



SNAICC
-NATIONAL
VOICE FOR
OUR CHILDREN

2016-2021
STRATEGIC PLAN







CONTENTS

5	Foreword
8	SNAICC's Vision, Purpose and Goal
10	SNAICC's Principles
13	SNAICC's Pillars
15	Priority Focus Areas
18	Pillar 1 Culturally strong families and communities
19	Pillar 2 Strong members and other services
20	Pillar 3 Culturally strong and responsive laws, policies and practices
21	Pillar 4 Awareness and understanding among the broader population
22	Pillar 5 Strong and effective national peak body for children
24	How will we know we are achieving our goals?



FOREWORD

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children exists to see all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive – growing up in nurturing environments, with loving and supporting families, adequate food and housing, and rich with our cultures – to live their dreams. We are deeply distressed by the realities that our children experience today across Australia and believe that we need a new approach to tackle the impacts of entrenched and pervasive discrimination and trauma.

We are energised and optimistic as we embark on this new phase, feeling the power of community and sector mobilisation alongside windows of opportunity for state, territory and national policy changes. SNAICC seeks to harness this potential to see genuine and substantial improvements in the basic human rights of our children and their families.

Our communities have enormous strengths and resilience, beauty and humour, imbued with culture that sees us survive and thrive despite the harrowing conditions that still pervade.

Our challenge is to enable and support these strengths.

Emerging from recent governance changes which have forged a more focused purpose, a smaller and more agile board – supported by a high quality representative Council – and a membership base reflective of our holistic vision, we are confident that this strategy will have significant impact. We also have an outstanding staff team, well equipped to drive SNAICC into the next phase of professionalism, connection and impact.

This strategy builds on SNAICC reflections over the last period on whether we are most efficiently and effectively geared towards the change that we want to see. We have asked ourselves: are we achieving change? If not, why? And how can we better make a real difference to the lives of our children across Australia?



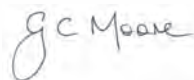
In response, we have shifted our focus to be:

- **Outcomes oriented**, gearing our projects to the change we want to see rather than outputs along the way, and building a strong evaluation component to monitor our progress. Our goal is not to produce publications; it is to effect change.
- **Public facing**, recognising that unless and until we can shift attitudes and garner increased support for our vision, we will have little success in influencing the political process. Strong public engagement is also central for SNAICC to maximise the impact of our quality resources and policy papers, supporting broad reach in accessible and diverse formats.
- **Evidence based**, realising that our children and families deserve the best strategies and programs that we can offer, and that evidence must reach beyond western frameworks, to capture the wisdom of our own cultural knowledge and experience.
- **Collective**, recognising that only with strong partnerships with our communities, our sectors, and through key influencers and decision-makers can we achieve the systemic change our children need.
- **Transformative**, embedding new, innovative capacity development models that work with people to shift underlying attitudes and support new practices and behaviours.
- **Sustainable**, continuing to expand our strategies for diversification for a strong national voice.

We live in a rapidly changing political and social context and must ensure that we are adaptable, nimble and responsive to changing community need. We are up for the challenge and look forward to continuing to grow our strong partnerships with each of you to see our kids grow up nurtured, healthy and proud, living their dreams.



Sharron Williams
SNAICC Chairperson



Gerry Moore
SNAICC CEO

OUR **VISION**

An Australian society in which the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families are protected, our communities are empowered to determine their own futures, and our cultural identity is valued.

OUR **PURPOSE**

SNAICC is the national non-government peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We work for the fulfilment of the rights of our children, in particular to ensure their safety, development and well-being.

OUR **GOAL**

Strong, healthy, self-determining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, connected to family and culture.





SNAICC'S PRINCIPLES

1. COMMITMENT TO CHILD RIGHTS PRINCIPLES AND A CHILD CENTRED APPROACH

SNAICC recognises that in all actions concerning children their best interests should be the paramount consideration and that ensuring their safety is essential. This can only be properly determined with the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the voice of children. Advancing the best interests of children requires the holistic realisation of their rights, including rights to safety, family, housing, health, education, culture and participation.

2. SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES

SNAICC believes that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the strengths and the right to lead change for our own children. This belief is reinforced by the internationally recognised rights of all Indigenous peoples to self-determination, and by international evidence that better outcomes can be achieved when Indigenous peoples are empowered to drive solutions for their own communities. We aim to support and enable the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to drive local solutions to local issues. We also seek to hold governments and non-Indigenous services accountable to support, build and transfer capacity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services to respond to the needs of their communities.

3. VALUE AND RESPECT FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURES

SNAICC values, respects and celebrates the enduring strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. Cultural identity and connection to family, community and land are the birth right of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and what they need to prosper. We recognise the evidence that continuity of cultural identity promotes healthy development and that cultural connections are critical to children's wellbeing and positive self-identity. We also recognise the strengths of unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing practices and know that cultural and community networks support safety for children.

4. INNOVATION AND FLEXIBILITY

We recognise that our organisation needs to adapt and develop new and flexible ways of working to respond effectively to the changing needs of our communities, their diverse cultures, and to the dynamic political, policy and social environment that impacts upon them and SNAICC as an organisation. We commit to identify, apply and adapt as needed innovative strategies to support, heal and strengthen our children, their families and their communities, and to redress the systemic barriers they face.

5. CULTURALLY INFORMED EVIDENCE BASED, BEST PRACTICE

SNAICC holds that all our efforts should be based on the evidence of what works to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. This includes, for example, prioritising the early years as the most critical developmental phase for improving outcomes for our children and investing in strengthening our families in crisis to prevent child removal and see kids grow up safe and cared for within family. This evidence base critically includes the knowledge, wisdom and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We commit to listen to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on how best to respond to the needs of their children and families.

6. COLLABORATION WITH RELATIONSHIPS OF TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

SNAICC believes that the fundamental changes needed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can only be achieved through the dedicated collective and collaborative efforts of all stakeholders, including communities, governments, services, academics and policy leaders. We commit to work collaboratively with all stakeholders. Our relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are central, however, building genuine and respectful partnerships to enable their critical role to drive change.



SNAICC'S PILLARS

SNAICC adopts the following five strategic pillars (or sub-goals) to prioritise our work to achieve our goal.

We believe we can realise our goal when each of these pillars are achieved.

Strong and effective national peak body for children

Awareness and understanding among the broader population

GOAL
Strong, healthy, self-determining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, connected to family and culture

Strong members and other services

Culturally strong and responsive laws, policies and practices

Culturally strong families and communities



PRIORITY FOCUS AREAS

1. IMPROVING THE CULTURAL SAFETY AND RESPONSIVENESS OF CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

When the ground-breaking Bringing Them Home report into the Stolen Generations was released nearly 20 years ago in 1997, mainstream Australia was shocked to learn that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children represented 20 per cent of children living in out of home care. Now, in 2016, they represent over 35 per cent. Despite numerous legal and policy frameworks designed to advance safety, and family and cultural connections for children, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is now almost ten times that of other children, and continues to grow.

Supporting strong, healthy, self-determining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children connected to family and culture requires the transformation of Australia's child protection systems. Outcomes for children in out-of-home care are alarmingly poor: preventing the need for ongoing contact with child protection services is essential as is addressing the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children in contact with child protection systems. Quality child protection responses can support healing for children, families and communities, preventing inter-generational harm.

Solutions lie in the full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, recognising the centrality of our cultures and the genuine participation of our people in decisions impacting our children. Change also requires redressing the unconscious bias embedded within the systems and those that are tasked to apply them.

2. STRENGTHENING THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF OUR CHILDREN, RAISED WITHIN FAMILY AND CULTURE

The strengths to address child wellbeing and safety concerns lie within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Extensive research describes the unique value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child-rearing practices, the importance of Indigenous-led solutions to improving outcomes, and that continuity of cultural identity is being vital to the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Yet, these strengths continue to be undermined by an ever-deepening crisis of child removal that breaks families apart and disrupts the social fabric of communities.

The answer for our children lies not in child protection systems but in redressing the causes of child removal, and investing in early intervention and prevention to better support and heal families experiencing vulnerabilities. This means engaging in proactive measures to redress poverty, trauma from the Stolen Generations and its ongoing impacts, and the exclusion of our people from curating the solutions. These measures include: culturally safe and effective family support services that are provided as early as possible; integrated child and family services; Aboriginal family led decision-making processes; and community healing approaches.



