



MEDIA RELEASE

Tuesday 5 February 2019

AbSec and wider community sector call for more essential services to address inequality

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 11 times more likely to be removed from their families than non-Indigenous children. A new approach is needed. We need to focus on building strong, safe, inclusive and accessible communities.

That is why AbSec joined 17 other peak organisations who came together today to confirm they will campaign together ahead of the election to make NSW fairer.

NSW is full of diverse and vibrant communities. We have abundant resources, a strong economy and as a state we are doing well. But not everyone has shared in this prosperity. Inequality is growing. There are too many people who we're leaving behind.

AbSec and 17 other peak organisations representing those that continue to be marginalised in our society have come together to shine a light on the inaction of government to protect those most vulnerable amongst us. We stand together in solidarity to show we should all be working together across government, the community sector and private sector to build great communities.

The impacts of the disparities in wealth and opportunity, and our failure to address this inequality, is reflected to us every day in the over-representation of Aboriginal people involved in the justice system, in the child protection system, in poor education engagement, unemployment and homelessness.

This needs to change. Peaks have unified around a shared platform calling for investment in essential services to build strong communities. Importantly, across all of these domains, we need Aboriginal-led solutions to 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.**

Dana Clarke, the Chair of AbSec, said dramatic improvements are needed for not just Aboriginal people, but all disadvantaged sectors of the community, including in the regions.

"Strong, resilient communities are built on more than infrastructure in urban areas, they are built on equality and respect for all," Dana said.

"Inequality in Australia is on the rise, and as the gap widens, Aboriginal people are affected the most.

"These divisions if ignored, will only cause further harm to society. I am here to tell you that Aboriginal people need a change.

"The solutions lie in Aboriginal communities themselves. We know that outcomes for Aboriginal

children and families are greatest when Aboriginal people develop and drive the solutions.

“We need to work together to ensure all people experiencing disadvantage have access to essential services. Everyone deserves a roof over their head, an education and healthcare.”

- ✓ 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.

Together the community sector is calling for the next NSW Government to enable families and communities to thrive, ensuring:

- Everyone has a decent, affordable, accessible and safe place to call home.
- Children and families have the supports and resources they need to cope with challenges and thrive.
- Young people are supported to reach their potential.
- Women are safe everywhere - their families, workplaces, in public and online.
- Aboriginal people decide their future and are strong in culture and identity.
- People with disability are included and can fully participate in all aspects of community life.
- Everyone has access to justice and legal help in times of need.
- The whole community is engaged and empowered.

**Please direct any media enquiries to Zoe Mayers on
Zoe.Mayers@absec.org.au – media@absec.org.au or 0448 587 318.**

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.