



CALLS FOR ABORIGINAL SPECIFIC ROUNDTABLE LOOKING AT SILOED MENTAL HEALTH AND CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS.

The Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance (The Alliance) welcomes the release of the Royal Commission Into Victoria's Mental Health System interim report and applauds the Commission's recognition of the vital role Aboriginal self-determination and social emotional wellbeing plays in securing better outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

The Alliance wishes to congratulate the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation in the establishment of a Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal Wellbeing, and notes that the Commission's recommendations will have a significant impact on improving the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal communities across Victoria.

But the journey is not over. The Alliance are calling for an Aboriginal specific roundtable to bring to light the systemic failings of child protection and mental health systems on Aboriginal children, young people, their families and carers. This also provides ACCOs the opportunity to highlight the innovative solutions they have driven in their communities.

It is our belief that Aboriginal children and young people in out of home care are the most vulnerable cohort in the state for poor mental health outcomes. Aboriginal children are vastly overrepresented in out of home care, presently being 15.8 times more likely than non-Aboriginal children to come in contact with the system. If current trends persist this number is expected to double by 2026.

A recent report by the Commission for Children and Young People confirmed what we have known for years, the current practices of child protection often do far more harm than good. The state's most vulnerable children have fallen through the gaps of soiled mental health and child protection systems, and in some cases this has led to the tragic suicides of young people who felt they had nowhere left to go.

Alliance chair Raylene Harradine said that the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in out of home care is one of the gravest human rights concerns in Australia and it has a ripple effect in Aboriginal communities, affecting families, carers and communities.

The Alliance is looking for support from across the sector in the establishment of this roundtable.

"The vast overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in out of home care, their suffering and the systems ongoing neglect can no longer fall on deaf ears. I implore those who can act to do so: as it has been said before, the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members," Ms Harradine said.

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