

# combined voices

Demanding  
better outcomes  
for Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait  
Islander Children



# THE REFORMS AND THEIR IMPACTS

- BACKGROUND
  - The Crime and Misconduct Commission (CMC) *An Inquiry into Abuse of Children in Foster Care 2004*
  - Queensland Government's response to the CMC Report, the *Blueprint* for implementing the recommendations.
  - Establishment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection agencies (Recognised Entities)
  - Establishment of Qld Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP Ltd)

## **The Qld Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Ltd**

- Is the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection services in Queensland
- Represents over 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander run child protection agencies
- Established in 2005, incorporated in 2008 and began operating independently January 2009

## WHY COMBINED VOICES CAMPAIGN ?

- **6.5%** of the total Queensland child population in **2009** aged 0 to 17 years was Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander i.e. **68,828**. (Source AIHW 2010).
- Children on care and protection orders (30 June 2008) Qld: 7,040 – 2,216 Indigenous
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland are more likely to present to the Department of Communities (Child Safety) because of physical abuse and neglect and less likely because of sexual and emotional abuse.

## WHY COMBINED VOICES CAMPAIGN ?

- Over-representation skyrocketed to 36.5%
- Adherence to the Child Placement Principle is at all time low of 56.7%
- Highest ever number of children in non-Indigenous care >1,000
- Low level of funding for services to support at risk families

## What's Happening with our Children

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children are still experiencing poor outcomes in terms of their safety, education and health.
- The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enter the child protection system as a result of neglect.
- Further, once removed from their families care many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not supported to maintain their connections with family, community and culture.

## What's Happening with our Children

**Juvenile Justice:** In 2007-08, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people aged 10-17:

- were **15 times more likely** to be on youth justice supervision orders
- made up **62.7%** of the children and young people in youth detention centres (based on average daily numbers).

**Homelessness:** In 2008-09, **26.3%** of children accompanying an adult using SAAP services were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

## What's Happening with our Children

- **Health Facts** : During 2006-07, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were **twice as likely** to have a low birth weight baby as non-Indigenous women.
- During 2007-08 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were **twice as likely** to die between the ages of 0-4 as non-Indigenous children.
- **Education Facts:** **Only 62%** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 4 years access preschool compared to the Australian average of 72%.



## What's Happening with our Children

- ***Education Facts Cont'd*** : Only 47% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people complete year 12 as compared to 76% of non-indigenous young people.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander are *less likely to attend* tertiary education.

## Contact with Family

- 20% of reports recorded that the child had regular contact with their mother
- 6% of reports recorded that the child had regular contact with their father
- 6.5% of reports recorded that the child had regular contact with at least one of their siblings
- 13% of children had regular contact with their extended family
- 12% of children had phone contact with a member of their family or a person of significance.

# Over Representation Child Protection data

## Comparative figures: 2007-08 and 2008-09 - Rate per 1000 population / Ratio

In 2007-08, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were:

- 3.3 (4.0) times more likely to be notified for alleged harm or risk of harm
- 4.0 (6.5) times more likely to be substantiated for abuse or neglect
- 6.4 (7.6) times more likely to be subject to a care and protection order
- 6.6 (7.9) times more likely to be living away from home.

# Child Protection data

Year	Total In out of home	Child placement Principle	Placed in Non-Indigenous Placements
2004		63%	
2009	2,481	58.2 % (1,445)	41.8% (1,036)
31 Dec 09	2,599	55.2% (1,225)	44.9% (1,166)
31 Mar 10	2,622	53.3% (1397)	46.7% (1,225)

Rates of notification - Department of Communities (Child Safety Services) website (Table N1)

