



SNAICC  
National Voice for our Children  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation  
Suite 8, First Floor,  
252-260 St Georges Road  
North Fitzroy VIC 3068

6 September 2016

## NATIONAL CHILD PROTECTION WEEK 2016: A TIME TO INVEST IN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

**Melbourne, Australia:** Throughout National Child Protection Week, SNAICC – National Voice for our Children encourages all Australians to reflect on the incredible community-led support systems in place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and the decisions we can make to ensure these supports are accessible for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the future.

Beginning on Father's Day each year, National Child Protection Week supports and encourages the safety and wellbeing of Australian children and families, recognising that *protecting children is everyone's business*.

This year's theme, *Stronger Communities, Safer Children*, emphasises the importance and value of connected communities in keeping children and young people safe and well.

The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is almost ten times that of other children, and continues to grow. The consequences of child removal are profound: devastating families; deepening intergenerational trauma; too often severing children's cultural bonds and triggering poor life outcomes; and eroding culture and community.

Combatting this are strong evidence based approaches, such as the [Family Matters: kids safe in culture, not in care](#) campaign – which aims to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 2040. Part of this campaign focuses on full compliance with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (Principle), a principle designed to ensure Aboriginal participation in decisions impacting children and to maintain crucial connections to community and culture.

The Principle recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the knowledge and experience to make the best decisions concerning their children, and recognises the importance of each child staying connected to their family, community, culture, and country. The Principle aims to ensure that if a child is placed in out-of-home care for protective reasons, they should be raised in their own families and communities.

The positive impacts of placing a child within family – not just for the child, but also for the entire community – are significant and numerous.

However, despite the adoption of this principle, the Report on Government Services 2016 shows that, nationally, 32.9 per cent of children in out-of-home care – almost 5000 children – are not placed in accordance with the placement requirements of the Principle – a figure that has been trending upwards for the last few years. These results also don't take into account

Phone 03 9489 8099 | Fax 03 9489 8044  
PO Box 1445, Fitzroy North VIC 3068  
info@snaicc.org.au | [www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au)



SNAICC  
National Voice for our Children  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation  
Suite 8, First Floor,  
252-260 St Georges Road  
North Fitzroy VIC 3068

how many children are placed with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander or non-Indigenous family members respectively.

“Ensuring the implementation of the Principle is required to effectively support our families in crisis and keep our kids connected to families, addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within the out-of-home care system,” said Gerry Moore, SNAICC CEO.

“We know that raising kids in their families, and in their communities, is one of the key ways we’re going to improve the well-being, stability, education and other outcomes for our children.”

“COAG has now supported a broad definition of the Principle under the Third Action Plan of the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2009-2020, we now need a comprehensive strategy for full implementation of the Principle.”

Embedding accountability measures demonstrates outcomes. Amongst other things, Andrew Jackomos has supported significant improvement in implementation of the Principle as the Victorian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People.

With the investment in an Aboriginal Children’s Commissioner, the rate of children placed in accordance with the Principle within Victoria has climbed from 60.9 per cent in 2013, to 66.9 per cent in 2014, and now 71.8 per cent in 2015.

“They’re proven results, and we’ve seen them within a short time frame. If the Child Placement Principle is the solution, then having a state Aboriginal Children’s Commissioner is the practical success.”

“Connection to culture is a human right. All jurisdictions need to follow this example, and establish an Aboriginal Children’s Commissioner, to ensure that this right is met.”

**ENDS/**