



This deadly image by Melbourne artist Adnate will feature on this year's poster for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day on 4 August. The poster will be available from SNAICC in April. The theme for 2015 children's day is *Little Kids, Big Futures*. See article on page 11. For more information: [www.childrensday.com.au](http://www.childrensday.com.au)

## SNAICC secures IAS funding

**The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet advised SNAICC on 4 March that we will receive 18 months' funding under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) from July 2015.**

"We have suffered a slight cut – to add to the funding cuts SNAICC has received since July 2013," SNAICC CEO Frank Hytten said.

"We are not yet in a position to assess what this means to the work we do and we may not know the final position for a week or two."

Mr Hytten said SNAICC is seeking to compile information on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services have been impacted by the IAS funding outcomes.

"Comprehensive data on the IAS outcomes will enable us to start conversations with the Government about the impact on critical services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families," he said.

SNAICC is looking to establish which organisations were unsuccessful, which

organisations were funded and what proportion of funding they were granted.

In devastating news, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) has not been funded under the IAS and may have to close at the end of June 2015.

NATSILS CEO Shane Duffy told *The Guardian* newspaper the national peak body ran on \$295,000 in annual funding.

"I'd suggest it was one of the leanest national bodies you've ever seen,

Continued on page 3



## frankly speaking

**Welcome to the first SNAICC newsletter for 2015. This will be a big year for SNAICC. In early March, we were told that we had received funding through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS), albeit much less than we had applied for and in fact less than we had in 2013–14. Also the funding is for 18 months, not the three years that had been promised by the Government.**

While most welcome, this funding does not provide even medium-term security, reduce regulation and red tape or enable

SNAICC to work seriously on the many issues that create disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Of course we are not alone and we have been treated better than many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, but it comes as a major disappointment after the expectations raised by Government of more security, better coordination, less red tape and long-term planning.

We are yet to be told which programs we are being funded for and so are still unable to set up the work plan, complete a budget or talk to staff about their work content and security. Again, we are not alone in this. With more than half a billion dollars cut from the Indigenous Affairs budget, services are in a continuing and damaging state of uncertainty.

Under the IAS, SNAICC tendered for projects including to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander playgroups to build parental capacity for supporting developmental needs of children; and projects around cultural competence development for early childhood services



and educators, to create a smooth transition to school and better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

SNAICC also tendered to do work aimed at building community capacity to prevent and respond to family violence, support parents to provide safe and quality care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and inform in trauma-informed practice for responding to the needs of Indigenous children and families.

SNAICC remains resolute in representing the needs and aspirations of our members. We will continue to provide a strong representative voice and promote increased participation of community-controlled services in the early years and child protection sectors, as well keeping the sectors informed of developments.

Meanwhile, SNAICC has been successful in one of two tenders submitted to the federal Department of Social Services.

Our successful tender focused on the transition of children from pre-school to school. We have been funded for a five-year project in the Halls Creek region to design a holistic transition program that connects to other local initiatives (see page 7).

In other news, SNAICC was in Canberra again in February to speak to ministers, other MPs and senior departmental staff about the importance of our core principles — community control, prevention and adequate long-term support — and how a lack of these impacts on the ability of services to achieve the best outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Last but not least, we welcome SNAICC Deputy CEO Emma Sydenham back to work after maternity leave. And let me introduce SNAICC's newest family member: Lilka Poppy (pictured above)...gorgeous or what!

The next three to six months will be momentous for this sector. Please keep us informed with news of your funding from government so that we can continue to report on how government actions are impacting on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

**Frank Hytten, SNAICC CEO**  
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## In this issue...

|   | Page    |
|---|---------|
| Commission's child care report an important step for change                       | 3 and 6 |
| Government announces funding under IAS  | 4–5     |
| SNAICC funded for "transition to school" project                                  | 7       |
| A look at the impact of two Aboriginal Child and Family Centres                   | 8–9     |
| Current SNAICC projects in brief  | 10      |
| 2015 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day                | 11      |
| Digital story celebrates the impact of Berrimba MACS                              | 12      |
| Report reveals almost 15,000 Indigenous children in out-of-home care in June 2014 | 13      |
| Setting the pathways for change in Western Australia                              | 14–15   |
| A day of fun and festivities for Bubup Wilam families                             | 16–17   |
| Royal Commission looks at child sexual abuse in OOHc                              | 18      |
| Strong opposition to permanent care orders in the NT                              | 19      |
| SNAICC calls for new approaches to child protection                               | 20      |
| We need to know more to prevent suicide and self-harm                             | 21      |
| Closing the Gap reports becoming a disappointing ritual                           | 22–23   |
| Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence                                   | 24–25   |
| SNAICC training update  | 26–28   |
| NDIS a life changer for Indigenous people with disability                         | 29      |
| 2015 SNAICC conference: keynote speakers announced                                | 30–31   |
| Putting family violence services on the interactive map                           | 32      |
| A guide on how to work better with Aboriginal families                            | 33      |
| New resources to deal with trauma launched in Victoria                            | 34      |
| New resource on working with children living with FASD                            | 35      |
| Check out the many benefits of becoming a SNAICC member...                        | 36      |



**Warning:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this publication may contain images of people who may have since passed away.



# Child care report an important step for change

**SNAICC applauds the Productivity Commission’s final Report into Childcare and Early Childhood Learning for identifying the need for a long-term community-focused program to support the provision of diverse, culturally-appropriate services for children that are at a higher risk of being developmentally vulnerable.**

The Productivity Commission report was tabled in Parliament by the Australian Government on 20 February.

The report proposes a new Community Early Learning Program (CELP) to replace the current funding program for Indigenous services.

The Productivity Commission also correctly recognises that this program should extend beyond rural and remote communities to include urban and inner city areas where Indigenous families are unable to access early childhood education and care services that will meet their needs.

.....  
**Proposed reforms promise to see more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the most difficult situations growing up confident, healthy, excelling in school and realising their dreams.**  
.....

Importantly, the Productivity Commission has recognised the huge gap in service participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the need to cater for at least 15,000 additional places to achieve parity for Indigenous children.

It has recommended that the CELP expands over time with considerable investment in start-up costs for new services. This should be the starting point for considering funding allocation needed for a successful CELP.

The proposed CELP holds significant promise to see more and more of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the most difficult situations growing up confident, healthy, excelling in school and realising their dreams, on par with other children across the country.

However, SNAICC is deeply concerned that the recommended requirement for services to transition to child-based funding could see the CELP become a vehicle for transitioning services to a mainstream funding model.

A mainstream model simply will not work. As reinforced by many experts, a user-pays model is not a feasible or appropriate model through which to provide culturally-strong early childhood education and care programs for families and communities experiencing entrenched disadvantage.

**Continued on page 6**

## SNAICC secures IAS funding

**Continued from page 1**

providing very timely evidence-based responses,” Mr Duffy said.

He said by forcing the closure of NATSILS, Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion had “really missed an opportunity to have first-hand expertise provided to his department.”

On a more positive note, 14 Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) have been advised they have

been successful in maintaining their current funding levels under the IAS.

“This is a significant outcome for our services and reflects an important recognition of the value of the FVPLS Program,” said Antoinette Braybrook, National Convenor of National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (NFVPLS).

It was also announced that 112 community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations would have their funding extended by the federal Department of Health for three years, at a cost of \$1.4 billion.

Minister Scullion said the Australian Government would invest more than \$860 million under the IAS grant funding round to deliver on its key priorities of getting

children to school, adults into work and ensuring communities are safe.

He said 964 organisations would be funded under the IAS to deliver 1297 projects to Indigenous people and communities throughout Australia.

“Our approach through this funding round has provided an opportunity to ensure the large sums of taxpayers’ funds invested in Indigenous Affairs are directed to support key objectives and focus on achieving outcomes,” Minister Scullion said.

“I have been very mindful in making decisions about grants of the need to support Indigenous organisations and employment.”

**IAS funding decisions: Extended coverage, pages 4 and 5.**

# Indigenous Advancement Strategy: the response so far

NATSILS CEO Shane Duffy: "Who is going to provide the expert advice around law and justice to the Federal Government?"



The Australian Government's long-awaited grant funding announcement has added to the uncertainty in Indigenous Affairs and the social services sector

## Uncertainty, frustration and disappointment are the recurring early responses to the Australian Government's grant funding decisions under its Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

A SNAICC survey of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services has found that many services are still unclear of the details, but understand that their application has been at least partially successful for at least one year.

There are significant concerns across the sector about the capacity to operate effective services on existing short term funding.

It also appears that many services had had their existing funding continued, but were unsuccessful in applying for further funding.

SNAICC so far has spoken to 12 Aboriginal Child and Family Centres that applied for IAS funding: eight were unsuccessful, and the other four partially successful — with some 18 months' funding for specific programs — but not for the operation of the services.

A few other Aboriginal early years services reached were also unsuccessful in their applications.

Services are also confused about the allocation of \$860m in funding — and not the \$4.8 billion advertised in the funding invitation in October 2014.

SNAICC is extremely concerned and disappointed with the Government's decision to defund National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS).

The baffling decision to silence the peak body comes against the backdrop of record incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and an alarmingly high number of Indigenous young people in juvenile detention.

NATSILS CEO Shane Duffy said the Government would lose a vital source of expert advice on Indigenous law and justice issues with the organisation's defunding.

"We really need our staff to be able to write submissions, gather the evidence, coordinate responses, to make sure that we're dealing with the same thing in the same way, and we're providing, where possible, a consistent advice to the Government," Mr Duffy told *NITV News*.

"And that's the challenge. Who is going to provide the expert advice around law and justice to the Federal Government?"

"There'll be a whole vacuum, and I believe the Prime Minister and, particularly, Minister Scullion have missed an ideal opportunity to make sure that our expertise from law and justice is included in their ongoing agenda."

The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), based in Darwin, is one of the frontline organisations that will be affected by millions of dollars in funding cuts to legal aid and community legal centres around Australia.

NAAJA CEO Priscilla Collins said the impact of the cuts would be revealed mid-May, but the organisation would have to scale back before then.

"We can't be taking on civil and criminal matters and then six weeks before the end of the financial year saying to clients, 'Well, sorry, we can't continue, we don't have enough staff to continue your matters'," Ms Collins told ABC News.

CEO of the Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS), Wendy Morton, said there was widespread confusion over who the winners and losers in the IAS grants are.

Ms Morton said some organisations had received a portion of the money they asked for while others had lost out altogether.

## IAS funding round at a glance

- \$860 million invested
- 964 organisations funded to deliver 1297 projects
- NATSILS defunded, may have to close on 30 June 2015
- 14 Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) funded at current levels
- SNAICC funded from July 2015 to December 2016
- Healing Foundation funded until 2018

### Also announced:

- 112 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Health Organisations funded for three years, at a cost of \$1.4b

"What I'm hearing anecdotally is that programs primarily working with young people have been hit," she said.

"We've heard stories like this from Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Darwin."

Ms Morton said the social services sector in the Northern Territory was more uncertain than it had been in a decade.

"Certainly it's pretty frustrating and heartbreaking, particularly when you're working with people on the frontline," she said.

"Working with people who are at risk and you know that if those services aren't delivered we'll have more children in our detention centres.

Continued on next page



“Family violence is an epidemic, a national crisis, and I am pleased to see that the (federal) Coalition and Opposition have both stepped up their commitments to action.”

— Antoinette Braybrook  
National Convenor,  
National Family Violence  
Prevention Legal Services



**PHOTO ABOVE RIGHT: NACCHO Chairperson Matthew Cooke: “Our services are delivering the biggest gains against the closing the gap targets.”**

“We’ll have more people in our hospitals. We’ll have less children going to school, less people in employment.”

In more positive news, 14 Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) have maintained their current funding levels under the IAS —news that came as “a major relief” to Antoinette Braybrook, National Convenor of the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (NFVPLS).

“Family violence is an epidemic, a national crisis, and I am pleased to see that the (federal) Coalition and Opposition have both stepped up their commitments to action,” Ms Braybrook said.

“It is essential that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims/survivors — women in particular — are fully recognised in this space and offered a key role in program and policy development. This kind of thinking is long overdue.”

However, Ms Braybrook said NFVPLS was concerned there had been no increase in funding to Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and many were only guaranteed an additional year.

“This maintains many of the stresses of funding uncertainty and brings into question the long-term commitment to the program,” she said.

The Australian Government also announced, separate to the IAS, three-year funding agreements for 112 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, at a cost of \$1.4 billion.

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) Chairperson Matthew Cooke said the new agreements meant that crucial primary

health care services would be sustained and that Aboriginal health services could now provide job security to their doctors, nurses and health workers who have the important role of improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Australians.

“This announcement is great news for Aboriginal health,” Mr Cooke said.

“Our services are delivering the biggest gains against the closing the gap targets.

“Longer-term funding agreements are something we have consistently called for and it is pleasing that Ministers Ley and Nash have recognised the great work being done by our sector in this way.

“Improving the health of Aboriginal people is no quick fix. It is complex and requires a generational commitment.”

While welcoming a new funding agreement worth \$100m over three years, the CEOs of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in far north Queensland — Apunipima, Gurriny Yealamucka, Mamu, Mookai Rosie, Mulungu and Wuchopperen — warned against misconceptions that the funding was an additional federal investment in health.

