Victorian Aboriginal Children & Young People's Alliance

Media Statement

VACYPA Condemns NT Child Protection Act Amendments

23 July 2026

The release of the Australian Human Rights Commission's Social Justice Report 2025 last month reinforced what Aboriginal communities have long known: improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children requires stronger commitments to self-determination, cultural rights and Aboriginal-led solutions. The report highlights the importance of ensuring First Nations children remain connected to family, community, culture and Country as a foundation for their wellbeing and future.

Instead, we have seen the Northern Territory Government proceed with legislative changes that weaken the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP), despite strong and sustained opposition from Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, children's advocates, legal experts, commissioners and sector leaders across the country.

The Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance (VACYPA) stand alongside Member Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, Children's Commissioners and ACCOs nationwide in expressing grave concern about these reforms and the effects they will have on Aboriginal children and families.

The ATSICPP was established in response to the devastating impacts of the Stolen Generations and reflects a simple but critical truth: Aboriginal children have the right to grow up connected to their families, communities, cultures and Country. Those connections are not separate from child safety and are central to a child's identity, wellbeing and long-term outcomes.

VACYPA Chief Executive Officer Jason Kanoa said, "*Cultural connection and child safety are not competing priorities. Aboriginal children have the right to both. We know from decades of evidence that when children remain connected to their family, culture and identity, they are stronger, safer and better supported to thrive*."

The implications of these reforms extend beyond the Northern Territory. At a time when governments across Australia have committed to Closing the Gap, weakening one of the most important safeguards protecting Aboriginal children's rights risks undermining decades of progress and setting a concerning precedent for other jurisdictions. Reforms that diminish cultural protections send the wrong message at a time when governments should be strengthening Aboriginal-led decision-making, investing in prevention and early intervention, and working in genuine partnership with communities.

The safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children is best achieved when governments listen to Aboriginal voices, uphold self-determination, and support community-based solutions. VACYPA calls on all governments to reaffirm their commitment to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and to ensure that the rights of First Nations children to culture, family and community remain at the centre of child protection systems across Australia.

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