

MEDIA RELEASE

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Legislated National Commissioner a critical step to turn the tide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Legislation empowering the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People marks one of the most impactful actions the Federal Government can take to reverse the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.

This significant milestone delivers on a long-held priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the community-controlled sector and reflects sustained advocacy from the community-controlled sector and the Family Matters Leadership Group, who have called for a legislated, independent Commissioner for many years.

Catherine Liddle, CEO of SNAICC – National Voice for our Children welcomed the legislation, saying it reflected many of the priorities stakeholders had been advocating for many years and help reach a critical Closing the Gap target.

“By legislating this role, the National Commissioner can finally serve as it was always intended - a true accountability mechanism to ensure governments follow through on their commitments to our children and families,” Ms Liddle said.

“This isn’t just a title, it’s a force for true change.

“With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children now ten times more likely to be in out-of-home care, and the connection between care and youth justice becoming clearer, this legislation could not arrive at a more critical time.

“Two years after the announcement of the role, this legislation ensures our children now have a fearless advocate who can act independently, with the authority of the law behind her.

“This legislation backs in Commissioner Hunter who has already been a fearless advocate for our children by giving her the independence, authority and statutory powers needed to drive accountability and systemic change.”

Alongside fulfilling one of the Family Matters building blocks, this legislation is also a significant step under Safe and Supported, Australia’s ten-year national framework for child and family wellbeing, and reflects targeted consultation with First Nations young people, the Safe and

Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group, Commonwealth Commissioners, and state and territory children's commissioners, guardians and advocates.

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