



Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families not hard to reach — but adequate support services are hard to find

SNAICC National Executive member Lisa Coulson has told a major conference there is an urgent need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family support services that are holistic and culturally appropriate to help build a stronger future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Speaking at the *Honouring the Child, Honouring Equity Conference* at the University of Melbourne, Ms Coulson said that despite the significant and multiple disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, they continued to have low access to family support services across the country.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children have been regularly identified as being hard to reach when it comes to support services and program engagement...(but) it is vitally important that we do not place the blame on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families for being hard to reach,” Ms Coulson said.

Ms Coulson, a palawa woman and Director of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Child Care Association, said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families faced multiple barriers in accessing support services.

“The barriers are historical, cultural, social and practical,” she said.

“They include: a lack of cultural awareness in the provision of services and as a result, services that are not culturally appropriate; the history of mainstream services in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and resulting distrust of the service provider; a lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff employed by the service provider and; language and communication barriers.

“Significant practical barriers include low income; remote or regional location and lack of transport.

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