

# SNAICC National Conference

27-29 July 2010, Alice Springs



**FOR OUR CHILDREN**

Local Strengths,  
National Challenges

**AMPE ANWERNEKENHEKE**

Rlterre Akwete  
Aneye

## **Media Statement – For Immediate Release – 27 July 2010**

### **"Reconciliation means not having to say sorry twice" Largest ever conference on Aboriginal children opens in Alice Springs**

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) opened the largest ever national conference on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at the Alice Springs Convention Centre today.

Steve Larkins, SNAICC Chairperson welcomed nearly 1000 delegates from across the country. Sabella Kngwarraye Turner and Janet Turner welcomed delegates to their country and led the Irrelape-Lyape Dance Group in performing traditional women's dances. Ms Turner also spoke of the importance of teaching the little ones to grow up strong in their culture and their law.

Northern Territory Senator Trish Crossin deputised for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Minister Jenny Macklin. Senator Crossin told delegates of the need to instill a thirst for knowledge in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children so they will want to go to school. She also supported bilingual teaching for Aboriginal children as the best way for them to learn to read and write. A message from Minister Macklin will be available on the SNAICC website.

Keynote speaker Cindy Blackstock received a standing ovation and tears for her address which bore witness to the Canadian First Nations' struggle for fundamental human rights. Dr Blackstock pointed out that the main reason for First Nations children and families coming into contact with the child protection system is neglect, not abuse. In fact First Nations children are less likely than other children to be reported for sexual abuse. The circumstances which lead to child being reported for neglect are the direct result of disadvantage: poverty, poor housing and substance abuse.

Dr Blackstock pointed to generational chronic underresourcing by governments as the main driver of disadvantage for First Nations people. "Governments have the resources to deal with discrimination but they have made a choice not to treat Aboriginal children with the respect and dignity they deserve", she said.

More than 40 workshops will cover a wide range of issues from human rights, to child protection, autism, literacy and early childhood education.

**For enquiries or to seek comment from Ms Lisa Coulson or keynote speakers: Felicity Hopkins, SNAICC Manager Policy and Research on (03) 9489 8099**

The conference continues until Thursday. Tonight delegates have a choice of attending a film night and meal at the Yarenyty-Arltere Learning Centre at Larapinta Valley town camp or a bbq at the Akeyulerre, the Arrente Healing Centre. The bbq will be followed by an introduction to cultural health, strength and healing, a bush medicine demonstration, dance, boomerang making, films and a smoking ceremony.

**SNAICC is the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. Our last National Conference was in 2007.**

*SNAICC is proud to acknowledge our sponsors, the Northern Territory Government, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, the NSW Department of Human Services Aboriginal Affairs NSW, the NSW Department of Education and Training, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Victoria, the Department of Education and Children's Services SA, the Commonwealth Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, World Vision Australia, Life Without Barriers, the National Indigenous Times, Warlpiri Education and Training Trust, Scene Change and Relationships Australia.*

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