

# COUNSELLORS PROGRAM MANUAL

*Bringing Them Home & Link Up Services*

## ***APPENDIX PART C: PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT***

- Orientation Guide for Staff working in OATSIH Funded Programs
- Program Performance Indicators (PPI's)
- BTH Counsellor Duty Statement
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*(provided separately in PDF format)*

**ORIENTATION GUIDE for STAFF WORKING in OATSIH's FUNDED  
SOCIAL HEALTH PROGRAMS**

## 1. Introduction

The following information is for use by new staff in the Link-Up and Bringing Them Home programs or for those considering employment in these programs. This information would also be useful for staff working in other areas of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Health, such as the Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Regional Centres.

### 1.1 Background

The Australian Government's response to the *National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families Inquiry* (also known as the *Bringing Them Home Report* or *BTH Report*) included funding to establish a number of social health programs to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people separated from their families as a result of past governments' policies and practices. Through the Department of Health and Ageing, the Australian Government provides services such as the Link-Up Services, the Bringing Them Home and Link Up Counsellors, Social and Emotional Well Being Regional Centres and mental health service delivery projects. These programs, and the services they provide, have the overarching aim of supporting the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A significant aspect of these programs involves providing support for Stolen Generations people seeking to reunite with separated families.

The Department currently has responsibility for the initiatives addressing recommendations 30 (a and b) and 33-35 of the BTH report, which focus on the social and emotional well being issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples affected by past forced removal practices:

- Recommendation 30 proposed the establishment of family tracing and reunion services;
- Recommendations 33-35 supported a broad approach to provision of counselling and education addressing the healing of the whole community; and
- Recommendation 33b specified that funds should go to existing Indigenous organisations, such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care services, child care agencies and substance use services

There were several Aboriginal family reunion services already established before the BTH Report was released, such as Link Up NSW. Following the release of the BTH Report the Australian Government established a national network of Link Up services. These Link Up services were originally overseen by ATSIC (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission) then ATISIS (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services) before being moved to OATSIH in 2004.

A recent evaluation by independent social research consultants, Urbis Keys Young, *Evaluation of the Bringing Them Home and Indigenous Mental Health Programs* (2007) has highlighted the importance of providing clear guidelines and information for staff working in government funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Health Programs. For further information on this Evaluation refer to the information available at: [www.health.gov.au/bringingthemhome](http://www.health.gov.au/bringingthemhome).

The evaluation also stressed the importance of appropriate training for staff of these programs. Such training should ensure that staff are better able to respond to the spiritual, cultural and emotional needs of their clients.

This guide provides introductory information for staff regarding OATSIH's Social Health programs. The information covers a variety of aspects related to working in the programs including an explanation of the concept of social and emotional wellbeing.

The information is not prescriptive but is intended rather to be used as an orientation guide for new staff to the area. Whilst there is a need for consistency, individual communities and employing services may wish to adapt the information to more adequately reflect their particular situation and/or locality. There are also Guideline Handbooks for both the Link Up Program and the BTH and Link Up Counsellor Program which outline mandatory guidelines, reporting processes and other relevant information for these programs. These should be used to understand expectations and obligations for staff working in these programs.

Some of this information has been directly adopted or adapted from material produced by various Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, Link Up Services and other sources of information.

## 2. Understanding Social and Emotional Health

Staff working in Social Health programs form part of a team whose purpose is to help support the social and emotional wellbeing of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. It is important that staff working in Social Health Programs fully understand the concept of "social and emotional wellbeing."

