



Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

**SOCIAL JUSTICE AND NATIVE TITLE REPORT HIGHLIGHTS
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER OVER-
REPRESENTATION IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE**

“One of the most pressing human rights challenges facing Australia today”

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Sydney, Australia: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice

Commissioner Mick Gooda has published the *Social Justice and Native Title Report 2015*, with several of the 21 recommendations aimed at addressing “one of the most pressing human rights challenges facing Australia today” – reducing the over-representation of our children in out-of-home care.

This year’s report highlights that 18 years after the *Bringing them Home* report was released not only are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children still over-represented in the child protection system, but the disparities between them and non-Indigenous children only continue to grow. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are currently 9.2 times as likely to be in out of home care¹ than their non-Indigenous peers.

In his report, Commissioner Gooda noted the priority for investment in prevention to stop children coming into care and mitigate the subsequent financial and personal costs. He concluded that, “As a first step, at-risk and vulnerable families must be given support which assists them to stay together.” The report advocates for a human rights based approach to child protection and for accountability at all levels of government for the realisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rights.

Five of the 21 recommendations in this year’s report are focussed on the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The report calls for:



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- Child welfare targets as part of the Closing the Gap commitment by Commonwealth, state and territory governments, to promote safety and wellbeing and reduce over-representation in child protection systems.
- All state and territory governments to appoint Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioners, following Victoria's lead.
- Increased recognition of the crucial need for holistic, culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child development and wellbeing through increased investment in Aboriginal Child and Family Centres.
- Recognition of the importance of healing and trauma informed approaches through long-term investment in healing initiatives.
- The establishment of a National Institute of Indigenous Excellence in Child Wellbeing and increased funding for research and quality information on child protection.ⁱⁱ

SNAICC commends Commissioner Gooda whose recommendations mirror many of the outcomes of the 2015 SNAICC National Conference, where 1000 delegates overwhelmingly supported the calls for greater government accountability, the establishment of a COAG target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection, creation of independent monitoring mechanisms in all jurisdictions, and greater investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led research.

This year's report also interrogates some of the most concerning government policies and processes affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, including the impact of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) which it describes as leading to "deep cuts, confusion and anxiety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples." Commissioner Gooda specifically expressed his concern about the partial defunding of SNAICC under the IAS, noting the importance of a national peak body to addressing the child welfare concerns raised in the report. The report also heavily critiques the planned closure of remote Western Australian



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communities and recommends changes to the Healthy Welfare Card and Work for the Dole schemes, to make these opt-in alternatives for individuals.

SNAICC Chairperson, Sharron Williams comments: “This year’s Social Justice Report has brought to the fore many of the most crucial issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia, who continue to face discrimination and violation of their fundamental human rights.

“SNAICC stands with the Social Justice Commissioner in calling for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be met through real recognition and investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations, and through increased independent accountability for advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child wellbeing at all levels of government.”

The report was tabled in Parliament on Monday 30 November with a formal launch be held at the Australian Human Rights Commission on Friday 4 December. The full report is available for download here: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/social-justice-and-nati-1>

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For more information please visit <http://www.snaicc.org.au> or contact: Jess Brennan, SNAICC Communications Coordinator, Jessica.Brennan@snaicc.org.au (03) 9489 8099 / 0421334918

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.



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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.

ⁱ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2015), *Child Protection in Australia, 2013-14*. Child Welfare series no. 61. Cat. no. CWS 52. Canberra: AIHW. pp viii, 51.

ⁱⁱ Australian Human Rights Commission (2015) *2015 Social Justice and Native Title Report*