



The wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children - a common goal

On 4 August 2014, we will celebrate the 27th National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day with a theme of 'Kids in Culture: Strong, Proud, Resilient'. The recently released report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Child Protection Australia 2012-13, highlighted once again the disproportionate number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with these children 10.6 times more likely to be in care than non-indigenous children. Of even more concern is that in Western Australia this figure sits at the highest in Australia at 16.1. With Indigenous children representing only 4.6% of the population this is a tragic situation not only for the children but also the families.

Since the 1997 inquiry into the forcible removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families (the Stolen Generations), child removal has increased by 400 per cent to a national figure in June 2013 of 13,914 children Australia wide. While acknowledging that the reasons for this staggering and highly disproportionate number of Indigenous children being removed are different to the motives that led to the Stolen Generations, the current situation has a devastating impact on Indigenous children, their families and communities.

CentreCare acknowledges the significant financial and other efforts made by various governments to deal with the health and social needs of Indigenous children. However, despite these efforts and marginal improvements in indicators of health and education the gap between the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the rest of the community remains stubbornly high. It is essential that efforts to bridge this divide are not abandoned but enhanced. There is little hope for effective change in the ongoing distress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families without long term, sustainable interventions that focus on the building of family and cultural resilience. Aboriginal people must be involved in the planning and delivery of such interventions.

We all want our children to grow up safe and healthy in close connection to their family and culture. The wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is everyone's responsibility. Unlocking the inherent beauty and potential in every child needs to be our common goal. All children have a right to grow up in an environment of respect, recognition and safety. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day provides us with an opportunity to show our support for Indigenous children so that they may be proud of who they are and realise how important they are to us all.

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Director