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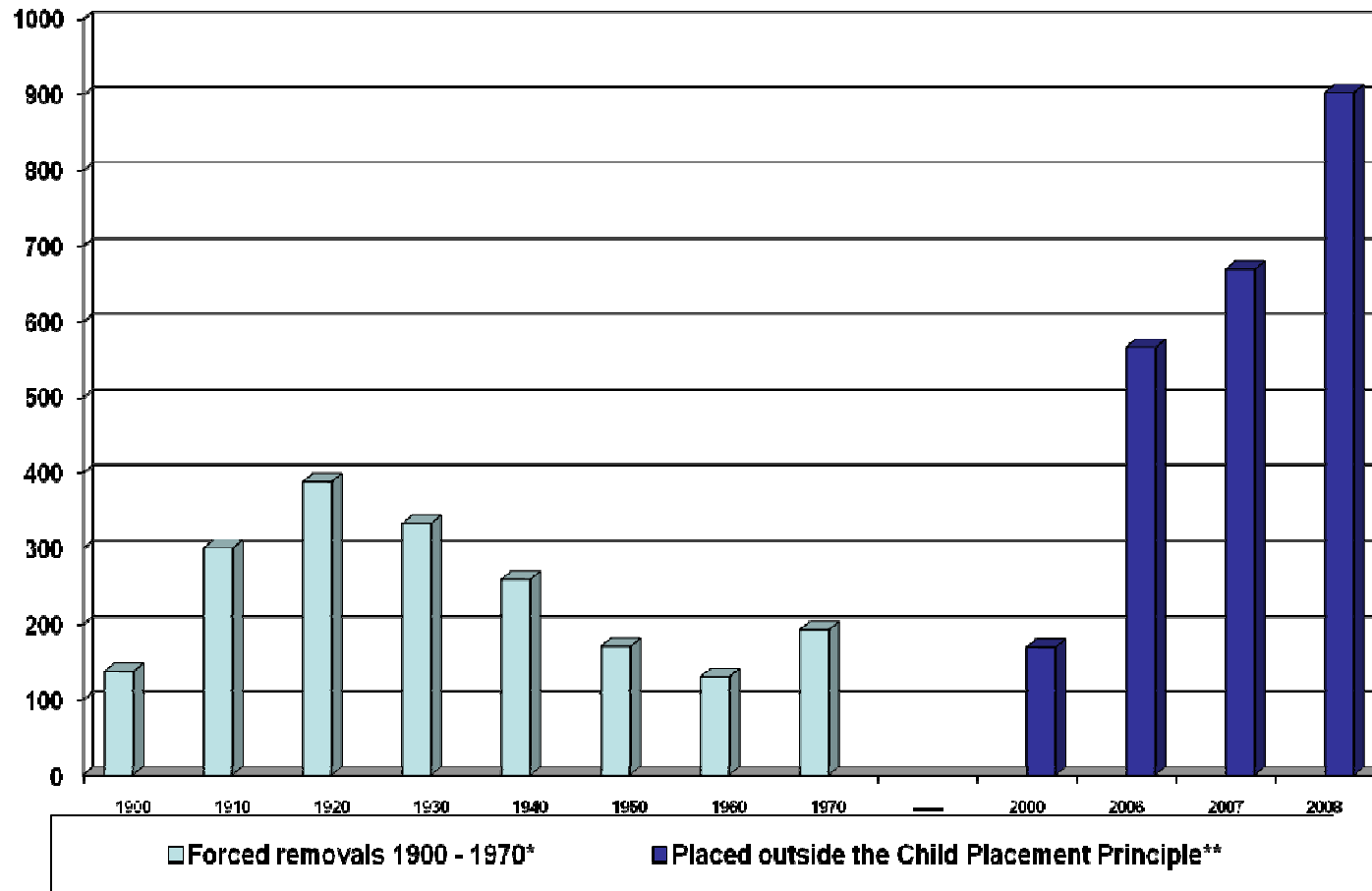
<http://www.childsafety.qld.gov.au/performance/child-protection/intake/notifications.html#tables>

All other data and population estimate -

2007-08 data - AIHW (2009) Child protection Australia 2008-09, Child Welfare Series 45

2008-09 data - AIHW (2010) Child protection Australia 2008-09, Child Welfare Series 47

# The historic comparison for current separations



# COMBINED VOICES

- **What is Combined Voices** : A Public campaign demanding better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- **Objective** : To improve the safety and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and stop their over representation by 2020.
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# FORMATION COMBINED VOICES

- QATSICPP Ltd – held a briefing Session – 9 April 2009 to present Child Protection Facts and impact on our children, families and communities.
- Combined Voices Established - 16<sup>th</sup> April 2009
- Who – five initial ‘Voices’
- Launch of Combined Voices – 4<sup>th</sup> August 2009

