**NAIDOC Week focus on Indigenous language gives voice to Aboriginal young people in Orange**

As the Anglicare team in Orange prepare for a week’s worth of NAIDOC Week activities running from Monday 3 July, Area Manager, Carmel Swan acknowledges that Aboriginal children and young people are still over-represented in the foster care system and need opportunities like this to celebrate and identify with their valuable history, language and culture.

“We want this week to be a celebration and acknowledgment of the richness and dignity of Aboriginal life and culture,” says Ms Swan. “Nearly 40 per cent of the young people in our care identify with an Aboriginal background so it’s important that they can connect with their culture and feel proud of who they are – not just this week, but every week and throughout their lives.”

Activities will take place at the Anglicare office, 127 Byng St in Orange and will focus on the importance of traditional languages with daily cultural lessons, workshops and presentations from local Aboriginal Elders. Peter Peckham, a Wiradjuri Elder, is excited about this opportunity to work with young people and the community sharing his heart and cultural knowledge.

“Telling our story to the next generation is part of our culture. It’s so important. Language is identity. Without it people can feel lost,” says Mr Peckham. “Opportunities like this to teach young people helps keep our culture alive. It gives them greater insight in to who they are, strengthening their self-esteem, and it gives voice within the wider community to our incredible history. Everyone benefits from activities like this.”

A team of Anglicare case workers from Aboriginal backgrounds have worked tirelessly to organise the language-themed events. Their work complements recent moves which have seen a revitalisation of the Wiradjuri language including classes taught in schools.

“I’m so proud of our team here,” says Ms Swan. “They know the importance of providing opportunities like this, and they have put together activities that are relevant, sensitive, fun and inclusive. This is the direction that Anglicare wants to continue heading in. We also hope this direction will be something the wider community continues to head in too.”

Anglicare currently assists over 400 children and young people across NSW, and around 80 in the Orange region. If you would like to become a foster carer or find out more about the work of Anglicare visit [www.anglicare.com.au](http://www.anglicare.com.au). **For more information or to arrange an interview, call Anglicare Media Coordinator, Amy Lanham on 6248 8410 or 0437 321 451.**