



## Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

The national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families  
[www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au)

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

**19 March 2015**

#### **Statement by SNAICC Chairperson Sharron Williams for National Close the Gap Day**

#### **Government's Families Package must be a turning point, not a lost opportunity, to improve the lives of our children and families**

The Australian Government has a great opportunity under its new Families Package to improve education, employment and health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families — by providing sustainable, long-term funding to Indigenous early years services.

SNAICC urges the Australian Government to fund a new Community Early Learning Program (CELP) within the Families Package, as recommended by the Productivity Commission's recent report on child care and early childhood learning, to deliver increased, affordable and culturally-centred early years services to our children and families.

The proposed CELP holds significant promise to see many more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the most difficult situations growing up confident, healthy, excelling in school and realising their dreams.

In short, to have the same opportunities as other Australian children.

Importantly, the Productivity Commission has recognised the huge gap in early years participation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the need for at least 15,000 additional places.

SNAICC calls on the Government to ensure that the Families Package includes:

- a 10-year commitment to adequately resource the Community Early Learning Program, starting with \$250 million per annum
- the creation of 20 new services annually to start to redress the 15,000 place gap
- Indigenous Professional Support Agencies to assist the establishment and ongoing quality improvement of Indigenous services, and
- a funded role to coordinate integrated services such as health assessments, speech and occupational therapy, transition to school, family violence counselling, parenting programs, nutrition, psychology, maternal health, cultural arts and child development.

It is well documented that the best way to meet the needs of our children and families is to invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early years services. These include the 38 Aboriginal Child and Family Centres, Multifunctional Aboriginal Children Services (MACS) and other services currently funded by the federal Budget Based Funded program.

Aboriginal integrated early years services, where they exist, are a bedrock of their community: they not only nurture and educate children, but also support families to raise healthy children, provide integrated support to families, generate employment opportunities and enable parents to get work-ready and secure employment.

They are critical frontline services in the efforts to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and meet the Government's priorities on school attendance, employment and safe communities.

Click **here** to read about the amazing work of Aboriginal Child and Family Centres and the impact they are having on our children, families and communities.

An effective Community Early Learning Program will make the difference between the Families Package being a crucial turning point to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families or putting our children most in need further behind.

That's the message SNAICC and representatives from Indigenous community-controlled early years services will deliver when they meet with Australian Government ministers and other parliamentarians in Canberra next week.

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