



SNAICC The national peak body for Indigenous children
Suite 8, 252 – 260 St. Georges Rd. North Fitzroy VIC 3068
ph: 03 9489 8099 fax: 03 9489 8044
e: snaicc@vicnet.net.au web: <http://www.snaicc.asn.au>

Children and Young People Living in Safe and Strong Communities

**Discussion paper prepared by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander
Child Care (SNAICC) November 2009**

for the

**Second National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community
Strengths Conference, 1 – 3 December 2009
Workshop 6D: Children and Young People Living in Safe and Strong Communities**

Joint workshop convened by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services
and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (FaHCSIA) and SNAICC.
Facilitator: Grant Sarra

Table of contents:

1.	Introduction	Page 2
2.	What is SNAICC?	Page 2
3.	Safety: Freedom from physical and psychological harm	Page 3
4.	Historical context to current child protection statistics	Page 4
5.	Family strength / cultural strength / cultural safety	Page 5
6.	Approaches, service models and initiatives	Page 7
	6.1 SNAICC policy priorities	Page 7
	6.2 SNAICC guidelines for developing funding and service models	Page 8
	6.3 Examples of worthwhile services, policies and initiatives	Page 9
Attachment 1:	SNAICC's Ten Point National Action Plan	Page 11
Attachment 2:	SNAICC'S 8 Priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families	Page 14

1. Introduction

A key supporting outcome under the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* (the National Child Protection Framework) is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander¹ children are supported and safe in their families and communities.

The National Child Protection Framework aims to both to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems and to ensure those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems receive culturally appropriate care that supports and enhances their wellbeing.²

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) has prepared this paper to address the question: How can we build on the existing strengths of families and communities to address the areas that put children at risk of neglect and abuse?³

The paper provides background information about the social and historical context to the increasing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems. It then presents SNAICC's views on the importance of family, community and culture for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and why recognising and building on the strengths of our families and communities is essential to achieving the aim of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being supported and safe in their families and communities.

The paper then discusses SNAICC's general policy priorities and outlines some approaches, service models and initiatives that SNAICC thinks should be further supported or replicated because they build on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and recognise their cultural importance for children.

2. What is SNAICC?

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

¹ Note: The National Child Protection Framework refers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as 'Indigenous' but SNAICC policy is to use the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and it is therefore used throughout this paper.

² Commonwealth of Australia *Protecting Children is Everyone's Business National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009–2020* (2009) 23

³ Note: This paper was prepared as background reading for a workshop entitled Children and Young People Living in Safe and Strong Communities convened by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (FaHCSIA) and SNAICC at the Second National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family and Community Strengths Conference 1-3 December 2009.

SNAICC was formally established in 1981, elected its first national executive in 1982 and opened a national office after first receiving Australian Government funding support in 1983.

SNAICC operates from a diverse membership base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community based family and children's services. These include child and family welfare services, Multi-functional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander preschools, crèches, playgroups and mobile services, Indigenous Professional Support Units, women's services, family support services, foster care agencies, link-up and family reunification services, family group homes, parenting programs, family and domestic violence services and services for young people at risk.

SNAICC has a network and subscriber list of over 1600, mostly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, but also significant numbers of other community based services, government agencies 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 a Melbourne office with funding provided by the Department of Families Housing Community Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

SNAICC's mission is to provide a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families through a national body that represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's services and promotes the rights, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, children and families.

3. Safety: Freedom from physical and psychological harm

Nothing is more important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children than keeping them safe from physical and psychological harm. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as for all children, safety is paramount. An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child's involvement with their family and community is highly important, *but never more important than the child's safety*.

Child protection statistics show that increasing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not being kept safe within their families and communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are grossly over-represented in child protection and out of home care statistics in Australia. At 30 June 2008, there were 9070 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care, an increase of 1178 since 30 June 2007. The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care at 30 June 2008 was 41 per 1,000 aged 0 – 17 years, ranging from 12.4 per 1000 in Tasmania to 50.1 per 1000 in Victoria.

In all states and territories, there are higher rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

children in out of home care than other children. In Victoria in at June 2008 the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care was nearly 13.7 times the rate for other children, and in New South Wales it was nearly 11.2 times the rate.⁴

4. Historical context to current child protection statistics

The situation of large numbers of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system has arisen because of the damage that has been done to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities through colonisation. Following colonisation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were variously dispossessed of their land, livelihoods, families, communities, language and culture, which has devastated people economically, psychologically and spiritually. This is the background to today's situation of increasing numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being unable to live safely with their families and communities.

