



Media Release

GROWING UP STRONG CHILDREN – LISTEN TO THE LOCAL VOICES – FAMILY MATTERS 2022

Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) around the country are demonstrating the unacceptable trend of increasing child removals can be halted when local communities are empowered and resourced.

The **Family Matters Report 2022**, released today by SNAICC -National Voice for Our Children, looks at what is working to turn the tide of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system.

It shows that where ACCOs are being given authority in child protection, where families have a voice in decision-making, and where there are accessible, culturally safe child and family services and supports, there are better outcomes for children and families.

SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle said ACCOs were doing amazing work developing initiatives to drive positive change.

“I also acknowledge action from some jurisdictions in progressing our key calls for change, with some genuine efforts to empower communities and transfer authority to ACCOs.

“But what we aren’t seeing is transformative action and the resourcing of significant commitments that have been made at a Federal, State and Territory level.

“We need to see concerted efforts to break down silos and implement collaboration across government bureaucracies with ACCOs and their representative organisations such as SNAICC.

“There must be commitment to our early years services that have a proven track record in strengthening families and children, helping break the nexus between child protection and the youth justice systems.

At 30 June 2021 there were 22,243 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children 10.4 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children.

Only 40.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers – the lowest proportion in at least 20 years.

Dr Paul Gray, co-chair of Family Matters said 25 years after the tabling of the Bringing Them Home report it was unacceptable that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children continued to be removed from their families at increasing rates.

“Child protection systems in every jurisdiction disproportionately target and intervene in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families – and this has been steadily increasing over the last 10 years.

“Notably, the fact that the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children increases as interventions become more intrusive – from notifications and substantiations through to removals – emphasises the inherent inequality within these systems.



“This clearly demonstrates systemic issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, with child protection systems focused on surveillance and intervention rather than investing in effective, culturally safe supports for families in need.

“The Family Matters report has clear evidence-based recommendations that will transform these failing systems and change the trajectory for many of our children and families.

“Transferring authority to our communities, investing more in ACCOs to design and deliver family support services and legislating for a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to oversee and report on the rights of our children are keys to this.”

Ms Liddle said The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021–2031, Safe and Supported, also offers a way forward.

“For the first time we have a framework for protecting children that was designed with us, where we had a say.

“But for this to work the commitments that have been made have to be funded with an emphasis on prevention and early intervention.

“Our children and families cannot continue to pay the heavy price of government inaction.”

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Media inquiries – Mandy Taylor 0414 634159 or media@snaicc.org.au