The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress in Alice Springs welcomed the health funding but was “very disappointed” it had not been funded for early childhood programs under IAS and would seek an explanation from Government.

“The Congress submission for an Abecedarian Educational Day Care Centre for disadvantaged children was not successful and the award winning Pre-school Readiness Program appears to have been defunded,” Congress CEO Donna Ah Chee said.



**Indigenous Affairs Minister,  
Nigel Scullion**

**Under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy announced in the 2014–15 Budget, the Australian Government transferred a multitude of programs from eight different agencies to the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.**

“The 2014–15 Budget invests \$4.8 billion to replace more than 150 individual programs and services with five streamlined broad-based programs under an Indigenous Advancement Strategy with the sole objective of achieving real results in the Government’s priority areas,” Indigenous Affairs Minister Nigel Scullion wrote in *SNAICC News*.

“The five new Indigenous programs will make it easier for organisations delivering services on the ground.”

The five new streams are:

- Jobs, land and economy
- Children and schooling
- Safety and wellbeing
- Culture and capability, and
- Remote Australia strategies.

The Budget outlined a total of \$549.4 million of savings from Indigenous programs, including cuts to Indigenous early childhood education and care, health and legal services, and the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples.

# Report a first step towards change for our children and families

Continued from page 3

Inter-generational poverty, trauma and disempowerment are long-term issues that require long-term responses.

A short-term transition of Indigenous services to mainstream funding would fundamentally fail our children and families: reducing their participation in early years services and reversing improvements in education outcomes, as well as impacting adversely on parental workforce participation.

Conflicting statements in the report, that recommend both ongoing support for the CELP and a transition to mainstream funding, suggest that the Productivity Commission was also not at ease with this approach.

There is a major need for a separate, long-term block-funded program to enable access to culturally-appropriate early childhood services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in many communities experiencing disadvantage across Australia. This must be the core premise on which the proposed Community Early Learning Program is based.

SNAICC is also concerned that the proposed imposition of a parental co-payment may result in decreased access for many vulnerable children and families.

While we do agree that co-payments can be a valuable way to enable families to feel they are contributing to their child's early childhood education — and many of our services already do charge a co-payment — SNAICC also recommends that the requirement for and amount of any co-payment be worked out with each service on an individual basis.

SNAICC commends the Productivity Commission for its strong support of integrated services, which aim to deliver a “whole of family” approach including early education and care, health and parent support programs.

However, if the enormous value of integrated service delivery is to be realised, governments must take responsibility to fund a streamlined

## From the Productivity Commission's Inquiry Report on Child Care and Early Childhood Learning Recommendation 15.8

The Australian Government should establish a Community Early Learning Program (CELP) to fund Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) services for communities where the children in the community are at a high risk of development vulnerabilities.

The CELP will fund the:

- establishment of new services that have a five-year business plan to transition to mainstream funding
- operation of these and current Budget Based Funded Programme services as they transition to mainstream funding, with a declining share of funding being provided by the CELP over time
- on-going support to CELP services to meet any unavoidable higher costs of supply to children after transition
- activities undertaken by an ECEC service to organise and manage integration of the ECEC service with other family and child services
- Indigenous Professional Support Agencies to assist CELP services in Indigenous communities in the establishment and transition of these services. These agencies would also provide advice to mainstream ECEC services on culturally-relevant inclusion planning strategies.

.....

**There is a major need for a separate, long-term block-funded program to enable access to culturally-appropriate early childhood services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in many communities experiencing disadvantage across Australia.**

.....



model. All governments and departments need to collaborate to fund integrated services rather than leaving early years services with the heavy burden of searching for funding to provide additional supports to families.

SNAICC also commends the report for its strong recommendation to expand the role of Indigenous Professional Support Units to provide capacity building and inclusion support to strengthen CELP services.

The report provides a strong starting point for consideration. SNAICC hopes to work closely with the Australian Government to develop a sustainable long-term funding program for Indigenous community-controlled early years services — services that are best placed to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

# SNAICC funded for 'transition to school' project

**SNAICC has secured funding from the federal Department of Social Services to develop a 'transition to school' program at Halls Creek, in the East Kimberly region of Western Australia.**

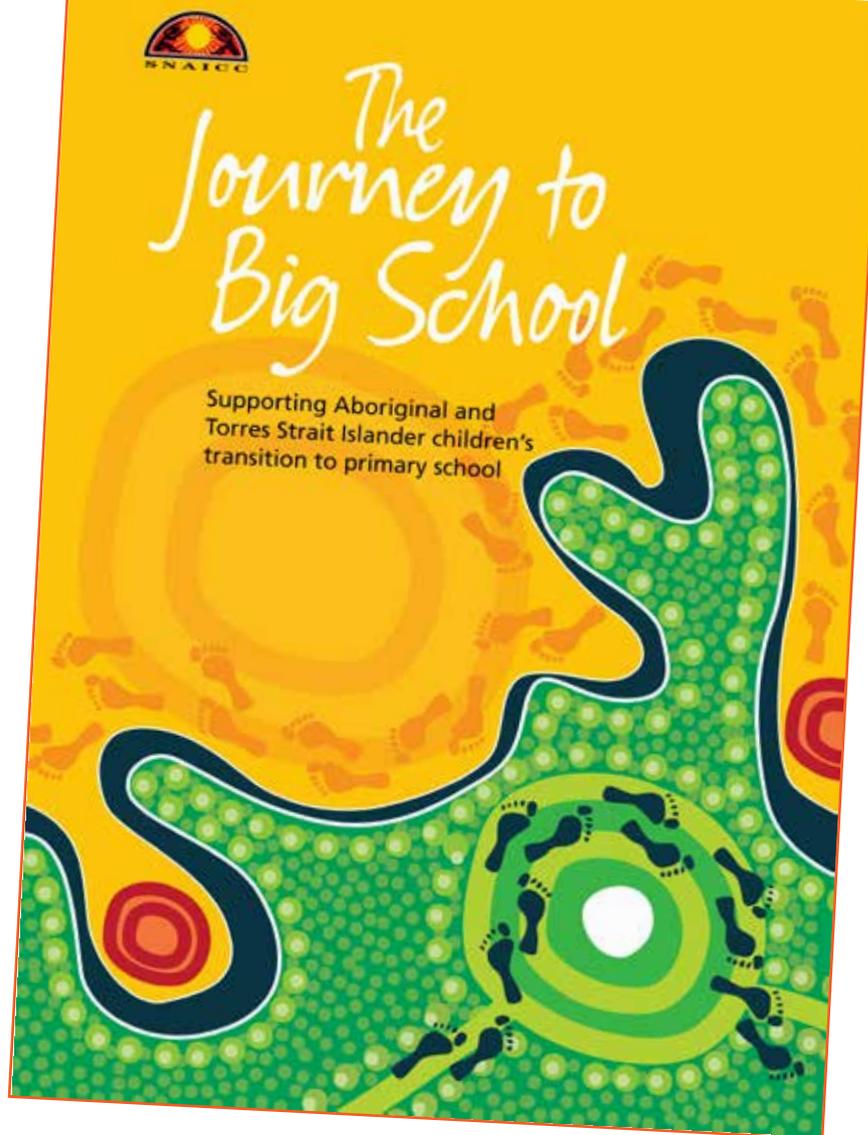
The five-year program will look to meet the specific needs of Aboriginal children in the region, empower parents and other carers to fulfil their role in the transition process, and strengthen the capacity of educators to successfully support the transition.

SNAICC will soon begin discussing preliminary details with community leaders and service providers at Halls Creek. SNAICC already has a connection with the Wunan Foundation, an Aboriginal development organisation that manages the Halls Creek Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, along with a number of other key initiatives in the community.

The Wunan Foundation will work in partnership with SNAICC to deliver the program. Among a number of roles, Wunan will drive local leadership for school readiness and engage key community members and families around their participation in the program.

The Halls Creek project follows years of research by SNAICC into good practice in supporting the transition, including an extensive literature review titled *Supporting Transition to School for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children: What it means and what works?*

The review found that a successful transition is one that "enables children to feel comfortable, connected, and engaged with their school environment and community; facilitates readiness to achieve early learning outcomes; and promotes, amongst parents and families,



a feeling of engagement in the school experience and school community."

In May 2014 SNAICC published a groundbreaking report, *The Journey to Big School*, which investigates the practical implications and applications of findings in the literature review.

*The Journey to Big School* is based on a series of consultations with 12 services across Australia that are delivering high-quality transition programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The report considers critical gaps between transition theory and practice, drawing together key recommendations for future policy and practice. It explores the challenge of ensuring cultural competence within programs, the lack of targeted funding for supported transition programs, and the limited focus in practice on enabling "ready communities" and "ready schools".

The report contains five recommendations to support the creation of successful transition strategies, including that:

- State-territory governments invest in adequately-funded, high-quality and

locally-designed transition programs in the year prior to school.

- Cultural competence resources are developed for schools and early years/family support organisations to assist and engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- Further research is conducted to identify how schools can participate in the transition process and the resources required to support Indigenous children and families.

SNAICC has developed and delivered pilot training workshops based on *The Journey to Big School* resource.

With the great support of a number of philanthropic trusts, SNAICC delivered several very successful trial workshops working with Ngroo Education, our NSW partners, at Mt Druitt in Sydney, Port Macquarie and Taree (northern NSW) and Cherbourg, Queensland (see page 26).

As a result of the Department of Social Services funding, SNAICC is now in a position to provide more intensive transition training and evaluation at a number of regional sites.

SNAICC continues to advocate on sustainable long-term funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services.

Federal funding for the 38 Aboriginal Child and Family Centres (ACFCs) across Australia was discontinued in July 2014. Some states, including Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales have provided temporary funding, with many ACFCs being forced to operate at a significantly reduced rate.

On these pages we profile the powerful work of two ACFCs: Cullunghutti at Nowra (NSW) and Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu Halls Creek (WA, pictured on this page).



**Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu Halls Creek CFC operates in the remote Kimberley region of Western Australia, providing a reliable space for children to build relationships, learn and be strong in their culture and identity.**

Participation rates are high, with 113 children and families accessing Little Nuggets, the long day care centre, and 505 children participating in Lilwuns playgroup over the last six months. Operating as the only children and family centre in Halls Creek, the centre delivers a large array of allied health services, including:

- growth and development assessments by the Yura Yungi child health nurse, who is permanently located in the CFC
- Neuro-Development clinics
- Allied Health (speech, physiotherapy and occupational therapy), which delivers workshops and attends Early Years Network meetings at the centre
- nutrition and dietary advice from visiting specialists, including collaboration with the CFC and Yura Yungi on one-off community events
- a sexual health program delivered weekly
- regular visits from a psychologist, and
- specific workshops delivered according to local demand – with past workshops covering topics such as foetal alcohol spectrum disorder and the ‘breathe blow cough’ program.

Centre manager Maria Lovison believes it is crucial to provide families with a range of programs to expose them to new knowledge and empower them to take a leading role in their child’s development.



## Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu

### At the centre of community

The range of family support services provided at the centre include:

- Parenting support, including a fortnightly men’s circle (pictured above) to discuss health and community issues.
- Daily literacy and numeracy support. The centre is also in discussion with the Australian Parents Council around training local staff to conduct the Indigenous Parenting Factor program.
- Cultural and community activities – including fortnightly programs through the Kimberley Language Resource Centre and local community members.
- A money management program delivered by the Jungarni Jutiya Aboriginal Corporation.
- A weekly radio slot to promote the Centre’s programs, upcoming events and partner service providers, as well as a special feature on ‘children’s stories’.

The community uses the centre as a hub for a range of activities from birthday

parties to a shared garden initiative. Maria says: “No matter where you come from, what your languages are, it is everyone’s centre. This is the most empowering aspect.”

Community members are encouraged to share their thoughts and suggestions on the operation of the centre and the programs provided. A cultural advisory group, comprised of Elders and community members, meets monthly to provide staff with advice and guidance on cultural and community matters.

Culture is the “life and breath” of the centre, and Carolyn McAdam, Manager of Little Nuggets, describes how the flow-on effects of this are visible in increased community pride in their culture and centre.

The establishment of a strong cultural identity is seen as particularly crucial as school-age children move on to attend mainstream primary schools. Supporting this transition, the centre maintains a strong partnership with the two local schools.

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A weekly story-time program is run for kids in Lilwuns Playgroup at the Halls Creek District High School, and a kindy program at Warlawurru (Red Hill) Primary School.

In describing the strengths of the service, Maria Lovison says simply, “people love coming here”, and this results in consistent participation and attendance rates. She attributes this to the trust that the community have in the centre: the community “have started to take ownership of the centre, and you can really feel that when you walk in.”

The employment of local staff is crucial in this. Seven of the nine Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu staff, and eight of the 11 Little Nugget staff are Aboriginal, and Maria describes how “when the people see locals working here, they feel more comfortable. They have their trust. When they see family working at the centre, they are more likely to come to the centre than [to a] mainstream service.”

However, like most remote communities, qualified local staff are hard to find. The centre has responded to this through a strong focus on staff capacity building. Seven local women are currently being supported to undertake Certificate and Diploma level training, and a high school student is undertaking a school-based traineeship.

The Kimberley Training Institute visits fortnightly to discuss training options with staff and community members. Additionally, the service mentors young parents through study enrolment processes and options.

Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu has been delivering strong outcomes for children and families since its inception. However, with no certainty of funding beyond June 2015, it is hard to plan for the future.

A mobile playgroup service operating out of the “Mums & Bubs” building gained just enough momentum to begin to show strong outcomes and high family participation, before funding ceased and the program was forced to close.

Programs at the centre are at risk of ceasing if future funding is not secured. Simply put, without Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu, there would be no child and family services available in Halls Creek.



## Cullunghutti: making an impact on families in Nowra

**After only 18 months of operation, Cullunghutti ACFC has dramatically changed the way local Aboriginal families are supported at Nowra, on the NSW south coast.**

With 400 children and adults participating each year in allied health and family support programs, Cullunghutti is a community service in high demand. In addition, the service has 70 children enrolled in the early childhood program — and another 45 on the waiting list.

These high numbers can be largely attributed to the fact that Cullunghutti delivers a culturally-centred, holistic response to the needs of Aboriginal families. Child and family health is supported through an extensive range of freely available on-site allied health services delivered through strong partnerships with other service providers.

These include:

- speech and occupational therapy
- psychology
- paediatric services, including child hearing assessments, ‘blue book’ health checks and coordination of GP assessments for allied health plans
- antenatal maternal health assessments.

The centre will also shortly be certified as a provider for the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

Families are encouraged to drop-in to the centre when they need — for advice, support or just a friendly yarn and cuppa. A comprehensive case management

approach ensures that families receive wraparound services, including:

- behavioural management support and Early Links Inclusion Support Service
- drop-in housing support
- parenting programs, including a supported playgroup that sees regular attendance from around 15 adults and 20 children
- cultural and arts programs, as well as separate men’s and women’s groups
- a catering and nutrition program, and
- support for kinship carers.

Cullunghutti also supports the development of a strong Aboriginal workforce, employing 12 Aboriginal workers out of 16 staff, with the other four staff members having strong connections and acceptance in the local Aboriginal community. The Aboriginal General Manager, Aboriginal Teaching Director and eight-member community and parent board ensure strong Aboriginal management and leadership. In addition to this, families report feeling that they have a strong voice at the centre.

The very real differences brought about in the lives of Nowra’s children as a direct result of the service are staggering:

- There has been an significant increase in early childhood diagnosis of additional needs and learning delay, with the Aboriginal-specific stream of the Early Links program assessing over 30 children annually.

Continued on page 12



# Current projects at a glance

[www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au)

## Early childhood education and care



- SNAICC's advocacy for **sustainable integrated early years services** is a major continuing focus, given the ongoing uncertainty about the future for Budget Based Funded (BBF) early years services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Centres (ACFCs).

SNAICC has recently developed Early Years Pathways case studies highlighting the amazing early successes of three ACFCs and the need for increased and sustained funding for them to deliver integrated family services.

SNAICC used these case studies to inform advocacy with key decision-makers in Canberra in February, and will travel again to Canberra with service representatives to put the case for better supports in March.

A major goal of this work is to see that the Federal Government responds to the Productivity Commission's recent early childhood review to implement a long-term and sustainable program of integrated early childhood and family support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that builds on our existing strong services.



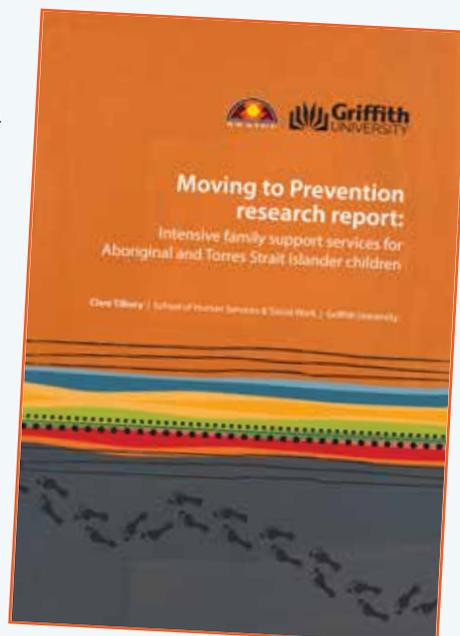
- As SNAICC continues trials of our **Journey to Big School** transition to school training program we are developing additional resources to support educators. These include a new video resource profiling good practice. SNAICC is also developing and planning to implement a new monitoring and evaluation program to track impacts together with communities in pilot sites for the transition to school program.

## Child and family wellbeing

- The SNAICC **Moving to Prevention** project, funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services under the National Research Agenda for Protecting Children, is nearing its conclusion.

In the coming weeks the final research report will be released highlighting the good practice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services providing intensive support to families with complex needs.

Practice resources will also be published and available to support learning and reflection for workers providing intensive and targeted support to families.



- The SNAICC **Safe for Our Kids** family violence response and prevention resource is now being used as the base for developing a new comprehensive family violence response and prevention training package.

SNAICC is building on a series of consultations with family violence services to develop a training program supporting good practice for support workers.

SNAICC is also shortly releasing a new video resource on good practice that shares the wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence services and professionals. Check the SNAICC website — the video may already be there!

- SNAICC has recently completed work on a policy paper entitled **Pathways to Safety and Wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children**. The paper draws on outcomes of key workshops with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family welfare sector leaders.

The paper presents priorities for reform and new initiatives in child protection and family support to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The paper is currently being circulated to inform the process for deciding priorities for the next three-year action plan under the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020*.



**National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day has been held on 4 August each year since 1988 to celebrate the special status of our children in families and communities.**

SNAICC is pleased to announce that this year's theme for Children's Day is *Little Kids, Big Futures*.

It's about supporting and celebrating the services that empower our children to have big futures. And it's about ensuring these services are adequately funded so we can turn around the lives of the next generation of our kids.

We know that the services that are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities lead to improved development and education outcomes and are more effective in creating safe and welcoming environments that engage our families and connect them to the service supports they need.

Not only that, but in the early years they provide a vital place for our communities to share and continue their cultural traditions, grounding strong and positive identities in our little ones.

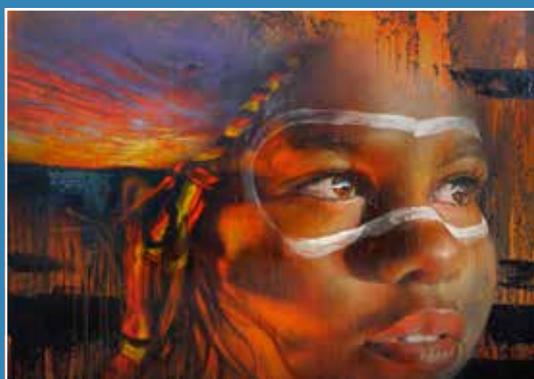
In the words of the Director of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Children's Centre, Lisa Coulson: "I don't think we've ever thought this place is about strengthening just children, this place is about building a stronger community."

Aboriginal integrated early years services, where they exist, are a bedrock of their community: a community development engine that nurtures and educates children, supports families to raise healthy children, provides accessible, affordable and integrated support to families, generates employment opportunities and enables communities to get work ready and secure employment. They are critical frontline services in the efforts to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

Equally important, these services understand that community and cultural identity are fundamental to the resilience

This year's theme, *Little Kids, Big Futures*, is about supporting and celebrating the services that empower our children.

## National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day



4 August  
2015

[www.childrensday.com.au](http://www.childrensday.com.au)

of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Identity helps to create a sense of belonging and connectedness and helps to empower children so that they have the skills and capacities to take control of events and influence outcomes.

Ensuring our children thrive is everybody's business.

Make sure you're a part of Children's Day this year.

This year's Children's Day theme aims to provide a space for everyone to come together to celebrate the achievements of these services and the families and children they support and ensure they are funded in a sustainable way so they can continue to ensure all our little kids have big futures.

SNAICC is also excited to announce we have formed a partnership with Kids Own Publishing, and together through Children's Day we will be supporting



children to tell their stories and share them with their communities through a large scale book publishing project.

In 2015, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day will be launched in Perth.

More information about how you can be involved and what resources you can purchase will be made available in April.

Stay tuned to the SNAICC e-bulletin and website — [www.childrensday.com.au](http://www.childrensday.com.au) — for more details.

# A great change for families in Nowra

Continued from page 9

- A minimum of 80-85% of the children and families accessing the early learning and supported playgroup did not previously access any early learning service before attending Cullunghutti.
- Numerous children who previously experienced limited access to health professionals have now received health checks, visited health professionals and are receiving additional support.

Changes are not just visible for the kids, but also for their families and the community as a whole. Adults are supported to undertake TAFE level study in work readiness, community services and micro-enterprise.

Due to the success of its nutrition program, Cullunghutti has established its own catering business as a social enterprise, as part of its sustainability strategy, which is staffed by three women from the nutrition program.



General Manager Cindy Holmes says: "The changes for those women are phenomenal...now they are running a catering business and out in the community selling raffle tickets to raise money for Cullunghutti. The changes are flowing through into their families...it's part of the way that we provide whole of family support."

The centre is now supporting the women to study small business management. Cullunghutti ACFC delivers a vital service to the Nowra region — with numerous benefits for children, families and the community as a whole. The Nowra community is working over-time to raise funds for their centre after its income was halved by the withdrawal of federal funds in 2014 and it awaits confirmation of state funds beyond June 2015.

It is more than apparent that it is time for the Australian government to re-invest in Cullunghutti's success.



Pictured at the digital story launch: (from left) SNAICC Deputy Chairperson Geraldine Atkinson, Kellyann Edwards (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development) Auntie Melva Johnson and Kate Booth (SNAICC Senior Training Officer).

## Video celebrates the impact of Berrimba

**A digital story launched in Melbourne highlights the incredible support Berrimba Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Service (MACS) has provided for some 30 years to the local Aboriginal children, families and community at Echuca, Victoria.**

SNAICC produced the eight-minute video to raise awareness of the vital role Berrimba and other Indigenous early years services are playing in getting children ready for school, providing support for families as well as a social hub for the whole community.

The digital story was launched by SNAICC Deputy Chairperson Geraldine Atkinson at the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc on 18 February.

The driving forces behind the creation of Berrimba in the 1980s were Auntie Melva Johnson — who features prominently in the video and attended the launch — and her daughter, Kerry Johnson.

"When we started it was like a playgroup. This was a really old house here [donated by the Uniting Church]. But we were so proud of it. And the children started coming and kept coming," Auntie Melva says in the video.

"We wanted our kids to gel together. We wanted our children to know who they were, who their families were, and who they were related to."

Berrimba — which means "forever learning" — is more like a big extended family than a child care centre, and cultural nurturing is at the core of everyday life.

Today, the 50-place centre provides affordable long day care, kindergarten for three- and four-year-olds, outside school hours care and holiday programs, as well as transport services for families who need them.

"They've got somewhere safe they can come to; or to feel good if things are not going too good at home. I think it's the best thing we've done in Echuca," says Auntie Melva.

Berrimba is one of 270 Indigenous early years services funded by the Australian Government under the Budget Based Funded (BBF) program. Despite their great work, the services face an uncertain funding future, with the BBF program under review and the Productivity Commission's far-reaching report into child care only recently tabled in federal Parliament.

Despite the challenges, Ms Atkinson said the launch of the Berrimba digital story was an opportunity to celebrate the history and impact of Aboriginal early years services.

"We must celebrate how these centres make a crucial difference in our families' lives, and the impact they have on their entire community. And we must celebrate how far we've come, from the days when there was a quota on how many of our kids were allowed to go to school."

SNAICC wishes to acknowledge Njernda Aboriginal Corporation as the licensor of Berrimba and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development for funding the production of the digital story.



Statement by SNAICC  
Chairperson Sharron Williams

Since the National Apology in 2008, the number of Indigenous children in care has increased by

65%

When will governments start to listen?



**The latest report on child protection has delivered another chilling picture on the disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care — and the urgent need for new approaches to improve the protection and wellbeing of our children.**

The Report on Government Services (ROGS) released in January 2015 by the Productivity Commission reveals that 14,991 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were in out-of-home care on 30 June 2014 — accounting for almost 35 per cent of all children in care. This is despite the fact that our children comprise only 4.4 per cent of the nation’s child population.

It’s safe to assume that today, seven months on from the June 2014 figures, well over 15,000 of our children are living in protective care. The bewildering reality is that since Prime Minister Rudd’s apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children placed in out-of-home care has increased by 65 per cent.\*

This is beyond a crisis, it is a national disgrace. If non-Aboriginal children were being removed from their families at a similar rate, there would be calls for an immediate national inquiry.

The rate at which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families are coming into contact with the child protection system is spiralling upwards at an alarming rate.

The Productivity Commission’s recent *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage* report noted that the rate of Indigenous children on care and protection orders has increased by over 400 per cent in a decade.

SNAICC again calls on state governments to place a greater focus on early intervention and family support programs, to strengthen the capacity of

vulnerable families to keep children safe and stay together.

We need to recognise and build on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities to support and nurture their children.

The latest ROGS reveals that last financial year state-territory governments spent \$3.3 billion on child protection and out-of-home care services — a figure that has increased by \$543.4 million since 2010 — and \$300.8 million on intensive family support services.

This imbalance must be redressed, so that governments invest much more in proven intensive family support services, integrated early childhood education and care services, healing and cultural programs, and supporting communities to protect and care for children.

