

ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY
to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children

MEDIA RELEASE

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First Nations children experiencing domestic violence need culturally safe, community led alternatives to child safety system

A child protection response to First Nations children experiencing domestic and family violence is not adequate or culturally safe, a new report from ANROWS has found.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over represented in child protection systems across Australia. Contact with the child protection system is often triggered by the presence of violence in the home, which can lead to negative lifelong outcomes, including increased interactions with the child protection and youth justice systems.

The report, *New Ways for Our Families*, by QATSICPP found that while First Nations children's voices have largely been invisible in the design and creation of interventions they have a role to play in designing the programs that meet their needs.

"Despite the overwhelming impact of domestic and family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people's lives their voices have been largely silent," said Garth Morgan, CEO of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak.

The report also found that systemic changes are required. These include procuring place-based and healing responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled services that support self-determination, and operate within a framework of perpetrator accountability that does not hold women (mothers) solely responsible for violence perpetrated by partners and other family.

"To break the cycle of violence Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people need opportunities to heal from witnessing or being a victim of violence. Support is also needed for their families to address domestic and family violence in holistic and culturally strong ways using cultural lore and values to change behaviour," Mr Morgan added.

Cultural capability across the services system needs to be enhanced and structural racism needs to be eliminated to reduce the load on existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services.

"No parent or carer or family plans to have their children go into child protection or youth justice," said Professor Daryl Higgins, Director, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic

University. *“Families welcome children into their lives and communities but often the forces of intergenerational trauma affect their ability to offer the best support to their children. And unfortunately, systemic bias and racism just make it harder for them,”* Professor Higgins added.

ANROWS CEO Padma Raman PSM acknowledged the importance of this project in contributing to the evidence base, saying *“First Nations academics have been telling us for a long time that this problem requires a holistic response. This report is an essential resource for understanding what the existing evidence base tells us through drawing together knowledge from multiple disciplines.”*

“The researchers amplify the call for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to be part of the conversation in designing the responses that impact them. ANROWS is keenly anticipating the practice framework which will be a valuable tool for practitioners and policymakers working across the child protection and domestic violence spaces,” Ms Raman added.

Minister for Women’s Safety Anne Ruston said the Morrison Government is absolutely committed to ending all forms of gendered violence, which is why we have made a historic \$2.5 billion commitment to women’s safety across the first five years of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children have the greatest knowledge about the issues that affect them and we must work in genuine partnership to design programs that meet their needs,” Minister Ruston said.

“That’s why for the first time ever we are developing two five-year Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plans to sit alongside the next National Plan and ensure we are addressing the individual needs of Indigenous women and investing in programs that are going to make a real difference on the ground.”

“This report from ANROWS will be a useful tool to help inform the Action Plan as we build on the \$45 million the Morrison Government provided in the 2022-23 Budget for Indigenous-specific measures.”

This first report from the QATSICPP led project drew on expertise from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander chief investigators, community researchers and practitioners using collaborative processes designed to elevate Indigenous voice and self-determination. The second research report from this project, due later in 2022, when a practice guide, supporting the implementation of findings from this project will also be produced.

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About ANROWS

Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety Limited ([ANROWS](https://www.anrows.org.au)) is a not-for-profit independent national research organisation. ANROWS is an initiative of Australia’s National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022. ANROWS was established by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments of Australia to produce, disseminate and assist in applying evidence for policy and practice addressing violence against women and their children. ANROWS is the only such research organisation in Australia.