

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Sector Peak Urges NT Government to Scrap Legislative Changes and Partner on Child Protection

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children is urging the Northern Territory Government to abandon proposed legislative changes that would weaken the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and instead work in genuine partnership with the Aboriginal community-controlled sector on an independent, evidence-based Inquiry into the Territory’s child protection system.

With almost 90 per cent of substantiated child protection cases in the Northern Territory involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, SNAICC says any attempt to reform the system without Aboriginal leadership, expertise and lived experience risks repeating the failures of the past.

Catherine Liddle, CEO of SNAICC said the Northern Territory could not afford to get reform wrong.

“Changes to the child protection system in the NT are urgently needed, and community-led organisations have been calling for action and investment for decades,” Ms Liddle said.

“But this work is too important to be reactive. The NT Government cannot get this inquiry wrong and risk another ill-conceived intervention.

“The priority must be genuine partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, leaders and Commissioners who understand the realities facing children and families on the ground.”

SNAICC is backing calls from the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People and the Northern Territory Children’s Commissioner for a Board of Inquiry into the Territory’s child protection system, including the interconnected systems that impact vulnerable children and families.

Ms Liddle said any Inquiry must also examine why successive recommendations from previous reviews and royal commissions had failed to deliver lasting change.

For decades, inquiries into the Northern Territory’s child protection system have identified the same systemic failures, yet recommendations from landmark reports such as the *Little Children are Sacred*, *State of Denial*, and the *Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory* continue to go unmet.

“An independent Board of Inquiry must examine not only the current system, but why previous recommendations have not been implemented and what is needed to finally deliver systemic change,” she said.

SNAICC also raised serious concerns about proposed legislative changes to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, describing the move as deeply at odds with the government’s stated commitment to reform.

“Connection to kin, community and culture is one of the strongest protective factors for our children,” Ms Liddle said.

“The Child Placement Principle is not red tape, it is a safety framework built on decades of evidence, designed to keep Aboriginal children connected to family, culture and community, and to ensure the mistakes of the past are never repeated.

“It is time the Territory’s child protection system, and the systems surrounding it to receive the coordinated attention they deserve.

“We call on the NT Government to work with us, Aboriginal leaders and other experts as a matter of priority.”

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