

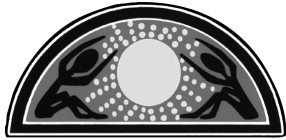


Secretariat of National  
Aboriginal and Islander  
Child Care

## **Future Directions of the Federal Budget Based Funding Program Workshop Report**

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A strong voice for our children and families

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SNAICC is the national non-government peak body  
that advocates on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander children and families.

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## A. Overview

On 26-27 November 2012, SNAICC convened a workshop of key early childhood leaders (identified on page 2) to examine the future direction of the Budget Based Funding (**BBF**) program. The workshop aimed to identify concrete, tangible proposals for the development of the program to better meet the needs of the Australian Government, non-mainstream early childhood education and care (**ECEC**) services targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and, in particular, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

This report presents the series of concrete proposals developed in the workshop. Different proposals are aimed respectively at the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (**DEEWR**), and at relevant stakeholders and services within the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood sector.

Participant support for the BBF program was unanimous, however the group recognised that significant improvements within the program and supports beyond the program are also necessary for a holistic strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to realise their vision for early childhood development. Ultimately, workshop participants agreed that a sustainable funding model for non-mainstream early childhood services is fundamental and should be a priority focus in the review of the BBF Program.

Key proposals for the future of the program include a revision of the BBF program objectives to better reflect current need and contexts, and to ground the program within the Council of Australian Governments (**COAG**) Closing the Gap, and broader ECEC, policy agenda. A second theme is the need for the development of a clear, sustainable and equitable funding model – potentially through pooling varied governmental funding sources - that will support services to provide holistic, ongoing services to their communities. A SNAICC facilitated Working Group on early childhood education and care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is proposed to take these actions forward by the sector, comprised at this stage of the workshop participants. The Working Group looks forward to dialogue with government stakeholders on these proposals and the way forward.

## B. Background

The development of a sustainable and effective early childhood education and care service model for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families is a pressing concern. The importance of the early years for good outcomes for children, and particularly for disadvantaged children, is abundantly clear. This is strongly reflected in the current national policy framework, in particular the *National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education* and the *National Early Childhood Development Strategy, Investing in the Early Years*, 2009, which recognise the importance of early childhood for positive outcomes for

children and for reversing cycles of disadvantage. Whilst early childhood services are key mechanisms through which to reduce disadvantage, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are still underrepresented in ECEC services and face significant barriers to accessing services. Under the Closing the Gap Indigenous Reform Agenda COAG has committed to the *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development*. Whilst this represents a significant and valuable step, this does not commit funding to ECEC services beyond the establishment of the 38 national Children and Family Centres (CFCs).

The BBF program has played a significant role in improving access to ECEC services, but has the potential to further significantly increase participation in and outcomes from early childhood services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families if appropriately designed, resourced and managed. The current BBF program consists of programs cobbled together over decades, with no cohesive framework or support infrastructure. Substantial under-funding has meant that many services have had to cut back on a range of programs, and a number of services have poorer infrastructure and resources, and less qualified staff, than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services.

DEEWR is currently conducting a review of the BBF program to ensure the program continues to achieve its objectives, is responsive and targeted to contemporary needs, and supports the delivery of high quality ECEC services to children, families and communities. This is a critical opportunity to redress the gaps identified and to explore how best to construct a non-mainstream integrated early childhood development program that meets the current policy imperatives of 'Closing the Gap' in Indigenous disadvantage. From the sector's perspective, it is also a moment to make clear again the strengths of communities and offer mechanisms that build on those strengths to support long-term empowerment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

SNAICC and others provided written submissions to the BBF review process. SNAICC organised this workshop to build on these submissions and ensure that the BBF review benefits from the consolidated, collective input of those with deep and longstanding academic, sector and service level expertise. This included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous expertise. SNAICC believes that only by building on this two way knowledge and expertise can any solutions reflect the practical complexities and nuances of service development and delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, as well as groundbreaking understandings of childhood development and overcoming disadvantage. The particular strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and communities must also be central to framing a way forward, in particular given that Indigenous children comprise 80% of all BBF services.

