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# Media Statement

## **Allies for Children calls on mainstream organisations to prioritise action on Closing the Gap targets**

Outcomes for First Nations children in care are getting worse as Australia heads into the final five years of its new Closing the Gap national targets, new data reveals.

A national alliance of child, youth and family organisations is warning that without urgent, large-scale collaboration and investment across Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and their communities, and mainstream organisations and governments, Australia will fail to meet its commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Allies for Children is a collective of organisations working with children, young people and families across Australia.

Allies for Children chair Maree Walk said Closing the Gap was designed to set a transformative agenda and guide systemic change.

“However, the latest data demonstrates that what we are doing is not working – it shows that only four of the 19 national [Closing the Gap targets](#) are on track to be met by 2031,” Ms Walk said.

“Shamefully, progress on Target 12 - which seeks to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent - has been moving in the wrong direction.

“With just a handful of years remaining to meet national 2031 Closing the Gap commitments, Allies for Children is determined to look at every system and approach still preventing this target from being reached including barriers and opportunities in their own organisations.

“We are committed to ensuring our organisations are contributing to improving the life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

“We know we are part of the system that continues to fail Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and over the past two years, Allies for Children organisations have been working together to identify ways to address the over-representation of First Nations children in care to achieve meaningful change within the child protection sector.”

Allies for Children organisations recognise the impact and toll of removing a First Nations child from family, kin, culture and community, and acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people know what is best for their children. They call on other mainstream organisations to consider opportunities to transform outcomes for First Nations children and families.

“We have been working with First Nations leaders, community and sector to drive much-needed change in the child protection system,” Ms Walk said.

Allies for Children particularly value the strong leadership and cultural guidance of the First Nations NGO Alliance and working in partnership with them to shape work including to:

- Transition and restore children to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations so they remain connected to culture, kin and community
- Lobby for a shared national commitment to improving out-of-home care solutions that are designed and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Advocate for more investment and partnerships between mainstream services, First Nations leadership, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations and communities, and all levels of government
- Follow the lead of First Nations leaders, SNAICC, Aboriginal peak bodies and First Nations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to advocate for policy reforms and resources that support self-determination and real change.

“Without radical partnership and sustained investment, the Closing the Gap targets will not be met,” Ms Walk said.

“We are up for the challenge and committed to being active allies working to change the story for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. We invite conversations on how collaborating and partnership can achieve a transformative agenda for First Nations children.”

Allies for Children is a collaboration of seven of Australia’s child youth and family agencies, including: Act for Kids, The Benevolent Society, Barnardos Australia, Life Without Barriers, MacKillop Family Services, Key Assets, and OzChild.

**ENDS**

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