

JULY 2017



SNAICC

SNAICC NEWSLETTER

SNAICC – NATIONAL VOICE FOR OUR CHILDREN



POLICY UPDATE

TRAINING

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CONTENTS

CEO UPDATE	2
POLICY	4
TRAINING	10
FAMILY MATTERS	14
7 TH SNAICC NATIONAL CONFERENCE	16
NEWS	18
SNAICC UPDATE	24

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CEO UPDATE

GERRY MOORE

It's been a busy start to the year; I'm sure that's the case for many of you. Everyone in the SNAICC team – from board to council to staff – has had their hands full over the past few months, and, personally, I'm incredibly proud of our output and results.

Some of our most significant achievements have come through our work as members of the Redfern Statement Alliance. In February we made our way to Parliament House to deliver the Redfern Statement directly to the Prime Minister, asking him to address the issues our communities and families face by working with us.

Following these discussions we've been able to organise a series of workshops with Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs Nigel Scullion that we're hoping will see some forward strides taken in the areas of health, justice, children and families, disability, and family violence prevention services.

We've invested a lot of energy this year, particularly in the early months, in working with our members and state peaks to provide submissions to a number of jurisdictional child protection reform processes. In partnership with our state affiliates we have provided submissions to the review of the Child Protection Act in Queensland; the child protection legislation reform in South Australia; and to the review of the Children and Community Services Act in Western Australia. We have also made a significant submission to the Royal Commission into Juvenile Justice and Child Protection in the Northern Territory.

Our submissions have been recognised to varying degrees, and we have seen greater successes in some areas than others.

Some of these processes have been very encouraging, while others have been clearly flawed. Regardless of all of this, I am grateful to everyone who put their time and energy into these submissions, and am satisfied that we advocated for our children with integrity, and with their best interests at heart.



We have maintained our advocacy to ensure the best for our children in the early years and continue to seek an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years sector based on the proven models of the ACFCs and the MACs. The *Jobs for Families Child Care Package* was passed in May (page 4). This has been a long process, which has included several Senate Inquiries and visits to Canberra to the Minister and the Department. While our major calls are yet to be truly heard or realised, we have seen funding levels secured for BBF services (which includes the MACs).

There's plenty of work still to be done to ensure a system that properly supports our children and early services so that they can thrive.

The trials of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family-led Decision Making in Queensland have concluded (page 7). The Queensland Government has recently announced its commitment to invest in community-controlled organisations and state-wide family-led decision making. This speaks volumes of the significant investment from everyone involved in these trials, and it's great that their successes have been recognised.

Our Family Matters Week of Action was a big success in raising awareness of our campaign to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture (page 14).

I was involved in some events in Melbourne that were all extremely well run, and I think our audiences got a lot out of hearing our experts discuss our campaign and the challenges we face. I know there was a lot of activity right across the country. It's been really pleasing to see just how far this campaign has come and how much everyone involved believes in it.

The 7th SNAICC National Conference is almost here, which is being held in Canberra this year, from 12-14 September (page 16). I'm certain that all of the hard work that has gone into the conference is going to be evident in a very professional and meaningful few days.

It's been really pleasing to see just how far Family Matters campaign has come and how much everyone involved believes in it.

Our SNAICC Training Team continues to deliver leading workshops to services and organisations in all corners of the country. I hear nothing but great things from everyone who participates in our workshops, particularly about our facilitators and their approach. There are several new faces in the team (page 10), who all bring their own unique experiences and strengths to our training, and I'm certain they'll continue to add to our reputation in this area.

Finally, as you have all been informed, I have resigned from position as CEO of SNAICC. It's been amazing working with this fantastic organisation during the past 15 months but, for personal reasons, I have decided to move back to NSW.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for making me feel welcome and for your support during my time with SNAICC. It's been a privilege being able to hold this role and contribute in my own way to the work we do.

I remain just as committed to all of SNAICC's ideals and values as when I was first given the opportunity to become the CEO of this impressive and important national organisation, and will continue to pursue our goals and advocate for our children.

Regards,

POLICY

PROJECTS AT A GLANCE

JOBS FOR FAMILIES CHILD CARE PACKAGE PASSED

“This outcome is a direct result of relentless campaigning by SNAICC and others in the early years sector, and for this we cautiously celebrate.”

In March 2017 the *Jobs for Families Child Care Package* was passed through as the *Family Assistance Legislation Amendment (Jobs for Families Child Care Package) Bill 2016*. This package will make significant changes to the child care sector, changing the way funding is provided to families and services.

OUR ADVOCACY

Over the past two years SNAICC has been actively advocating for the *Jobs for Families Child Care Package* to be amended to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's rights and needs are reflected in the government's approach to early childhood education and care. Throughout this process, which has included three Senate Inquiries, SNAICC's ongoing recommendations have been for:

- a dedicated funding stream for all our early years services;
- ongoing funding and support for all services – both those funded under the Budget Based Funding (BBF) program and established under the Aboriginal Children and Family Centre (ACFC) initiative;
- a minimum of 22.5 subsidised hours of early learning access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families; and
- a commitment to increase early learning places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by 5000 over the first three years of the package to redress the current 15,000 place gap.

When the package was first announced, the structure of the new system did not accommodate, or recognise, the essential and unique role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early years services. Without amendment, the package would have had a devastating impact on our children through reducing the funding available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early years services.

SNAICC, along with a range of other organisations in the early years sector, was also deeply disappointed that the package did not increase the minimum number of subsidised early learning hours families on low incomes could access.





FUNDING DEVELOPMENTS

The package has now passed, however, with a key amendment that is a potential improvement for a majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services. On the day that Bill was passed in parliament, the Minister for Education and Training, Senator Simon Birmingham, announced that the Australian Government would be setting aside \$61.8 million for services currently operating under the Budget Based Funding (BBF) program.

For services providing child care, this funding will now be available under the Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) through a non-competitive grant round, and funding agreements will be 3 to 5 years. Services will have access to this funding on top of the core funding streams under the new system (including the Child Care Subsidy and the Additional Child Care Subsidy), meaning that eligible services will have access to three streams of funding under the package. BBF services not primarily providing child care have confirmed access to this funding, but it is not confirmed what the arrangements will be and which government department will manage this funding.

WHAT'S NEXT

This funding commitment to support BBF services is a significant win for many of our families, and clearly shows the government has shifted its position and has recognised the essential and unique role that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services play. This outcome is a direct result of relentless campaigning by SNAICC and others in the early years sector, and for this we cautiously celebrate. We particularly need to acknowledge the role played by the Xenophon Party in securing quarantined funding for BBF services and the support of the ALP and the Greens in advocating for key changes to the original package.

There is still more work to be done to ensure this package properly supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and SNAICC is particularly concerned about funding security for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services that haven't been a part of the BBF program.

SNAICC's ongoing advocacy focus is to seek secure funding supports for services set up under the ACFC initiative; to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander BBF services are supported to thrive through the transition; to seek a long-term and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years program for all services; and to increase the coverage of community-controlled services to address the 15,000 place early learning gap.



NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN UPDATE

THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WORKING GROUP

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group (Working Group) operating under the Third Action Plan of the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* (National Framework) has been keeping busy over the past few months, continuing to provide advice and leadership to governments on how to implement best-practice approaches for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The National Framework, endorsed by COAG in 2009, is a twelve-year collaboration between governments, the non-government sector, and key researchers aimed at ensuring Australian children and young people are safe and well.

In the third stage of the National Framework's implementation (2015-2018), the Third Action Plan sets out an ambitious agenda for addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care through fully implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (the Principle).

The Working Group has been continuing to analyse how each jurisdiction is currently complying with the Principle. The only comprehensive and accessible data source available in the country is the recently tabled reports from the Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Andrew Jackomos. Entitled *Always was, always will be Koori children: a systemic inquiry into services provided to Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care in Victoria* and *In the child's best interests – inquiry into compliance with the intent of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle in Victoria*, the reports interrogate the Victorian government's compliance with the Principle. The Working Group noted that the presence of a specific Commissioner for Aboriginal children in Victoria is playing a significant role in driving a shift in practice to provide more effective and targeted supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. As of March 2017, Andrew Jackomos has been invited to join the National Forum for Protecting Australia's Children (National Forum), which is responsible for leading implementation of the Third Action Plan.



