



# SNAICC NEWS

## EDITORIAL

# Time for National Laws to Place Australia's First Children First

By Muriel Bamblett, AM  
SNAICC Chairperson

Sadly it comes as no surprise to SNAICC that the Queensland Department of Child Safety was directly involved in the case of the 10-year-old girl so brutally abused at the hands of young people in her community of Aurukun. That the 'justice' system then compounded the violation of this child by ignoring her right to expect that her abusers would be appropriately punished is also of no surprise.

We have seen this before and we will see it again unless and until we throw out

the existing models of child protection and foster care and start again. Governments must instead fund and support Aboriginal agencies based in the communities to do the child protection work with support from the statutory authorities.

The reality is that in most rural and remote areas Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children cannot count on statutory child protection authorities to protect them or to respond effectively when abuse occurs.

Child protection models have been built on two assumptions that don't often operate outside of large urban cities. Firstly that child protection staff can get to a family and respond to critical incidents quickly

**"The model of foster care we operate in Australia is wrong. It is wrong for all children it is wrong for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children."**

and secondly that within a community there will be a 'supply' of well resourced high functioning families with whom to place a child.

Faced with this reality child protection staff make agonising decisions about when to remove a child from their family, and by implication their community, and place them in foster care a long way from home. Placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in non-Indigenous foster care far removed from their community, as happened in the Aurukun case, doesn't resolve all the case issues or provide the child with all that they need. Children, all children, whatever their race or culture, want to be with their family. The best evidence and research tells us that abused children want to go home, to see their mum and dad, their brothers and sisters, their friends and peers. The child now at the centre of this latest national debate about Aboriginal children wanted to go home.

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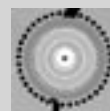
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Contributions, feedback and suggestions to *SNAICC News* are welcome. Copy deadline for our **April** edition is **25 February 2008**.

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Government departments	\$100
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Welcome to another extended edition of *SNAICC News*, with an eight-page **Special Focus on Education and Literacy**, looking at the education needs of, and aspirations for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

It is a pleasure to feature an extract from Dr Chris Sarra's keynote speech given at SNAICC's National Conference where he talks about the true colours of Aboriginal children and their capacity to achieve in their education (**page 10**).

There is also a profile of early childhood teacher Louise Manas, who talks about the children's activity centre she runs on Kubin Island in the Torres Strait (**page 13**).

Also, this edition showcases the MACS (Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Service) model as an ideal model to meet the early years needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and their parents and communities (**pages 14–15**).

There are also case studies of programs running early learning and literacy initiatives with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (**pages 16–17**).

In his editorial for our theme, SNAICC Executive Officer Julian Pocock looks at the federal government's support for, and resourcing of, remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Education is a key area in which SNAICC expects the new Rudd Labor Government to show its commitment to supporting all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities – whether rural, remote or urban (**page 9**).

This also resonates strongly with SNAICC Chairperson Muriel Bamblett's call for a 'third way' in child protection and foster care, and for the new Rudd Government to create a national framework for child protection.

Besides the regular SNAICC and SRS Updates, there is an extensive review (**page 5**) of SNAICC's achievements in 2007, and plans for 2008. This will be a big year for SNAICC – it is our **25th Anniversary!** So please look out for stories this coming year to mark this special birthday.

I hope you enjoy this edition of *SNAICC News*, and please share your feedback – and stories – with us.

– Mark Lawrence, Publications Officer

**Deadlines and themes for SNAICC News 2007–2008**

**Next edition: April 2008**  
**Theme: Health and nutrition**

Do you have a case study, story, successes or perspective on improving the **health and nutrition** of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-schoolers, children and young people? We would love to hear it!

Send us your story or perspective for the next edition of *SNAICC News* **before 25 February 2008**.

In 2007–2008, each newsletter edition will have a theme, with a key article on the theme's issues and a list of resources and services offering more information or support. We welcome readers' contributions, suggestions and articles addressing the theme. The themes are in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

All contributions of announcements, articles, reviews or news to SNAICC's quarterly newsletter should be sent to us no later than the deadlines listed below.

<b>Edition</b>	<b>Copy Deadline</b>	<b>Theme</b>
April 2008	25 February 08	Health and nutrition
July 2008	26 May 08	Focus on Torres Strait Islander communities

Each edition will generally be mailed out the first week of the month the edition is named for.

Contact Mark at SNAICC for details:  
telephone (03) 9489 8099; email: [publications@snaicc.asn.au](mailto:publications@snaicc.asn.au)

## EDITORIAL

# Time for National Laws to Place Australia's First Children First

The model of foster care we operate in Australia is wrong. It is wrong for all children it is wrong for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It is based on a false dichotomy: that a child is either with, and raised by, their birth family or by a foster family. SNAICC argues that children

can and should be raised by both.

There is a third way. Place children with a well supported, resourced and trained foster family to ensure children are not at risk of abuse or neglect. Set up a community visitors program and coordinate visits between the community and the child. Don't bounce kids around between foster care placements and home. Support foster families to raise children with the birth family – not for the birth family. Reinforce the message that families have to raise their children well. Train the magistrates to administer the law correctly. Provide community services to heal the victims. Insist at every level, family, community and within the justice system that abuse is intolerable and will be severely punished.

Calls for the new Federal Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, to

extend the NT intervention to Queensland don't go far enough. SNAICC has for decades called for national legislation to create a framework that sets out standards for child protection, children's rights and a common approach to preventing child abuse.

Next week Jenny Macklin meets all her state and territory colleagues. She should tell them that national legislation for child protection is on its way.

**Muriel Bamblett, AM** is the Chairperson of SNAICC and the CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA). A version of this article was published as an



Opinion piece in *ABC News Online* on 12 December 2007. © SNAICC 2007

**STOP PRESS!**

## PM meets with NT Aboriginal leaders

The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and the Indigenous Affairs Minister, Jenny Macklin, met with 25 representatives from Aboriginal organisations based in the Northern Territory to discuss the NT Intervention. Natalie Hunter represented Karu Aboriginal Family Support Service and SNAICC at the meeting. Natalie is one of the NT representatives on SNAICC's National Executive. The Prime Minister will meet with the group every three months to discuss the intervention as the government reviews how the intervention is working.

SNAICC, through Natalie, stressed that a core focus on child protection must not be lost amongst all the various aspects of the intervention. For many years, SNAICC has argued for major reform of the NT child protection system. There is still a significant risk that despite the scope of the NT intervention (or perhaps because of it), the detailed work on developing an effective child protection system won't happen.

Following the revelations from Aurukun of child sexual assault, the government is under pressure to extend the NT intervention

to other parts of the country. SNAICC does not support the knee-jerk roll out of 'the NT Intervention' to other areas. As NT leaders told the PM, the mistake the previous government made was acting without consultation with local communities.

SNAICC has for decades called for national legislation to create a framework that sets out standards for child protection, children's rights and a common approach to preventing child abuse. The Prime Minister and Jenny Macklin should commence work with SNAICC and the states and territories on national legislation for child protection.

– **Julian Pocock,**  
SNAICC Executive Officer

**The SNAICC National Executive and staff wish all our members and readers of SNAICC News**

**Happy Holidays & A Very Safe and Happy 2008!**



# SNAICC Update

## SNAICC Annual General Meeting

Twenty-five SNAICC member organisations recently attended the SNAICC Annual General Meeting and Members Forum held in Perth on 15 November.

Renowned artist Dr Richard Walley OAM opened the meeting with a welcome to Nyungar country. Other highlights of the Members' Forum were presentations by Glenn Pearson, the Deputy Manager of the Kulunga Research Network at the Telethon Institute for Child Health, and Marenee Provost of the WA Department for Child Protection.

Glenn Pearson provided an overview of the work of the Kulunga Research Network in pioneering preventive strategies to improve outcomes for children by bringing together an outstanding team of Aboriginal researchers. Marenee Provost provided an overview of the welfare reform pilot and associated reforms currently taking place in the Halls Creek community.

There were opportunities for members to contribute directly to SNAICC's work through two workshops. The first of these reviewed SNAICC's *Seven Priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children* and the second considered priorities for the future development of the SNAICC Resource Service (SRS). As usual, members also provided feedback to SNAICC on issues for follow up and action over the coming year.

The formal business of the Annual General Meeting focused on a range of amendments to the SNAICC Constitution. These new amendments were approved and the updated SNAICC Constitution will be

available on the website when it is ratified by the Registrar of Associations in Victoria.

As the current National Executive was elected for a two-year term in 2006 there was no election process at the 2007 AGM. However, as required by the Constitution the National Executive members voted at a meeting prior to the AGM to elect the SNAICC Office Holders for 2008. They are:

**Chairperson:** Muriel Bamblett from the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

**Deputy Chairperson (Child Welfare):** Donna Klein from the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council

**Deputy Chairperson (Child Care):** Geraldine Atkinson from the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.

**Treasurer:** Dawn Wallam from Yorganop Aboriginal Child Care Corporation, WA

**Secretary:** Sharron Williams from Aboriginal Family Support Services, SA

In addition, the National Executive voted to co-opt a representative from Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi in Alice Springs to the National Executive until the next AGM, to provide for greater representation of remote communities.

