



**Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc.**

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## **Federal Response to Indigenous Child Abuse Must Strengthen Not Weaken Families, says Indigenous Child and Family Services Leader**

“The Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs’ proposed adoption of Noel Pearson's plan for tackling child abuse in Indigenous communities must be strengths-based and not further disempower Indigenous families,” the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) Chairperson, Muriel Bamblett, said today.

"The Indigenous child and family services sector and the Indigenous community more broadly has not been given an opportunity to see the plan and already the Minister is suggesting that this is the way forward," she said.

"Is this new approach for all Indigenous communities? How will it work where most Indigenous families live – in the cities and regional centres?"

“Best practice in child and family services suggests that enabling families to look after children has better results for children than simply taking away their resources,” Ms Bamblett said. "You can't pull up your socks if you haven't got any socks. Merely taking away welfare payments doesn't solve the fundamental problem of impoverishment, which is the key contributor to family dysfunction."

“Obviously if children are in any danger of harm then alternative arrangements, preferably through kinship networks, should be found. But using the welfare system as a punitive, blunt instrument may do more harm than good.”

“The problems of a minority of Indigenous families and communities require a more coherent and coordinated approach. SNAICC has continually lobbied for better services and raised issues around child abuse in the Northern Territory four years ago. The Minister needs to listen to the Indigenous agencies which have the cultural and professional expertise and runs on the board in dealing with giving families a hand up.”

"We also need to ask why family dislocation and dysfunction is getting worse and not better under the policies of the current Federal Government.”

“We call on the Minister to consult with Indigenous child and family service agencies before establishing any plan for Indigenous children if he is serious about addressing the underlying issues.”

SNAICC is the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

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