



SNAICC
National Voice for our Children
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SNAICC WELCOMES SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EARLY YEARS SERVICES

Melbourne, Australia: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children strongly welcomes Minister Birmingham’s commitment to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services to transition to the new child care system.

With long-held concerns from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services about the impacts associated with the roll out of the Government’s new Child Care Package, Minister Birmingham has this week announced an important three-month “checkpoint” for Budget Based Funding (BBF) services transitioning to the new model, providing a crucial opportunity to assess service viability and the need for further top-up funding.

“These services are the life-blood of our communities. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander integrated early years services across the country are concerned that they will not be able to continue critical supports for the children and families that need them most. This commitment will give them hope,” says Geraldine Atkinson, SNAICC Deputy Chairperson.

BBF services have confirmation this week of funding under the new Community Child Care Fund (CCCF), starting in July 2018. It is encouraging to note that 66 BBF services will receive greater annual CCCF funding than their current BBF funding. This investment is critical to support access to early learning and integrated supports for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, and must be sustained over the long-term to meet the needs of those experiencing most vulnerability in our communities.

Concerns remain however that the most vulnerable families will have reduced access to critical early learning opportunities, and face administrative difficulties in accessing subsidy entitlements, under the new system. Most critically, the new activity test halves subsidised hours to only 12 hours per week for families where one or both parents don’t meet work or study requirements.

“We have an open door policy,” says Ms Atkinson. “We can’t turn our children in need away. We need a system that has some flexibility to enable us to work closely with those families who are struggling most, not push them away.”

The checkpoint announced by the Minister will be vital to identify and address challenges for services in the transition to the new system. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child and

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Family Centres should also be included within this checkpoint given that they have similarly been set up in areas of particular vulnerability to support early learning access for those that need it most.

Close assessment of the impact on participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in early learning will also be critical over this period. If the new system is not serving our children this needs to be identified quickly so that appropriate changes can be made. Without an increase in participation, and progress in redressing the identified 15,000-place gap in early learning places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, we cannot make substantive progress in efforts to achieve equality.

“We know the importance of quality early learning as a foundation for long-term education and life success,” says Ms Atkinson. “There are no more excuses. We need to see these opportunities for our young ones now. We are working with the Government to do all we can to see this happen.”

To this end, it is very positive that 96 services awarded CCCF funding this week intend to expand their services through longer hours or additional places. It is fundamental, however, that the right policies and mechanisms are in place to ensure those places can go not necessarily to the highest paying clients, but to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that need support most.

Confirmation that BBF services not coming under the new Child Care Package will be supported under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy is also strongly welcomed.

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For more information please visit www.snaicc.org.au or contact:

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