

MEDIA RELEASE

4 October 2024

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN ESTABLISHED

A major milestone has been reached in the journey to establishing the first National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People.

The Executive Order establishing the National Commission as an Executive Agency has been gazetted, setting up the structure to enable the work of the National Commissioner.

CEO of SNAICC – National Voice for our Children Catherine Liddle said with this step now in place, recruitment for the National Commissioner role was expected to open this month.

“This is an exciting and historic step to realising the position of National Commissioner,” Ms Liddle said.

“Through shared decision-making processes we have been able to establish strong functions that reflect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector’s long-held ambition to have a National Commissioner with real authority and real teeth.

“Having a National Commissioner that will be autonomous, with the power to investigate issues and tackle the over-representation of our young people in out-of-home care and youth detention will be a game changer for many children and families.

“They will be the champion, the voice and facilitator for our children, young people and families, and who will hold governments to account.

“It is important to note that this long-held ambition has been achieved in large part because of the levers that exist in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

“A critical next step will be to progress legislation to further strengthen the powers and independence of the National Commissioner.”

Indigenous children are almost eleven times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children and 29 times more likely to be in youth detention, and trends are increasing.

“As the 2023 Family Matters report says: “The most effective and immediate action the government can make to ensure the safety and protection of our children 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.”

“We look forward to the National Commission being officially operational from January 13, 2025, with a National Commissioner ready to start their vital work.”

For all media queries, please contact Mandy Taylor on 0414 634159 or media@snaicc.org.au.