



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Inc.

SNAICC Response

***Consultation paper – Towards the Development of a
National Agenda for Early Childhood***

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Background on SNAICC

SNAICC, the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, is the national peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Whilst in 2003 SNAICC will celebrate the 20th anniversary of the election of its first national executive and the opening of its national office it is only in recent years that we have begun to work more closely with child care and pre school services.

Initially SNAICC was comprised of the Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies, AICCA's, which work in the area of children's rights, child welfare, foster care and family support. However SNAICC now operates from a much broader membership base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community based child care agencies, Multi-functional Aboriginal Children's Services, family support services, foster care agencies, link up and family reunification services, family group homes, community groups and voluntary associations, long day care child care services, pre schools, early childhood education services and services for young people at risk.

Three years ago SNAICC re-wrote much of its constitution and created additional positions on its National Executive for community based Indigenous services working in the fields of pre school education and child care. Since that time the majority of the Commonwealth funded Multi functional Aboriginal Children's Services, MACS, have joined SNAICC with a MACS or other Indigenous child care service from each State and Territory represented on our national executive.

In addition to these members SNAICC has a network and subscriber list of over 1200 community groups, mostly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, but also significant numbers of non Indigenous community based services and individuals with an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children.

SNAICC is governed by a national executive of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people drawn from our members and operates from an office located in Melbourne with two part time staff.

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Development of the SNAICC Response

SNAICC undertook a number of activities to inform the development of this response and to encourage and facilitate broad input into the consultation process from our network of members, affiliates and interested organisations. Specifically this included:

- participating in a number of the consultation round table discussions convened by the Department in relation to the proposed development of a National Agenda for Early Childhood,
- circulating copies of the consultation paper to Indigenous representatives from the SNAICC National Executive in all States and Territories,
- including a notice about the availability of the consultation paper and process in our newsletter which is distributed to over 1200 organisations and individuals; over a 1000 of which are Indigenous community based services working with children and families, and
- discussing the consultation paper in detail through workshops conducted as part of a SNAICC national executive meeting in June.

Our response also reflects our accumulated knowledge and experience in working for Indigenous children as well as related policy issues we have recently been involved in including the Broadband Redevelopment and participation in the ongoing work of the Australia Council on Children and Parenting, ACCAP.

Overview

SNAICC commends the Federal Government for taking the initiative to place the need for a more concerted and coordinated approach to supporting child development on the nation's agenda. We are cognisant of the fact that securing cooperation and commitment across a range of Commonwealth agencies as well as across States, Territories and a diverse set of non-government bodies is a great challenge.

Securing such cooperation will be more likely if the Commonwealth makes a clear, substantial and long term funding commitment to improving support for children in their early years. As the draft consultation paper outlines nowhere is this more important than in respect of Indigenous children. SNAICC believes that for the Commonwealth's commitment to a national agenda to be taken seriously and be responded to by States and Territories as such then the Commonwealth must commit new resources. The current socio-economic disadvantage which confronts Indigenous children, combined with the age structure of the Indigenous population, makes the need for a very significant increased investment in Indigenous children's development inescapable. The Commonwealth must lead the way in this area by making additional investments in areas such child care, child nutrition and immunisation and child abuse prevention whilst securing additional State and Territory investment in areas such as early childhood education, child protection and child health.

The SNAICC national executive have endorsed the proposal for a National Agenda for Early Childhood. We are committed to pursuing the development and implementation of a national agenda which can bring about long term and sustainable improvements in the health and well being of Indigenous children. Central to this will be working to build pride amongst Indigenous children in their cultural identity. In our experience cultural pride and strong sense of self identity provide a platform upon which other forms of resiliency and strength, such as those outlined in Appendix B of the consultation paper, can be built.

Supporting Indigenous children to take pride in their culture and in themselves presents challenges not just for governments and services but equally for Indigenous parents, families and community leaders. One challenge which a National Agenda would face is providing the right forms of assistance and support to Indigenous families and communities such that they are better able to care for their children. Understanding that caring for children is a shared societal obligation should in our view underpin any proposed National Agenda for Early Childhood.

SNAICC looks forward to the next stage in the development of a National Agenda for Early Childhood. We will continue to contribute our ideas and energy and will take our own steps to encourage other stakeholders including other levels of government to support something which we consider long overdue.