We have learnt a lot but done little to change the realities for our children since the Bringing Them Home report.

We have had countless commissions and frameworks with directives to transform the system for our children.

These are words on paper until each Australian takes responsibility for making it real.

Natalie Lewis, SNAICC Director



3. INCREASING ACCESS TO QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Despite zero to three being the most critical years for development of a child's life, setting the lifelong pathways to school, education, employment and well-being, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are nearly 2.5 times more likely to be developmentally vulnerable on two or more domains than other children by the age of five.

Almost 50% of children removed by child protection authorities are also removed by the age of 4.

Redressing the significantly lower access of our children to quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) services provides a clear avenue for change, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children currently only comprising 2.9 per cent of children participating in early childhood education and care programs, despite making up 5.5 per cent of the population.

Ensuring the highest quality ECEC services, complete with wrap around supports for our children and their families is also essential, requiring high cultural safety of mainstream services and availability of community controlled services. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC services are particularly important as they work from the strengths of children's culture to build and reinforce positive self-identity while supporting the wellbeing of children and families experiencing most vulnerability in the community. They prioritise access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children not accessing, or unlikely to access, mainstream services, and through their unique features overcome many of the identified service access barriers our families experience. They are holistic and responsive to child and family needs, including integrated language development, speech and hearing supports, as well as broader health, family support, capacity building and early intervention.

SNAICC will work to assist these services to provide the optimal supports to their communities.

PILLAR 1 CULTURALLY STRONG FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Family is the foundation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's social, cultural and emotional wellbeing and is their most important life-long support. Families are deeply impacted by the communities within which they live. Healing our families and communities, and supporting them to be nurturing, responsive carers is essential to see our children grow up strong and healthy.

Culture is a deeply protective factor, central to our family and community well-being and healing.

To ACHIEVE culturally strong families and communities, SNAICC will:

1. Develop and advocate strong policy positions that enable:
 - Children and family led decision making
 - Continuity of connection to culture
 - Strong community controlled organisations
2. Lead strong capacity development for communities to effectively respond to their local issues impacting children
3. Seek and provide a platform for the voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

As a RESULT, we aim to see that:

- Communities are empowered to determine their own future
- Child and family-led decision making on issues that impact on their lives
- Cultural identity and achievements are valued
- Families are supported to care for their children
- Children are thriving and realising their dreams

PILLAR 2 STRONG MEMBERS AND OTHER SERVICES

Culturally safe services are central to ensuring our children and their families access the supports that they need to grow up strong, healthy and proud of who they are, with the skills to realise their potential. Quality, local community controlled services are best equipped to identify and respond to the needs of the children and families in their communities.

To ACHIEVE strong members and other services, SNAICC will:

1. Increase the capacity of member and other organisations through training, support and resources based on evidence and best practice
2. Work to build a strong community controlled sector for children
3. Strengthen focus on networks and relationships
4. Resource and support collaboration, networking, information exchange and shared learning between our members, other organisations and governments

As a RESULT, we aim to see that:

- Children and families across Australia have access to high-quality Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services to meet their needs
- Children and families have service choice, with culturally competent mainstream services

PILLAR 3 CULTURALLY STRONG AND RESPONSIVE LAWS, POLICIES AND PRACTICES

No matter how strong communities are at a local level, without culturally strong and responsive systems at a state, territory and national level, we cannot achieve systemic change for our children. Our families need an enabling environment of laws, policies, procedures and practices that values their cultures, hears their voice and respects their ways.

To ACHIEVE culturally strong and responsive laws, policies and practices, SNAICC will:

1. Inform and guide law and policy development
2. Consult with, represent and enable the voice of children
3. Consult with and represent the voice of members and families
4. Use all communications platforms to deepen understanding of and support for culturally strong and responsive laws, policies and practices
5. Advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and participation across policy and service led design, development and delivery
6. Use data to inform policy development and resource allocation
7. Lead education and learning for politicians and government departments

As a RESULT, we aim to see that:

- Governments develop and implement laws, policies and practices that respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, are culturally safe and are informed by the needs of our children, families and organisations
- Funding for services is based on need and the capacity to provide culturally safe services across Australia
- Mainstream services have culturally respectful and responsive policies, processes and practices

PILLAR 4 AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING AMONG THE BROADER POPULATION

SNAICC recognises that until we can shift attitudes and garner increased support for our vision, we will have little success in influencing the political process towards improved laws and policies that support our children. There are many groups which also directly impact the development, safety and well-being of our children such as early childhood workers, child protection workers, nurses and judges. Shifting attitudes of these groups who work with our children and their families is central to their growing up safe, healthy and empowered.