THE NATIONAL FORUM FOR PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN

At the National Forum in March 2017 two key recommendations by the Working Group were agreed to:

1. The development of an agreed set of indicators on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child safety and wellbeing to address the priority data gaps about children's experiences of the child protection system that were identified in the Family Matters Report.
2. Consideration of a full proposal on a culturally safe intensive family support and reunification program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families by the Commonwealth.

In April 2017, a workshop was held to action the first recommendation, with members of the Working Group, the National Children's Commissioner, and representatives from each state and territory – along with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare – convening to discuss development of comprehensive and consistent national data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child safety and wellbeing.

The Working Group has also encouraged ongoing discussion by the National Forum on how it can support the following:

1. A COAG target to eliminate over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, ensuring all children grow up safe and cared for within family and culture.
2. Increased investment in early intervention to ensure that:
 - a minimum of 30 per cent of all child protection funding is channelled into prevention and early intervention; and
 - a new federal program is developed for effective and culturally safe intensive family support and reunification programs.
3. Prioritising investment in family and community participation through:
 - state-wide Aboriginal family led decision-making programs; and
 - a federal program to trial local community strategies to redress local risks for children and mediate child protection intervention.
4. Prioritisation of community-controlled services.



THE FUTURE OF FAMILY-LED DECISION MAKING FOR FAMILIES IN QUEENSLAND

With the recent trial of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family-led Decision Making finishing at the end of June in Queensland, we have been eagerly awaiting the news of what comes next. At the beginning of June, the Queensland Government announced its commitment to “invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family-led decision making across the state.”

The announcement has brought the positive news that the government intends to continue increasing the empowerment of families and community organisations in decision making. The commitment is a testament to the quality work and dedication from everyone who has been involved with the trials.

The trials involved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers from Ipswich, Mt Isa, Cairns, and Thursday Island employing family-led decision making convenors to support families to keep children safe and connected to family, culture and community. Funding was provided by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

Some participating families were already involved in the child safety system, and other families were at risk of department involvement if family dynamics impacting on the children did not improve. To work with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander convenor, either outside of or along with the Department, gave families hope for change and self-directed steps to take to “get child safety out of our lives”.

A family member engaged in the trial explained: *“It’s made things a lot easier for us, knowing we have support if we need it. The way it was going I didn’t think I would have made it.”*

One convenor reflected on her role and her ability to provide culturally safe and sensitive support throughout the process of meeting families (including the children), preparing them for a family meeting, and then holding a family-led decision making meeting: *“They [families] are happy to do it [family led decision making] with us because we’re Murri. I think that’s the bottom line.”*

Convenors carried a caseload of up to 6 families at one time, with support lasting from three weeks to nine months or more. Each family is different, with some families needing several family meetings over a longer period of time, while other families found that issues were sorted during the preparation phase and a family meeting was not necessary.

One example of the changes family-led decision making can create is the story of a young mum with two young daughters. The mum drank frequently, had experienced domestic violence in more than one relationship, and was in care as a child. She was disconnected from her family and too shame to ask for help. Child Safety received a notification that the mother physically abused her four-year-old daughter while herself and other adults were drinking at home.

One week later a family meeting was held. Present at the family meeting were Child Safety representatives, the two children, the mother, and members of her family including an aunty, uncle, and cousin, the trial convenor, and the RE worker. Family growled the young mum about her drinking behaviour and told her they knew she could do better to look after the children. They also said they were willing to help in anyway possible with the immediate care of the children, as well as being of support to the mother. After 20 minutes of private family time, family advised all in attendance that they

The key differences of this approach include:

- Family plans are created in the family’s own words
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people lead the process and work to involve kin and community networks that can support the family
- Family members and support people choose for themselves what they can commit to and provide for the safety of children
- Everyone focuses on building on what is working well for the family and the belief that the children can remain safe in family’s care.

Convenors share their experiences through monthly teleconferences with their peers across the state. They talk about their successes and challenges supporting families with issues of shame, isolation, abuse and intergenerational trauma, and they learn from each other. This support, as well regular debriefing and supervision, is important for protecting the wellbeing of workers.

SNAICC has supported the implementation of the trial through enabling this peer sharing and support by convenors, as well as through training, site visits, practice support, collaborative discussions with department representatives, and engagement of an Expert Advisory Group for guidance and cultural advice throughout the trial.

The trial is now nearing completion, with an external evaluation underway. The evaluation is being conducted by Aboriginal consultancy Winangali, in partnership with international research company Ipsos. The evaluation will seek to understand what worked well for different families in different contexts, in relation to this model, and what can be improved to strengthen the family-led decision making model.

Evaluation findings will be used to inform planning and service delivery, and by the Department to make decisions about future design and funding of the model.

The findings and learnings will aim to enhance practice reforms currently underway in Queensland in regard to family support and wellbeing services provided through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers.

SNAICC sees the continuation of family-led decision making processes aligning with and adding value to current reforms that seek to empower families to be the drivers of change and decision making.

decided the aunty would look after the children in the short-term.

The mum is adamant she wants to care for her children, so Child Safety suggested reviewing the decision at six months, with a three-month review to ensure mum is on track and receiving the required support to help her reach her goal. Though the father wasn’t present, the family asked if Child Safety would agree to the father of one of the children spending time with the children as he lives close to the aunty. Child Safety stated this decision and responsibility lies with the aunty as the custodian for the children. The aunty said she would allow this contact on the condition that the father is sober.

The convenor reported that the meeting was intense, but short (one hour) and effective: *“The right people were there, which was a key thing, and the extended family were strong in their influence and decision making.”*

“The ACF represents a significant step towards genuine partnership between the Victorian government and the Victorian Aboriginal community. It was promising to see real acceptance and valuing of Aboriginal views and voices in the child protection and wellbeing policy space.”

Earlier this year SNAICC attended the Victorian Aboriginal Children's Forum in Healesville. SNAICC was invited to attend the forum as an observer and saw firsthand meaningful partnership with, and participation of, the Aboriginal community in Victorian child protection and wellbeing policy.

The Aboriginal Children's Forum (ACF) is a quarterly meeting convened by the Victorian Minister for Families and Children, the Hon. Jenny Mikakos, and co-chaired with a nominated Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO). The sixth ACF, held on 28 February and 1 March 2017 on Wurundjeri land, was co-chaired by Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett AM, CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA).

The ACF is a representative forum including ACCOs, mainstream community service organisations, and government. It was established to increase the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children and young people in, or at risk of entering, out-of-home care. The forum aims to progress self-determination for Aboriginal people and address the over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care by delivering on the agreed priorities of the *Koorie Kids: Growing Strong their Culture* document.

The priorities of this document and the agenda for the ACF include:

- ensuring every Aboriginal child and family has full access to a continuum of prevention, early intervention and placement services delivered through the ACCO sector;
- building the capacity of Aboriginal families, communities and ACCOs to care for children and reduce the number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care;
- placing all Aboriginal children in out-of-home care under the authority, care and case management of an ACCO;
- better supporting Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal carers to provide culturally competent placements and maintain and grow the pool of Aboriginal carers; and
- developing an approach and creating a comprehensive outcomes framework to address the cultural needs and rights of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care.

The ACF also provides an opportunity to share examples of best practice outcomes and information on successful ACCO and other community service organisation initiatives.

The ACF offers a real opportunity for the Victorian Aboriginal community, through representative ACCOs, to demand accountability and participate in policy development. The provision of Department of Health and Human Services data on agreed indicators or measures is a significant feature of the forum's proceedings and enables ACCOs to track progress on agreed targets and hold the government accountable to their commitments. This was keenly observed by SNAICC at the Healesville forum, which featured extensive and robust consideration of various data sets including those relating to the progress towards full case management of Aboriginal children by ACCOs.

However, the forum is more than a mere oversight mechanism for ACCOs to receive information and demand accountability – importantly, it is also an opportunity for input, feedback and suggestions on government policy and practice. Victorian ACCOs readily took this opportunity, contributing principles and detail to emerging departmental policy and winning agreement for further consultation. It was promising to see real acceptance and valuing of Aboriginal views and voices in the child protection and wellbeing policy space.

The ACF represents a significant step towards genuine partnership between the Victorian government and the Victorian Aboriginal community. We commend the recognition and promotion of the ACCO sector as best placed to meet the needs of Aboriginal children and families and the active acceptance of ACCO participation in policy design and development. We look forward to this partnership progressing self-determination and achieving the shared goals of eliminating over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care and advancing the safety and wellbeing of all Victorian Aboriginal children.

