



AbSec

NSW Child, Family & Community
Peak Aboriginal Corporation

MEDIA RELEASE

absec.org.au

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Closing the Gap progress stalls while Aboriginal children remain over-represented in care

AbSec NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation says that the 2026 Commonwealth *Closing the Gap* report released yesterday shows how little is occurring to reduce over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care (OOHC), leaving them vulnerable and exposed to the system failures that have driven over-representation of our children in OOHC for generations.

The report outlines several child and family initiatives. These include funding for programs assisting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing violence, the establishment of a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People and some investment to prepare Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to take on greater responsibility in child and family services.

AbSec acknowledges these commitments. However, without structural reforms to child protection systems and genuine power-sharing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, progress for children will continue to stall. Nationally, overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC has gone backwards.

“Closing the Gap cannot succeed while our children remain drastically over-represented in out-of-home care,” says AbSec CEO, John Leha. “Governments must transform how child protection works, dramatically scale up investment in Aboriginal delivered prevention and early support for families experiencing difficulties, and genuinely share decision-making power with Aboriginal communities. Without this, we will continue to see more of our children taken from their families, with all the terrible outcomes that flow from that for children, families and communities now and into the future.”

New South Wales continues to carry one of the highest numbers of Aboriginal children in OOHC in the country. The Closing the Gap report reinforces that structural reform and accountability mechanisms are essential. However, state level oversight remains fragmented, insufficient, untrusted and reactive.

In New South Wales:

- 6,563 Aboriginal children and young people are in out-of-home care
- Aboriginal children are around seven times more likely to have contact with the child protection system
- Aboriginal children are around 10 times more likely to be removed from their families
- Only four of nineteen Closing the Gap targets are currently on track in NSW.

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Why NSW needs a Child Safety and Wellbeing Commission

These statistics reinforce why New South Wales urgently needs an independent *Child Safety and Wellbeing Commission*. As the Department of Community and Justice's role continues to expand and oversight remains fragmented, families have nowhere independent to raise concerns, and no trusted body is responsible for setting and enforcing standards and for monitoring and reporting on system performance.

A Commission with real powers to investigate complaints, conduct systemic inquiries and publicly report on performance would strengthen transparency, build trust and ensure children's safety is not compromised by capacity constraints or administrative failures. If governments are serious about Closing the Gap for our children, independent accountability in NSW must be part of the solution.

About AbSec

AbSec is the peak Aboriginal organisation in NSW dedicated to empowering Aboriginal communities by advocating for the rights, safety, and wellbeing of Aboriginal children, young people and families. We build strength and resilience by supporting community-led solutions, shaping policy, and driving reforms that ensure every Aboriginal child and young person grows up strong in culture and identity.

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