Most members took part in visits to a range of local services in Perth on Friday before finishing with a barbeque lunch hosted by Yorganop.

The next SNAICC AGM will be held in Coffs Harbour on 13 November 2008 and we hope that all members can join us for what will be a special celebration of our 25th anniversary.

– **Kim Werner, SNAICC Governance & Planning Manager**



## New SNAICC website goes live in early 2008

Over the last 12 months the SNAICC Resource Service website has been created and the existing SNAICC website has been re-developed after a review found it long overdue for an upgrade.

Both sites are ready for a spectacular launch scheduled for early 2008.

As the SNAICC Resource Service (SRS) website was funded and set for development in 2006, we decided to upgrade the existing SNAICC website at the same time; obviously a more efficient and technically sensible move to develop the two sites in tandem so that they have a compatible technical and graphic design.

We asked our original designers Fraynetwork to do the job and they happily accepted the mission.

Fraynetwork were an obvious choice for us as they have a large portfolio of web and digital products with many Indigenous clients, including the Indigital centre (see <http://www.indigital.org.au/>) and Learning about Native Title (see <http://toolboxes.flexiblelearning.net.au/demosites/series4/423/>).

Fraynetwork is a not-for-profit organisation established to create multimedia productions that promote greater understanding between peoples and contribute to the development of a more just and compassionate world. Fraynetwork values the depth, richness and creative potential of diverse cultures, both within Australia and in those areas of the world.

The existing SNAICC site consists of static HTML and was developed about five years ago. The re-build has achieved a number of different aims in relation to structure, accessibility and functionality.

The site now has a fully re-developed ColdFusion Content Management System (CMS) capabilities that enables web managers as well as less technically skilled staff to contribute content to and to manage the site remotely using this basic in-built web editing software.



## SNAICC Update

This feature is of particular importance to SNAICC as it translates to the possibility of SNAICC developing online resources in partnership with members in remoter areas where service members can control, create and edit content from anywhere in Australia or the world for that matter.

The upgrade to the SNAICC site and the new SRS site makes the site compliant with international and government standards of accessibility set by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) Priority 1 Accessibility level.

The new sites are XHTML Transitional and we have brought up the publishing standards to meet with W3C and the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) standards.

Overall the SNAICC website now is up to speed with the most sophisticated websites of the day, yet is still accessible to diverse range of people and communities.

Developments of the SNAICC website include:

- a new graphic design layout that is more positive and bright in feel and flavour, but is still recognisably SNAICC,
- The SNAICC Resource Service website has a more sophisticated resource management system that interacts with a central resource hub which is the central component to the SRS website,
- The site has a strong capacity to handle non-verbal content such as W3C compliant image gallery and image management, audio and moving picture elements,
- An electronic news bulletin that is text based, making it simple to read and compatible for use by communities with older and slower computers or slower internet connections. This email is linked with a news and events management system housed on the SRS website, replacing the great concept and free service that InfoXchange Australia has provided us with in the past, but was hosted remotely from our website.

– **Tatiana Doroshenko**  
SRS Clearinghouse Officer

**See the SRS Update (on page 18) for more on the new SRS website features and tools.**

## 2007 in Review

### SNAICC's work and achievements

Edited extract for the SNAICC Secretariat Report to SNAICC's 2007 Annual General Meeting in Perth

– **Julian Pocock, SNAICC Executive Officer**

**S**ince SNAICC was formed we have always sought to have the federal government take a more active role in responding to child abuse and neglect. This past year has certainly seen that happen but not in the manner that SNAICC has been advocating.

The intervention by the federal government into the Northern Territory represents a very significant shift in the federal government's approach to child abuse and neglect. The interventions mark a turning point in the provision of basic income support (welfare payments) to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families – including the quarantining of 50 per cent of families' income support.

It is doubtful whether the long-term outcomes will benefit children. It is arguable that this approach to welfare provision will further undermine parenting capacity and further entrench the welfare dependency that the measures are supposedly seeking to address.

Detailed policy work carried out by SNAICC in relation to child abuse and neglect and child protection reforms over the past several years proved critical to our capacity to respond when the NT interventions were announced. SNAICC was not left working out what to advocate for but could point to the large body of work we have produced advocating for just and sustainable responses to child welfare issues.

In the coming year, SNAICC and other organisations concerned with the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children face the challenge of arguing for a different approach to welfare reform than that being implemented in the Northern Territory. We must also retain a strong focus on the core business of developing a stronger child protection system in the Northern Territory. There is a risk that while concern about child abuse and neglect may have precipitated the interventions the welfare reform, land permit and land tenure reforms may swamp any opportunity to reform child protection.

It would be wrong to characterise 2007 as solely about what has been happening in the Northern Territory. A challenge for any peak body is to find ways to



© Kerry Bedford

**“A challenge for any peak body is to find ways to maintain a constructive policy dialogue with governments that produces results for services while being able to advocate strongly on issues of disagreement.”**

maintain a constructive policy dialogue with governments that produces results for services while being able to advocate strongly on issues of disagreement. In 2007 SNAICC managed this balancing act well and continued to pursue other organisational priorities such as a 20 per cent increase in funding for Indigenous child care services and finalisation of the National Indigenous Child Care Services Plan.

*Ngadluko Ngartunnaitya* – For Our Children, the SNAICC National Conference in Adelaide last September, was a runaway success with 700 delegates attending. The conference showcased the terrific work of services and communities in raising children. Our international speakers and the richness of local keynote speakers generated a very positive atmosphere that flowed through the event.

The conference enabled services to learn more about SNAICC and the SNAICC Resource Service (SRS) and to highlight their own resource materials through the conference displays. Evaluation of the conference was very positive with strong interest in seeing the next conference

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## 2007 in review – SNAICC’s work and achievements

happen in the not too distant future.

Policy work for SNAICC remains a high priority with our Policy Manager, Julie Higgins, coordinating SNAICC’s advocacy and lobbying leading up to the 2007 federal election and working on several policy briefing papers relating to a national approach to child abuse and neglect.

We have also completed SNAICC’s policy statement on ‘Principles for Child Welfare’, a ‘SNAICC Values Statement on Children’ and the ‘SNAICC Service Access Policy’, which responds to the ‘mainstreaming’ issue that has been prominent this year. In 2008 our policy work will focus on a review of SNAICC’s *Seven Priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*.

From the *SNAICC Strategic Plan 2007–2009*, a two-year work plan has been developed and endorsed by the SNAICC National Executive. The workplan outlines major work priorities for 2007 and 2008. Significantly the new *Strategic Plan* has merged the previously separate sections on child welfare and early childhood development. SNAICC has always seen these two areas of policy and service delivery as connected and mutually reinforcing, and this is reflected in our policy and advocacy.

Children’s Day (NAICD) this year was a great success again. Each year we achieve a broader awareness of and greater participation in NAICD through local events. The production of the NAICD leaflet in the past three years and the Activity Kit the last two years have made a significant and positive difference, especially in attracting support and involvement from

various state government departments and mainstream organisations.

The SNAICC Resource Service (SRS) has continued to deliver successful projects and develop new resources to support the work of local services, under the leadership of SRS Program Manager Veronica Johns. The original four-year funding contract is nearing completion and the independent evaluation reports are providing evidence of the important and useful work of the SRS. Detailed promotional materials about the SRS have been published and distributed outlining the major projects and activities of the SRS.

**“All major political parties recognise SNAICC as a central point of policy information and advice in relation to children.”**

During 2007 we have sought to ensure that SNAICC’s project work through the SRS and SNAICC’s policy work link together and are mutually reinforcing. Currently we are exploring with the funding body the re-funding of the SRS with a goal to have its funding integrated into SNAICC’s core operations rather than being seen as an add on to our core functions.

The SNAICC staff team has been stable and operating within the revised organisational structure developed in 2006

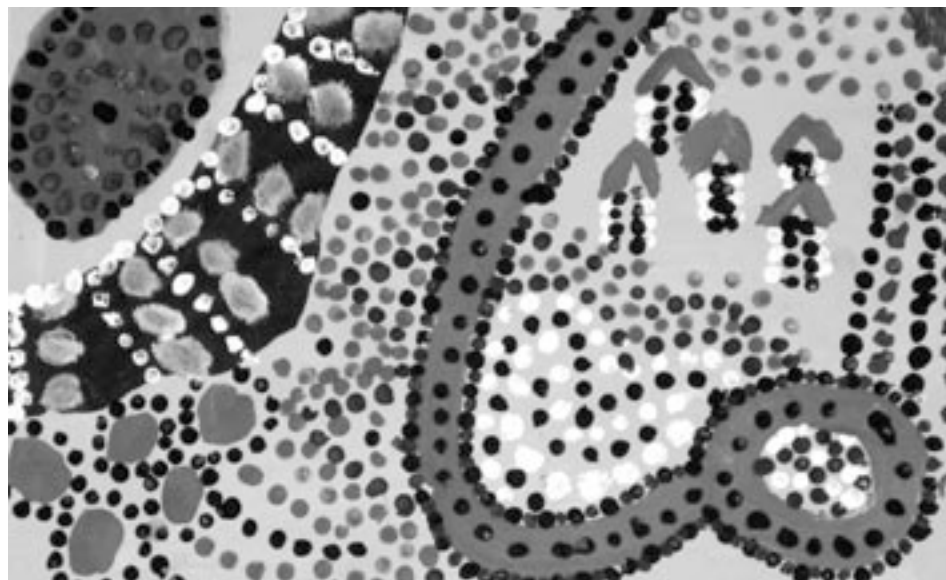
and implemented this year. The finance and administration team, led by our Governance and Planning Manager, Kim Werner, has continued to provide excellent support to all components of SNAICC’s operations.