As a best-practice partnership approach, we recommend the ACF model to other jurisdictions and support ACCOs throughout Australia to call for the establishment of similar arrangements.

SNAICC PROVIDES EVIDENCE AND ADVICE TO THE NT ROYAL COMMISSION

SNAICC has welcomed the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory (NT) following last year's deeply disturbing revelations about its treatment of young people in youth detention.

Importantly, the Royal Commission has included a focus on the child protection system. As the Royal Commission has stated in its Interim Report, the youth justice and child protection systems in the NT are “inextricably linked”, as many children who enter the youth justice system have experiences with the child protection system and out-of-home care.

Throughout 2017, SNAICC has provided input to the Royal Commission regarding the failings of, and reform options for, the NT child protection system. SNAICC has contributed to the Royal Commission in a variety of ways, including by:

- providing a comprehensive submission on issues of concern and recommendations for reform;
- providing examples of promising practice from across the country that could inform changes in the NT;
- appearing at a public hearing in Alice Springs to provide evidence; and
- contributing to a joint submission with the Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the NT.

SNAICC's welcome of the Royal Commission has, however, not been without reservation. Despite more than 30 reviews, inquiries, and Royal Commissions into Australia's child protection systems over the last 10 years, two previous inquiries into the Northern Territory system in 2007 and 2010, and 20 years after the release of the Australian Human Rights Commission's seminal *Bringing Them Home* report, there has been very little progress made on genuine reform.

As such, SNAICC has advised the Royal Commission to make recommendations that support accountability for reform. In particular, SNAICC recommends the establishment of a dedicated Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People in the Northern Territory with responsibility for ensuring that reforms respond to the specific needs of Aboriginal children, families and communities.

Aboriginal children make up 89.1 per cent of children in out-of-home care in the NT, and their number in care has increased approximately 70 per cent in the last 5 years. Currently only 30.1 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the NT are placed with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kin or other family – one of the worst rates in the country. SNAICC has provided a raft of recommendations to improve practice to keep children connected to family, community, culture, and country – most importantly, investing in early intervention and prevention supports that could stop children entering care in the first place.

SNAICC has called for the development of the Aboriginal community-controlled child and family service sector, which currently has limited resourcing and capacity. SNAICC has also called for the establishment of Aboriginal child and family peak leadership in the NT because it is vital that Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are empowered to participate in policy design and decision-making and to deliver quality and culturally safe services supports for their families.

The NT also has the worst access rates in the country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care service and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children show higher vulnerability across every category of measurement in the Australian Early Development Census. SNAICC has called for investment in holistic community-led early childhood development and family support services in the NT by the Federal Government. This aligns with SNAICC's call for a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years program that would address the 15,000 place gap in service access for Aboriginal children across the country.

SNAICC will continue to advocate alongside Aboriginal communities and organisations in the NT to see that the Royal Commission results in desperately needed change to support better outcomes for Aboriginal children and families. We hope to see our vital recommendations made when the Royal Commission provides its final report at the end of the year.



TRAINING

PROGRAMS AT A GLANCE

THE JOURNEY TO BIG SCHOOL

The *Journey to Big School* workshop provides practical tools – incorporating and showing respect for local strengths – and focuses on transition programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in their journey from pre-school to primary school.

The Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service (TAIHS) is one organisation that has recently undertaken *The Journey to Big School* workshop with SNAICC. Kate Booth (Manager, Culture and Community Engagement) and Shannon McLeod (Training and Resource Officer) travelled to sunny Townsville in February to deliver the workshop. Kate and Shannon met with TAIHS for a pre-workshop conversation about how their community prepares for the transition of young children to school. It was impressive to hear the examples of good practise that were already occurring. Additionally, the meeting was valuable as it informed the workshop the following day.

The workshop was held with participants from both the education and community services sector. For the most part, the workshop was driven by participants and everyone involved discovered a real need for participants to network and find out the who does what in the community in order to form effective and collaborative partnerships to aid the transition of young Aboriginal children and their families to school.

Participants reported they valued the workshop as it helped them to identify gaps in their current transition to school programs, clarifying barriers for families, and where to locate resources.



SNAICC Training and Resource Officer, Shannon McLeod, with participants in Townsville.

TRAINING IN 2017

SNAICC workshops are available nationally.

If you are interested in hosting a workshop for your organisation, please call the SNAICC Training team to see how we can meet your training needs.

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INTENSIVE AND TARGETED FAMILY SUPPORT TRAINING

SNAICC is offering two-day intensive and targeted family support training for people supporting families, carers, children and young people to address complex needs in a culturally appropriate way.

The training package, which incorporates the *Stronger Safer Together* resource, is tailored specifically to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers and non-Indigenous services working with our families. The package draws on community input and best practice examples gathered from key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and organisations.

This training enhances workers' expertise in recognising and building on the strengths of families to grow up children safe and connected to their families, communities and culture.

Key topics include:

- how trauma impacts the brain and behavioural responses of children;
- building partnerships with service providers and mapping community supports; and
- including families in case planning and decision-making.

We also know that working with mob intensively can be a 24/7 job that impacts on workers' wellbeing. During training, approaches for self-care are discussed, including what you can do for yourself and what your workplace can provide.

SNAICC recently delivered this training on Thursday Island in the Torres Strait. SNAICC trainers partnered with local program coordinator and trainer, Cecilia Wright of Mura Kosker, to share facilitation over the two days. SNAICC supports collaborative training arrangements because it creates an opportunity to tailor training to local needs while also supporting the professional development and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their own community setting.

Participant reflections included:

"Made me realise the importance of the knowledge we have at a cultural level, and how to pass that knowledge to our children."

"It exceeded my expectations, drawing on others' knowledge, practical strategies and trauma info."

"Thank you for creating safe space and allowing space and time to laugh and storytelling."

Our thanks to Mura Kosker Society and Port Kennedy Association for hosting training on Thursday Island in April.

WORKING AND WALKING TOGETHER

***Working and Walking Together* develops culturally appropriate professional practice and service responses for mainstream services working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations by providing ideas, information, tools, practical approaches, and way to strengthen relationships.**

Northside Community Services, who work with various people in their community in Canberra, were looking to ensure their services were accessible to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Jenine Godwin-Thompson (Manager, Resources) and Shannon McLeod (Training and Resource Officer) worked with Northside to present a two-day cultural competency workshop. In-depth discussions were had on respectful communication, with several participants commenting that they really valued having Aboriginal facilitators sharing their experiences.

Jenine and Shannon also recently facilitated a *Working and Walking Together* workshop with ACTCOSS, the ACT Council of Social Services. Participants at the workshop were from varied services, including arts centres, and family and community services. Participants from ACTCOSS were looking to gain more insight into the lives of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and practical was to close the gap. At the conclusion of the training participants reported that they enjoyed the interactive approach to the workshop, which included activities and discussion, as well as the visual aids, tools and resources provided.



A PLACE FOR CULTURE

Supporting cultural competence of non-Indigenous educators in ECEC services who work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

A Place for Culture provides a cultural competency framework training package for non-Indigenous educators in early childhood education and care services, which supports the improvement of service access and service quality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

A Place for Culture has been developed to take non-Indigenous educators on a journey through our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and context to provide a deeper understand, and support their current culturally inclusive practice approach throughout their services. With the support and guidance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years educators, Elders, community members, and academics, SNAICC has brought the two worlds together.

The package aims to ensure educators meet the National Quality Standards (NQS) and most importantly build a genuine understanding, respect and relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, communities, children and families.

The workshops are not intended to provide a detailed *how to* guide to implement the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF), but instead to promote conversations, genuine understanding, and ideas on effective approaches and strategies.

KEY TOPICS OF DISCUSSION INCLUDE

- Unpacking white Australia's Black history
- Understanding how the past still impacts the present
- Self-assessment and review of cultural awareness and inclusive practice
- Developing culturally appropriate and sustainable relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, children and families
- Implementing culturally appropriate programs and practice in line with the Early Years Learning Framework and National Quality Standards
- Putting everything into practice: ideas, strategies and approaches that promote, explore and celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture whilst implementing the outcomes, principles and practices from the Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To build the capacity of non-Indigenous educators in ECEC services to improve service access and service quality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.
- To develop awareness, culturally inclusive practice, and practice approaches of ECEC educators.
- To build respectful and genuine approaches and engagement of non-Indigenous educators with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC services, communities and networks.

TARGET GROUP

- Non-Indigenous educators in Early Childhood Education and Care services, family day care, and early years programs.

