



Legislative Scrutiny Committee
Northern Territory Legislative Assembly Legislative Scrutiny Committee

**Re: Submission on the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment
(Every Child Matters) Bill 2026**

Dear Committee Members,

As the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People in South Australia I wish to provide you with the *Holding onto Our Future Report 2024* that is highly relevant to the proposed amendments contained in the *Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026* in the Northern Territory. We hold significant concerns regarding several aspects of the proposed amendments, particularly those relating to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle – the subject of the South Australian Inquiry in 2024.

The *Holding on to Our Future (2024)* report found that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle is not being effectively implemented in practice, despite being embedded in policy and legislation. It highlights that Aboriginal children continue to be disproportionately removed from their families, often unnecessarily, with removal used too early rather than as a last resort. The report emphasises that these practices cause significant long-term harm, including trauma and disconnection from culture, while also contributing to intergenerational disadvantage. It further identifies a lack of genuine involvement and decision-making by Aboriginal families and communities, alongside systemic racism and culturally unsafe practices within the child protection system.

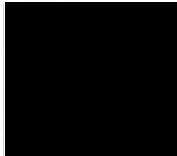
The report found that there is insufficient investment in early, culturally appropriate support services, meaning underlying issues such as poverty, housing instability and trauma are not adequately addressed. Overall, the report concludes that meaningful reform is needed to restore Aboriginal self-determination and ensure the Principle is applied as intended, with Aboriginal-led approaches to the care and protection of children.

We are concerned that aspects of the proposed reforms in the Northern Territory Bill may weaken safeguards designed to preserve Aboriginal children's cultural identity and kinship connections. In particular, the reframing of placement and participation provisions reduces the practical operation of the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and diminish the role of Aboriginal families and communities in decisions affecting children.



As Commissioner I appreciate the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry and would welcome any further engagement with the Committee regarding these matters.

Yours sincerely,



Dale Agius
South Australian Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People

22 May 2026