SNAICC has a very dedicated and talented staff team committed to doing the best job possible for SNAICC. I want to acknowledge the work they do and the commitment I know they all feel as individuals to ‘stand up’ for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Our profile as an organisation continues to expand particularly through events such as the Conference, NAICD and SRS projects. SNAICC is increasingly sought after to make presentations and participate in conferences and seminars focused on children and families. In the lead up to the federal election SNAICC met with and provided briefings to all the major political parties, all of which recognise SNAICC as a central point of policy information and advice in relation to children. We will now actively pursue the new government to respond to the issues we have placed before them.

### **Some other priority areas SNAICC worked on in 2007 included:**

- Government liaison in relation to SNAICC strategic priorities including National Indigenous Child Care Plan, AICCA program review, Establishment of IPSUs/resource agencies in all states and territories, NT welfare reforms and interventions, Senate Inquiry into NT Interventions, SNAICC’s proposed National Action Plan to prevent child abuse and neglect and development of mental health resources for early childhood field
- Working with the Minister for Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Mal Brough, MP
- Preparation of conference papers/speeches for the SNAICC Chairperson and a variety of conferences and forums,
- Collaboration with project partners and supporters including Early Childhood Australia, Family Action Centre, VAEAI, Centre for Community Child Health, NSW Aboriginal Early Childhood Services Support Unit, InfoXchange Australia, Fraynetwork Multimedia, SuccessWorks, Australian Institute of Family Studies, NAPCAN, Good Beginnings, Raising Children Network, ARACY, national Indigenous organisations in the United States and Canada, and various universities and



academic institutions,

- Input into COAG processes relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services Working Group (child protection issues).

### Major work priorities for 2008

The issues and areas below provide an indication of the on-going work priorities in 2008:

- Ensuring the implementation of the National Indigenous Child Care Services Plan
- Developing a working relationship with the new Federal Government
- Commemorating SNAICC's 25th anniversary
- Diversifying and consolidating SNAICC's income and resource base
- Participating in the development of the UN General Assembly general comment on Indigenous children
- Reviewing and re-publishing the SNAICC policy paper, *Seven Priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*
- Developing research projects on child welfare and protection including on family decision making and the importance of family and cultural connections for children in care
- Ongoing lobbying of state and territory governments in relation to child protection reforms
- Further developing and re-positioning the SRS including securing ongoing funding
- Further developing the SNAICC quarterly newsletter with major themes/topics for each quarter's edition
- Further developing the SNAICC Resource Service web pages and clearinghouse service
- Continually improving our systems and approaches to staff support and supervision and project planning and management
- Advocating for child care quality assurance systems based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and child rearing practices
- Advocating for increased longer term funding for the IPSUs/state resource agencies.

As we close the book on 2007 and look ahead to 2008 we need to consider that 2008 will be SNAICC's 25th anniversary.

It will be important to mark the occasion appropriately reflecting the successes we have enjoyed and the work that remains to be done.

SNAICC's story has been one of collaboration and partnership between people and communities committed to the rights, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This has included a diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and cultures; government and non-government organisations; non-Indigenous people and organisations; as well as communities and people from beyond Australia. It has been my privilege to be part of SNAICC's story for about ten years now and I hope that can continue for a little while longer.

– Julian Pocock  
SNAICC Executive Office

This is an edited extract from the Secretariat report presented to the 2008 SNAICC Annual General Meeting in Perth on 15 November 2007.



© Catching Photography 2007

## The First National Indigenous Family and Community Strengths Conference

**'Our Culture: A strength to build on'**

**Monday 14 to Wednesday 16 April 2008**

Convened by The Family Action Centre (the University of Newcastle) & Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)

**&**

## The Fifth Australian Family and Community Strengths Conference

**'Community Engagement: A rewarding business'**

**Wednesday 16 to Friday 18 April 2008**

Convened by The Family Action Centre

At the University of Newcastle, Newcastle, New South Wales

Registrations now open!

Earlybird registration closes 25 January 2008

For more information:  
[www.pco.com.au/family](http://www.pco.com.au/family)

Conference Secretariat  
Tulips Meetings Management  
Tel: (02) 4984 2554  
Fax: (02) 4984 2755  
Email: [family@pco.com.au](mailto:family@pco.com.au)

# Motion in Support of Jordan's Principle passes in Canada's parliament

Readers of the October edition of *SNAICC News* will be familiar with Canada's First Nations peoples' campaign for all jurisdictions in Canada, especially the federal and state governments, to support an agreement – known as Jordan's Principle – on providing services that puts children's needs and rights ahead of jurisdictional disputes between levels of government over who should pay for the services. The campaign was led by SNAICC's counterpart in Canada, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society (their peak body for children's and families' organisations). Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Caring Society, recently wrote to us to tell of the wonderful progress they've made on the initiative.

December 13, 2007

Dear supporters of Jordan's Principle,

I am writing to share the wonderful news that Members of Parliament unanimously voted in favour of the Private Member's Motion in support of Jordan's Principle that was tabled by NDP MP Jean Crowder yesterday. Jordan's father, Ernest Anderson, and sister Jerlene Anderson and families from Norway House Cree Nation whose children were affected by government jurisdictional disputes watched as all members stood in support of this historic child first approach to resolving jurisdictional disputes affecting First Nations children and then joined in a unanimous standing ovation for the family, community and supporters who filled the public galleries. Ernest said he hopes the federal government follows up this moral, but not binding, motion by immediately putting in place clear rules to ensure governments pay for kids first – and settle cash disputes later.

We are so thankful for your support and that of over 1200 individuals and organisations who helped make this special time a reality, but our job is not done and we need your help. We would ask that you write a letter to the Prime Minister congratulating all Members of Parliament on their unanimous vote in favor of Jordan's Principle and urging immediate implementation. We would also ask that you write to the Premiers of the provinces and territories, none of whom have adopted Jordan's Principle, asking that they take immediate action to adopt and implement Jordan's Principle. Sample letters are available on the **Many Hands One Dream** website <[www.manyhandedream.ca](http://www.manyhandedream.ca)>

Please also encourage others individuals and organisations in your circle to continue to sign the **Joint Declaration in Support of Jordan's Principle** <[www.fncaringsociety.com](http://www.fncaringsociety.com)> so that we can continue to demonstrate how many peoples in Canada care about these children and want government to put their needs before jurisdictional disputes. I cannot tell you how much your support has meant to Jordan's family, community and to those of us who have had the privilege of supporting Jordan's message of equality and fairness.

On behalf of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada we would like to extend our warmest appreciation to all members of Parliament for their support of Jordan's Principle and especially to MP Jean Crowder who tabled the private member's motion making the unanimous vote possible. We would also like to confirm our commitment to work with governments and all of you to ensure that Jordan's Principle goes beyond a moral victory and into a lived experience of every First Nations child in Canada.

Thank you for your support and Happy Holidays!

**Cindy Blackstock,**  
Executive Director,  
FNCFC



**For more information:**

Many Hands One Dream website  
[www.manyhandedream.ca](http://www.manyhandedream.ca)

Joint Declaration in Support of Jordan's Principle  
[www.fncaringsociety.com](http://www.fncaringsociety.com)

## National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD) 2008

The theme for NAICD 2008 is 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Families – Nurturing Our Children to Flourish'. As always NAICD will be celebrated on the 4th of August. Each year National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day allows SNAICC an opportunity to raise awareness of, and promote the value and importance of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The 2008 theme reinforces a message that we have to nurture our children to flourish. SNAICC doesn't want kids just to be OK and do OK. We want them to flourish, achieve their greatest potential and enjoy the same quality of life and opportunity as all Australians. We have to set high expectations for children and for ourselves as those that look after them.

The capacity to nurture and guide our children to flourish is vitally important. It is up to all of us in our roles as parents, family members and in our working lives to create healthy and safe communities for children. We provide the building blocks for shaping future Aboriginal and Islander leaders who are resilient, strong in culture, strong in identity and possess integrity as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

SNAICC will produce a poster, leaflets and activity kit for national distribution and work to extend public awareness of, and participation in, NAICD. We will be further promoting NAICD to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and services, schools, government departments and non-Indigenous organisations that want to support our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

We encourage communities to organise local activities and events, for example: community picnics, children's activities and/or other culturally relevant activities in services, schools and child care centres, story telling and/or the involvement of Elders and local leaders.

Information in relation to NAICD 2008 will be updated on the SNAICC website in 2008. For further details and information on previous National Aboriginal Islander Children Day celebrations visit website at [www.snaicc.asn.au/children](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/children)

More information regarding NAICD 2008 contact Angelique Davis at the SNAICC Office:

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# Remote Aboriginal communities – their future is our responsibility and education is the key

Over the past six months the Federal Coalition government intervention into the Northern Territory generated divisive, angry, confused and at times disheartening public debate about issues concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Intervention comprises a range of interventions from the NT and Federal governments many of which are clearly necessary. Additional funding in areas such as primary health care, child protection, family violence services, early childhood programs, safe houses and policing are all to be welcomed.

