

From: [Natasha Kastrissios](#)
To: [Legislative Scrutiny Committee](#)
Subject: Submission: Care and Protection of Children Amendment Bill 2026
Date: Tuesday, 19 May 2026 5:40:07 PM

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Dear Legislative Scrutiny Committee,

Submission: Care and Protection of Children Amendment Bill 2026

I write on behalf of the Marthakal Homelands and Resource Centre Aboriginal Corporation to strongly oppose the Care and Protection of Children Amendment Bill 2026. I urge the Legislative Scrutiny Committee to examine whether this Bill has sufficient regard for the rights and liberties of Aboriginal children, families, and communities in the Northern Territory.

This Bill was introduced without genuine consultation with Aboriginal communities and was rushed through, with some stakeholders given as little as 48 hours to respond. It contradicts decades of evidence, Royal Commissions, and inquiry findings. It must not pass in its current form.

1. The Bill undermines the rights and liberties of Aboriginal children
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) exists because history has demonstrated the devastating harm caused when Aboriginal children are severed from family, culture, community, and Country. Weakening these safeguards risks entrenching harm and repeating past injustices. Furthermore, the proposed amendments appear discriminatory, as they specifically target and limit the rights of Aboriginal children.

2. The Bill is not supported by evidence
The government claims this Bill prioritizes child safety, yet there is extensive evidence that separating children from their culture negatively impacts their long-term wellbeing. The Bill reduces obligations to pursue reunification and expands punitive powers while leaving structural issues unaddressed. Currently, the NT government is failing to comply with existing principles; only 17 per cent of Indigenous children in out-of-home care in the NT are placed with relative or kin—the lowest rate in Australia.

3. Inadequate consultation process
Both the NT Children's Commissioner and the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People have called for a halt to these changes, warning that rushed amendments risk unintended consequences. Over 330 organizations across the NT have called for the legislation to be abandoned. No laws affecting Aboriginal children should pass without the meaningful and resourced consultation required by Closing the Gap commitments.

4. Meaningful alternatives for child safety
Aboriginal communities have identified what is actually needed to keep children safe:

- Safe and secure housing.
- Culturally safe two-way schooling environments.
- Community-led healing on Country, including mental health and substance programs.

- Support for extended family, Elders, and clan leaders to care for children within the community.
- Resourcing for community-led justice mechanisms, such as Law and Justice groups and peacekeepers.
- Genuine partnerships with extended family when removal is necessary to find culturally appropriate placements.

5. Recommendation

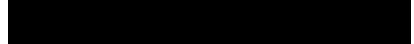
The Committee should find that this Bill does not have sufficient regard for the rights of Aboriginal children and individuals. We recommend:

1. The Bill not be passed in its current form.
2. The government immediately halt these legislative changes.
3. A genuine, resourced consultation process be undertaken with Aboriginal communities and experts.
4. The establishment of an independent inquiry to drive evidence-based systemic reform.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission.

Sincerely,

Natasha Kastrissios
Marthakal Homelands and Resource Centre Aboriginal Corporation


19 May 2026

I respectfully acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which I live. I pay respect to all First Nations peoples and elders, past, present and future.