



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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Minister for Children and Families pledges his support for Aboriginal controlled services

At a forum attended by over 140 non-government organisations and community members, the Northern Territory Minister for Children and Families, John Elferink yesterday pledged his support for Aboriginal controlled services.

The Minister said "I would love for communities to come to me and say, this is what we want to do, this is how we could do it, can you support it? Bring me a model and I will support it", he said.

The Minister was speaking at a public forum held in Darwin organised by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) in partnership with Strong Families together (SAF,T) and Northern Territory Council of Social Service.

The forum was exploring the issue of the continued removal of Aboriginal children from their families and placed in out-of-home care. Since 2003 the number of children being taken away has tripled in the Northern Territory and represents six times the rate of removal compared to non-Aboriginal children.

SNAICC Chairperson Sharron Williams said that "It is well researched that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families will experience:

- poorer outcomes as adults in relation to their health and mental well being
- greater risk of contact with the judicial system resulting in higher rates of incarceration
- reduced participation in the education system and higher rates of withdrawal and
- low levels of employment, which continues the cycle of poverty and welfare dependency."

Participants at the forum condemned the removal of children from their families and stated in a resolution that it was unacceptable and had to stop. They called on the Northern Territory Government to establish an Aboriginal Child Care Agency to deliver case management and placement and the recruitment of foster carers.

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

The forum is part of a national initiative *Family Matters - Kids safe in culture, not in care* aimed at reducing the over representation of Aboriginal and Islander children in out-of-home care. The initiative is lead by SNAICC and driven by a group of national and peak non-government organisations.

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