



# SNAICC NEWS

## SNAICC Conference a big success

by Julie Higgins,  
SNAICC Policy Manager

Delegates gave SNAICC's National Conference an overwhelmingly positive response as they gathered for two and a half days at the Adelaide Convention Centre to share their experiences, ideas and knowledge about what works well in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

From the initial feedback, it was clear delegates were happy not only with how well the conference was organised, but also with the keynote speeches and workshop presentations and discussions.

SNAICC's National Conference, 'Ngadluko Ngartunnaitya – For Our Children' was the largest ever conference

on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, with 700 delegates from across Australia. They came from early childhood services, child and family welfare services, foster care agencies, health services, universities, research centres, government departments and local community organisations; they came from remote communities, regional centres, and capital cities from across Australia.

44 per cent of the delegates came from Indigenous non-government organisations, with the balance of the delegates coming from mainstream non-government organisations (29 per cent) and government agencies (27 per cent). More analysis of who the delegates and speakers were and where

they came from will be presented in the conference report next year.

SNAICC was delighted that we were so successful in meeting our conference objective of gathering people together to share and learn. Our conference numbers were much larger than expected, confirming SNAICC's view that people need interaction with others to renew their own ideas and their own work.

“Indigenous people already have the answers to deal with the challenges we face.”

Services with great ideas and programs wanted to share them with others for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families across the country and it was wonderful to see this happening at the many workshop and displays.

On another level, the conference keynote speakers lifted people above their day-to-day work with moving and inspiring presentations. SNAICC was honoured to host two renowned international Indigenous leaders: Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, and Terry Cross, Executive Director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association of the United States.



Delegates and performers at our National Conference. Photos by Rosie Elliot & Tatiana Doroshenko © SNAICC 2007

continued on page 9

SNAICC Annual General Meeting 15–16 November 2007 Perth, WA. Details on page 3

### Also in this edition:



SNAICC UPDATE  
NT Intervention,  
NAICD and more

page 4



EDITORIAL  
Federal Election 2007

page 3



Protecting Children  
and Our Culture

page 10



Saying 'sorry' still a  
priority

page 7



**SNAICC News** is the newsletter of the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc. It is published quarterly.

© SNAICC 2007. Copyright for images and text published is retained by SNAICC, unless specified otherwise.

Please seek permission from SNAICC before reproducing any information published here.

**Disclaimer**

While SNAICC makes an effort to ensure the information published in this newsletter is correct at the time of printing, readers should contact the relevant organisations for current information on events, conferences, services or publications.

The photographs in this publication are intended for illustrative purposes only. No inference is intended or implied that the children or adults depicted in the photographs are the subject of any issue(s) raised in this newsletter.

Contributions, feedback and suggestions to *SNAICC News* are welcome. Copy deadline for our **January** edition is **15 November 2007**.

**For publication inquiries, contact:**

Mark Lawrence, Publications Officer  
Email: [publicatons@snaicc.asn.au](mailto:publicatons@snaicc.asn.au)  
Telephone: (03) 9489 8099

**Subscribe to SNAICC**

Any organisation, government department, service or individual may subscribe to and receive *SNAICC News* and other information and resources on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's and families' issues.

**Fees (including GST):**

Government departments	\$100
Non-government organisations	\$55
Individuals	\$33

All subscriptions are paid annually, based on the financial year. Fee exemptions can be arranged for cash-strapped non-government organisations.

Members and affiliate members receive the newsletter as part of their membership.

**For subscription inquiries, contact:**

Bethalia Tabuai at SNAICC  
Email: [project4@snaicc.asn.au](mailto:project4@snaicc.asn.au)  
Telephone: (03) 9489 8099  
PO Box 1445, Fitzroy North, Victoria 3068  
[www.snaicc.asn.au](http://www.snaicc.asn.au)

# IN THIS EDITION

We bring you a special report on SNAICC's recent National Conference in Adelaide in this edition of *SNAICC News*. The conference was a huge success, and saw the whole SNAICC staff team, and the National Executive, jump in to work hard to make it a success. (SNAICC will publish a full conference report next year.)

As you can imagine, this meant that a number of things had to be let go for the time being, and unfortunately we can't bring you the special content on the theme of 'Education and Literacy' as intended for this edition of the newsletter. Instead, we will cover that theme in the next edition of *SNAICC News*, to come out in mid-December.

If you have suggestions or content you'd like to share on education and literacy initiatives that are working well with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, we'd love to hear from you.

Meanwhile, we are adjusting the subsequent editions' themes and deadlines accordingly to ensure that we still cover all the themes we intended, so if you have ideas, stories or photos related to the themes to share with our readers, please see the details below for copy deadlines etc.



© Mary Lou Divilli 2007

In this edition, we report on SNAICC's continuing work on the NT Intervention, the Indigenous Child Care Services Plan, and the forthcoming federal election.

We also have a report on the recent National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day on 4 August. It is hard to imagine that Children's Day – such an important event in SNAICC's annual calendar – was only a couple of months ago.