Summary Recommendations

Recommendation One: National Council

That the Commonwealth Government, SNAICC, ATSIC and each State and Territory Government form a National Indigenous Child Welfare and Development Council based on the model of the Aboriginal Health Ministers Advisory Council.

Recommendation Two: Principles

That the National Agenda for Early Childhood include the following principles:

- *A life course approach recognising that human development is continuous and that all people should be able to access support and opportunities to reach their full potential.*
- *Strong, happy, effective and dynamic families in which people are able to support each other provide the best environment for raising children and building healthy communities.*
- *An approach which supports self determination and self management for Indigenous communities recognising the ongoing consequences of previous state intervention into the lives of Australia's Indigenous peoples.*

Recommendation Three: Outcomes for Indigenous Children

That a set of anticipated outcomes for Indigenous children be developed in consultation with SNAICC, ATSIC and other Indigenous organisations based on the SNAICC and other Indigenous submissions to the National Agenda consultation paper.

Recommendation Four: Indigenous Children's Report Card

That the national agenda include the development of a report card on Indigenous children produced in collaboration with SNAICC and other agencies for tabling in Federal Parliament on a periodic basis.

Recommendation Five: Training and Professional Development

That the National Agenda consider and take up recommendations arising from the ACCAP Capacity Building project and the specific recommendations in relation to the Indigenous child and family welfare sector workforce.

Comments on the *National Agenda* consultation paper

Background and Context

Recognising Indigenous history in child rearing

SNAICC notes that the early section of the paper provides some background and context including information on the three broad areas for attention under the national agenda, the Australian situation and the major findings of brain development research highlighting the value – social and economic - of investing in the early years. Speaking from an Indigenous perspective this section of the paper could be enhanced if it recognised that Indigenous people have been rearing their children in Australia for over 40,000 years. The current disadvantage encountered by Indigenous families and their children should be seen in this context. The disruption caused by colonisation to traditional child rearing practices, social and economic systems, family and kinship networks, culture and language and to traditional law sits behind the current disadvantage.

Whilst the material on page 3 of the consultation paper appropriately notes the markedly poorer outcomes experienced by Indigenous children it would be preferable to see this in a longer term historical context which recognised the impact of colonisation. This would also enable the paper to make a positive reference to the commitment Indigenous peoples in Australia have shown to raising their children over many thousands of years.

Ecological models for child development

In relation to the ecological context shaping child development and the model outlined on page 2 of the consultation paper SNAICC points out that the three spheres included in the model may not be entirely relevant for many Indigenous children. In the case of Indigenous children their immediate local community, Elders and extended family are often more significant in their early development than school.

We would also argue that since national agenda is focussed on children 0-5 that school is not a relevant component of what influences child development in this period. Most children start school after they have turned five. If the paper is to retain a focus on schools and their influence on child development then the parameters for the national agenda should be extended to children aged 0-7.

In summary SNAICC questions the relevance of the diagram model on page 2 and recommends that it not be included in future publications in relation to the national agenda.

Roles and responsibilities of governments and the non-government sector

SNAICC notes that the paper suggests that the National Agenda will not seek to alter traditional areas of responsibility between the Commonwealth, States and Territories. In the case of Indigenous children there is a particular need to set out and agree upon the roles of each level of government in relation to Indigenous children arising from the 1967 Referendum which provided the Commonwealth with a specific power to make laws in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Currently there is a lack of clarity, and flowing from that, a lack of accountability in relation to the responsibilities of each level of government for the well being of Indigenous children. Whilst child protection may be a 'traditional' responsibility of States and Territories this should not preclude the Commonwealth from asserting its right and acting upon its responsibility towards Indigenous children in need of care and protection.

SNAICC has advocated for over 20 years that the Commonwealth should enact national legislation to provide a consistent framework and set of principles for the care and protection of Indigenous children. This position has been supported by a range of inquiries and reports including the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the *Bringing Them Home* report. Despite this the Commonwealth has remained unwilling to exercise its constitutional power and legislate for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Without seeking to re-run those debates through this submission SNAICC believes this illustrates the lack of clarity and agreement around the respective roles of the Commonwealth and the States and Territories in relation to the welfare of Indigenous children.

Even at the time of writing this submission the appalling stories of the treatment of children in foster care¹ highlight the potential value in establishing mandatory national standards for the care, protection and treatment of children in out-of-home care.

