



Save the Children

Closing the Gap Refresh

POLICY SUBMISSION

(APRIL 2018)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Save the Children Australia acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the traditional owners and custodians of the land on which we work. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present.

This submission was prepared by Save the Children's Australian Social Policy and Advocacy Adviser, Georgia Goldsworthy. For further information, please contact georgia.goldsworthy@savethechildren.org.au or Save the Children's Head of Policy and Advocacy, majella.hurney@savethechildren.org.au

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It has been a decade since the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to act to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. Yet, despite the commitment of significant resources to date, Australia is not on track to close the gap. Just three of the seven targets are on track to be met in 2018.¹

The Closing the Gap Refresh is an opportunity to take stock of what has and has not worked in addressing areas of entrenched inequality. It also presents an opportunity to reset the agenda and commit to investing in what works in practice to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This involves not only scaling up successful programs, but also investing in Indigenous organisations to further enable them to be agents of change in their own communities.

Save the Children has been delivering programs in Australia for over 65 years, including in some of the most remote and hard to reach Indigenous communities in the country. We have cultivated strong relationships with Indigenous communities and sought to deliver lasting change – not just deliver services. Our approach involves understanding the needs and aspirations of Indigenous communities and supporting them to be active agents of the changes they wish to bring about in their communities. Our support is underpinned by a commitment to investing in, and building the capability of Indigenous partners and staff. We are proud of the fact that 26 per cent of our program staff in Australia identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and we are on track to reach our target of 35 per cent by June 2019.² While we know we have more work to do, our approach reflects our firm belief that working with local communities and employing local staff will deliver positive community driven outcomes.

Through our work on the ground in Indigenous communities, we have identified three priority areas for action in the Closing the Gap Refresh:

- First, COAG should commit to improving the integration and coordination of services through the adoption of place-based, collective impact approaches, as described in section 2 of this submission. This requires State, Territory and Federal Governments to invest in joined-up services for a holistic response.
- Second, COAG should support Indigenous leaders to co-design and implement solutions at all levels – from service delivery on the ground to the co-design of frameworks and strategies at the national level. This involves investing in capacity development to support the effective transition of service delivery from non-Indigenous organisations to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- Third, COAG should strengthen existing targets and adopt new targets to address currently overlooked areas of Indigenous disadvantage. This includes adopting new targets to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care and in the youth justice system. For both new targets, policies and services must be weighted towards prevention and early intervention to

¹ Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2018.

² Save the Children, Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2016-19, Deliverable 11.1. Accessed at: https://www.savethechildren.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/184758/2016-19-Innovate-Reconciliation-Action-Plan-Save-the-Children-Australia.pdf

ensure young people and families access services which support, strengthen and empower them towards improved life outcomes. Existing education targets should also be strengthened in the areas of early education and student retention through improving participation and access.

This submission contains seven recommendations to assist policymakers in the design of the Closing the Gap Refresh. These recommendations are informed by Save the Children's work on the ground in Indigenous communities and evidence of success. We have suggested how small wins could be brought to scale by policymakers.

Tough choices and fiscal trade-offs need to be made to accelerate progress in closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. This must be informed by evidence-based practice, but most crucially, it must be led by those whose lives it impacts most – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Only then will lasting change be achieved to finally close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

1. Save the Children's experience

Save the Children is one of the world's leading child-focused emergency relief and community development mission-driven organisations. We work in 120 countries and aim to reach every last child. Our focus is to work with and advocate for children, families and communities in the most vulnerable circumstances to support and empower them to reach their full potential.

Domestically, we have been delivering programs in Australia for more than 65 years to make sure all children and young people are set up for success, wherever they are and whatever their circumstances. We implement evidence-informed programs in 200 sites across almost every State and Territory of Australia. These programs intersect with, and involve the provision of services across education, family support, child safeguarding and protection, and at-risk young people (including within the justice system).

In 2017, we supported over 31,000 children and families in Australia. We work in some of the hardest to reach and most remote parts of Australia, as well as regional and urban settings where the system is failing.

a. Working in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

We believe there are significant gains to be made by working in genuine collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and we put that principle into practice in how we approach community employment, program design and implementation, and public policy advocacy. As we work side-by-side with communities and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), our programs embody a range of approaches including:

- valuing culture and place;
- working with families to address issues at a community level;
- co-designing programs and/or working jointly on long-term projects to build capacity for transition to community control;
- employing local people with local knowledge; and
- partnering with ACCOs wherever possible across both our programming and advocacy work.

We are very proud to have established and supported the development of a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce. Currently, 26 per cent of our Australian Programs staff identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This reaches over 90 per cent in some of our most remote locations. We are working hard to ensure this target reaches 35 per cent by June 2019 as part of our Reconciliation Action Plan.³ While we know we have more work to do, our approach reflects our firm belief that working with local communities and families, including employing local staff, will deliver positive community driven outcomes.

Our program work in communities informs our sector-level and other public policy initiatives, including our advocacy and campaigns. Our recommendations to decision makers are evidence-informed, drawing on our on-the-ground expertise and contemporary

³ Save the Children, Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2016-19, Deliverable 11.1. Accessed at: https://www.savethechildren.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/184758/2016-19-Innovate-Reconciliation-Action-Plan-Save-the-Children-Australia.pdf

secondary research covering Australian and international literature and best practice. We seek to amplify the voices and recommendations of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partner organisations in a range of policy areas. In all our work, a developmental and culturally aware understanding of the best interests of the child are paramount.

b. Adopting a rights-based approach

From 2018 to 2020, Australia will be under the spotlight to see whether we are upholding our international commitments to human rights. Our three-year membership of the United Nations Human Rights Council provides Australia with an opportunity to demonstrate leadership in promoting respect and adherence to International Human Rights Treaties and Declarations. Moreover, this year, marks the five-year review of Australia's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). It is crucial that the upholding of human rights, including children's rights, is at the centre of Australia's work.

At Save the Children, the inherent, universal and equal dignity of all children and young people is fundamental to our mission as a child-focused organisation. In practice, we apply a rights-based framework to translate that mission into our work on-the-ground. We believe the CRC should be used to inform and strengthen the Closing the Gap refresh. The CRC enshrines a number of rights that align with existing targets, such as those relating to child mortality, access to early education, school attendance and retention and completion of year 12.

More specifically, the CRC provides that Member States should ensure:

- the right of the child to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24) including States taking active measures to diminish infant and child mortality;
- the right of the child to education and ensuring the education of the child allows children to develop to their fullest potential (article 28 and 29); and
- the right for Indigenous children to enjoy his or her culture (article 30).⁴

The CRC preamble's commitment to the family, both as a fundamental unit in society and as the natural environment for the growth and well-being of children, also lends support for the inclusion of a new Closing the Gap target to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system, as outlined in the Family Matters⁵ campaign and later in this submission.

Save the Children is also of the view that the principles and rights enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples should inform the Closing the Gap refresh, particularly the right to self-determination (Article 3) and the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising Indigenous peoples' right to development (Article 23).⁶ The need for governments to better align policy priorities with our international commitments to this Declaration was highlighted by the UN Special Rapporteur who found it 'alarming' that Australia had failed to respect the rights to self-

⁴ *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, opened for signature 20 November 1989, 1577 UNTS 3 (entered into force 2 September 1990).

⁵ Family Matters- Strong communities, strong culture, stronger children is a campaign led by SNAICC – National Voice for our Children to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. It partners with prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, noted academics and other leading groups including Save the Children.

⁶ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, GA Resolution 61/295 (Annex), UN Doc A/RES/61/295 (2007).

determination and full and effective participation, a fact which she argues has compounded the failure to deliver on Closing the Gap targets.⁷

⁷End of Mission Statement by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz on her visit to Australia , 3 April 2017, p. 3. Accessed at:
<http://www.natsils.org.au/portals/natsils/Final%20statement%20SR%20IP%20Mon%203%20April.pdf?ver=2017-04-04-115415-617>

2. Charting a new course for change: coordinating and integrating services through place-based strategies for collective impact

We believe that much of the failure of the current Closing the Gap agenda is a result of poor service delivery design and implementation, rather than poor policy. Service delivery to close the gap remains highly fragmented. Services and programs cut across State, Territory and Federal Governments, and are delivered by a range of departments and organisations. For those seeking to improve their lives, these patchworks of services are difficult to navigate and can regularly change due to policy or funding shifts.

