



12 February 2021

## **SNAICC CALLS ON GOVERNMENTS TO COMMIT TO SUPPORTING FIRST NATIONS CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

The 13<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations on 13 February is an historic day for Australia in acknowledging the wrongs of the past, but the impact of child removal on First Nations children and families continues decades on.

“In 2008, the Australian government finally said sorry for unjustly removing generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families – breaking up families and communities and leaving a legacy of intergenerational trauma for our peoples.” says SNAICC’s CEO Catherine Liddle.

“We feel for our families on this day. The stories of the Stolen Generations are something that we all carry with us. They are our mothers, our fathers, our grandparents and our brothers and sisters.

“The Apology was only the first step in truth telling for our nation. Failures to adequately incorporate First Nations perspectives into policy and to support healing for families continue to impact our communities. Our children are still being removed from their families at alarming rates.

“We need to move from acknowledgement to action and recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the experts in providing culturally responsive services to our children and families.

“The *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* is an opportunity to invest in genuine support for our children and families to enable healing and break the cycle of trauma.”

– Catherine Liddle, SNAICC CEO

In the 13 years that have followed the national apology, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from family and kin is at a record high.

Figures released in January 2021 reveal that 18,862 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were living in out-of-home care at 30 June 2020 (an increase of 53% over the last 10 years).

This number does not include many children on permanent care orders or those that have been adopted, so the actual number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who have been removed from their families is far higher.

*The Family Matters Report 2020* identified a concerning trend towards permanency and adoption that is driving separation of children from family, community and culture.

Based on 2018-19 figures, a worrying 81% (16,287) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care are living permanently away from their birth parents until the age of 18 years. The report states that there were 19 adoptions throughout this period, of which 95% have been to non-Indigenous carers, and all occurred in New South Wales and Victoria.

“It has been 13 years since the apology, yet every year the number is rising, and every year we do not see the systemic change required to reduce these numbers. The current child protection system is not working,” says Co-Chair for the Family Matters campaign, Sue-Anne Hunter.

“We know that our kids have the best opportunity to thrive by keeping them connected to family, culture and kin. With national standards such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, we can ensure the interests of First Nations children are at the centre.

“It is essential we have a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s commissioner that holds all levels of government to account so that our children are supported on their healing journey.”

– Sue-Anne Hunter, Family Matters Co-Chair

For more information contact:

Joanne Cackett, Acting Communications Manager  
[media@snaicc.org.au](mailto:media@snaicc.org.au) 0474 727506

### **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.

Join us on social media and find out at [www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au)

### **About Family Matters**

Family Matters is Australia’s national campaign to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community, and culture.

The Family Matters campaign aims to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 2040.

Join us on social media and find out at [www.familymatters.org.au](http://www.familymatters.org.au)

**Phone** 03 9419 1921  
PO Box 1144, Collingwood VIC 3066  
[info@snaicc.org.au](mailto:info@snaicc.org.au) | [www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au)  
**ABN** 42 513 562 148