In relation to current service delivery it is already the case that there is confusion between the roles of the states and the commonwealth. In the area of child care, an area seen as the responsibility of the Commonwealth, some states and territories have provided direct funding for Indigenous child care services when the Commonwealth has failed to do so. Likewise the Commonwealth has funded Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies in some instances even though the Commonwealth's stated view is that this is a state responsibility.

A further issue which suggests that the current arrangements are less than ideal and likely to become more confused is the convergence of child care services and programs with preschool education. Child care services, such as the Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services or MACS, are already delivering programs which combine elements of long day care, parenting support, playgroups, preschool education, health and

¹ See articles in Brisbane Courier Mail, 13/6/03, regarding the alleged systematic sexual and physical abuse of children in foster care over a period of more than two decades.

nutrition, immunisation, cultural development, child abuse prevention and traditional language development. Whilst responsibility for the early years remains shared in a poorly defined manner between states and the commonwealth the efforts of local services to respond in a holistic manner to the needs of children will be hampered. Local agencies face difficulty in securing flexible funding from a single source which can be utilised to respond to a diversity of need.

The service delivery role and functions of ATSIC in relation to Indigenous children need also to be considered as ATSIC is in effect another layer of government with some responsibility for the well being of Indigenous children. Whilst ATSIC may not have a substantial program base focussed on children this does not prevent State, Territory and Commonwealth Departments from referring Indigenous communities to ATSIC when they are looking to establish new services or programs for children. It is often reported to SNAICC that Indigenous communities are referred to ATSIC as a potential source of funding when mainstream Departments are more appropriate. Clarifying the role and functions of ATSIC should form part of the broader issue of clarifying roles and responsibilities.

SNAICC is not satisfied with the position outlined in the draft consultation paper – that no change be made to current responsibilities. Currently it remains unclear what those responsibilities are and when, if at all, the Commonwealth will exercise power granted to it through the 1967 referendum. Further the lack of clarity around responsibility for Indigenous child welfare and development can result in inappropriate demands being placed upon ATSIC and mainstream government departments remaining unresponsive to the needs of Indigenous communities.

SNAICC does not believe that this submission can provide the vehicle through which to address these concerns. In our view a permanent inter-governmental forum with non-governmental membership operating at Ministerial level is required to take long term responsibility for Indigenous child welfare and development. The Aboriginal Health Ministers Advisory Council which brings together all levels of government, ATSIC and the ngo peak body, NACCHO, is a model which should be replicated for Indigenous child welfare and development. Such a forum would provide the political and policy space to better plan, coordinate, deliver and monitor Indigenous children's services focussed on child welfare and development.

The establishment of a such a body would also be consistent with an intended purposes of the national agenda as stated on page 4,

“ A National Agenda for Early Childhood will provide a way of sharing a common understanding about aims, goals, principles and outcomes to ensure that Australian children get the best start in life. “

Recommendation One: National Council

That the Commonwealth Government, SNAICC, ATSIC and each State and Territory Government form a National Indigenous Child Welfare and Development Council based on the model of the Aboriginal Health Ministers Advisory Council.

Draft outline for a National Agenda for Early Childhood

Aims

SNAICC supports the aim of the proposed national agenda with the inclusion of a reference to cultural identity. In our view cultural identity is important for all children but it is particularly important that Indigenous children develop and take pride in their cultural identity. Without this we know that Indigenous children grow up with a sense of hollowness and loss and lack self confidence and a sense of identity. The importance of culture to the development of children needs to be recognised in the aim and we would suggest the following:

The aim of the National Agenda is to provide our children with the best possible start in life. This entails providing children with the foundations to develop their cultural identity and their physical, emotional, intellectual and creative potential.

We recommend this wording because it is inclusive of all children, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and recognises that cultural identity is important for all children.

Principles

SNAICC has noted that the development of the national agenda and the increased focus on the early years can at times be heavily predicated on the notion that increased investment in the early years will generate social benefits and future savings for government. Our view is that there is some danger in placing too much emphasis on the argument that investment now creates savings later. The breadth and depth of the research on this issue is questionable. We have also noted that at times the focus on brain development can create an argument that interventions later in life are ‘worthless’. Some commentators in this area suggest that once developmental opportunities have been lost they are lost forever and that later interventions are not worthwhile. This in our view is unhelpful as it may result in children who have experienced difficulties early in life being ‘written off’.