To address this fragmentation, we are guided by the approach taken in the 2015 Productivity Commission performance assessment on the National Indigenous Reform Agreement. That assessment emphasised the need to critically evaluate what does and does not work in practice, rather than only setting targets and monitoring long-term outcomes.⁸

Given the above, it is critical for COAG to address the fragmentation of service delivery by improving the coordination and integration of services at all levels – from local communities up to the national level. This aligns with the whole of government approach advocated for by the Australian Public Service Commission - to bring together the range of stakeholders needed to deal with ‘wicked’ problems, those public policy issues with interlinking and complex causes.⁹ Coordinating and joining up services at the local level is crucial.

In particular, we recommend that COAG look to supporting ‘place-based approaches’ which bring community members and other stakeholders together to collaboratively address complex problems that cut across a range of service delivery areas.¹⁰ As an organisation, Save the Children has adopted place-based approaches for collective impact, with our approach and frameworks described further below. There is also a growing body of evidence to show that place-based approaches can be an effective way to support those experiencing multiple risk factors in some of our most complex communities, although such approaches require a commitment to evaluation from the outset and longer lead times to see measurable results.¹¹

We note that place-based approaches have already been adopted by the Commonwealth in various contexts including the National Partnership in Remote Service Delivery in 2009. For example, in the first iteration of the Closing the Gap National Indigenous Reform Agreement, the Commonwealth invested in Children and Family Centres in targeted, urban, regional and remote areas with high Indigenous populations and disadvantage as a place-

⁸ Productivity Commission, ‘A change in approach is needed to improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians’, Media Release, 2 December 2015. Accessed at: <http://www.pc.gov.au/research/supporting/indigenous-reform-assessment#media-release>

⁹ Australian Public Service Commission, ‘Tackling Wicked Problems: a Public Policy Perspective’, Commonwealth of Australia, 2007. Accessed at: http://www.apsc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/6386/wickedproblems.pdf

¹⁰ The Royal Children’s Hospital, Melbourne Centre for Community Child Health, ‘Place based approaches to supporting children and families’, Policy Brief, Vol 23, 2011, p. 1. Accessed at: https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/Policy_Brief_23_-_place-based_approaches_final_web2.pdf

¹¹ Wilks, S., Lahaussé, J., & Edwards, B., ‘Commonwealth Place-Based Service Delivery Initiatives: Key Learnings project’, *Australian Institute of Family Studies*, Research Report No. 32, 2015; The Royal Children’s Hospital, Melbourne Centre for Community Child Health, ‘Place based approaches to supporting children and families’, Policy Brief, Vol 23, 2011. Accessed at: https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/Policy_Brief_23_-_place-based_approaches_final_web2.pdf; T. Bellefontaine, and R. Wisener, ‘Policy Horizons Canada Evaluation of Place Based Research: Questions for Future Research’, Government of Canada, June, 2011; National Evaluation of Sure Start Team. *National evaluation of Sure Start local programmes: An economic perspective*, 2011, (Research Report No. DFE-RR073).

based approach.¹² A recent review produced by the Centre for Community Child Health shows that there are a range of existing place-based approaches already used across Australia focussing on children.¹³ The proposed fourth action plan for the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children also proposes place-based sites.

Effective place-based strategies incorporate strong community-based accountability mechanisms. For example, the Children's Wellbeing Initiative in East Gippsland managed by Save the Children uses 24 key indicators, identified and hence owned by over 60 key local stakeholders (local government, schools, community organisations and NGOs), to help measure the well-being of children. These indicators are being used to identify where children are doing well, where things could be improved and where more focus is needed to make sure they can flourish. Further information on the Children's Wellbeing Initiative is included in Section Three's discussion on evaluation.

Given the above and based on our experience leading place-based work on the ground, we recommend that COAG's focus should shift from supporting trials or pilots of place-based approaches to investing in the architecture required to bring such approaches to scale as a way of further testing this method of service delivery. Given there has not always been sufficient rigor attached to these projects in the Australian context, we would further suggest to ensure effective evaluation of outcomes, there is a need to agree on common definitions, standards and indicators for service providers to measure success, while allowing flexibility to adapt to local contexts.¹⁴

With that in mind, in designing a place-based approach, we suggest the Closing the Gap refresh have regard to the following place-based principles which inform Save the Children's work on the ground:

- engaging with community leaders and individuals to deeply understand the needs, aspirations and strengths of the community;
- co-defining objectives and co-designing activities that build upon the needs and aspirations of the community;
- the rigorous use of data to increase accountability, better target services and determine the full nature and extent of the issues;
- interventions across the family and child support continuum to address the risk factors which young people and families experience of varying scale;
- strong governance structures that cut across levels of government and involve non-government organisations and communities to collaborate and develop action plans; and
- a recognition that lasting change won't be achieved overnight, with a need to establish reasonable timeframes and milestones along the way in partnership with the community.¹⁵

¹²National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap), Ref: B-57. Accessed at:

http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/npa/health/_archive/indigenous-reform/national-agreement_sept_12.pdf

¹³ Laidlaw, B., Fong, M., Fry, R., & West, S. (2014). A snapshot of place-based activity promoting children's wellbeing. Parkville, Victoria: Murdoch Children's Research Institute and The Royal Children's Hospital Centre for Community Child Health, Nov 2014.

¹⁴Wilks, S., Lahaussé, J., & Edwards, B., 'Commonwealth Place-Based Service Delivery Initiatives: Key Learnings project', *Australian Institute of Family Studies*, Research Report No. 32, 2015.

¹⁵ See also: The Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne Centre for Community Child Health (2011), 'Place based approaches to supporting children and families', Policy Brief, Vol 23, p 3. Accessed at: https://www.rch.org.au/uploadedFiles/Main/Content/ccch/Policy_Brief_23_-_place-based_approaches_final_web2.pdf.

Complementary to place-based approaches, are ‘collective impact’ frameworks. The advantage of collective impact for governments is that it can provide a way to incentivise individual community organisations, who are often competing against each other for funding, to collaborate and work together. In short, place-based collective impact as outlined by Kania and Kramer¹⁶ has five key elements for participating local organisations who collaborate across sectors to deliver joined up services to improve community outcomes:

- a common agenda for change including a shared understanding of the problem and solutions;
- consistent data collection and measurement of results;
- a plan of action which ensures mutually reinforcing activities for each participant;
- open communication between participants to build trust; and
- a backbone organisation which includes staff and specific skillsets to support participating organisations.

In our West Australian operations, Save the Children has incorporated efforts to build the pre-conditions for collective impact with community. In practice, our partnership with Aarnja in the Dampier Peninsula for the Family Empowerment Partnership works with a range of government, non-government and local organisations to design and coordinate the services the community needs (see the Case Study on page 19). While more complex than single agency service delivery, this multipronged approach captured in a place-based strategy with an overarching collective impact framework can deliver lasting results on the ground.

Save the Children has partnered in, or led, place-based collective impact projects in Northern Territory, South Australia and Victoria. We are also supporting the operational build-up of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-conceived and led “First 1000 Days Australia” initiative (which focuses on supporting the optimal development of children in the critical period from pre-conception to age two through evidence-based, locally driven and collaborative ways of working).¹⁷

We further recommend that government adopts a greater openness to cross-organisational collaboration, particularly when supporting place-based approaches, when opening government tenders.¹⁸ This reflects a recognition that successful collaboration cannot be rushed. This means a shift from the limited time organisations often have available to put a bid together when seeking funding. Save the Children has previously found short time frames can strain relationships with local organisations. For example, the initial Prime Minister and Cabinet Indigenous Advancement Strategy tenders opened on 8 September 2014 and closed on 17 October 2014.¹⁹

¹⁶ Kania, J., & Kramer, M., ‘Collective Impact’, *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 9(1), 2011, pp. 36-41.

