



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

8 March 2013

Statement by SNAICC Chairperson Sharron Williams

New approaches are needed to child protection — or we risk another Stolen Generation

The latest report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reveals an already serious situation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is getting worse.

Figures show that one-third of all children in out-home-care in Australia are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and that our children are eight times more likely to be the subject of substantiated child abuse and neglect.

This is simply not acceptable.

The financial cost of these continued policy failures is considerable. But the human cost to the individual children, their families and communities is devastating — and it will impact on generations to come.

New approaches are needed to improve the protection and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children — with the active participation of our families and communities.

Clearly current approaches have not worked, as the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children coming into contact with child protection systems in the states and territories continues to grow at an alarming rate.

Addressing the underlying causes that lead to child abuse and neglect is at the core of improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Our children and families continue to experience systemic discrimination and disadvantage in health, education and housing.

Any long-term and sustainable solutions to our children's welfare must be based on ensuring the basic needs of our children and families are met.

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

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities must be empowered to participate in a meaningful way in the design and delivery of programs that affect their lives.

A greater focus must be placed on early intervention and prevention measures — improving access to Indigenous community-based early childhood, child care, family support and child welfare programs.

We need to recognise and build on the strengths of Indigenous families and communities to support and nurture their children.

It is important to support and build on the successes of intensive family support services, integrated early childhood services, the increased focus on healing and reviving cultural identity and pride, and increased community action to protect and care for children.

The latest AIHW report also reveals that once in care, many of our children are losing connection with family, community and culture. SNAICC continues to advocate for the need to improve the way the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle is applied in each state and territory.

The principle is a key to meeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's rights to remain connected with their extended family, community and cultural heritage.

The principle must be strengthened, particularly in the Northern Territory, Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania, where a high percentage of our children are being placed with non-Indigenous caregivers.

Until we stem the tide of our children being placed in out-of-home care — and improve the chances of children in care remaining connected with their families and culture — Australia faces the bleak prospect of another Stolen Generation.

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

