



National Commission for
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Children and Young People

TUESDAY 21 JULY 2026
MEDIA RELEASE

**NATIONAL COMMISSION ENDORSES MINISTERIAL JOINT STATEMENT ON THE
ATSICPP AND URGENTLY CALLS ON THE NT GOVERNMENT TO PAUSE EVERY
CHILD MATTERS BILL IMMEDIATELY**

The National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People (National Commission) urgently calls on the Northern Territory Government to pause the progression of the *Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026* (the Bill) and listen to the experts when it comes to the safety and wellbeing of First Nations children in the Northern Territory.

These calls follow the joint statement released by community services ministers (CSM), including the federal minister for social services Tanya Plibersek and state and territory ministers responsible for child protection, on Monday, 29 July 2026. This reinforced the critical role of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) in helping to reduce child removals, in line with Target 12 of the Closing the Gap Agreement.

National Commissioner Sue-Anne Hunter endorses this joint statement and urgently calls for the Bill's immediate pause.

National Commissioner Hunter said the NT Government needs to listen to the countless experts telling them to pause the Bill and to stop acting in a silo without the rights of the child in mind.

"This Bill goes directly against the rights of the child and contradicts everything that was put in place to protect them," said National Commissioner Hunter.

"The NT Government is blatantly ignoring everyone, expert or not. We are calling on urgent action, urgent reform and for the NT Government to halt the progression of this Bill immediately."

On Wednesday 8 July, the Legislative Scrutiny Committee handed down its final Report on the inquiry into the Bill.

Despite receiving 150 submissions, with more than 120 of them calling for the Bill not to proceed, the CLP-led committee recommended in a 3-2 split that it be passed. Child and family experts, independent institutions and frontline organisations have raised serious concerns that rushing the Bill through the NT Parliament without adequate consultation risks more First Nations children being removed from their culture, family and kin.

If this Bill passes, more children will be removed. Enough is enough. Listen to the experts who have the lived experience and stop this deeply concerning and discriminatory Bill from passing," said National Commissioner Hunter.

Last week, National Commissioner Hunter joined an [urgent call](#) from Australian Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ACCGA) following the recent [resignation](#) of Northern Territory Children's Commissioner Shahleena Musk.

"I am deeply concerned that the NT Government is shifting the responsibility for their own systemic failures," said National Commissioner Hunter.



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“Our children should not be used as political pawns. Legislative reform must be drafted based on evidence that centres the wellbeing of our children.”

“We must listen to the voices of children and young people, front-line experts and community Elders who know what is best for our children and families. If we don’t listen – we risk increasing the number of children in out-of-home care and permanently separating them from their inherent right to culture and community.”

The Bill, in its current form, risks further permanent removal of Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory through the weakening of the ATSICPP.

“The Child Placement Principle has five interrelated elements: Prevention, Partnership, Placement, Participation and Connection. Each of these five elements must be applied together if we are to keep our children safe and out of the child protection system,” said National Commissioner Hunter.

“The ATSICPP does not interfere with the safety of a child; it only enhances the protections.”

“I urge the NT Government to focus on resourcing, including addressing the significant worker vacancy rate in their child protection agency, and building the right community-led support services for children and families. A child’s future depends on us; let’s not let them down.”

For more information, visit <https://www.ncatsicyp.gov.au/>

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About the National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

The National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People (The Commission) is a statutory agency dedicated to promoting the rights, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. The National Commission works to elevate First Nations voices, advocate for systemic reform and drive evidence-based policy and practice that supports strong, thriving futures for children, families and communities.