



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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Statement by Geraldine Atkinson, SNAICC Deputy Chairperson (Early Childhood)

SNAICC welcomes appointment of Mr Andrew Jackomos as Victoria's first Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Youth

SNAICC warmly welcomes the ground-breaking appointment of Mr Andrew Jackomos as Victoria's — and Australia's — first Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Youth.

SNAICC congratulates the Victorian Government on its initiative to appoint a commissioner dedicated to the needs of the state's Koori children and youth — and implores other state and territory governments to follow suit.

We believe Mr Jackomos is an excellent choice as inaugural commissioner. He comes from a famous and highly respected Aboriginal family in Victoria and he knows the Koori communities and the challenges intimately.

Importantly, as a long-serving senior public servant at both the state and federal levels, Mr Jackomos also knows the workings of governments and departments — and has long advocated the importance of Aboriginal people participating in the delivery of government programs and services that impact on them.

The appointment of an Aboriginal children's commissioner was one of the recommendations arising out of the Protecting Victoria's Vulnerable Children Inquiry, by former Supreme Court Judge Philip Cummins.

The inquiry found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are being badly let down by an ineffective child protection system in Victoria, with our children coming into contact with that system and the juvenile justice system at alarming rates.

The Victorian Government's last Closing the Gap annual report showed that in 2011-12 Aboriginal child protection substantiations in the state grew to 963 — the highest number in the past decade and 10 times than the rate for non-Indigenous children.

These figures are reinforced by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Child Protection Australia Report, which showed that at 30 June 2012, there were 1,028 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in Victoria — a rate 15.8 times higher than that for non-Indigenous children.

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

And Aboriginal youth in Victoria have similarly disproportionate high contact with the justice system.

So Mr Jackomos has an enormous task ahead of him. But SNAICC is confident his knowledge, commitment and passion will serve Victoria's Koori children and youth well.

SNAICC believes that learning from evaluations of past policies and building on the solid evidence base to strengthen focus on underlying causes of over-representation, on prevention and on Aboriginal participation can see change happen.

SNAICC would urge other state-territory government to follow Victoria's important lead to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth.

SNAICC is keen to meet with Mr Jackomos, offer any support his office may require and looks forward to working with him over the coming years to see better protection of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Victoria.

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