SNAICC’s current national campaign to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care has highlighted the enormous stress under which child protection systems are operating in the states and territories, and the feelings of powerlessness and distrust of the systems by Indigenous families and communities.

Our national campaign is delivering compelling evidence that fostering greater inclusion and involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

people in child protection decision-making, as well as improving cultural competence across child protection systems, will lead to better outcomes for children.

Many practical alternatives are emerging to improve child protection processes and safeguard the best interests of our vulnerable children. It is now time for governments to start listening to our families and communities to stem the tide of child removals.

Ultimately, addressing the underlying disadvantage in Aboriginal communities — such as lack of adequate housing, financial security and education — is at the core of improving the lives of our children and families.

Governments must empower our communities and organisations to help reduce the levels of family violence, drug and alcohol misuse and mental illness, caused by disadvantage and poverty, that are contributing to child abuse and neglect.

None of this will come as news to governments — but when will they start listening to us?

\* Percentage increase is based on June 2008 figure (9,070 children) from Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and June 2014 figure (14,991 children) from 2015 Report on Government Services.



*Family Matters — Kids safe in culture, not in care* is a national initiative to reduce the alarming over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.

A National Coordinating Group is driving the initiative, comprising representatives from SNAICC, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation, Families Australia, Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), the NSW peak body Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (AbSec), and Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP).

For more information: [www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au)

## Setting the pathways for change in WA

**The Family Matters initiative is aiming for urgent and major reforms to child protection systems across Australia — systems that are under stress and failing to meet the needs of vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.**

Our children and families are coming into contact with child protection systems at disproportionate and increasing rates. Today, Indigenous children comprise over 35 per cent of all children in out-of-home care.

Family Matters is engaging with key stakeholders, including Indigenous community members, practitioners, service providers, researchers and government to develop national and state-territory based measures.

To date, 645 people have attended Family Matters forums in Darwin, Alice Springs, Perth, Fitzroy Crossing, Adelaide and Port Augusta to share their experiences and make recommendations for positive change.

At the forums in Western Australia in June 2014, 211 community members and representatives from the government and non-government sectors identified 56 recommendations for change in out-of-home care policies and practices. These



PHOTO: Ted Wilkes, Associate Professor at the National Drug Research Institute addresses the follow-up Family Matters forum in Perth in February 2015. The forum was attended by mostly Aboriginal participants.

included strategies for individuals to implement within their own communities and also initiatives for the non-government and government sectors.

SNAICC CEO Frank Hytten and Family Matters Manager Gemma Unwin returned to Perth in February 2015. They invited participants from the original forum to come together again to establish the most appropriate way forward.

The follow-up meeting was attended by more than 50 participants, predominantly Aboriginal community leaders and practitioners, who considered the recommendations made at the June forum.

There was a great sense of direction and optimism within those present — and strong belief that they could tackle the high rates of children being taken away.

After the small group discussions participants met as a whole group and decided on the following:

1. Ongoing meetings were required to unpack the recommendations.

The meetings would also be a good opportunity to share professional expertise and encourage networking and linking of services.

2. The Alliance of Aboriginal CEOs will look at establishing a Peak Child Protection Aboriginal Community-Controlled Agency.
3. Everyone has a responsibility to lobby for bi-partisan support and a 20-year strategy to stop child removal and promote the reunification of children with their families.
4. A number of recommendations — relating to the transfer of Aboriginal case management to ACCAs, the Department for Child Protection and Family Support sharing statutory responsibility for care with ACCAs and establishing a Circle of Elders — are already being progressed by a group of Aboriginal community leaders in WA.

Aboriginal community leaders clearly stated that while they welcomed the support from the non-Aboriginal, non-

Continued next page

The Perth follow-up forum brought together some of WA's key Aboriginal leaders who provided expertise and context to discussions. They included:

- Virginia Dingo, Manager Out-of-Home Care, Yorganop
- Ted Wilkes, Associate Professor at the National Drug Research Institute
- Mary Cowley, Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Family Law Centre
- Jim Morrison, Co-chair Stolen Generations Alliance
- Ken Kelly, Strong Families Coordinator

government sector now was not the time for them to get involved.

They said it was important that Aboriginal people led this strategy and the time would come when the non-Aboriginal community would be invited to walk beside or behind Aboriginal people.

During the morning some participants were interrupted by telephone calls from family and community members with child protection issues and these were shared with the group.

One phone call came from a family member whose children were at risk of removal because of contact between the children and their father, who was recently released from jail. The conviction was not related to child protection issues and the mother and her family wanted the children to maintain contact and have a continued relationship with their father. The department, however, did not.

A positive story was shared by a Strong Families Coordinator, who took a call informing him that housing had just been sourced for a young mother and her family and her children had been returned to her.

This was greeted with a round of applause with a participant stating the Strong Families program was an excellent initiative that needed greater acknowledgement and resourcing.

The Strong Families program is a collaborative and coordinated approach by local services to respond to "families in need" in a holistic manner, using their networks and resources to leverage support where it was most needed.



ABOVE: The Family Matters forum in Perth in June 2014 identified 56 recommendations for change in out-of-home care policies and practices.



During his visit to Perth, SNAICC CEO Frank Hytten (pictured above) gave a presentation to 80 senior staff from the WA Department of Child Protection and Family Support.

He spoke about the high incidence of substantiated notifications in WA for emotional abuse and neglect and the strong link between neglect and poverty.

"Children should not be removed because they were sharing a bed with their siblings," Mr Hytten said.

He outlined some innovative child protection practices across Australia, including Stronger Communities for Children (NT), Capacity Building Partnerships (NSW) and Child FIRST (Victoria.)

## Forum identifies new measures

**Participants at the February forum identified gaps in the recommendations from the June 2014 gathering and recommended a number of new measures:**

- Statutory and legislative change was required to remove executive powers from inexperienced social workers. The new legislation would require the Department for Child Protection and Family Support to provide evidence to Magistrates on how it has supported families to address child welfare issues. The legislation could also explicitly require state family conferencing prior to placement.
- Where non-Aboriginal people are involved in child protection service delivery there needs to be monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure practice was culturally-relevant and that Aboriginal people are involved in discussions and decision-making.
- The department needs to develop a Reconciliation Action Plan with an Aboriginal Advisory Group. All Family Matters recommendations relating to the department's workforce could be captured in the plan, including those relating to cultural awareness.
- There was a need for change to occur on three levels — within legislation and also on a strategic and practical level. A peak child protection organisation should be established to drive this change.

# A day of fun and festivities for Bubup Wilam families

2014 may have been a busy and challenging year for Bubup Wilam for Early Learning Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, but all that was forgotten for a day as families got together to celebrate the festive season at Funfields Water Park in Whittlesea, in Melbourne's north.

Bubup Wilam has been operating since 2012 and provides greater access to services for Aboriginal families and their children in Melbourne's northern suburbs, offering long day care, kindergarten, visiting allied health professionals and other services.

Bubup Wilam has become an important hub for Aboriginal families and community — a community spirit that was obvious walking among the large gathering of children, families, Bubup Wilam staff and supporters.

Guests were treated to a typically beautiful Melbourne day (!), a healthy lunch and lots of fun activities for the children.

And the speeches were kept to a minimum, including one from Bubup Wilam CEO Lisa Thorpe, who told the gathering: "You are the reason why we will continue to keep Bubup Wilam going."

Lisa said the day would become an annual event, as a way of thanking Bubup Wilam families, staff and supporters.



▲ Renee Sweetman and daughter Harmony were part of the large gathering at Whittlesea for Bubup Wilam's festive celebration.

▼ Enjoying a healthy lunch: George Tuuholoaki and Shantelle Thompson with children Nacinta, Jaida and Soane.



▲ Shakara Montalto and little Alirrah.



▲ Showing their support on the day were (from left): Councillor Mary Lallios (City of Whittlesea) Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Andrew Jackomos, local state MP Bronwyn Halfpenny, Whittlesea Mayor Ricky Kirkham, VACCHO CEO Jill Gallagher, local Federal MP Andrew Giles with Bubup Wilam CEO Lisa Thorpe and Bubup Wilam board member Karen Bryant.



▲ Brian Liddle and Natasha Corrigan with Liana and Rebekah.

▼ Laura, Victoria and Alex have fun in the sun.



▲ Lyn Longhurst takes a break from festivities.



▲ Valiecia Kelly-Briggs is all smiles as little Ivy enjoys a drink.

▼ Little Allirah hangs on with all her might!



▲ Young Michael Graham Jnr was in fine form at the batting crease as dad Michael Snr kept wicket.



▲ Tracey Barton with children Taliah, Jarneaka and (a tired) Indi.

## Sexual abuse by children against children is a growing and significant problem in out-of-home care, the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has heard.

The Royal Commission began a public hearing on 10 March in Sydney, examining the incidence of abuse against children in out-of-home care in all Australian jurisdictions and ways to prevent abuse.

Senior Counsel Assisting the Commission Gail Furness SC told the hearing it was impossible to collate accurate or consistent national data on child sexual abuse in out-of-home care because of the lack of data in some states, changes in policy and a difference in definitions of what constitutes different types of care and even what constitutes abuse.

But Ms Furness told the hearing: "The major focus should be on efforts to prevent child-to-child sexual abuse rather than caregiver child sexual abuse since this type likely represents the vast majority of observed child sexual abuse in out-of-home care."

The Royal Commission also heard a crisis is looming in the care of Aboriginal children because of the ageing population of carers.

Commissioner Robert Fitzgerald questioned witnesses about the high proportion of Aboriginal children who are cared for by their grandparents, observing there was anecdotal evidence in relation to Aboriginal carers.

Ms Connie Salamone, the director of strategy and services for the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), said there was definitely a problem.

She said there were difficulties in attracting Aboriginal carers.

"I look at the poor support we offer basically in terms of brokerage funds, for example to kinship carers. Many of the Aboriginal carers who are looking after children are quite poor," Ms Salamone said.

The Royal Commission interim report released last year identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as over-represented as victims of sexual abuse in institutional settings.

The interim report observed, however, the little statistical research available.

Almost 7 per cent of private session participants identified as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person — despite Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



## Royal Commission looks at child sexual abuse in out-of-home care

people representing 3 per cent of the Australian population.

The interim report stated all children in an institution, who have an association with an institution or in out-of-home care may be at risk of sexual abuse.

The risk for sexual abuse impacts disproportionately on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as they make up almost 35 per cent of all children in OOH, despite representing only 4.65 of Australia's child population.

Children in out-of-home care face a range of additional factors that make them more vulnerable to abuse. For example, some children live in residential or quasi-residential environments, often with extensive periods of unsupervised contact with adults.

**• SNAICC is part of a coalition of Victorian Aboriginal services to lodge a joint submission to the Royal Commission on redress measures for the survivors of institutional child sexual abuse.**

The submission canvasses measures to be taken by institutions towards survivors, including compensation, an apology, the opportunity to meet with senior representatives, and assurances of steps taken to protect against future abuse.

These steps include more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social workers, systems cultural change, more Working With Children Checks, and culturally-appropriate training for staff and carers.

The submission can be viewed at: [www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au)

### SNAICC outlines prevention measures

In a 2014 joint submission to the Royal Commission, SNAICC and other key agencies outlined the measures needed to prevent sexual abuse of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.

These measures were:

- Reinvestment from statutory intervention to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led, prevention-focused services, including intensive family preservation and restoration supports.
- Commitment to long-term, sustainable funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander integrated, early years focused child and family services.
- Investment in building capacity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led governance in child and family service integration initiatives (for example, Communities for Children; Child Aware Local Communities; Aboriginal Child and Family Centres; Child FIRST).

The submission can be downloaded at: [www.snaicc.org.au/\\_uploads/rsfil/03248.pdf](http://www.snaicc.org.au/_uploads/rsfil/03248.pdf)

# Strong opposition to permanent care orders in the Northern Territory

**The North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) has expressed serious concerns about the Northern Territory Government's new legislation on permanent care orders, which NAAJA claims was rushed and enacted without proper consultation.**

The NT parliament passed the legislation on 18 February. Minister for Children and Families John Elferink said a Permanent Care Order aims to offer a more permanent option for children who are unable to be reunited with family.

"A Permanent Care Order will be in effect until the child is 18 years and allows a carer to make everyday decisions about the individual in their care, such as providing approval for a child to attend a school excursion or travel on a family holiday," Mr Elferink said.

"This new type of order transfers parental rights to a third party, in a very similar way to adoption, however, unlike adoption, a Permanent Care Order will not change a child's surname, birth certificate, birthrights or entitlements."

However, NAAJA believes the new legislation does not have sufficient safeguards to ensure that permanent care orders are made only as a last resort and Aboriginal children are able to maintain their connection with family and culture.

"We know the intergenerational effect of cultural dislocation on Aboriginal people and the government needs to take more care before attempting to introduce this type of legislation," said NAAJA CEO Priscilla Collins.

"Under permanent care orders there will be no monitoring of the permanent placement and an Aboriginal child's relationship with their family and culture will be left to the discretion of the carer."

Ms Collins said Aboriginal children were over-represented among children in out-of-home care in the NT — numbering 774 in June 2014 — with less than half of those children placed with Aboriginal foster carers.