SNAICC's Policy Manager, Julie Higgins, also revisits the issue of a National Apology and Reconciliation, which the Prime Minister rekindled just before calling the election.

Please enjoy this edition of *SNAICC News*, and do share your feedback with us. ●

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

### Next edition (December-January) theme: *Education and literacy*

Do you have a case study, story, or perspective on initiatives in and priorities for improving education and literacy outcomes for 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 **15 November 2007**.

In 2007–08, 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 general 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>
January 2008	15 November	Education and literacy (released mid-December '07)
April 2008	TBC	Health and nutrition

July 2008 edition	TBC	Focus on Torres Strait Islander communities
-------------------	-----	---------------------------------------------

Each edition will generally be mailed out the first week of the month the edition is named for (except January's, which goes out mid-December).

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



## Federal Election New Leadership, the Right Leadership and No Leadership

– Julian Pocock, SNAICC Executive Officer

As readers of *SNAICC News* would know the federal election is well under way, with the Northern Territory intervention a continuing focus for all the parties and some new announcements relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children already being made.

In the last edition of *SNAICC News* we outlined our priorities for children and provided some details about the policies of the various political parties. Already it is clear that in this election the Federal Government and the ALP Opposition are seeking to appeal to voters on Indigenous issues balancing two competing factors.

We have had the Prime Minister's pre-election confession about his inadequate leadership in promoting reconciliation matched with his Northern Territory intervention welfare measures, which focus very narrowly on parenting as the central issue relating to child neglect. The Opposition leader, Kevin Rudd, in a major pre-election speech on the anniversary of the 1967 referendum, outlined some broad and ambitious goals targeting the health and well being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. At the same time he has been quick to state that a Rudd Labour Government would broadly support the NT intervention and the new welfare measures being introduced across the NT.

“The use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a political football that can be kicked from end to end between the major parties is shameful.”

Both parties appear caught between trying to convince some sections of the electorate that they are compassionately committed to the 'plight' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and that governments have let down Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, while convincing another part of the electorate that they see the 'plight' of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as largely their own fault.

This is what comes from opinion poll-driven politics where parties appeal to the existing biases and prejudices in the electorate, rather than developing policy based on values, principles and

## SNAICC Annual General Meeting

**Thursday 15 to Friday 16 November**  
**Best Westin Emerald Hotel**  
**24 Mount St Perth Western Australia**

**Thursday 15 November 2007**

### Members' Forum

9.00 am – 3.00 pm

An opportunity for members to discuss issues and policy directions for SNAICC and services working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

### Annual General Meeting

3.00 pm – 5.00 pm

### SNAICC AGM Dinner

6.30 pm onwards

AGM notification and papers have been sent directly to all members in the mail.

Only full and affiliate members who are financially current may attend the AGM.

Only full members may vote at the AGM.

### Friday 16 November

#### Service Visits

Members attending the AGM will have the opportunity to visit and learn from local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's services in the Perth area.

#### Further Information

If you wish to ensure your organisation's membership is financial, or have inquiries about the AGM or the Members' Forum, please contact

Kim Werner, SNAICC's Governance and Planning Manager, on tel: (03) 9489 8099 or email: [project2@snaicc.asn.au](mailto:project2@snaicc.asn.au)

evidence and then working to convince the electorate that such policies are the right approach – even if unpopular to start with.

The use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as a political football that can be kicked from end to end between the major parties is shameful. Neither the Federal Government nor the Federal Opposition can claim to have fearlessly advocated for the basic human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children or taken an evidence-based approach in responding to issues of child abuse and neglect in the NT.

The Federal Government started the election campaign stating that Australia required the *right leadership* whilst the Federal ALP suggests the country needs *new leadership*. At this point in time in relation to delivering better programs, policy and outcomes for Indigenous families and children both the major parties are providing *no leadership*.

**Election 2007:** SNAICC information and priorities for the federal election – [www.snaicc.asn.au/news/election07.html](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/news/election07.html)



# SNAICC Update



Natalie Hunter (Karu AICCA), Veronica P. (RRACSSU), Margaret Orr and Irene Nungala (Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi) and Roxanne Highbold (Regional and Remote Aboriginal Children and Services Support Unit) at the SNAICC National Executive meeting in August. Photo by Rosie Elliot © SNAICC 2007

## National Executive's August meeting

The SNAICC National Executive met in Melbourne on 16 and 17 August and, besides addressing a range of policy and governance responsibilities, had the opportunity to discuss various matters, including our September National Conference, the progress of the SNAICC Resource Service, and the federal government's Emergency Intervention in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and SNAICC's response to it.

Two representatives of the Alice Springs based Aboriginal child and family support and resource agency Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi, Margaret Orr and Irene Nungala, also attended the August National Executive meeting and along with the Executive's two Northern Territory representatives, Natalie Hunter of Karu AICCA and Veronica P of RRACSSU, gave invaluable insights to the NT communities' responses to the intervention.

