



FEDERAL ELECTION PRIORITIES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN

The majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up in supportive, loving and positive environments, connected to their families, communities and cultures. However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families continue to experience significantly higher levels of disadvantage than non-Indigenous families.

Current efforts are not succeeding and reform is required to enable better outcomes for our children. The strengths to address child development, well-being and safety concerns lie within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We invite all parties to work in partnership with us to achieve equality for our children.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER
CHILDREN ARE



more likely to be removed by child protection
authorities and placed in out-of-home care than
their non-Indigenous peers.



Ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture

The scale and impact of this issue is at national crisis proportions and requires all of our urgent attention.

Experience and research indicates that ad hoc, piecemeal approaches focused on the child protection system will not lead to improvement for children and families involved in Australia's child protection systems. The complex, structural nature of required solutions span federal and state and territory powers, and multiple departmental responsibilities. Achieving fundamental change in outcomes requires the implementation of holistic, evidence-based solutions, through a coordinated national approach.

WE CALL UPON ALL PARTIES TO COMMIT TO:

- **the development** of a national comprehensive **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Strategy**, with generational targets to eliminate over-representation of our children in out-of-home care and address the causes of child removal;
- **establishment** of an independent and empowered federal **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner**;
- a **50% federal budget increase** to family support and reunification services for families at risk of or recently experiencing child removal, targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled services (ACCOs); and
- the **development of a model ACCO investment**, expansion and capacity development strategy drawing on best practice.

THIS IS A NATIONAL CRISIS THAT NEEDS ALL OF OUR URGENT ATTENTION

Improving access to quality, culturally safe early childhood education

The early years of a child's life play a critical role in shaping long-term health, development, employment and well-being outcomes.

Currently, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are twice as likely than other children to be developmentally vulnerable when they start school. There is compelling evidence of the difference that high quality early education can have by amplifying children's development and enhancing lifelong social and emotional wellbeing. This is particularly true for children who experience disadvantage early in life.

WE CALL UPON ALL PARTIES TO COMMIT TO:

- new **early childhood development targets to close the gap** in the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains by 2030, and an accompanying strategy, through the Closing the Gap 'refresh';
- **funding universal preschool access for three and four year olds**; including additional funding to ensure our children have access to a minimum of three days per week of high-quality preschool;
- **amending the Activity Test** within the Child Care Subsidy to provide up to 30 hours per week for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, without having to meet work or study requirements. This is critical to ensure that children do not miss the most important opportunities to achieve equality because of policies seeking to influence parental behaviour; and
- **investing in** quality Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled integrated early years services, through a specific early education program, with clear targets to increase coverage in areas of high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and high levels of disadvantage.