¹⁷ For more on our collaborative partnership with the University of Melbourne in support of the First 1000 Days Australia initiative, see *First 1000 Days Australia: Save the Children and University of Melbourne partner to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander peoples* (Media Release, 4 August 2017), <http://www.savethechildren.org.au/about-us/media-and-publications/media-releases/media-release-archive/years/2017/first-1000-days-australia-save-the-children-and-university-of-melbourne-partner-to-improve-life-outcomes-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples> Additional background on this initiative is available online at: <http://www.first1000daysaustralia.org.au>

¹⁸ Ronalds, P. ‘The Challenge of Change’. In *The Three Sector Solution*, ed. John R Butcher and David J Gilchrist, 338-9. 2016. Canberra, Australia: ANU Press.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Getting collaboration right, including the appropriate frameworks for governance, accountability and measurement may prove more beneficial to communities than getting it done quickly and result in more positive outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION ONE:

Save the Children recommends that COAG:

- supports the scale up of place-based, collective impact approaches nationally with specific targets for a minimum number of sites across all States and Territories to adopt such approaches (including existing sites and communities as appropriate).
- leads the development of common definitions, standards and indicators for place-based approaches to ensure effective evaluation of success, through a tripartite and collaborative process involving the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Aboriginal communities and organisations and other service providers.
- ensures that timeframes for government tenders allow sufficient time for community organisations to collaborate with each other and community members as part of place-based ways of working.

3. Indigenous-led solutions for effective implementation

Closing the gap, on intergenerational disadvantage is challenging, but not impossible. While governments have wrestled with these so-called ‘wicked’ problems²⁰, this can sometimes obscure the stories of success, driven at the local level by communities themselves. Save the Children suggests looking to the lessons that government and organisations have learned about what works in service delivery at the local level which has led to long term positive outcomes.

Save the Children is strongly of the view that in this process, the design of the Refresh be focussed on implementation, rather than policy development. The Refresh is also an important way to demonstrate clear lines of responsibility for funding and service delivery at a State, Territory and Federal level.

Getting implementation right first involves a genuine and ongoing partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This includes incorporating the recommendations of previous forums held by peak leaders and organisations, particularly those that resulted in the Redfern Statement²¹ and the Uluru Statement²². Save the Children again endorses the recommendations in the Redfern Statement as a roadmap for the Refresh process, particularly relating to education, health, justice and out-of-home care for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Australians.

The Refresh must also recognise that policy settings need to translate into meaningful implementation at the community level. We would propose that key elements for success in this respect include:

- the community as active agents of the social change that is trying to be achieved, meaning the Refresh must be Indigenous-led at a local level;
- coordinating and integrating services to address multiple areas of disadvantage, through supporting place-based and collective impact approaches as described in the section above; and
- a focus on evaluation and measurement to ensure accountability, recognising that change cannot be achieved overnight.

a. Empowering local communities to be agents of change

Save the Children’s approach to community development in Australia aims to ensure the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families we work with are the agents of change they want to see in their communities. Our Reconciliation Action Plan specifically commits us to handing over program delivery to Aboriginal communities over time and as appropriate to ensure service continuity and sustainability for children and families, and to

²⁰ Australian Public Service Commission, ‘Tackling Wicked Problems: a Public Policy Perspective’, Commonwealth of Australia, 2007.

Accessed at: http://www.apsc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/6386/wickedproblems.pdf

²¹ Redfern Statement, 9 June 2016. Accessed at: <https://nationalcongress.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/The-Redfern-Statement-9-June-Final.pdf>

²² Uluru Statement from the Heart, 26 May 2017. Accessed at: https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/201705/Uluru_Statement_From_The_Heart_0.PDF

help strengthen the capacity of our Aboriginal partner organisations.²³ It is also reflected in our approach to local employment, as outlined further below.

As Family Matters has identified, international and Australian evidence has demonstrated the importance of ensuring service design and delivery is developed through Indigenous participation and self-determination to achieve good outcomes for Indigenous children and families.²⁴ This approach has been endorsed by the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator Nigel Scullion, who has signalled a shift to prioritising Commonwealth funding for Indigenous-led organisations.²⁵ Further, the Australian Institute of Family Studies finds the following factors are key to success:

‘facilitating community ownership and control; embedding culture; employing local Indigenous staff; harnessing existing community capacity and its leaders; implementing good governance; establishing trusting partnerships; keeping implementation timelines flexible; and using community development approaches.’²⁶

The Closing the Gap Refresh process – and subsequent ongoing framework and supporting strategies delivered by organisations on the ground– must also include a recognition of the need for real reconciliation based on healing, truth-telling and the negotiation of an equal relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the non-Indigenous Australian community. This also means, as Reconciliation Australia identifies, ‘as part of this process, all Australian governments must extend and expand the Closing the Gap targets in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’.²⁷

Considering the above, we offer the following insights from our own work to achieve improved outcomes in the Refresh.

i. Collaborate, seek consent and respect culture

Save the Children believes collaboration is a fundamental principle for non-Indigenous organisations to abide by when delivering services which seek to improve Closing the Gap outcomes. For example, we will partner with local communities where there are capacity gaps locally and engage in formal partnership agreements with Aboriginal organisations where we may have a long-term presence or ongoing role. This is demonstrated in our recent formal partnership with Gidgee Healing in Queensland to establish holistic healthcare services in both Mornington Island and Doomadgee, an agreement which includes a transition to community control over seven years.

This partnership exemplifies that knowledge and learning is a two-way process and must be shared between both parties, including through us providing backbone support in areas such as systems, processes and resources. For example, our Gidgee Healing partnership has helped Save the Children staff boost their health skills and capabilities and provided Gidgee

²³ Save the Children, Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2016-19, Deliverable 6.1-6.3. Accessed at: https://www.savethechildren.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/184758/2016-19-Innovate-Reconciliation-Action-Plan-Save-the-Children-Australia.pdf

²⁴ Cornell & Taylor, 2000; Denato & Segal, 2013; Chandler & Lalonde, 1998 in SNAICC, *The Family Matters Report 2017*, p. 12. Accessed at: <http://www.familymatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Family-Matters-Report-2017.pdf>

²⁵ N. Scullion, ‘Coalition unveils new Indigenous Grants Policy’, Media Release, Australian Government, February 12 2018.

²⁶ Morley, S., ‘What works in effective Indigenous community-managed programs and organisations’, CFCA Paper No. 32, Australian Institute of Family Studies, May 2015. Accessed at: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/what-works-effective-indigenous-community-managed-programs-and-organisations>

²⁷ Reconciliation Australia, *The State of Reconciliation*, Report, 2016, p. 71. Accessed at: https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/The-State-of-Reconciliation-report_FULL_VR.pdf

Healing the capacity to access Save the Children's tender writing and stakeholder management skillsets.

We seek consent from the community prior to providing services and continue to work with community during service delivery. We strive to follow a culturally appropriate consultation pathway connecting with Traditional Owners or other local authorities, ensuring all family and clan groups are represented with an "Elders first" approach, and empowering local people with the right authority to lead the conversation with community from the outset.

We recognise that one size does not fit all in relation to service delivery and work with communities to map aspirations, needs, capacity and local delivery to enable transition to community control. The case study of our work in the Dampier Peninsula in partnership with Aarnja, highlighted on page 19, provides an example of this in practice.

ii. Providing opportunities for development and connection amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees

Consistent with our Reconciliation Action Plan, Save the Children has sought to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to develop and implement a Workforce Development Plan to address cultural learning, recruitment, employment and retention strategies, including professional development. This includes a target of 35 per cent employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff across the organisation by June 2019 and 3 per cent in our Head Office. We are also seeking to improve the avenues of feedback and consultation with our staff, through the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employee Network and a funded Workforce Development Adviser.²⁸

There is a direct benefit of delivering services with staff from local communities and, in addition, there is a potential multiplier effect through employing local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in communities. It provides the opportunity to increase employment and offer pathways for further education, training and professional development, assisting in the delivery of Closing the Gap outcomes relating to employment. As the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse has found, lower levels of educational attainment of Indigenous Australians, compared to non-Indigenous, is 'an important factor in explaining the relatively low rates of employment of Indigenous Australians'.²⁹ Ensuring strategies are in place to support the development and retention of Indigenous employees is pivotal including mentoring, flexible work arrangements, non-standard recruitment processes and formal education and training.³⁰

In practice, Save the Children has seen positive results in developing career pathways for local staff. From 2015-17, we have supported over 100 staff around Australia to achieve qualifications ranging from basic training to entry level Certificates and Diplomas. For example, in Queensland, this has included supporting staff studying for qualifications in

²⁸ Save the Children, Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan 2016-19, Deliverable 11.1-11.9. Accessed at: https://www.savethechildren.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/184758/2016-19-Innovate-Reconciliation-Action-Plan-Save-the-Children-Australia.pdf

²⁹ Gray M, Hunter B and Lohaar S, 'Increasing Indigenous employment rates', Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, Issues Paper 3, March 2012, p. 10. Accessed at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/increasing-indigenous-employment-rates/contents/table-of-contents>

³⁰ Gray M, Hunter B and Lohaar S, 'Increasing Indigenous employment rates', Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, Issues Paper 3, March 2012, p. 20.

