



Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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SNAICC WELCOMES SENATE INQUIRY REPORT RECOMMENDING COMMUNITY CONTROL OF SERVICES FOR FAMILIES

The report of the Senate Inquiry into out of home care released yesterday by the senate Community Affairs References Committee has identified the need for urgent and comprehensive reforms to address a system that is failing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

SNAICC strongly supports the recommendations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled agencies to be funded across Australia for a full range of family support services as a key preventive strategy to child removal.

The report recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over nine times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children, leading the Committee to the view that, “current practices risk creating a ‘Stolen Generation’...The context in which children are removed today is different to that of past practices, but...the result is similar if adequate supports and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families are not provided.”

Evidence provided by SNAICC CEO, Frank Hytten, emphasising the need for far more support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families across the continuum of care, was reiterated in the report. The Committee’s views were in clear agreement, recognising that, “the lack of family support services means there is limited scope for at-risk parents to get the support they need to build safe and resilient families for their children.”

SNAICC Deputy Chairperson Sue-Anne Hunter commented that, “The most important finding of the Committee is that we need to be empowered to make the decisions and deliver the services that will support better outcomes for our families.”

The Committee expressed the view that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled agencies “should be introduced across all jurisdictions and should be involved in the full range of family support services for Aboriginal

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and Torres Strait Islander families, not just out-of-home care, and must be supported by flexible funding models.” The report recommends the development of “a nationally consistent approach to building the capacity of Aboriginal community controlled agencies (ACCAs) to become integrated into all aspects of the child protection system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, including:

- training Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support workers;
- providing family support services;
- implementation of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle;
- involvement and responsibility for all decision making processes; and
- delivering out-of-home care services.”

In handing down the report, the Committee acknowledged “connection to family is integral to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people” and called for greater supports to promote connections including the provision of “services aimed at supporting family reunification.”

The report also highlights inconsistent application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle as a key concern. The Committee has recommended measures to address “the lack of support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relative/kinship carers to become accredited, and lack of ongoing support to provide adequate support for children and young people.”

Ms Hunter praised the foresight of the Committee to recognise that such broad sweeping reforms are needed: “The Committee has rightly called for COAG to include their recommendations in the third action plan for the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children so that they are the responsibility of all Australian governments and civil society.”

“It is vital that all Australian jurisdictions review and work to implement these critical recommendations so that we can turn the tide on the current devastating separation of our children from their families and cultures through child protection intervention.”

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About SNAICC:

SNAICC is the national non-government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Founded in 1981, SNAICC was established to engage in activities that promote and accommodate a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

Over the past 30 years SNAICC's efforts have resulted in many key milestones and achievements both in policy developments at state, territory and federal levels and in developing innovative and useful resources for the sector.

SNAICC is governed by an influential National Executive made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled children and families' services.