The questions that arise in exploring how best to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children achieve their vision for early childhood development within their communities are complex and layered. Two days to talk through and together explore these issues is a starting point only, but a necessary starting point. The following proposals are

presented to the sector and to DEEWR as a step in what we hope will be an ongoing process of dialogue and action.

## C. Proposals to DEEWR

**Recommendation 1:** *DEEWR redefine the BBF Program objectives to more explicitly focus on the role of the BBF program in the national 'Closing the Gap' and early childhood development agendas, and develop a program statement that sets out how the program will be supported to work towards 'Closing the Gap' outcomes*

The objectives of the BBF program represent a historical definition that does not accurately or adequately capture the focus and role of BBF services, nor allow for development of potential new service roles that services have pioneered and that may not yet have been explored. The legacy of the trauma caused to individuals, families and communities by colonisation and the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, continues to have profound impact. The protective quality of culture where it has been damaged needs regeneration, and where it is strong needs strengthening through healing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agency. Research demonstrates that threat to the persistence of personal or cultural identity poses a counterpart threat to individual or community well-being.<sup>1</sup> *"Failures to achieve a viable sense of self or cultural continuity are strongly linked to self destructive and suicidal behaviours."*<sup>2</sup> Where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have strong cultural attachment, they display improved outcomes across a range of areas, including self-assessed health, substance abuse, employment and educational attainment.<sup>3</sup> Evidence-based policy that seeks to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must therefore take into account that *"Indigenous culture should be maintained and leveraged as a part of the solution to Indigenous disadvantage, rather than being seen as part of the problem."*<sup>4</sup> Key to this is rebuilding cultural continuity, demonstrated by preservation of Indigenous language, community control over key services and local decision-making.<sup>5</sup>

This situation is reflected in the experience of children, the most vulnerable children across Australia – with 52% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander five year old children classified as 'at risk' or vulnerable in the domains of language and cognitive skills (compared to 21% of

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<sup>1</sup> Chandler, M.J. & Lalonde, C.E. 2008. "Cultural Continuity as a Protective Factor Against Suicide in First Nations Youth", *Horizons --A Special Issue on Aboriginal Youth, Hope or Heartbreak: Aboriginal Youth and Canada's Future*. 10(1), 68-72; Hallett, D., Chandler, M. J., & Lalonde, C. 2007. Aboriginal Language Knowledge and Youth Suicide. *Cognitive Development* 22 (3), pp. 392–399.

<sup>2</sup> Chandler, M. J., & Lalonde, C. E. 1998. Cultural continuity as a hedge against suicide in Canada's First Nations. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 35, 191-219.

<sup>3</sup> Dockery, A., Michael. 2012. *Do traditional culture and identity promote the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians? Evidence from the 2008 NATSISS*, 281, in H. Boyd, & Nicholas, Biddle (Eds.) *Survey Analysis for Indigenous Policy in Australia: Social Science Perspectives*. Canberra, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research - The Australian National University: pp. 281-306.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> See FN 1 and 2.

non-Indigenous five year olds);<sup>6</sup> child abuse and neglect substantiation rates that are 7.6 times higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children than for non-Indigenous children;<sup>7</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being 10.1 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be living away from home;<sup>8</sup> and a range of lower early childhood health outcomes than experienced by the general population.<sup>9</sup>

The holistic Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care services provide a trusted community owned and driven entry point to tackle the trauma, poverty, dislocation and disempowerment many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families experience. They provide a space where children can access basic supports they need to thrive in their early years. They also importantly provide a space for Indigenous ways to be strengthened, nourished and valued, so that Indigenous Australia and non-Indigenous Australia can benefit from the rich quality, diversity and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures now and in the future. BBF services are key contributors to two of the three 'Closing the Gap' priority outcomes:

- Safe, healthy and supportive family environments with strong communities and cultural identity; and
- Positive child development and prevention of violence, crime and self-harm.

BBF services work directly with children and their families to meet pressing needs, to support them to retain and extend their cultural and social strengths, and to provide a foundation for them to develop to their fullest potential.