As I reflect upon the debate I ask myself these questions – what is the debate actually about? What is the underlying question being debated? What is it that people have

**“Supporting communities through the provision of basic infrastructure does not promote welfare dependency – it promotes human rights.”**

been thinking about and discussing, both privately and publicly?

SNAICC's perception is that the previous Federal government was privately discussing Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory as some form of 'failed state'. Talk of 'failed states' usually comes up in discussions about foreign affairs. The role of Australia in the Asia-Pacific region and concerns about the viability of East Timor, Fiji, Nauru, Bougainville and the Solomon Islands to manage and survive as independent provinces or nations.

Publicly the discussion was about protecting children from child abuse and intervening to create a level of stability so that child protection staff, police and others could do their work in protecting children.

Changes to the land permit system, land tenure and the appointment of administrators to manage Aboriginal communities have been criticised by SNAICC as not relevant to child protection. The *Little Children Are Sacred* report, upon which the intervention was premised, made no mention of taking over the running of communities and their assets as a precursor to protecting children from abuse.

These changes make more sense, have a logic you can understand, if you happen to believe that the actual communities are dying and cannot be sustained. Like a failed state they need someone to move in and take over the day to day running of everything. Not surprisingly some have described the NT intervention as an invasion and likened it to the invasion of Iraq.

On the night of the recent federal election both the outgoing Prime Minister, John Howard, and the outgoing Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Mal Brough, in their last speeches implored the incoming government to stick with the NT intervention. It is not insignificant that the NT intervention was singled out from everything that the government had done as the one thing that must be sustained by the new government. The newly elected Federal ALP Government has indicated that it will largely continue with the NT intervention while reviewing aspects including the policy to quarantine welfare payments.

From SNAICC's perspective the newly elected Federal ALP Government can and should make clear its views and intentions about the future of remote Aboriginal communities. That's what the NT intervention is actually about. It must publicly commit to supporting the viability and sustainability of Aboriginal communities. And make it clear that it has no hidden agenda to sit by and watch communities wither away.

SNAICC knows who the first victims are when, through the insufferable burden of managing without good quality education, housing, health, early childhood, policing, employment, transport and communication services, communities start to unravel. The first victims are the children.

An early test of the commitment of the Rudd Labour government to ensuring that remote Aboriginal communities not only survive but thrive will be how quickly their education revolution reaches remote communities. During the election promises



What a wonderful community welcome sign! Congratulations to all those who work to keep Owairtilla/Canteen Creek (NT) a child-friendly community. Some of the wonderful women are (from left) Della Mick, Kerris Clegg, Millie Mick, and Natasha Mick with their children Tiana Mick, Tyrell Mick, Talia Clegg. Owairtilla is 275 km SE of Tennant Creek with around 140 Alyawarre, Warramanga, Walpiri people and this beautiful sign was funded through a NAPCAN community child-protection micro-grant. Photo by Kathy Gers © Kathy Gers 2007

**continued on page 11**

# Let the True Colours of Indigenous Children Shine

Speaking as an Aboriginal father of young children wanting to “stand up for my people – especially young Aboriginal children – across the country, and particularly in a climate [where] few of us should sit idly by,” leader in Indigenous Education **Dr Chris Sarra** shared his vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at SNAICC’s National Conference last September.

**T**he challenge here is for all of us to see the true colours of Aboriginal children. Let me reflect on my time as principal of Cherbourg State School to show you exactly what I mean when I say the true colours of our children.

As principal of Cherbourg State School, I’ve seen the true colours of Aboriginal children!

**It was no dream!**

I’ve seen Year 2 literacy improve to a great extent – from where 0 per cent of children were at expected reading levels in 1998, to a point where 58 per cent of children were at expected reading levels just two years later!

I’ve seen Year 7 literacy improve to the extent that where all children were at rock bottom on statewide diagnostic testing in 1999, by 2004, 17 out of 21 Year 7 children



were identified within the state average band for literacy!

I’ve seen unexplained absenteeism reduced by 94 per cent within 18 months!

I’ve seen real attendance at school improve from 62 per cent in 1999, to 93 per cent in 2004!

I’ve seen a girl named Talisha ring her mum when she was in Grade 5 to say “Mum I read a book today!” This was the first book that she had read in her five years of school. By Easter of the following year she had read more than 30 books!

I’ve seen a girl named Marilyn miss almost half of the first six years of her schooling – missing 87 days of school in Year 6 – but miss only seven days in Year 7. Her attendance improved dramatically. We didn’t touch anyone’s welfare payments but, rather, we tampered with our own beliefs and practices to contemplate how we could deliver a school that she would want to come to. Today she is in Year 12 at high school with a very firm, and very tangible, notion that she will study law when she finishes school!

This was no dream – this was the true colours of Aboriginal children that I saw!

When I was principal at Cherbourg State School, I insisted that it would be a place that made children feel good about who they were – a place where they felt and were ‘Strong and Smart’.

This ‘strong’ and this ‘smart’ that we spoke of included the need to be strong and smart enough to know that sexual abuse was just not normal.

I would say to children: We have to be strong enough to say “I am going to tell on you!” when someone touched them in a way

**“Let our schools and our classrooms be that one place in a child’s life where somebody believes they can be something great and where we can get them to see that something truly great resides in them.”**



Dr Chris Sarra addressing the SNAICC National Conference in Adelaide last September. Photo by Tatiana Doroshenko. © SNAICC 2007

**“After seeing what I’ve seen, I’ve come to believe quite firmly that our children can learn just as well as any other children, regardless of where they are coming from.”**

that was wrong.

In our Aboriginal studies program I insisted that as part of the program we stare in the face child abuse, alcoholism, and domestic violence so children could understand that these issues – while they were seemingly prominent in many Aboriginal communities – were in fact the legacies of other historical and sociological processes, and not the legacy of being Aboriginal.

I wanted children to see the truth about being Aboriginal.

Again, I am not suggesting for a moment that it is not hard work and that there is no dysfunction in Aboriginal communities – there certainly is and this must be addressed. But what must also be addressed is the dysfunctional mindset existing among some of us which implies that it is somehow okay or ‘explainable’ to deliver continued and chronic failure to such communities.

It disappoints me that many of my colleagues as educators can hide so easily behind the complexities of an Aboriginal child’s social and cultural context and say

## EDITORIAL

### Remote Aboriginal communities – their future is our responsibility and education is the key

were made that every 4-year-old child will receive at least 15 hours per week of early childhood education from a qualified early childhood educator. Promises were also made to:

- halve the gap in mortality rates between Indigenous and non Indigenous children under the age of five within a decade, and
- halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievement within a decade by introducing a comprehensive package focusing on Indigenous children's early years.

SNAICC will work with the new government to ensure that their policies have the best impact possible on the lives of children and families. We will highlight the policy gaps where necessary and point out the factors that need to be considered in implementing policies (for instance, what is meant by a 'qualified early childhood educator' will be an interesting and challenging place to start).

Ultimately the future of remote Aboriginal communities is everyone's responsibility. Any debate or discussion about the future of these communities, and the many distinct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures they represent, must not happen behind closed doors. It is grossly unjust to not provide the basic services and

infrastructure that any community needs to function well and then blame families in those communities for the dysfunction which follows.

**“The future of remote Aboriginal communities is everyone's responsibility.”**

Supporting communities through the provision of basic infrastructure does not promote welfare dependency – it promotes human rights. The right to education is one such human right and SNAICC looks forward to the new government's education revolution making it a reality for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. As Chris Sarra's article reminds us it is possible to support children and watch their true colours shine through.

– Julian Pocock,  
SNAICC Executive Officer

**Right:** The illustration shows the abuse and neglect that children can experience; the role of SNAICC and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's and family services in protecting children and supporting families; and a model of care that is nurturing, and is free from abuse. Illustration by Ikanballa, originally published by SNAICC in *Footprints to Where We Are*. © SNAICC 2005



### Let the True Colour of Indigenous Children Shine

how impossible it is to achieve educational outcomes because of:

- Drinking and fighting in the home;
- Their father being in jail;
- Lots of health issues;
- Child abuse in the home.

After seeing what I have seen I will not accept any excuse any more. After seeing what I have seen I have come to believe quite firmly that our children can learn as well as any child.

My message to educators around the country is that there are just three things they need to know if they want to get

the best out of Aboriginal children: high expectations, high expectations and high expectations.

I will never pretend that the life of an Aboriginal child in an Aboriginal community is without tremendous challenge. But surely, if we can easily highlight these complexities, then surely we MUST easily understand the need to give these children one place in their lives that is positive.

Surely this is even more reason enough to want to provide a place in that child's life that is positively structured demanding, challenging and supportive. Let our schools

and our classrooms be that one place in a child's life. Just one place where somebody believes they can be something great and where we can get them to see that something truly great resides in them.

