

Australia-first push to protect Koori children

A GROUNDBREAKING agreement to protect and heal Aboriginal children from the trauma of abuse, violence and neglect was signed in Mildura yesterday.

In a first for Australasia, the Australian Childhood Foundation's Safeguarding Children Program has formed a partnership with Mallee District Aboriginal Services, which was formalised yesterday during a visit to the region by ACF chief executive, Joe Tucci.

MDAS chief executive, Rudolph Kirby, described the agreement as both a significant honour and privilege.

Mr Kirby said that while protecting Koori children in the Mallee

was at the core of the agreement, the partnership would benefit both organisations as well as the broader community.

"From the MDAS perspective, we are already leading the way in the Early Years space through the programs we have developed and implemented to strengthen families and protect children from pre-birth," he said.

"ACF holds the very best expertise in safeguarding children and supporting the recovery of traumatised children and young people, which will be a huge benefit to MDAS and our communities."

Mr Tucci meanwhile said the landmark partnership was based on

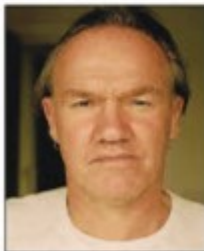
a shared determination to educate and empower communities to keep children and young people safe.

"The Safeguarding Children approach aims to implement best practice policies and standards to protect children and young people, while ensuring that there is the capacity and ability to understand, communicate and effectively interact at the cultural interface," he said.

"We have been working in this space for a long time, but this partnership allows us to refine and evolve our approaches so they are specific and effective within the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities."



Indigenous writers workshop later this month



• Writer Tony Birch will host an indigenous writers workshop this month.

ACCLAIMED indigenous author Tony Birch will be a special guest at an Indigenous Writers Workshop on April 22.

The workshop is a collaboration between the Mildura Writers Festival, PEN Melbourne and Mallee District Aboriginal Services.

The event is open to local indigenous writers of all levels.

Participants will learn about writing short stories, poetry and life stories, with exercises, creative prompts and ideas to assist in the writing process.

Tony Birch is the author of five works, 'Shadowboxing', 'Father's Day', 'Blood', 'The Promise', and 'Ghost River'.

His writing has been critically acclaimed and shortlisted for numerous awards, including the 2012 Miles Franklin Prize for 'Blood'.

The writer currently works at Victoria University, researching the relationship between climate change and indigenous knowledge.

Tony encourages participants to bring along a favourite photograph of a family member they would like to write about as well as a photo of a favourite place.

The free workshop will run from 10am to 4pm on Friday, April 22.

Bookings are necessary and can be made by contacting MDAS on 5018 4100.