



**NATSILS**

National Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander Legal Services

TRUE JUSTICE FOR OUR PEOPLE

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **NT child protection reforms will harm children, not protect them**

**25 May 2026**

The Northern Territory's proposed child protection reforms will harm children and families.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) stands with the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), the NT Children's Commissioner, the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, and other Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and community leaders in calling for the Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment Bill 2026 to be scrapped.

"Let's be clear: nothing is more important than our children's safety and wellbeing. Any insinuation that Aboriginal communities don't care about our kids is racist and dehumanising, and it couldn't be further from the truth," said Nerita Waight, Chair of NATSILS.

"The NT Government's bill is based on misinformation and mistruths. It demonises Aboriginal families rather than reforming the Territory systems that have been failing children for decades and are responsible for putting them at risk.

"The immediate safety and best interests of the child are already paramount in the NT's child protection laws. As NAAJA CEO Ben Grimes has said, the NT Government either doesn't understand its own legislation or is deliberately misrepresenting it to the public.

"Weakening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle will do irreparable harm to our children. The Principle is a protective framework that safeguards Aboriginal children's rights and wellbeing, through their vital connection to family, Culture and community. In no way does it compromise child safety.

"The Principle is not the problem. The NT is already ignoring it, with nearly 90% of child protection cases in the Territory involving Aboriginal children, 74 % living with non-Indigenous non-relatives– the highest rate of over-representation in the country.

"This dangerous bill will force more children into a cycle of institutionalisation. Children who are forcibly removed from their families face far worse life outcomes, including a much higher risk of entering the criminal legal system.

"This is just another example of states and territories proposing laws that are driven by political point-scoring rather than evidence. At the expense of our children and families. The NT government should be ashamed. In a time of mourning, they have politicised our children's safety yet again.

"This is happening across Australia, and it will continue unless the Federal Government steps in and demonstrates meaningful leadership.

“It’s up to the Prime Minister to answer the call to defend our children from the serious harm being imposed by state and territory governments, he holds the power, it is time he takes a stance for our children and for all children.” says Ms Waight.

**Media contact:** Catalina Casar, 0421 547 759, [catalina.casar@essentialmedia.com.au](mailto:catalina.casar@essentialmedia.com.au)