This broader understanding of health is outlined in the first key principle listed in Ways Forward (Swan and Raphael, 1995) in:

*"Aboriginal concept of health is holistic, encompassing mental health and physical, cultural and spiritual health. Land is central to well-being. This holistic concept does not merely refer to the 'whole body' but in fact is steeped in the harmonised interrelations which constitute cultural well-being. These inter-relating factors can be categorised largely as spiritual, environmental, ideological, political, social, economic, mental and physical. Crucially, it must be understood that when the harmony of these interrelations is disrupted, Aboriginal ill health will persist."*

The underpinning framework for the Social Health programs is the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Mental Health and Social and Emotional Well Being 2004-2009*. The purpose of this Framework is to respond to the high incidence of social and emotional wellbeing problems and mental health issues in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This Framework is based on the Aboriginal definition of health. This definition recognises that achieving optimal conditions of health and wellbeing requires a **holistic** and whole-of-life view of health, referring to the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community. The Framework also recognises the crucial role of the health sector and recognises the critical importance of partnerships between mainstream and Indigenous specific comprehensive primary health care services.

Social and emotional wellbeing problems are distinct from mental illness, although the two interact and influence each other. Even with good social and emotional well being, people can still experience mental illness. People with a long- term mental health condition can live and function at a high level with adequate support.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience higher rates of both social and emotional wellbeing problems and some mental disorders compared to other Australians. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience reduced access to community based mental health care, particularly care that is sensitive to their specific needs.

As social and emotional wellbeing problems can result from a diverse range of causes it is appropriate that staff in the area of Social Health adopt a range of multi-dimensional solutions. These solutions should build on existing community strengths and capacity and include counselling and social support, and where necessary, support during family reunification.

Over recent years a number of new responses have developed. These have included cultural and healing activities, community based promotion and prevention programs and workforce development initiatives. Some mainstream services have progressed models for more culturally sensitive and responsive care or developed effective partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers.

Some Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services have successfully utilised the Social Health Team model. These teams can provide both holistic management of social and emotional well being issues and effective treatment for mental ill health within the primary health care setting. The Teams provide a range of skills including community and cultural expertise, family support, mental health, and substance misuse and can improve access to mainstream mental health specialists through visiting outreach or partnership arrangements. Social Health Teams often support clients to access a range of other sectors such as housing and welfare.

Within this model, social health workers such as Bringing Them Home and Link Up Counsellors, Link-Up Caseworkers, Social and Emotional Wellbeing Regional Centre Workers and Mental Health Service Workers play a significant role in contributing to positive health outcomes for clients including social and emotional wellbeing.

The following pages provide information about the Social Health Programs as well as information on relevant qualifications and training for working in the area of Aboriginal Social Health.

### **3. Bringing Them Home Programs**

There are three Bringing Them Home programs that are currently funded by OATSIH.

#### **3.1 Bringing Them Home and Link Up Counselling Program**

The Bringing Them Home and Link Up Counselling program funds counsellors to provide counselling to individuals and families, and related services to communities

affected by past practices around the forced removal of children from Aboriginal families.

The program provides funding for over 100 counsellor positions in over 70 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS's), 11 Link Up services as well as some other agencies across Australia. BTH and Link Up Counsellors respond to the needs of a broad range of clients, including those removed, those who were left behind, and the children, grandchildren and relatives of all those affected by separation practices. Because the intergenerational effects of removal practices are widespread and caused emotional harm throughout families and across entire generations, entire Aboriginal communities are potentially in need of counselling around the effects of past removal policies, BTH and social and emotional wellbeing issues.

### **3.2 Link Up Program**

The Link-Up Program funds 11 Link Up services across the country to provide support, guidance and assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people forcibly removed from their families and communities as a result of past governments' laws, policies and practices, to trace, locate and reunite with their families. The core activities of the Link Up Service are:

- community contact;
- dissemination of information;
- initial contact discussions;
- client assessment for Link Up services;
- advice on family history and search avenues;
- records search assistance;
- counselling for clients;
- family counselling and support during reunion process;
- organizing a reunion;
- ongoing support for individuals and families immediately after reunion;
- Indigenous cross-cultural awareness training;
- Link Up process training for those directly involved; and
- Administration and data management.

### **3.3 The Social and Emotional Wellbeing Regional Centre Program**

There are twelve Social and Emotional Wellbeing Regional Centres across the country. The Social and Emotional Wellbeing Regional Centres have four core objectives. They are as follows:

- to provide curriculum development and training for all workers involved in the area of Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing;
- to assess the training needs of these workers;
- to provide professional support to the health workforce; and

- to develop cross-sector linkages.

