



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**6 June 2013**

### **Delegates call for action to reduce high number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care**

Delegates at SNAICC's Fifth National Conference in Cairns today unanimously endorsed a national campaign to halve the dramatically high number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 2018.

In an emotionally-charged atmosphere, delegates at the children's conference – the biggest forum of its type ever held – committed to support the national campaign and take action to achieve its objective by 2018.

SNAICC will partner a number of agencies (see background information) in running the campaign, which will seek to create a groundswell of support from the Australian community to change what one conference speaker described as “our national shame”.

In mid-2012, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children accounted for over one third of the 39,900 children in out-of-home care across Australia. Indigenous children are being removed from their families at rates higher than at any time during the Stolen Generations eras.

Recent figures in Queensland indicate that, this year, 62 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will have had some contact with the state's child protection system.

SNAICC Chairperson Sharron Williams told delegates the high number of children in care was “diabolical” and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people “would not stand for this any longer.”

Delegates agreed that different approaches were needed to support vulnerable families and reduce their contact with child protection systems. These new solutions must be driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and with the participation of Indigenous children at the centre of renewed efforts.

A greater focus must also be placed on keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care connected with family, community and culture. As at 30 June 2012, almost a third of Indigenous children in care were not placed with kin, other Indigenous carers or in Indigenous residential care.

**SNAICC: The national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children**

Conference delegates also committed to:

- take personal responsibility and action at the local level for safe and nurturing communities
- hold government accountable for fundamental human rights, and
- look at strategies for sustainable support for integrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early year and family support services

### **Background information on national campaign**

Founding organisations in the national campaign include:

- Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)
- Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat (NSW) – AbSec
- Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection peak Ltd (QATSICPP)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation
- Families Australia
- Australian Council of Social Service.

The campaign vision is:

***All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safely at home, get a good education, are healthy and proud of who they are.***

The campaign objectives are:

**Stage One** – To halve the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of home care by 2018.

**Stage Two** – To reduce, by 2023, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of home care so that it is proportionate to their representation in the general Australian population.

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