

Key commitments that SNAICC wants political parties to support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

This is a summary of the briefing paper SNAICC presented at its recent trip to Canberra. See the Editorial on page 2 for a report of the trip.

1. A National Apology for the Stolen Generations and their families.

A national apology that acknowledges the harsh injustices of past child removals, and the ongoing impact of these on the health and happiness of current generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

2. Development of an Indigenous Family Support and Parenting Program

Support to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family welfare services and child care services to broaden their service delivery into the family support and parenting areas – working on prevention and early intervention.

3. Funding for facilitated playgroups for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander playgroups linked to existing child care, maternal and child health or child and family welfare services create opportunities for families to access information and support in relation to child health and development.

4. Development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing and Well Being Program

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families affected by the trauma of previous child removals and family violence require support to heal and recover. All governments should have a role in this and the Commonwealth should provide an initial commitment and seek additional commitments from states and territories.

5. Development and funding of a National Indigenous Child Care Strategy

SNAICC has called for a National Indigenous Child Care Strategy for many years and was pleased that the Government responded in 2005 by employing consultants to identify the child care needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and the barriers to having these needs met. The immediate child care priorities that SNAICC wants a strategy to address are to:

- Recognise that the purpose of child care

for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families is more broadly focussed on supporting children's development and supporting families to care for their children and that the current number of Indigenous specific child care places meets only a small fraction of the need.

- Recognise that multi-functional Indigenous specific child care is the only appropriate form of child care for many Indigenous families and that this form of child care needs to be supported and expanded across the country
- Immediately expand the capacity of current Indigenous specific child care services
- Immediately establish new multi-functional Indigenous specific child care services in areas of high need
- Develop a separate Child Care Accreditation process for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child care services and programs recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander approaches to child rearing and parenting.

6. National Indigenous Children's Services Workforce Development Plan

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in Indigenous child care and child and family welfare services do not have adequate opportunity or support to access appropriate accredited training. As a result, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, particularly those in remote communities, struggle to recruit and retain skilled workers and meet licensing requirements. Nationally accredited training needs to be developed and staff within services need to be provided with adequate support to undertake accredited training modules.

7. Re-funding of the SNAICC Resource (SRS)

SNAICC was granted four million dollars over four years (2004/05 -2007/08) to establish and manage the SNAICC Resource Service (SRS). The SRS was funded under the Australian Government's National Agenda for Early Childhood and the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy. SRS projects resource and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services to deliver programs focussed on child abuse prevention, early intervention, family support and early childhood development. The SRS is making a real

difference to the quality and relevance of the resources Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood and child and family welfare organisations have access to. SRS funding has also enhanced SNAICC's capacity across all areas of our operations.

8. Development of national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander out-of-home care standards and legislation.

Federal government leadership is required to develop national standards that ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who have involvement with state and territory child protection systems and potentially require out-of-home care are guaranteed that their rights are consistently protected, including their right to know their extended family and community and to cultural and spiritual development as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

9. National monitoring of the implementation of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle

The Aboriginal Child Placement Principle has been in place for over twenty years now but its implementation is inadequate and inconsistent across the country. The Principle was designed to ensure that Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children who needed to be removed from home were kept connected to their family, community and culture to the maximum extent possible; but compliance with the Principle is very poor in most states and territories.

The priorities included in the briefing paper reflect the content of SNAICC's key policy framework documents, all of which are available on the SNAICC website:

<http://www.snaicc.asn.au/news/briefing-papers.html>

i) *Seven Priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families*

This was developed as an outcome of SNAICC's 2003 National Conference Our Future Generations. This policy statement has been in the public domain for the past two years and has been circulated widely by SNAICC

ii) *Achieving Stable and Strong Out of Home Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children*

This plan was recently written and will be published and circulated widely by SNAICC after the 2006 SNAICC Annual General Meeting in November.
– by Julian Pocock and Julie Higgins