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Media Release

HAVE WE FORGOTTEN THE LESSONS OF THE STOLEN GENERATIONS?

Indigenous children and young people living in out-of-home care placements in the Northern Territory (NT) are at risk of being completely disconnected from their culture, experts have warned.

Indigenous family violence researcher, Dr Kyllie Cripps from UNSW, and co-researcher Julian Laurens, examined the recent establishment of Permanent Care Orders (PCOs) under the Territory's *Care and Protection Act 2007*.

The findings, published in a special children's rights edition of the *Indigenous Law Bulletin*, show a significant rise in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in out-of-home care placements in the NT and nationally; and a substantial increase in the number of children being placed in care arrangements away from their community and familial connections.

"For the NT in particular, PCOs do not provide any safeguards to protect the cultural identity of the child once placed under the order, with either a non-Indigenous family or Indigenous family," Dr Cripps said.

"There is a real risk Indigenous children will lose connection with culture, community and country—a situation that has been identified as resulting in a myriad of negative and lifelong consequences such as mental health problems, illicit substance and alcohol abuse, child protection reports, increased criminal justice system involvement, and suicide.

"Many Indigenous people in the NT view the system as nothing more than a vehicle through which their children are removed and communities broken up," Dr Cripps said.

"A display of leadership by governments in implementing best practice in this important area is needed to ensure that Australia's history of stolen children is not repeated."

Dr Cripps and Mr Laurens' concerns are echoed by solicitor Pip Martin from the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA).

“Even though neglect and family violence are the predominant child protection concerns, over 80 per cent of funding goes into child protection services and out-of-home care, rather than preventative measures such as family support,” Ms Martin said.

“This skews the system towards removal of children and is exacerbated for some Aboriginal families in the NT, where the interaction between the social context of poverty, limitations in the relevant legislation, and the remote service delivery context increases the chances of removal.

“We need more investment in preventative measures such as family support and an understanding that Aboriginal people and communities are best placed to make decisions about their children.”

[Click here](#) to access a copy of: *Protecting Indigenous Children's Familial and Cultural Connections: Reflections on Recent Amendments to the Care and Protection Act 2007 (NT)* by Kyllie Cripps and Julian Laurens.

[Click here](#) to access a copy of: *Glimmers of Hope in a Broken Child Protection System* by Pip Martin from NAAJA.

Media contact:

For interviews with Dr Kyllie Cripps or representatives from NAAJA contact:
Rebecca Gallegos 02 9385 2256 or 0429 483 747 r.gallegos@unsw.edu.au

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