



## MEDIA RELEASE

Wednesday 20 February 2019

### **\$11 million less spent on family supports for children at risk of harm in NSW. Next NSW government must invest in families**

#### **ABSEC CALLS ON ALL PARTIES TO LET ABORIGINAL PEOPLE DECIDE THEIR FUTURE**

In the lead up to the State Election, AbSec, is highlighting problematic NSW child protection policies, including an \$11 million cut from family support services in 2017–18.

At the same time as this cut to vital support services, there was a \$55 million increase on spending on out-of-home care in the same year. Overall, almost 60% of funding is directed to out-of-home care, with less than 15% directed to family supports.

AbSec Chair, Dana Clarke, said a new approach is urgently needed, and priorities have to be reset.

“18,454 Aboriginal children were reported to be at risk of harm and we know that family support services are essential in keeping children safe at home,” Ms Clarke said.

“By failing to invest in early intervention and support services, how can we expect to support, strengthen and heal families and communities?”

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are now over 10 times more likely to be removed from their families than non-Indigenous children. And with recent legislative reforms passed by the NSW government expanding the powers of family and community services to permanently remove children from their families, another generation of Aboriginal children are at threat of being severed from their families.

“We want to see all Aboriginal children looked after in safe, thriving Aboriginal families and communities, raised strong in their identity and spirit, and with every opportunity for lifelong wellbeing. This means providing a safety-net of holistic supports, and keeping kids connected to their communities and culture” Ms Clarke, added.

Evidence shows that Aboriginal children must be connected and supported in their families, kinship groups and communities, to enable them to thrive.

“The solutions lie in Aboriginal communities themselves. We know that Aboriginal-led solutions achieve the best possible outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities. That’s why we are calling on all parties to ensure that **Aboriginal people decide their future, and are strong in culture and identity.**”

We are calling for the next NSW Government:

- Commit to Aboriginal self-determination through the design and delivery of Aboriginal policy and programs impacting children, families and communities. Including immediate stop on detrimental policies, such as adoption, as identified by Aboriginal people

- Provide a 10-year commitment to and resourcing of Aboriginal-led solutions and delivery of child and family programs from early intervention to care, to address the immediate crisis of overrepresentation of vulnerable Aboriginal children and families involved with government systems. Investment to be negotiated through formal partnership with Aboriginal representative bodies and organisations, and focused on addressing disadvantage as well as providing immediate support and care for children and families.
- Establish independent Aboriginal oversight of systems, policies and programs for Aboriginal children and families, through a NSW Aboriginal child and family commission to direct resources towards Aboriginal-led designed outcomes, commissioned through Aboriginal community controlled organisations.

Until Government and policy decision makers allow a system that is tailored to Aboriginal families, designed by Aboriginal people, and delivered by Aboriginal organisations, Aboriginal communities will continue to suffer.

**Sign AbSec's petition here: [absec.org.au/sign](https://absec.org.au/sign)**

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#### **Notes to Editors**

**The NSW child protection expenditure is taken from the 2018 report on government services: <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2019/community-services/child-protection>**

***The Building Great Communities campaign is supported by NCOSS, Fams, Homelessness NSW, AbSec, Yfoundations, Association of Children's Welfare Agencies, Domestic Violence NSW, Community Housing Industry Association NSW, Community Legal Centres NSW, Shelter NSW, People with Disabilities Australia, The Centre for Volunteering, Financial Inclusion Network, Youth Action, Tenants Union of NSW, Local Community Services Association, CREATE and Churches Housing.***