For more information on these programs see the Bringing Them Home website at: [www.health.gov.au/bringingthemhome](http://www.health.gov.au/bringingthemhome).

#### 4. Key Stakeholders

Staff working in the Social Health programs need to be aware of who the key stakeholders are and work towards developing effective relationships with them. Some services already have in place Memorandums of Understanding or protocols to facilitate the relationship with key stakeholders.

The key stakeholders are:

- the clients;
- family of the clients;
- Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS);
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation(NACCHO) affiliates;
- Stolen Generation organisations;
- adoptive or foster family of the client;
- OATSIH Central Office;
- OATSIH State and Territory Offices
- BTH and Link Up Counsellor services;
- Link-Up services;
- SEWB RC's;
- Commonwealth record- keeping or searching agencies;
- State record-keeping or searching agencies such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies(AIATSIS);
- Commonwealth agencies providing services to Aboriginal families as part of mainstream or Aboriginal-specific programs such as the Department of Family and Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Department of Health;
- State agencies providing services to Aboriginal families as part of mainstream or Aboriginal-specific programs such as health, child welfare, justice-related programs.

For more detailed information on these programs and on working in the area of Social Health see the complementary manuals:

- *Link Up Program Handbook*;
- *BTH and Link Up Counsellor Handbook*; and
- *Employment Best Practice Guidelines for Aboriginal Social Health Programs*. This manual provides a best practice guide to job descriptions and selection criteria for the sector including information for:

- Link Up Caseworker positions;

- Link Up Counsellor positions;
- Bringing Them Home Counsellor positions; and
- Mental Health Worker positions.

## PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

### A. Client Information and Support

1. Number of clients by status (active/closed);
2. Number of clients by type (new/continuing/transferred in/ transferred out);
3. Number of clients by age and gender;
4. Number of clients by Stolen generations status (eg. first generation, second generation, third or subsequent generation\*)
5. Number of reunions supported (supporting Link Up service);
6. Number of support group sessions held;
7. Number of referrals made by staff to external services; and
8. Informed client consent (as indicated by number of signed partnership agreements).

### B. Service Quality and Improvement

9. Number of initiatives undertaken to improve the quality of the service for clients (eg client satisfaction survey introduced by service);
10. Number of current Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs);
11. Number of community awareness and education activities conducted; and
12. Number of promotional activities successfully conducted.

### C. Staffing, Governance and Reporting

13. Staffing profile according to funding provided (eg full time/part time/other employees compared with number of positions funded);
14. Caseworker load (number of clients per caseworker);
15. Record management systems in place and consistently used and up-to-date (eg client case files, appointment diaries, computer records, collection of outcomes information);
16. Confidentiality policy understood by all staff and Governing Committee members (% of staff who have signed confidentiality agreements);
17. Regular external supervision with all staff requiring supervision by a professional in relevant field conducted on a regular basis (at least once a month);
18. Number of staff who have undertaken training in current 12 month period including the type, level and length of course; and
19. Confirmation of Corporate Governance training undertaken since last AGM (or previous 12 month period).

\* Stolen Generations status for the purposes of these performance indicators is as follows:

- *First generation* means Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people directly removed from their families
- *Second generation* means Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people whose parents were directly removed from their families

- *Third or subsequent generations* means Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people whose grandparents, great grandparents or their direct ancestors were directly removed from their families

## **SUGGESTED JOB DESCRIPTION & SELECTION CRITERIA - BRINGING THEM HOME (BTH) COUNSELLOR POSITIONS**

### **1. POSITION TITLE**

BTH Counsellor: position number.

Classification: to be completed by employing service. This will be set by the relevant State/ Territory Award

Award: to be aligned to the State/Territory Award

Salary: to be aligned to the State/Territory Award. This may also be dependant on the applicant's qualifications, skills and experience.

