



**STATEMENT FROM AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONERS AND GUARDIANS ON THE DOCUMENTARY FILM 'IN MY BLOOD IT RUNS'**

The Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners and Guardians were privileged earlier this year to view an advanced screening of the documentary film 'In My Blood It Runs' from director, Maya Newell.

The film tells a powerful story through the eyes of 10-year-old Djujan, an Arrernte/Garrwa boy living in a town camp in Mparntwe (Alice Springs).

Djujan is a multi-lingual hunter and healer with a rich curiosity about his culture and ambitious dreams for his future. Yet, he is becoming disengaged from school and falling under increasing surveillance by police and welfare agencies—increasing his alienation from the institutions intended to educate, uplift and protect him.

This film illustrates the value and importance of listening to and understanding children's voices and experiences from their own perspective. By positioning viewers to see the world through Djujan's eyes, we see first-hand the systemic injustices that create barriers to him fulfilling his potential and his gifts, in favour of interventions that increase his risk of spiralling into the criminal justice system.

This film makes a compelling case to address the systemic racism that is too often embedded in our educational, justice and child welfare systems. It demonstrates the importance of raising the age of criminal responsibility in favour of supportive interventions that prevent youth offending. It shows the love and care that Aboriginal families have for their children, the power of culture for children, and the painful ways this is often called into question. It portrays the strength and resilience of Aboriginal communities still fighting the legacy of colonisation. The film will also challenge viewers from Aotearoa/New Zealand, where similar issues are faced by many indigenous Maori children.

As Children's Commissioners Guardians and Advocates, we commend the film's centering of Djujan and the significant level of input, ownership and control Djujan, his family and his community had in shaping the film and defining the social impact

objectives they want to achieve from sharing their stories. We support measures to ensure children have access to culturally safe, inclusive schools; efforts to address systemic racism in all our institutions; and reforms to prevent the criminalisation of young children like Djuwan, including reforms to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility.

The film celebrates the continuation of Aboriginal traditional practices through the talents of young Djuwan. The Aboriginal Children's Commissioners, in particular, felt the film reminded the audiences of the uniqueness and significance of Aboriginal children as vessels of the longest continuous culture in the world. Much needs to be done to support Aboriginal children to be safe and connected to family with the balance of culture and identity; as without the balance, their wellbeing and their inherent rights as Aboriginal children cannot be fully realised.

We encourage all Australians to see the film, to share its message and to engage with the uncomfortable truths it reveals about how First Nations children and families are too often treated in our society.

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Statement endorsed by:

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