Let's give them one place that is positive, where they can learn protective behaviours, and let's believe in them to the extent that – in spite of the complexities and challenges in their home context – they actually start to believe in themselves. Surely, if we are being paid taxpayers' money to be in their school and community, then surely we owe them just that much. ●

**Dr Chris Sarra** is the Director of the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute in Queensland. This is an edited extract of the Keynote Speech Dr Sarra presented at the SNAICC National Conference. Republished with permission from Dr Sarra. © Chris Sarra 2007.

# SPECIAL FOCUS

## EDUCATION & LITERACY



**A**rkai Kaziw Children's Activity Centre provides a wonderful example of the resourcefulness of Aboriginal and, as in this particular case, Torres Strait Islander communities in supporting their children. (See the profile on Louise Manas and her service on the next page.)

SNAICC believes Arkai Kaziw Children's Activity Centre provides not only a case study of what communities can achieve, but equally it highlights that there is much more that needs to be done. All over Australia there are stories of people like Louise Manas who, along with others in their communities, have developed children's services to support families raise their children. They all started off just like Arkai Kaziw Children's Activity Centre.

SNAICC has for some years advocated that the federal government develop and implement a comprehensive plan to expand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's services so they can reach their full potential. We have highlighted the need for:

- Workforce development and training programs that can train local people already working in the child care field and formally recognise their cultural and

## PERPECTIVE

# So much achieved, so much more to be done

community knowledge important for raising children,

- Long term additional funding to increase the capacity/size of services to meet the needs of their communities particularly given the rapid growth in the size of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population,
- Reforming licensing of children's services so that they can be run in a manner consistent with their local community needs and build local practices and traditions (sharing food, story telling, fishing etc.) into their routines,
- Ensuring the funding model for services is broad, holistic and adequate such that services do not have to cut corners or dependent on CDEP or their local council to keep them going,
- Supporting services to provide a range of blended programs that combine parenting, family support, community development, child care, health and nutrition,
- Mentoring and networking between services to support staff in centres with the challenges involved in running

childcare and early learning services,

- Properly recognising the richness of the skills and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and wisdom they bring to the task of child rearing,
- Integrating services with schools and other service providers to support children in those important transitions and ensure that schools prepare themselves to meet their responsibilities to children.

SNAICC has written to the new Minister for Families, Community Services, Housing and Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, MP, asking that the National Indigenous Childcare Services Plan, released just weeks before the federal election, be retained with some modifications to reflect the new government's priorities.

SNAICC wants the new government to 'fast track' the long term development of services like Arkai Kaziw Children's Activity Centre. We must do this in a way that respects the great work of people like Louise and ensures that all young children in their community can access the services they provide.

– Julian Pocock  
SNAICC Executive Officer

## EDUCATION & LITERACY RESOURCES: print and online



**Dreaming Stories:  
A Springboard for  
Learning**  
Published by Early  
Childhood Australia  
(ECA) and SNAICC  
Cost: \$14.95

Developed by the SRS in partnership with ECA, this is a play-based teaching and learning resource for use in preschools, playgroups, child care and other early years services. It comprises a DVD of 13 animated Dreaming stories selected by the SRS and a booklet to assist staff explore concepts from the stories with children. For more information, contact the SRS.

To buy copies, contact Early Childhood Australia on their freecall sales line to order a copy: 1800 356 900. You can also order it online:

[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/rip0702](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/rip0702)

### SNAICC Conference Presentations online

A number of presentations at the SNAICC National Conference were on literacy, early childhood education and education initiatives and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Some of these have been made available on SNAICC's website:

[www.snaicc.asn.au/news/conference\\_presentations07.html](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/news/conference_presentations07.html)

### Indigenous education publications and resources webpage

Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training

Provides access to publications and resources for the Indigenous education sector

[www.dest.gov.au/sectors/indigenous\\_education/publications\\_resources/](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/indigenous_education/publications_resources/)

### Early Childhood Australia

As the national, non-government umbrella organisation for children's services, ECA's website has an extensive collection of early childhood resources, including ECA publications. Resources identified elsewhere online are recommended after a quality assurance process.

[www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/)

## ‘It is a stepping stone – that is my motto’

### PROFILE: Louise Manas, manager of Arkai Kaziw Children’s Activity Centre, Kubin Island (Torres Strait Islands)

by Rosie Elliott, SRS Project Officer

On a recent trip to Melbourne, early childhood teacher Louise Manas made a visit to SNAICC. She spoke to Rosie Elliott about her work as an educator and the children’s activity centre she manages in her Torres Strait community of Kubin Island.

Louise Manas is the manager of the Kubin Island Arkai Kaziw Children’s Activity Centre. “Our children’s activities centres are the first point of contact for children and families,” she says. “We prepare them for their greater journey and for school in a non-threatening way – all the little steps.”

“I did my Diploma of Education at James Cook University in 1993. These children are all part of me. I speak our Kala Lagau Ya language, plus Creole and English. As an educator, I can interpret and code switch. When the children look puzzled I can model language back to them in English, so they adapt well to school, because the language is not alien.”

There are 14 Torres Strait Islands with children’s services: Badu, Hammond, Thursday and Narupai Island all have registered centres; Saibai and Darnley have playgroups; and Yorke, Yam, Dauan, St Pauls, Poruma and Kubin all have unlicensed centres. This story comes from Kubin Island – population around 175.

“The need in the community is for working parents, so the council auspices our centre, pays my wage and provides our multi-purpose building and community hall for our OSHC [Out of School Hours Care] programs,” Louise says.



© Kenny Beford 2005

“Our childcare service has been going for three years with 10 to 15 kids across two age groups, but because we are not licensed we do not receive childcare funding. We only get OSHC funding two days a week for up to 25 kids. Queensland Department of Families and Communities has also funded fencing, air-conditioning and an adventure playground. So the OSHC funding helps with money but not the human resource support and training – all those problems that come with remoteness.”

“We have CDEP staff four days a week full-time plus my position. We all have a Blue Card. The community now want our service to go to the next step to reinforce stages of child development, not just provide child minding. So we are thinking about getting licensed, but we need a good committee. It is all about capacity building. This has been a passion of mine for a long time, but it’s a really big responsibility.”

**“The community now want our service to go to the next step to reinforce stages of child development, not just provide child minding.”**

“Really, I like the hub model best, rather than being constrained to just child care. We use the Sport and Rec officer here, the arts coordinator and the social justice committee. I would like a school councillor here too, as an early intervention part of the hub, because it’s less threatening for families to talk here.”

“Last year Education Queensland brought in half-day four-year-old pre-prep. Next year it will be an all-day program. I need advice on this so I can streamline the options. The school gets funded for each child from 8.30–10am and their pre-prep class is mixed in with Grades 1 and 2. The school then drops them to us at 11am and



Louise Manas, manager of the Arkai Kaziw Children’s Activity Centre on Kubin Island. © Louise Manas 2007

they stay until 5pm, though we only get OSHC funding for this.”

“I’d like all the stakeholders to sit together and consider this centre as a first place for children to be immersed through play into routine and social interactions. We would like the pre-prep program here once we get licensed. There should not be a competition.”

“Last year the department said that if we all do bridging courses we could become licensed. So I am now doing a six month TAFE bridging program for a Diploma of Children’s Services and some of the CDEP ladies are now training through Cairns TAFE and doing their practice assessment at Thursday Island Childcare.” (Thursday Island has their own TAFE teacher.)

“Two years ago the Commission for Children came here and trained our staff about The Act and the Blue Card. The Queensland IPSU came here recently too, which was really good, and there was a recent TAFE visit for remote area childcare studies.”

“But as a co-ordinator I cannot be a mentor for the staff as I don’t have the time, and I need financial and IT mentoring myself. We really need money for more child care developmental training, but who will come up here? Who will pay?”

“What I really want is funding to get an ongoing children’s services mentor to visit us several days a month from Cairns. That would be wonderful. That is my goal.”

“We lit up our building for our Christmas party this year to indicate that we want our service to be beneficial for the community and all the other stakeholders – that we all share our children’s journey together. The children all helped with the preparation, and Rev. Paul Tom, Deputy Chair of Kubin Council, gave a speech, praising all of our staff for bringing cultural knowledge to engage children in an appropriate environment to prepare them for the big world. It was a fantastic function!”



# Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) Culture Keepers

By Katie Sutherland (*Rattler* magazine)

**Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) like Noogaleek in New South Wales instill a sense of self-respect among Indigenous children, and weave their connections with culture and community.**

**O**n the front door of Noogaleek Children's Centre in Berkeley, near Wollongong, is a painting by local Aboriginal artist Josephine Davis. It shows small footprints walking toward two teachers and a central Aboriginal figure, representing knowledge, then larger footprints walking away.

This story sums up the objective of Noogaleek, one of 12 Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) in New South Wales. The centre endeavours to teach children about the values of Koori culture, while preparing them for a future of learning and life in 'white society'.

Judy Tempest is the co-ordinator of the Indigenous Professional Support Unit (IPSU), which provides professional support, advice and training to staff in MACS centres in NSW and the ACT. She feels that the essence of MACS centres like Noogaleek is to keep their Aboriginal culture alive.

"I see that our centres came about because of the history of Aboriginal people

not feeling proud about standing up and saying they were Aboriginal," says Tempest. "In MACS centres, they are to an extent immersed in their identity so they're feeling proud of who they are – proud to stand up and say 'I'm Aboriginal.'"