Certificates II-IV in mental health, community services and leadership and Diplomas in Financial Counselling and a Bachelor of Human Services.

Employment and development opportunities in service delivery, like any other workplace, should be fit for purpose. In that regard, Indigenous cultural knowledge is a key skill area which assists in the delivery of services. Analysis of effective Indigenous community-managed programs and organisations has found that local Indigenous staff play an important leadership role. For example, Indigenous facilitators in a family wellbeing program were critical to success due to their life experiences and emphasis on culturally appropriate values.³¹ Again, this analysis finds that staff development is crucial to support organisations towards success.³²

RECOMMENDATION TWO:

Save the Children recommends that COAG:

- gives priority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to lead on service delivery where they have demonstrated capacity to do so.
- maintain existing funding streams at a State and Federal level for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employers to provide targeted and culturally appropriate professional development opportunities, including relevant training/certifications and development of mentoring programs to develop capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- leverage funding agreements and policy settings to incentivise non-Indigenous organisations to provide in-kind or low cost technical expertise, management and operational support to enable an effective, sustainable and accountable transition to community control.

This should include mandating minimum Indigenous employment quotas in regional service delivery for organisations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, accessing State and Federal grant funding to improve pathways to employment and professional development in communities.

b. Ensuring services include evaluation and clear measurements to improve accountability

Save the Children notes that government grants often do not allow for rigorous independent evaluations of outcomes and impact. This makes it challenging to determine with rigor 'what works'.³³ For example, the Institute of Family Studies found that at a Commonwealth level, the causal effects and cost-effectiveness of programs are 'rarely evaluated' compared to international initiatives.³⁴ Meaningful evaluation for whole of government or partnership approaches also often required long term commitments of 10-20 years to deliver lasting

³¹ Tsey et al., 2009 in Morley, S., 'What works in effective Indigenous community-managed programs and organisations', CFCA Paper No. 32, Australian Institute of Family Studies, May 2015. Accessed at: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/what-works-effective-indigenous-community-managed-programs-and-organisations>

³² Ibid.

³³ Save the Children, Submission to the Productivity Commission, Human Services Reform, 26 July 2016. Accessed at: https://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/204952/sub222-human-services-identifying-reform.pdf

³⁴ Wilks, S., J. Lahausse and B. Edwards. 2015. Commonwealth place-based service delivery initiatives: Key learnings project. Research Report No. 32. Australian Institute of Family Studies, Melbourne.

and meaningful change.³⁵ This approach is not new for Australia, which has previously been recognised for having a strong focus on evaluation in Federal Government in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which was incorporated in policy-making and government decisions.³⁶

We would suggest that clear articulation of the frameworks that are being tested in a place-based approach can help ensure that all participants know what is required of them in a collaborative process. This should be supplemented by funding which can help ensure that a rigorous evaluation can occur. Evaluations should be built into program design and logic to ensure the intended outcomes are understood from the start.

Connected to improved evaluation, is the need to improve the use of data and indicators to measure progress. Our previous experience in working in community, supports our view that using data in collaboration with community members can help determine where efforts should be targeted and measure tangible improvements. Save the Children recently launched the second Wellbeing of Children and Young People in East Gippsland Report, previously developed by Good Beginnings Australia, with which Save the Children merged in 2015.

As discussed in Section Two, Save the Children supports the Children's Wellbeing Collective which is a partnership of organisations across the community who work together to strengthen collective action in priority areas. We collect data and report on the wellbeing of children and young people every four years, produce annual reports for the collective, stakeholders and community, coordinate stakeholder engagement and facilitate partnerships as well as support priority areas and actions.³⁷

This report demonstrates how evidenced-based analysis increases accountability and enables the community to focus resources and track the progress of young people in the region, across 24 indicators, which were previously identified by over 60 stakeholders in 2012. These fall under five wellbeing domains, which also align with the Nest – a national plan for child and youth wellbeing, and represent the journey from birth to 24 years. The five wellbeing domains are: 1. Developing Well; 2. Safe and Secure; 3. Happy and Healthy; 4. Engaged, Learning and Achieving; and 5. Active Citizens.³⁸

The report shows, for example, significant improvements in children's physical health and wellbeing and emotional maturity from 2012 to 2015, according to Australian Early Development Census data. Local Government Data also provides the capacity to measure other improvements and where further work is needed in the above domains at a community level. The report draws on data sets such as ABS census data, departmental statistics such as maternal and child health services annual reports and crime statistics. It categorises according to where indicators need to improve, are doing well, show improvement/decline/about the same and where data gaps are identified.³⁹

³⁵ Australian Public Service Commission, 'Tackling Wicked Problems: a Public Policy Perspective', Commonwealth of Australia, 2007, p. 23. Accessed at: http://www.apsc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/6386/wickedproblems.pdf

³⁶ Mackay, K., 'The Australian Government's M&E System' in Lopez-Acevedo, G., P. Krause and K. Mackay. 2012. Building Better Policies: The nuts and bolts of monitoring and evaluation systems. Washington, DC: The World Bank, pp. 197-209.

³⁷ Save the Children, The Wellbeing of Children and Young People: East Gippsland Report, March 2018, p. 9. Accessed at: http://www.savethechildren.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/261899/East-Gippsland-Wellbeing-Children-Report.pdf

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

This use of indicators is one way in which communities themselves can engage and drive the use of data to improve services in clear target areas. It also supports one of the key principles of the Closing the Gap Refresh discussion paper - that 'all governments have agreed that to give effect to our commitment to Closing the Gap there must be local, regional and national targets that will focus on the things that are important to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians'.

RECOMMENDATION THREE:

Save the Children recommends that:

- programs and services arising out the Closing the Gap Refresh at a Federal, State and Territory level include funding for an evaluation framework which is built into the program design and logic from the commencement of programming.
- any Federal or State/Territory targets should be supported by indicators which can provide data to the local government area. This will enable communities and organisations engaging in collective action frame works to deliver programs which measure outcomes at a local level.

WHAT WORKS:

SAVE THE CHILDREN AND AARNJA IN PARTNERSHIP IN WA TO DELIVER THE DAMPIER PENINSULA FAMILY EMPOWERMENT PARTNERSHIP

Save the Children's work with Aarnja, a Kimberley Aboriginal membership organisation and local lead for Empowered Communities provides an example of this approach in practice. Save the Children began work in the region in 2009, and later became the backbone organisation for an early years collective impact scheme, called the Dampier Peninsula Family Empowerment Partnership (DPFEP).

The Dampier Peninsula Family Empowerment Partnership is bringing together children, families, communities, service providers, businesses, philanthropy and Government to engage in a new way of working together to improve the health and wellbeing, safety and learning for local disadvantaged Aboriginal children, and empower families living across the remote region to meet their needs and aspirations

Save the Children and Aarnja joined together to plan and co-design Aboriginal governance and program logics, in partnership with the Dampier Peninsula communities and State and Federal Government. This was underpinned by an agreement to collectively build Aarnja's capacity over time to take on project lead from Save the Children. This agreement is formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding and overseen by a Joint Steering Committee.

The partnership is currently focusing on collective collaboration across agencies with service providers working alongside Dampier Peninsula communities and families to develop targeted and tailored support, which meets their vision, key priorities and expectations. Building quality data and evidence to measure and evaluate what works is imperative for driving informed community decision-making processes. This also requires ensuring on-going communication and sharing information with the communities and families

An early initiative of the project is the employment of five local Aboriginal community navigators by communities to work with their councils, leadership groups and communities to raise awareness of the goals of the DPFEP initiative, and to show how it aligns with building the capacity and capabilities of community governance structures to inform, guide and drive the implementation of their social plans for a thriving community. Save the Children is responsible for coaching, mentoring and capacity building these staff.

Governance mechanisms include family empowerment steering committees, children, youth and wellbeing hubs, as well as regional reference groups. These will ultimately help to guide policy and practices and enable systematic change across the Kimberley to provide a demonstrative model from which other communities can learn, benefit and adapt to realise more effective, integrated and holistic service provision. Its overall purpose is to realise better outcomes for vulnerable Aboriginal children and families and shift the dial on intergenerational disadvantage in Australia.