**"Under permanent care orders there will be no monitoring of the permanent placement and an Aboriginal child's relationship with their family and culture will be left to the discretion of the carer."**

**— Priscilla Collins**



**"I have seen the behaviour too many times in the past from this process and I believe this is extremely damaging to all Aboriginal children in care in the NT and their families..."**

**— Natalie Hunter**

"The NT Care and Protection of Children Act does not allow for 'cultural plans' or for conditions to be attached to the permanent care order. Once the order is made there is no oversight about what happens to that child," she said.

"The National Framework for Protecting Australia's children adopts a preventative approach to child abuse and neglect on the basis that this approach will deliver better outcomes for children.

"Proper investment in intensive family support services must be a priority. It's disappointing that the government is pushing through such a significant change without voicing any commitment to prevention and early intervention."

In the NT the number of Aboriginal children on care and protection orders has more than tripled since the year 2000.

Former SNAICC National Executive member Natalie Hunter has written to NT Chief Minister Adam Giles requesting an urgent

meeting to discuss permanent care orders.

In an email to Mr Giles, Ms Hunter said she was "deeply disappointed" with his government's decision to "rush through the permanent care order for Aboriginal children" and its failure to consult the wider Aboriginal community and Aboriginal services.

"This is just another policy that your Government makes on the run and change immediately to suit your budget," Ms Hunter wrote.

"I find this extremely damaging to the wellbeing of Aboriginal children and their families that your department permanently place Aboriginal children with non-Aboriginal families in which the child loses his/her identity and self belonging in their family structure and to be part of the wider Aboriginal community when they leave care.

Continued on page 20

# SNAICC calls for new approaches to child protection and out-of-home care

**SNAICC has provided a submission to the Senate Inquiry into Out of Home Care, which details five key priorities it believes should underpin new ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.**

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care has increased by 53 per cent since June 2008. Today there are over 14,000 of our children in out-of-home care across Australia — or 34 per cent of all children in care, despite comprising just 4.4 per cent of the child population.

The SNAICC submission draws from a practice and evidence base built in consultation and research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous communities, organisations and sector experts.

The five key priorities outlined in the submission are:

- Increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community participation in decisions for the care of our children, supported by increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled service design and delivery.
- Re-orienting service delivery to early intervention and family support to build on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families

to care for and protect their own children.

- Reflecting in funding and policy directions that holistic and integrated family support and child protection services that are accessible and appropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are crucial.
- Recognising the importance of supporting and maintaining cultural connection to the best interests of our children.
- Facilitating and supporting partnerships that build capacity and cultural competence for effective service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

In July 2014 the Senate referred the out-of-home care inquiry to the Community Affairs References Committee, which is now expected to deliver its report in May 2015.

SNAICC's submission — which is available on the SNAICC website, [www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au) — has individually addressed all ten terms of reference for the inquiry.

It is clear from the staggering numbers of our children and families that come into contact with child protection systems that innovative and bold new ways of working are needed, based on greater Indigenous participation and control.

## Cultural advisors for children in care

**In a ground-breaking move, the ACT Government has appointed five cultural advisors to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.**

The cultural advisors will work directly with children, young people, and families to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within the child protection system are receiving culturally appropriate care.

The Minister for Children and Young People, Mick Gentleman, first announced the initiative during Child Protection Week in September 2014.

"This service means children and young people in care will be further supported to develop their identity through contact with their culture and communities," Minister Gentleman said.

"Care and Protection Services are keen to work more closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community to ensure the best possible outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people."

The cultural advice service model will be trialled for 12 months, targeting children and young people when they enter care, and also as they transition from care.

## Strong opposition to new NT legislation

Continued from page 19

"I have seen the behaviour too many times in the past from this process and I believe this is extremely damaging to all Aboriginal children in care in the NT and their families that your Government refuse(s) to fund (an) Aboriginal service provider on the ground to assist families to be the positive parents they should be for their children."

SNAICC has come out in support of NAAJA's position. Speaking on 783 ABC Radio Alice Springs, SNAICC CEO Frank Hytten said he also feared that permanent

care orders would see children lost in the system.

"The order allows for children to be removed until they're 18, so let's say a young mum has an alcohol problem, the child can be removed from the mother from the hospital ward at birth and disappear into the system never to be returned," Mr Hytten said.

Mr Hytten said that families should be supported first and foremost, questioning the lack of detail regarding how the orders would be applied and the extent

to which cultural connections would be maintained under the new system.

"Before any such decision is made... the families should be worked with, the families should be supported, there needs to be a period of time where staff and resources are put into the families...to ensure that whatever the problems are, the parents have got ample time to do something about it," he said.

"Nothing's been said about connecting these kids to culture, nothing's been said about making sure these children don't lose relationships with their Aboriginality or the community or the family they come from."

# We need to know more to prevent suicide and self-harm

**National Children's Commissioner Megan Mitchell's *Children's Rights Report 2014* details the findings of her investigation into suicide and intentional self-harm among young people.**

The report, Ms Mitchell's second in the role, was tabled on 8 December. The report also examines the Commissioner's work during the past year to promote discussion and awareness of matters relating to the human rights of children and young people in Australia.

The Commissioner's investigation has found that too much continues to be unknown, impeding us from predicting and preventing injury and death resulting from intentional self-harm – with or without suicidal intent – in children and young people.

The report recommends a national research agenda for children and young people, annual reports on death and hospitalisation due to intentional self-harm, and the need for standardised data collection and terminology.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are identified in the report as being disproportionately affected by intentional self-harm and suicidal behaviour. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people represent only 4.4 per cent of Australia's population yet, appallingly, the data provided by ABS shows they accounted for 28.1 per cent of all the recorded deaths in children and young people under 18 years of age due to intentional self-harm.

This is also linked to higher rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.



Megan Mitchell

At 30 June 2013, there were 40,549 children and young people in out-of-home care in Australia. Of these, 13,952 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people – or 34 per cent of all children in care.

Out-of-home care is clearly a risk factor associated with non-suicidal self-harm and suicidal behaviour. The report calls for more prevention and support programs tailored for children and young people in out-of-home care placements – programs that actively listen to the voices of children and provide culturally appropriate therapeutic and other support, both during and post-care.

Issues of colonisation and inter-generational trauma and ongoing racism were consistently identified in consultations conducted by the Commissioner and submissions made to the examination as key factors behind the high rates of self-harm and suicidal behavior in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children.

The importance of language and culture in building identity and resilience in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people was reported to be one of the most critical protective factors. Intergenerational cultural programs with a focus of 'on country' responses such as the Yiriman Project of Western Australia highlights a successful example of culture as a critical protective factor.

Despite the existence of the National Suicide Prevention Strategy, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait

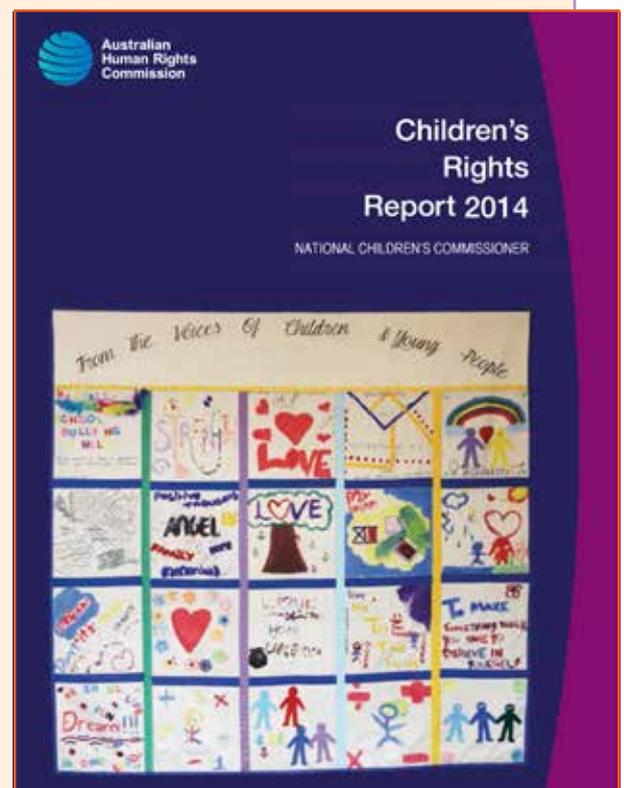
Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy, and a range of other national policy initiatives focused on the wellbeing of children and young people, Australia lacks a strategic and coordinated approach that articulates and resources the full suite of interventions required.

The Commissioner hopes this examination of non-suicidal self-harm and suicidal behavior and the recommendations will provide a blueprint for the development of a specific national research agenda.

"Adopting these recommendations would deliver regular and more detailed surveillance of intentional self-harm in children and young people...and improve our understanding of effective intervention and prevention," Ms Mitchell said.

Ms Mitchell has also released a child-friendly version of the Children's Rights Report 2014.

Written from the National Children's Commissioner to the children of Australia, *What does the Children's Rights Report 2014 say?* is a document that is accessible to children, which aims to explain what children's rights are, why they are important, and what was found in the 2014 report.



On 11 February, Prime Minister Tony Abbott tabled the seventh Closing the Gap report in Parliament. As with previous progress reports, the latest statement delivered mixed news on the Government's efforts to reduce Indigenous disadvantage.

**Unless there is a new approach to the delivery of programs and services for Indigenous Australians — that retargets government funding to early years education and health and improves Indigenous participation — the Prime Minister's Closing the Gap statement will continue to be an annual ritual in disappointment and frustration.**

We share the Prime Minister's profound disappointment, but the latest results should not come as a surprise. Indigenous Affairs in the past 12 months has been marked by severe funding cuts and uncertainty — hardly the platform for sustained improvements under Closing the Gap targets.

Today hundreds of Indigenous organisations across Australia, including SNAICC, are still waiting to see if they have been successful in securing funding under the Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

Clearly there is a contradiction between aiming for Closing the Gap targets and reducing funding on Indigenous programs intended to close the gap on disadvantage.

It is a contradiction to aim for greater access to early childhood education while at the same time turning your back, as the Australian Government has done, on funding the 38 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Centres across Australia.

The latest Closing the Gap report shows disappointing progress in the areas of life expectancy, access to early childhood education, literacy and numeracy, and employment.

Governments simply must invest more in Indigenous early childhood and family support services to stop the gap from widening in the first place. If we get this platform right, it will lead to better outcomes across all Closing the Gap targets.



## Closing the Gap reports becoming a disappointing and frustrating ritual

Greater long-term investment in integrated early childhood education, care and health will set our children on the path to better school attendance and attainment, and greater employment opportunities. Improved health and education outcomes will help veer them away from contact with juvenile detention and criminal justice systems.

Greater investment in intensive family support and family violence services will keep more vulnerable families together, reduce their contact with the child protection system and stem the tide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being placed in out-of-home care. Funds taken away from family violence prevention services in the last Federal budget need to be restored in the next.

But funding is only part of the issue. Our community organisations must be empowered and encouraged to design and deliver programs and services at the local level.

In his Closing the Gap statement last year, Mr Abbott acknowledged that past policy failures in Indigenous affairs could be attributed to doing things “for” Indigenous Australians rather than “with” them.

But according to a recent Productivity Commission report on government expenditure, of the 6.1 per cent of all government spending on Indigenous-specific programs in 2012–13, 81 per cent (\$24.7 billion) was provided to mainstream services while only 19 per cent (\$5.6 billion) was targeted to Indigenous specific services.

“Funding is only part of the issue. Our community organisations must be empowered and encouraged to design and deliver programs and services at the local level.”

Unless there is a new approach to the delivery of services, which redresses this imbalance and strengthens the capacity of Indigenous organisations, we will not achieve sustained improvements in the lives of Indigenous Australians.

There is a wealth of national and international evidence that effective community governance and meaningful participation are essential to advance issues impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

We note that the one target that is on track is the mortality rate for Indigenous children under five. SNAICC welcomes this as great news that can be directly attributed to the work of Indigenous community-controlled health services.

The Australian Government has made encouraging remarks about delivering more flexible funding to make sure it meets the aspirations and priorities of communities. Let's hope the reality matches the rhetoric when the funding allocations are announced under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy in March 2015.

