



**ONE CHILDHOOD - ONE CHANCE**

# **NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHILDREN'S DAY AUGUST 4TH**

National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day, (NAICD), is an annual event celebrated on August 4th each year having been established by SNAICC in 1988. The aim of NAICD is to demonstrate how important children are to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Through focussing on a different theme each year NAICD draws attention to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and major issues SNAICC is pursuing on their behalf.

# NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND

**SNAICC produces free posters featuring original artwork to represent the theme with posters distributed by SNAICC throughout the country to community based organisations. At the local level many of these community based children's services organise local celebrations and free activities with a focus on children and families.**

**Since 1998 NAICD has focussed on themes ranging from child poverty, the forced removal of children from families, access to education, cultural pride and inheritance, the importance of elders in the lives of children, family reunification and healing, speaking up in response to child abuse and investing in the early years of childhood.**



## STOP THE CULTURAL GENOCIDE

In 1988 SNAICC produced the first NAICD poster featuring a photograph from the Bicentenary protest march in Sydney. SNAICC sought to highlight the detrimental impact of placing Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children with non-Indigenous families after these children had been removed from their families

by welfare authorities. Describing this as a form of cultural genocide SNAICC advocated that to deny children their culture was a form of genocide. In 1997 the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission described the forced removal of children and their placement with another cultural group with the intention of denying children their culture as a form of genocide.

In 2004 up to 25% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children removed from their families are still placed with non-Indigenous carers.

## CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE – LETS PROTECT AND EDUCATE THEM

The 1989 NAICD poster features artwork from John Cummins using Central Australian Aboriginal symbols. The painting depicts the story of the development of Aboriginal and Islander people and their children including the damage caused by colonisation. The

story ends with the message, we are a strong proud race, lets build ourselves up and protect our children.



## THE STOLEN GENERATIONS – DEMAND AN ENQUIRY INTO THE REMOVAL OF ABORIGINAL AND ISLANDER CHILDREN

In 1991 NAICD focussed on the issue of the Stolen Generations as SNAICC demanded a national inquiry into the forced removal of Indigenous children from their families. The poster was based on a photograph taken in the 1930's of Aboriginal children removed from their families and placed at the Bomaderry Infants Home in NSW. SNAICC was the first national organisation to call for an inquiry into the Stolen Generations and the NAICD poster was instrumental in bringing the Stolen Generations out of the shadows and into public view.



## OUR CHILDREN - OUR RESPONSIBILITY

The painting for NAICD in 1993 was by Heather Kemarre Shearer of the Central Australian Aranda Tribe. Heather worked for many years with the South Australian Aboriginal Child care Agency and was a member of the SNAICC National Executive.

Heather outlined the story in the painting as follows:

*"The top part of this painting shows nine (9) traditional Aboriginal families consisting of mother, father and four (4) children. In some of the families you can see where the children have been taken away from the sanction of their families.*

*The bottom half of the painting eighteen (18) boxes shows how the children removed from their families have become isolated from everything that protected them and nurtures them, and forced to live a life of isolation as they are slotted into the mainstream (white institution of education and learning).*

*This foreign, alien system is killing our people and destroying our inherent right to raise our own. Our children are our future and we have to gain control of our lives again for the future of our people, our land and our culture".*

# ISLANDER CHILDREN'S DAY



## BRING THEM HOME

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission completed the inquiry into the forced removal of children and released the Bringing Them Home report in 1997. The NAICD poster for 1997 advocated that governments provide a full and proper response to the Bringing Them

Home report. This included reparation for those directly affected and a complete overhaul of the current child protection systems, which continue to remove Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at over 5 times the rate of other children.

The painting for the 1997 was also by Heather Kemarre Shearer and it tells a story about the journey home for the Stolen Generations. The hand in the picture belongs to the person who is coming home. The colours of the hand change from concrete grey, (representing the confusion of identity and environment to those who do not know who they are or where they are from), black ochre (representing the reconnection back to the reality of or identity), yellow ochre (representing the turbulent times of change within ourselves and those around us) and finally red earth, which represents our coming home to mother earth and our family. Once the person has come home you then find our family connections, which criss-cross the land. The colour of the background represents the diverse environments from desert to coast.