### **2. BACKGROUND**

The purpose of the Bringing Them Home (BTH) Counsellors is to provide counselling and education to clients who have been affected by the removal or by intergenerational effects of forced removal. BTH Counsellors must give priority to First Generation clients, especially elderly clients and those requiring urgent assistance due to health concerns. The service works closely with other agencies such as the Link Up Program.

### **3. REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS**

The BTH counsellor works under the overall direction of a Social Health Coordinator or other such supervisor. As part of the Social Health Team, the counsellor may work closely with social workers, psychologists, drug and alcohol counsellors and other mental health professionals.

The employing Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service must ensure that the counsellor receives external professional supervision and debriefing from a qualified mental health professional on a regular basis.

Additionally, as part of the Single Funding Agreement between OATSIH and the service (the "OFA"), it is a requirement to provide an annual report to OATSIH by completing the Bringing Them Home Survey which is currently titled: *'Questionnaire for Bringing Them Home and Link Up Counsellors.'*

This survey may be accessed under 'B' in Publications at:  
[www.health.gov.au/bringingthemhome](http://www.health.gov.au/bringingthemhome)

The date on which the report has to be completed is printed on the front page of the survey.

### **4. PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE POSITION**

The primary role of the BTH counsellor is to facilitate healing and improvements in the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been affected by past policies and practices of forced removal. This will be achieved through the provision of professional and confidential counselling. For further information regarding these positions refer to the BTH and Link Up Counsellors Handbook.

### **5. SPECIFIC DUTIES**

**Counselling and Support**

The BTH counsellor assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and individuals to improve their emotional health by:

- providing counselling and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- offering a broad range of counselling services which includes trans-generational grief, trauma and family relationship counselling;
- establishing a referral network of professional counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists, traditional healers and other relevant health professionals;
- offer to refer clients to other services as required, including mainstream mental health services, non-government organisations, and alternative services such as drug and alcohol services.
- participating in the full re-union process at the request of a Link Up service whose function is family tracing and reunion. This participation could occur from the pre-reunion phase through to the post-reunion phase and may involve travelling with clients to community locations;
- attending regular case discussion meetings with the social health team to ensure cultural sensitivity and safety in clinical practice;
- working with established peer support groups and other Stolen Generations groups to either conduct or support healing programs and related activities; and
- offering to refer clients to Link Up services for family tracing and reunion services.

#### **Promotion and Professional Development**

Promote community awareness of related social and emotional issues by:

- participating in outreach service delivery and in the delivery of community education plans;
- participating in national networks, conferences and other relevant taskforces; and
- attending professional development training courses on counselling and other areas related to the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

#### **Administration**

Contribute to the effective delivery of the BTH counselling service within the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service by:

- maintaining paper-based and electronic client records;
- keeping accurate counselling notes;
- ensuring secure management of all program files and compliance with applicable privacy legislation and policies; and
- establishing and updating a referral network list of other relevant health professionals.

#### **Equal Employment Opportunity**

Contribute to the implementation of principles of equal employment opportunity in the workplace.

#### **Responsibilities**

Caseworkers and counsellors have a legal responsibility to uphold the privacy and confidentiality of client communications at all times.

Where required under the relevant jurisdictions legislation staff employed in Counsellor positions should undertake a National Criminal History Record Check and Working With Children Check where required.

## Occupational Health and Safety and Legislative Compliance

Contribute to the provision of a safe and healthy work environment by:

- observing and complying with the organisation's policies and procedures;
- attending relevant training such as workshops on self care;
- accepting professional clinical supervision and participating in debriefing sessions on a regular basis; and
- compliance with all relevant jurisdictional regulations and legislation including a National Criminal History Record Check and Working With Children Check where required.

