



SNAICC
National Voice for our Children
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WHERE DO THE LIVES OF TODAY'S CHILDREN FIT IN REFLECTION OF NATIONAL APOLOGY?

Canberra, Australia: The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in out-of-home care has increased by over 120 per cent since 2008, when the Parliament of Australia apologised for taking our children away from their families.

Ten years ago then Prime Minister Rudd took an important step towards reconciliation by apologising, on behalf of successive governments, for the shameful treatment of Australia's First Peoples since colonisation.

"I think, when we reflect on the ten years since the national apology, that we must consider what has actually changed, in real terms, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and particularly for our children, who are amongst the most vulnerable in the world," said Sharron Williams, SNAICC Chairperson.

"The national apology, the acknowledgement of the atrocities that occurred, was important for so many people, and for so many reasons. However, I think we all believed that saying sorry was about more than just the past, and that it was also a resolve to create a better future for our children.

"Our people – our children – are still suffering. Where do the lives of today's children fit amongst our discussion of the apology?"

Today, nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 10.1 times more likely to be living in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children, with 10,000 more children living in out-of-home care today than at the time of the apology.

In early years education – an area that is proven to have the greatest impact on a child's lifelong education and employment outcomes – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are today only half as likely to access early education as non-Indigenous children, despite being twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable early in life.

"Our children deserve a fair start in life. I think, as a nation, that is something we should all aspire to," said Ms Williams.

Last year Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull announced that the Closing the Gap initiative

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required a refresh, hoping to identify why current targets have not been met, and to identify new targets.

“For us to believe that the Closing the Gap refresh will work, we need to know that we’re being heard,” said Ms Williams.

“At SNAICC we pride ourselves on being the national voice for our children, and we have such a considerable history in protecting our children.

“All SNAICC members – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and services across the country – lead the way in ensuring our children are cared for, and are given the best start in life.

“Our services are examples of best practice. That knowledge and expertise cannot be fully utilised if our voices are not heard.”

SNAICC believes that the ongoing support and development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early years sector is an essential component to closing the gap.

Leading the Family Matters campaign, SNAICC is calling for new targets through the Closing the Gap refresh to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and address the gap in access to early childhood supports that help to keep children safe at home.

“In order to close the gap we must be listened to, and we must be trusted,” said Ms Williams. “We know how to support and care for our children. What we need is to be supported to make decisions for our children and our communities. Outcomes cannot improve until we see a change in attitudes, and that starts with letting us lead.”

ENDS/

For more information please visit www.snaicc.org.au or contact:

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