The National Executive also endorsed two new SNAICC policy statements: the 'SNAICC Values Statement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children' and the 'Principles for justice in child well-being and protection'.

These two policy statements (previously mentioned in the April 2007 edition of SNAICC News) were initiated at our 2006 AGM in Cairns, and after further development and public consultation this year were finalised by the SNAICC

Executive. These two policy statements will be available on SNAICC's website in November.

The National Executive will next meet at the upcoming AGM in Perth, where they will elect SNAICC's Office Bearers for 2008.

## Northern Territory Update

SNAICC considers that the overall direction of the NT government's response is very positive, with new initiatives to include establishing a new network of Aboriginal Child Protection and Care Services at a cost of \$10.15 million. This proposal and new funding for early childhood and family services in communities, at a cost of \$9.6 million, indicate that the NT government is laying some foundations for community based responses to child abuse and neglect.

Comparatively, SNAICC has made clear its opposition to key elements of the Federal Government's intervention into the Northern Territory, including the welfare reform measures and changes to the land permit and land tenure arrangements.

We are receiving considerable feedback from local communities across the Northern Territory about the federal intervention, which typically includes gratitude that the federal government is finally taking decisive action mixed with anger that some measures introduced, most notably the welfare reform measures and changes to land permit

systems, are not necessary in order to tackle child abuse and neglect.

In SNAICC's view, there is no evidence that the NT welfare measures, which take over the decision-making role of parents in relation to meeting a child's basic needs, will benefit children in the long term. Under the measure, every parent in a prescribed area has 50 per cent of any government income support they receive quarantined. There is no reward in the new income management regime for parenting well, only a presumption that every Aboriginal parent in a prescribed area of the Northern Territory is incapable or unwilling to do so.

This sends the wrong message that parenting is a task that Aboriginal people cannot manage without a government bureaucrat making daily decisions for them. Rather than tackle welfare dependency as suggested, these measures will further entrench dependency and strip away the capacity of parents to manage independently.

SNAICC will continue to do what it can to monitor the implementation of the NT intervention with a view to minimising any negative impact on children and maximising the long-term benefit that can be derived from the initiatives being funded as part of the intervention. The serious implementation problems emerging with measures such as the alcohol bans reinforce the need for close community consultations in order to avoid negative repercussions for local families.

SNAICC's dedicated NT Update webpage is the best way to keep up to date with what we are doing on this issue. It has:

- information on what you can do to lobby the federal government and opposition,
- links to SNAICC's '10 Point National Action Plan to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect' and other responses,
- our published reports and briefings on child abuse,
- a link to the *Little Children are Sacred Report*,
- our media statements, and
- some of our chairperson Muriel Bamblett's media comments.

<http://www.snaicc.asn.au/news/SNAICCresponseNTJune07.html>

## National Indigenous Child Care Services Plan launched

After advocating and lobbying for a National Indigenous Child Care Plan for over five years, SNAICC is pleased to

# SNAICC Update

welcome Minister Mal Brough's recent announcement of the Indigenous Child Care Services Plan.

The Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs launched the Plan when he addressed the final plenary of SNAICC's National Conference in Adelaide.

The plan results from extensive consultation with the community, including with Indigenous early childhood services across the country, and with continuing feedback and advocacy from SNAICC into the plan.

**“Communities and families that raise their children strong in culture create many pathways to healing and revival.”**

In her media statement in response to the Minister's announcement of the Plan, SNAICC Chairperson Muriel Bamblett said, “This plan recognises that culturally appropriate, quality early childhood services are important to meeting the cultural and development needs of Indigenous children.”

“Such services,” she said, “are instrumental to keeping Indigenous children connected to their community and their culture, and are not only places where Indigenous parents can have their children cared for while they participate in work, training or education.”

It is critical that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have access to child care that is culturally relevant, affordable, flexible and able to help and support families with the breadth of challenges they face in raising their children.

The Indigenous Child Care Services Plan will go some way to helping to make this happen.

You can find SNAICC's media statement from 21 September in response to the Minister's announcement of the Plan on our website here:

<http://www.snaicc.asn.au/news/IndigenousChildCarePlan.html>

– Julian Pocock,  
SNAICC Executive Officer

## National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day (NAICD) – 4 August 2007

The National Aboriginal and Islander Children's day theme for this year was 'Raise Children Strong in Culture: pathways to healing and revival'. SNAICC would like to thank everyone who participated in, or organised activities for, their communities and children on or around 4 August, and we hope you had a great day.

We know of a number of Children's Day events across the country. For instance, in Port Augusta, South Australia, up to 200 children under 5 years old and their families enjoyed a family fun day held by the Early Years Parenting Centre, with a barbecue, face painting, games, and a 'Sea of Hands' event to bring together Indigenous and non-Indigenous children. The children and families from Undoonoo Child Care Centre in Woorabinda, Queensland, paraded down the main street to celebrate the day, and enjoyed a family barbecue with bush tucker, cultural activities and a traditional dance corroboree at Kangaroo Stadium.