## 6. SELECTION CRITERIA

Selection criteria for the position of BTH counsellor must include:

- **formal higher or vocational education qualifications in counselling, psychology, social work, mental health or a related area; the minimum qualification is a Certificate IV (from a currently endorsed national training package) in these areas;**
- **demonstrated understanding of the history and effects of the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and a comprehensive understanding of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues;**
- effective communication skills and a demonstrated ability to communicate effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- demonstrated counselling skills with experience and knowledge of social, emotional and mental health issues which may include culturally appropriate healing methods, and trauma and grief counselling skills;
- ability to work as an effective member of a team and willingness to refer clients to other services when necessary;
- competence with computers, especially the use of word-processing and database software; and
- willingness to abide by the policies and procedures of the organisation.

## 7. FURTHER INFORMATION

It is strongly recommended that the employing Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service seek further information on the appointment, conditions, benefits, assessment of performance, probationary periods, salary levels and superannuation requirements from their relevant State or Territory Department of Industry Relations (or equivalent). This will provide further information around your jurisdictions relevant Award requirements.

## LINK UP COUNSELLOR POSITION

### 1. POSITION TITLE

Link Up Counsellor: position number.

Classification: to be completed by employing service. This will be set by the relevant State/ Territory Award.

Award: to be aligned to the State/Territory Award.

Salary: to be aligned to the State/Territory Award. This may also be dependant on the applicant's qualifications, skills and experience.

### 2. BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Link Up Service is to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who have been effected by past policies and practices of forced removal, to locate and reunite with their families. Link Up Counsellors must give priority to First Generation clients, especially elderly clients and those requiring urgent assistance due to health concerns. The service facilitates and supports family reunions.

Link Up counsellors work as part of a team in the Link Up Service to provide counselling and education for clients who are engaged in tracing their families and/or are planning a reunion. Link Up counsellors provide a range of counselling services to clients at all stages of the tracing and reunion process, as required by and agreed with the client.

### 3. REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Link Up counsellor works under the overall direction of the Link Up co-ordinator. As part of the Link Up team, the counsellor works closely with Link Up caseworkers.

The employing Link Up Service must ensure that the counsellor receives external professional supervision and debriefing from a qualified mental health professional on a regular basis.

Additionally, as part of the Single Funding Agreement between OATSIH and the service, it is a requirement to provide an annual report to OATSIH by completing the Bringing Them Home Survey which is currently titled: *'Questionnaire on Performance Indicators for Bringing Them Home and Link Up Counsellors'*.

This survey may be accessed under 'B' in Publications at:

[www.health.gov.au/bringingthemhome](http://www.health.gov.au/bringingthemhome)

The date on which the report has to be completed is printed on the front page of the survey.

### 4. PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE POSITION

The primary role of the Link Up counsellor is to facilitate healing and improvements in the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been affected by past policies and practices of forced removal. This will be achieved

through the provision of professional and confidential counselling. For further information regarding these positions refer to the BTH and Link Up Counsellors Handbook.

## **5. SPECIFIC DUTIES**

### **Counselling and Support**

The Link Up counsellor assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and individuals to improve their emotional health by:

- providing counselling and support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are tracing and/or locating their families and/or planning a reunion;
- offering a broad range of counselling services which includes trans-generational grief, trauma and family relationship counselling, to all clients who are engaged in family tracing and reunion;
- establishing a referral network of professional counsellors, psychologists, psychiatrists, traditional healers and other relevant health professionals;
- offering to refer clients to other services as required, including mainstream mental health services, non-government organisations, and alternative services such as drug and alcohol services;
- working with established peer support groups and other Stolen Generations groups to either conduct or support healing programs and related activities; and
- offering to refer clients to Link Up services for family tracing and reunion services.

### **Priorities for their role:**

- provide after care for previously reunited clients;
- arrange support group activities (post reunion care);
- provide support for current clients awaiting reunion (pre and in-service care in terms of emotional support and assessment to determine readiness for a reunion should this be possible); and
- provide advice and assistance to remote service provider staff in caseworker reunion matters (but not responsible for caseworker duties and outcomes).