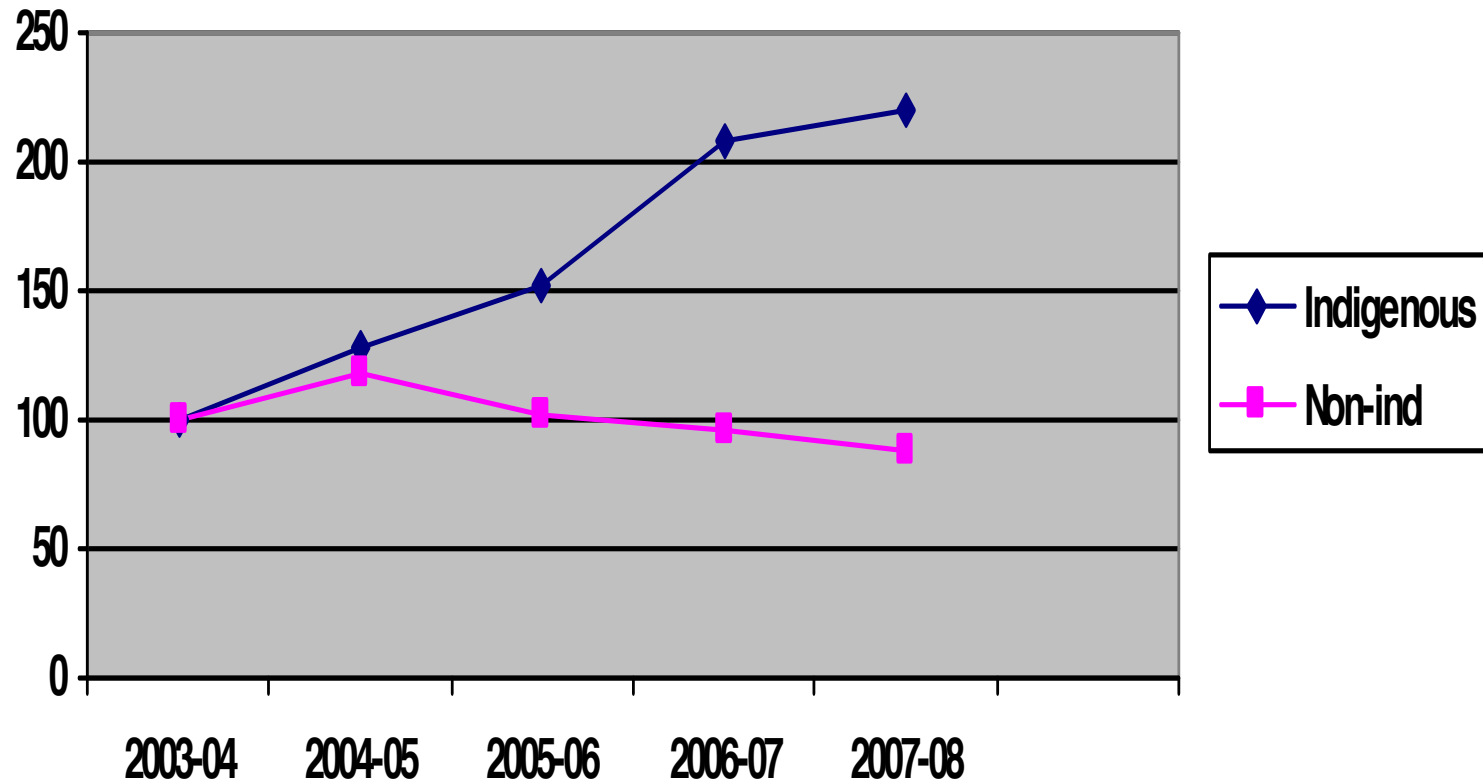
# MISSION

- To increase government's, government department's and non-government services awareness of the issues impacting on vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
- To increase government's, government departments' and non-government services' awareness of the failure of existing approaches to child and family welfare and the need for systemic reform to improve outcomes.
- To lead the identification and implementation of new ways to ensure the safety and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.



# Widening the Gap

## Notifications



## GOVERNMENT ACTION:

1. Increase funding for child and family support services by \$105m
2. Increase the proportion of child and family support service funds allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Islander organisations to 19%
3. Develop a child and family service strategy and implement an action plan that acknowledges and addresses the vulnerability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families
4. Link the child and family service strategy to COAG's commitment to 'close the gap' by addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage.