Also, in New South Wales, the Narrandera Aboriginal Infants and Mothers Health Service hosted a children's outing at the local park day with face painting, hand painting on calico, didgeridoo activities, family photos, Wiradjuri singing, and races, in conjunction with local Aboriginal groups



The 2007 National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day poster, bearing the theme 'Raise Children Strong in Culture – pathways to healing and revival' © SNAICC 2007

and families.

As SNAICC's Chairperson Muriel Bamblett said on the occasion, this year's NAICD “allows our communities to highlight how important Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are to us, and what our culture offers them.”

“For an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child, culture is a source of strength, resilience, happiness, identity and confidence,” she said. “Communities and families that raise their children strong in culture create many pathways to healing and revival: children develop confidence and pride in themselves, their families and their culture; and communities grow in pride and strength.”

This year SNAICC received more interest from state and federal governments

**continued on page 6**



**NOW AVAILABLE**  
**“Remember Me”**  
**Commemorating the Tenth Anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* Report (2007)**  
**ISBN: 978-1-921174-11-7**

Published by SNAICC  
Full colour, 46 pages  
Free

SNAICC's latest publication commemorates the tenth anniversary of *Bringing Them Home*,

the report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families.

The publication is a collection of essays by contributors sharing their reflections and recollections on the National Inquiry, how its report was received by the Australian public

and government, and the continuing need for healing and a national apology to the Stolen Generations.

Contributors include former SNAICC Chairperson Brian Butler, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma, SNAICC Chairperson Muriel Bamblett, Professor Larissa Behrendt of University of Technology, Sydney (UTS), former SNAICC Executive Officer Nigel D'Souza, Professor Anna Haebich of Griffith University, former National Inquiry Secretary Jim Brooks, Rosie Baird of Karu Link-Up in Darwin, UTS law lecturer Terri Libesman, VACCA Policy Manager Peter Lewis, and SNAICC Executive Officer Julian Pocock.

It also includes excerpts from historical documents that chronicle SNAICC's work and perspective on the National Inquiry.

A limited number is available, and can now be ordered online (free). Go to:

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

# SNAICC Update

continued from page 5

to purchase our NAICD resources for mainstream schools and services. These departments were also very keen to organise NAICD events within these services. We are extremely pleased with this response and would like to acknowledge the following departments for their support: the Government of South Australia's Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation Division of the Department of the Premier and Cabinet and the Department of Human Services in Victoria.

Other external support SNAICC received this year for Children's Day was from the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP), who gave SNAICC funds to produce extra copies of this year's Children's Activity Kit. This worked out to be an extra 300 copies that we could provide to our members free of charge.

For those services who have not received an Activity Kit, there is still a small number left, which can be obtained by contacting the SNAICC office on (03) 9489 8099. Otherwise, you can download a PDF version of the Kit from our website at [www.snaicc.asn.au/children](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/children) at anytime. We encourage all services, schools and individuals who have a copy of this wonderful resource to use it as often as you would like – don't just bring it out on NAICD!

We hope to have the theme for 2008 on our website by late January 2008. We are currently working on theme and poster ideas, so if anyone has any suggestions please feel free to call our office on the above number or email us at [admin@snaicc.asn.au](mailto:admin@snaicc.asn.au)

More information on Children's Day is on our website at:  
[www.snaicc.asn.au/children](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/children)

– Carmen Isherwood  
SNAICC Children's Day Project Officer

## Children's Artwork Program – Winners

The SNAICC Conference held a Children's Artwork Program to provide children with an opportunity to participate in the conference and to express their ideas about their 'culture and family' and/or their 'hopes for the future'.

The children's artwork was displayed prominently throughout the Conference in Adelaide.

The artwork we received came from various schools and children's services across Australia. We invited drawings, paintings, poems, DVDs, sketches, photos, and mosaics. We were pleased and grateful with the response we had to the Artwork Program – thank you to all the services and schools who participated.

There were winners chosen from each state and territory that had entered the Program. The winners listed by state are:



**Northern Territory:** From Our Lady of the Sacred Heart in Alice Springs: Rashawn Williams and Deacon Braun

**Queensland:** From Ozcare in Gladstone: Bryce Martin

**South Australia:** From Kura Yerlo Children's Centre in Port Adelaide: Richard Rigney and Bradley Potter

**Tasmania:** From Aboriginal Childrens Centre in West Moonah: Joe Castle

**Western Australia:** From Palyalatju Maparnpa Health Committee Youth Services: Wirrimanu Young People and Palyalatju Youth Services

**Victoria:** From Batdja Pre-school in Shepparton: the whole Centre was awarded the prize.

– Carmen Isherwood

## Thank you!

Organising and hosting the SNAICC National Conference was a huge feat that was made easier with the leadership and assistance of the National Executive, especially the Conference Reference Group: Garry Matthews, Debbie Bond, Veronica P, Sharron Williams, Alison Overeem, and in 2006 Debbie Hart and Joanne Dela Bona.

