



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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Aboriginal community-controlled services need funding certainty to deliver better results in closing the gap

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (SNAICC) has again called for long-term funding certainty for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early childhood services, following the Prime Minister's Closing the Gap report this morning.

The Prime Minister has again reported mixed results under the key target areas, with disappointing news on efforts to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade. Mr Abbott has vowed to lift attendance rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to the level of other children within five years as the foundation for improved outcomes.

SNAICC asserts that Indigenous community-controlled early childhood services must be supported to play a pivotal role in assisting families and improving the educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children — given that the critical phase of development in children occurs before they go to school.

SNAICC has urged the Australian Government to commit to a ten-year funding model for the 300 Indigenous community-controlled early childhood services across Australia. These services include long day care centres, out of school hours care services, Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) and the 38 new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family centres (ACFCs).

The services face an uncertain funding future beyond June 2014.

SNAICC has developed a cost-effective proposal that calls for existing allocations to be redirected to provide the same funding levels to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as are provided to other children in Australia.

SNAICC's proposal looks to secure sustainable levels of funding for evidence based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services for the next 10 years, and calls for the creation of 40 new community-controlled services across Australia every three years.

The program proposal has been endorsed by key organisations in the early

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

childhood sector and Indigenous peak and representative agencies, as well as Professor Deb Brennan, a leading early childhood expert.

In a paper by Professor Deb Brennan, commissioned by SNAICC, titled *Joining the Dots*, Professor Brennan found services provided holistic, community-led programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that “address a wide range of physical, social, emotional and learning needs — far wider than the needs in mainstream early education and care services.”

Professor Brennan found a low participation rate by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the mainstream child care and early childhood education system— even though they are a priority target for services.

Only around 2 per cent of 0-5 year olds who participate in Commonwealth approved early years services are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, even though they represent more than twice that proportion (4.7%) in the community.

SNAICC will hold a breakfast event at Parliament House in Canberra this Thursday, 13 November, bringing together key players in the early childhood sector — including representatives from Indigenous early childhood services — to discuss issues around the future and funding of services.

The breakfast event will be held in partnership with the Australian Council of Social Service, Early Childhood Australia and UNICEF.

Media inquiries: **Frank Hytten, SNAICC CEO, on (0432) 345 652;**
 Emma Sydenham, SNAICC Deputy CEO, (0415) 188990
 Holly Mason-White, SNAICC Senior Policy Officer,
 (0405) 827 274
 Giuseppe Stramandinoli, SNAICC Media Officer,
 (0419) 508 125