Policy makers driven by a narrow focus on the early years and brain development risk developing service interventions which may not be supported by a strong evidence base. For example in NSW in 2001 legislative reforms to the NSW Children and Young Persons Act to introduce permanency planning were driven by concerns that very young children who were at risk of abuse could face permanent long term damage if left for too

long in the care of their families. Brain development research and the importance of the early years were cited as evidence that the focus of child welfare interventions should shift from supporting vulnerable families to stay together to removing children earlier and placing them permanently in alternative care.

SNAICC's members in NSW opposed these reforms as they were mindful of the fact that up to 25% of Indigenous children who are removed from their families are placed in non-Aboriginal foster care. The advent of permanency planning increased the risk that greater numbers of Indigenous children in NSW will be forever removed from their Indigenous families and communities – placing their cultural identity at risk.

Thus SNAICC remains cautious about too much weight being placed on brain development research and the need to focus on the early years. More emphasis should in our view be placed on human development over the life course with the focus on child development balanced by a commitment to support children and young people who may miss out in their early years.

SNAICC believes that the principles which underpin the National Agenda should place stronger emphasis on the rights of children and human rights over the life course to access support and assistance in order for people to develop to their full potential. Thus SNAICC supports the inclusion of a life course approach within the stated principles but would prefer this principle to be stated more explicitly the need to support human development throughout life. We recommend:

A life course approach recognising that human development is continuous and that all people should be able to access support and opportunities to reach their full potential

The history of state intervention into the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families is brutal, extreme and profoundly negative. As the paper highlights Indigenous children today carry with them disadvantage which has its roots in the disruption to their families in previous generations. The principles need to recognise that fundamental to the welfare of children is the welfare of their families and communities. Impoverished communities, create impoverished families who raise impoverished children.

SNAICC recommends the inclusion of a principle, which would be relevant to all families, which recognises the importance of family in the development of children; we recommend:

Strong, happy, effective and dynamic families in which people are able to support each other provide the best environment for raising children and building healthy communities.

We also recommend that the principles include a statement about self determination and self management to take account of the particular position of Indigenous peoples in

Australia and their desire to raise children to know and embrace their Indigenous culture. We recommend the inclusion of the following:

An approach which supports self determination and self management for Indigenous communities recognising the ongoing consequences of previous state intervention into the lives of Australia's Indigenous peoples.

SNAICC notes that the principle which talks about universal access was criticised during some of the roundtable discussions convened by the Department on the basis that it contradicts itself by supporting a *universal* approach and a *focus* on vulnerable communities, families and children.

SNAICC does not support this criticism. We would read this principle as leading to the development of universally accessible services focussed on family support and child development with priority given to vulnerable communities, families and children within the criteria for additional 'universal services'.

The other principles as stated in the draft paper are supported by SNAICC.

Recommendation Two: Principles

That the National Agenda for Early Childhood include the following principles:

- *A life course approach recognising that human development is continuous and that all people should be able to access support and opportunities to reach their full potential.*
- *Strong, happy, effective and dynamic families in which people are able to support each other provide the best environment for raising children and building healthy communities.*
- *An approach which supports self determination and self management for Indigenous communities recognising the ongoing consequences of previous state intervention into the lives of Australia's Indigenous peoples.*

Goals

In relation to the goals SNAICC has considered the goals and believes they are appropriate with one minor amendment. We recommend that the words, *at school*, be deleted from the first listed goal as success as school is only a part of succeeding in life.

SNAICC notes that the third goal makes specific reference to the need for particular emphasis on improving outcomes for Indigenous children and we support this goal as stated.

Anticipated Outcomes

SNAICC considers that given the inclusion of Indigenous children within the third goal of the national agenda it would be appropriate to specify, in broad terms, some anticipated outcomes for Indigenous children.

These anticipated outcomes would then provide the starting point for monitoring and evaluation. SNAICC does not intend to list here what all of the anticipated outcomes might be as this should be the subject of broader more specific discussion with SNAICC and a range of other relevant stakeholders including ATSIC, State and Territory governments and relevant non-government organisations. Rather we have provided some initial recommendations on the anticipated outcomes for the service system and Indigenous children.

