

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **SNAICC warns proposed NT child protection laws will make children less safe**

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children has today warned that the Northern Territory Government's proposed *Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026* risks making children less safe and fails to address the systemic failures at the heart of the Territory's child protection crisis.

Appearing before a Public Hearing into the Bill, Catherine Liddle, CEO of SNAICC said the organisation strongly opposed the proposed amendments while continuing to advocate for urgent reform of the Northern Territory child protection system.

"Everyone wants children to be safe. That must be the starting point for this conversation," Ms Liddle said.

"But despite its stated intent, we do not believe this Bill will make children safer. We believe it will exacerbate existing weaknesses in the system and ultimately place more children at risk.

Ms Liddle said the debate surrounding the legislation had created harmful misunderstandings about the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle, which exists to protect children.

"To suggest the Principle puts culture ahead of safety is simply wrong.

"The Principle is a child safety framework which recognises that an Aboriginal child's safety and wellbeing are strengthened through connection to family, kinship systems, community, culture and Country.

Ms Liddle said if governments are serious about child safety, they must confront the reality that too many children are being harmed by the very system designed to protect them.

"Recent data from the Northern Territory Children's Commissioner showed one in three children in care experienced harm, and in more than a quarter of those cases the harm was inflicted by a carer.

"The answer to these failures is not to weaken protections. It is to fix the system.

While supporting comprehensive reform of the child protection system, Ms Liddle said neither the proposed legislation nor the review process announced by the Northern Territory Government provided a pathway to the meaningful reform required.

"The Northern Territory has spent decades receiving recommendations for child protection reform. What children and families need now is not another rushed response, but lasting change that addresses the root causes of harm and strengthens families and communities," Ms Liddle said.

"The only way to get this right is to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal families, communities and organisations. If governments are serious about child safety, they must listen to the people who know what children need to thrive."

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