She adds that MACS centres provide an important bridge to school life for Aboriginal children. "Schools are governed by white society rules and they're sometimes not very understanding of where kids are coming from".

**"In MACS centres, they are to an extent immersed in their identity so they're feeling proud of who they are – proud to stand up and say 'I'm Aboriginal.'"**

"MACS centres prepare the children for going to school. They are a gentle introduction—just by having an Aboriginal face around and talking the same language—Aboriginal English or the slang, the terminology they use.

"Staff also understand... and support what's happening in their lives without judging them. Building that trust is integral in helping children to establish their identity."

Noogaleek is a 39-place centre and currently has 81 children enrolled – 70 Aboriginal and 11 non-Aboriginal. It employs one teacher, one diploma trained childcare worker, three assistants and one enrolled nurse.

It was set up by Aunty Irene Moran and other Aboriginal community members, who were conscious that Aboriginal children were not attending any form of childcare in the Illawarra.

Noogaleek's founders initially ran a playgroup for Aboriginal children in the garage of the original Illawarra Aboriginal Corporations building (a house at the time). After applying for and gaining funding for Noogaleek, Moran went on to work as the

centre's co-ordinator until early 2002.

The centre has maintained a distinct family feel to it, possibly because many of the staff and children are actually related.

"Everyone feels comfortable, including the non-Aboriginal children and their families," explains Noogaleek Co-ordinator Roslynn Webb. "Staff are more aware of our families" background and issues as we all come from the same community and know each other – which is good as we can make sure we are meeting their needs both in school and at home if we are able."

By incorporating a Reggio Emilia philosophy into its Koori-focused program, Noogaleek provides a child-directed, emergent curriculum. Included in its Indigenous focus are visits from local Elders and activities around Aboriginal music and art.

In Noogaleek's foyer, you are greeted by a stunning mural, mostly dot-painting, of animals, footprints, letters and numbers – painted by local Indigenous artists, just after the centre opened some 17 years ago.

In fact, one of the first things that strike you about the interior of Noogaleek is the bright colour from wall to wall. Even on a grey winter's day, the traditional Aboriginal art, children's art, mobiles and workspaces, all culminate to create a vibrant, cheerful ambience.

Another noticeable thing about Noogaleek is the number of male role models on staff. There's Jimmy the gardener, bus driver, handyman and artist, who has been with the centre since day one. Then there's Steve the childcare assistant and big kid at heart. And Stuart the passionate accountant and advocate who is equally comfortable with the children as he is behind a computer spreadsheet.

The playground is a well-utilised space, regularly shared with children from the neighbouring Winnanggay Preschool, which is a separate service but shares the same licensee.

Surrounded by hinterland and near the edge of the lake, you feel the landscape when you are in the playground—a fairly spacious area with plenty of climbing equipment and



a bike track with fabulous oversized tricycles for children and adventurous staff alike.

Like other MACS centres, Noogaleek provides health screening (hearing, speech, occupational therapy, sight and vision), with regular visits from a child and family health nurse and from South East Sydney Illawarra Health. It also has a referral system to early intervention programs for families in need. And the centre provides a pick-up and drop-off service for Aboriginal families who do not have transport.

Funding is a huge issue for a centre set up to cater for disadvantaged families. And many MACS centres were extremely relieved to hear the federal government announcement in August of a 20 per cent increase in base funding from the Department of Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaCSIA).

MACS centres are Budget Base Funded (BBF) rather than having families in receipt of Child Care Benefit. Noogaleek often needs to seek funding from external sources, such as the Department of Community Services (DoCS), to make ends meet.

“The funding announcement literally means the continuation of Noogaleek as a service,” says Webb. “Our biggest sadness is that our chairperson (of the Illawarra Aboriginal Corporation) Aunty Mary Davis passed away before the news. She struggled to make this happen and she died before she knew that we’d be OK.”

Many services were suffering from the wage increases that came into effect last year. Prior to the announcement of a funding increase, there were concerns that the last increment in 2008 would put Noogaleek in deficit, and without funding support the centre would have no choice but to raise fees.

Currently \$10 per day per child, fees have doubled in five years (in 2002 daily fees were \$5 for the first child and \$2 for siblings). While this may not sound like a lot, Webb feared that any further fee increase would keep families away.

“Our greatest fear was that parents would no longer be able to afford childcare, which would then mean the whole purpose of our centre would change,” explains Webb.

“If we did not receive any further funding we may have had to raise the fees to \$20 or more per day. We know this fee is still low, but for some of our families, they would not be able to send their children to school—and sometimes these are the children who need to be here.” ●

Originally published in *Rattler* 83, Spring 2007. Reprinted with permission from Community Child Care Co-operative (NSW). Copyright *Rattler* 2007. For more information visit [www.cccnsw.org.au](http://www.cccnsw.org.au)

# Holistic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care Services: The MACS Model

By Julie Higgins  
SNAICC Policy Manager

**A** boriginal and Torres Strait Islander child care services do not just take on the children, they take on the family and the community issues that are part of the children. We cannot remove or separate the community and family issues from the child and that’s what makes community based holistic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child care services such as MACS unique in their delivery.

The holistic model of care that MACS provide is based on the premise that child care services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities play an important role in the lives of:

- The child
- The child’s family; and
- The community.

For the child (children 0–5 and school aged children where appropriate) – holistic child care services should provide for:

- Spiritual, cultural, health, physical and emotional development,
- School readiness,
- School attendance and school achievement,
- Children with special needs such as physical disabilities, speech delays, learning delays, emotional problems, ADHD, fetal alcohol syndrome etc should have these needs properly identified and responded to by their child care service.

For the family – holistic child care services should:

- Enable work, study, care for other children, care for other family members, self-care when sick, stressed or undergoing health or other therapeutic treatment,
- Child care services should also provide opportunities for mutual support, socialising and participation in parenting programs and should be a source of information about a variety of health and child rearing issues.

For the community – holistic child care services should:

- Contribute to building the health, cultural and spiritual strength, education levels, employment opportunities and economic strength of the community as a whole, and
- Reducing stress, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect.

A holistic service model such as the MACS model, which emphasises supporting families in a multitude of ways depending on the needs of each community, works best for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. However holistic services cannot meet broad community needs unless they are adequately funded and supported.

Increasingly holistic services are being forced to restrict rather than expand the types of services they provide due to lack of funding. The excellent culturally strong long day care that MACS provide is consuming a larger part of the budget available to the services meaning that the MACS vision has not had the opportunity to flourish in recent years.

The new Federal Government must now fund MACS and other holistic Indigenous children’s services such as the planned child care hubs adequately and document best practice so that their real potential can be realised at last. ●



An Aboriginal storyteller and performer takes kids at Coolabaroo Neighbourhood Centre MACS through a cultural activity for the Centre’s 2006 NAICD celebrations

# SPECIAL FOCUS

## EDUCATION & LITERACY

**T**he Indigenous Literacy Project raises funds to help tackle Indigenous literacy in the Jawoyn region of Northern Territory, through a partnership with the Fred Hollows Foundation.

We assist in engaging and supporting development of literacy skills by increasing the access and availability of books, learning materials and literacy resources.

The Fred Hollows Foundation works closely with communities on a range of projects and programs including community literacy to support communities to develop and deliver literacy based activities. The community literacy program aims to enhance health, education and employment outcomes through improved literacy by:

- Encouraging greater valuing of education and learning
- Improving school attendance rates
- Achieving community wide functional literacy to at least Year 10 standard.

Planning of this project has recognised that there is potential for longer term expansion to benefit more communities in other remote areas. Currently, the Indigenous Literacy Project and subsequent funds raised are used to purchase books and learning materials for people of the Jawoyn region, covering the communities of Barunga, Wugularr, Eva Valley and Bulman.

The Fred Hollows Foundation staff have supported the communities to take charge of literacy needs for the both the older and younger generations. The Fred Hollows Foundation facilitate delivery of this program by brokering funds raised and assisting the communities to select and order publications for learning environments including schools, libraries, early learning centres such as crèches and other identified institutions to enhance their pool of resources. Catalogues are supplied by the Australian Booksellers Association, ensuring community members have a wide range of resources to select from.

Having dedicated Fred Hollows Foundation staff allocated to the project ensures that necessary time is spent communicating with representative

## Indigenous Literacy Project – a collaborative effort

By Gemina Corpus, Indigenous Project Leader, the Fred Hollows Foundation

community members to ensure prompt ordering and distribution of materials. Supporting local organisations in the choice and placement of resources whilst being careful not to replace the role of the state education departments, including that of state libraries, and seek to complement existing programs. During 2007 distribution is divided equally for purchase of publications and learning materials for the communities of Jawoyn region.

### Indigenous Literacy Project – Stories from Jawoyn region (NT) communities

**Barunga Community Library** in Barunga is attached to the Community Education Centre which caters from preschool to Year 12. There is also a crèche attached to the school. The library facility is also available for the wider community members. The community is located 90 kilometers southeast of Katherine and has a population of approximately 250 people.

