



Case Study: I feel like I'm grounded and wanted

Case study: OurSPACE



The Family Profile

Dakota is a 14-year-old Aboriginal teenager from Lake Cargelligo, NSW. He was originally placed with a non-Aboriginal foster carer and this placement was under considerable strain when he was referred to OurSPACE.



Melissa, an Aboriginal therapeutic specialist from OurSPACE, helped Dakota by being his point of contact for a number of services. As Dakota's foster care placement was unsuitable, Melissa found a kinship placement. The specialist provided support for Dakota's transition to the new placement with his brother who he hadn't seen for years.

"We can't do this work with Aboriginal families without responding to them in a culturally strong way, we want to walk together. Aboriginal families need support that feels safe and includes consultation and understanding, so we provide them with the best and most appropriate response."

Sue Buratti - Program Manager Therapeutic Services



The Result

The OurSPACE Program is an outreach trauma treatment service. It supports children who are in foster care, kinship care or alternate care arrangements. It offers specialist trauma-informed therapy to young people and their support network in out-of-home care.

Dakota's experience left him feeling unloved and unwanted. He was having difficulty trusting people, particularly from his school and community. Melissa provided a range of evidence-based therapeutic approaches that also focused on re-engaging Dakota to his family, culture and community.

This specialist support helped Dakota to attend school full time, play rugby league and other sports, and develop strong relationships with his uncle and his siblings. He says he finally feels grounded and wanted and is planning for his future.

"I'm a proud Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi, and my totem is a goanna. OurSPACE helped me to turn my life around, go to school, play football, live with family, make new friends and feel like I'm grounded."

Dakota

Dakota's carer and uncle, Mike, says "Melissa has been great. She has put structures in place for Dakota that helped with his anxiety and his transition back to school. She is always available for a phone call or text message, and rings Dakota and myself all the time to check in. She has been really positive, always smiling, and encouraging with all of the progress that has been made."

The OurSPACE Program is for children and young people aged 15 years and under throughout New South Wales, their carers and important people in their lives, such as school, extended family, peers and others.