## The Campaign's Achievements

- A greater awareness and priority regarding over representation and solutions from both Government and mainstream NGO sector.
- Media campaign supported by 98.9 FM – Brisbane Indigenous Media Association. This has included Combined Voices representation on National Indigenous Radio, and Broadcasting community messages.

## The Campaign's Achievements

- The Minister for Child Safety Phil Reeves established a Taskforce to address over representation.
- Development of a Comprehensive Plan to address Over representation.
- Successfully advocating for a Queensland Government investment into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family support services.
- Several Collaborative partnerships aimed at building the capacity and resources of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Community Controlled organisations.

## The Campaign's Achievements

- Key Policy Position Papers:
  - Stating the Case for Change
  - Think Tank Report
  - Policy Monograph.

## Your Challenge

- **Celebrate** – our children!
- **Recognise** – overrepresentation in child protection and welfare systems; and inequity of life chances
- **Join** – a growing number of Combined Voices to make it change



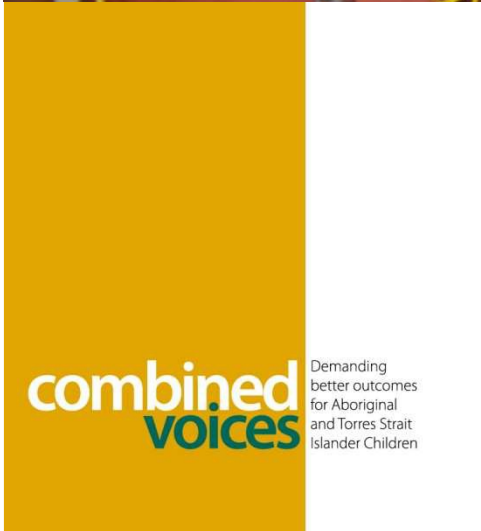
## ORGANISATION ACTION:

1. Spread the word about the campaign's issues and actions through its networks and in the broader community;
2. Communicate the objectives of the campaign to all levels of Government - and work with them on addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage; and
3. Contribute to the identification and implementation of new ways to ensure the safety and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

## Individual ACTION: *Do 3 Simple Things*

1. Personally **sign up** today – email [combined.voices@qcross.org.au](mailto:combined.voices@qcross.org.au)
2. **Email your MP** – via the TAKE ACTION website [www.qcross.org.au](http://www.qcross.org.au)
3. Talk within your organisation – and join up as an **‘Organisational Voice’** – email [combined.voices@qcross.org.au](mailto:combined.voices@qcross.org.au)





## Everyone's Concern

- At 30 June 2009, Nationally, there was 35,409 children on child protection orders of which **10 271** were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 25, 138 non-Indigenous children.
- In 2010, 44 out of every 1000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were on care and protection orders, compared to per 1000 non Indigenous children.
- the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on care and protection orders was more than 8 times the rate of non-Indigenous children.

## Everyone's Concern

- The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care was just over 9 times the rate of non-Indigenous children.

(Source Government Report on Government Service Delivery 2010)

## What Can Be Done

- The ‘public health approach’ proposed emphasises an holistic care and is based on the principles of community development. It is a whole of community approach for children and families which can be tailored to meet the different needs and circumstances across urban, rural, regional, and remote community settings.
- *“Communities need to be challenged and encouraged to take responsibility for their children rather than looking at the Department and Government as the parent”*

## What Can Be Done

### The Public Policy Environment:

- The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) commitments to 'close the gap' in Indigenous disadvantage by coordinating investment of significant/additional funding into Queensland across Indigenous health and early childhood development to achieve greater balance in the child protection continuum.
- The National Framework for Protection Australia's Children 2009-2020.



## What Can Be Done

### Public Health Model as a Framework:

- In particular, the establishment of some nine (9) Indigenous Children and Family Centres in Queensland under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development provides an opportunity to address identified gaps in child and maternal health, family support and early child development within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- It is critical that the planning for the Establishment of these services is integrated with planning and service development within the child protection system.

## We Can Solve This!

We are talking about 10,271 children nationally on child protection orders.

This is not too big.

The crisis can be solved.

[combined.voices@qcross.org.au](mailto:combined.voices@qcross.org.au)