



**NAPCAN**  
PREVENT CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT



SCCWN

15<sup>th</sup>

Conference

# South Coast Child Wellbeing Network Conference 2026

**Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup>  
September 2026**

**The Pavilion**  
*2 Bong Bong Street, Kiama*

Registration opens 8am  
Conference: 8:45am - 4:30pm

Tickets  
**\$110**

## Belonging and Togetherness

*Championing inclusion and challenging discrimination*

This year, the conference focuses on strengthening practitioners' skills to navigate and challenge harmful beliefs through calm, constructive conversations, in ways that uphold inclusion and protect the wellbeing of children and families.

The conference features keynote speakers, Blake Alan Cansdale and Katherine McKernan with workshops from local professionals demonstrating knowledge and practices to support children and their families.

**Child  
Protection Week**  
6<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> September

**Buy Tickets at**  
[www.sccwn.org.au/events](http://www.sccwn.org.au/events)

## Keynote Speaker 1: Blake Alan Cansdale

Blake Alan Cansdale is a First Nations lawyer, advocate, and national leader in the movement for justice and self-determination.

With a background across law, policy, and Aboriginal community organisations, Blake is a leading voice on treaty, truth-telling, and systemic reform, known for his direct and engaging communication style.

His advocacy is grounded in lived experience and a deep commitment to structural reform. Blake is known for his clear, unapologetic voice - calling out systemic injustice while working constructively to shift policy, public consciousness, and institutional behaviour.



### Keynote

For practitioners, educators, service providers and community leaders working with children and young people, this keynote asks what it means to move beyond passive allyship, toward being an 'accomplice': taking responsibility, yielding power, challenging racism, and helping build systems where children can belong, be safe, and be strong in their identity, culture and community.

In this keynote, Blake explores what it means for Australia to become truth-ready. Drawing on personal story, First Nations truth-telling, the 2023 Referendum, the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and the emerging concept and practice of truth-listening, he argues that Australia's challenge is not a lack of truth, but rather a failure of Australians to listen deeply enough to the truth to be moved to action.

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## Keynote Speaker 2: Katherine McKernan

Katherine McKernan commenced her five-year term as the NSW Advocate for Children and Young People in January 2026. As the Advocate, Katherine leads the NSW Office for Youth and is an independent statutory officer.

Prior to her appointment as Advocate for Children and Young People, Katherine was the Executive Director at National Legal Aid and previously held the role of CEO of Homelessness NSW.

Katherine has significant social justice and advocacy experience in housing and homelessness, legal assistance, disability, health, mental health, and women and children's safety.

She also took on leadership roles at the Department of Family and Community Services and NSW Health, focusing on policy and strategy.

As the Advocate, Katherine will work to improve the safety, welfare and wellbeing of all children and young people in NSW and will ensure that their rights are respected and voices heard by decision makers.

Katherine looks forward to working collaboratively across government, non-government organisations, businesses and communities to create the best outcomes for children and young people in NSW.



## **Tides Film Project: Nhandi and a Reverse Q&A with Young People**

Join us for a screening of Nhandi, a short film created through the Tides Film Project.

Based in Warrawong, The Tides Film Project is a youth-led creative initiative that supports young people to explore identity, belonging, culture, and community through filmmaking. Through co-design, young people build skills in storytelling, collaboration, and creative production while contributing their voices to conversations that matter to them and their communities.

In this context, the project has produced Nhandi, a short film that draws on Dharawal story-sharing, local history, and truth-telling to invite reflection on Country, colonisation, cultural continuity, and Australia's shared history.

Following the screening, participants will take part in a Reverse Q&A led by the young people involved in the project. They will invite attendees to reflect on the film's themes and consider how to create environments where children and young people experience genuine belonging. This session offers a chance to hear directly from young people, challenge assumptions, and explore inclusive approaches to practice.



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## Belonging and Togetherness

### Workshop 1: Charlie Ashby

#### Cultural Lead Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child & Family Centre

Charlie is a Wodi Wodi Djuin from Roseby Park Reserve with family ties to La Perouse, Lismore, Lightning Ridge, Coonabarabran and Mogo areas.

Working in the community sector for almost 20 years and sitting on multiple committees, Charlie has had the joy of working at Cullunghutti ACFC for the last 10 years coordinating multiple programs.



Charlie now sits as the Cultural Lead in the Boori Milumba Program, supporting children with their Cultural journey while strengthening their Cultural identity, building relationships with Mother and always giving back to Country.

### Workshop

Embedding cultural perspectives in everyday experiences with children, connecting with, listening to and learning from Country while building culturally strong children and identities.

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## **Workshop 2: Allyson Pazos and Emily Duncan**

### **Youth Services at Multicultural Communities Council of Illawarra (MCCI)**

Allyson Pazos serves as the General Manager for the Settlement & Youth team at the MCCI of Illawarra where she leads the organisation's strategic direction in settlement services and youth development. With over 15 years of frontline and leadership experience in the community sector she has dedicated her career to working alongside culturally and linguistically diverse communities and former refugee families.



Emily Duncan is a passionate youth development worker at MCCI. With extensive experience supporting CALD and refugee youth, she is dedicated to amplifying young voices and ensuring their perspectives shape the programs designed to foster their growth into independent young adults.



### **Workshop: Young People at the Centre: Co-designing for Participation and Inclusion in Diverse Communities**

This interactive workshop explores how co-design approaches can meaningfully centre the voices of young people from diverse cultural backgrounds in program development and service delivery. It will explore the role facilitators play in fostering creativity, trusting participants, and following adaptive practices for successful engagement and impact.

Through the sharing of experiences and recent examples, participants will gain insight into practical strategies for engaging children, young people and their families, identifying and addressing barriers to participation, and fostering inclusive, culturally responsive environments. The session will include real-world case studies, reflective discussion, and tools that practitioners can adapt within their own community contexts to strengthen inclusion and belonging.

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## Workshop 3: Dr Jane Warren

Jane trained as an early childhood teacher and worked for ten years in a preschool where she practiced inclusion, with a focus on the rights of all children and families. She became more passionate about the role of the first five years in developing positive attitudes toward diversity within all children; authentic inclusion of children with disabilities; and the importance of partnerships between parents, educators and other community organisations to meet the needs of all children.



Her research interests centre on including families' voices in decisions about their children, as well as how to support educators to include children with disabilities in educational settings. Jane works with children and families in a supported playgroup environment as a stepping stone to further inclusion, and enjoys inspiring students to be passionate, inclusive educators in her role as co-Academic Program Director of Early Years at University of Wollongong.

## Workshop

This workshop will focus on the rights of all children, with a focus on inclusion of children with disability, developmental delay and neurodivergence in early childhood education and care services. We will identify some of the challenges around inclusion, and unpack ways to ensure that all children have the opportunity to participate, engage and be supported toward their individual potential.

We will discuss some practical ways to genuinely include every child, from reviewing our environment, routine, transitions, resources, communication to engaging and partnering with families. In line with the conference theme, our holistic approaches to inclusion need to ensure that all children and families feel a sense of belonging in our services.

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## **Workshop 4: LGBTQI+**

This interactive workshop explores inclusive, culturally safe practice for LGBTQI+ children, young people, and families. Grounded in the theme of Belonging and Togetherness, it focuses on practical strategies to challenge discrimination, support identity and wellbeing, and build affirming environments across education, health, and community services. Participants will explore opportunities to strengthen inclusive practice in their everyday work.