



SNAICC

National Voice for our Children

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(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation)

Level 7, Melbourne Polytechnic (Collingwood)

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Collingwood VIC 3066

24 January 2020

**ON 26 JANUARY, SNAICC CALLS FOR GREATER RECOGNITION OF
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children does not mark 26 January as a day of national celebration when the impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, particularly children, are profound and long lasting.

There is undisputed evidence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children suffer from intergenerational trauma from the continued removal from family, culture and kin – the impact of historical displacement and discrimination since the arrival of the First Fleet on 26 January 1788.

Survival Day is a reminder of the ongoing struggle for recognition of the rights of our children. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have rights to their culture, family connections and identity. Protecting and promoting these rights is paramount to supporting their wellbeing and opportunity to live happy and healthy lives.

SNAICC calls for an end to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. This will require greater investment in early intervention and family support services through Aboriginal community-controlled organisations; and, greater support to keep children connected to culture, community and kin. Our children must also have the opportunity to access quality early years education that enables them to thrive.

SNAICC CEO and Co-Chair for the Family Matters campaign, Richard Weston said,

“Many of our communities are affected by a range of adverse experiences from poverty, through to violence, drug and alcohol issues and homelessness. Without an opportunity to heal from the resultant trauma, its impact can deeply affect children’s brain development causing life-long challenges to the way they function in the world. It is experienced within our families and communities and from one generation to the next.”

“These adverse experiences drive our children’s over-representation in government managed systems.”

“According to *The Family Matters Report 2019*, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 10 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children and more likely to have contact with juvenile justice and criminal justice.”

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children need to feel strong and safe in their identities to thrive but how can this be the case when we celebrate a date that ultimately marks a time for us when the bonds between child, family and community were destroyed?”

– Richard Weston, SNAICC CEO & Family Matters Co-Chair

SNAICC Chair and CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), Muriel Bamblett said,

“Despite the adversity our people face, we are inspired by leaders such as singer and songwriter Archie Roach, named Victorian Australian of the Year 2019. Removed from his family as a child, he endured difficulties throughout his life, but continues to campaign for Indigenous rights and give a voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

SNAICC acknowledges the contribution of the Coalition of Peaks on Closing the Gap, and the Australian Government’s support for the Priority Reforms as positive steps towards establishing clear targets to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Ms Bamblett is SNAICC’s representative on the Coalition of Peaks. She said,

“Our Country and community is part of who we are, and it is so important for our children to feel connected to culture and community. With the impact of the recent fires, we have seen how Aboriginal community-controlled organisations can pull together to support affected families and communities.”

“Our services go above and beyond to fight the disadvantage that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children face. Our children are 2.6 times more likely to be developmentally delayed at the age of 5 and are attending child care services at half the rate of non-Indigenous children.”

“The introduction of the New Child Care Package and Activity Test has made access to early years services harder for our families, and this isn’t good enough. By working in partnership with the Morrison Government through shared access to data and decision-making, we can make inroads towards closing the gap for our children.”

– Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett AO, SNAICC Chair

We call upon the Australian governments to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights and sovereignty over this land, to celebrate our Indigenous culture and Country, and work towards closing the gap on inequalities impacting our children through greater investment in their wellbeing.

ENDS/

For more information, or to organise an interview with Muriel Bamblett or Richard Weston, please visit www.snaicc.org.au or contact:

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About SNAICC – National Voice for our Children:

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

Founded in 1981, SNAICC was called Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care until it was changed to SNAICC – National Voice for our Children. For over 30 years SNAICC has achieved key milestones in policy development at state, territory and federal levels and developed innovative and useful resources for the sector.

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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