The core elements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander BBF services, that is an approach that places culture at the centre, holistic service provision, community control, responsiveness and flexibility to community needs and aspirations,<sup>10</sup> reflect the evidence emerging at state, national and international levels on what works to overcome disadvantage.<sup>11</sup> These outcomes can be far greater where the services are provided with the basic supports necessary to provide effective, high quality service. Where recent Government reviews continue to decree that past approaches to remedying Indigenous disadvantage have clearly failed, and new approaches that engage Aboriginal and Torres

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<sup>6</sup> SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision). 2011. *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2011*. Productivity Commission. Canberra, 5.45

<sup>7</sup> SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision). 2011. *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2011*. Productivity Commission. Canberra, 4.107.

<sup>8</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2012. *Child Protection Australia 2010 – 2011*.

<sup>9</sup> SCRGSP (Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision). 2011. *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2011*. Productivity Commission. Canberra, 5.28-5.63.

<sup>10</sup> See SNAICC. (2012). *Review of the Budget Based Funding Program*. Available at <http://www.snaicc.org.au/uploads/rsfil/02897.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> See Council of Australian Governments (COAG). (2009). *National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap)*. Canberra, A-22 and D-76; Ware, V. (2012). *Improving access to urban and regional early childhood services*. Resource sheet no. 17 produced for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Australian Institute of Family Studies; NSW Ombudsman. (2011). *Addressing Aboriginal disadvantage: the need to do things differently*. Special Report to Parliament. Sydney; and Australian National Audit Office (ANAO). 2012. *Capacity Development for Indigenous Service Delivery*. Audit Report No. 26, 2011-2012.



Strait Islander peoples effectively in identifying and developing solutions to disadvantage are needed, we urge the Government to enable and expand a core early childhood program that does just this.

The centrality of the early childhood development and 'Closing the Gap' agendas to the BBF program calls for explicit connection of these agendas to the objectives of the BBF program and a program statement that sets out how the program will be supported to work towards 'Closing the Gap' outcomes. This would create a significantly stronger vision for the BBF program and reset the parameters for its effective implementation. This is also consistent with national moves towards more coherent, seamless, integrated programs, in particular detailed in *National Partnership Agreements on Remote Service Delivery and on Indigenous Early Childhood Development*. Redefining the objectives in this manner would serve to recognise the value of the BBF program, providing a more genuine space to negotiate the funding allocations to programs to meet these agendas.

***Recommendation 2:*** DEEWR amend the BBF program to ensure a transparent formula for allocation of funding to BBF services that responds to the supports required for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families which each BBF service serves.

Current BBF funding allocations do not stem from an equitable, transparent and evidence-based formula, but instead are ad hoc and historically determined. Funding allocations do not necessarily reflect both the contemporary needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, and the demand for services to provide high quality, culturally appropriate and holistic care to their communities. Any new model will need to address this by developing a transparent and equitable formula that ensures that communities receive the service they need and want for their children, and that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across Australia have the opportunity to participate in a resourced, culturally appropriate and high quality ECEC service.

***Recommendation 3:*** DEEWR develop a clear and consistent third funding model (i.e. beyond BBF and Child Care Benefit) premised on the core principles of the BBF services that is sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This would be a common model for integrated services targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and could apply for both BBF services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Family Centres.

In order to deliver quality, culturally appropriate and comprehensive early childhood education and care support to children and families, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC services need a clear, consistent, sustainable and appropriate funding model. Major limitations in the BBF program, including funding caps and ad hoc funding allocation, and the inconsistency of the CCB model with BBF service philosophy and operation, require a new integrated approach.

Specifically, the success of the services currently funded under the BBF model requires effective, direct and flexible relationships between the funding body and the services. The range of potential needs of service users requires a flexible and reliable funding system. The arms length model of funding via the Child Care Benefit (CCB) funnels standardised funding via parents, which lacks the flexibility and reliability needed for the proposed new BBF service model. The essential difference between the two systems is the different locus of control and negotiation processes for determining the funding quantum needed.