4. A new target and strategy to address over-representation in out-of-home care

a. A national crisis

Save the Children is a proud partner of the Family Matters campaign which calls for action to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system. The latest Report on Government Services shows that more than 17,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were living in out-of-home care as at 30 June 2017.⁴⁰ This figure has almost doubled since 2008 when the Parliament of Australia apologised to the Stolen Generations.⁴¹ This trajectory reflects an escalating crisis, whereby Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are now 10 times more likely to be living in out of home care than non-Indigenous children.⁴² Projections developed by the University of Melbourne in 2016 show that the population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care will triple in the next 20 years if nothing is done to interrupt current trajectories.⁴³

As the Australian Institute for Family Studies recognises: connection to family, community and culture is essential for the social and emotional development, identity formation and physical safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.⁴⁴ Despite this, children continue to be removed from their families at alarming rates. For example, 'the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who were placed with relatives/kin, other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers, or in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential care has decreased over the past 10 years'.⁴⁵

As an organisation passionate about children's rights, we believe no form of violence against children is acceptable and every child should have a safe environment to thrive in. However, our organisation opposes any actions that may have unintended negative consequences for children, including removing their connection to family, community and culture. Through our community-based programs, we actively take measures to protect children from harm in a culturally-safe manner and to support families experiencing vulnerability to prevent, rather than just respond to incidents of violence.

Given the large number of Indigenous children in out of home care across the country, there is a need for a clear and collaborative national response, with a focus on prevention and early intervention to address the root causes of child removal. We note that Federal, State and Territory governments have endorsed the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020, which includes a focus on preventative approaches to promote child safety. Despite this, a majority, (59.5% or \$3.1 billion) of the \$5.2 billion child

⁴⁰ Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services, Child Protection Services, Chapter 16, 2018. Table 16A.18. Accessed at: <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2018/community-services/child-protection>.

⁴¹ Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services, Child Protection Services, Chapter 16, 2018. Table 16A.18. Accessed at: <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2018/community-services/child-protection>.

⁴² SNAICC, 'Where do the lives of today's children fit in reflection of national apology', Media Release, 13 February 2018. Accessed at: <http://www.snaicc.org.au/media-release-13-february-2018-lives-todays-children-fit-reflection-national-apology/>

⁴³ SNAICC National Voice for our Children, *Family Matters Report 2016*, Melbourne, p. 46.

⁴⁴ Lewis & Burton, 2014; Lohar, Butera, & Kennedy, 2014 in Arney, F et al., 'Enhancing the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: Policy and practice considerations', CFCA Paper No. 34, Child Family Community Australia information exchange: Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2015.

⁴⁵ Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services, Child Protection Services, Chapter 16, 2018, section 16.20.

protection budget in 2016-17 remains targeted at out of-home care.⁴⁶ As a nation, we are investing in responding to incidents that place children at risk, rather than preventing them from happening in the first place.

The escalating rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care points to a failure of current policies and programs. There is a clear need for setting a national target and developing a comprehensive national strategy, co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations, and agreed through COAG, to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.

b. Co-designing a new target and national strategy – a way forward

We believe the current process to refresh the COAG Closing the Gap strategy in 2018 provides an opportunity to address this issue. Co-design, is a critical step towards full implementation of a ‘public health’ model that works for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in child safety and well-being. A public health model is one which seeks to prevent problems occurring by targeting policies and interventions at known risk factors by intervening early. In areas of escalation, there is also scope for further interventions at secondary or tertiary (formal child protection system) levels to seek to minimise long term effects.⁴⁷ It was a key recommendation of the Royal Commission into the Prevention and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.⁴⁸

At the COAG level, co-design necessitates a tripartite co-design process of relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations, the Federal Government and State/Territory Governments. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, through their representative voices should also be supported to lead a co-designed public health approach and process for policy development, implementation and evaluation.

Peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations need to be resourced appropriately to provide a representative, culturally safe voice and sector expertise into the process. In addition, as outlined in Section Two, further support must be given to place-based approaches that work within local contexts including supporting ACCOs and communities to deliver services where needed.

The importance and need for prevention and early intervention approaches in the child and family welfare space is well recognised – by COAG, Community Services Ministers, and the Third Three-Year Action Plan of the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children. The proposed national strategy will require a substantially increased focus on preventative approaches, with greater integration and coordination of complementary Federal, State and Territory services, addressing areas including: family support; housing; social security; family violence; drug and alcohol misuse; health and mental health; early childhood education and care; and child protection. The proposed national strategy must

⁴⁶ Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services, Child Protection Services, Chapter 16, 2018, section 16.4.

⁴⁷ Defining the Public Health model for the child welfare services context, CFCA Resource Sheet, Published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, December 2014. Accessed at: <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/defining-public-health-model-child-welfare-services-context>

⁴⁸ Royal Commission into the Prevention and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, Findings and Recommendations, 17 November 2017, Recommendation 39.1.

include public measures of accountability, which are essential tools to drive intra and inter-government focus, resourcing and monitoring of outcomes.

While tertiary child protection systems are funded by States and Territories, the Federal Government has significant influence over, and the potential for substantive investment in, many of the universal and targeted services that can prevent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being removed from their families and communities as part of a public health model. To implement a COAG target and strategy to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, resources will be required from all levels of Government, but particularly the Federal Government, for:

- the tripartite co-design and development of the target, strategy, and outcomes measures;
- national coordination of implementation efforts by the Australian Government with Secretariat support provided by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet and the Department of Social Services;
- ongoing consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and peak organisations on the co-design, development and delivery of the strategy;
- public reporting of progress and outcomes; and
- additional resources for targeted family and community strengthening initiatives.

Furthermore, a significant investment in data development is needed to inform a better understanding of the current situation of overrepresentation, the progress towards reform and the targeting of future efforts. Data development should take account of identified data gaps discussed in the Family Matters Report 2017 which includes reunification rates, community controlled family support as well as longitudinal data that allows for calculation of the length of stay in out-of-home care, time to exit by exit type, and re-entry to care, by Indigenous status.⁴⁹ A data development project could be led by either the Productivity Commission or the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare which both report annually on a number of relevant existing data sets.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR:

Save the Children recommends that COAG:

- establish national targets to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, including sub targets that address the underlying causes of child protection intervention.
- leading and funding the co-design of a national strategy to achieve such targets together with State/Territory governments, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations and leaders. A national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Leadership Forum should be supported to assist in this process.
- data is collected and published to better measure the situation of, causes and responses to over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system including reunification rates, community controlled family supports and longitudinal data. This data collection and publication could be led by either the Productivity Commission or the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, which both report annually on relevant existing data sets.

⁴⁹ SNAICC, *Family Matters Report 2017*, Melbourne, p.. 30.

WHAT WORKS:**SAVE THE CHILDREN'S INTENSIVE FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE
IN NORTHERN TERRITORY AND QUEENSLAND**

Protecting children from abuse and neglect is a crucial part of Save the Children's work. But removing children from their parents or families can compound trauma – particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are placed in out-of-home care at 10 times the rate of non-Indigenous children. We know that it is crucial that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children keep connections to their community. The loss of culture and identity can have significant long-term impacts on development and wellbeing.

To address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, we must tackle the root causes and develop culturally appropriate solutions that support entire families. Our Intensive Family Support Service program helps parents in the Northern Territory and Queensland to meet the emotional, developmental and physical needs of their children. A practical parenting support service, the program aims to keep children out of the child protection system and in their own community by creating sustainable behaviour change in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

An external evaluation conducted in the Northern Territory by the Parenting Research Centre in 2014 revealed that over three quarters of participating families achieved their goals and successfully completed the program. Children were also benefiting from more supervision, physical care, healthcare and parental warmth. In 2017, we received a significant increase in referrals, reinforcing the value of the program.

WHAT WORKS:**FAMILY MATTERS CAMPAIGN - SAVE THE CHILDREN PARTNERS WITH
SNAICC - NATIONAL VOICE FOR OUR CHILDREN**

Save the Children committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by signing onto a national campaign partnership with SNAICC – National Voice for our Children. The *Family Matters: Strong Communities, Strong Culture, Stronger Children* campaign is Australia's national campaign to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe and cared for in family, community and culture. Family Matters aims to eliminate over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 2040.

