



Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

4 August 2015

CELEBRATE NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN'S DAY – 4 AUGUST 2015

Little People, Big Futures

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day on 4 August provides all Australians with an opportunity to recognise the strengths and culture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, as well as draw attention to the issues that affect them.

The Children's Day theme for 2015 is *Little People, Big Futures*: we want our kids to stand tall so that they can feel connected and proud in their cultures. It's about supporting and celebrating the services that empower our little people to have big futures, ensuring these services are adequately funded to support strong development outcomes for the next generation.

SNAICC Chairperson, Sharron Williams comments: "It is our responsibility to ensure that no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child misses out on life-changing services as a consequence of barriers and limitations that we can remove. We ask the Australian Government to work with us to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids get the fair start in life that all of Australia's children deserve.

"There is clear evidence that the early formative years of a child's life are a critical predictor of their successful transition to school, life-long education, employment outcomes and big futures. The new Australian government's Child Care Assistance Package will drastically limit the access our children have to early childhood education and directly impact their opportunities as they grow up. Framing these critical services as merely 'child-minding' ignores the educational and developmental benefits of early years programs.

"Ensuring these services are adequately supported is key to supporting strong development, learning and identity outcomes for the next generation of children"

SNAICC is amongst the parties concerned that changes to be introduced under the Government's new Child Care Assistance Package will further disadvantage and exclude our children from these vital services.

We want to send a clear message to Minister Morrison that excluding vulnerable families from childcare won't get them into work – it will put them under more strain and make it harder for them to address the barriers to finding and keeping jobs. Even worse than that, since all the evidence shows the early childhood services have the most impact for vulnerable families, we know these measures will cause harm to our



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next generation, continuing a cycle that excludes them from the workforce in the future as well.

The proposed reforms will force our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services to operate under a mainstream, inflexible, user-pays model without adequate safety net supports. Coupled with the introduction of an activity test (that favours workforce participation objectives at the expense of early childhood development for children who are experiencing disadvantage) that reduces access for non-working families, the early childhood education reforms risk excluding thousands of our children from access to necessary early years services.

Minor amendments to the package now – leaving the activity test unchanged and building in explicit protections to the Child Care Safety Net – would see tremendous difference later in outcomes for children. See attached SNAICC brief for more information.

Findings from the most recent [Australian Early Development Census](#) show that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more than twice as likely to be developmentally vulnerable than non-Indigenous Children. Furthermore, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are nearly ten times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children.

Providing integrated and culturally strong early years services is *the* key preventative measure in reversing these negative trends. These services are much more than just ‘child care’; they are trusted community hubs that provide holistic support for children and families.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who have attended early learning programs are:

- More socially and developmentally ready for school,
- More likely to have good attendance,
- At less risk of harm and the need of child protection services and,
- More likely to achieve positive educational outcomes.

An investment in the children of today will secure the strength and success of communities tomorrow.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day is a time for all Australians to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children – let’s all stand together for our children on 4 August.

#fairstartforIndigkids

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For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact Jessica Brennan, Communication Coordinator, Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (03) 9489 8099 / 0421334918 or jessica.brennan@snaicc.org.au

About SNAICC:

SNAICC is the national non-government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Founded in 1981, SNAICC was established to engage in activities that promote and accommodate a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

Over the past 30 years SNAICC's efforts have resulted in many key milestones and achievements both in policy developments at state, territory and federal levels and in developing innovative and useful resources for the sector.

SNAICC is governed by an influential National Executive made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled children and family services.