

MEDIA RELEASE

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Ignoring the evidence won't keep children safe

The Northern Territory Legislative Scrutiny Committee has chosen politics over evidence, recommending in their report that the *Every Child Matters Bill* proceed despite overwhelming warnings from those working every day to keep children safe.

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children said the recommendation confirms what Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, child protection experts and frontline services feared from the moment the Bill was introduced – that this was a political exercise rather than evidence-based reform.

Catherine Liddle CEO of SNAICC said the recommendation made in the report is incredibly disappointing and is an extraordinary rejection of decades of evidence and the expertise of those working in the sector every day.

"You cannot claim to put children first while rejecting the evidence about what keeps children safe. This was a political exercise from the get-go," Ms Liddle said.

"The evidence opposing this harmful legislation presented to this inquiry was overwhelming. From Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations to child protection experts and frontline services, the warnings were clear. Yet our evidence and expert advice has been ignored.

"Children are safest when families are supported early, and when children remain connected to their kin, culture and community wherever it is safe to do so.

"This recommendation flies in the face of everything we've learned over generations. Time and again, inquiries have found that unnecessarily separating children from their families and culture causes lifelong harm."

Ms Liddle said while Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children would bear the greatest impact, every Territory family should be concerned.

"This Bill lowers the threshold for removing children from their families and expands the powers of a child protection system that is already under immense pressure.

"Every Territory household should be asking whether that will make children and families safer.

"In a jurisdiction that already has some of the poorest child protection outcomes in Australia, this is a dangerous step backwards.

"The Government and the Committee had a choice. They could listen to the evidence and the people who know this system best, or they could pursue a political agenda.

"This recommendation confirms they chose politics over evidence and it is Territory children and families who will pay the price."

END

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