We also particularly want to thank the National Executive members who helped out at the Conference by chairing the plenaries and facilitating workshops, helping out on SNAICC information tables and supporting staff in the logistics of the conference and dinner.

Thanks also to the staff of our member services AFSS and ARMSU in Adelaide, who also helped out at the Conference. ●



Members of SNAICC's National Executive, with some of the Conference Keynote Speakers, at the SNAICC National Conference Dinner in Adelaide last month. Back row, from left: Steve Larkins, Dawn Wallam, Sharron Williams, Geraldine Atkinson, Ray Burrows, Cindy Blackstock (Canada), Natalie Hunter, Lisa Coulson, former SNAICC Chairperson Brian Butler, and Terry Cross (USA). Bottom row, from left: Garry Matthews, Desley Thompson, Rose Bamblett, Muriel Bamblett, Debbie Bond and Tanya Ardler. Photo by Tatiana Doroshenko © SNAICC 2007

# 'Sorry' Remains a SNAICC Priority

by Julie Higgins, SNAICC Policy Manager

On the eve of the federal election and in the context of Prime Minister John Howard's recent commitment to a 'statement of reconciliation' in the preamble to the Constitution, it is timely to remember that a formal apology by the Australian Government to the Stolen Generations and all Indigenous people, through the Federal Parliament, for past policies of systematic removal of Indigenous children from their homes, families and culture, remains a key SNAICC priority.

In SNAICC's view, a National Apology that acknowledges the harsh injustices of past child removals, and the ongoing

impact of these on the health, happiness, and parenting skills of current generations of Indigenous people is a foundation upon which the success of many other initiatives will depend.

Child removal and the economic, social and political segregation of Indigenous people throughout Australia, for over a hundred years, laid the foundations for the unemployment, poverty, homelessness, poor educational and family dysfunction which many Indigenous people experience today.

Whichever political party is in power after 24 November, a National Apology will assist both the Indigenous community and the broader Australian community to have faith in the national government's integrity in the area of Indigenous child and family welfare. When we fail to recognise and acknowledge how the past lives on, we allow the injustices of the past to continue. Justice is an important part of the healing process.

SNAICC is pleased to see the campaign started by Get Up Australia calling on the next Prime Minister of Australia to make the first act of the new Parliament on its first sitting day "to be the act of saying sorry for past wrongs committed against Indigenous Australians". Get Up Australia is a non-partisan, independent lobbying movement that campaigns online on a range of human rights, environmental and democracy issues.

We would also welcome recognition of Indigenous Australians in the preamble to the constitution following genuine negotiation on the wording of this with Indigenous representatives. But more than this we would welcome the apology that would underpin the integrity of all other symbolic and practical steps towards healing and reconciliation.

Mr Howard has spoken of a "new reconciliation". SNAICC, however, continues to believe in true reconciliation and believes that, to quote Nelson Mandela, "True reconciliation does not consist in merely forgetting the past".

To remember the past properly means that the Government must apologise for past injustices to Indigenous people and then move forwards in a new spirit of partnership and trust to build the schools and houses and shape the programs and services that will make a difference to the lives of children and families.

**Get Up Australia:** 'The First Act is Saying Sorry' – [www.getup.org.au/campaign/TheFirstActIsSayingSorry](http://www.getup.org.au/campaign/TheFirstActIsSayingSorry)

**SNAICC:** 'Key Commitments Political Parties Must Make to Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children' – [www.snaicc.asn.au/news/KeyCommitments.html](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/news/KeyCommitments.html)



© SNAICC 2007

## SNAICC Signs Up in Support of Jordan's Principle

by Julie Higgins

Following a moving presentation by Cindy Blackstock at the SNAICC National Conference in September, SNAICC became a signatory of the Joint Declaration of Support for Jordan's Principle for resolving jurisdictional disputes affecting services to First Nations children in Canada.

Cindy, the Executive Director of the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada, told conference delegates the story of a little boy named Jordan, a First Nations child who was born with complex medical needs and whose family made the difficult decision to place him into care because they did not have access to the support needed to care for him at home.

Jordan remained in hospital for the first two years of his life as his medical condition stabilised. When Jordan turned two doctors said he could go to a family home, but then federal and provincial governments began

arguing over which department would pay for Jordan's at-home care.

The jurisdictional dispute would last over two years, during which time Jordan was the one to suffer – remaining unnecessarily in hospital. The costs they argued over ranged from major items such as house renovations to smaller things such as showerheads. The community initially tried to mediate a solution between the governments but when this failed they turned to legal action. Shortly after Jordan's fourth birthday in hospital, the jurisdictional dispute was settled, but not in time for Jordan, who sadly passed away before he could live in a family home.

In Canada, jurisdictional disputes involving the costs of caring for First Nation's children are very common. The vast majority of these disputes are between two federal government departments or between the federal government and the provincial/territorial government. In honor of Jordan, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada has instigated a campaign to call upon all provincial and territorial governments as well as the federal government of Canada to immediately adopt a child-first principle to resolving jurisdictional disputes involving the care of First Nations children.

