

SNAICC NATIONAL CONFERENCE

27-29 July 2010, Alice Springs



FOR OUR CHILDREN

Local Strengths,
National Challenges

AMPE ANWERNEKENHEKE

Rlterrke Akwete
Aneye

Media Statement – For Immediate Release – 28 July 2010

We must stop breaking our promises

Professor Dorothy Scott delivered an ultimatum to Australia at the SNAICC national conference this morning. In her last public speaking engagement as the Foundation Chair in Child Protection at the Australian Centre for Child Protection at the University of South Australia, her passionate and personal speech rebutted recent media calls for Aboriginal children to be removed from their families.

Professor Scott shared her experiences of witnessing the terrible, indelible trauma of Aboriginal children being taken away from their families and the impact on parents, families and communities when they are unable to defend their children. “Wholesale removal of Aboriginal children from their families is wrong”, Professor Scott said.

“Will we remove the traumatised parents' subsequent children, and again and again and again? And where would they go - through the revolving door of multiple foster placements in our overloaded child welfare system, or should we reopen the institutions where children were warehoused in the 1960s? These ‘solutions’ have failed,” said Professor Scott.

“Some things are working but there is a long way to go. Improved housing and employment, alcohol control measures and rehabilitation services, child and family health nurses and early childhood education require sustained commitment by governments willing to work in partnership with Indigenous organisations and communities,” she said. “This was the first recommendation of *The Little Children are Sacred*. It's time we tried it”.

SNAICC National Executive member, Dawn Wallam supported Professor Scott's statements. “I am appalled by any call for removal of all Aboriginal children from their families. This sort of preemptive child removal would create an instant and ongoing Stolen Generation into the future. It is tantamount to genocide. I call on both sides of politics to stand strongly against such a suggestion.”

“Properly used, the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle is the only safe option for Aboriginal and Torres Strait children. Safety for Aboriginal children is paramount, and is always grounded in their culture. Even if their birth family is not a safe option, Aboriginal children need to remain connected to the communities and be sure and strong in their cultural identity”, Ms Wallam said.

Ms Wallam supported Professor Scott's call for the first recommendation of the *Little Children are Sacred* Report to be implemented across the country. “There have been too many broken promises – too many reports with recommendations that governments toss in the too hard basket” she said.

“The only way to move forward is in equal and respectful partnership; government has committed to working with us. We will be watching to see how they will keep this promise”, Ms Wallam said.

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