## Progress against Closing the Gap targets

### Key findings:

| Target   | Target year | Progress     | Results   |
|--|-------------|--------------|---|
| Close the gap in life expectancy within a generation   | 2031        | Not on track | Limited progress  |
| Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade                      | 2018        | On track     | Long term progress  |
| Ensure access for all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities to early childhood education       | 2013        | Not met      | In 2013, 85 per cent of Indigenous four-year-olds were enrolled compared to the target of 95 per cent |
| Close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance within five years                  | 2018        |              | New target, baseline 2014   |
| Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for Indigenous students                      | 2018        | Not on track | There has been no overall improvement in Indigenous reading and numeracy since 2008.                  |
| Halve the gap for Indigenous Australians aged 20–24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates | 2020        | On track     | The gap is narrowing in Year 12 or equivalent attainment.   |
| Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians                   | 2018        | Not on track | There was a decline in employment outcomes since the 2008 baseline.                                   |

— From *Closing the Gap Report 2015* (page 5)

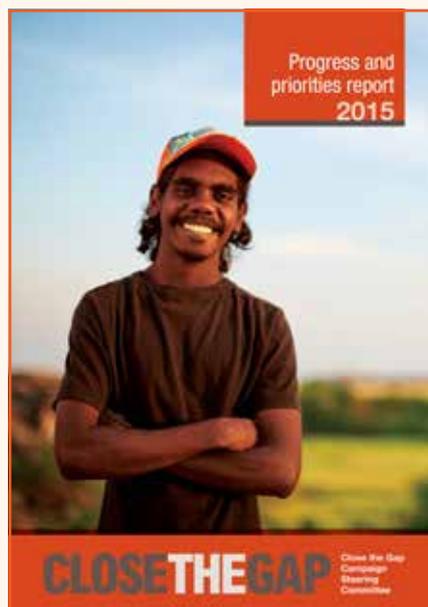
## Continued investment is the only way to Close the Gap

**The Close the Gap Campaign has urged the Australian Government to focus on greater access to primary health care services to detect, treat and manage chronic health conditions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.**

Campaign Co-Chairs Mick Gooda and Kirstie Parker released the 2015 *Close the Gap Progress and Priorities Report* on 11 February, to coincide with the Prime Minister's annual report card to Parliament on progress made to reduce Indigenous disadvantage.

Key recommendations from the 2015 progress and priorities report include:

- That the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Measures Survey (NATSIHMS) findings are used to better target chronic conditions in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.
- That the Australian Government continues to lead the COAG Closing the Gap Strategy.
- That the Australian Government restore the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee.



The Campaign has also called for clear alignment of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy with the Closing the Gap Strategy; restoration and increase of funding to vital Indigenous anti-smoking initiatives; development of a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and social and emotional wellbeing plan to complement others relating to general health, suicide prevention and drug use; new Closing the Gap targets to reduce imprisonment and violence rates; and a comprehensive Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan.

Mr Gooda, who is also Social Justice Commissioner at the Australian Human Rights Commission, said the report identified high levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with undetected treatable and preventable chronic conditions that impact significantly on life expectancy.

“Armed with this data, the Campaign Steering Committee believes the nation now has a real opportunity to make relatively large health and life expectancy gains in relatively short periods of time,” Commissioner Gooda said.

“We have seen some gains in maternal and child health but without strong and sustainable commitment from Government to ensure chronic conditions are detected, treated and managed, the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is in jeopardy.”

Ms Parker, who is also Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, said there needed to be a clearer connection between the Australian Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy — which focuses on education, employment and community safety — and the national effort to close the gap in Indigenous health

“Employment, education and community safety are drivers of improved health and wellbeing. It is important to remember that good health contributes to positive outcomes in all these areas.”

# Victoria announces Royal Commission into Family Violence

**Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews has announced the proposed Terms of Reference for the Royal Commission into Family Violence — the first such government-backed inquiry in Australia's history.**

Announcing the Royal Commission, the Victorian Government said family violence was the most dangerous and prevalent form of violence perpetrated against women.

"We need a system that protects the vulnerable, punishes the guilty and saves lives. The Royal Commission will give us the answers we need and nothing will be off limits," Premier Daniel Andrews said.

Justice Marcia Neave will chair the Royal Commission, with Patricia Faulkner and Tony Nicholson serving as Deputy Commissioners. The commission is due to deliver its report and recommendations by February 2016.

The proposed Terms of Reference task the Commissioners with finding the most effective ways to:

- prevent family violence
- improve early intervention to identify and protect those at risk
- support victims
- make perpetrators accountable, and
- improve the way that Government and society work together.

The effect of family violence is profound. Family violence is the leading cause of death and disability in Victorian women under 45. Every week in Australia, a woman is killed by her current or former partner.

The incidence of family violence across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is disproportionately higher than in the broader Australian community.

In 2013–14, there were 65,393 family incidents reported to Victoria Police, a rise of 83 per cent since 2009–10. A third of all police work, family violence costs the Victorian economy over \$3 billion every year.

## **SNAICC's response**

SNAICC welcomes the historic and groundbreaking initiative from the Victorian Government.

Family violence is a critical issue for our children and families and we commend the positive focus of the Royal Commission on future strategies for prevention and early intervention, which are desperately needed.

Considerations of the impact of family violence on children seem contained mostly within the child protection sector and there is a need for the Royal Commission to include a strong focus on children.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their organisations have a deep understanding and wealth of experience in strategies to effectively prevent and respond to family violence.

It is crucial that our communities and organisations are strongly consulted and that the Royal Commission has Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation.

## **The impact of family violence**

The Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, Andrew Jackomos, told *SNAICC News* that he also welcomed the Royal Commission.

Mr Jackomos said he had seen the impact that family violence is having on individual children through the Taskforce 1000 project that he co-chairs with the Secretary of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services.

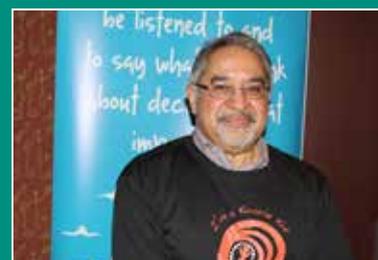
"So far the taskforce has considered about 250 Aboriginal children in out-of-home care across regional and metropolitan Victoria. Over 90 per cent of our children that we have looked at are being removed from families and living in out-of-home care as a direct result of family violence," Mr Jackomos said.

He said the significant over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child protection system across Victoria was not declining. Aboriginal children represent



**"We need a system that protects the vulnerable, punishes the guilty and saves lives. The Royal Commission will give us the answers we need and nothing will be off limits."**

**— Daniel Andrews**  
Premier of Victoria



**"Over 90 per cent of our children that we have looked at are being removed from families and living in out-of-home care as a direct result of family violence."**

**— Andrew Jackomos**  
Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People

about 16 per cent of the approximately 6500 Victorian children in state care.

"We will only see a reduction if more focus is placed on the drivers of child protection, changing behaviours and building the cultural and timely responsiveness of interventions," Mr Jackomos said.

**Continued on next page**

### Statement from Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS Victoria)

The Royal Commission is an opportunity for Government, stakeholders and the wider community to be better informed about the wide ranging impacts of family violence in the community, especially the Aboriginal community.

FVPLS Victoria considers that the Royal Commission should lead to the development of appropriate policy responses to family violence in Aboriginal communities and resourcing for frontline family violence services for Aboriginal people.

Any new initiatives should recognise that family violence is a gendered crime. Although FVPLS Victoria is not a gender exclusive service, 93 per cent of our clients are Aboriginal women and children.

Family violence is endemic in our community, with Aboriginal women and children disproportionately represented as victims/survivors of family violence. In Victoria, police reports of family violence against Aboriginal victims/survivors have almost tripled in less than a decade.

Family violence is the key contributor to the over-representation of Aboriginal children in the child protection system. We are particularly informed by the important work of Taskforce 1000, commenced by the Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People in 2014, which highlights men's violence against women as a primary driver of Aboriginal children entering out-of-home care.

Family violence has broad ranging impacts on the mental and physical health and wellbeing on Aboriginal women placing a heavy burden on the already under-resourced legal sector and undermining economic and social development in our communities.

As the only specialist legal service exclusively dedicated to supporting Aboriginal victims/survivors of family violence in Victoria, FVPLS Victoria anticipates taking a lead agency role in the Royal Commission. FVPLS Victoria expects that the Royal Commission will lead to increased demand for frontline family violence services, including culturally safe, specialised legal and holistic responses such as ours.

Statement by Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett, AM CEO, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency



## Inquiry should lead to safer children, women and communities

### The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) welcomes the announcement of the Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria.

The impact of family violence on children and future generations should never be underestimated:

- Children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of family violence.
- Family violence is present in the majority of reports made to Child Protection.
- Experiencing violence in childhood is a significant risk factor for being both a victim and a perpetrator of violence in adulthood.
- Family violence is a key factor in the high rates of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians are much more likely to experience violence than non-Indigenous Australians:

- The number of Aboriginal women reporting violence by a current partner were 1.2 (NSW), 1.6 (SA) and 2.2 (NT) times the rates for non-Aboriginal women. The number of Aboriginal women reporting sexual assault by a family member were 1.4 (QLD), 1.5 (NSW and SA) and 3.8 (NT) times the rates for non-Aboriginal women. These figures cannot be provided in Victoria as the police incident data is not available, an issue in itself.
- Nationally in 2012–13 hospitalisations for non-fatal family violence-related assaults were 34 times higher for Aboriginal women than for non-Aboriginal women.

- Also in 2012–13, the rate of Aboriginal children and women aged 10 years and over accessing Specialist Homelessness Services and escaping family violence (359 clients per 10 000 population) was 10 times the rate for female non-Aboriginal clients (34 clients per 10 000 population).

The Terms of Reference of the Royal Commission, which importantly make specific mention of children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, will ensure that we all have a comprehensive view of family violence in Victoria at the end of its 12-month investigation.

We welcome the focus on service systems and how they can better coordinate and collaborate for better results. This is a demanding timeframe and it needs to be followed by swift action. We are concerned that services are likely to experience an increase in demand during this time and are pleased to note that the Government will be providing support for agencies to meet this.

Family violence is never acceptable and it causes great harm and hurt. Particularly in an Aboriginal context its impact is felt throughout extended families, kinship networks and community. Effective measures against family violence will positively affect many services including the courts, police, child protection and support services. It will also mean a safer community where children and women will be safer.

\*Data from Productivity Commission's *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2014 Report*



ABOVE: Participants at a TYBE workshop at SNAICC in November 2014.

**Welcome to a new year of SNAICC training. We are looking forward to responding to the ongoing and emerging training needs of workers with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities across the country.**

Following pilot programs on issues including trauma, family violence and transition to school, we are looking at where best to undertake training delivery and how best to get feedback on emerging programs. We will also be seeking expressions of interest for agencies wanting to host workshops in different regions.

Our Training Administrator, Grace Brown, has left SNAICC to take on a Social Worker role at Whitelion, working with Aboriginal young women at Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation Co-Operative (MAYSAR) and the Minajalku Centre.

Grace played a major role at SNAICC for over 18 months, coordinating many of the training events and being a wonderful first port of call for community and those wanting to explore their training needs. Grace will be really missed by all her friends at SNAICC.

Alice Davis has now commenced work as our new Senior Training Administrator. Alice comes to us with a strong background in the humanitarian and community sector including work for international volunteer organisation, Projects Abroad.

Before joining SNAICC, Alice worked in the International Program at Australian

Red Cross as the Training Team Administrator and in 2014 began a Master of Social Work. Welcome on board Alice!

### **New transition training: *Journey to Big School***

With the great support of a number of philanthropic trusts including the Gandel Foundation, Cages and JT Reid, SNAICC has now completed development and delivery of pilot workshops for *The Journey to Big School* transition training. SNAICC delivered several very successful trial workshops with Ngroo Education, our NSW partners, at Mt DrUITT in Sydney, and Port Macquarie and Taree regional centres. A wide range of early years programs and schools were involved.

We received great support from Deb Mann and five Aboriginal mentors from Ngroo, demonstrating the effectiveness of local partnerships and gaining input from Aboriginal workers based in the regional networks. Our thanks to the generous trusts, Ngroo and the local networks who supported this very successful training.

Based on the exciting new five-year funding grant from the Department of Social Services (see page 7), we are now in a position to provide more intensive transition training and evaluation at a number of regional sites. This is a great opportunity to make a real difference in terms of best practice skills development, and to provide a strong research and evaluation base regarding transition approaches that work well for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

While there are specific targeted sites already tied to this funding, the project will also inform our training and capacity to respond to training needs around Australia.

The following feedback from participants highlights some important impacts of the transition to school training:

“I am inspired to strengthen connections made today and maintain, and to strengthen relationships with families of students coming into our school.”

“The stories shared really resonated with me and made me realise the importance of building relationships that are respectful, inclusive and positive with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.”

“It has provided much food for thought around transitions and how to make it better for Indigenous children and families.”

### **Family violence training development: *Safe for Our Kids***

SNAICC has now delivered two community consultation workshops as part of our family violence research and best practice package *Safe for Our Kids: A guide to family violence response and prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families*. The aim of *Safe for Our Kids* is to lead and support best practice across the nation to reduce the incidence and impacts of family violence.

The two consultation workshops on the practice guide were completed at the end

of 2014 at AbSec in Sydney and at Mullum Mullum Indigenous Gathering Place in Melbourne. SNAICC filmed discussions and interviews about the best practice principles, and would like to thank a number of services that gave us valuable insights into how the principles can be put into practice. The services included Boorndawan Willam, Wesley Mission, Family Violence Prevention Legal Service and members of the Indigenous Family Violence Regional Action Group, Eastern Metro. In Sydney this included AbSec, Mudgin-Gal, Yenu Allowah Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, and Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal Women's Legal Centre.

A two-day Family Violence Workshop will be developed over the next six months, based on the extensive research, consultation and filming we have undertaken, to help address this important issue for our community. We expect this training to be piloted in the second half of 2015 and will look for expressions of interest for host organisations and locations for the training. Research and content from the project will also help assist in developing a new family violence training focused on working with fathers and men in general.

### Recognising and Responding to Trauma pilot workshops

With funding from the Healing Foundation, two pilot workshops were completed in late 2014 on trauma-informed practice with the Australian Childhood Foundation, based on research, consultation and staff development. SNAICC has since developed its training package, working in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) to deliver two pilot workshops in Lismore and Ballarat.