Under this principle, where a jurisdictional dispute arises between two government parties (provincial/territorial or federal) or between two departments or ministries of the same government regarding payment for services for a 'Status Indian' child, which are otherwise available to other Canadian children, the government or ministry/department of first contact must pay for the services without delay or disruption. The paying government party can then refer the matter to jurisdictional dispute mechanisms. In this way, the needs of the child get met first while still allowing for the jurisdictional dispute to be resolved.

SNAICC was proud to join 403 other supporters of Jordan's Principle and was delighted to hear recently from Cindy Blackstock that Jordan's Principle will be tabled in the Canadian House of Commons on 31 October 2007 and that hopefully by Christmas Jordan's Principle will be a reality in Canada. We urge you all to also support Jordan's Principle.

**Support Jordan's Principle:** First Nations Child and Family Welfare Society (Canada), 'Joint Declaration of Support for Jordan's Principle' – [www.fncfcs.org/more/jordansPrinciple.php](http://www.fncfcs.org/more/jordansPrinciple.php)



# Conference Highlights

“

“For thousands of years, before we saw the first social worker in our territory, we raised generations of children from time immemorial.”

– **Cindy Blackstock**

“Culture is critical to children’s development needs. Culture is about identity and children who are strong in their sense of identity have greater resilience.”

– **Muriel Bamblett**

“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.”

– **Chris Sara**

“Our teachings across our cultures are rich, our stories are rich, in how to relate to each other as human beings.”

– **Terry Cross**

“SNAICC will not choose between land and child protection.”

– **Muriel Bamblett**

“Removing children from their families and their community is not always in the best interest of the child.”

– **Chelsea Yarrrie**

“We now know – beyond a shadow of a doubt – that the pervasive legacy of removal will impact on more generations to come. It will limit their life chances in ways that non-Indigenous children will not experience.”

– **Tom Calma**

“Each of us must realise the power and potential for change when just one individual armed with the right mind-set decides things can be better, and rejects absolutely the notion that second or third rate is good enough for Aboriginal children.”

– **Chris Sara**

“Where will the culturally appropriate and ongoing healing programs come from – if



governments don’t acknowledge the need for them, ensure that professional staff are trained to deliver them, and provide the funding for Indigenous community controlled organisations to implement them?”

– **Tom Calma**



“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.”

– **Chris Sara**



“Indigenous people already have the answers to deal with the challenges we face. The role of non-Indigenous organisations, including governments, is to help ensure that Indigenous organisations are fully funded and supported to deliver services that we know Indigenous children and families need.”

– **Cindy Blackstock**



“SNAICC believes that most Australians are looking for a choice that will see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enjoy the same basic freedoms and standards of living enjoyed by other Australian children.”

– **Muriel Bamblett**



“We, for too many years, have been told that our ways are bad. Those days are over! All of you being here, all of you engaging in the work that you’re engaging in, is proof of the fulfillment of the prayers of our ancestors.”

– **Terry Cross**

“Growing up in foster care, I often felt like I didn’t belong. I was disconnected from my mob, my identity was distorted and I often felt unsafe in the physical sense. However, what I didn’t have didn’t matter, because what I have always had is an extremely significant and very strong spiritual connection to my mum.”

– **Chelsea Yarrrie**

**Some of the Keynote speakers at SNAICC’s Conference in Adelaide. From Top:** Dr Chris Sara, Director of Indigenous education Leadership Institute, QLD; Cindy Blackstock, Executive Director of First Nations Child and Family Caring Society, Canada; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma; Chelsea Yarrrie, a young Indigenous woman studying social work in Canberra; and Terry Cross, Executive Director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association, USA. Photos by Tatiana Doroshenko & Rosie Elliot © SNAICC 2007

”



continued from page 1

## SNAICC Conference a big success

Cindy impressed the delegates with her warmth, poise and passion in her compelling speech, which drew from her culture's story-telling traditions. She provided powerful evidence from Canada showing that the over-representation of First Nations children in care is due to structural inequality – namely poverty and disadvantage – and are difficult for parents to change on their own.

Cindy challenged the governments of both Canada and Australia, as both G8 countries with huge surpluses, to meet their obligations to Indigenous children as some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged of their nations.

“Indigenous people already have the answers to deal with the challenges we face. The role of non-Indigenous organisations, including governments, is to help ensure that Indigenous organisations are fully funded and supported to deliver services that we know Indigenous children and families need,” she said.

Cindy has also written to Australian Prime Minister John Howard asking him on what evidence the federal government's emergency intervention in the Northern Territory is based.

“Canada and Australia, as both G8 countries with huge surpluses, [must] meet their obligations to Indigenous children as some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged of their nations.”

Terry Cross was equally impressive speaking about his Native American cultural background and about the ‘Relational World View’ that underpins Native American and Tribal thought and its value as a practice tool in child and family welfare. In this world view, the aim is to balance context, mind, body and spirit.