Poverty, poor housing and community infrastructure, unemployment, and alcohol and other substance abuse contribute in great measure to child abuse and neglect. The effects of the past large scale forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by child and welfare services and government bodies and systematic removal of Aboriginal children (the Stolen Generations) from their families, communities, land and heritage are still being felt. Both for those who were removed and their families and communities, removal meant "the severing of family ties, the rupturing of community and culture."⁵ It had a profound and prolonged impact on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The grief, dislocation and despair experienced by the Stolen Generations and the grief and loss of their families remains unhealed and has had terrible effects on children and families. This has passed from one generation to the next, a situation that has been recognised as 'multigenerational trauma'.

"With several generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people being denied normal childhood development, the opportunity to bond with parents and experience consistent love and acceptance, both the skills and the confidence to parent have been damaged, with over-representation in the child welfare system".⁶

In 1997, the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families tabled its report, *Bringing them Home*,⁷ in the Australian Parliament. The report highlighted the devastating effects of child removal both on the

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Child Protection Australia 2007-08*, (2009) 63,65

⁵ David Hollinsworth, Non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Co-Chair of Stolen Generations Alliance, speaking on 'The National Interest', ABC Radio National, 13 February 2009

⁶ Atkinson and Swain S, 'A Network of Support: Mothering across the Koori Community in Victoria', *Australia in Women's History Review*, Vol 8 No 2 1999 p. 9

⁷ HREOC, *Bringing them Home: The Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families*, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), Sydney, 1997

children and on their families and on the entire Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The formal National Apology by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and the national parliament to the Stolen Generations and their families on 13 February 2008 recognised the anguish the Stolen Generations have experienced and offered significant comfort. The dignity of the occasion gave acknowledgement to, and respect for, the Stolen Generations' experiences and offered hope and a promise of future renewal for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia.

“Acknowledging what happened in the past, and saying sorry, is crucial to the healing that is needed – not only for members of the Stolen Generations, but for the whole community.”⁸

Today's worsening child protection statistics show that far too many, and increasing numbers of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are living with poverty and ill health within families that are inadequately housed, racked by grief and loss, stress, poor physical and mental health, alcohol and other substance abuse and violence.

5. Family strength / cultural strength / cultural safety

There is another side to these negative stories. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and family life has great strengths and provides most of our children with a wonderfully rich childhood, and cultural and spiritual life. Family is the cornerstone of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and spirituality. The maintenance of connections to family and community forms the basis of the development of the child's identity as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person, our cultural connectedness, and the emergence of our spirituality.

The cultural importance of family means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are strong and powerful. Family is often more broadly defined within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture than within mainstream white culture. Family members involved in children's lives, and helping to raise them strong in culture, may include grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins.

An Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child who has the opportunity to know family and culture, feel proud of identity and allow their spirituality to develop and emerge during childhood has a sense of strength, confidence, pride, belonging, peace and security that can protect them through adolescence and adulthood.⁹

SNAICC's National Executive is made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

⁸ Pocock, Julian, 'Saying Sorry is the First Step (Editorial)', SNAICC News, April 2008, Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, p. 3.

⁹ The above information is taken from SNAICC *Achieving Stable and Culturally Strong Out of Home Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children* (2005) 8
<http://www.snaicc.asn.au/uploads/rsfil/00061.pdf> at 9 November 2009.

running child and family welfare organisations or early child services or organisations in each state and territory. Members of the Executive were asked about the cultural importance of family earlier this year and a selection of their comments follows

“With Aboriginal kids, family is a really important part of establishing their identity. Family determines what happens with them in life. If they don’t know who they are they just wander, in their spirits as well.”

“Family is what gives me strength in time of need and also greatest joy, it is woven into the fabric of my life. It makes me resilient and gives me the capacity to walk tall.”

“If you don’t know where you come from you have no identity, no ties to history, land and culture, you are like a soul that’s just floating. I imagine that if I didn’t have a family that’s how I’d feel.”

“ Culture, land and spirit are tied together so closely that you can’t have one without the other, but it’s not a complete story without family – it’s like building a house without mortar, it makes the right shape but there’s nothing to hold it together.”