While the CCB can be supplemented by additional grants to remedy its fairly inflexible basic payments, the complex family usage based payment system requirements are not necessarily appropriate for most our users. A system that has been designed to support parental workforce participation is different to one designed for diverse communal needs and active engagement. The difference is between meeting funders, services and communities' explicit priorities for service design, or a model where funding via parents assumes a more standardised individualised consumer user.

The child based funding model will not work where Centrelink relationships are poor, paper work difficult and movement of children between households frequent. These factors mean that fees may not necessarily be paid on time. This will create unnecessary tensions for parents and services.

Furthermore, top-down, bureaucratic funding models do not support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and governance. Evidence demonstrates that strong community governance enhances outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and enables sustainable and context-specific service delivery.<sup>12</sup> What is required therefore is a model that promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agency and self-governance at the service and community levels. The Australian Government has publicly stated its commitment to community governance, as recently stated by Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin, "The Government supports effective governance and strong leadership in Indigenous communities, as an important part of closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage."<sup>13</sup>

Critically, the new model must stem from a reconceptualisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC services and their role, recognising their unique and valuable position in delivering the COAG defined 'Closing the Gap' and early childhood development outcomes. Redefining the BBF program to reflect this will make explicit its central role in prevention,

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<sup>12</sup> See Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. (2012). Social Justice Report 2012. Australian Human Rights Commission, Canberra; Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development, viewed 11 December 2012, <http://hpaied.org/about-hpaied/overview>; SNAICC. (2011). 'Increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access and engagement with child and family services'. FaHCSIA policy paper 3. Melbourne.

<sup>13</sup> The Hon Jenny Macklin MP. 'Government welcomes social justice and native title reports'. (Media Release). Accessed 12 December 2012 at <http://jennymacklin.fahcsia.gov.au/node/2172>

early intervention, early childhood development and access to the service system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The rationale within the *National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development* for the establishment of 38 Children and Family Centres was to provide integrated early childhood services that evidence demonstrates results in higher participation of and outcomes for children and families. However in order to contribute to the identified outcomes that:

- Indigenous children are born and remain healthy;
- Indigenous children have the same health outcomes as non-Indigenous children;
- Indigenous children acquire the basic skills for life and learning; and
- Indigenous families have ready access to suitable and culturally inclusive early childhood and family support services (*at 7*),

more than 38 Centres across Australia are clearly required. 269 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander BBF services are also currently working to specifically achieve these outcomes, and more still are needed to realise them across Australia.

A reformed BBF model, premised on the goal of *access* for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to services, and informed by a series of principles, as outlined in the SNAICC Submission to the BBF review, has the potential to substantially move towards these outcomes. We recommend that this model provide a base core operational support for all services and a second tier of support, determined through services' identified need for further programs, staff and other locally determined supports. The provision of transparent resources to enable services to respond to the community need would provide an opportunity to capitalize further on the potential contribution of the BBF services to the national policy priorities discussed.

***Recommendation 4: DEEWR take steps now towards the longer term outcome of recommendation 3, including:***

- (a) *Nationwide mapping of the location of each Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care service; and other ECEC services in areas to identify service gaps and needs;*
- (b) *Inclusion of early childhood education and care as a component of the place-based trials to occur within the second three year action plan of the National Framework for the Protection of Australia's Children 2009-2020.*<sup>14</sup>

Place-based models are community-led models which shape service delivery around local community needs, and combine different sources of funding to divide based on community priorities. Such models, if implemented effectively, could allow space and flexibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and leadership in the development of services that reflect the culture and values of the many diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia.

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<sup>14</sup> See <http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/our-responsibilities/families-and-children/publications-articles/protecting-children-is-everyone-s-business-national-framework-for-protecting-australia-s-children-2009-2020-second-action-plan-2012-2015>

- (c) *Establishment of a Working Group comprised of academics, sector peaks, BBF service leaders and department representatives (across multiple departments) to explore a principled place-based model that meets the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and that would combine resources from diverse funding streams (including potentially across federal/state and departmental lines) based on relevance to meeting their policy objectives;*
- (d) *Support for economic modeling of the proposed model to determine and strengthen feasibility and cost-benefit outcomes.*

***Recommendation 5:*** *DEEWR establish a Federal Department for Children to enable a consolidated focus on holistic development needs, and capacity to identify funding allocations*

Following its recent review of Australia's fulfillment of its child rights obligations, the United Nations (UN) Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Australia establish and appropriately resource a technical body to advise COAG on its implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. An appropriate mechanism for this could be a ministerial portfolio responsible for children with dedicated resources to drive data collection, research and policy development, coordinate across government and ensure the effective implementation of programs and services that meet child rights standards, as detailed in Recommendation 3 of the Child Rights NGO Report Australia, *Listen to Children* (2012). This would support a holistic and integrated policy response to and engagement with the needs of all children.