FAMILY VIOLENCE

Developing and delivering workshops to improve the sectors capacity to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families experiencing Family Violence

The SNAICC training and resource team are working collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts in the sector to develop and deliver family violence workshops across the country.

The SNAICC team are focusing on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous practitioners to develop culturally safe, best practice skills, tools, initiatives, strategies and resources required to minimise the harm caused by family violence.

The delivery of these workshops intend to enhance the family violence sector's capacity to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities to build their potential to live safe, healthy lives free from family violence.

The workshops are run over three days and target four specialist areas: **Safe for community; Safe for our kids; Safe for our women; and Safe and healthy men.**

SNAICC's approach to family violence training and service delivery with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities includes:

- Sharing cultural, historic, strength-based and healing approaches and understandings, which address family violence and trauma in holistic and integrated ways.
- Specific culturally appropriate skill development activities, including a focus on the issues and strategies for working with each target group and looking at best practice approaches.
- Consideration of supervision, support and debriefing issues designed to build capacity and address vicarious trauma arising for workers with family violence.
- Supporting the rights of our children and young people, women, and men to live strong in culture, in safety, and free from violence.
- Supporting place-based ownership, agency and empowerment approaches to enhance the capacity for local communities to direct and guide responses.
- Linking training to relevant national competencies, including cultural safety and those related to each specific target group, to enhance recognition pathways.
- Providing hands-on approaches and theoretical and cultural concepts and frameworks.

SNAICC are proud to have this opportunity to share our cultural knowledge and expertise with the family violence sector to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our children, their families and communities.

SNAICC WORKSHOPS ARE AVAILABLE NATIONALLY

WANT TO HOST A WORKSHOP FOR YOUR ORGANISATION?

Contact the SNAICC Training Team to see how we can meet your training needs.

E: training@snaicc.org.au | T: 03 9489 8099

SNAICC training is customised to meet the needs of participants and organisations, and is always designed specifically for working from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective and approach.

Through Young Black Eyes (TYBE) train-the-trainer

Builds participants' confidence and skills for running workshops using the Through Young Black Eyes workshop kit. Participants discuss and learn about issues running programs relating to family violence, child abuse, and neglect in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Recognising and Responding to Trauma

Looks at trauma and understanding its impacts, and builds understanding of trauma-informed approaches to healing and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Deadly Futures

Provides training and accompanying resources for educators operating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander playgroups or parenting programs. These educational sessions will support parents, carers, and playgroup leaders to use evidence-based strategies to increase their children's social, emotional, and educational development.

Email training@snaicc.org.au



FAMILY MATTERS



NATIONAL WEEK OF ACTION

The first half of 2017 has seen significant momentum for the Family Matters campaign, with a focus on collaborative political strategy and a very successful inaugural National Week of Action in May.

The Family Matters Leadership Group in Queensland is also celebrating the launch in May of an Australian first: a 20-year strategy to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, Our Way, along with Changing Tracks, a three-year action plan authored in partnership with the Queensland Family Matters Leadership Group.

The Family Matters Statement of Commitment continues to garner support. Current support includes:

- 102 organisations
- 32 state, territory and federal parliamentarians
- 9 children's commissioners, advocates and guardians.



KEY CAMPAIGN ACHIEVEMENTS OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS INCLUDE

- Attracting over \$1.3 m funding pledged for state, territory and national campaign activities over the last 18 months. Funding so far includes recurring sponsorship from several key campaign partners; new funding from Mercy Community Services, Reconciliation Australia and UnitingCare Queensland; and a Gandel Philanthropy grant, which has provided the campaign with \$250,000 over two years, with a specific focus on Victorian-level activities.
- Securing two years' sponsorship from Woodside for the WA Family Matters jurisdictional working group, including for a WA Family Matters coordinator, William Hayward.
- A very successful inaugural National Week of Action, with significant events hosted in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia, and national media coverage of many of the campaign's key advocacy messages.
- Incoming Northern Territory Minister for Territory Families Dale Wakefield signing the Family Matters Statement of Commitment.
- Western Australia's Children's Commissioner Colin Pettit and Tasmanian Children's Commissioner Mark Morrissey signing on to the Statement of Commitment, along with NSW Advocate for Children and Young People, Andrew Johnson. The overwhelming majority of all Australian Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocate have now shown their commitment to the campaign.
- Leadership from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation, which will host an initial meeting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream stakeholders later this year to discuss establishing a Tasmanian Jurisdictional Working Group.





STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In addition to continuing to work closely with Save the Children Australia as a principal campaign partner, SNAICC has held roughly 20 stakeholder meetings with existing and potential new members of the Family Matters Strategic Alliance in 2017, including with a wide range of Tasmanian stakeholders, the Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance, ACT community-controlled organisations, and influential NGOs including the Australian Red Cross, UNICEF, The Benevolent Society, the Society of St Vincent De Paul, Anglicare and TEAR Australia.

SNAICC has also held two meetings with Megan Mitchell, National Children's Commissioner. Megan is keen to work collaboratively with Family Matters and the newly appointed Social Justice Commissioner, June Oscar.

In January, Family Matters made a submission to the 2017-18 Federal Budget. SNAICC has held meetings focused on the priorities outlined in this submission with a range of senior bureaucrats, political advisers, Ministers and other members of parliament at state and national levels.

In February, Family Matters attended a workshop with senior staff from DSS and PM&C in Brisbane based on the Family Matters budget submission and Roadmap, and explored the potential role that the Commonwealth might play in ensuring that placement arrangements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children align with the holistic intentions of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

COLLABORATIVE ADVOCACY IN ACTION: THE REDFERN STATEMENT ALLIANCE

On 14 February 2017, Australia's leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies demanded a new relationship with government as they delivered the historic Redfern Statement directly to the Prime Minister at Parliament House (page 23). As a part of the Redfern Statement Alliance, Family Matters was proud to support this historic event.

A significant achievement for the campaign on the day was Opposition Leader Bill Shorten's reply to the Prime Minister's Closing the Gap report, with which he called for a "new priority on stronger families", pledging to listen to and work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to look at new approaches to reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed by child protection authorities.

Another significant activity under the Redfern Statement Alliance was a workshop on Child Development, Safety & Wellbeing in Melbourne on 9 June, as part of an ongoing series of peak-led workshops forming part of the Redfern Statement engagement process. The workshop was based primarily on many of the goals and priorities of the Family Matters campaign, and participants identified core priorities, principles and definitions of what success would look like for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. The workshops will be followed by a summit and Ministerial Forum later in the year.



2017 SNAICC CONFERENCE

BRING
THEM
HOME



SECURING THE RIGHTS OF OUR CHILDREN

7TH SNAICC NATIONAL CONFERENCE
12 - 14 September 2017
National Convention Centre Canberra

The **7TH SNAICC NATIONAL CONFERENCE** is taking place at **CANBERRA'S NATIONAL CONVENTION CENTRE** from **12-14 SEPTEMBER 2017**.

Coinciding with the 20-year anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* report, the 2017 Conference will primarily focus on the issues of ongoing child removal, its causes, and the consequences for children, families and communities.

The SNAICC National Conference is one of the largest conferences of its type in the southern hemisphere and the 2017 Conference promises to again provide a comprehensive program with something for everyone attending.

Over three days the Conference will showcase over 60 sessions, including a range of panel discussions, workshops and presentations. Two pre-Conference masterclasses are scheduled immediately prior the Conference on 11 September, offering practical takeaway learnings for practitioners on the frontline.

Conference keynote speakers include an impressive line-up of talented local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders and international experts speaking on a range of subjects – the complete speaker list and program are available online.

Registrations are now open – go online to register today:

WWW.SNAICC.ORG.AU/CONFERENCE

The team at SNAICC are currently putting together an exciting Social Program to accompany the 7th SNAICC National Conference taking place at the National Convention Centre from 12-14 September 2017. Local performances by amazing young talent have been incorporated into the program.

THE WELCOME RECEPTION will take place after the sessions on Day One (12 September) of the Conference. This is a great opportunity to catch up with colleagues, as well as meet new friends, exhibitors and sponsors. The Welcome Reception is included in the Full Registration and Exhibitor Registration fees. Additional tickets may be purchased for \$77.

THE CONFERENCE DINNER is being held on Wednesday 13 September at Old Parliament House. The dinner is a highlight of the Conference and a night not to be missed. This is a great time to network with friends and colleagues, enjoying the historic surroundings, fantastic entertainment, and the delicious local food. Dress is smart casual. Tickets are \$140.

