



SNAICC
National Voice for our Children
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation
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15 March 2018

OUR VOICES MUST LEAD IN THE NEXT PHASE OF CLOSING THE GAP

Melbourne, Australia: Today, on National Close the Gap Day, SNAICC recognises that we have a shared responsibility to ensure the rights of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child to be safe and thrive in their families, communities and cultures.

This year marks a decade since the Closing the Gap Strategy was developed to achieve equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by 2030. In 2018, this day of action is needed more than ever. The Prime Minister has acknowledged that six of the seven targets for Closing the Gap are not on track, and a refresh of the strategy is currently being conducted.

Today, nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 10.1 times more likely to be living in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children, with 10,000 more children living in out-of-home care today than since the Closing the Gap Strategy was introduced.

In early years education – an area that has proven to have the greatest impact on a child’s lifelong education and employment outcomes – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are only half as likely to access early education as non-Indigenous children.

On this day, SNAICC calls for the current Closing the Gap targets to be expanded to:

- ensure our children’s safety by including an **additional target** to eliminate over-representation of our children in out-of-home care by 2040, and sub-targets that address the underlying causes of child protection intervention.
- foster our children’s wellbeing and development by **strengthening the current target** on education to eliminate the under-representation of our 0 to 5-year old children in early childhood education and care services by 2040.

In February 2018, a Special Gathering was held to discuss Closing the Gap involving forty-five prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, up to six from each jurisdiction. The Special Gathering Statement emphasises that ‘the next phase of the Closing the Gap agenda must be guided by the principles of empowerment and self-determination’.

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SNAICC Chairperson, Sharron Williams would like to add, “It is imperative that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are at the centre of decision-making processes from the beginning. If this had happened a decade ago when the Closing the Gap Strategy was first developed, maybe the gap would be much narrower already.”

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