To ACHIEVE awareness and understanding among the broader population, SNAICC will:

1. Invest in effective framing and messaging for influence
2. Use all communications platforms creatively to promote learning and exchange from SNAICC resources and policy papers
3. Proactively engage traditional and social media
4. Amplify the voices of our children, families and leaders
5. Host events, including our biennial conference, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day and the Family Matters National Week of Action
6. Build effective partnerships and target key stakeholders

As a RESULT, we aim to see that:

Increased awareness and understanding by key stakeholders and the public of:

- Strengths and importance of our cultures
- Stolen Generations, colonisation and their impacts on child development and safety indicators
- Healing and supports for families and communities
- The impact of quality early years education
- The benefits of community controlled services

PILLAR 5 STRONG AND EFFECTIVE NATIONAL PEAK BODY FOR CHILDREN

A strong and effective national peak body is essential to progress the previous four pillars. Independent cultural policy advice, research, capacity development and best practice, connected to realities on the ground and the impacts of laws and policies on our children and families, provides a critical role to support both sector and governments effectively respond to children and family needs. An effective peak provides a platform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice, both individual and collective, on issues impacting children.



Unless and until we turn the child and family welfare system on its head and do the hard work with families in the early years, we will not see change.

Unless and until governments and services start to trust in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, giving them agency to drive local solutions for local issues, we will not see change.

We know the potential of our people and we know the trauma we have suffered. We know together we can walk a path of healing.

We are passionate about our children and will be working tirelessly to see them valued and respected, to see them have the opportunities that they deserve. We will be in a very different place for the next generation.

Geraldine Atkinson, SNAICC Deputy Chairperson



To ACHIEVE a strong and effective national peak body for children, SNAICC will:

1. Ensure a highly engaged, expertise based representative Council and Board with a solid understanding of governance responsibilities
2. Secure diverse funding streams
3. Prioritise cultural safety and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment
4. Embed best practice planning, evaluation and internal operating systems
5. Reinforce and grow SNAICC's reputation as the "go to" organisation on issues impacting our children
6. Lead policy analysis through effective written publications, participation on committees and public engagement
7. Listen to the views and represent interests of members and their communities, promoting learning and exchange
8. Work through multi-sector, targeted campaigns
9. Develop proactive, respectful partnerships with governments
10. Provide tailored and relevant resources, training, mentorship and support to members and other key partners

As a RESULT, we aim to see that:

- High public awareness of and respect for SNAICC
- SNAICC is a sustainable and independent peak body, with a high quality engaged workforce
- SNAICC is a culturally safe and responsive organisation
- SNAICC is leading sector debate and influencing government policy shifts
- SNAICC has a strong, inclusive and active membership
- Strong relationships with key decision makers, community leaders and strategic sector partners
- High quality culturally safety sector servicing the needs of children and their families

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE ARE ACHIEVING OUR GOALS?

Our five pillars to achieve our goal of strong, healthy, self-determining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, connected to family and culture, involve complex issues at the community, state, territory, national and international levels.

So that we can monitor and report on our progress towards achieving these pillars, we will:

- Establish specific measures and indicators of progress for outputs and results
- Collect relevant quantitative and qualitative data
- Use this data to assess our progress
- Use those assessments to adapt our approach where necessary in order to most effectively work towards achieving our goals.

At an operational level, our plans will specify outputs and key performance indicators that directly align to the activities and results in this Strategic Plan.

Monitoring and reporting at both the strategic and operational levels will enable the SNAICC Board, management and staff to remain focused on achieving our goals, and ensuring the effectiveness of our work.







SNAICC

National Voice for our Children

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.snaicc.org.au

(03) 9489 8099







SNAICC
-NATIONAL
VOICE FOR
OUR CHILDREN

www.snaicc.org.au

