

OzChild announces a new direction to support **self-determination for First Nations People**

OzChild Chief Executive Officer, Dr Lisa J. Griffiths has announced a bold and principled initiative to advance OzChild’s strategic goal of being a courageous voice for change and to advocate for self-determination for First Nations people.

With the support of the OzChild Board, and in consultation with the Director - National Aboriginal Practice and Partnerships, Chad Lofthouse, OzChild has committed to not receive money, funds, or referrals for the care of Aboriginal children, young people, or families from the government within five years.

This means OzChild will actively support the transfer of the delivery of support services for First Nations children, young people and families to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), which are best placed to provide culturally safe and effective support.

What this means:

- OzChild will return funding received from governments for existing services supporting First Nations children, young people and families where a suitable ACCO is available
- OzChild will not accept First Nations children, young people and family referrals and funding directly from governments without community and local ACCO endorsement.

This decision reflects OzChild’s recognition of the rights and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to determine their own futures and to have access to services that are designed and delivered by them. It is also aligned with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the policy positions of SNAICC and other peak bodies, and the evidence-based solutions that have been developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

Furthermore, it is responsive to the urgent need to address the systemic over-representation of First Nations children and young people in the child protection and justice systems, and to support the strengthening of the ACCO sector. Announcing this move, Dr Griffiths explains that the organisation will develop a transition plan in collaboration with OzChild’s First Nations staff, ACCOs, Aboriginal Peaks and partner agencies. “Working collaboratively to develop our transition plan will ensure the safety and wellbeing of children and young people is at the forefront of our actions. This will be underpinned by our efforts to establish deeply respected and trusted relationships with community controlled organisations.”

OzChild will also work with governments, peak bodies, and other stakeholders to facilitate the transfer of funding and referrals to ACCOs where possible and appropriate, and to provide support and assistance when requested.

“This initiative is a significant step in OzChild’s journey of reconciliation and allyship with First Nations people and communities. It will require us to embrace change, to learn from our First Nations colleagues and partners, and to challenge the status quo. It will also create new opportunities for OzChild to innovate, collaborate, and advocate for what works for children, young people, and families,” said Dr Griffiths.

“OzChild’s commitment to being a courageous voice for change in supporting self-determination is one of the most significant pieces of work we will undertake and hopefully will be a catalyst for change that we believe must happen. We are determined to ensure our organisation is positioned on the right side of history by drawing a line in the sand today with the announcement of our commitment.”

This commitment will be the foundation of the Stretch RAP OzChild will embark on in 2026.

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