



**Victorian Aboriginal  
Children & Young  
People's Alliance**

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23 August 2018

Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee  
Social Policy and Legal Affairs  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

**RE: Adoption of Aboriginal children in Victoria**

On behalf of the Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance, I send you our position on possible changes to local adoption laws which have the potential to sever cultural rights of Aboriginal children.

Whilst we understand the date has passed for written submissions, we hope that this will inform the standing committee in their decisions.

The Alliance firmly believe that no Aboriginal child or young person in Victoria should be adopted.

We support the recommendations and advice provided in writing by Dr Philip Mendes, The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, Anglicare, AbSec, Berry Street, AMSANT and the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People.

Any further enquiries can be made to Dana Pyne, Senior Policy Officer

or

Sincerely,

Karen Heap  
Chairperson VACYP Alliance  
CEO Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative



## Victorian Aboriginal Children & Young People's Alliance

### Strengthening Family not Severing Culture through Adoption

The Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance oppose any changes to legislation that facilitate processes for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children to be adopted.

No Aboriginal child in Victoria should be adopted. It is not a culturally appropriate option. Clear evidence from the Stolen Generation demonstrates that adoption causes poor outcomes and has detrimental impacts on identity.

The Alliance believes that the recent debates and schools of thought on ethical adoption reform show hallmarks of introducing another Stolen Generation.

In Victoria, we have the commitment across and within government departments, and from the community sector, to build the capacity of Aboriginal families, communities, ACCOs and the sector to care for our families, children and young people, and to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care.

Victoria's strong commitment to Aboriginal self-determination and the position of "adoption not an option" for Aboriginal children and young people can be interpreted through the legislated Aboriginal Child Placement Principle (ACPP).

If a child must be removed, the Alliance strongly support adherence to the ACPP, which recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the knowledge and experience to make the best decisions concerning their children, and recognises the importance of each child staying connected to their family, community, culture and country.

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are working with families, children, young people and carers to build their capacity and provide culturally and socially strong communities.

The result is that Aboriginal children are now remaining with families who are being assisted to provide a safe and supportive environment or, where this is not possible, being brought up by extended members of family and Aboriginal community who are providing stability and cultural support for that child.

This model is the only way to prevent the devastating effects of trauma from removal, which have strong links with unacceptably high levels of incarceration, homelessness, poor mental health, family violence and drug addiction.

While the Alliance does not support adoption of Aboriginal children, it is aware of dialogue around the development of a national framework for local adoptions. It is imperative this dialogue includes Aboriginal communities and the Alliance emphasises its request to be included in this process so it can provide guidance on specific guidelines that apply only to the unique needs of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children.