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## **Howard and Rudd on the wrong path on child abuse prevention**

SNAICC Chairperson, Muriel Bamblett, AM, said today, “talk of increased policing, sending in the army, hurricanes, tsunamis and war time cabinets is creating fear and anxiety amongst Indigenous children and families. The current national debate on child abuse is spinning out of control and in danger of wasting a generational opportunity to provide Aboriginal children with the rights and freedoms all children should enjoy.”

“SNAICC has joined with ACOSS and many other organisations in calling for a comprehensive long term response developed in partnership with Indigenous organisations, as this is precisely what SNAICC has been saying for decades,” Ms Bamblett said.

“SNAICC,” she said, “has seen it all before – a rush by a decade old government to release a plan after years of inaction in the lead up to a federal election. The previous Federal ALP government in 1995 commissioned SNAICC to prepare a *National Plan for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect in Aboriginal Communities*. The Keating Government sat on the plan for months, only for the Howard Government to shelve it soon after their 1996 election victory. Here we are eleven years later and it’s all happening again,” Ms Bamblett said.

She added, “We are equally unimpressed by ALP Leader Kevin Rudd’s suggestion of a ‘wartime cabinet’ if they are elected. Such a model excludes Indigenous organisations from decision making, fails to involve states and territories and suggests one part of the country is at war with another.”

“If things are to change then the government and opposition should stop talking, start listening and accept SNAICC’s proposal, put forward at the 2003 Prime Minister’s Indigenous Family Violence and Child Abuse Summit, for a *National Indigenous children’s well being and development taskforce*,” Ms Bamblett said. “The taskforce should include representation from all governments, SNAICC and other Indigenous organisations. It should report directly to COAG and develop a package of measures to reverse the over representation of Indigenous children in child protection and their under representation in early childhood and other essential health and education services.”

Ms Bamblett said, “SNAICC briefed all states and territories and Minister Brough in May 2006 on the need for additional policing and other essential services. We will do what we can to support and influence the emergency taskforce established by Minister Brough but the Government needs to commit to a longer-term taskforce with broader representation to look beyond the next six months and focus on more than law and order.

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