



Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

SNAICC NATIONAL CONFERENCE TO DRIVE COLLECTIVE CHANGE FOR INDIGENOUS CHILD WELL-BEING

Perth, Western Australia: Tomorrow, 15th September, sees the opening of the 6th SNAICC National conference in Perth on the land of the Whadjuk Noongar people.

The event is the largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conference on child and family issues in the southern hemisphere, attracting an audience of 1,000+ attendees, including local and international keynote speakers participating in over 70 concurrent sessions, yarning circles and workshops.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, policy makers, researchers, government representatives, other non-government organisations and industry representatives will gather from around the country to discuss challenges and share knowledge and experiences in raising happy, healthy, proud and confident Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Speakers include:

- Emeritus Professor Michael J. Chandler (PhD), Canadian expert on the role of culture in achieving positive outcomes in Indigenous communities - particularly in regards to youth suicide;
- June Oscar (AO), A Fitzroy Crossing Bunuba woman and a champion for social justice, women's issues, and Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder;
- Professor Fiona Stanley, founding director of the Telethon Kids Institute and respected Australian doctor trained in maternal and child health, noted for her public health work;
- Mick Gooda, A descendant of the central Queensland Gangulu people and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Commissioner;
- Judge Matthew Myers AM, Judge of the Federal Circuit Court of Australia - Australia's first and only Aboriginal Commonwealth Judicial officer;
- Muriel Bamblett, a Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung woman, is a national child protection leader and CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency;
- Andrea Mason, descending from the Karonie people of WA and the Ngaanyatjarra people of the NT is CEO of the NPY Women's Council and a strong advocate for reducing family violence in communities;

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- Dr. Cindy Blackstock, A member of the Gitksan First Nation, an Associate Professor at the University of Alberta and the Director of FNCARES.
- Antoinette Braybrook, An Aboriginal woman born in Victoria on Wurundjeri country and CEO of the Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service (FVPLS) Victoria.

This year's conference will work to drive change through:

Investing in the early years: Just 2.9% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids participate in Commonwealth early childhood education and care programs, while making up 5.5% of the population. Not enough is being done to help get these kids into early years programs despite evidence showing that these formative years of a child's life are a critical predictor of their successful transition to school, life-long education and employment outcomes.

Cultural connection promotes safety and wellbeing: The strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in creating protective environments for children are evident and strongly recognised, but commonly undervalued in policy design and implementation.

Prioritising early intervention: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are grossly over-represented in Australia's child protection systems. They are over 9 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than their non-Indigenous peers. Change will remain difficult until policy supporting prevention and early intervention is matched by expenditure. Holistic, community driven and owned services demonstrate significant potential to strengthen families and reduce child abuse and neglect in Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in child protection decision-making: Reports and inquiries in Australia consistently confirm a lack of robust and meaningful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation as major contributors to past failures of government policy. This is nowhere more evident than in child protection. Strong strategies are required to build participation into legislation, policy and practice, and see support for community-controlled, Indigenous specific services, which enhance access, engagement and outcomes for families.

Healing and trauma informed approaches: Research has highlighted that the trauma resulting from the inter-generational impacts of colonisation, disempowerment, child removal and entrenched disadvantage contributes significantly to risk factors for child abuse and neglect. Significant healing programs are unrolling across the country as are explorations of how healing informed approaches can be integrated into child and family support practice.



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For more information please visit <http://www.snaicc.org.au/conference/> or contact:

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About SNAICC:

SNAICC is the national non-government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Founded in 1981, SNAICC was established to engage in activities that promote and accommodate a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

Over the past 30 years SNAICC's efforts have resulted in many key milestones and achievements both in policy developments at state, territory and federal levels and in developing innovative and useful resources for the sector.

SNAICC is governed by an influential National Executive made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled children and families' services.