



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

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NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN KEY TO REALISE ASPIRATIONS OF THE APOLOGY

The anniversary of the apology to the Stolen Generations is a moment to reflect on the atrocities so many of our children and families have gone through, and a moment to reflect on our commitment to ensure we don't repeat history.

The national apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008 saw the government say sorry for unjustly removing generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, tearing apart communities, and causing profound hurt and trauma.

In the 11 years that have followed the national apology, the number of our children removed from family has grown exponentially. In 2019, there are over 17,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in out-of-home care. Our children are now 11 times more likely to be removed from their families than non-Indigenous children. If urgent action is not taken, that rate is projected to triple in the next 20 years.

“The number of our children entering out-of-home care has been on the increase and is a national crisis,” said Muriel Bamblett, SNAICC Chairperson. “The [Family Matters reports](#) have revealed that this is an issue in all states and territories. A national, whole-of-government approach with the full participation and engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is needed.”

The Closing the Gap refresh currently underway provides significant opportunity to drive a pathway to change – if it is co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and communities.

“Genuine, respectful participation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – and our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and services across Australia – is truly the only way a refreshed Closing the Gap can work,” said Ms

Phone 03 9412 1921
PO Box 1144, Collingwood VIC 3066
info@snaicc.org.au | www.snaicc.org.au
ABN 42 513 562 148



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Bamblett.

The Closing the Gap refresh will introduce a new series of targets, and – as [announced in December 2018](#) – a partnership approach between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies. For real progress, SNAICC is calling for clear targets on out-of-home care accompanied by a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s strategy; a strategy premised on self-determination and investment in prevention, consistent with the Family Matters approach.

This week [SNAICC, in partnership with Early Childhood Australia, launched a new position paper calling for equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the early years](#). Endorsed by over 40 leading child welfare, education and research organisations, the paper highlights different aspects of a holistic strategy needed to see all of our children thriving from the early years and onwards. Strong early childhood Closing the Gap targets, focused on parity in developmental outcomes, are critical to drive change and see redress of causes rather than symptoms.

“We see this as a vital time for government to show us just how seriously they plan to tackle the problems our children face,” said Ms Bamblett. “We’ve had a number of our young people take their own lives in the last few weeks, and it’s barely made a ripple with government. We want to see national evidence based commitments to change.”

ENDS/

For more information please visit www.snaicc.org.au or, to organise an interview with SNAICC spokesperson Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett OA, contact:

Daniel Kovacevic, Communications Coordinator
daniel.kovacevic@snaicc.org.au (03) 9489 8099 / 0431 767 363

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ABN 42 513 562 148