

Date: 22/05/2026

Proposed changes to the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles

Re: Submission to the CLP Scrutiny Committee

I am writing to oppose the proposed changes to the Aboriginal Child Placement Principles and related legislation.

I am a qualified social worker with experience in child protection in Victoria, family violence, NDIS behaviour support and community development. I have extensive knowledge of, and experience working with, First Nations families in both the NT and Victoria. In my view, the measure of a good government is whether case managers are properly supported to do the work required to keep Indigenous children with their family, kin and culture wherever possible.

When this principle is not embedded in government systems, the risks increase significantly. The consequences include higher rates of offending, child and youth suicide, poverty, homelessness, intergenerational trauma, and the loss of culture, identity and community.

I urge you to consider this from a broader social perspective. We must do better. If, in a multicultural society, this is how we continue to misunderstand and punish First Peoples, what does that say about us? You are in a position of power, and you must listen to workers and communities on the frontline.

Victoria's Indigenous-led truth-telling inquiry into child protection, the [Yoorrook Justice Commission](#), was established in 2021 with the powers of a Royal Commission. Its final reports were tabled in the Victorian Parliament in 2025.

Yoorrook investigated systemic injustices affecting First Peoples and found that child protection practices in Victoria contribute to intergenerational trauma and the disproportionate placement of First Nations children in out-of-home care. The evidence overwhelmingly showed that children do better when they grow up with family, in community, in culture, and with appropriate support services around them.

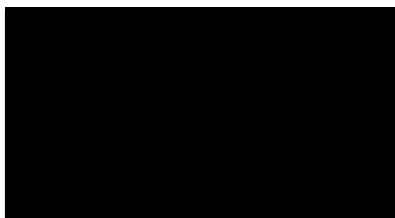
Following the work of the Yoorrook Commission, Victoria has moved away from rigid reunification timelines. Recent reforms have removed the strict 12-month and 24-month limits and restored greater flexibility for decisions based on a child's best interests. In practice, Victoria also has stronger wraparound supports. During my time working in child protection there, families could often be linked with services within one to two weeks of referral.

The key difference in the NT is that families often wait between two and eight months to access services. That delay alone raises serious questions about fairness. How can parents be expected to reunify with their children within two years when they may spend six months or more on waitlists while grieving and trying to get support? If the NT government chooses to entrench a two-year reunification deadline to align with national policy, it should also recognise that other jurisdictions are moving away from this approach because of the harm it causes. Removing First Nations children from their families and placing them in institutions causes lasting damage. Continuing these practices, despite the evidence, ignores reason, compassion and care.

Failing to prioritise Aboriginal children being placed with Aboriginal family, while imposing a two-year deadline on parents seeking reunification, is deeply unethical. It does not reflect the government's obligation to do everything within its power to protect children from harm and to support safe reunification wherever possible.

Before any such drastic and harmful changes to child protection principles are considered, there should be a Territory-wide inquiry similar to the Victorian Yoorrook Commission.

Regards,



Fiona Alessi

Karama, NT