SNAICC has always advocated for the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be remain connected to their culture and strongly made the point that this means, wherever possible, remaining connected to their families.

The importance of family means that where there are challenges that may lead to the child being at risk of neglect or abuse, the first approach should always be to identify how to support the family to build on its strengths to care for the child.

When an Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander child is away from their family for child protection reasons or simply because they are attending child care or school, their cultural needs must be valued, respected and met.

SNAICC’s Deputy Chairperson (Early Childhood) Geraldine Atkinson has expressed the need to value culture from the child’s point of view as follows: “If Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children know their culture is valued, they will know they are valued.”

5.1 Cultural safety

A culturally safe environment is generally considered to be one that is creating a service environment that is safe and welcoming for Aboriginal people. The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) was commissioned by the Department of Human Services Victoria (DHS) to develop an Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework published in 2008¹⁰. This Framework guides mainstream community service organisations in the development of management strategies, policies and direct practice with children and

¹⁰ Victorian Government Department of Human Services and VACCA, *Aboriginal Cultural Competence Framework* (2008).

families. The framework suggests that cultural safety is achieved when a client feels safe to be themselves.

SNAICC supports non-Aboriginal organisations developing their cultural competence and strongly concurs with one of the key messages of the DHS/VACCA Framework that cultural competence is a journey, not a destination. Our communities will not be culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people until all organisations and institutions in Australia from schools and child care centres to child protection agencies make commitments and plan to build their cultural competence over time. SNAICC's view is that governments must provide leadership in this regard.

6. Approaches, service models and initiatives

The National Child Protection Framework provides a national consensus for the aim of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being supported and safe in their families and communities. The next step is to agree on what general approaches and particular service models and initiatives will best achieve this aim. Which approaches and models build on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, recognise their cultural importance for children and therefore support the outcome of keeping children safe in their families and communities?

6.1 SNAICC policy priorities

The general policy approaches advocated by SNAICC are found in two documents that are both attached to this paper:

- ***SNAICC 10 Point Plan to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect*** released at the time of the Northern Territory Intervention (Attachment 1)¹¹ and
- ***SNAICC 8 Priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families*** released as a poster November 2009 (Attachment 2).¹²

SNAICC's broad aspiration for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is best captured by the priority:

Hope, wealth and 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

¹¹ ***SNAICC 10 Point Plan to Prevent Child Abuse and Neglect***
<http://www.snaicc.asn.au/uploads/rsfil/00331.pdf>

¹² ***SNAICC 8 Priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families***
<<http://www.snaicc.asn.au/policy/default.cfm?loadref=67>>

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.’

6.2 SNAICC guidelines for developing funding and service models

SNAICC’s general approach to the development of programs, initiatives and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families is as follows:

- Recognise there are real strengths within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and families including connection to culture, family and extended family and community relationships and networks which are best understood and worked with by locally based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies.
- Recognise the expertise within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to know and understand community needs and community strengths.
- Recognise that programs that evolve within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are most likely to meet community needs and that support is needed to help programs evolve at the community level.
- Require and support non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies to continually build their cultural awareness and cultural competency and to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait children and families in a culturally respectful manner.
- Require and support non- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies to provide specialist services or fill service gaps.
- Provide adequate time and assistance for new and existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers to develop their proposals.
- Provide clearer application and accountability processes and requirements to support the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies to apply for and manage funding.
- Provide examples of promising practices or successful models of family support services delivery by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies to inspire and guide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies in their submission development.
- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services to apply for funding rather than forcing them to compete with non Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services to provide support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families within their communities.¹³

¹³ SNAICC, *Submission to the Family Support Program Consultation* (2009) <<http://www.snaicc.asn.au/uploads/rsfil/00310.pdf>> at 9 November 2009.

6.3 Examples of worthwhile services, policies and initiatives

Listed below are some examples of specific services, policies and initiatives that SNAICC strongly supports.

