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NACCHO calls on the federal government to work with us to keep our children safe

According to media reports last night, a four-year-old boy from the community of Ali Curung in the Northern Territory has been taken to Alice Springs for medical care after he was allegedly sexually assaulted on the weekend and police are investigating. The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) is deeply concerned that some of our children are being sexually interfered with.

NACCHO Chair John Singer said, “that the sexual abuse of any Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal children has got to stop. It is not acceptable and in no way can our communities, the Australian community at large or Governments at all levels condone this continuing. I welcome a thorough investigation by the Northern Territory Child Abuse Taskforce and Children’s Commissioner into this grave allegation.”

Our Sector continues to call for immediate Government action to assist families to keep their children safe. We know these are complex issues requiring urgent responses but the abuse still continues. We need a comprehensive approach to child and community safety with a focus on prevention and community education.

One part of the solution is in establishing a Confidential Child Help Line within Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services by regions which is a no-brainer for any government to fund and implement in this budget cycle. In getting better rates of disclosure, we can respond to both victims and offenders. This is particularly important when young people are perpetrators so that they can be held to account for their behaviour and receive appropriate rehabilitation and behavioural change programs.

Extra resources should also be made immediately available for wrap around Families and Children Support services to work with traumatised children and their families. This requires a multi-disciplinary professional team to provide full assessment and treatment programs in our local communities. A health-led therapeutic model will deliver much better outcomes for our people.
Often as the academic evidence now suggests, perpetrators have themselves often been abused and they too require treatment not punitive punishment regimes or they will not be rehabilitated and will re-offend. There is also no national plan to redress the Social Determinants of Health in Aboriginal communities throughout Australia.¹

“Further the NT Government needs to take a good hard look at the total number of liquor licenses granted and curtail them to stop the flow of alcohol. People must come before profits. The grog is killing our people and our children are exposed to the results of that every day. Those dry communities are to be commended for their efforts to control alcohol consumption, but the sheer number of liquor outlets at Roadhouses on the Highway and in the closest towns undermines their efforts to live safe and peacefully in their local community. Government must take off the blinkers over these issues, show leadership and take the actions outlined,” said Mr Singer.

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