Library worker Pamela Talbot, who is also a former teachers' aide at Barunga Primary Community Education Centre and former director of the Burunga Nursery School crèche, thinks that the Indigenous Literacy Project is a good idea and believes in the value and importance of books. She says that, working in the library, she has observed that school-aged children (in particular) who often visit the library want to borrow up to four books at a time.

Pamela says that it is important for development and that after reading the books, the kids start to ask a lot of questions. It's helping adults and kids to learn, it's broadening thinking and the books give people the ability to learn about other people and places too.

**Eva Valley Crèche** is staffed by Priscilla James, a resourceful young woman, who is the only crèche worker in the community of Eva Valley, 85 kilometers east of Katherine in the Northern Territory. The Indigenous Literacy Project supports people like Priscilla so that she will have access to books to

read to children at the crèche and be able to expand activities with the children at the early learning developmental stage of their lives.

Children attending the crèche will be better prepared for school when the time comes. They will be familiar with the concepts of books and reading, their activities will have prepared them for developmental creative educational activities and exercises.

**Wugularr School** has an enrolment of approximately 110 students from preschool to secondary, and is staffed by a teaching principal, four teachers, two assistant teachers, ATAS tutors, an administrator officer and cleaner. Recently, facilities for preschool and secondary students were opened.

The preschool early childhood teacher at Wugularr School, Martha Murugan, and teachers' assistant Gloria Lane are using the books from the Indigenous Literacy Project in their classes. They said that the community book project through the school is a fantastic idea that engages young children, and that the children are enthusiastic about reading.

They firmly believe that literacy is important for education and jobs and training for the future. The kids love to read books, they look after the books when they are taken home and always bring the books back to the school. Taking books into the home environment motivates the parents to read to children too. The Indigenous Literacy Project provides more resources for the kids.

#### For more information:

Alison Edwards, Manager, Indigenous Program, The Fred Hollows Foundation  
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# The Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)

– courtesy of HIPPY, Brotherhood of St Laurence

**T**he Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) is a home-based parenting and early childhood enrichment program targeting disadvantaged families in our community.

HIPPY empowers parents as their child's first teacher and fosters parent involvement in school and community life to maximise the chances of successful early school experiences. It also offers some parents a supported pathway to employment and local level community leadership.

The first HIPPY project in Australia began in 1997 within the City of Yarra, auspiced by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, with twenty families and three home tutors. Growing slowly but steadily, HIPPY currently operates in three states around Australia helping over 400 families per year.

## Working with parents

Parents learn to use the stories and activities through regular, structured visits by home tutors who are also parents in the program. Every fortnight, the home tutors role-play the activities with parents, in the parents' home. On alternate weeks, parents and home tutors meet together as a larger group, discussing issues of common interest, hearing from speakers, and further practicing the HIPPY activities.

Over the two years parents are involved, they develop strong, supportive relationships with the tutors and Coordinators, being encouraged to have more confidence in themselves, in their children, and in their ability to be actively and positively be involved in their child's education.

## Home tutors

The role of home tutor is a supported, very structured, family-friendly, part-time position, which is often an entry or re-entry point into the workforce for parents. Most sites now qualify their home tutors for a Certificate 3 or 4 in Community Services as part of their training, and we aim to extend this to all sites. The skills, qualifications and experience home tutors acquire improve their future employment prospects or spurrs them to return to education.

## Achievements

Australian research so far, (mostly smaller projects at single sites), has shown that the

HIPPY children were more likely than the comparison group to have higher self-esteem and education scores. Research has also found gains for HIPPY children on measures such as classroom behaviour, socialisation, cognitive development and academic performance.

## Indigenous parents and children

Of the eight HIPPY programs running in Australia, two have a particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents and children. Over 60 per cent of the children at HIPPY La Perouse in Sydney, New South Wales, are Aboriginal, while HIPPY Fitzroy has an Aboriginal Home Tutor working specifically with a small but growing number of Indigenous parents and children (see the case studies below).

With the election of the new Federal Labor government, HIPPY will be expanding the number of sites into new communities across Australia. They expect some of these to be Indigenous-run sites and have been discussing the possibilities over many months. HIPPY Australia welcomes enquiries.

## For more information:

Susan Davies, National Manager HIPPY Australia  
Ph: (03) 9483 1325 or Fax: (03) 9417 2691  
Email: sdavies@bsl.org.au  
www.hippyaustralia.org.au

## CASE STUDY: HIPPY Fitzroy

HIPPY Fitzroy is a home-based parenting, and early childhood enrichment program targeting families with four year-old children, in and around Fitzroy in Melbourne, Victoria.

HIPPY has been operating in Fitzroy since 1997 and works currently with Sudanese, Vietnamese, Somali and Arabic families living in the area.

An exciting development for HIPPY during 2007 has been the establishment of an Indigenous HIPPY Group. HIPPY Fitzroy is fortunate to have secured financial support to help fund this group from the City of Yarra and Victorian Department of Human Services. Zoe Upton, a young and enthusiastic Indigenous woman with one young son and another child on the way, has been talking to families and encouraging



© SNAICC 2006

them to become involved for the start of the 2008 HIPPY year.

HIPPY encourages and supports parents to foster a love of learning in their children, promote cognitive and social development and enhancing school readiness.

HIPPY Fitzroy is calling out to Indigenous families to come and join this extraordinary and exciting program for 2008. Contact Zoe Upton by telephone on (03) 9415 1316 for more information.

– Susan Davies (National Manager HIPPY Australia) and Zoe Upton (Fitzroy Indigenous home tutor)

## CASE STUDY: HIPPY La Perouse

HIPPY La Perouse this year had 56 families with 60 children enrolled, 40 of these children are Indigenous. We have 25 children graduating on Tuesday 4 December (17 of these children are Indigenous). They have completed their two years of HIPPY (Age 4 and Age 5).

We have four Indigenous mums from the local Indigenous community who work as our home tutors teaching other parents/carers to work through the HIPPY activities with their children so they will be ready to start school.

We were lucky enough to secure funding from FaCSIA Local Answers Round 5 (before the elections) and also Rotary Sydney donated \$160,000 to HIPPY La Perouse, which means that we can concentrate on working with our families for the next 18 to 24 months instead of looking for funding.

It is also an exciting time for HIPPY as the Labor Government had also pledged a substantial amount to set up new programs around Australia and also the current sites.

– Sherri Longbottom  
HIPPY La Perouse Co-ordinator

## ‘Walking and talking together for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families’

Children deserve the best and to have interested and actively committed people like you to provide them with opportunities and experiences that will assist them to develop at their own pace and at different ages and stages. Your attention and positive input can help children to be happy, healthy and safe and to grow up strong in mind, strong in body and strong in heart. The SNAICC Resource Service, through its resourcing work, is happy to have assisted you in doing this over the 2007 year. We would like to say a big thank you for your interest, input and participation over the 2007 year and look forward to working with you in the New 2008 Year.

### SRS Evaluation Report

It is heartening to hear that the SRS is on a good track and producing good quality and useful resources – we are reaching people. The *Review Point 2 Evaluation Report* is testament to the hard work of all SNAICC staff and executive, past and present, and to the importance of cultural accountable practice at all levels of the work. *Sharing the Good Story about the SRS: External evaluation report* calls for a further six-year commitment to build on good foundations. The second evaluation report on the SRS was completed by the external consultant firm beyond... and delivered to the SNAICC National Executive in November 2007. The report assessed the functional operations of the SRS and the progress of sixteen SRS projects.

Giving voice to SNAICC member organisations, partner organisations and a broad range of early childhood and child and family well being services and service providers, the report summarises feedback

about SRS resource products and activities and includes information about resource distribution and reach.

Sixteen SRS projects are outlined and there is detailed information from five case study sites and the eight projects that have been formally evaluated. With some useful pointers for the SRS about

**“The SRS is on a good track and producing good quality and useful resources – we are reaching people.”**

quality improvements to the operations and processes for resource implementation, the overall assessment indicates that the SRS is on track to achieving good outcomes in the four priority areas of early childhood development, parenting and child rearing; child and family wellbeing; prevention of family violence and child abuse and neglect; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance and organisational development.

A consistently positive message through the report is that the SRS is starting to gain status as an important source of information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families on a range of issues. This message holds not only for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services but also mainstream services.

According to the report, survey responses and phone interviews are providing consistent feedback to indicate that non-Indigenous organisations value, and are actively using, the resources to improve the quality and cultural relevance

of the programs they provide to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

There are thirteen specific recommendations about the operations and functions of the SRS and its projects. Significantly, the report acknowledges that the cultural integrity of the SRS has been strengthened through the appointment of a well-qualified and experienced Aboriginal manager. The report also defines the need for an extended implementation stage in the support of SRS projects and resources. Other important recommendations advise SNAICC to continue to explore additional funding options and partnerships, in particular with the state and territory based Indigenous Professional Support Units (IPSUs).

A significant barrier to sustainable outcomes and successful work by the SRS is identified as the time limited framing of the initial work plan which the evaluators describe as “in fact at least a ten year work plan, given the extensive task of needing to have a national reach that is capable of responding to the shared and diverse needs of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family services sector”.

