



National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day is celebrated on 4 August 2015. It is a time for all Australians to celebrate and learn about the protective influence that community, culture and family play in the lives of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and why we, as a nation, must work to minimise children in out-of-home care.

What is Children's Day?



National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day is the largest national day to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. This year's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day theme, *Little People, Big Futures*, is all about helping kids stand tall and feel connected and proud in culture. Having a strong connection to culture helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children develop a strong sense of self, a comprehensive education, and a big future.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day is about supporting and celebrating the services that empower children to have big futures. These services are crucial for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, especially for those who experience greater rates of out-of-home care.

Did you know?

- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is much younger than the wider Australian community population, with more than one in three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under 15 years of age (compared with one-fifth of the wider Australian community).¹
- Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures contain natural protective and wellbeing features such as kinship networks.²
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are healthier and happier when they have strong language, culture and cultural identity.³

¹ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/2075.0main+features32011>

² Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health, 2009, Key directions for a social, emotional, cultural and spiritual wellbeing population health framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in Queensland, Queensland.

³ Ibid.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are almost 10 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care than non-Aboriginal children.⁴
- While comprising just 5.5% of all children aged 0-17 years in Australia, in 2013-14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children amounted to nearly 35% of all children placed in out-of-home care.⁵
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teenagers in urban and regional areas attend school more regularly if they speak an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language.⁶
- Where cultural identity is strong, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are more likely to complete secondary school.⁷
- Indigenous children are over-represented in out-of-home care across all age groups.⁸

Family Matters – Kids Safe in Culture, Not in Care

“Culture is central to identity. Culture defines who we are, how we think, how we communicate, what we value and what is important to us... Every area of human development, which defines the child’s best interest, has a cultural component. Your culture helps define HOW you attach, HOW you express emotion, HOW you learn and HOW you stay healthy.” Muriel Bamblett, a Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung woman and CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency.⁹

Strong cultural systems and support networks are crucial to the healthy development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Sadly, the protective influences of community and cultural connections are often lost when children are placed in out-of-home care.



This National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day, it is important for every Australian to recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are severely overrepresented in the child protection system and that significant actions need to be taken to change this.

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) support a child protection system that is attuned and

responsive to the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.¹⁰ SNAICC prioritises self-determination in child protection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as key to ensuring better support, better decisions and better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, their families and their communities.¹¹ SNAICC also focuses on ensuring that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2015). *Child protection Australia 2013-2014* (Child Welfare Series No. 61). Canberra: AIHW; and <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/children-care>

⁵ <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/children-care>

⁶ Hunter, B., 2007, ‘Cumulative causation and the Productivity Commission’s framework for overcoming Indigenous disadvantage,’ *Australian Journal of Labour Economics*, 10(3) p.185-202.

⁷ Dockery, A.M., 2011, ‘Traditional Culture and the Wellbeing of Indigenous Australians: An analysis of the 2008 NATSISS’, in *Social Science Perspectives on the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey*, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), Australian National University (ANU), Canberra.

⁸ <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/children-care>

⁹ Muriel Bamblett (2006), VACCA 2010a, *Building Respectful Partnerships: The Commitment to Aboriginal*.

Cultural Competence in Child and Family Services, Melbourne: VACCA, p. 13.

¹⁰ <http://www.snaicc.org.au/policy/dsp-landing-policyarea.cfm?loadref=172>

¹¹ Ibid.

Islander children remain with family, are reunified where they have been removed, and stay connected to their Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander culture and community.¹²

In 2013–14 as part of SNAICC's work in this area, they established the national initiative, 'Family Matters — Kids Safe in Culture, Not in Care'. This program aims to break the traumatic cycle of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child removal and halve the number of children in out-of-home care by 2018.¹³

As part of the initiative, Family Matters is engaging with key stakeholders and decision-makers across Australia to discuss how to work to reduce the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are placed in the out-of-home care system. As part of this process, they highlight the lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and develop state and territory based action plans.¹⁴

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community led services lead to improved development and education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children; because of connections to culture, community controlled services are more effective in creating safe and welcoming environments that engage families and connect them children and their families to the service supports they need.¹⁵

This year's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day theme aims to provide a space for everyone to come together to celebrate the achievements of these services and the families and children they support.¹⁶ Show your support for National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day by taking action in the following ways.

Take Action

- Learn more about SNAICC's Family Matters initiative by visiting www.familymatters.org.au
- Share, Share, Share! Individuals can share the Children's Day website – www.aboriginalchildrensday.com.au and the children's day television commercial: www.aboriginalchildrensday.com.au/2015/childrens-day-tv-ad-launched - on social media and with your family, friends, workmates, and community to encourage others to get involved.
- Help us create a national atmosphere of celebration, respect and recognition by hosting your own Children's Day event. Download the celebration pack here: www.aboriginalchildrensday.com.au/how-to-celebrate
- Get involved with Reconciliation Australia's *Narragunnawali: Reconciliation in Schools and Early Learning* program which is helping early learning services and schools to foster a high level of knowledge and pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and contributions: www.reconciliation.org.au/schools.
- Learn more about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the issues which affect them, by visiting the SNAICC website: www.snaicc.org.au.

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Banner: National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), National Children's Day.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ <http://www.snaicc.org.au/news-events/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=253>

¹⁴ <http://www.snaicc.org.au/news-events/dsp-default.cfm?loadref=253>

¹⁵ <http://aboriginalchildrensday.com.au/what-is-childrens-day/>

¹⁶ <http://aboriginalchildrensday.com.au/what-is-childrens-day/>

Photo 1. Reconciliation Australia Indigenous Governance Awards Finalists 2012, SNAICC - Wayne Quilliam Photography.

Photo 2. Reconciliation Australia Indigenous Governance Awards Finalists 2012, SNAICC - Wayne Quilliam Photography.