



MEDIA RELEASE

To: News Editor
From: Uniting Church Synod of WA
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Reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care

The Uniting Church WA calls on the State and Federal Governments to fund and support Aboriginal organisations to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in Government care. The Uniting Church WA also called for the age of criminal responsibility to be raised from 10 to 14 years in Western Australia.

The calls were made at the 44th Annual Meeting of the Synod of WA where more than 150 Uniting Church members from around Western Australia came together to discuss issues of importance in the life of the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Western Australia, and the wider community this weekend, Friday 11 to Sunday 13 September.

Rev Robert Jetta, Chair of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress WA (Congress), said, "Too many of our young people are being taken away and put in care or entering the prison system. It means this generation are reliving the trauma of many years ago.

"We want the Government to support us to look after our young people. The funds that are being used to take kids away and lock kids up, we need to be spending that money on prevention, on supporting young mums and families to keep their kids."

The Synod meeting acknowledged that the practice of governments removing First Peoples' children from their families and placing them in the care of church-based agencies, while distinct in modern practice, closely echoes the practices that created the Stolen Generations.

Susy Thomas, the new Moderator of the Uniting Church WA, acknowledged that, "As a church we have apologised for our role in the Stolen Generations. We know the trauma that generated and still holds for Aboriginal people. We want to be part of making sure that this generation of Aboriginal families have all the resources they need to raise healthy children in their own communities."

There are currently 47 000 children aged 0 to 17 in out of home care across Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children make up most of this number.

Concern for children is a particularly important point for Congress. Through support for families to keep their children, connect with their culture, and become healthier and happier, Congress sees a positive future for their people.

While there will continue to be circumstances where the safest option for children is in some form of out of home care, and there are excellent examples of the positive influence foster carers can have, there is also an inherent trauma in removing a child from their family and heightened risks of poor outcomes.

"Our Australian Government needs to work harder to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families together by supporting families to be happy, healthy and connected to their culture," Susy Thomas said.

"We are calling for independent oversight and more funding to help reduce the number of Aboriginal children in out of home care in Australia."

Ends

*For media enquiries and interviews, please contact
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