## WE ARE WATCHING AND LEARNING FROM YOU - MAKE US PROUD OF ALL YOU DO

The theme in 2001 it challenged individuals, organisations and governments to remember that children learn from observing their behaviour. It was produced at a time of national focus and attention on issues of family

violence and child abuse. Too often children witness behaviour, which carries messages of violence, neglect and indifference instead of love, respect, reconciliation, support and encouragement. Through the NAICD poster SNAICC challenged organisations and all individuals, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to think about the example they set for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Children who can take pride in the people around them will grow up to

respect their elders, value their cultural heritage and strengthen their communities.



## NOT NOW - NOT THEN - NOT EVER: SPEAK UP AGAINST CHILD ABUSE

Building on the increased focus on the level of child abuse within Aboriginal and Islander

communities SNAICC chose to focus NAICD in 2003 on the importance of speaking up against child abuse. The theme served to remind people that the abuse of children has never and will never have any place in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture. The poster featured a painting from Joanne Honeysett depicting Elders and other community members speaking out to protect children and encouraging others to do the same.



## ONE CHILDHOOD - ONE CHANCE: LET'S NOT TAKE A CHANCE ON OUR FUTURE - INVEST IN OUR FUTURE LEADERS

The 2004 theme reflects the importance of the early years of a child's

life and the profound impact childhood experiences have on children's long term development. Since it was established SNAICC has advocated that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should have access to early childhood and child care programs which reflect Indigenous culture and family values. Ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children know, value and feel pride in their culture is critical to ensure they develop the strength of character to prosper in mainstream Australia. Early childhood programs and services have a particularly important role to play in supporting children develop their self confidence and cultural identity.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are far less likely than other Australia children to have access to early childhood services and programs. With the rapidly increasing size of the Indigenous population this situation may decline further. The theme for 2004 highlights that increased investment in children's development is urgently required to foster the development of the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

**The following provides some ideas to assist community sector organisations plan and implement practical activities that focus on the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It aims to assist community sector organisations build partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations as part of their normal activities.**

**REGISTER YOUR EVENT WITH SNAICC, MAKE SUGGESTIONS FOR NEXT YEAR'S THEME AND SEND US PHOTOS**

SNAICC likes to promote activities people are organising at the local level so we encourage you to fax back the NAICD events form. SNAICC will feature some stories from NAICD local events in our newsletters and on our website. You can also use the fax back sheet to tell us your ideas for next year's theme including any issues you think we should focus on for NAICD

Organisations may also wish to send us photos of their NAICD event so we can include them in our newsletters (please only send copies that you don't want back and include your contact details on the back)

**KEEP INFORMED THROUGH THE SNAICC WEBSITE**

SNAICC will provide updates about NAICD including any media release we put out about NAICD and children's issues. You can download the media release and other information about SNAICC and NAICD from <http://www.snaicc.asn.au>

**SUMMARY**

The most important thing to do is get involved in NAICD and organise an event – no matter how small – at through your service, child care, kinder, pre-school, health service or community groups.

Make a commitment to make NAICD something you focus on each year and work with your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

**LOCAL ACTIVITIES**

Services and agencies at the local level are encouraged to use National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day as a time to reflect on their work for Indigenous children. SNAICC encourages services to take a break from their normal routine and organise some activities or functions involving children and families which reinforce how important it is to fill children's lives with happy times.

Services and agencies might want to consider doing some of the following:

**Organising an open day or morning tea at work so people to bring their children into work**

Hold a family fun day for foster carers and their foster children and young people

**Promote the achievements of Indigenous children and young people in your local community through young achiever awards**

Organising a children's picnic or activities in a local park

**Bring Elders, families and their children together in your service for storytelling**

Run a seminar or workshop with other local services

**Have a flag raising ceremony with children and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags**

Put out a press release or media statement to your local papers, radio and TV about why your services support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

**Hold a fete or fund raising activity for children in your community**

Organise some sporting events or competitions for children and young people in your service

**Sponsor some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to have a day out with their families at the pictures or other activities**

Promote your service and activities to other local children's services

**Screen print some t-shirts or caps to celebrate NAICD**

Organise kids at school or in child care to do their own paintings and artwork about the NAICD theme

**Get children to paint a mural about NAICD to display at your service**

Invite local leaders, politicians and Elders to spend some time at your service on NAICD

**Put children's issues on the agenda for your next staff meeting or board meeting and get people thinking about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children**

# BACKGROUND ON SNAICC

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, SNAICC, is the national peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

SNAICC was formally established in 1981 after Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at, "The First Aboriginal Child Survival Seminar" held in Melbourne in 1979 proposed the creation of such a body. The organisation elected its first national executive in 1982 and opened its office after first receiving Federal Government funding support in 1983. 2003 marked SNAICC's 20th anniversary.