Remember to get in quick for the Conference Dinner, as places are limited. It is recommended that you book in early.

Don't forget that Canberra has some wonderful exhibitions, with many showing over the week of the Conference, including the Trail at the Australian National Botanic Gardens, and the *For Country, For Nation* exhibition at the Australian War Memorial.

2017 CONFERENCE SPEAKER PROFILES

DR SARAH KASTELIC

Executive Director of the National Indian Child Welfare Association (USA)

Dr Sarah Kastelic will deliver the opening keynote address at the 7th SNAICC National Conference. Dr Kastelic will focus predominately on the effective implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act – a piece of legislation that has many policy parallels to our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

Dr Kastelic will share her knowledge of, and experience in, the United States's Indian child welfare sector in a way that can assist and inform our own advocacy efforts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Australian context.

Dr Sarah Kastelic is the Executive Director of the USA-based National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) – the only national American Indian organisation focused specifically on the tribal capacity to prevent and respond to child abuse and neglect and the most comprehensive source of information and advocacy regarding American Indian child welfare.

Sarah is Alutiiq, an enrolled member of the Native Village of Ouzinkie. She joined NICWA in 2011 during the deliberative four-year executive transition plan for NICWA's founding Executive Director Terry Cross, and became its Executive Director in January 2015.

Before coming to NICWA, Sarah served the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), the oldest, largest, and most representative national organisation serving tribal governments, from 1998–2010, including founding the NCAI Policy Research Center in 2003.

Sarah received a Bachelor's degree in sociology from Goucher College in 1996 and earned a Master's degree (1997) and PhD (2008) from the George Warren Brown School of Social Work at Washington University in St. Louis.

Adjunct Professor

MURIEL BAMBLETT AM

CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

Muriel Bamblett is a Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung woman who has been employed as the CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency since 1999. Muriel was Chairperson of SNAICC for 10 years and was recently awarded a Lifetime Associate Membership of SNAICC.

Muriel is active on many boards and committees concerning children, families and the Indigenous community, including the Victorian Children's Council; Aboriginal Children's Forum; Aboriginal Treaty Interim Working Group; the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum and the Aboriginal Justice Forum.

Muriel has been the recipient of a number of awards, including the Robin Clark Memorial Award for Inspirational Leadership in the Field of Child and Family Welfare; was inducted into the 2011 Victorian Honour Roll of Women and was a finalist for a Human Rights Medal with the Australian Human Rights Commission. Muriel was awarded a Member of the Order of Australia in the 2004 Australia Day Honours for her services to the community, particularly through leadership in the provision of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

In 2009, Muriel was appointed by La Trobe University as an Adjunct Professor in the School of Social Work and Social Policy within the Faculty of Health Sciences. This year Muriel was awarded a Doctor of Letters in Social Work (honoris causa) for leadership in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander welfare and affairs by the University of Sydney.

MICK GOODA

Royal Commissioner for the Royal Commission into the Child Protection and Youth Detention Systems of the Northern Territory

Mick Gooda will share his experience as a Royal Commissioner for an inquiry that has closely examined the failings of the Northern Territory child protection system and its links with the youth justice system.

Mick Gooda resigned from his position as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner with the Australian Human Rights Commission, effective 1 August 2016, in order to take up the position of Royal Commissioner for the Royal Commission into the Child Protection and Youth Detention Systems of the Northern Territory. He is also currently on the Referendum Council on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Mick has been involved in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs throughout Australia for over 35 years and has always actively promoted the concept of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples being intimately involved in decisions that affect them. As Social Justice Commissioner, Mick advocated for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia and sought to promote respect and understanding of those rights amongst the broader Australian community.

Mick is particularly passionate about closing the health gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, a move he says is "non-negotiable". Immediately prior to taking up the position of Social Justice Commissioner, Mick was the Chief Executive Officer of the Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal Health for over five years. Here, he drove a research agenda which placed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 'front and centre', working alongside world leading researchers.

Mick is a proud Gangulu man from Central Queensland and, in his spare time, can usually be found in the Sunshine State.

The Conference will also feature two important plenary panel discussions involving prominent community and national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

The first Bring Them Home – Securing the Rights of our Children session will be a dynamic and frank Q&A discussion centred on learnings from the Bringing Them Home report, 20 years on, in the context of increasing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. This session will be facilitated by Professor Larrisa Behrendt (Chair of Indigenous Research, Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology, Sydney) and feature Mick Dodson AM (Director, National Centre for Indigenous

Studies, The Australian National University; Professor of Law, ANU College of Law, Canberra); Natalie Lewis (CEO, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak); Jim Morrison (Co-Chair, West Australian Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation); and Richard Weston (CEO, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation).

The closing plenary panel will strategise around continued and future action. Justin Mohamed (Chief Executive Officer, Reconciliation Australia)

will facilitate an open dialogue between the featured panellists – Andrew Jackomos PSM (Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Victoria); Megan Mitchell (National Children's Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission); Dr Jackie Huggins (Historian and Author; Co-Chair, National Congress of Australia's First Peoples) and June Oscar AO (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Australian Human Rights Commission) as well as conference delegates.

NEWS

CHILDREN'S DAY 2017 | UNITED NATIONS | BRINGING THEM HOME ANNIVERSARY | BUDGET |



You can now pre-order your Children's Day bags!

Celebrate your day with a bag of fun resources for children of all ages at the price of \$6 per bag.

The Children's Day resource bag contains:

- Activity book - Colour pencils
- Water bottle - Snap band
- Little J & Big Cuz stickers

The Children's Day bags can be ordered online at <http://www.snaicc.org.au/shop> before Monday 17 July 2017.

You can learn more about Children's Day and resources by visiting our website www.aboriginalchildrensday.com.au, contacting us on 03 9489 8099, or by getting in touch with a team member at info@snaicc.org.au.

CHILDREN'S DAY 2017

We can't wait to celebrate Children's Day in 2017: *Value Our Rights, Respect Our Culture, Bring Us Home*

SNAICC is proud to launch National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day (Children's Day) 2017.

Children's Day is held on 4 August each year and is coordinated by SNAICC – National Voice for our Children. Children's Day was first observed in 1988, and was set against the backdrop of protests led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their supporters. For the Stolen Generations who'd had their families torn apart, and who may not have even known their own birthdays, a day was needed to celebrate our children, to give them confidence and make them feel special and included. Children's Day has grown each year, becoming a major event in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Each year, SNAICC produces and distributes resources to support organisations, services, schools, and communities to celebrate this important day.

In 2016, SNAICC distributed over 10,000 Children's Day celebration bags and other resources to support over 400 Children's Day events across Australia. Each year, we see an increase in the number of Children's Day events held by Multi-functional Aboriginal Children's Services, early years learning centres, community, government and non-government organisations.

The theme for Children's Day 2017 is *Value Our Rights, Respect Our Culture, Bring Us Home*.

This year Children's Day recognises the 20th anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* report and the many benefits children experience when they are raised with strong connections to family and culture.

Published in 1997, the seminal *Bringing Them Home* report exposed the violations of the fundamental human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities through the policies and practices of the Stolen Generations.



UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR

SNAICC was proud to host a roundtable discussion with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, during her visit to Australia in late March and early April this year. The meeting was one of several thematic meetings Ms Tauli-Corpuz attended during her visit.

As the Special Rapporteur Ms Tauli-Corpuz has a mandate to promote good practices between Indigenous peoples and governments, implement international standards concerning the rights of Indigenous peoples – such as those taken from the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – and report on the overall human rights situations of Indigenous peoples in selected countries, including Australia.

In March 2017, over 20 attendees from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and non-Indigenous community service organisations gathered at the SNAICC office to meet the Special Rapporteur and discuss the current situation and challenges in our work to protect and realise the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The group – including representatives from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Aboriginal Family Law Services (WA), Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit, UNICEF, and Amnesty International – took the opportunity to report on the progress in implementing recommendations from the previous Special Rapporteur's

visit to Australia in 2009 and the Committee on the Rights of the Child's Concluding Observations of 2012. These leaders also highlighted the significant work that still needs to be done, offering strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led recommendations.

Following the roundtable discussion, and as part of her End of Mission Statement, Ms Tauli-Corpuz highlighted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child removal practices as a particular concern. Ms Tauli-Corpuz reflected that “the prolonged impacts of intergenerational trauma from the Stolen Generations, dispossession and entrenched poverty continue to inform Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's experience of child protection interventions”.