Save the Children is taking a leadership role in the not-for-profit sector in promoting and supporting the Family Matters campaign through a formal memorandum of understanding. The campaign partnership seeks to utilise the skills and abilities of Save the Children staff; particularly in the areas of programming, policy, advocacy and campaign support, media and communications. Save the Children will use political influence and corporate relationships to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community voices through both program work and delivery.

Family Matters seeks to encourage Save the Children to explore more ways to inform program management and community engagement practices through the on-going development of a responsive and malleable partnership. Save the Children will explore its internal frameworks to enhance collaborative and complementary approaches to inform community development and project management.

5. A new target and strategy to address high levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in the criminal justice system.

As indicated in Section Four above, the Closing the Gap refresh is an opportunity to introduce new shared national targets where there is a clear and overwhelming need. Not only are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children over-represented in the child protection system, the continuing high rates of youth incarceration and recidivism for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders suggests that the system is continuing to fail those who need it most.

Between 2009 and 2011 the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs conducted an inquiry into the over-representation of Indigenous young people in the justice system and recommended that a Closing the Gap target be added, to be monitored and reported against.⁵⁰ This is a call to action which has been echoed by the Change the Record Campaign⁵¹ and the National Congress of First Peoples⁵² in their advocacy for justice targets. However, targets are just part of the mechanism to measure progress, as this section will outline – a genuine effort to close the gap on youth over-representation in the criminal justice system requires governments committing to rethinking how to invest in our most at risk young people to support them towards better pathways, rather than simply punishing them.

a. The NT Royal Commission – shining a light on a national issue

In 2016 and 2017, the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory (the “NT Royal Commission”) confirmed shocking reports of abuse at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre, with children being mistreated, verbally abused, humiliated, isolated and denied access to basic human needs such as water, food and the use of toilets. The report highlighted the urgent need for reform both within and beyond the youth justice system - not only in the Northern Territory, but in all States and Territories of Australia.

Challenges in and around the youth justice system are particularly critical for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, who are severely over-represented. While less than 6% of Australians aged 10–17 are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, they made up over half the population in detention on an average day in Australia in 2015–16.⁵³ Alarmingly, the NT Royal Commission report revealed that 96 per cent of young people in detention in the Territory in 2015-16 were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.⁵⁴ The incarceration rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth has doubled in the last two and a half decades since the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody in 1991.⁵⁵ The situation is even more concerning given the young age at which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enter the criminal justice system. The Australian Institute for Health and Welfare found in 2015-16 that two in five (40%) young Indigenous Australians

⁵⁰ House of Representatives – Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. *Doing Time – Time for Doing: Indigenous youth in the criminal justice system*, June 2011: Canberra. Recommendation 2.

⁵¹ Change the Record Coalition, ‘Blueprint for Change’, Report, November 2015, pg. 5. Accessed at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B3OI0CaEOuaFU3BNc3Zrbl9wa0U/view>

⁵² National Congress of First Peoples, Policy. Accessed at: <http://nationalcongress.com.au/resource-centre/policy/#1482376154073-389d39b1-e32e>

⁵³ Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory (2017), Chapter 3, p. 117.

⁵⁴ Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory (2017), Chapter 3, p. 118

⁵⁵ Amnesty International A Brighter Tomorrow: Keeping Indigenous Kid in the Community and Out of Detention, May 2015, Australia.

under supervision in 2015–16 were first supervised when aged 10–13, compared with about 1 in 7 (15%) young non-Indigenous Australians.⁵⁶

Evidence shows that the younger a person enters the criminal justice system, the more likely they are to re-offend.⁵⁷ Furthermore, evidence suggests that detention does not deter re-offending, but may increase it.⁵⁸ This is due to the impact detention has on cognitive and social development of young people, as well as increasing exposure to other young people who have committed offences. This is reflected in high recidivism rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. In 2014–15, 53% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth returned to youth justice supervision – 1.6 times higher than non-Indigenous youth.⁵⁹

b. The need to address root causes

Youth justice cannot be examined in isolation of historical, social and economic factors. It is not possible to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in detention without addressing the reasons why they commit offences.

As noted by the NT Royal Commission, no one factor alone provides a full explanation for the involvement of children and young people in the youth justice system, rather, a complex range of factors is relevant.⁶⁰ The Commission also recognised that the prevalence of these factors does not excuse or justify unacceptable behaviours or diminish personal responsibility for children or parents.⁶¹

However, considering these factors helps to understand why offending occurs and how it can be prevented in the future. This requires a focus on underlying issues such as health, early childhood development, education, employment, family violence, alcohol and substance abuse, and welfare support. In addition, the intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people since colonisation can result in young people turning to other coping mechanisms, including addiction and other anti-social behaviours.⁶²

c. Co-designing a justice reinvestment strategy

Achieving substantial change will not only require the genuine commitment and involvement of Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. It also requires the meaningful participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and their community sector partners in co-designing a national response to this crisis.

As noted in the previous section, Save the Children supports the NT Royal Commission's call for public health approaches to youth justice, that shifts investment away from detention and into prevention and early intervention (also known as a justice reinvestment model). To change the story with Aboriginal children and young people, the Federal Government has a critical leadership role in facilitating through COAG, the co-design of a national justice reinvestment strategy together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders and community controlled organisations. Such a strategy must delineate actions,

⁵⁶ AIHW, First entry to youth justice supervision: 2015–16, youth justice fact sheet no. 90, 28 July 2017, Accessed at: <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/92677d43-e8dd-4714-a713-256aee200f9/112-YJFS-90-First.pdf.aspx>

⁵⁷ Jesuit Social Services States of Justice: Criminal justice trends across Australia, 2016, pp 32, 35.

⁵⁸ Jesuit Social Services States of Justice: Criminal justice trends across Australia, Position Paper, 2016, p. 4.

⁵⁹ Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services 2016, Corrective services, Attachment table 8A.3, Canberra.

⁶⁰ Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory (2017), Chapter 3, p. 116.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 116.

⁶² Ibid, Chapter 4, p. 177.

timeframes, and roles and responsibilities. The strategy should also draw on relevant inquiries and evidence of what works, and must be informed by community priorities.

Save the Children recommends that the national strategy be informed by considerations of Aboriginal culture, kinship systems and family in line with the NT Royal Commission's findings.⁶³ We also note that adopting a justice reinvestment approach is in line with the recommendations of the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The Committee recommended that Australia 'dedicate sufficient resources to address the social and economic factors underpinning indigenous contact with the criminal justice system' and encouraged Australia to adopt 'a justice reinvestment strategy'.⁶⁴ Under the justice reinvestment approach, young people should be placed in detention only as a last resort in accordance with Article 37 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Support for justice reinvestment is growing across the sector and encompasses policy proposals from early intervention to therapeutic rehabilitation. A recent *#justicesolutions* report found from international evidence, 'good youth justice systems focus on early intervention and diversion, preventing young people from further contact with the justice system, using child-specific approaches and engaging families and communities'.⁶⁵ The Victorian Council for Social Services (VCOSS) has noted the importance of 'intensive interventions' to rehabilitate those who have reoffended, including post-release support.⁶⁶ This could include mentoring, maintaining access to education or gradual reintroduction into the community through employment pathways. Further, the Human Rights Commission has identified, conditions within detention can improve well-being such as contact with family members and friends, being treated respectfully by staff, access to health services and fresh and healthy food and contact with professional services.⁶⁷

At a state level, in Western Australia, Social Reinvestment WA (SRWA), an Aboriginal community led organisation, has focussed on the principles of social reinvestment to argue that prisons are not effective deterrents. Instead, SRWA advocates for a holistic approach to implement strategies to promote healthy families, smart justice and safe communities. A recent consultation with the 17 members of the SRWA Coalition (which includes Save the Children), provides consolidated advice regarding what works to prevent incarceration or promote rehabilitation of young offenders. This includes but is not limited to:

- education - particularly one on one support;
- using a positive role model to help assess and overcome learning or other difficulties and set a plan going forward;
- creating a structure in the organisation that caters to young person's needs,
- creating routine; and
- going back to basics on life essentials such as paying bills, applying for identification, jobs and health appointments.⁶⁸

⁶³ Ibid, Recommendations.