***Recommendation 6:*** *DEEWR establish a clear and transparent process for DEEWR to complete, prior to closing a BBF service.*

This is suggested in light of the frequent changes in status of BBF services and the significant implications of closing a BBF service for a local community. The process should include consultation with a representative or support body for the service, such as SNAICC or the Indigenous Professional Support Units, to provide a space for outlining the concerns which give rise to consideration of a decision to close a service, and opportunity for written an oral response from the representative body and service.

***Recommendation 7:*** *DEEWR, in partnership with the BBF services and service sector, host a workshop to explore the potential consistency or inconsistency of the components of the National Quality Framework with services in the BBF Program, and develop an Options Paper for consultation on possible alternative approaches or adaptations of the National Quality Framework.*

There are serious concerns that aspects of the National Quality Framework are not appropriate for application to BBF services or do not reflect the core elements of 'quality' in these services. There is a need to consider these services as community development

engines, with any quality assessment process therefore needing to support and value them in this broader role.

DEEWR has suggested the possibility that it may apply “a similar, potentially less formal, process for some or all BBF services.”<sup>15</sup> The intention behind this statement is supported, and the Working Group urges DEEWR to invest time now to explore key objectives of a quality framework for BBF services, areas of inconsistency with the National Quality Framework and alternative possibilities for adaption. For example, it may be appropriate that services are measured against their Quality Improvement Plans only, rather than be formally assessed against the current rating system, or have a choice to adopt this approach. Alternatively, a focus on what good practice looks like in different service and community contexts may be the most meaningful form of assessment, how do Elders and the community rate their service and on what basis? Transition to the NQS could also be a self-initiated process, investing services with control over the process, and the required supports and time to enable this process to be meaningful and effective.

These are complex and involved issues that warrant serious investigation, consultation and planning. For too long BBF services have been left out due to an ad hoc, inconsistent and inequitable funding system. It is crucial that attention is paid to this issue now to ensure that services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families are not left further behind, but instead are provided with a sustainable and effective model that in fact does meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families

## **D. Proposed Actions for the Working Group**

### ***Actions relating to Recommendation 1***

- Develop a discussion paper analysing the different ways in which BBF services specifically meet the COAG agendas, policies and targets;
- Develop a brief setting out the rights-based, equity argument for a new BBF model;
- Conduct a literature review on the cost-benefits of BBF services to demonstrate their value and need for increased funding;
- Properly conceptualise the objectives of the BBF program;
- Develop short briefs and policy statements to widely circulate and increase visibility and understanding; and
- Engage State & Federal Ministers, COAG, the Child and Family Roundtable, and other appropriate stakeholders and forums on their action to use BBF services to advance the Closing the Gap agenda and/or link early childhood development and care to these other spaces/agendas.

### ***Actions relating to Recommendation 3***

- Initiate a dialogue between BBF services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Family Centres on workable funding models for Aboriginal and Torres

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<sup>15</sup> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR). 2012. *Quality Early Childhood Education and Care for Children in Regional, Remote and Indigenous Communities: Review of the Budget Based Funding Program*. Canberra, 15.

Strait Islander early childhood education and care services, commonalities and future directions;

- Engage BBF services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Family Centres together at SNAICC conference in June 2013, and also at national and state level CFC Leader's forums or state service conferences.
- Develop a brief that explores the different major funding avenues that relate to the policy objectives of the BBF program, unpacks these and propose a possible model that would bring these together to support integrated ECEC services;
- Compare government funding of the BBF program (and other programs) with the federal policy promises to identify any contradictions or gaps and develop recommendations. Also conduct a comparison of the objectives of the BBF program with the capacity in monetary terms to meet those base service response that these objectives require;
- Promote discussions on funding integration through various forums, including the roundtable on the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development, National Children's Services Forum, and COAG discussions on early childhood development and care.