In relation to outcomes focused on the service system we would recommend the following be included as anticipated outcomes:

- national agreement on the roles and responsibilities in relation to Indigenous children's welfare and development between SNAICC, ATSIC and all levels of government
- establishment of a permanent inter-governmental Ministerial level Indigenous children's policy council in partnership with SNAICC and ATSIC
- nationally agreed long term strategic response to major gaps in service provision for children aged 0-5; eg commitments to resolve service gaps in child care, pre-school education and access to maternal and child health services
- development of an evidence base in relation to the value and impact of the breadth of service interventions focused on Indigenous children aged 0-5
- development of a greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child rearing practices and improved capacity of service providers to reflect this knowledge in their practice

Outcomes for Indigenous children should include:

- decline in the levels of child abuse and child neglect within Indigenous communities
- higher levels of literacy and numeracy and increased proportion of Indigenous children able to use Indigenous languages
- improved nutrition amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- reduced incidence of substance misuse such as petrol sniffing and chroming
- improved health status for children by the time they commence primary school

SNAICC believes that it would also be appropriate to develop and specify a number of minimum benchmarks or developmental milestones to apply to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children between the ages of 0-5. This should build on the systems commonly in place across the broader community which chart and monitor children's development often through maternal and child health services. Just as we monitor

children's physical development we should also be monitoring the cultural development of Indigenous children to ensure they can access, practice and enjoy their own culture.

Such measures might include:

That by age five all Indigenous children will have had an opportunity to:

- learn something of their traditional Indigenous language
- access culturally appropriate preschool and child care programs
- learn about their family, kin and tribal ancestry
- learn about their traditional laws, customs and cultural practices in a setting with other Indigenous children

Recommendation Three: Outcomes for Indigenous Children

That a set of anticipated outcomes for Indigenous children be developed in consultation with SNAICC, ATSIC and other Indigenous organisations based on the SNAICC and other Indigenous submissions to the National Agenda consultation paper.

Key Action Areas

SNAICC considers that the three key action areas outlined are appropriate and relevant to Indigenous children. To improve outcomes in these three action areas will require additional investments specifically targeting Indigenous children.

For instance in relation to *early learning and care improved* outcomes in this area will not be forthcoming whilst the critical shortage of child care and early childhood services and programs remains unaddressed. Indigenous children are already significantly under represented in Commonwealth funded child care and state funded preschool education programs. The rapid increase in the number of Indigenous children in Australia means that the participation is already declining. Additional programs and services accessible to Indigenous children will be required – just to prevent the already low levels of participation from declining further.

This is also true in relation to *supporting child friendly communities*. SNAICC supports the direction foreshadowed in the consultation paper towards the flexible and responsive services at the local level. Currently services such as Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies, AICCA's, are restricted and constrained by the focus of government funding being heavily concentrated towards crisis intervention and the provision of out-of-home care services. This needs to be balanced through the expansion of their program base and increased service flexibility so they can assist and support families to prevent rather than just respond to family breakdown and child separation.

SNAICC believes these services need to be re-oriented to become universal family support services which all local Indigenous families access in order to build their

networks, establish positive relationships with other families and provide them with the emotional, social and physical support which underpins all health families. Currently families access services such as AICCAs when they are in crisis and are facing the prospect of losing custody of their children to the state.

As with early learning and care services there is also a critical shortage of AICCAs and other Indigenous family services. Over the past two decades few if any additional services have developed and most Indigenous communities and families do not have access to a local, flexible family support service. This is a critical service gap which the national agenda should seek to address.

The development and implementation of the national agenda must involve increased investment and a fairer share of resources being directed towards Indigenous families and children. Major gaps in service provision relating to early learning and care and family support must be overcome and existing services such as AICCAs need assistance to broaden their program base to become universal family support services.

If the Commonwealth believes that investment in the early years does bring about improved outcomes for children and potential savings to government then surely it must move to address the critical under investment in the early years of Indigenous children. If the Commonwealth government fails to back up its words in support of a national agenda with increased investment directed towards Indigenous children then it will have failed its own test.

Support for the action areas

Using Research and Information and Monitoring Progress

Elsewhere in this submission SNAICC has advocated for the establishment of an inter-governmental policy council which brings together relevant stakeholders focussed on Indigenous child welfare and development. We have proposed that this body be established in partnership with ATSIC and SNAICC and that it operate in a manner not dissimilar to the Aboriginal Health Ministers Advisory Council, AHMAC.