The first Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies, AICCAs, SNAICC's founding members, developed following a study trip to the United States by the late (Auntie) Mollie Dyer from the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. Inspired by the success of Native Americans in reducing the rate of child removal by welfare authorities, and in particular the Yakima Indian Nation, Mollie returned to Australia to establish the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, VACCA. Soon afterwards the NSW Aboriginal Children's Service was formed in Redfern and South Australia AICCA in Adelaide with these new bodies becoming a model and source of inspiration for the establishment of similar agencies across Australia.

SNAICC now operates from a membership base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community based child care agencies, Multi-functional Aboriginal Children's Services, family support services, foster care agencies, link up and family reunification services, family group homes, community groups and

voluntary associations, long day care child care services, pre schools, early childhood education services and services for young people at risk.

In addition to these members SNAICC has a network and subscriber list of over 1500 community groups, mostly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, but also significant numbers of non-Indigenous community based services and individuals with an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children.

SNAICC is governed by a national executive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people drawn from our members and operates from an office located in Melbourne with three core staff and two project staff.

## SOME RECENT AND TYPICAL ACTIVITIES

Key milestones in SNAICC's commitment to serving the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families have included:

- Development of National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day, NAICD, (August 4th each year), as a major annual event celebrated by communities throughout Australia from 1988
- Securing the agreement of all State, Territory and Commonwealth Community Services and Welfare Ministers to the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle as a cornerstone of child welfare policy in Australia
- Bringing to national prominence the story of the 'Stolen Generations' when in 1991 SNAICC was the first national Indigenous organisation to call for a national inquiry into the 'Stolen Generations'
- Production of "Through Black Eyes - Family Violence Resource Handbook" in 1991 and 1992;
- Presentation of a major paper to the First National Child Sexual Abuse Conference, Melbourne 1994; ' Sexual Abuse and Aboriginal Children: An Exploration'
- Research and development of paper for the International Year of the Family National Secretariat on issues and priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- Representing the rights and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1998 and 2000
- Research and production of the 'Proposed Plan of Action for Child Abuse and Neglect in Aboriginal Communities' in 1996
- Convening the second National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Survival conference in June 1997.
- Compilation of a national report on the operation of the 37 Commonwealth funded Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services, MACS, for the Department of Family and Community Services in 2000
- Publication in 2002 of ' Young Black Eyes' a national resource booklet and community elders guide responding to issues of family violence and child abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Convening Our Future Generations: The National Indigenous Child Welfare and Development Seminar in 2003
- Establishing a National Indigenous Family and Children's Resource Centre in partnership with the Australian Government in 2004

## CREDITS AND SPONSORSHIP OF NAICD

### SPONSORSHIP

National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day, NAICD, has enjoyed the sponsorship and support of ATSIC, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, for most of the past 16 years. Each year ATSIC, (and more recently ATSIS), have provided the funds for the production and distribution of the NAICD posters. SNAICC gratefully acknowledges their long term support for NAICD, which we will miss,

For 2004 the NAICD poster has been sponsored by ATSIS and this publication by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services, FaCS. SNAICC gratefully acknowledges not just the financial support of these organizations but their commitment to work with SNAICC on children's issues.

### CREDITS

Writing/Editing: Julian Pocock (SNAICC Coordinator)  
Design and Layout: Heather Hoare (Pixel City Digital Design)

### SNAICC NEWSLETTER AND MEMBERSHIP

SNAICC produces a quarterly newsletter with information on issues of direct relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, services working with them and organisations or individuals with an interest in children's rights.

Information regarding subscriptions to the SNAICC newsletter or membership of SNAICC should be directed to the SNAICC Secretariat.



THEME PAINTING ARTIST: Lyn Briggs, Wiradjuri - Yorta Yorta

The painting shows the vibrancy and strength of our babies, young children and youth. Through the passing on of knowledge of culture and our story lines, we support our children to reach their highest potential - strong identities. These things form the links that strengthen our communities and nurtures our future leaders.

## CONTACT SNAICC

**SNAICC Chairperson**  
Muriel Cadd, AM

**SNAICC Coordinator**  
Julian Pocock

Gnd Floor 48 High Street  
Northcote VIC 3070

P: 039 482 9380

F: 039 482 9157

email: [snaicc@vicnet.net.au](mailto:snaicc@vicnet.net.au)

website: [www.snaicc.asn.au](http://www.snaicc.asn.au)