



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

The national peak body for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander children and families
www.snaicc.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE

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Statement by SNAICC Chairperson Sharron Williams

SNAICC urges new Victorian government to make Aboriginal Affairs a high priority

SNAICC congratulates Daniel Andrews and the ALP on its victory in the Victorian state election and urges the new government to make the pressing issues facing Aboriginal children, young people and families a priority in the next four years and reset the relationship with Victoria's Aboriginal community.

SNAICC would urge Mr Andrews follow the Australian Government's lead and elevate the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to a Cabinet position, and place the Commission of Aboriginal Children and Young People within the Premier's Department.

These moves would show the Andrews Government is serious about tackling the entrenched disadvantage of Aboriginal children and families in Victoria that is leading to poor outcomes in early childhood education, the high incidence of family violence in our communities and an alarming number of our children being placed in out-of-home care.

Aboriginal community-controlled early education services in Victoria need secure, long-term funding to be able to continue to support families and give children the best start in life, to get them ready for school and proud of their cultural heritage.

These early years services — including the two Aboriginal Child and Family Centres (ACFCs) and 13 Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) across the state — represent the best chance to break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage. The benefits of greater investment by governments in our early years services are immense.

Greater investment in early years education and, as well as early intervention and integrated programs for our families, would help reduce the disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care and the youth justice system.

Today, there are 1200 of our children in out-of-home care in Victoria — a figure that has doubled since 2007. Aboriginal children are 15.7 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home than other children in Victoria.

Urgent action is needed to reduce the abnormally high contact of Aboriginal children and families with Victoria's child protection system. And more must be done to ensure that children that are placed in care retain vital connections to their culture and cultural relationships.

SNAICC calls for a new partnership with the Aboriginal community in Victoria, based on integrity and honesty working with the whole sector to keep children safe and provide more support for vulnerable families.

As part of that new partnership, the Victorian Government should fully implement Justice Philip Cummins's recommendations, including developing a 10-year plan to delegate the care and control of Aboriginal children removed from their families to Aboriginal community; strengthening the cultural competence of child protection and family support workers; and providing more support to Aboriginal kinship carers.

According to figures from Taskforce 1000, well over 90 per cent of our children in out-of-home care are there because of male perpetrated family violence.

We need to ensure that the voices of the Aboriginal community in Victoria are central to the promised Royal Commission into Family Violence.

There is an urgent need to develop an Aboriginal family violence prevention strategy in Victoria that is community driven and places the safety of women and children at its core.

In resetting the relationship with the Aboriginal community, there needs to be greater transparency and accountability from the Victorian government —including greater powers for the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People — and enabling greater participation by Aboriginal families and communities to make decisions and implement solutions.

SNAICC wishes the new government well and looks forward to assisting it to produce the very best outcomes for Aboriginal children and families in Victoria.

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