⁶⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding Observations – Australia, CERD/C/AUS/CO/15-17, [20]. Greenwood, Peter, Ph.D. Preventing and Reducing Youth Crime and Violence: Using Evidence-Based Practices, January 2010

⁶⁵ Jesuit Social Services, *#Justicesolutions Tour: Expanding the Conversation*, August, 2017, p. 5. Accessed at: <http://jss.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/SUB-170623-Solutions-Tour-Long-Report-v.15.pdf>.

⁶⁶ VCOSS, Restoring youth justice VCOSS submission to the inquiry into youth justice centres, March 2017, pp. 33-34 Accessed at: http://vcoss.org.au/documents/2017/03/SUB170303_Youth-Justice-Centres-Inquiry_FINAL.pdf

⁶⁷ Australian Human Rights Commission, 2016, p 10 in Ibid.

⁶⁸ A full list can be found at: Social Reinvestment WA, Recommendations for the Intergovernmental Committee for Target 120, 9th November 2017, p. 6.

Only by learning from the experience of those on the ground can evidence be developed to better improve services to and pathways available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE:

Save the Children recommends that COAG:

- establish a Closing the Gap youth justice target to reduce the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people in the criminal justice system by 2040.
- leads and funds the co-design of a national justice reinvestment strategy to achieve such targets together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations. This should be supported by appropriate indicators (including incarceration and recidivism rates) to ensure accountability for reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the justice system.

WHAT WORKS:

SAVE THE CHILDREN AND THE YOUTH INTERVENTION PARTNERSHIP IN ARMADALE, WA

Save the Children has placed a strong focus on justice reinvestment as one key pathway to reducing the rates of youth offending, particularly in Western Australia. Aligning closely with the place-based collective impact approach discussed in Section Two, the Youth Intervention Partnership project in Armadale seeks to bring together governments, service providers and young people to better support young people with complex needs and prevent escalation into youth justice.

Using a collective impact approach, Save the Children acts as the technical backbone organisation to coordinate all collaborators and provide supporting infrastructure. Service mapping and design was informed by a co-design process which engaged young people who have had contact with the criminal justice system, including young people accessing support services as well as representatives from the project's Youth Leadership Roundtable. A recent independent evaluation of the Armadale Youth Intervention Partnership by KPMG has found that:

- Local services are starting to work in a more flexible, client-centred and efficient way.
- Armadale programs are directing more effective and appropriate supports to the right people.
- Policy makers and providers now recognise the value of using shared definitions and data to better target long term and intensive help to young people with the most complex needs.
- Save the Children's role as backbone organisation has been consistently identified as a key factor driving better coordination and a reduction in siloed program delivery and case management.

The co-design approach means that providers and agencies are more accountable to the community for improved and sustainable outcomes, and increases client and family engagement in programs.



6. Supporting greater investment in learning and development targets

a. Greater investment in access to early learning and development

All children have the right to a quality education that allows them to develop to their fullest potential, as enshrined in the CRC. Access to quality early childhood education and care is recognised, not just as an essential right, but as one of the most effective and targeted interventions to support vulnerable children and families. We welcome the finding in the Prime Minister's 2018 Closing the Gap Report that the early education enrolment target is on track, with 91 per cent enrolment of 4-year olds in 2016.⁶⁹ However, it is clear from the same report that more work needs to be done to improve attendance rates and participation at both four years and younger, to ensure children receive the full benefits that can be obtained from engagement in early learning and development programs.⁷⁰

The first five years of a child's life is crucial to their development and can critically shape other outcomes through life.⁷¹ Furthermore, work by the World Health Organisation has focussed on the importance of supporting the developmental trajectory in the first 1000 days of a child's life.⁷² As highlighted in the Lancet Series on Advancing Early Childhood Development, 'strong biological, psychosocial, and economic arguments exist for intervening as early as possible, starting from and even before conception, to promote, protect, and support children's development'.⁷³ ⁷⁴ James Heckman and others in the United States also show that early childhood education for disadvantaged children improves early life environments, boosting both early life skills and achievements later in life.⁷⁵

Overall, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable than non-Indigenous children according to the Australian Early Development Census. However, trends show that this gap is starting to narrow.⁷⁶ Participation in, and access to, early education from an early age remains important to reduce developmental vulnerabilities. As the 2018 Closing the Gap Report made clear, a significant gap remains as only 65 per cent of all Indigenous children enrolled in an early childhood education program attended for 600 hours or more in comparison to 77 per cent for non-indigenous children.⁷⁷

As Family Matters outlines, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander run services provide an avenue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to access early learning and development services when they may be otherwise unable or unwilling to access mainstream services for cultural or structural reasons.⁷⁸ In addition, as the ANU Social Research Centre

⁶⁹ Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2018.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ OECD, Starting Strong 2017: Key OECD Indicators on Early Childhood Education and Care, OECD Publishing, 2017, Paris, p 148.

⁷² Meeting Report: Nurturing human capital along the life course: Investing in early child development World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland 10–11 January 2013. Accessed at: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/87084/1/9789241505901_eng.pdf?ua=1

⁷³ 'Executive Summary: Advancing Early Child Hood Development: from Science to Scale', *The Lancet*, October 4 2016, p. 7. Accessed at: <http://www.thelancet.com/series/ECD2016>

⁷⁴ Commencing from pre-conception is an approach also adopted by First 1000 Days Australia as explained in their website: www.first1000daysaustralia.org.au/1000-days-movement

⁷⁵ Heckman, J. et al, 'Early Childhood Education' First Draft: May 30, 2013, This Draft, November 4, 2015: pg 8. Accessed at: <https://heckmanequation.org/assets/2017/01/FINALMoffitt-ECE-Paper2015.pdf>

⁷⁶ Commonwealth of Australia (2016), Emerging Trends from the AEDC, Fact Sheet. Accessed at: <https://www.aedc.gov.au/Websilk/Handlers/ResourceDocument.ashx?id=4bcf2664-db9a-6d2b-9fad-ff0000a141dd>

⁷⁷ ABS, 2016 in Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2018., pg. 46.

⁷⁸ SNAICC, *Family Matters Report*, 2017, Melbourne, p. 71.

identifies, there are barriers which can impede access and attendance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children including: trust, transport, cost, understanding of the need for the service and Indigenous involvement.⁷⁹ Thus, early learning and development services designed and run by ACCOs and communities can provide unique and tailored holistic support which is grounded in culture, trauma-informed and cognisant of the complex needs of children and families.⁸⁰

SNAICC, the lead for Family Matters, has called for COAG to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's wellbeing and development by strengthening the current target on early education to ensure 95 per cent of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 3 and 4 year olds access 30 hours per week of early childhood education by 2030. SNAICC rightly argues it is also important to close the gap in early development outcomes reflected in the early childhood development domains measured in the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) by 2030.⁸¹ We add our support to their call.

We also support SNAICC's call to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled integrated early years services are available for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from birth to 2 years living in areas of particular vulnerability by 2030. In particular, we note the importance of funding a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early years sector to address the 15,000 places gap identified by the Productivity Commission, as we have previously advocated in our 2018-19 Budget Submission.⁸² This could include supporting and growing existing Aboriginal Children and Family Centres, Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services and other critical early years supports in line with previous investments under the original National Indigenous Reform Agreement, as well as investing in the development of new community-controlled services to address the gap in service access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

RECOMMENDATION SIX:

Save the Children recommends strengthening the early education target in the Closing the Gap Refresh to ensure that 95 per cent of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 3 and 4 year olds access 30 hours per week of early childhood education by 2030.

We recommend the below indicators be used to measure progress against this revised early education target to focus on both developmental outcomes and attendance levels:

1. Including the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) and its five domains of: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), communication skills and general knowledge. Using the AEDC means the developmental outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can better inform ECEC program design. Moreover, the availability of this data at local levels will ensure funding can be directed to where it is most needed.
2. Ensuring attendance, particularly hours of attendance is a key indicator in all States and Territories, to more effectively measure participation in early childhood education and care. Indicators for attendance and enrolment in the years preceding the Year Before School (YBFS) should also be resourced where appropriate to track progress in younger cohorts.

⁷⁹ Analysis of Indigenous Participation in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Prepared by the Social Research Centre, September 2016. Accessed at: http://www.echr.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/supporting/indigenous_participation_in_ecec.pdf

⁸⁰ SNAICC, *The Family Matters Report 2017*. Accessed at: <http://www.familymatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Family-Matters-Report-2017.pdf>

⁸¹ The five domains being: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), communication skills and general knowledge

⁸² For more information, please see Save the Children's 2018-19 Pre-Budget Submission, pg. 14. Accessed at: https://www.savethechildren.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/256139/submission.pdf

We also support SNAICC's call to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled integrated early years services are available for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from birth to 2 years living in areas of particular vulnerability by 2030.

