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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Urgent Action needed to address high rate of Aboriginal children in state care.**

Key Aboriginal organisations have called for urgent talks with Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Ben Wyatt and Commissioner for Children and Young People, Colin Pettit to tackle the over representation of Aboriginal children in state care. “That over 54% of children in care are Aboriginal needs to be urgently addressed to avoid another generation of trauma and it’s aftermath”, said Aboriginal Family Legal Services (AFLS) CEO Corina Martin.

AFLS has partnered with Family Matters, the Noongar Child Protection Council and Kimberley Aboriginal Children in Care Committee to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in state care, initiating and promoting a range of activities within the communities and government to address systemic disadvantage and support Aboriginal families. However, we urgently need an increased commitment from the State government to work alongside of us to ensure we implement improved ways of working with families and communities.

“Our figures show that Western Australia has the highest rate of Aboriginal children in state care in the nation. Given this, the Aboriginal Family Law Services would like to see the urgent appointment of a dedicated Commissioner for Aboriginal Children. It is essential that we focus on shifting investment towards community led preventative and early intervention approaches. One such approach could include the adoption of national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child protection notification and referral system, to better support families and children who come into contact with the child protection system.” The national Family Violence Prevention Legal Services secretariat have endorsed this initiative as a measure to intervene earlier in the trajectory from family violence to child protection to imprisonment.

The AFLS is also concerned that key recommendations made over a decade ago by the Gordon Inquiry to address family violence, were not implemented. “We need human rights based approaches to improve Aboriginal children’s lives and the trauma of Aboriginal child removal today,” Dr. McGlade, Chair of AFLS urged, “We do not understand why WA is the only state that hasn’t yet signed the Family Matters Statement of Commitment national campaign to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal children in out of home care.

We call on the State to commence formal dialogue with Aboriginal representative bodies. There is a great deal that can and should be done to keep children safe in families and communities.”

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