### **Promotion and Professional Development**

Promote the Link Up Service and community awareness of related social and emotional issues by:

- participating in outreach service delivery and in the delivery of community education plans;
- promoting community awareness and education about the history and social, emotional and health impacts of forcible removal;
- conducting outreach and public information sessions on the Link Up Service;
- participating in national networks, conferences and other relevant taskforces; and

- attending professional development training courses on counselling and other areas related to the social and emotional wellbeing of Link Up clients.

### **Administration**

Contribute to the effective delivery of the Link Up Service by:

- maintaining paper-based and electronic client records;
- keeping accurate counselling notes;
- ensuring secure management of all program files and compliance with applicable privacy legislation and policies; and
- establishing and updating a referral network list of relevant health professionals who may provide assistance.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity**

Contribute to the implementation of principles of equal employment opportunity in the workplace.

### **Occupational Health and Safety and Legislative Compliance**

Contribute to the provision of a safe and healthy work environment by:

- observing and complying with the organisation's policies and procedures;
- attending relevant training such as workshops on self care and case management;
- accepting professional clinical supervision and participating in debriefing sessions; and
- compliance with all relevant jurisdictional regulations and legislation including a National Criminal History Record Check and Working With Children Check where required.

### **Responsibilities**

Caseworkers and counsellors have a legal responsibility to uphold the privacy and confidentiality of client communications at all times.

Where required under the relevant jurisdictions legislation, staff employed in Counsellor positions should undertake a National Criminal History Record Check and Working With Children Check.

## **6. SELECTION CRITERIA**

Selection criteria for the position of Link Up counsellor must include:

- formal higher or vocational education qualifications in counselling, psychology, social work, mental health or a related area; the minimum qualification is a Certificate IV (from a currently endorsed national training package) in these areas;
- demonstrated understanding of the history and effects of the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and a comprehensive understanding of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues;

- effective communication skills and a demonstrated ability to communicate effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- demonstrated counselling skills with experience and knowledge of social, emotional and mental health issues which may include culturally appropriate healing methods, and trauma and grief counselling, and case management skills;
- ability to work as an effective member of a team and willingness to refer clients to other services when necessary;
- competence with computers, especially use of word-processing and database software; and
- willingness to abide by the policies and procedures of the organisation.

## **7. FURTHER INFORMATION**

It is strongly recommended that the employing Link Up Service seek further information on the appointment, conditions, benefits, assessment of performance, probationary periods, salary levels and superannuation requirements from their relevant State or Territory Department of Industry Relations (or equivalent). This will provide further information around your jurisdictions relevant Award requirements.

## LINL UP CASEWORKER POSITION

### 1. POSITION TITLE

**Link Up Caseworker:** position number.

Classification: to be completed by employing service. This will be set by the relevant State/Territory Award.

Award: to be aligned to the State/Territory Award.

Salary: to be aligned to the State/Territory Award. This may also be dependant on the applicant's qualifications, skills and experience.

### 2. BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Link Up Service is to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who have been effected by past policies and practices of forced removal, to locate and reunite with their families. Link Up caseworkers must give priority to First Generation clients, especially elderly clients and those requiring urgent assistance due to health concerns. The service facilitates and supports family reunions.

### 3. REPORTING RELATIONSHIPS

The Link Up caseworker works under the overall direction of the Link Up coordinator. As part of the Link Up team, the caseworker also works closely with Link Up counsellor.

The employing Link Up Service must ensure that the caseworker receives professional supervision and debriefing from a qualified mental health professional on a regular basis.

### 4. PRIMARY PURPOSE OF THE POSITION

The primary purpose of the position is to:

- assist clients in tracing family and facilitating family reunions;
- provide community information, education and awareness to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non- indigenous people about the effects of past government's practices of forced removal of children from their families. Part of this role is to provide information about the services available from the Bringing Them Home and Link Up Counsellors, and related services such as family tracing organisations; and.
- refer clients to the Link Up Counsellor for counselling and support with social and emotional issues, or if a Link Up Counsellor is not available, a BTH counsellor.

For further information regarding these positions refer to the BTH and Link Up Counsellors Handbook.