We recommend that any future strategy to support a strengthened early education target should: draw on our recommendations in Sections Two and Three, particularly, that services are Indigenous-led, place-based and local staff are supported with training and development opportunities, and that there is cultural competency training for non-Indigenous staff.

b. A more flexible approach to learning to maximise school retention

The 2018 Prime Minister's Closing the Gap report noted that attendance rates of Indigenous students have been stable between 2014 (83.5 per cent) and 2017 (83.2 per cent). However, the target to close the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous school attendance is not on track to be met and due to expire at the end of this year.⁸³ The entrenched nature of the attendance rate gap suggests that new and innovative approaches to improving attendance and retention may be needed. The finding that there has been no meaningful improvement in any of the States and Territories is concerning. In the Northern Territory, for example, the Indigenous attendance rate fell from 2014 (70.2 per cent) to 2017 (66.2 per cent).⁸⁴

The failure to meet this target is doubly concerning when approaching the Closing the Gap targets from a holistic perspective. Education is one of the key ways to break the cycle of disadvantage. Students who do not complete school or equivalent education and training face higher likelihoods of becoming and staying unemployed as well as lower wages and wealth over their life span.⁸⁵ Studies have shown a link between a failure to complete high school and criminal activity.⁸⁶ Similarly, 'for taxpayers, having 38,000 people (in 2014) aged 19 who will never achieve Year 12 or equivalent costs \$315 million each year, and more than \$12 billion over a lifetime'.⁸⁷ Conversely, a higher level of schooling is positively associated with self-reported health status, according to the 2008 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey.⁸⁸ It also leads to greater job opportunities, higher income and supports participation in broader societal activities.⁸⁹

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse identified several factors which relate to school attendance and retention of Indigenous Australian students. A common feature of successful programs was that they built bridges between public agencies and the community.⁹⁰ The

⁸³ Commonwealth of Australia, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Closing the Gap Prime Minister's Report 2018, pg. 51.

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 51.

⁸⁵ Rumberger & Lamb (2003); OECD (2001); Levin (2010) in Deloitte Economics for Hands On Learning Australia (2012), 'The socio-economic benefits of investing in the prevention of early school leaving', September, pg. 3.

⁸⁶ Chapman et al 2002 in N. Purdie and S. Buckley (2010) Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, *School attendance and retention of Indigenous Australian students*, Issues Paper No. 1, September, pg. 3.

⁸⁷ Lamb, S. and Huo, S. Counting the costs of lost opportunity in Australian education. Mitchell Institute

report No. 02/2017, Mitchell Institute, Melbourne. Accessed at: <http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/reports/costs-of-lost-opportunity/>

⁸⁸ ABS, 2010 in Deloitte Economics for Hands On Learning Australia (2012), 'The socio-economic benefits of investing in the prevention of early school leaving', September, p. 6.

⁸⁹ N. Purdie and S. Buckley (2010) Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, *School attendance and retention of Indigenous Australian students*, Issues Paper No. 1, September, p. 2.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 20.

importance of cultural factors in school also cannot be underestimated, with practitioners and policy makers needing to develop approaches that take account of Indigenous cultures and history as well as how to participate and engage in education.⁹¹ One option, which may capture some of this approach are flexible learning approaches. They improve outcomes for young people who may be less likely to remain in school and complete year 12. They can allow young people to ‘attain educational credentials as well as confidence, knowledge and skills necessary for work’.⁹² Consistent with earlier discussions in this submission, these approaches can reflect priorities of local schools and community needs to deliver meaningful results.

WHAT WORKS:

HANDS ON LEARNING

Hands on Learning (HOL) merged with Save the Children Australia in 2017. Skilled artisan teachers build a platform of safety, belonging and cultural identity in the classroom and support young people to shift the attitudes and behaviours that have become barriers to learning at school. Our alternative, skill-based approach to education recognises the different ways young people learn. We build students’ skills to help transition to future training and employment.

HOL’s partnership with the Education Queensland Indigenous Schooling Support Unit to deliver the program in Northern Peninsula Area State College Bamaga in 2008 resulted in a 650 per cent increase in student attendance, as well as a significant reduction in school suspensions by the end of the first term. As Deloitte found, ‘The HOL program, through engaging the Indigenous community, directly contributes to the second of the COAG’s key goals for supporting students at disadvantage.’⁸⁶

RECOMMENDATION SEVEN:

Save the Children recommends that COAG support greater investment in flexible programming in schools, including integration of programs within mainstream school systems to improve increased levels of school attendance and retention to close the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous students. This should be particularly targeted towards students in cohorts from years 5-10 to encourage senior school completion.

This requires a funding stream focussed on employing teachers with a broader range of artisan and cultural skillsets to reflect the needs of local communities and students. This approach may have opportunities for crossover with findings from the National Review of Teacher Registration which is considering expanding the scope of qualifications for teachers with VET certifications.⁸⁷

⁹¹ Ibid, pg. 21.

⁹² Associate Professor, Kitty te Reale. (2014) *Putting the Jigsaw Together: Flexible Learning Approaches in Australia*, Dusseldorp Forum. July. Pg.18. Accessed at: <http://dusseldorp.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Victoria-Institute-1-7-MB.pdf>

⁸⁶ Deloitte Economics for Hands On Learning Australia, ‘The socio-economic benefits of investing in the prevention of early school leaving’, September 2012, p. 14.

⁸⁷ Koziol, M., ‘From Tradies to Teachers: the Government’s plan to shake up Australia’s schools’, SMH, 9 February 2018. Accessed at: <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/from-tradies-to-teachers-the-plan-to-shake-up-australia-s-schools-20180209-p4yzu1.html>



Save the Children

7. Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION ONE:

Save the Children recommends that COAG:

- supports the scale up of place-based, collective impact approaches nationally with specific targets for a minimum number of sites across all States and Territories to adopt such approaches (including existing sites and communities as appropriate).
- leads the development of common definitions, standards and indicators for place-based approaches to ensure effective evaluation of success, through a tripartite and collaborative process involving the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Aboriginal communities and organisations and other service providers.
- ensures that timeframes for government tenders allow sufficient time for community organisations to collaborate with each other and community members as part of place-based ways of working.

RECOMMENDATION TWO:

Save the Children recommends that COAG:

- gives priority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to lead on service delivery where they have demonstrated capacity to do so.
- maintain existing funding streams at a State and Federal level for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous employers to provide targeted and culturally appropriate professional development opportunities, including relevant training/certifications and development of mentoring programs to develop capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- leverage funding agreements and policy settings to incentivise non-Indigenous organisations to provide in-kind or low cost technical expertise, management and operational support to enable an effective, sustainable and accountable transition to community control.

This should include mandating minimum Indigenous employment quotas in regional service delivery for organisations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, accessing State and Federal grant funding to improve pathways to employment and professional development in communities.

RECOMMENDATION THREE:

Save the Children recommends that:

- programs and services arising out the Closing the Gap Refresh at a Federal, State and Territory level include funding for an evaluation framework which is built into the program design and logic from the commencement of programming.
- any Federal or State/Territory targets should be supported by indicators which can provide data to the local government area. This will enable communities and organisations engaging in collective action frame works to deliver programs which measure outcomes at a local level.

RECOMMENDATION FOUR:

Save the Children recommends that COAG:

- establish national targets to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, including sub targets that address the underlying causes of child protection intervention.
- leading and funding the co-design of a national strategy to achieve such targets together with State/Territory governments, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations and leaders. A national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Leadership Forum should be supported to assist in this process.
- data is collected and published to better measure the situation of, causes and responses to over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system including reunification rates, community controlled family supports and longitudinal data. This data collection and publication could be led by either the Productivity Commission or the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, which both report annually on relevant existing data sets.

RECOMMENDATION FIVE:

Save the Children recommends that COAG:

- establish a Closing the Gap youth justice target to reduce the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous young people in the criminal justice system by 2040.
- leads and funds the co-design of a national justice reinvestment strategy to achieve such targets together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations. This should be supported by appropriate indicators (including incarceration and recidivism rates) to ensure accountability for reducing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the justice system.

RECOMMENDATION SIX:

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