

MEDIA RELEASE

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SA Child Protection Laws - A Step in the Right Direction

SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children, says the child protection legislation passed in SA is a good step forward, but more action is urgently required to address the systemic issues still harming Aboriginal children and families.

Catherine Liddle, CEO of SNAICC said while this Bill will lead to improvements, the state's child protection system urgently needs complete reform to embed self-determination and the empowerment of Aboriginal communities.

"We welcome the strengthening of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (the Principle), which functions to reduce the gross over-representation of our children in the child protection system," Ms Liddle said.

"In states like Victoria which have invested in implementing the Principle, we see children placed with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family more often and they are more likely to be reunified with their birth parents.

Despite this progress, SNAICC warns that South Australia's child protection system continues to cause serious harm.

"There is still much more to be done. We urgently need a stronger focus on transitioning OOHC services for Aboriginal children to community-controlled organisations (ACCOs)," Ms Liddle said

"Greater investment in early intervention and family-strengthening programs is critical to preventing children from entering care in the first place.

"If the South Australian Government was serious about making this system safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, they would be urgently implementing the recommendations from April Lawrie's Report into the removal and placement of Aboriginal children in South Australia, *Holding on to Our Future*.

"Regardless of whose interests these systems claim to serve, they are separating children from their families while failing at their core responsibility - to support and keep families together and children safe, as they should be."

The 2024 Family Matters Report revealed that South Australia recorded the highest increase in the number of Aboriginal children in OOHC nationally between 2019 and 2023—a rise of 33.5%. The state also reported one of the lowest levels of investment in ACCO-led family support services (just 9.8%).

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