In conclusion the report argues that the full range of benefits the SRS can offer the sector and FaCSIA will only be realised if it can continue to operate and build upon the good foundation it has already established. The SRS is currently funded until June 2008. A third and final evaluation report for this current funding contract will be completed for the SNAICC executive by June 2008. Copies of the Executive Summary and Recommendations of the second Evaluation report are available online and full copies of the report can be obtained on request to Liz Orr, SRS Evaluation Manager, by email: [project3@snaicc.asn.au](mailto:project3@snaicc.asn.au)

### Project Partners

The SNAICC Resource Service would like to acknowledge and thank our project partners that have worked with us over the year:

- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)  
**Project:** Partners in Action Research Evaluation (PARE) QLD
- Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia (AHCSA)  
**Project:** Partners in Action Research



At the SNAICC National Conference (from left): SNAICC National Executive member Veronica P, SRS Program Manager Veronica Johns, and Veronica Coutts, board member of Gooddo Day Care Centre (MACS), Palm Island

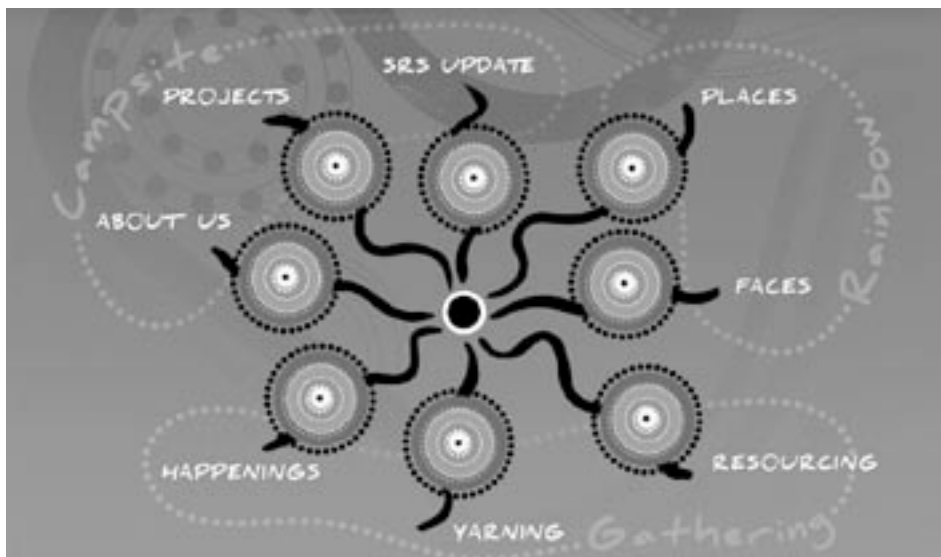
- Evaluation (PARE) SA
- Australian Institute of Family Studies  
**Project:** Promising Practices Profiles
- Barnardos  
**Project:** Looking After Children
- Early Childhood Australia  
**Project:** Dreaming DVD Stories Stage 2
- Aboriginal Nations Australia  
**Project:** Dreaming DVD Stories Stage 2
- Family Action Centre, University Of Newcastle  
**Project:** Parenting and Men Tip Sheets
- Infoxchange Australia  
**Project:** Early Childhood Communication Online (ECCO)
- St Lukes Innovative Resources  
– strength based resources
- Indigenous Professional Support Units from each state/territory
- Bradfield Nyland Group  
**Project:** Support and Management (SaM) Online

Check out the website for new resources produced through the SNAICC Resource Service this year:

- *Promising practices in out-of-home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers, children and young people: profiling promising programs* – 4 booklets
- *Dreaming Stories: A springboard for learning* – a booklet and DVD
- *Through Young Black Eyes: A handbook to protect children from the impact of family violence and child abuse* (2007)
- *How Safe is Your Family? A Leaflet for Parents* (part of the *Through Young Black Eyes* resources)
- *Through Young Black Eyes: A Guide for Indigenous Community Leaders to Respond to Family Violence and Child Abuse* (2007)
- Evaluation: a Picture and Story Poster Queensland Partners in Action Research Evaluation (PARE)
- Weaving Tracks: An Action Research Evaluation Story of the SNAICC Resource Service Poster

For information on the SNAICC Resource Service work, its projects and publications please check out the SNAICC website [www.snaicc.asn.au/srs](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/srs) or contact us on tel: (03) 9489 8099.

by Veronica Johns,  
SRS Programme Manager



## SNAICC Resource Service (SRS) Website

The day is getting closer and closer when the SRS website will 'go live'. The image above shows you what the Home page of the SRS website will look like. We wanted to use this visual image that has become embedded into the SRS logo, which is based on artwork by Veronica Johns. The website is being developed around three main concepts of resource provision that fit under:

- Campsite
- Rainbow
- Gathering

**Campsite** is the home base for the SNAICC Resource Service (SRS).

Campsite has three sections:

**ABOUT US** – information on the SRS background, priority areas of work, funding, contacts

**PROJECTS** – information about the SRS projects. This area also includes SRS project publications.

**SRS UPDATE** – Here you'll find information updating you on new projects, resources, ideas, happenings, and positive stories

**Rainbow** is where you can share your story and your picture in a less formal and more friendly way. Rainbow has two sections:

**PLACES** – member services can share stories saying who they are, what they

do and where they are located. Talk to us about including your website link.

**FACES** – member services can upload pictures and photos showing who you are, what you do and create a picture gallery for yourself. This is also a place where we can show snippets of your videos and digital stories.

**Gathering** is where resources are gathered and shared and has three sections:

**YARNING** – a section for sharing ideas as well as information and news through the chat/blog features.

**HAPPENINGS** – a section for publicising events, announcements, arts, conferences and workshops

**RESOURCING** – this section is the main clearinghouse section of the website and is where we will collect publications online, link to websites and resource collections. If a resource is not available on the web, we will provide summary information on how and where to get it.

Also see the report on the development of new SRS website features and tools and the SNAICC website redevelopment in the SNAICC Update (see page 4). The website is expected to be launched in early 2008.

For more information contact Tatiana Doreshenko on tel: (03) 9489 8099.

by Tatiana Doroshenko, SRS Clearinghouse Officer, and Veronica Johns, SRS Programme Manager



**Have you moved or changed your address details?**

**Has your organisation changed its name?**

SNAICC receives a large number of returned mail due to incorrect postal details each time a mail-out is done. It would assist us immensely if you let us know whether your details have changed or are about to change. Please complete this change of address slip and either fax or post it back to SNAICC, attention to Angelique Davis.

**Send this form to SNAICC at:**

PO Box 1445  
Fitzroy North, VIC 3068  
fax: (03) 9489 8044  
email: [snaicc@vicnet.net.au](mailto:snaicc@vicnet.net.au)

Please tick :

Yes, we would like to stay on the SNAICC database – please update our details.

OR

Please remove us from the SNAICC database.

Organisation:	
Contact person:	
Address:	
State:	Postcode:
Phone:	
Fax:	
Email:	
Website:	

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# SNAICC Publications and Resources

## COMING SOON

**Through Young Black Eyes: Manual – 2007 edition**

A fully edited and updated 2007 edition of the Manual to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities stop child abuse and family violence.

Publisher: SNAICC

**Cost: \$25** (Handbook) incl. GST, postage and handling

**Available for order online in early 2008**



## NEW – NOW AVAILABLE



**Through Young Black Eyes – Community Leaders' Guide**

32 page DL full colour booklet

&

**Keep Your Family Safe – leaflet**

double-sided DL full colour leaflet

Publisher: SNAICC

**Cost: free**

The fully updated and edited 2007 editions of the *Through Young Black Eyes* resources to assist communities to stop child abuse and family violence can now be ordered. Produced by the SRS.

**Promising practices in out-of-home care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers, children and young people: profiling promising programs (2007)**

By Jenny Higgins and Nikki Butler

Publisher: Australian Institute of Family Studies

4 booklets, PDFs for online download or print copies for order

**Cost: free**

These booklets profile what works well for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

in out-of-home care, and promotes strategies to help organisations overcome barriers to delivering services to them.

Produced through a collaboration between the National Child Protection Clearinghouse and the SRS, commissioned by the Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs on behalf of the Australian Council of Children and Parenting.

The series of booklets discussing the project's findings is available for download from the SNAICC website:

**Booklet 1:** Characteristics of promising Indigenous out-of-home care programs and services

**Booklet 2:** Assessing, training and recruiting Indigenous carers

**Booklet 3:** Comprehensive support for Indigenous carers and young people

**Booklet 4:** Indigenous responses to child protection issues

To download or order, go to:

[www.snaicc.asn.au/publications/](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/publications/)

**"Remember Me" – Commemorating the Tenth Anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* Report (2007)**

ISBN: 978-1-921174-11-7

Publisher: SNAICC

**Cost: free**

SNAICC's recent publication to commemorate the tenth anniversary of *Bringing Them Home*. Order online from SNAICC's website.



## COMING SOON

**Foster Their Culture – Caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in Out-of-Home Care**

Publisher: SNAICC

**Cost: free** to foster carers, foster care support groups, out-of-home care services and government departments

A resource to support non-Indigenous carers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Assists them keep children in care connected to their community, culture, identity and family. Available early 2008.

**To order or download SNAICC publications, go to:**  
[www.snaicc.asn.au/publications](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/publications)