

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

19 October 2023

### **JOINT STATEMENT ORGANISATIONS REJECT CALLS FOR ROYAL COMMISSION INTO ABORIGINAL CHILDREN**

Child abuse is a serious crime, which has a devastating impact on children, family and communities. The safety of children should not be politicised or used as a platform to advance a political position.

It is frustrating and disappointing to hear the Opposition Leader and Senator Price repeating the same claims and calls they made earlier this year, again with no evidence and no credible solutions. If any politician, or anyone at all, has any evidence about the sexual abuse of children then they must report it to the authorities.

These calls for a Royal Commission into the sexual abuse of Aboriginal children have been made without one shred of real evidence being presented. They play into the basest negative perceptions of some people about Aboriginal people and communities.

In April this year, the Australian Child Maltreatment Study revealed the majority of Australians (62 per cent) have experienced at least one type of child abuse or neglect, with domestic violence, physical, emotional or sexual abuse the most common.

Child abuse is far too prevalent in Australia full stop.

Singling out Aboriginal families and communities is harmful and puts ideology before evidence. The most recent Child Protection Australia data release, by the AIHW, shows that Indigenous children were *less* likely to be the subject of a substantiated notification of child sexual abuse in 2021-22 (6.8% of substantiations) than were non-Indigenous children (9% of substantiations).

The evidence and the solutions are very clear.

There have been more than 33 reports into child protection since the Bringing Them Home Report in 1997.

SNAICC produces an annual report, Family Matters, and has done for many years which details the evidence-based solutions that will enable our children to grow up safe, loved and protected. These solutions have been developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

They prioritise Investment in effective, culturally safe supports for families and children before they reach crisis point, through Aboriginal community-controlled services.

The most effective and immediate action Government can take to make children safe and protect their human rights is to stand up a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner, with the legislated power to investigate and make recommendations on issues impacting our children.

This will be more effective and more powerful than any Royal Commission.

We have been calling for a National Commissioner for many years.

We now call for bipartisan support to make this happen.

Endorsed by

SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children  
Coalition of Peaks on Closing the Gap  
NACCHO  
Lowitja Institute  
Healing Foundation  
Life Without Barriers  
Families Australia  
Reconciliation Australia  
National Coalition for Child Safety and Wellbeing  
ACT Children and Young People’s Commissioner Jodie Griffiths-Cook  
WA Commissioner for Children and Young People Jacqueline McGowan-Jones  
SAFeST Start Coalition  
Act for Kids  
Barnados  
The Benevolent Society  
MacKillop Family Services  
PeakCare Qld  
ANTaR  
National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Research  
Professor Catherine Chamberlain  
Onemda Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing  
Healing the Past by Nurturing the Future  
Replanting the Birthing Trees  
Association of Children’s Welfare Agencies  
Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare  
Australian Education Union  
ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body  
Tony McAvoy SC  
CASPA  
Dr Graham Gee  
Indigenous Allied Health Australia  
NAATSIHWP  
Zoe Robinson - Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People  
National Health Leadership Forum  
Partnership for Justice in Health  
Child and Family Focus SA  
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