



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA ALERT

The future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services — breakfast event, Parliament House, Canberra, 13 February 2014

A Parliamentary breakfast in Canberra will bring together key players to discuss the crucial role and funding future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early childhood services across Australia.

Community-controlled services are proving successful in overcoming barriers faced by Indigenous children and families — some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged Australian citizens. The services are nurturing children and getting them school-ready, providing accessible, affordable and integrated support to families, creating employment and building the capacity of their communities.

These services — numbering around 300 across Australia — include long day care centres, out of school hours care, crèches, mobile children's services, playgroups and Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS), as well as the 38 new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and Family Centres (ACFCs) created to deliver integrated child and family services.

Despite their core importance, there are far too few Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early childhood services and they are grossly underfunded — forcing many of them to cut programs and turn away children in need. Their funding future remains uncertain beyond June 2014.

The plan at this stage is that some of the services come under the user-pay mainstream funding program. All evidence, including Government reports, confirms that this is not a viable option for services operating in areas specifically targeted at disadvantaged Indigenous communities.

Representatives from Indigenous early childhood services will present their cases at the breakfast event, which will be opened by Mick Gooda, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. Dr Ngiare Brown, a member of the Prime Minister's Indigenous Advisory Council who has significant expertise in this field, will deliver the keynote speech.

The majority of the Indigenous Advisory Council will also be in attendance, including chairman Warren Mundine, as well as NT Senator Nova Peris among a number of Federal MPs.

SNAICC is holding the breakfast event in partnership with the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), Early Childhood Australia and UNICEF.

WHERE: House of Representatives Alcove
Parliament House, Canberra

DATE: Thursday, 13 February

TIME: 7 to 8:30am

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