Delegates also heard from a range of leading Australian Indigenous speakers taking about issues closer to home – and close to their hearts. Tom Calma reminded us that the reality of Australia's Stolen Generations is not a thing of the past. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner marked the tenth anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* report in his keynote speech. Commissioner



Calma highlighted the importance of the need for healing for Indigenous families and for preventative measures such as housing, child protection programs and schools – something that he remarked is not a feature of the government's intervention in the Northern Territory.

The Conference also saw the release of SNAICC's new publication to commemorate the tenth anniversary of *Bringing Them Home*, the report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families. The book, “Remember Me”: *Commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Bringing Them Home report*, was launched by former SNAICC Chairperson Brian Butler, who spearheaded the campaign for the Inquiry to be held, during his keynote speech (see page for 5 details of this publication).

Other presentations by Indigenous keynote speakers included those by SNAICC Chairperson Muriel Bamblett

**At SNAICC's National Conference. Top:** performers from South Australian Aboriginal group Tal-kin-jeri Dancers performing on the morning of the last day. **Bottom (from left):** Keynote speakers Cindy Blackstock, Muriel Bamblett and Terry Cross. Photos by Tatiana Doroshenko © SNAICC 2007

(see page 7 for an excerpt of her keynote speech), child and adolescent psychiatrist Dr Helen Milroy, educator Dr Chris Sarra and Chelsea Yarrie, a young Aboriginal woman studying social work in Canberra.

On the final day, SNAICC was pleased that both the federal Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs the Hon. Mal Brough and the Shadow Minister Ms Jenny Macklin were able to address delegates and respond to questions from the floor.

A full evaluation of the conference will be published by SNAICC in the coming months and published in a report next year.

The Conference presentations and keynote speeches will be available from the SNAICC website from early November. ●

# Protecting Culture and Protecting the Future for Our Children

by Muriel Bamblett, AM  
SNAICC Chairperson



Photo by Tatiana Doroshenko © SNAICC 2007

This is an edited extract of the Keynote Speech Muriel Bamblett presented at the last day of the SNAICC National Conference in Adelaide on Friday 21 September 2007.

All of us know how important it is to tell our children stories. Telling stories helps children learn. More importantly, telling our children the true stories of our families and our peoples helps them form their identity. Our past, our personal stories, make us who we are. So, too, do stories of peoples.

Our stories are the source of our survival and our resilience. My story, my Aboriginal cultural story, is central to who I am. Without a story or a culture we are just animals, or worse, cogs in the machinery of the world economy. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are the longest continuing cultures in the world. They are sophisticated and holistic – linking spirituality with politics, education, economics, land care, and the law.

Our stories since colonisation have been dangerous and subversive remembrances. Even remembering our law, our dreaming stories, was a subversive practice, let alone our tales of massacres, resistance, dispossession, living on the mission and the ‘welfare’ coming to take away our children. Unlike Hollywood, we tell stories to survive, not just to entertain or sell products.

We have lost some of our stories because of the brutality of colonisation, but we are finding them again and learning new stories: modern stories of surviving the policies of assimilation and establishing our own organisations in law, health, education, child care and child and family services. And heroes such as Molly Dyer and Mum Shirl and the founders of SNAICC inspire us to

work towards a new story

So when we consider the future of our children – it is all about finding that new story to tell.

This year has seen many important anniversaries for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia: a celebration of past stories that we would have hoped marked a positive turning point in our relationship to our colonised environment. These were the tenth anniversary of the release of the *Bringing Them Home* report, which told the stories of the Stolen Generations, the fiftieth anniversary of NAIDOC, which celebrates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in Australia, and the fortieth anniversary of the 1967 Referendum, which gave de facto recognition of the citizenship Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“It is just common sense to say that families who are strong in their sense of identity and culture are better able to provide their children with good self-esteem.”

But it’s not only the big story we need to consider. The real story is that of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the ground.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people constantly seek to make a difference in the lives of their community. Our leaders are found in all walks of life and some of the most inspirational are those not known. These are the mums and dads who, in spite

of socio-economic disadvantage, in spite of the trauma they may personally have experienced, are still able to focus on doing the best possible for their children.

It is their perseverance that we must honour in all that we do and it is their perseverance that continuously guides us towards creating a better environment for our children.

The story of SNAICC is one that has tried to place due regard to those many stories of perseverance and resilience in communities. We have sought to honour those stories by fighting for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights and children’s rights throughout our history. We fought and won the battle to have an inquiry into the Stolen Generations.

We continue to fight for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific services for children and families. We have learnt from our battles and have responded accordingly. And we now seek to assist mainstream services in becoming culturally competent, not so that they replace our services, but so that they can compliment our services and be accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

At SNAICC, we have always said that Aboriginal and Islander services need to take control of the narrative so that the story of our children doesn’t become another tragedy.

