**CHILD SAFETY OFFICERS**

**TRANSCRIPT [MACKAY]**

- I'm Kerry, I'm a Child Safety Officer at the Mackay Office in the Central Queensland Region. I've been a Child Safety Officer for approximately six months.

I was given an opportunity from the state government to complete my Bachelor of Social Work through the Indigenous Career Progression Program. I'd like to work with the families to provide them with the same opportunities that I've been able to give to my children.

So I really try and support them and link them to community, by taking them to the orthodontist, speech therapist appointments. Basically wherever they need to be. I can do court work, case plans, looking at child strengths and needs, the parents' strengths and needs. It's just a wide variety of work.

I don't like to focus on the past too much, because I know how traumatic that is for the young people and also their families. So I try and talk about strengths and how we keep our young people connected to their moms and dads, how we keep them connected to their siblings, but also to culture and community and land.

The great things that I've found about living in Mackay, wonderful beaches, great fishing spots, whether it's exercise, it's cycling, swimming. There seems to be endless amount of different activities.

I'm so passionate about closing the gap, that is so important. And I don't want our families or our young people coming back into the system, so what can I do to break that now? And I really think it's education and opportunity.

Being an Aboriginal woman, I believe that I can see things differently to other CSOs. Because it's allowed me to use a cultural lens. I can see the importance of kinship, the importance of community and culture, and also self-identity. So I want the young people to have a deep understanding of where they've come from, so they can know they are and be proud of who they are.

I'd like to make a difference in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families coming into care. And also give them an opportunity to work with an Aboriginal CSO as well. Because there's not many of us. It's really important that we get more Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander CSOs.

It's extremely important for our young people to feel safe, because they are our future. And if we're going to reduce our numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in our system, it's time that we really start to work with them, so they can break that cycle. I absolutely love what I do, and definitely not going anywhere soon.