



SNAICC – National Voice for our Children  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation  
Melbourne Polytechnic  
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## **SNAICC SUPPORTS ABORIGINAL-LED SOLUTIONS FOR THE SAFETY AND WELLBEING OF OUR CHILDREN**

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children is devastated by the tragic deaths of three children in the Northern Territory that are currently being examined by the NT coroner and calls for greater action to protect our children from sexual abuse.

SNAICC supports Minister Wyatt's call for all levels of government to work together to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Since recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse were released in 2017, Indigenous and non-Indigenous children continue to be victims of abuse due to systemic failings within child protection systems.

The deaths of three young Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory in 2016 and 2017 is a deeply saddening reminder of the failure of the system to provide support for our children and communities.

In response to these tragic events, the Northern Territory Government has established a multi-agency taskforce with small teams in remote communities to share information about safety concerns for children. Minister Wyatt has also called for mandatory reporting of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) for children.

SNAICC believes that the issues that lie beneath these tragedies cannot be solved with increased scrutiny.

The real issues relate to decades of deep systemic failures to invest in solutions and support our communities in their efforts to keep children safe. Initiating a taskforce of bureaucrats without a meaningful partnership with Aboriginal people will not effectively address the underlying failures in the system.

SNAICC Chair Muriel Bamblett says,

“Despite repeated inquiries at a national, state and territory level, governments have failed to adequately respond to child sexual abuse in our communities.

“Initiating a taskforce is another knee-jerk reaction by the NT Government that ignores the need for long-term and dedicated commitment to change.”

The 97 recommendations from the *Little Children Are Sacred* report in 2007 were largely ignored, leading to the NT Intervention. In 2016, the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory continued to expose systemic failings of the child protection and youth justice systems.

Both Royal Commissions highlighted the concerning over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and the importance of the full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.

The new Closing the Gap Agreement includes a commitment to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.

The ultimate way to achieve this is by investing in our communities to provide the prevention and early intervention supports that are needed to protect children from abuse. This also includes investing in cultural healing approaches and trauma-informed care for victims and survivors of sexual abuse.

Ms Bamblett continues,

“When I was on the Board of Inquiry into Child Protection in the NT in 2010, we called on the NT government to invest in prevention and early intervention, but still those supports aren’t in place.

“Culture is a protective factor for our children. We must focus on community-led support and healing for our communities, with connection to culture at the heart of our children’s wellbeing.”

SNAICC and the Family Matters campaign has long called for an independent national commissioner of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to make governments accountable and act on recommendations.

“We owe it to our children to uphold their right to be happy and healthy, feeling safe and secure in their identities. With genuine commitment from all governments and investing in Aboriginal-led solutions, we can lead the way.”

– Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett, SNAICC Chair

**ENDS/**

For further information and media enquiries, contact:

**SNAICC – National Voice for our Children**

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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. 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 called Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care until it was changed to SNAICC – National Voice for our Children. Over the past 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.

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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