

The Hon. Gladys Berejiklian, MP
NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

2 March 2020

Re: Urgent reforms needed to child protection system for Aboriginal children in NSW

Dear Premier

Aboriginal children and young people continue to be tragically over-represented within the out-of-home care system in NSW, with most recent data indicating more than 7,000 Aboriginal children within the system, at a proportion of 40% when compared to non-Aboriginal peers. I am sure you agree that this must change, and the status quo of the NSW child protection system cannot continue.

In 2017, the NSW Government via former Minister for Family and Community Services, the Hon. Brad Hazzard, commissioned an independent review into 1,144 Aboriginal children and young people removed from their families by the Department of Communities and Justice (formerly Family and Community Services). This review was chaired by Professor Megan Davis and explored the systemic and practice failings within the system with the intention of providing a roadmap for genuine change.

In November 2019, the Hon. Gareth Ward, Minister for Families, Communities and Disability Services released the findings of this landmark independent review, presenting 125 recommendations for legislative, policy and practice reforms that aim to turn the tide in how this system is destroying Aboriginal families and communities. Importantly, these recommendations are about ensuring the NSW child protection system is accountable to Aboriginal people and communities, and genuinely enables Aboriginal self-determination. The Minister gave the commitment to release a government response in the first half of 2020.

After decades of devastation to Aboriginal families and communities caused by the NSW child protection system, Professor Megan Davis, through the *Family Is Culture Report* provides the NSW Government with a clear roadmap for reform and change. This is now over to you to demonstrate real action, real change for the thousands of Aboriginal children and young people impacted by the NSW child protection system. We cannot continue to stand by and witness the NSW Government continue to destroy the lives of Aboriginal children, families and communities.

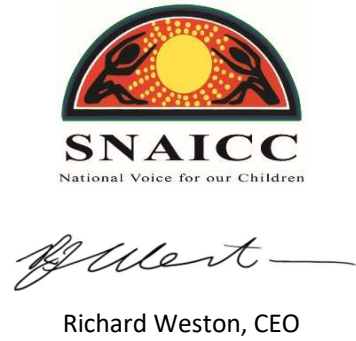
We are calling on you to ensure that implementation of all 125 recommendations in the *Family Is Culture* report commences from 1 July 2020, and as such, call on your government to demonstrate this by allocating resourcing in the 2020/2021 NSW Budget. We ask that you make a significant financial commitment to drive implementation of this vital reform on behalf of Aboriginal communities that are so disproportionately represented in your Government's Stronger Communities Cluster. This is about starting from 1 July 2020 with immediate actions based on Professor Davis' recommendations, as well as respectfully laying the foundations with Aboriginal communities for long term reform.

Premier, we stand in unity to call on you to make serious, meaningful and genuine change – to uphold and support all 125 recommendations made in the *Family Is Culture* report. We call on you to demonstrate this commitment by making an immediate budget investment to support the implementation of the report's recommendations.

Please note that the Leader of the Opposition, the Hon. Jodi McKay MP, has also been sent a copy of this letter.

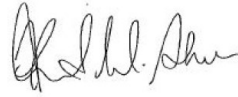
Yours sincerely,

Campaign supporters





Garry Matthews, CEO



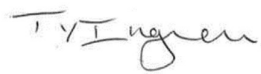
Robert Skeen, CEO



Distinguished Professor
Larissa Behrendt, Chair of
Indigenous Research Director
Research and Academic
Programs



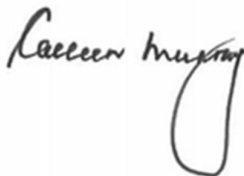
Jo Grant, CEO, Katungul Aboriginal
Corporation Regional Health and
Community Services



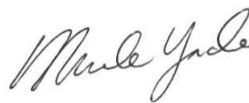
Tangerene Ingram, CEO



Christine Robinson,
Coordinator,
Wirringa Baiya Aboriginal
Women's Legal Centre



Colleen Murray, Manager,
Woomera Aboriginal Corporation



Nicole Yade, General Manager



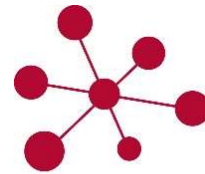
Jeremy Halcrow, CEO



Jo Toohey, CEO



Jane Titterington, Principal Solicitor



public interest
ADVOCACY CENTRE

Jonathon Hunyor, CEO



Tania McCurley Muchitsch, Executive Director



Dixie Link-Gordon, Senior Community Access Worker

Helen Campbell, Executive Officer