

MEDIA RELEASE

8 November 2023

**JOINT STATEMENT
ORGANISATIONS REJECT CALLS FOR ROYAL COMMISSION INTO ABORIGINAL
CHILDREN**

Child abuse is a serious crime, which has a devastating impact on children, family and communities. The safety of children should not be politicised or used as a platform to advance a political position.

It is frustrating and disappointing to hear the Opposition Leader and Senator Price repeating the same claims and calls they made earlier this year, again with no evidence and no credible solutions. If any politician, or anyone at all, has any evidence about the sexual abuse of children then they must report it to the authorities.

These calls for a Royal Commission into the sexual abuse of Aboriginal children have been made without one shred of real evidence being presented. They play into the basest negative perceptions of some people about Aboriginal people and communities.

In April this year, the Australian Child Maltreatment Study revealed the majority of Australians (62 per cent) have experienced at least one type of child abuse or neglect, with domestic violence, physical, emotional or sexual abuse the most common. Child abuse is far too prevalent in Australia full stop.

Singling out Aboriginal families and communities is harmful and puts ideology before evidence. Australian Institute for Health and Welfare data shows that, in 2021-22, substantiated child protection reports for Indigenous children were less likely to identify sexual abuse as the primary type of abuse (6.8% of substantiations) than they were for non-Indigenous children (9% of substantiations).

The evidence and the solutions are very clear.

There have been more than 33 reports into child protection since the Bringing Them Home Report in 1997.

SNAICC produces an annual report, Family Matters, and has done for many years which details the evidence-based solutions that will enable our children to grow up safe, loved and protected. These solutions have been developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

They prioritise investment in effective, culturally safe supports for families and children before they reach crisis point, through Aboriginal community-controlled services.

The most effective and immediate action Government can take to make children safe and protect their human rights is to stand up a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner, with the legislated power to investigate and make recommendations on issues impacting our children.

This will be more effective and more powerful than any Royal Commission. We have been calling for a National Commissioner for many years. We now call for bipartisan support to make this happen.

Reference:

AIHW 2023, Child Protection Australia 2021-22, Data Table S3.10

Endorsed by

Organisations:

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children

54 Reasons/Save the Children

AbSec

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body

Act for Kids

Allambi Care

ANTaR

Anti-Poverty Week

APONT - Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the NT

Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA)

Australian Child Rights Taskforce (UNICEF)

Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS)

Australian Education Union

Australian Indigenous Doctors Association

Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA)

Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY)

Barnados

Benevolent Society

CASPA

Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare (CFECFW)

Child and Family Focus South Australia (CAFFSA)

Coalition of Peaks on Closing the Gap
DJIRRA
Early Childhood Australia
Families Australia
Family and Relationship Services Australia (FRSA)
Full Stop Australia
Gayaa Dhuwi
Goodstart
Healing the Past by Nurturing the Future
Indigenous Allied Health Australia
KWY Aboriginal Corporation
Life Without Barriers
Lowitja Institute
MacKillop Family Services
NAATSIHWP
NAPCAN
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS)
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)
National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence
National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Research
National Coalition for Child Safety and Wellbeing
National Health Leadership Forum
Ngaweeyan Maar-oo
Noongar Family Safety and Wellbeing Council
Onemda Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing
OzChild
Parkville Institute
Partnership for Justice in Health
PeakCare Qld
Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP)
Reconciliation Australia
Replanting the Birthing Trees
SAFeST Start Coalition
South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON)
SSI
Strive
The Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM)

The Healing Foundation
The National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse (National Centre)
United
Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)
Yamurrah Collective

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