



## Advocating for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in Melbourne, Australia

Adrienne Bombelles  
University of Michigan, School of Social Work



### Global Field Agency

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Care (SNAICC) is the national non-governmental peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. SNAICC works for the fulfilment of the rights of our children, in particular to ensure their safety, development and well-being.

SNAICC represents a membership body of over 1400 Indigenous-led and controlled child care centers and advocacy groups across Australia

### Indigenous Youth are over-represented in the child-protection system across Australia

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children comprise 5.5% of all children aged 0-17 years in Australia yet they constitute nearly 35% of all children placed in out-of-home care
- The national rate of Indigenous children in out-of-home care is almost 10 times the rate for non-Indigenous children
- The numbers of Indigenous children in foster care and receiving child protection services is steadily rising - from 12,358 in 2011 to 15,455 in 2015

### Melbourne, Australia

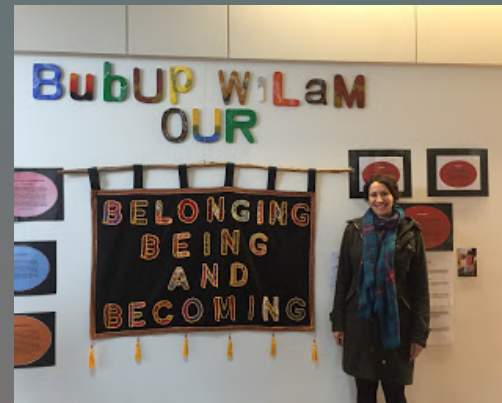
Melbourne is the capital and the most populous city of the southeastern Australian state of Victoria. It has been rated the "world's most liveable city" for 6 years in a row and is referred to as Australia's cultural capital

### Placement Focus

As a Social Policy and Program Evaluation student, I had the opportunity to research the Australian federal and the Victorian state government's policies concerning the placement of Indigenous children in the child protection system and how culturally-appropriate Indigenous early education services are funded

### My project accomplishments include:

- Authored an independent research project on Social Impact Bonds, a funding mechanism that could potentially provide additional funding for under-resourced yet vital early child education centers serving Indigenous children
- Conducted independent research on the impact new legislation in the Australian Parliament will have on placing Indigenous children in out-of-home care and on their access to culturally appropriate early education services
  - Work-shopped a trauma-informed cultural competency training seminar for child care providers working with Indigenous children in the child protection system
- Created a Student Peer-Learning group to further develop the structure of SNAICC's internship program



### Skills Utilized:

I developed my ability to identify and engage stakeholders involved in our issue area; how to be a culturally sensitive advocate for a community that I do not share a heritage with; how to manage an independent research project

### Classroom Connections:

*SW 647 Policies and Services for Social Participation and Community Well-Being* helped me to understand the policies and services that promote a civil society  
*SW 504 Social Justice and Diversity in Social Work* helped me to apply a PODS framework and engage with diversity and differences when practicing international social work

### Lessons Learned:

To effectively advocate for and craft inclusive social policy, one must prioritize relationship building and be patient when working alongside and learning from the served community

### Career Connections:

My global experience enhanced my ability to build cross-cultural relationships and appreciate the differences between how social policy is implemented in the United States compared with other nations. This knowledge will improve my ability to act as a policy analyst in a foreign setting

### Advice

- Build your knowledge base before departure by studying the history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations
- Read the Australian news to stay informed on the current political climate
- If possible, connect with people in your agency or involved in Indigenous rights advocacy to get a sense of the culture you are entering

### Acknowledgements

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