



UN Human Rights Council 41st Session

High removal rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their families must be addressed

By Antoinette Braybrook (in a joint statement with the Human Rights Law Centre)

Mr Vice President,

I am an Aboriginal woman born on Wurundjeri country. My family is Kuku Yalanji.

I thank the Special Rapporteur for his report highlighting States' obligation to promote social connection and non-violent relationships as key to wellbeing. As an Aboriginal woman from Australia, my strong identity and wellbeing comes from a deep connection to culture and family.

Our people continue to feel the full force of the invasion of our country. Today, the Australian Government removes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families at seven times the rate of other children, setting many on a path to youth and adult prison.

Family violence is a key driver to the removal of our children. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised because of family violence than any other women in our country. Our women fear reporting violence because of the punitive approaches taken by agencies that blame them and then take their children. Our mothers must feel safe to seek help and support to keep their children.

I call on the Human Rights Council and the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Health to urge the Australian Government to invest in culturally safe, specialist family violence services that are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled and our early intervention and prevention programs.

Urge our government to support our calls for a mandatory notification scheme whereby our specialist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services are notified as soon as a child comes in contact with child protection agencies.

Call on our governments to stop taking our children. There must be urgent action now to stop another generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being taken, lost and their culture stolen. Our children must be given every chance to thrive with their families, strong in culture and identity.

Thank you

Geneva, 25 June 2019

*This is the extended version of Djirra's positions on this issue. Due to time limitations, the oral presentation to the Human Rights Council was an abridged version of the above. Watch the video for the shortened version.