1. Multi-functional Aboriginal Children's Services and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled child care and preschool services.
Note: These need to be expanded in number and scope. Thirty five child and family centres funded under the National Partnership Agreement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Development are at the planning stage but if these are not Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled, SNAICC's view is that they will not deliver their desired outcomes.
2. Aboriginal and Islander child care agencies and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Welfare agencies.
Note: These need to be expanded in number and scope to provide community based services and programs focused on child abuse prevention, early intervention, family support and where required specialist advice and support for children that must be placed in out of home care.
3. Aboriginal Child Placement Principle.
Note: application of and compliance with the Principle needs to be strengthened in all states and territories as noted in the National Child Protection Framework.
4. Cultural care planning for children in out of home care and resources such as Life Story Books and *Foster their Culture: Caring for Aboriginal and Islander Children in out of Home Care*.
5. Local communities to coming up with their own strategies for making their communities safer for their children.
The SNAICC *Through Young Black Eyes Workshop Kit* and workshops are resources for this approach.
6. Celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures through national initiatives such as National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day and NAICD Activity Kit
7. Initiatives that build on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parenting such as SNAICC Child Rearing Stories Project and *You're a Dad* (produced by SNAICC Resource Service and University of Newcastle's Family Action Centre.)
8. Healing services. SNAICC supports the Federal Government's proposal to establish an appropriately funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation.
9. Culturally appropriate therapeutic programs such as drug and alcohol counseling

and therapeutic healing for child victims of abuse and perpetrators.

10. Ensuring the involvement of an authorized Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agency in all decisions about placements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children eg Lakidjeka ACSASS Program at Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

Attachment 1: SNAICC's Ten Point National Action Plan

At the time of the intervention SNAICC outlined ten key points that should be pursued in the Northern Territory (and other States and Territories) to enhance children's well being and better protect children at risk. Those ten points are:

SNAICC's Ten Point National Action Plan

1. **Safety is paramount:** Responsive child protection. Allegations of child abuse and neglect must be investigated in a child centred way. Ensure child protection systems are well resourced to respond when called upon to properly investigate and intervene where children are at risk of abuse or neglect.
2. **Support for children:** Remove perpetrators not the children. Focus interventions on removing the risk and perpetrators from children rather than children from their families and communities. This requires extra funding and support for local community family support and counselling services and working in partnership with a child's extended family, family friends and local community services.
3. **Effective policing:** Speak up against violence and abuse. Ensure the appropriate levels and forms of policing within communities are in place to enable people to speak out against violence and abuse without placing their own safety at risk.
4. **Early intervention:** Improve access to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community based early childhood, childcare, family support and child welfare programs to support families to access help early and promote children's well being.
5. **Connections to culture:** Maintain children's rights to be connected with their extended family and community and their cultural and spiritual heritage – child removal is a last resort.
6. **Build on strengths:** All Aboriginal families and communities have strengths and capacity to support and nurture their children. Governments must do things with local communities not to local communities. Recognise and build on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and kinship systems and develop workforce and community capacity.
7. **Healing and restoration.** Victims and perpetrators need access to a range of healing and therapeutic programs including alcohol and substance abuse rehabilitation, counselling and healing programs and family restoration programs to rebuild family relationships across generations.
8. **Safe and healthy communities:** Disempowered communities with woeful housing, extreme poverty, chronic alcohol and substance abuse, few early

childhood programs or health services, no economic base and inadequate schools are likely to have high rates of abuse and neglect. Well planned large scale investment over generations is required to create safe and healthy communities for all Australian children.

9. **Listen to and do what works:** Evidence on effective child protection systems from Australia and overseas demonstrates that community based and managed child protection systems achieve the best results. Governments should act on the best evidence and advice available – children deserve nothing less than a thorough response.

10. **A national response for a national emergency:** The Prime Minister has called child abuse in Aboriginal communities a national emergency, but government has only developed a short-term response for the Northern Territory. The problem requires sustained national commitment from all states and territories, the Commonwealth and non-government agencies planned and monitored through a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Well Being and Development Taskforce.

http://www.snaicc.asn.au/_uploads/rsfil/00331.pdf

Attachment 2.

SNAICC'S 8 Priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families

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

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.

Support families to care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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.

“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

Value and respect Aboriginal and 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.

“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

Healing and 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.

“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 and Management Services – SA

SNAICC National Executive Member 2009

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.

“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)

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.

“Culture is caught not taught.”

Dawn Wallam

Chief Executive Officer

Yorganop Association Inc. – WA

SNAICC Treasurer 2009

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.

“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

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.

“ 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

Hope, wealth and 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.

“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