We aren’t acting out of some ideology but real knowledge and common sense. It is just common sense to say that families who feel they have some control over their lives will have a better sense as to how to look after their children.

People who feel disempowered see the future as determined for them – they



become helpless and focus on immediate gratification rather than sowing the right seeds for their children's future. It is just common sense to say that families who are strong in their sense of identity and culture are better able to provide their children with good self-esteem.

It is just common sense to say that staying connected to land – which is our connection to our ancestors, our spirit – will provide our families with that sense of having a place to stand, a place to be.

So while we welcome the Minister for Family, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs's move in our direction in the area of the early years we do remain puzzled at the child protection end of the

“The ‘emergency measures’ may put culture at risk and have a negative effect on communities and they still don’t address the issue of creating a culturally-competent child protection system in the Northern Territory.”

spectrum, particularly given the Federal Government's response to child abuse issues in the Northern Territory. There seems to be a miss-match here.

We have the view that the ‘emergency measures’ may put culture at risk and have a negative effect on communities and they still don’t address the issue of creating a culturally-competent child protection system in the Northern Territory.

We also believe that there needs to be a better plan for protecting our children, not just in the Northern Territory but throughout Australia.

SNAICC has been advocating such a plan since 1995 and that plan is based on the common sense understandings about the role of culture and communities having a sense of control over their future.

Our hope is that a sober discussion of these issues can occur after the election – a discussion based on evidence and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expertise. Our challenge is to provide the evidence-base to support what we know works and lay those facts before government.

We need to get deadly, not only in our advocacy for a better future for our children, but in how we gather and harness the evidence to argue our case.

We need to learn from our traditions and stories if we are to meet the challenges of the present and create a better future for our children. In order to create a new story for our people there must be a new partnership and a new paradigm.

The critical question when it comes to the future of our children is what will achieve sustaining change. This means appropriate policy input into government, proper investments in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led solutions and being aware that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services won't succeed if they just replicate the mainstream.

We need a social investment strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families which:

- recognises that colonisation has impacted negatively on Aboriginal social and economic capacity,

- builds on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and
- respects the self-determining rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in order to re-build our community capacity.

If Governments treat us on the basis of our self-determining rights as peoples instead of treating us as passive recipients of welfare, as client communities, the debilitating effects of poverty can be overcome. If we can lobby government to not mainstream us but work in partnership with us and invest in our own vessels to navigate the waters of modernity, we can find ways to avoid the rocks of family dysfunction.

Our hope is that we are all up to the challenge to reverse the trends and restore rights and capacity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

Where we go to from now depends on your role, each and every one of you, in the coming chapters of this story. Let us not have our stories confused, or worse, destroyed. I hope this story becomes one of freedom for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and I suspect if it does it will also be a story of redemption for the non-Indigenous people in this land. I hope it becomes story of truth overcoming denial, justice overcoming oppression and hope overcoming despair.

It is the story of all our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies. It is the story of all of us. And it is a story I am looking forward to telling to my children and my grandchildren one day.

**Muriel Bamblett, AM** is the Chairperson of SNAICC and CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA).



The full version of this speech will be available from SNAICC's website in November.

© Muriel Bamblett 2007

“Our hope is that we are all up to the challenge to reverse the trends and restore rights and capacity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.”





**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:	

**Privacy statement:** SNAICC collects this information for our records and activities, including to mail our publications. This information is treated with strict confidentiality and is covered by our Privacy Policy. For details on how we protect your privacy, see [www.snaicc.asn.au/privacy.html](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/privacy.html)

# SNAICC Publications and Resources

## AVAILABLE IN PRINT

### State of Denial – The Neglect and Abuse of Indigenous Children in the Northern Territory (2003)

Researched and Written by Julian Pocock  
Publisher: SNAICC



First published in 2003, this ground-breaking report analyses the systemic failure of the child protection system in the Northern Territory to meet the needs of Indigenous children and families. Includes interviews with key non-government agencies, statistical overview of the child protection system, discussion and reform proposals.

A limited number is available in print, and can be ordered online (free). Go to: [www.snaicc.asn.au/publications/](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/publications/)

## NEW – NOW AVAILABLE

### 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 download online  
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.

These are the product of a project conducted as a collaboration between the National Child Protection Clearinghouse and the SNAICC Resource Service, 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

For electronic download, 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

SNAICC's new publication to commemorate the tenth anniversary of *Bringing Them Home*. Order online (free) from SNAICC's website.

For details, see **page 5** of this newsletter.

## COMING SOON

### Connecting Communities – The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Services Directory

Publisher: SNAICC  
Cost: \$35 including GST and postage and handling



A comprehensive print directory of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family services across Australia, based on SNAICC's online Services Directory. It is a joint project of Infoexchange Australia and SNAICC.

Available to order from SNAICC at the end of this year.

### Through Young Black Eyes – 2007 edition

Updated editions of the Handbook and related resources, including the community leaders' guide and community leaflet, will be available soon.

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



Available to order from SNAICC at the end of this year.

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