



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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Statement by Geraldine Atkinson, SNAICC Deputy Chairperson — Early Childhood

SNAICC welcomes extension of funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services

SNAICC welcomes the Australian Government's announcement that it has extended funding of the Budget Based Funding (BBF) program until June 2014, as an interim measure while it completes a review of the program.

The announcement provides some short-term relief and certainty to the 269 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services around Australia that receive vital funding under the program.

These services represent 80 per cent of all BBF services and include long day care centres, out of school hours care, crèches, mobile children's services, playgroups and Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS).

The services generally operate from a strong, historical community base, providing accessible and affordable, community-controlled, culturally-competent early childhood education and care services, as well as family support.

The review of the BBF program provides a crucial opportunity to address the concerns identified in June 2012 by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding "the serious and widespread discrimination" faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in accessing basic services.

The Government has indicated that it will now conduct phase two consultations by establishing an external stakeholder reference group to work through some issues raised in the BBF review to date.

SNAICC submitted a series of recommendations to the BBF review, the most critical of which focused on the inadequacy of current funding and the detrimental effect this has had in limiting the support services are able to provide their communities.

SNAICC's submission also outlined the need for reframing the program to ensure appropriate support for the large numbers of high-needs children in BBF services, and for a targeted, resourced and consistent funding model that meets the needs of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

SNAICC: The national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Any reform of the BBF program must support the unique cultural strengths of these services and recognise the critical role that they play in closing the gap in educational, health and wellbeing outcomes for our children.

SNAICC applauds the Government for taking time to think through the way ahead and looks forward to working with DEEWR to ensure a program that provides quality service supports for our children.

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