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SOUTH AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FAILS TO ENGAGE WITH LEADING ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS ON CHILD PROTECTION LEGISLATION REFORM

SNAICC is deeply disappointed that the South Australian Government has passed [The Children and Young People \(Safety\) Bill 2017](#) in the House of Assembly and urges the Legislative Council to block the passing of this bill. The South Australian Government has repeatedly refused to engage with and listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations during this deeply flawed child protection legislation reform process – and this subsequent outcome is devastating.

Unacceptably, the current Bill seeks only to implement a limited scope of the recommendations of the [South Australian Child Protection Systems Royal Commission Report](#) (the *Nyland Report*) and does very little to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in South Australia's child protection system - in fact it is a backwards step.

Neither SNAICC, Australia's peak body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children or [Aboriginal Family Support Services](#) (AFSS), South Australia's leading organisation representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, have been listened to regarding these reforms despite both organisations providing detailed submissions.

Currently, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in SA are 10.8 times more likely to be residing in out-of-home care than their non-Indigenous peers, this is above the national over-representation rate of 9.8 times. This means that 33% of all children in out-of-home care in South Australia are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

AFSS CEO and SNAICC Chairperson Sharron Williams comments: "It is unfathomable that the singular recognised Aboriginal organisation in South Australia which the government was required to consult with was not engaged in this process. This is hugely insulting, a direct rebuke to the right to self-determination for Aboriginal people and, quite frankly, indicative of the culturally inappropriate approach that is reflected in the content of the current Bill."

SNAICC and AFSS are both urging that the South Australia's child protection legislation:

1. Require that culturally safe and accessible family support services are made available to promote the safe care and reunification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their parents and family members.
2. Fully and properly incorporates the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle;
3. Recognises and enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, including by mandating representative participation of recognised Aboriginal organisations in all significant decision making in child protection matters; and
4. Safeguards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's identity and connections to family, community and culture in decision making about permanent care.

"Essentially, the Bill as it is currently shaped is a poorly considered version of what should be carefully crafted, inclusive and supportive legislation. We believe the South Australian Government can do better for its citizens, and needs to put genuine effort into ensuring this legislation best supports all of South Australia's children" Ms. Williams concludes.

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