



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

Media release: Thursday 5 September 2019

8th SNAICC National Conference Communiqué

With more than 1200 delegates meeting on the land of the Kaurna people in Adelaide, the past three days have been a truly exhilarating experience for us. We have been able to share our knowledge and experiences in raising happy, healthy and confident children in our cultures and communities.

We have heard from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and practitioners who are proving that they are leading change. Where state and territory governments have invested in and committed to self-determination for our communities, we see greater outcomes for our children and families.

Our challenge going forward will be to address the disparities in funding between states, territories and the Commonwealth and varying levels of commitment.

As one voice, we call for **urgent action** to be taken to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have every opportunity to grow up safe and cared for in their family, community, and culture, and on country.

Our agreement on the Closing the Gap Refresh is to support the Coalition of Peaks, and pursue the three reform priorities for action to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children in the areas of child protection and in the early years.

Our key calls for action are:

1. The establishment of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner

We have been inspired by the brilliance and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, June Oscar AO and South Australian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, April Lawrie.

Commissioner Oscar's commitment to focusing on early intervention and wellbeing was highlighted yesterday. She said,

“Just 17% of funding for child protection went to child and family support and prevention services while 83% has been invested in child protection services. This needs to change.”

A National Commissioner for our children must be independent, properly resourced, and have strong powers to investigate the systems that are failing our children.

2. A comprehensive National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Strategy that includes generational targets to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children ends next year and has failed to improve outcomes for our children. The soaring rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care are a national crisis. We must start work now so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can co-design with governments a dedicated strategy that focuses on prevention and targets the drivers of child protection intervention. We heard strong calls from Victoria Tauli-Corpuz's, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, that Australia must adhere to international standards. The strategy must give effect to the internationally recognised human rights of our children. It must be based on our knowledge of what will work to change outcomes and seek to achieve the four building blocks of the Family Matters Campaign.

3. A dedicated funding program for integrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services, and an exemption to the child care 'Activity Test' for our families

We need a long term program to invest in integrated community-controlled early education, maternal and child health and family support services, with clear targets to increase coverage in areas of high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and high levels of disadvantage.

There should be an exemption to the Activity Test in the New Child Care Package, because that test limits participation for children in early education and undermines their fundamental rights. This will seriously impact the futures of our children.

4. An end to legal orders for permanent care and adoption for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, replaced by a focus on supporting the permanence of their identity in connection with their kin and culture

We need to stop focusing on permanent legal orders, and invest in programs that support reunification and cultural connection for children in care. Our children need continuity and to know where they are from, and their place in relation to family, mob, community, land and culture.

This too is a significant human rights issue.

While many other reforms are needed to support the best futures for our children, getting these things right will set us on the path to Closing the Gap in outcomes, and giving all of our children access to their fundamental rights. We need your action now!

Thursday 5 September, Adelaide Convention Centre
Conference highlights www.snaicc.org.au

Mark Jeffery, media manager, 0419 732 583

The 8th SNAICC National Conference is being held on the land of the Kaurna people, *Tarntanya* (red kangaroo place) at the Adelaide Convention Centre, and its theme is *Growing Up with Strong Identity, Culture and Connection*.

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

Founded in 1981, SNAICC was established to engage to promote and accommodate a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. Over the past 30 years SNAICC's has achieved key milestones in policy developments at state, territory and federal levels to develop 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.

**8TH SNAICC NATIONAL
CONFERENCE**
2-5 September 2019
Adelaide Convention Centre
www.snaicc.org.au/conference

GROWING UP WITH
STRONG
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