

Media Release

26/6/19

The Community Restoration of the Aboriginal Children's Service Redfern

A generous community campaign, led by Paddington Children's Centre and involving an army of more than 50 businesses, has brought new life to the Aboriginal Children's Service in Redfern.

Over the last 12 months the historic 4-storey ACS terrace has been fully restored, thanks to the support of more than 50 local businesses, donating supplies and services to the value of around \$350,000. As a result, a new playgroup will soon begin.

The ACS at 18 George Street Redfern has a long history of supporting Aboriginal children and families. The restoration works will honour the past achievements and support empowering Aboriginal families through collaborative partnerships and programs into the future.

The ACS Community Project is a result of Paddington Children's Centre (Uniting) Reconciliation Action Plan that is committed to partnering with local Aboriginal organisations with the goal to support closing the gap initiatives for local Aboriginal children in their broader community.

Paddington Director Natalie Cordukes has engaged and co-ordinated the project which will allow the space to be available to Aboriginal children and families for many years to come.

"The process of engaging others has allowed me to advocate for better outcomes for our First Nations children, while also fostering an understanding of the importance of partnerships and culturally informed approaches," says Natalie Cordukes.

"The generosity from the community has been extraordinary. It will be wonderful to bring together all contributors at the Supporters Event scheduled for the 2nd August 2019."

Natalie has worked closely with the ACS Committee throughout the process and is looking forward to seeing the doors open for Aboriginal Children's Day on the 4th August.

"It will be wonderful to bring back laughter and joy into the space. The ACS looks forward to supporting Aboriginal children and families to develop and fulfill their dreams," says Ann Weldon, ACS Committee Member.

The new playgroup, to be held each Thursday initially, is called Biddy's Joy Playgroup – named after the late Pauline Coe 'Aunty Bid', who made significant contributions to Aboriginal children and families at the ACS. Pauline was awarded an Order of Australia medal for her service to Aboriginal children in NSW. The playgroup will be facilitated by Pauline Weldon-Bowen, Tonilee Jacky & Natalie Cordukes.



Early childhood education is proven to improve the educational outcomes for children in future learning. Providing a quality early childhood program in the Redfern and inner-city area for Aboriginal children will support improved

educational learning outcomes. Having Early Childhood qualified educators facilitating the program who are partnering with local community members and organisations will ensure a culturally informed program.

Funding is still required for future programs and donations can be made by contacting - contact@acsredfern.org

<https://www.facebook.com/ACSRestorationProject/>

<https://www.instagram.com/acsredfern/>

www.acsredfern.org

Events:

1. Supporters Event – Friday 2nd August at 3:30pm
2. Community Launch Event – Sunday 4th August from 11am – 2pm

For further media information please contact:

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About the ACS:

The Aboriginal Children's Service (ACS) was established in 1975. It previously was a State-wide community-based organisation which provided out of home care/foster care services for Aboriginal children. It was ACS's representation over the years that resulted in Aboriginal placement principles being incorporated into the "Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection Act 1998)". Due to funding cuts the ACS offices in Wagga Wagga, Mount Druitt and Cowra offices were closed. The Redfern premises had been used over the years for various programs, currently a food drive supported by volunteers and OzHarvest once a week.

The Aboriginal Children's Service is one of the remaining original organisations started up within the Aboriginal community movement in Redfern in the 70s. The legacy and commitment of this cornerstone Aboriginal community-based organization is a testament to the many incredible Aboriginal trailblazers. ACS was then and still is now strongly committed to addressing Aboriginal disadvantage and changing the cycles of government policy on the inter-generations of Aboriginal families, children, people and communities. The strong network of volunteers from across the inner west of Sydney and the membership across NSW working alongside Natalie, Pauline and the team will strive towards achieving sustainable positive outcomes.