A number of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal participants, who work directly with community, attended the workshops. Participants indicated that strengths of the program included the healing approach to trauma from a strong cultural perspective, historical and current views in understanding the nature and impacts of trauma, understanding the impacts of trauma on the brain during early childhood development, and key responses to working with a trauma-informed practice approach. Vicarious trauma and the impacts of trauma work on workers themselves were also seen to be extremely important issues.

SNAICC has appreciated working closely with the Healing Foundation, VACCA and the ACF on the planning and delivery



## Training dates

March–June 2015

### March

3–6 March: The Journey to Big School Workshop, Cherbourg, Qld

19–20 March — Working & Walking Together, Canberra ACT

### May

4–5 May: Through Young Black Eyes, Mackay Qld

### June

3–4 June: Through Young Black Eyes, Melbourne VIC

For more information on SNAICC training, please call Alice Davis on (03) 9489 8099 or email [alice.davis@snaicc.org.au](mailto:alice.davis@snaicc.org.au) or visit: [www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au)



Grace Brown

of the Recognising and Responding to Trauma workshops. The collaborative approach of these and other agencies has been vital in developing trauma content and approaches. Many thanks to all our colleagues for their generosity in sharing their expertise and passion.

SNAICC and key agencies are now reviewing the program using the feedback and pilot process and will modify the program in the first half of 2015. Expressions of interest will be sought for agencies interested in hosting workshops in the latter half of 2015 and beyond.

### Through Young Black Eyes (TYBE) workshop, Darwin

A TYBE workshop was held at CAAPS in Darwin 27 and 28 October with Nat Loadman and Nick Joseph, our new trainer who joined us after working most recently with the Tiwi Islander community...and it was very hot! Many of the participants had travelled from remote communities around the NT, so it was interesting and informative to hear



Alice Davis

of the progress in their work and also the challenges in preventing and overcoming family violence.

It was pleasing to see networks being strengthened during the workshop and contacts exchanged to ensure that ideas, support and experience will be shared among the group moving forward.

### TYBE Melbourne

Another TYBE workshop was held in Melbourne on 26 and 27 November with Kate, David and Ralph our student from the Institute of Koori Education at Deakin University, working with a range of workers from Aboriginal and other services across Melbourne. The workshop provided opportunities for planning and collaboration with several new programs for young women and for early years services in several regions. Some strong partnerships were established between services and agreements made for future programs together.

Continued on page 28

# SNAICC training update

Continued from page 27



ABOVE: Participants and SNAICC staff at a trauma workshop in Lismore in November 2014.

## **Working and Walking Together 2015**

SNAICC will deliver its cultural competence training program on 19 and 20 March in Canberra, hosted by the ACT Council of Social Service.

The program is particularly relevant for:

- agencies and services wanting to gain cultural knowledge for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families
- individuals who want to increase their knowledge on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Culture and its diversity, and
- organisations wanting to increase the cultural appropriateness of their service for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients and community.

## **Creating Change Through Genuine Partnerships**

The first pilot workshop was held in Darwin on 8th December and was based on the SNAICC *Partnerships Training Manual* and *Audit Tool*.

CREATE NT and Danila Dilba Health Services worked with John and David from SNAICC to develop their first draft Memorandum of Understanding and plan three youth program activities for a joint approach to working with Aboriginal young people. These

included a program for Closing the Gap Day and planning for a cultural camp at Kakadu. A great deal of progress was achieved in the workshop, and strengthened the basis for the agencies working together in future.

One participant commented: "This brought the materials to life. It helped to make the partnership real. We needed the structured process and agreement to achieve as much as we did. We are really excited to bring the outcomes to executive management level as we now have such well-formed outcomes."

Pre-workshop planning has commenced for a second trial site in regional NSW in conjunction with our partners AbSec and a number Aboriginal and other services.

The second trial is due to commence in March 2015 and will be designed to strengthen local partnerships in out-of-home care.

SNAICC is interested in looking for host organisations which may wish to undertake some partnership work between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal services later in 2015.

## **Tracks to Healing workshops for Kinship Workers and Carers**

SNAICC provided our final 2014 pilot workshop, Tracks to Healing Trauma Training Program for Kinship Carers and

Workers with our partners the Australian Childhood Trauma Group (ACT Group). The workshops were held in Shepparton on 10 and 11 November, generating some strong energy for working with trauma and kinship care in the region.

This successful regional workshop will be followed up in Swan Hill on 23 February for workers from the kinship care field, followed on 24 February with another session for carers. After very positive responses to this pilot program of six sessions, we will be evaluating the program in February and looking at potential program modifications and future work in this very challenging field. Go to the website to register if you would like to attend.

## **Eleventh Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Prevention Forum: NO SHAME: NAME IT**

SNAICC has been invited to provide training at the Mackay Indigenous Family Violence Forum from 4 to 7 May. A TYBE workshop will be held on the first two days, followed by sessions on both trauma-informed practice and family violence on each of the two forum days.

It will be a privilege to work with regional community members committed to dealing with these two complex areas and to learn from their experience and expertise.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are drastically over-represented among Australians living with disability, and are largely out of reach of current services.

The First People Disability Network (FPDN) is working to identify all of the reasons behind the prevalence of disability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and what steps need to be taken to ensure those with disability receive adequate and individualised care.

In this article **Damian Griffis**, CEO of the FPDN, writes that for change to occur, it must be community driven.

# Our plan to come in from the margins

**The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will be life changing for Indigenous people with disability. Our people must lead the process.**

The prevalence of disability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is significantly higher than the general population. The introduction of the NDIS has the potential to be life changing for all people with disability, and particularly those living in remote areas.

The NDIS presents an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability to engage, many for the first time, with the disability service system in a substantive way.

Currently most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability remain at the periphery of the disability service system. This continues to occur for a range of reasons, many of which

are not well understood. One factor is the reluctance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability to identify as person with disability. This preference to not identify presents a fundamental barrier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in gaining access to the scheme.

At the First Peoples Disability Network we recognise and understand this. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands communities and their representatives must take a central role in facilitating the rollout of the national scheme from the outset.

Most importantly — for real long-term change to occur — the implementation of the NDIS must factor in the individual's or community's needs and wants. Meaningful change cannot be imposed by others, from afar.

Aunty Gayle Rankine, the chairperson of First People Disability Network recently attended the launch of the first NDIS trial site in Aboriginal communities at Barkly in the Northern Territory. We support its aims, and will carefully monitor how the trial involves Aboriginal people in the roll-out.

We know that this is a new conversation to be having in many communities. The FPDN's community and sector consultation process has revealed that for positive change to happen in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities the change must be driven by community itself.

Throughout many communities across the country Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders with disability have always been supported and accepted as members of their communities. However, it is access to resources and support services that many communities lack.

In May 2013 we launched our Ten Point Plan for the Implementation of the NDIS in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities at Parliament House, Canberra. This plan has been well received and we are working towards its full implementation in partnership with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) and other relevant bodies.

The plan is based on our work across the country in advocating for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians with disability and most importantly, our yarn-ups, which have provided important insights through extensive community consultation.



This means that we are in a position to work collaboratively and constructively and to put people's rights first. We see this as a significant opportunity which, deftly handled, can transform the lives of many people with disability, their family, carers and community.

The Ten Point Plan is a comprehensive framework for recognition and respectful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It will ensure the opportunities presented by the new disability insurance scheme are understood and used. The long-term impact means the cycle of entrenched disadvantage can be broken by enabling communities, in particular remote and regional communities.

As I reflect on our work to date, and look forward, it is clear that disability services must be managed within community, and by the community, using a right's based framework. We are well placed to capitalise on the opportunity that the NDIS presents and it is clear that change for the people, by the people is the answer.

An extension of this, as we observe the first predominantly Aboriginal trial site in Barkly, is the national Closing the Gap agenda. Today, there is no discrete Closing the Gap access target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. There must be. Aboriginal people with disability are significantly over-represented on a population group basis among homeless people, in the criminal and juvenile justice systems, and in the care and protection system (both as parents and children).

A clear closing the gap target for access to disability support services will reinforce the Government's commitment to removing social and health inequality faced by our peoples. There is important and rewarding work to be done and there needs to be strong and long-term backing at all levels in order to deliver on the promise of the NDIS for Aboriginal and Torres Strait people with disability.

FPDN looks forward to working with SNAICC and its members to better inform Aboriginal people with disability and their families about the NDIS.

**For more information, contact FPDN on (02) 8399 0882 or visit the website: [fpdn.org.au](http://fpdn.org.au)**



# For Our Children *Ngallak Koorlangka*

6th SNAICC National Conference  
15-17 September 2015, Perth



**In six months' time the Sixth SNAICC National Conference will be held at the Convention Centre in Perth, on the lands of the traditional owners, the Noongar people.**

The program is presently taking shape and promises to provide a broad range of presentations from communities, organisations and individuals in the key areas of out-of-home care, community, early childhood and family support.

SNAICC is hoping the Perth conference can build on the successes of its Fifth National Conference, held in Cairns in June 2013, which was attended by over 1100 delegates.

The conference committee is pleased to announce that renowned national and international experts June Oscar, Professor Michael Chandler and Professor Fiona Stanley have been confirmed as keynote speakers so far (see panel on opposite page).

## **Sponsorship and exhibitor opportunities**

There are still opportunities available for organisations wanting to exhibit or support the SNAICC conference through sponsorship.

Sponsorship of the SNAICC conference provides the opportunity to make a genuine contribution and statement of your commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families. For those participating a range of benefits can be provided including:

- Recognition of your corporate social responsibility and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services.
- Engagement with your target audience – opportunity to engage those child and family services you wish to reach.
- Promotion and brand awareness with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family services from all over Australia.
- Acknowledgement of your support in a wide variety of ways.

Current sponsors and supporters include:

- NSW Department Family & Community Services
- WA Department of Local Government & Communities
- WA Department of Education
- WA Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- WA Department of Child Protection & Family Support
- Centrecare

## **Key dates**

### **6 March 2015:**

Abstract Submission deadline

### **April 2015:**

Authors advised of submission outcome

### **4 May 2015:**

Registration opens

### **12 June 2015:**

Early Bird Registrations close

- Life Without Barriers
- Wanslea
- Perth Convention Bureau
- Families Australia
- Family & Relationship Services Australia
- Early Childhood Australia, and
- *Koori Mail* newspaper.

## **For more information**

For more information on the SNAICC Conference please contact our Conference Secretariat EECW on Tel: (03) 9863 7606, Email: [eecw@eecw.com.au](mailto:eecw@eecw.com.au) or our SNAICC Conference Coordinator, Poppy Bervanakis at (03) 9489 8099 or email: [poppy.bervanakis@snaicc.org.au](mailto:poppy.bervanakis@snaicc.org.au)

Conference updates can be found at [www.snaicc.org.au/conference](http://www.snaicc.org.au/conference)

# Community Voices: Sharing Knowledge and Practice



## keynote speakers



**June Oscar**  
**Chief Executive Officer, Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre**  
**Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia**

June Oscar is the CEO of Marninwarntikura Fitzroy Women's Resource Centre and a proud Bunuba woman from the remote town of Fitzroy Crossing.

June is a champion for Indigenous Australian languages, social justice, women's issues and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

In 2007, she fought successfully for alcohol restrictions in Fitzroy Crossing. Her focus on Aboriginal children and determination that we do not sacrifice the health of children for the 'right' to buy full strength take-away alcohol, made her a role model for all Australia.

In 2011, in an article published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* June was named as one of the 50 most influential

women in the world for her work in improving the lives of those living in remote Aboriginal communities.

June is co-founder of the Yiramalay Wesley Studio School and in 2012 she was appointed as an Ambassador for Children and Young People by Western Australian Commissioner for Children and Young People, Michelle Scott.

In 2013 she was awarded an Order of Australia (AO) in the Queen's Birthday honours. June was the winner of the Westpac and Financial Review 100 Women of Influence 2013 for Social Enterprise and Not for Profit Category. In 2014 June was awarded the Menzies School of Health Research Medallion for her work with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.



**Michael J. Chandler, PhD**  
**Professor Emeritus, The University of British Columbia**

Professor Chandler is a developmental psychologist, Professor Emeritus, and Distinguished CIHR and MSFHR Investigator working at the University of British Columbia. His ongoing program of research explores the role that culture plays in setting the course of identity development. In particular, his work has made it clear that both individual youth and whole Indigenous communities that lose a sense of their own personal and cultural continuity are at special risk to suicide, and a host of other negative outcomes including high accident, and school drop-out rates.

These efforts have earned Dr. Chandler the Killam

Memorial Senior Research Prize, the Killam Teaching Prize, and to his being named Canada's only Distinguished Investigator of both the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, and resulted in his being chosen as a member of the Advisory Board of CIHR's Institute of Aboriginal Health. Professor Chandler's program of research dealing with identity development and suicide in Indigenous communities was singled out for publication as a book and an invited SRCD Monograph, and is the only program of Canadian research featured in WHO's recently released report on the social determinants of health.



