



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

The national peak body for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander children and families
www.snaicc.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE

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Statement by SNAICC Chairperson Sharron Williams

Dropping PPL should pave the way for more support for disadvantaged families

SNAICC welcomes Prime Minister Abbott's decision to drop the Paid Parental Leave scheme and focus on improved child care support for Australian families.

Mr Abbott's about-turn should pave the way for badly needed reforms in the child care sector and lead to a more affordable and accessible system for disadvantaged Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The renewed focus on child care is an exciting opportunity to reform the sector and deliver long-term funding commitment to Indigenous community-controlled early years services. This is the key to vastly improve support for our families and preparing our children for school so that they enjoy the same opportunities as other Australian children.

As a starting point, SNAICC calls on the Abbott Government to table the Productivity Commission report on child care and finalise the review into Budget Based Funded program as soon as possible.

SNAICC calls on the Abbott Government to reverse its decision to no longer fund the 38 new Aboriginal Child and Family Centres across Australia. The ACFCs were established to provide integrated early education and care, family support and specialist health services in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the country.

Given their crucial importance in helping to Close the Gap, the Abbott Government's decision was both perplexing and disappointing — and left the ACFCs to rely on their respective state and territory governments to keep their doors open.

It's also time for clarity on the future of the 270 Indigenous community-controlled early years services funded under the Budget Based Funded (BBF) program — a program that has been under review since June 2012.

Our BBF services provide an array of services beyond child care, including nutrition, transport, family support, health and early intervention programs.

Despite years of inadequate funding, these services — including crèches, mobile services, Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services and Outside School Hours Care — have done an outstanding job in supporting families and getting children ready for school.

All of our community-controlled services — and our children and families — deserve greater clarity and support.

Instead, the early years sector is riven by funding cuts and uncertainty. Adding to this state of flux has been the push to mainstream services in both the BBF review and the Productivity Commission's draft report on child care.

SNAICC and our early years services strongly oppose the push to a mainstream, fee-based child care model. The reality is that many of these services operate in disadvantaged communities where a mainstream, self-sustaining model, that relies on the community paying, is not feasible.

Our families are also more likely to use Indigenous-controlled services because they provide flexible and responsive services, they nurture children's cultural identity and connections, and they understand the particular issues and needs of our children and families.

Our community controlled services should be better supported to carry out their crucial role — a greater and more effective investment that would lead to life-changing benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, including improved school participation, education, health and employment outcomes.

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