The development of such a body would provide the mechanism to clarify roles and responsibilities, coordinate service delivery within the context of nationally agreed strategic directions and monitor and evaluate progress. SNAICC considers that the continued absence of such a policy coordination mechanism at the national level represents the most significant barrier to improving outcomes for Indigenous children in the early years of life.

As the consultation paper put it on page 7,

The best outcomes for children will be achieved by a national approach that involves collaboration and cooperation between those with an interest in the future of children.

SNAICC recommends that the Commonwealth endorse this proposal and in partnership with SNAICC and ATSIC initiate discussions with the States and Territories for its establishment, see recommendation one above.

Report card for Indigenous children

SNAICC supports the notion of the report card for children and the inclusion of material and indicators which specifically identify progress towards anticipated outcomes for Indigenous children. The report card should take the form of a report to the Federal Parliament. Compilation of the report card being a collaborative exercise involving a range of stakeholders rather than a task of the Department of Family and Community Services.

Recommendation Four: Indigenous Children's Report Card

That the national agenda include the development of a report card on Indigenous children produced in collaboration with SNAICC and other agencies for tabling in Federal Parliament on a periodic basis.

Early Childhood and Child and Family Welfare Workforce Issues

SNAICC recently produced a report for the Centre for Community Child Health as part of an Australian Council on Children and Parenting, ACCAP, commissioned project on Capacity Building². SNAICC reviewed the training and professional development needs of Indigenous child and family welfare services including workers in early learning and care services and workers in child welfare services.

That project identified the need for a nationally coordinated approach to the development of Indigenous specific training and qualifications for early learning and child care workers as well as training for workers within Indigenous child welfare services. SNAICC understands that the ACCAP Capacity Building project is publish and release the report prepared by the Centre including the material relating to Indigenous workforce issues. We would encourage that material to be considered as part of the development of the National Agenda.

The summary recommendations are included below and the full report is available from SNAICC or from ACCAP,

Recommendation One :- Indigenous foster carers

² Unpublished report for the Centre for Community Child Health; *Child development content of in-service training within Indigenous community services*. Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, SNAICC. February 2003

The development of specific training modules, information and resources covering the eleven content areas:

- For use by foster care support and training agencies during the assessment, induction and training of prospective Indigenous foster carers
- For distribution to foster carers already registered as carers and kinship carers
- For use by foster care support and training agencies in voluntary training and support programs targeting existing foster carers and kinship carers

The development of compulsory and accredited training modules to cover the eleven content areas to be delivered to all prospective foster carers.

Recommendation Two: - Indigenous child and family welfare workers

That all Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies and similar Indigenous child and family welfare services be provided with training information and resources covering the eleven content areas(on child development).

That these resources be designed for use as part of on-site professional development programs and demonstrate how knowledge of child development issues can inform practice in the child and family welfare field.

Recommendation Three:- Indigenous child care workers

That the priorities for responding to the child development related training needs of child care workers include the development of the following:

- Flexible, accredited training modules which can be delivered on and off the job to staff working within Indigenous child care services
- Specifically tailored resource /training packages to support workplace training and professional development activities for staff working in Indigenous child care services covering the eleven content areas to meet the differing needs and circumstances of the range of service providers including Mobiles Children's Services, MACS, Family Day Care services, Occasional Care Services and Innovative Services
- A nationally accredited and portable Indigenous Child Care/ Early Childhood worker qualification with a minimum accredited level of Certificate IV with delivery options to meet the needs of different service types.

Recommendation Five: Training and Professional Development

That the National Agenda consider and take up recommendations arising from the ACCAP Capacity Building project and the specific recommendations in relation to the Indigenous child and family welfare sector workforce.

Conclusion

SNAICC supports the proposal for the establishment of a national agenda for early childhood. We believe that it can provide the framework for substantially improving outcomes for Indigenous children.

To do so will require a sustained, nationally coordinated and strategic set of increased investments focussed on Indigenous children and families across the three key action areas. Unless and until a national policy forum or council is formed, which focuses on Indigenous child welfare and development and brings together all governments and relevant non-government organisations, it is doubtful if long term change will occur.