



**Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc**

## **SNAICC Media Release**

For immediate release

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### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children - Time for a National Strategy -**

The Australian Government must use its leadership role to develop a national strategy to outline a long term commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, Muriel Bamblett, Chairperson of SNAICC, Secretariat of National Aboriginal & Islander Child Care, Australia's national peak body for Indigenous children said today. "The recent controversies surrounding the high rates of child abuse and neglect in Indigenous communities highlight the need for a national commitment to protect our children from harm and secure for them the life opportunities other Australian children enjoy," she said.

"Australia's Indigenous communities need long term constructive support from Governments to deal with and move beyond the crisis in family violence, child abuse and child neglect," Ms Bamblett said.

She said, "SNAICC calls upon the Federal Minister Mal Brough to capitalise on the national focus he has created on Aboriginal children by developing a national strategy after consulting with Indigenous organisations such as SNAICC and with the States and Territories to distil from the many existing reports the most effective and sustainable solutions."

"For over 20 years SNAICC has highlighted the need for a national approach to child welfare that deals with the immediate issues of violence and abuse in a way that build on the strengths of Aboriginal families and Aboriginal culture while working to prevent the abuse from re-occurring in the next generation," she said. "SNAICC, and other Aboriginal organisations and leaders, have made these issues clear to all governments on many occasions."

Ms Bamblett said, "In 2003 SNAICC researched and published a report that found the reasons behind the incidence of child abuse are complex but relate to failures in policing and the Northern Territory child protection system, a lack of resources for Aboriginal child and family welfare agencies to deal with family violence and the ongoing effects of socio-economic factors which undermine self-determination and create a sense of hopelessness in some communities." (See *State of Denial – The Abuse and Neglect of Aboriginal Children in the Northern Territory*, [www.snaicc.asn.au/publications/](http://www.snaicc.asn.au/publications/)) "The reports recommendations remain largely ignored," she said.

"As far back as 1992 SNAICC produced, at the request of the Commonwealth, *A National Plan of Action for the Prevention of Child Abuse*. The report was accepted but never implemented," she said.

Key measures SNAICC considered essential to providing social justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children include:

1. All States, Territories, the Commonwealth and SNAICC agreeing to a National Policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children which has as its central objective reducing

the harm experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and reducing their over representation in child protection.

2. Lifting the capacity of child protection systems and policing to ensure families can speak out against abuse and violence without fear of reprisal
3. Establishing broad, holistic and accessible Indigenous family support services within all Indigenous communities to provide practical parenting and family support and maintain a focus on preventing abuse and family violence.
4. Making a national commitment to expand early childhood development programs and services for Indigenous to ensure all Indigenous children have access to quality children's services and preschool education - currently less than half of Australia's Indigenous children can access pre school education and other early childhood programs and the proportion is declining.
5. Focusing on healing and treatment to deal with perpetrators and break the intergenerational cycle of abuse.

Ms Bamblett said, "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are massively over represented in the care and protection system and massively under represented in preschool education, childcare and other early childhood development programs. Reversing this picture was the key to providing children with a better future."

"Children depend on others to protect them from harm and abuse and to respond when they have been the victims of such crimes. The solutions to these issues will be found when all governments agree to work together with SNAICC and local Indigenous communities to develop a national commitment to children – a commitment SNAICC has been seeking for 20 years," she said.

#### **More information**

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#### **Media interviews**

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SNAICC (Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc.) is the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

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