Ms Tauli-Corpuz then made several strong recommendations, including the prioritisation and support of community-led early intervention programs which invest in families and prevent child protection involvement, a target and national strategy to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, a Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be established in each state and territory, and a national coordinating entity to be set up.

A full report of the Special Rapporteur's visit, including detailed recommendations, will be released later in the year. SNAICC looks forward to progressing these recommendations in partnership with our members and government.



BRINGING THEM HOME ANNIVERSARY

Bringing Them Home anniversary an opportunity to acknowledge the past and respond to the needs of the present.

On the 20th anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* report, SNAICC pays tribute to the Stolen Generations: the children forcibly removed from their families, the families that lost their children to past government policy, and the communities that continue to deal with the immense trauma these policies have brought.

SNAICC pays its respects to every Stolen Generations member and acknowledges the suffering they have endured and its lifelong impacts.

“This year we reflect on a number of things: it has been 50 years since the government chose to recognise our people as citizens in our country through the 1967 Referendum; 25 years since Eddie Mabo fought for acknowledgement of our people as owners of our lands and waters; and 20 years since our country acknowledged the dark past of forcibly and inhumanely removing our children and tearing our families apart,” says Sharron Williams, SNAICC Chairperson.

“In the 20 years that have followed the handing down of the *Bringing Them Home* report only a handful of the recommendations have been implemented. This influences everyone’s ability to face these events and attempt to heal this trauma, and I think it creates new trauma as well.”

In its *Bringing Them Home: 20 years on report* The Healing Foundation has reflected on the impact that ignoring recommendations from the inquest has had, as well as outlined an action plan for addressing the unfinished business of supporting our Stolen Generations members and facing this responsibility as a nation.

“What those families were forced to go through as members of the Stolen Generations must never be forgotten,” says Ms Williams. “SNAICC absolutely supports the recommendations in the Healing Foundation report.”

“But this is as much about our present – and future – as it is our past. Current child and family welfare systems across Australia are failing our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Thousands of our children are being robbed of the right to grow up safely in their homes and with their families.

“Looking at how those recommendations from the *Bringing Them Home* report, as well as the Healing Foundation report, can be fully implemented is the first step we must take. Our governments must work with us – our Elders, leaders, and communities, as well as the leading peak bodies in the Redfern Statement Alliance – to get it right this time.

“We ask that Governments work with us to ensure our next generations are granted the right to a childhood. Our children deserve the opportunity to be all they can be, and no one wants to see children thriving in their homes more than their families and communities do.”

INDIGENOUS TV SERIES SUPPORTS READY CHILDREN, READY FAMILIES AND READY SCHOOLS

Ground-breaking new television series *Little J & Big Cuz*, the first animated kids show to feature Indigenous Australians and their culture, has arrived in homes and classrooms to support successful transitions to school for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Featuring the voice talent of Miranda Tapsell (Little J), Deborah Mailman (Big Cuz) and Aaron Fa’aso (Old Dog), the series builds a bridge between home and school. Each episode is a narrative adventure designed to implicitly build children’s understandings of their backyard, the school yard and Country.

Explaining the rationale for the series, SNAICC CEO Gerry Moore says, “Extensive research shows a child’s formative early years are a critical predictor of their successful transition to school and life-long education and employment outcomes.

“Currently Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia are twice as likely to be identified as developmentally vulnerable, but they are only half as likely to access important early years education. We know for a fact that a focus on change in the early years is fundamental to Closing the Gap, and we welcome the emphasis *Little J & Big Cuz* places on this critical time and the positive light it shines on our kids.”

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) initiated the series in response to studies showing that educational television programs can help improve children’s transition to school.

Deirdre Jackson, Director of the ACER Foundation explains, “The initiative is not just ‘getting children ready for school’, but also ‘getting schools ready for children’, following a two-way learning model and focusing on the strengths that Indigenous children bring to school.”

ACER convened a team of Indigenous education experts to develop a suite of *Little J & Big Cuz* educational resources





mapped to the Early Years Learning Framework and the Australian Curriculum.

“The educational resources model a way for early years educators to bring Indigenous perspectives into the classroom as part of daily conversations – thereby creating classroom environments in which Indigenous children feel valued and have a sense of belonging,” Ms Jackson says.

“As Australia’s peak body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, SNAICC is incredibly proud to be part of this landmark project,” Mr Moore says.

Little J & Big Cuz is a joint project of the Australian Council for Educational Research, Ned Lander Media, NITV, Screen Australia, Film Victoria, Screen Tasmania, the Australian Children’s Television Foundation and SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

Little J & Big Cuz airs on NITV at 7:30pm AEST on Fridays, and at 4pm AEST weekdays. Visit www.littlejandbigcuz.com.au to watch, play and learn.



FEDERAL BUDGET

SNAICC disappointed by another meagre and mediocre budget for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The 2017 Federal Budget, handed down in May, has seen little new funding secured for long-standing priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

SNAICC CEO Gerry Moore urged the government to “refocus on prevention and work with States and Territories to fund Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to deliver child and family welfare services.”

“Our services know our communities and know what is needed for our families to wrap care around each child; it’s always been our way,” Mr Moore said.

“We need leadership from the Federal Government to drive reforms through COAG to invest in our communities.”

SNAICC continues to call on the government to:

- invest in a national strategy and increased family support programs to address the gross over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Australia’s child protection systems;
- reinstate the \$534.4 million funding cuts made to the Indigenous Affairs budget over the last five years;
- invest in genuine engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including in the development and application of policy and programs through adequate funding of the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples and other national peak bodies, including SNAICC and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS); and,
- commit further resources to grow the capacity and service delivery role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in the early childhood and child and family support sectors.

While SNAICC has welcomed the Budget’s confirmation of a secured \$61.8 million annual funding for Budget Based Services in child care, which may save and also grow some services, this is still not the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years service system required to close the gap in child care placements and address the needs of our communities. The funding needs and sustainability concerns of Aboriginal Child and Family Centres and Aboriginal community-controlled Multifunctional Aboriginal Children’s Services remain largely unaddressed.

“SNAICC remains open to further conversations with the Minister for Education and Training to build an integrated early years service system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that is founded on the principles of self-determination, community control, and grounded in the cultural resilience of our communities,” Mr Moore said.

“We need to build bi-partisan support to break the funding silos in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years sector that not only go across Federal Government departments but also State and Territory jurisdictions.

“For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children this is an unimaginative, meagre and mediocre budget.”



CLOSING THE GAP REPORT DECLARES NATIONAL PROGRESS “TOO SLOW”

The annual Closing the Gap report released on 14 February 2017, intended to provide a snapshot of health, education and employment, reveals that progress in these areas is too slow – resulting in continued disadvantage for Australia’s First Peoples.

The report contends that any improvements “...are not enough to meet the majority of the outcomes set by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG)”.

Of particular concern for SNAICC are the early years education targets. Having only been established in 2015 (aiming for 95 per cent of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander four-year-olds to be enrolled in early childhood education by 2025), it is not yet possible to measure progress on this target. However, the previous early years education target – ensuring access for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander four-year-olds in remote communities to early childhood education – expired unmet in 2013.

SNAICC is also concerned that the current target is not broad enough. It fails to report on the 2017 Report on Government Services statistics that show that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-5 are less than half as likely to access an early childhood education and care service, meaning they are in many cases already behind by the time they reach their pre-school year.

SNAICC CEO Gerry Moore commented:

“Data from past reports shows us that there is significant ground to be made up to ensure all Australian children have access to early childhood education and care.

“There is so much evidence that shows us just how important it is that children receive early childhood education and care, particularly to ensure they can successfully transition to school and have strong lifelong outcomes in the future.”

Additionally, the Closing the Gap report fails to capture the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed by child protection authorities – a key driver of poor lifelong outcomes for children.

In order to reduce this over-representation, SNAICC has strongly recommended the adoption of a COAG target to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids in out-of-home care by 2040, as called for by the Family Matters campaign.

