



## MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 9<sup>th</sup> July 2020

### NSW Government delivers unremarkable response to the Family is Culture Review

The NSW Government yesterday released their long-overdue response to the *Family is Culture Review* into Aboriginal children and young people in out-of-home care.

The report, released eight months ago, outlined the vast over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care in NSW, along with some major failings within the child protection system, including:

- Widespread non-compliance with legislation and policy among caseworkers
- Lack of transparency and effective oversight within the child protection system
- Reported multiple instances of poor and unethical newborn removal practices
- Continued resonance of the current child protection system with historical practices used against Aboriginal communities

Despite self-determination being one of two foundational reforms urged by the *Family is Culture Review*, the NSW Government has failed to comprehensively engage with Aboriginal communities over the past eight months in developing their response and none of the recommendations that would improve self-determination are included.

The main reform, the appointment of an Aboriginal Deputy Children's Guardian within the Office of the Children's Guardian, is widely supported, along with the focus on greater oversight and accountability of the child protection system.

However, these commitments fall short in providing the comprehensive oversight envisioned by an independent NSW Child Protection Commission, as recommended in the *Family is Culture Review*.

There are also concerns over some of the key reforms that have not been supported, such as the move to delay legislative changes that would safeguard Aboriginal children and promote steps to support families.

These would be subject to a review in 2024, and based on current rates of removal over 2,400 Aboriginal children would be taken from their families over the three and a half year wait for yet another review.

AbSec will continue to fight for the implementation of the remaining recommendations of the *Family is Culture Review*, with a focus on establishing an independent Aboriginal Child Protection Commission with the ability to hold live data in relation to Aboriginal children, families and communities.

Dana Clarke, Chairperson of AbSec said, "The response that has been put forward is a mixed bag of good, bad and re-announced initiatives. While there are some positives, many essential reforms have either been postponed or ignored, rather than providing the systematic change that our children need. We take heart from some of the hard-won commitments like the full implementation of the Aboriginal Case Management Policy."

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