

# Building Better Relationships through Family Inclusion



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# Acknowledgement of the traditional custodians of the land

## Program for this session



### **Quick Introduction**

- Who are we?
- The importance of learning from lived experience.
- What do we mean by family inclusion?
- How is this about child aware practice?

**Parent's with lived experience speak**

**Interactive small group activity**

**Close**

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# Acknowledgement



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# Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter



*(AKA  
FISH)*



Hunter Region

# Participants



## Audience participation

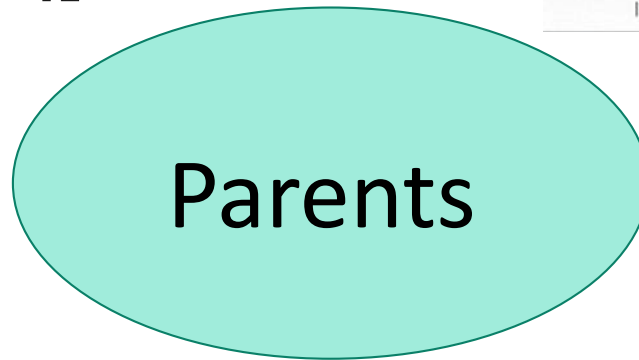
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*your family, our community*



Muloobinba Aboriginal Corporation Family Support



*Relationships Australia*

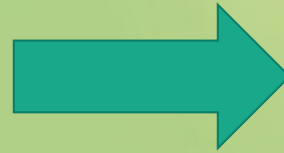
NEW SOUTH WALES



Social Services  
Hunter-Manning

DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

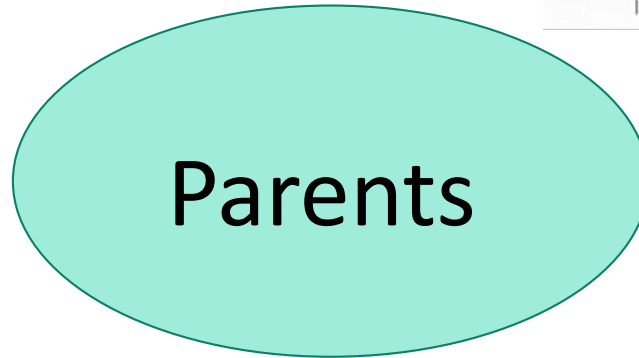
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# Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter



- Practice forums and regular community meetings, workshops and team presentations, social media
- Reframing parents and family as experts from who we need to learn. A genuine partnership between workers and parents.
- Research projects – parent perspectives – partnership with the University of Newcastle
- Website for parents and family [www.finclusionh.org](http://www.finclusionh.org)

# Why family inclusion?



<b>Why change is needed?</b>	<b>Why family inclusion is good for kids.</b>
Increasing numbers of kids in care who stay longer in care	Continuation of relationships and attachment
Narrow focus on family contact	Identity formation
Changing policy and legislative framework	Better long term support beyond care
Knowledge that parents and family are stigmatised and silent in discourse	It's consistent with what kids want and need.
Strong evidence that better relationships with family is good for kids	Contributes to permanence and felt security – no matter what the legal outcome.

## Why we need to be family inclusive.



“The weight of evidence, from all quarters, convinces us that the relationships with people who care for and about children are the golden thread in children’s lives, and that the quality of a child’s relationships is the lens through which we should view what we do and plan to do (The Care Inquiry, 2013, p.2).

*“Kids need their parents in their lives... one way or the other” (Parent with children in care, Newcastle, 2014)*

What is family inclusive practice?



*“Family inclusion is the active & meaningful participation of parents and family in the lives of children. It requires open, warm, professional relationships aimed at building equity with workers & carers. It is underpinned by respect & trust.”*

(Family Inclusion Strategies in the Hunter, 2015)

## Challenging stated and unstated beliefs....



*“We have to choose between parents rights and children’s rights”*

*“Your role as a parent stops when your child is placed in long term out of home care.”*

*“People can’t or won’t change”*

*“Attachment theory means parents should have very little contact with their children and should not be included in their day to day lives.”*

What is family inclusive practice?



*“I definitely think it comes from the caseworker.... If they have a relationship with the family, if this is trusting, then this will mean a better culture, a better relationship with the family..”*

(Parent with children in care, Newcastle, 2015)

## Family Inclusion



- In order to keep kids safe and do the best we can for them we need all the voices at the table – including parents

Gillian Calvert AO  
*former Commissioner for children and young  
people NSW*



# Parents with lived experience speak

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