REPORT SNAPSHOT

Infant Mortality	NOT ON TRACK
The target to halve the gap in child mortality by 2018 is not on track this year. The 2015 Indigenous child mortality rate is just outside the range for the target.	
Over the longer-term (1998 to 2015), the Indigenous child mortality rate declined by 33 per cent.	
Life expectancy	NOT ON TRACK
The target to close the gap in life expectancy by 2031 is not on track based on data since the 2006 baseline.	
Early Years Education	NOT YET MEASURABLE
In December 2015, COAG renewed the early childhood education target, aiming for 95 per cent of all Indigenous four-year-olds to be enrolled in early childhood education by 2025. The baseline data for this new target is for 2015. The data shows that in 2015, 87 per cent of all Indigenous children were enrolled in early childhood education in the year before full-time school, compared with 98 per cent of their non-Indigenous counterparts.	
School Attendance	NOT ON TRACK
There has been no progress in closing the gap on school attendance (it has actually fallen by 0.01 per cent) resulting in the attendance rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students being 83.4 per cent while the figure for non-Indigenous kids remained steady at 93.1 per cent.	
Literacy and numeracy	NOT ON TRACK
The latest data show of the eight areas measured (reading and numeracy for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9), only one (Year 9 numeracy) is on track.	
Year 12 attainment	ON TRACK
Nationally the proportion of Indigenous 20-24 year-olds who had achieved Year 12 or equivalent increased to 61.5 per cent in 2014-15 (from 45.4 per cent in 2008).	
Employment	NOT ON TRACK
While there was an increase in the Indigenous employment rate between 1994-2008, there has been a decline since 2008. In 2014-15, the Indigenous employment rate was 48.4 per cent, compared with 72.6 per cent for non-Indigenous Australians.	

ABORIGINAL LEADERS SEEK NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT THROUGH HISTORIC DELIVERY OF REDFERN STATEMENT

In the lead up to the 9th Closing the Gap Report to Parliament in 2016, Australia's leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies demanded a new relationship with government, delivering the historic Redfern Statement direct to the Prime Minister at Parliament House.

The leaders called on the Prime Minister to support the historic Redfern Statement, a road map to better address the appalling disadvantage gap between Australia's First Peoples and non-Indigenous Australians, by working with First Peoples as genuine partners.

National Congress of Australia's First Peoples's co-chair Mr Rod Little commented:

"After 25 years, eight Federal election cycles, seven Prime Ministers, eight Ministers for Indigenous Affairs, 400 recommendations, and countless policies, policy changes, reports, funding promises and funding cuts, it's time to draw a line in the sand.

"We need a new relationship that respects and harnesses our expertise, and guarantees us a seat at the table as equal partners when governments are making decisions about our lives."

The Redfern Statement was released during last year's Federal Election campaign on 9 June by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from the health, justice, children and families, disability, and family violence prevention services.

The statement calls for changes across these sectors through structured engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and is supported by more than 30 major mainstream organisations including the Australian Medical Association and Law Council.

National Congress of Australia's First Peoples's co-chair Dr Jackie Huggins said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations have worked with our people on the ground for decades and have shown they have solutions.

"Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations deliver 2.5 million episodes of care a year in their local communities – and are the only health and leadership models making inroads on Close the Gap targets.

"Our teachers, education professionals and family violence experts are delivering real results on the ground in their communities every single day – despite chronic underfunding and an ad hoc policy approach based on three-year election cycles.

"We are seeking a new relationship, a genuine partnership and a commitment to ongoing structured engagement."

SNAICC UNSURPRISED BY DAMNING IAS AUDIT REPORT – CALLS FOR NEW EMPHASIS ON INDIGENOUS DECISION MAKING

In February 2017 the Australian National Audit Office's (ANAO) released an audit update on the much-maligned Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS), unsurprisingly showing that the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (the Department) is not effectively implementing the IAS.

This report revealed what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations have known since the IAS's establishment – the strategy is deeply flawed and wholly unsuitable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people.

SNAICC CEO Gerry Moore has called on Prime Minister Turnbull to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and leaders to get Federal policy back on track: "I encourage the Prime Minister to take this opportunity to reset the Government's relationship with Australia's First Peoples, and to start genuinely listening to us and respecting our right to have a say in issues that concern and affect us."

As Australia's peak body representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, SNAICC has been deeply concerned since the inception of the IAS that it is innately discriminatory towards Indigenous people and organisations. In particular, in the way it has effectively defunded key peak bodies (essential for promoting Indigenous voices) and implemented an unnecessary competitive tendering process that has caused instability and concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

The ANAO report reveals that the Department's lack of effectiveness broadly covers all areas of the IAS strategy, including: the Department not allowing adequate time to properly implement key processes and frameworks in the programs structure (such as consultation, risk management and advice to Ministers); a lack of transitional arrangements available during the implementation period; and poor grants administration processes (resulting in unclear recommendations and limited assurance that said projects achieved their outcomes).

Further, the report finds the Department did not:

- assess applications in a manner that was consistent with the guidelines and the Department's public statements;
- meet some of its obligations under the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines;
- keep records of key decisions; or
- establish performance targets for all funded projects.

The ANAO has recommended that "The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet ensure that administrative arrangements for the Indigenous Advancement Strategy provide for the regional network to work in partnership with Indigenous communities and deliver local solutions."

SNAICC UPDATE

COUNCIL MEMBER PROFILE | MEMBER ORGANISATION PROFILE | STAFF + STUDENTS |

SNAICC COUNCIL MEMBER: EMMA BECKETT

Centre Manager | Nikinpa Aboriginal Child and Family Centre



Nikinpa Aboriginal Child and Family Centre is a clear leader in early years education and care best practice, providing culturally appropriate services in a safe and stimulating environment where children can learn, play, and grow.

Ensuring that these high standards are maintained is Centre Manager and SNAICC Council Member, Emma Beckett.

Emma's mother's family are Walkers, from the Brisbane area. Emma brings enormous value and experience to the SNAICC Council, having worked in children's services and the early years sector for over 20 years.

Located on Awabakal land, Nikinpa operates as a vital part of the Muloonbinba Aboriginal Corporation, and has been providing a range of specialist services to the children and families from the greater Newcastle region since opening in April 2014.

Nikinpa offers a wide range of support services to its children and families: counselling with Relationships Australia; a women's centre; the Awabakal Medical Service visits with a GP, a nurse, and a clinic care team; a child psychologist and an adult psychologist; a speech therapist; and Birra-Li, an Aboriginal Child and Family Health Unit from one of the local hospitals, provides its services from the centre one day a week.

"We offer what people are interested in," says Emma. "The community space gets really well used as well."

"We have good relationships with the community. We have conversations about what people would like to do, or what they think the community needs."

Emma works closely with community Elders when identifying new services Nikinpa can offer.

"Elders are really good source of information. I go to most of their meetings, and they tell us what they think needs to happen, what they'd like to see happen, and I guess it's my job to try to facilitate that."

"It's my job to go out and find that person. Then that person has to then come and meet with the Elders to talk about what they're going to do, and how they're going to do it, and the Elders give some feedback about what else might be useful."

Emma has been involved with SNAICC for many years, and values the knowledge sharing that occurs when meeting with representatives from other jurisdictions at SNAICC, as well as what she is able to feed back from her work with Nikinpa.

"There's no doubt, even as a member of the Council, that I'll learn something every time I go to SNAICC."

"If I ever go to any high-level meetings I always ring someone down there [at SNAICC] to say, 'This is where I've been asked to go. This is what's going to be talked about. Is there anything that you want me to raise?'"

"It works both ways."



Emma has been able to undertake a lot of learning, growth and development through her position with SNAICC, such as being able to represent the organisation at the New South Wales Children's Services Forum, which also provides SNAICC with representation in that space.

Emma has no doubt that the children at Nikinpa are supported to grow and develop too, and that the children that graduate Nikinpa are prepared for their transition to school. She's concerned, however, that not all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can access the same necessary supports that Nikinpa offers.

“We have a really strong partnership with the local school across the road; we work closely with them and the feedback we've been getting is that the kids that come out of Nikinpa are meeting their benchmarks.”



“The thing that worries me and concerns me for all other children, and particularly our own Aboriginal kids, is, ‘Do they have the same access to services that Nikinpa provides?’ Not all kids and families do. That's concerning.”

The introduction of the Jobs for Families Child Care Package (see page 4 for details) has left many Aboriginal Child and Family Centres across the country in the dark about government funding support.

Despite all of the incredible services Nikinpa is able to offer children and families in the area, its strong relationship with Elders, and its reputation for playing a vital part in the community, it is one of several early years centres that is in immediate danger of slipping through the cracks.

“For our services, in particular, I think we're going to be fairly negatively affected by the Jobs for Families Child Care Package, because I know some of our kids will have their access reduced.

