



**Aboriginal
Legal Service**
(NSW/ACT) Limited

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – 12:43 PM WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 2023

Family Is Culture Community Report Card (September 2023)

September 2023

Absec, the NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec) and the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Ltd (ALS) have today launched their most recent Community Report Card evaluating the government's progress towards addressing critical deficiencies in the NSW child protection system. Continuing the disappointing trend highlighted in previous report cards, current efforts fall substantially short of the urgent, transformational change outlined through the Family is Culture (FIC) Review Report and its recommendations.

While governments have committed to working with Aboriginal communities in new ways, including through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, substantial reforms continue to be government-led, and don't adequately listen to Aboriginal people about what's best for our children, families and communities.

AbSec and ALS, our members and partners, call for urgent action to deliver on the 126 FIC recommendations in full. This includes an agreed, comprehensive implementation plan in genuine partnership, grounded in shared decision-making, and the immediate appointment of an independent and empowered Aboriginal Child and Family Commissioner along with an Independent Commission. We also call for the immediate end to the use of the structured decision-making tools that are biased against Aboriginal children and families and a commitment from government to an Aboriginal-led design process for a new suite of tools.

The FIC report, led by Professor Megan Davis, identified a system that had lost focus on meeting the needs of the children it is intended to serve. The recommendations provided a clear roadmap for change, with self-determination and greater accountability as key pillars for addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care.



**Aboriginal
Legal Service**
(NSW/ACT) Limited

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

AbSec and ALS developed a monitoring and reporting framework in 2021 to hold governments accountable for these necessary changes. These community report cards have become more important in recent years with the Department of Communities and Justice offering no report on progress for more than two years.

Quote from John Leha, AbSec CEO:

"It's been nearly 4 years since the release of the Family is Culture report. The NSW Government has spent obscene amounts of money in the Out-of-Home Care sector and has acknowledged that they have caused significant harm to our children and families. We call for urgent systems-level change and a significant re-direction of investment to Aboriginal designed and led family support, family preservation and family restoration programs. We have heard loud and clear, over and over from community that government-led, small-level reforms to child protection systems continue to drive the absolute failure to keep our children safe and thriving in community. We echo the call from our communities for the Minister to deliver on the FIC reforms in full. We once again extend the hand of genuine partnership to the Minister to drive lasting change for our children and families."

Quote from Karly Warner, CEO ALS (NSW/ACT) and Chair of NATSILS:

"This report card reveals an unacceptable level of government inertia when it comes to the FIC Review Report's recommendations, especially when the cost of inaction is families being torn apart. Through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, all governments have committed to implementing the Priority Reforms, which means working in partnership and shared decision-making authority with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Disappointingly, the development and implementation of the Family Is Culture Report recommendations has to date not lived up to this commitment."



**Aboriginal
Legal Service**
(NSW/ACT) Limited

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

Click the link to read our [Community Report Card - September 2023](#)

Below are other relevant links:

- [Honouring Family is Culture: Community Reporting & Monitoring Framework](#)
- [Community Report Card - November 2022](#)

END

For media inquiries, please contact:

media@absec.org.au | policy@alsnswact.org.au

AbSec:

Carina Stokes | 0493 165 759 | Carina.Stokes@absec.org.au

Aboriginal Legal Service:

Alyssa Robinson | 0427 346 017 | alyssa.robinson@alsnswact.org.au