

8

Priorities

for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children & Families

'Family is important because it holds for you the past and the future.'

Sharron Williams
Chief Executive Officer
Aboriginal Family Support Services – SA
SNAICC Secretary 2009

'If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children know their culture is valued, they will know they are valued.'

Geraldine Atkinson
Chairperson, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc – VIC
SNAICC Deputy Chair (Early Childhood) 2009

'It's time to build the relationships again and walk together into the future healed.'

Debbie Bond
Aboriginal Research Management Support Unit Coordinator
Network SA Resource, Advisory & Management Services – SA
SNAICC National Executive Member 2009

'We had our right to determine our children's future removed from us in the past. Self determination means decisions made for our children must be made by our people. We cannot allow government child protection strategies to fail our children.'

Garry Matthews
Chief Executive Officer
Coffs Harbour Aboriginal Family Community Care Centre – NSW
SNAICC Deputy Chairperson (Child Welfare)

'Culture is caught not taught.'

Dawn Wallam
Chief Executive Officer
Yorganop Association Inc – WA
SNAICC Treasurer 2009

'Let's not fail our children and families, let's work together to build them a better future.'

Desley Thompson
Director of Services
Cape York/Gulf Remote Area Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care Advisory Association Inc (RAATSICC) – QLD
SNAICC National Executive Member 2009

'Capacity building is achieved by skilling up, training and resourcing Aboriginal staff within Aboriginal agencies; the agency benefits and the entire community benefits.'

Steve Larkins
General Manager, Hunter Aboriginal Children's Services – NSW
SNAICC Chairperson 2009

'You give children hope by giving their families hope, by empowering families and by having faith in them that they can do great things.'

Donna Klein-Kawane
Manager, Central Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agency (CQAICCA) – QLD
SNAICC National Executive Member 2009



Support families to care for children

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families provide children with a wonderful childhood that is enriched by family connections and cultural identity. Services engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families should aim to build on existing family strengths to assist families to develop healthy relationships to care for themselves and their children. Child care, healing services, parenting services, housing programs and employment programs are examples of the types of support that families need if they are to provide children with a happy childhood that will be the foundation for their future success in life.

Value & respect Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander culture

Cultural identity and connection to family, community and country/land are the birth right of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and what they need to prosper. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will grow, learn and excel when their cultural needs are met, valued and respected at home, school, child care and throughout all aspects of their lives.

Healing & reparations for the Stolen Generations

The National Apology to the Stolen Generations on 13 February 2008 was an important step in acknowledging the wrongs done to members of the Stolen Generations, their families and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Governments must now acknowledge that because injustice was inflicted compensation is required. Services to heal, reconnect and preserve families and prevent the removal of children in this and future generations are also essential and must be provided.

Self determination in child protection

Self determination in child protection is a right. Recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are best placed to make informed decisions about the safety, well being and protection needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children ensures self determination. Decision makers in child protection need strong trusting relationships with families and communities to ensure that decisions are well informed. Evidence shows that community based models of child protection offer the best option for protecting children. Appropriate family and community members should be closely involved in all decisions regarding children's safety and protection to ensure risk and alternative care options are appropriately assessed. Each community must develop and run holistic community based child and family welfare services child protection service models that meet that community's needs and capacities.

Thrive by five with culture alive

Meeting children's health, development and cultural needs through programs that value learning and respect for culture is the best way to ensure improvements in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's long term well being and educational achievements. A confident ready-to-learn Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child starting school is one who is healthy, has strong family bonds, who knows and is proud of his or her Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture and who has participated in a quality early learning program. A high quality early learning program is one that has supported the child to identify with and feel proud of his or her Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture. This support must continue through their school years to ensure their continued confidence and success.

Real results take real planning

The future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Plans only improve people's lives when they have been developed in close consultation with those people and include clear short, medium and long term outcomes that are properly funded, monitored and reported against. A National Action Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's welfare and development which guides initiatives and programs of the federal government and all states and territories must be developed.

Building capacity builds communities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people know best what their children, young people and communities need and want. The role of governments is to support and sustain the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and organisations to work in a culturally sound way that will improve people's health and education, strengthen families, improve connections to culture and build strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Governments need to work more flexibly and supportively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies across all areas of the community sector. Rather than governments prescribing what local agencies do, they should support them to meet local needs.

Hope, wealth & prosperity for our children

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, wherever they live, should enjoy a childhood that encourages them to aim high and explore all of life's opportunities. They should be encouraged to dream like other kids of a happy and prosperous life and be supported to realise their dreams. Each and every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child should feel safe in their homes and communities, feel proud of their heritage and culture and have health care and educational opportunities available to other Australian children. This will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to share in and contribute to the wealth and prosperity of their nation.

SNAICC is committed to pursuing these priorities, each of equal importance, on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. We will work in partnership with local services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander bodies, governments and non-government organisations.

*Artwork by John Cummins for the SNAICC 1989 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day poster **Our children are our future – Let's protect and educate them.** Design: Heather Hoare at Pixel City Digital Design. SNAICC is funded by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.*

SNAICC is the national peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

Ph: (03) 9489 8099
snaicc@vicnet.net.au
www.snaicc.asn.au
© SNAICC 2009

