



SNAICC  
National Voice for our Children  
(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation)  
Level 7, 20 Otter Street  
Collingwood VIC 3066

10 December 2018

## **ON HUMAN RIGHTS DAY, WE CALL ON ALL GOVERNMENTS TO UPHOLD OUR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

**Melbourne, Australia:** Today, SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, is proud to celebrate Human Rights Day and the [70th anniversary](#) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The UDHR is a seminal document that proclaimed the rights everyone is entitled to as a human being, regardless of race, age, religion, sex, language or other status. However, we are deeply saddened that despite these international protections, the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain so far from being fully promoted and protected.

Australia has committed to upholding rights enshrined in the UDHR and other international human rights agreements that have come after it, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They enshrine the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to remain connected to their culture, grow up safe and healthy, have access to quality education and participate in decisions that affect them.

However, across many areas the gaps in outcomes and rights protections are widening between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australian children. As a nation, we are failing to protect our most vulnerable citizens, including particularly our First Nations children. The [Family Matters Report 2018](#) and [The Children's Report](#) by UNICEF have both found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people face poorer outcomes than their non-Indigenous peers in many areas of life, from child protection to accessing quality education (including early childhood education) and beyond. In fact, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are now 10.1 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander five-year-olds are also 2.5 times more likely to be developmentally delayed than non-Indigenous children, but are accessing early childhood education and care at half the rate of other children.

Some governments across Australia have taken promising steps to address these disparities. Both Victoria and Queensland have adopted comprehensive strategies to improve outcomes for children that are overseen by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives. These states have also adopted statewide programs to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait families to participate in child protection decisions.

While we commend these developments, the scope and pace of change across the country are far from what is required to ensure that our children can flourish. In fact, some jurisdictions are regressing in their duty to guarantee that our children grow up connected to culture. The New South Wales Government has recently passed changes to adoption and child protection laws that fast-track the permanent removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families. This was done without meaningful consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives in the state.

**Phone** 03 9419 1921  
PO Box 1144, Collingwood VIC 3066  
[info@snaicc.org.au](mailto:info@snaicc.org.au) | [www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au)  
**ABN** 42 513 562 148



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Next year, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child will review Australia on its progress to safeguard our children's rights. We note with concern that many of the recommendations from Australia's last review in 2012 remain unimplemented, including calls for the Australian Government to prioritise prevention, support families experiencing vulnerability, and prioritise the safe reunification of children with their families after removal. We call on all Australian governments to urgently implement these vital recommendations to protect and promote the rights of our children.

*"If Australia is to fully implement its children's rights obligations, governments must invest more in prevention and early intervention. We must empower our families and communities to care for and protect our future generations. Governments must work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their representatives to bring about the crucial change necessary to guarantee that our children grow up safe, healthy and connected to family and culture."*

– Muriel Bamblett, Chairperson of SNAICC

## **ENDS/**

For more information please visit [www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au) or contact:

Jo Cackett, Communications Officer  
[joanne.cackett@snaicc.org.au](mailto:joanne.cackett@snaicc.org.au) (03) 9419 1921

### **About SNAICC – National Voice for our Children:**

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children is the national non-governmental peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We work for the fulfilment of the rights of our children, in particular to ensure their safety, development and well-being.

Founded in 1981, SNAICC was established to engage in activities that promote and accommodate a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

Over the past 30 years SNAICC's efforts has resulted in many key milestones and achievements both in policy developments at state, territory and federal levels and in developing innovative and useful resources for the sector.

SNAICC is governed by an influential Board of Directors made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled children and family services.

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