



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

National Child Protection Week: Celebrating the strength and spirit of our children

As National Child Protection Week begins, we celebrate our children and recognise the leadership of First Nations families and communities in keeping our children safe, strong and proud.

The 2025 theme *Every Conversation Matters: Shifting Conversation to Action* calls on all of us to move beyond words and take meaningful steps to create safe environments for children. For Children's Ground, this means prevention and cultural protection led by families and communities. It means supporting children to grow strong in identity, language and culture while also creating access to health, learning and life opportunities as a norm.

The safety of our children is most protected in the freedom and strength of our culture. At Children's Ground, families are creating places of safety and environments where our next generation are thriving. Across our communities, children are engaged in learning from an early age with families walking alongside them in safe and nurturing environments. In Central Australia, the proportion of children engaged in early years learning has grown from 14% to 68% in just a few years. Across Children's Ground more than 1,100 children and family members took part in health promotion activities in 2024 alone.

Safety is children growing up strong in culture, surrounded by family, supported in their health and thriving in their learning. Cultural knowledge and practice are creating protection and empowerment. This is what every child deserves.

Community-led prevention plays a critical role in keeping children safe. Despite the clear evidence that prevention works, governments continue to direct resources elsewhere. In 2023–24 more than \$10.2 billion was spent on child protection services, as the number of children removed from their families, Country and culture continues to rise. This is preventable.

Children's Ground Chair William Tilmouth said "We know what works. For generations, our families have raised strong, resilient children through culture, kinship and community. Right now, our children are most under threat by government policies that are removing them from families and placing them in detention. We are fighting against the system rather than the system working for the protection of our children. Governments continue to pour billions into crisis and punitive responses, while Aboriginal systems of care and prevention such as Children's Ground remain grossly underfunded.

"Conversations are a beginning, but words alone are not enough. Our children need action. Real change must be led by families and communities with the resources to keep them safe and strong. Our young ones continue to show resilience through immense challenges. Through the leadership in our communities, we are trying to change the tide in the face of hardship, holding on to culture, identity and hope. The responsibility to act rests with all of us," said Mr Tilmouth.

"This week we honour the brilliance of our little ones, the leadership of families and the strength of culture. Children's Ground shows that prevention is possible when communities lead, and we continue to call for true partnership with governments to ensure every community has this opportunity," said Mr Tilmouth.

Independent cost-benefit analysis confirms the economic case: every \$1 invested in the Children's Ground Approach returns \$5.70 to government in avoided expenditure, with the greatest savings in child protection, early childhood and health. This is investment that creates stronger families, thriving communities and long-term savings for the nation.

This week is a reminder of what is possible for our children. Safety is children growing up strong in culture, connected to family, supported in health and thriving in learning. The evidence shows that prevention works and culture protects. By walking with communities and respecting their leadership, Australia can ensure every child grows up safe, celebrated and strong.

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