## 4. SPECIFIC DUTIES

### Identification and Research

Assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by removal policies to identify and locate family members by:

- making preliminary assessments of client needs;
- initiating family history research and family tracing;
- researching and investigating various sources including government and non-government organisations, which hold relevant records relating to clients;
- engaging the services of Indigenous experts for provision of genealogical information;
- providing advocacy on behalf of individual clients and, on behalf of clients as a class, with record agencies;
- participating in research into the history and effects of forcible removal
- acting as a central resource, within the limits of expertise, regarding family tracing and reunion processes; and
- developing and maintaining appropriate networks within the local / regional community as well as state-wide and nationally. This could include a range of government departments, archives agencies, libraries and adoption services and Stolen Generations groups.

### Support and Facilitation

Assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people directly or indirectly affected by removal policies to understand and overcome issues relating to forced removals by:

- ensuring the client and or/ their family is ready for the reunion;
- providing support for clients viewing their records;
- explaining and working through archived documents with clients that may have sensitive and unpleasant information written about themselves and/or family members;
- facilitating client reunions which are informed by a case management plan setting out the reunion plan and associated logistics;
- providing support for clients, family and community members in the reunion process, including travelling with clients to community locations;
- offering clients contact with a Bringing Them Home or Link Up Counsellors at every step of the reunion;
- engaging the services of Indigenous experts for provision of traditional healing;

## **Responsibilities**

Caseworkers and counsellors have a legal responsibility to uphold the privacy and confidentiality of client communications at all times.

All staff employed in Counsellor positions should undertake a criminal record check as they may work with individuals, families and children.

## **Promotion and Professional Development**

Promote and consolidate the Link Up Program

- maintaining up to date information on services provided by the Program and related services;
- developing an outreach plan;
- developing and conducting outreach and public information sessions on the history and effects of past removal policies and practices;
- planning and participating in outreach and public information sessions which promote the Link Up and related services;
- participating in national networks, conferences and other relevant taskforces;
- attend training courses on research, genealogy, counselling and other related areas; and
- participating in planning and review processes of the Program.

## **Administration**

Contribute to the effective delivery of the Link Up Program by:

- maintaining paper based and electronic client records including the Foxtrot database;
- ensuring secure management of all program files and compliance with applicable privacy legislation and policies;
- preparing written and verbal reports as required; and
- providing data as required.

## **Equal Employment Opportunity**

Contribute to the implementation of principles of equal employment opportunity in the workplace.

## **Occupational Health and Safety**

Contribute to the provision of a safe and healthy work environment by:

- observing and complying with the organisation's policies and procedures;
- attending relevant training such as workshops on self care; and
- accepting professional clinical supervision and participating in debriefing sessions; and

- compliance with all relevant jurisdictional regulations and legislation including a National Criminal History Record Check and Working With Children Check where required.

## 5. SELECTION CRITERIA

Selection criteria for the position of Link Up Caseworker may include:

- **formal qualifications are not mandatory but working towards a related (nationally recognised) qualification in research and family tracing or in social and emotional wellbeing or mental health would be an advantage;**
- **demonstrated understanding of the history and effects of the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and a comprehensive understanding of contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues;**
- effective communication skills and a demonstrated ability to communicate effectively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- ability to work in a manner that takes into account community kinship systems;
- research skills, including a basic knowledge of family tracing processes;
- well developed networking skills including the ability to relate, mediate or liaise with other agencies, self help groups and other Aboriginal organisations and communities
- ability to work as an effective member of a team and willingness to refer clients to other services when necessary;
- competence with computers, especially the use of word-processing and database software; and
- willingness to abide by the policies and procedures of the organisation.

## 7. FURTHER INFORMATION

It is strongly recommended that the employing Link Up Service seek further information on the appointment, conditions, benefits, assessment of performance, probationary periods, salary levels and superannuation requirements from their relevant State or Territory Department of Industry Relations (or equivalent). This will provide further information around your jurisdictions relevant Award requirements.