***Actions relating to recommendation 4***

- Develop a brief explaining the rationale for including BBF ECEC services in the place-based trials, and a proposal for how to do this; and
- Advocate to Government (specifically DEEWR, FaHCSIA and relevant Ministers) for inclusion of BBF ECEC services in place-based trial.

***Actions relating to Recommendation 5***

- Link in with Child Rights Taskforce advocacy and actions, who would take the lead on this issue; and
- Develop a brief for advocacy which sets out the rationale and model for a Minister and associated Department for Children.

***Actions to strengthen genuine partnerships: walking and working together***

BBF services rely on respectful and productive partnerships with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, mainstream services, and local and national governments to be able to deliver the array of services their communities need. In order to be genuine, respectful and valuable, partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous services need to follow certain key principles, including respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, knowledge and history; commitment to self-determination and developing long-term relationships; redressing unequal relationships; and shared responsibility and accountability.<sup>16</sup> Significant attention is needed to the processes required for partnership development and their proper resourcing. Training for services on genuine partnership principles would be a valuable way to build capacity for effective partnerships. Suggested actions include:

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<sup>16</sup> SNAICC. 2012. *Opening Doors through Partnerships: practical approaches towards developing genuine partnerships that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs*. Melbourne.

- Develop guidelines for Government and services to agree to and conduct themselves in accordance with, which set out a framework for partnership development and operation in accordance with agreed principles. The guidelines should include the provision of necessary supports to ensure such partnerships are genuine and mutually beneficial;
- Identify solutions to support a shift to collaborative rather than competitive service relationships, including broader structural issues (e.g. tendering) and specific practical issues (e.g. sharing use of a bus);
- Develop training for mainstream and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services on developing and maintaining genuine partnerships;
- Develop a resource or matrix examining the principles, criteria and effectiveness for partnerships between mainstream agencies and local communities/services within the early childhood context, building upon SNAICC's 2012 report *Opening Doors through Partnerships: Practical approaches to developing genuine partnerships that address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community needs*;
- Drawing on the above, take action (such as advocacy or actual creation of the resource) on the development a 'partnership toolkit' for use between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream services, to enable both parties to comprehensively understand the rationale behind the partnership, what each party can contribute to it, and examples of governance, decision making, accountabilities, reporting, etc;<sup>17</sup> and
- Develop a brief on the value of large mainstream community development organisations partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC services, to develop submissions on behalf of BBF services.

#### ***Actions to pilot different funding models for rural/remote mobile children's services***

Whilst strong evidence exists regarding both the current challenges with BBF funding, and the unfeasibility of CCB funding for BBF services, there is a need to develop, test and present evidence on alternative models. The National Association for Mobile Children's Services (NAMS) is currently conducting research on the cost-effectiveness in terms of per-child costs of BBF and CCB funding. They are proposing to DEEWR to pilot different funding models for rural and remote mobile children's services. Whilst this is only one service type, it could provide a valuable foundation from which to explore alternative funding models for a number of BBF service types.

- Develop an article highlighting the findings of the NAMS research, and promote in the public domain; and
- Share and gather work across the sector that demonstrates the cost-effectiveness (per child cost) of BBF versus CCB.

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<sup>17</sup> Office of the Coordinator-General for Remote Services. (2012). Report: June 2011 to August 2012. Northern Territory Government, 58.

***Actions to demonstrate evidence base for BBF services achieving strong outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families***

- Identify research funding opportunities for major research with randomized trials with children of different ages (Debb Mann, Margaret Simms, SNAICC)
- A trial could be conducted through support from Lotteries WA, and the trial used as a justification for an Australian Research Council Grant. Other more state focused funding organisations to contact include Spencer Foundation, Ian Potter, Telethon Institute, Menzies School of Health Research, in addition to LISC data.