

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **GROUND-BREAKING AGREEMENT PUTS CLOSING THE GAP INTO ACTION**

An agreement signed today between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and Community Services Ministers from around the country has been described by SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle as a demonstration of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap in action.

The two groups came together for the first time on Kurna country in Adelaide as the Safe and Supported Shared Decision-Making Committee, to sign and launch the Safe and Supported Partnership Agreement.

“This meeting and the signing of the Partnership Agreement represents a significant, concrete demonstration of a commitment to shared decision making and a different way of working between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and every government,” Ms Liddle said.

“It will oversee the implementation of *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021-2031* and its two Action Plans.

“Safe and Supported is the first national policy framework to be negotiated using the terms of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

“For the first time we have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples sitting at the decision-making table with the same status as governments.

“Safe and Supported presents actions and solutions on how we can work together to ensure that children and young people in Australia reach their full potential by growing up safe and supported, free from harm and neglect.

“This framework and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan will be the key mechanisms for Governments to respond to Closing the Gap Target 12, which aims to reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031.

“As we’ve seen from new data released just yesterday by the Productivity Commission, these figures are worsening and the target is off track.

“The transformations promised under Safe and Supported, which include the commitment to a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, need to be urgently taken forward by Governments.

“Commitments to transforming the way Governments work with us, to change from the business as usual approach, will help turn the tide for our children and families so they can thrive and enjoy the same opportunities as all Australians.”

Minister Amanda Rishworth welcomed the new approach to working in genuine partnership.

“All children and young people across Australia have the right to grow up safe, connected, and supported in their family, community, and culture, but the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care shows us that we have a long way to go to achieve this vision, and that’s because the old ways of working are simply not working,” Minister Rishworth said.

“The Safe and Supported Partnership Agreement marks a change in direction. From now on we will be working in true, equal partnership with First Nations leaders to make a difference to Aboriginal children’s lives.

“We know that we get better decisions when people who understand their own communities are empowered in policy decision-making.

“Our ongoing commitment to genuine partnership and shared decision-making will be essential to achieving the goals of *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021-2031* and creating the change necessary for all children in Australia to thrive.”

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