

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

My name is [REDACTED], and my family and I have lived in Darwin for the past 11 years. I am a linguist and anthropologist, and work closely with Larrakia Elders as well as other Aboriginal community leaders in the Top End.

I am deeply concerned by the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026. I believe this Bill may have long-term negative impacts on Aboriginal children and communities across the NT.

I am disturbed by the NT government's politicisation of a child's death, and the nature of the commentary about the child's family. The proposed reforms are a rushed, knee-jerk reaction to a highly complex issue. Any reviews or legislative changes should be done in consultation with experts, Aboriginal families and frontline workers, and need to be informed by evidence. The government has not done proper consultation and research regarding the proposed changes. The Northern Territory's Children's Commissioner has stated that she was not contacted by anyone from the NT government before the review was announced, and at least 300 organisations across the NT and Australia have stated their opposition to the Bill. For example, eight public legal services in the NT have released a joint statement calling on the government to focus on supporting families "rather than kneejerk legislative changes which risk creating another Stolen Generation and further harming a new generation of Aboriginal children".

The safety of children is paramount, and as a mother I support efforts to keep children safe. However, many issues relating to child protection involvement in Aboriginal families are closely linked to poverty, lack of access to services, housing instability and intergenerational disadvantage, rather than to a lack of love for children. The Bill itself recognises that families need access to safe housing, counselling and parenting support services. However, in many communities these services are underfunded or non-existent. This Bill prioritises government intervention over investment in services that would support families and strengthen communities.

The harms of removing Aboriginal children from their families are intergenerational and far-reaching. 92% of children in out-of-home care in the NT are Aboriginal, and only 16% of those are placed with family. Children who are disconnected from family, language and culture often experience long-term trauma and negative impacts on their wellbeing. Children are safest when families can access stable housing, mental health support, and culturally appropriate services.

I call on the Northern Territory government to scrap this Bill. Rather than expanding government powers to intervene in NT families, I implore the government to develop evidence-based reforms that keep children safe by strengthening their communities.

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