“They won't treat the Aboriginal Child and Family Centres as they do Budget Based Funding services, BBFs. There's another fund within the Community Child Care Fund where you can competitively tender with people. The rules around that are based on targeted areas, but we're not in the targeted area, so we can't apply in that either.”

The dedication and drive Emma approaches her work with ensures that she is at the forefront of best-practice principles and implementation, and showcases just how valuable she is as a leader within SNAICC as an advocate for our children.

Emma works closely with community Elders when identifying new services Nikinpa can offer.

SNAICC MEMBER PROFILE: YARN STRONG SISTA

Indigenous education consultancy



Yarn Strong Sista is an Indigenous education consultancy based in Victoria with a focus on early childhood. Yarn Strong Sista travels to kindergartens, schools, conferences and expos across the state, supporting members of both the Indigenous community and non-Indigenous community committed to learning more about Aboriginal culture. Yarn Strong Sista offers storytelling, art experiences, traditional games, professional development training, mural painting, resources, craft products, and more.

ORIGINS

The story of Yarn Strong Sista goes back long before it began operating in 2001. In the early 1990s, Founder and Director of Yarn Strong Sista, Taungurung woman Annette Sax, was inspired by the *Passing It On* package – a partnership between Prahran TAFE and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA):

“*Passing It On* included a puppet show narrated by Auntie Iris Lovett Gardiner, a Gunditjmarra Elder and Teacher. I was taken by how the children responded to the show, mesmerised by the bush scene, knitted finger puppets, Auntie Iris’s voice and the singing! It was during this time that I learned more about my own Aboriginal culture and formed friendships with Sue Atkinson, a Yorta Yorta woman, as well as fellow student and Arwka woman Delta Kay. These women inspired me in so many ways, encouraging me to take my knowledge of Aboriginal culture into the early childhood environment and share it with children.

“Over the years this developed into developing my own designs for toys and resources, thinking back to those

first interactions with children and how positively they responded to *The Possum Hunt* show. I wanted to recreate that experience of being enthralled by Aboriginal educational toys and natural materials, which had the capacity to teach a child about Indigenous values, history and story.

“My daughter Kiella, who is eleven years old, has now designed Indigenous dolls that reflect her identities. With her permission, we have also used her drawings to develop a set of felt sea life creatures. We have received wonderful feedback from our Aboriginal Elders and community members, as well as early childhood educators and teachers.”

SUCCESSSES

These days Yarn Strong Sista employs, consults and supports the businesses of many Aboriginal people, receiving advice from female Traditional Owners in particular. Yarn Strong Sista is very proud that all of its products are fair-trade, meaning they are safe, sustainable and adhere to an Indigenous way of living. As Annette says:

“We promote the purchasing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources in ethical ways and believe that this is a vital part of our communities’ self determination.”

When organisations buy our resources they are supporting the economics of those Indigenous artists and crafts people who we have connected with.”

In 2017, Yarn Strong Sista became one of the preferred suppliers of Indigenous early childhood resources for Goodstart Early Learning, engaging with four new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artefact suppliers in Swan Hill, Ballarat, Gippsland and Cairns.

Demand for Yarn Strong Sista products is strong, which means more work for other Indigenous businesses. One of the main challenges that Yarn Strong Sista faces, however, is Australian education companies purchasing and on-selling fake Aboriginal artwork and artefacts from overseas. Yarn Strong Sista works to counter this by promoting the importance of buying authentic local products that support Indigenous people.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING A SNAICC MEMBER

Yarn Strong Sista believes it is very important to be a SNAICC member, as it does “amazing work” as the national voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Annette learns a lot about what is happening in Indigenous communities across Australia and the Torres Strait Islands by following SNAICC on Facebook and its website. She also appreciates the great Indigenous resources that can be purchased online, and SNAICC’s important training program for early childhood educators and teachers.

NEW STAFF AND STUDENTS

SNAICC has recently welcomed a number of experienced and knowledgeable new members to our Training Team.

Ian Bloomfield, a Wiradjuri man from Narrandera, NSW, joins us as a Senior Training Officer, and will begin workshop delivery within the coming weeks. Ian has previously held roles as manager with the KEEP project, executive officer of Tirkandi Inaburra (an early intervention centre for Aboriginal boys) and trainer with the Department of Industries Aboriginal Rural Training Program.

Katrina D'Angelo and **Shannon McLeod**, a Larrakia woman from south-west Victoria, have joined the Training Team as Training and Resource Officers, and have made incredible contributions through their approach to training delivery with SNAICC member organisations and partners.

Katrina has worked across a number of fields, holding community development positions at both Umoona Community Council in SA for 15 years, as well as the Department of Community Welfare for 12 years, based in Coober Pedy and on the APY Lands. Katrina has also worked as a case manager, and in various management roles, as well as with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service for 12 years, and in specialist family violence for 8 years.

Shannon is a qualified early childhood teacher, previously working as an educator in urban and regional early childhood services and, recently, in an Aboriginal-controlled organisation in remote NT.

Tanya Wells, from north-west Tasmania, has also joined the team as Training Projects Officer, coordinating the SNAICC Training calendar and processing workshop requests. Tanya has moved from Tasmania to take up this role, where she previously worked at the University of Tasmania – Riawunna Centre for Aboriginal Education.

Outside of the Training Team, following the growth of the Family Matters campaign, **William Hayward**, from the south west of Western Australia – Noongar country of the Minang and Gorang peoples, has taken up the new role of WA Family Matters Project Coordinator. The Western Australia Family Matters Working Group has had some great successes over the past few months, in which William has played a major role.

Katherine Hinton has joined SNAICC as Manager, Finance and Operations. Katherine is a Chartered Accountant who previously worked in various finance roles at GE Capital.

Lastly, having started with SNAICC as a volunteer several years ago, and following two years as Communications Officer, **Daniel Kovacevic** has been appointed Communications Coordinator.

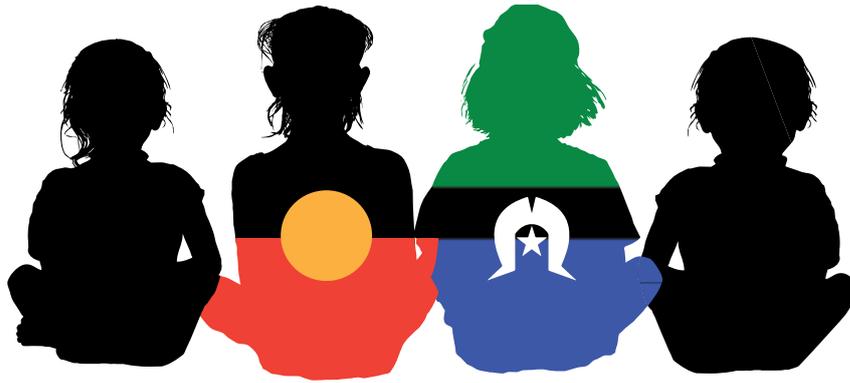
Each year SNAICC provides experience to a number of students via practical placements. We thank our students and recognise the valuable contribution they make.

Emily Castle is completing Graduate Certificate in Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne. Emily has played a key role in the Policy Team supporting the early childhood policy focus by analysing information about Aboriginal Children and Family Centres (ACFCs) and finalising a policy report on ACFCs.

Kylie Rippon is currently completing an integrated policy and research course as part of her Masters of Public Policy at RMIT. Kylie is assisting the Policy Team by producing research and analysis of reconnection and reunification programs. This work will support both SNAICC's policy efforts and that of the Family Matters campaign.



BRING
THEM
HOME



SECURING THE RIGHTS OF OUR CHILDREN

REGISTER NOW

to **ATTEND** the 7th SNAICC National Conference.

The SNAICC Conference is the largest of its type in the southern hemisphere and, with over 1000 attendees expected in 2017, it promises to again provide a comprehensive program with something for everyone attending.

This year, the Conference will be centered on the 20th anniversary of the *Bringing Them Home* report and Australia's ongoing removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The focus will be on strategies and best practice to support children to be safe and cared for within family and culture. Conference objectives are to honour and learn from experience, strategise collectively and inspire action.

The culturally rich, and safe, program will feature:

- International and local keynote speakers
- Over 70 concurrent sessions, yarning circles, panels and workshops
- Displays, poster presentations, exhibitors
- Cultural highlights and performances
- Social events and opportunities to network and connect with peers

