



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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SNAICC welcomes appointment of Professor Helen Milroy as a Royal Commissioner

SNAICC welcomes the appointment of Professor Helen Milroy as one of six Commissioners to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

“Professor Milroy is a descendant of the Palyku people of Western Australia who has extensive clinical experience in working with children and adolescents who have suffered child abuse and is an expert on trauma and grief. She will bring great experience and expertise to this important inquiry,” SNAICC Chairperson Sharron Williams said.

Ms Williams said SNAICC — in a joint submission with National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) — had called for the inclusion of an Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander Commissioner and was pleased that the Australian Government had named Professor Milroy among the Commissioners.

“We believe Professor Milroy’s appointment is a crucial step in ensuring the effective participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims in the Royal Commission,” Ms Williams said.

“SNAICC congratulates Professor Milroy and the other Commissioners on their appointment and wishes them the best in the challenging task ahead.

“SNAICC congratulates the Australian Government for this important initiative and its commitment to those children and young people who have suffered such gross violations of their basic human rights and dignity at the hands of institutions mandated to care for them.”

Ms Williams said it was imperative the Royal Commission’s processes enable a comprehensive review of the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people who were forcibly removed by State and Commonwealth past protection and segregation policies.

SNAICC and NATSILS had called for the terms of reference to specifically mention the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and to recognise the continuing impact of past protection and segregation policies.

“SNAICC is concerned that there is no specific reference to those experiences. The impact still being felt — for example, in the disproportionate levels of children being removed from their homes,” Ms Williams said.

However, she said SNAICC was pleased the terms of reference seek to ensure appropriate services and support are available for victims that come forward and any trauma they experience in discussing their abuse — as called for in the joint SNAICC-NATSILS submission.

**SNAICC: The national peak body for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander children**

“It is critical that further damage is not inflicted on victims of sexual abuse by the Royal Commission’s investigations and that their testimonies will be treated in the appropriate way.

“We trust that Commissioners will focus on preventative measures and more effective support to redress the impact of systemic abuse and its consequences, including intergenerational trauma, with abuse transferred to other members of the community and over time.”

Ms Williams said it was important that the Royal Commission learns from the findings and lessons of past inquiries, such as the 1997 *Bringing them Home* report, particularly in putting in place mechanisms to ensure its eventual recommendations are implemented in full.

“Commitments need to be made now to implement the recommendations, to ensure respect for those people — particularly members of the Stolen Generations — that have told their stories again and again and for whom little action has followed,” she said.

“In fact, SNAICC would urge that the inaction in relation to outcomes of past inquiries should be a subject of consideration for this Royal Commission.”

For more information: **Frank Hytten, SNAICC CEO, on (0432) 345 652**
Emma Sydenham, SNAICC Policy and Research
Manager, on ((0415) 188 990)
Giuseppe Stramandinoli, SNAICC Media Officer, on
(0419) 508 125