**Prof Fiona Stanley AC FAA FASSA**  
**Patron, Telethon Kids Institute**  
**Distinguished Research Professor, The University of Western Australia**  
**Vice Chancellor's Fellow, The University of Melbourne**

Fiona Stanley is the Founding Director and Patron of the Telethon Kids Institute (formerly Telethon Institute for Child Health Research), Distinguished Research Professor at the University of Western Australia and Vice Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Melbourne where she was Director, 2013 Festival of Ideas.

Trained in maternal and child health, epidemiology and public health, Professor Stanley has spent her career researching the causes of major childhood illnesses such as birth defects. Her research includes the gathering and analysis of population data for epidemiological and public

health research; the causes and prevention of birth defects and major neurological disorders, particularly the cerebral palsies; patterns of maternal and child health in Aboriginal and Caucasian populations; various ways of determining the developmental origins of health and disease; collaborations to link research, policy and practice; and strategies to enhance health and wellbeing in populations.

Professor Stanley was named Australian of the Year in 2003 in recognition of her research on behalf of Australia's children and Aboriginal social justice.

In partnership with 1800RESPECT — the national sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service — SNAICC has launched two major resources to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and frontline family violence and sexual assault workers.

The resources were launched at the Queen Victoria Women’s Centre in Melbourne on 9 December as part of the 16 Days of Action campaign (25 November to 10 December).

In a national first, SNAICC and 1800RESPECT have developed a new online interactive map specifically targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seeking support to respond to family violence.

The map provides contact and service information for over 280 Aboriginal community-controlled services across Australia. It allows communities and workers to instantly find culturally-appropriate services to respond to family violence and sexual assault.

The map can be accessed through the 1800RESPECT website and will also be available soon on the SNAICC website.

SNAICC and 1800RESPECT have also collaborated to launch an online resource to support best practice across the nation to reduce the incidence and impact of family violence and sexual assault on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The online resource is based on the recently published SNAICC guide, *Safe for Our Kids*, which was developed from consultations with Indigenous community-controlled service providers and drew on their wealth of experience in delivering effective programs to prevent and respond to family violence.

The resource, titled *Good practice principles: A rights-based framework for engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, details

PHOTO: Former Queensland premier Anna Bligh at the launch of the 16 Days of Action campaign in Melbourne.



## Putting family violence services on the map

In a national first, SNAICC and 1800RESPECT have developed a new online interactive map specifically targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people seeking support to respond to family violence.

best practice principles in achieving positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and communities, but in particular supports the needs of children.

The resource is targeted at service providers working to prevent and respond to family violence and sexual assault with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

SNAICC Chairperson Sharron Williams said SNAICC was proud to partner with 1800RESPECT to help respond to family violence and make families and communities safer for women and children.

“Family violence is a serious and damaging issue in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities — as it is in the wider Australian society.

“However, it is a particularly devastating issue for our families and communities. Aboriginal women are 35 times more likely to suffer family violence and sustain serious

injuries requiring hospitalisation, and 10 times more likely to die due to family violence, than non-Aboriginal women.

“While governments have a critical role to play in tackling the underlying issues that lead to family violence, our communities and organisations must also be empowered to come up with local solutions to keep women and children safe from family violence.

“These great new resources will play a part in empowering community and frontline family violence workers. On behalf of SNAICC, I would like to thank 1800RESPECT for teaming up with us to help improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.”

To view service map, go to: [www.1800respect.org.au/workers/atsi/indigenous-services/](http://www.1800respect.org.au/workers/atsi/indigenous-services/)

Good practice principles: [www.1800respect.org.au/workers/atsi/good-practice-principles/](http://www.1800respect.org.au/workers/atsi/good-practice-principles/)



## A guide on how to work better and form stronger links with Aboriginal families

**A unique new resource from Aboriginal Resource & Management Support Unit (ARMSU) in South Australia brings together the wisdom and experience of many people who have worked closely with and formed strong partnerships with Aboriginal families and communities.**

The resource — *Linking Together for Aboriginal Children* — is straightforward and practical providing advice, information and tips in an accessible format. It seeks to give non-Indigenous people insight and confidence to work better with Aboriginal families and to form stronger links with the Aboriginal community in their area.

A range of topics are presented under the two main focus areas of Partnerships with Families and Partnerships with Communities. These include:

- building relationships with families
- child rearing and family life
- cultural identity of families
- learning about local Aboriginal groups

- including Aboriginal culture in your service, and
- respecting cultural protocols.

While this book has been written specifically for educators working with children and families in children's services, much of the content will be relevant and useful to all people who work with Aboriginal children and families in a range of community or health services. The connections with the National Quality Framework for early childhood education and care services are demonstrated throughout the resource.

The book also includes a directory for community services and resources in South Australia. While this is of particular use to SA community groups, the directory could be used as a model to adapt for your specific state or territory.

The knowledge and insight that has informed this resource has come from educators in South Australian Aboriginal children's services both past and present, from research carried out by ARMSU staff and from Aboriginal mentors who have

supported and advised ARMSU over many years.

We thank all of the Aboriginal educators in children's services and acknowledge their connections to country, ancestors, language and traditions throughout South Australia and other States and Territories.

ARMSU gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government Department of Social Services through the Inclusion and Professional Support Program in funding this resource.

The book is available through the online shop on the ARMSU website: [www.armsu.org.au](http://www.armsu.org.au)

Any other enquiries, please phone (08) 8340 9639.

*Linking Together for Aboriginal Children* is published by Network SA Resource, Advisory & Management Services Inc., Aboriginal Resource & Management Support Unit (ARMSU).

— **Article by Sharolyn Talbot and Teresa Butler-Bowdon**

# New resources to deal with trauma

PHOTO: Traditional dancing at the resources' launch in Melbourne.



The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS) has released a new suite of Koori parenting resources, called *Breaking the Cycle of Trauma: Koori Parenting, What Works for Us*.

Consisting of a booklet, poster and postcards, the resources convey key messages and practical strategies to help Koori parents break intergenerational cycles of trauma within their families.

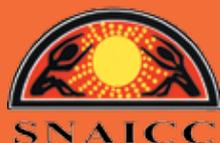
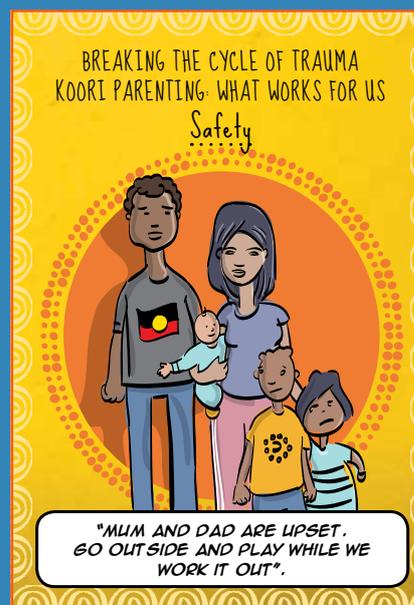
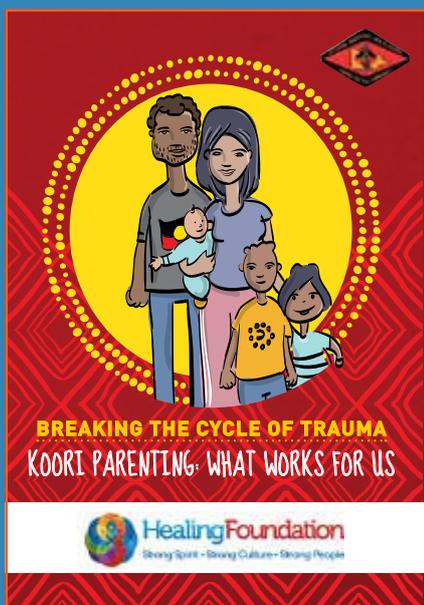
The resources have been directly informed by, and developed for urban Aboriginal parents, based on Koori parents who have experienced past trauma; yarning about what works best for them as parents.

The resources were developed as part of a 12-month project funded by the Healing Foundation, and overseen by a steering committee comprising members from VAHS, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) and Victorian Child Care Agency (VACCA). The project aimed to raise awareness and understanding about trauma within the context of parenting.

The resources can be downloaded free of charge via this weblink: [www.vahs.org.au/koori-parenting-resources/](http://www.vahs.org.au/koori-parenting-resources/)

Hard copy resources are also available to purchase in bulk, until stocks run out, by downloading and completing the order form via the same link.

For further information, please call the VAHS Family Counselling Service on (03) 9403 3300.



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

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[www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au)



relevant organisations for current information concerning their activities.

Line art by Ikanbala (Richard McLean).

**Subscribe and contribute to SNAICC News**

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**Subscription fees (incl GST & postage)**

|                |       |
|----------------|-------|
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| Individuals    | \$35  |

Subscriptions are paid annually on the calendar year. Members and affiliate members receive the newsletter as part of their membership.

Subscriber forms or credit card subscriber payment online [www.snaicc.asn.au](http://www.snaicc.asn.au) or ring the SNAICC finance section to organise EFTPOS.

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 Victoria 3068

# New package to help educators working with children living with FASD

**A new resource package has been launched to help educators recognise, understand and work effectively with students living with FASD in our schools.**

The information and resource guide – *Understanding and addressing the needs of children and young people living with Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD)* – was developed by the Kimberly Success Zone (KSZ).

The resource package – produced in partnership with the WA Department of Education, Catholic Education Office of Western Australia and Aboriginal Independent Schools – is designed to help educators to identify, understand and work effectively with students living with FASD across the Kimberley region of Western Australia.

However, the materials are relevant for early childhood workers, primary and secondary school leaders, teachers, Aboriginal educators, and broader school communities throughout Australia.

The new resource package focuses on educators and communities working collaboratively and holistically, using a strengths-based approach, to improve educational and life outcomes for children and young people living with FASD.

The guide provides educators and school communities with comprehensive knowledge and understanding of FASD, in order to support them to best meet the complex needs of children and young people living with FASD.

The resource package includes:

- a DVD – the story of Tristan, a Kimberley boy living with FASD
- a 40-page resource for teachers and school communities, and
- two short videos highlighting positive interventions for students with FASD.

Research has shown early diagnosis and intervention of children living with FASD is a central factor in their development, education and long-term life outcomes. A holistic network of professional, educational and social support can significantly improve the quality of life and long-term outcomes for children and young people living with FASD.

In January the *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health* published the Lililwan study – a research project led by Aboriginal leaders from the Fitzroy Valley communities, The George Institute for Global Health and The University of Sydney – providing Australia's first comprehensive data on the prevalence of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome in remote communities.

The study involved research in 45 remote communities across the Fitzroy Valley using internationally-recognised criteria, following a rigorous process that included a detailed questionnaire about the pregnancy and early childhood and a comprehensive health and development assessment by a multi-disciplinary team of clinicians.

The new resource is available at: [www.kimberleyfasdresource.com.au/](http://www.kimberleyfasdresource.com.au/)



Fetal Alcohol Syndrome is one of a group of preventable, lifelong conditions (the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders) that may result from alcohol use in pregnancy, and can cause low IQ, delays in development, and problems with learning, academic achievement, behaviour, motor function, speech and language and memory. It is also characterised by abnormal facial features and poor growth, before or after birth.

Reports suggest that high-risk drinking during pregnancy is common in some remote Australian communities, such as the Kimberly region and the Northern Territory, where there are pockets of patterns of heavy drinking, making FASD more prevalent.

Secondary disabilities for people living with FASD are life-long, and range from mental health problems to interrupted education and a high prevalence of contact with the criminal justice system.

# We need you...



## to become a SNAICC member!

**For over 30 years, SNAICC has worked with and on behalf of its members to see real change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.**

To continue to be a passionate advocate for the needs and rights of our children and families — and to continue to have an impact in the child welfare and early childhood sectors — SNAICC needs a strong and vibrant membership base.

And this is where you can play a vital role.

We need more members to be our partners, to inform our policy work and contribute to the development of SNAICC resources and training.

SNAICC has five levels of membership to cater for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (both large and small), other agencies in the child welfare sector, and interested individuals.

For more information on membership, visit [www.snaicc.org.au/membership](http://www.snaicc.org.au/membership) or contact the SNAICC Membership Officer Ashley Tennyson on [membership@snaicc.org.au](mailto:membership@snaicc.org.au)

Here's a small highlights package of our work since the early 1980s. SNAICC has:

- been a key player on the major issues that impact on the protection and wellbeing of our children and families — for example, in the 1990s SNAICC was the first agency to call for a national inquiry into the forced removal of children from their families
- advocated on the need for improved access to community-controlled and culturally-appropriate early childhood education and care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- produced high-quality cultural and educational resources to assist those working with our children and families across Australia, and
- vastly increased its training activities, delivering workshops on issues such as family violence and cultural competence to support capacity building in Indigenous communities and organisations and to improve the skills of those working with our children and families.



### The benefits of membership

Now is the time to join SNAICC. At very reasonable rates, our members have access to a range of information and resources to inform their work or increase their knowledge on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's issues.

Benefits include:

- complete voting rights at the SNAICC AGM (full members only)
- exclusive free access to SNAICC's complete online resources catalogue (featured above)
- subscription to this popular newsletter, which is published three times a year, as well as a copy of the SNAICC Annual Report
- access to exclusive early bird offers for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day
- exclusive SNAICC Conference discounts, and
- the opportunity to stay up-to-date with our work via exclusive member alerts and regular eBulletins via email.

