



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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Review of BBF Program an important opportunity for change — but consultation process must be genuine

SNAICC has cautiously welcomed the Australian Government's announcement that it will review Budget Based Funding (BBF) Program, under which many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services are funded.

SNAICC Deputy Chairperson (Early Childhood) Geraldine Atkinson said SNAICC had long advocated for changes to the BBF program to enable better delivery of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Ms Atkinson said SNAICC saw the review as an important opportunity to improve support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and remove some of the factors inhibiting their capacity to deliver programs. These include heavy administrative and reporting workloads, inadequate funding and a single-year funding model that creates uncertainty and prevents long-term planning.

"Our services have been significantly under-funded for the past 20 years, despite a growing demand and the fact they provide holistic, affordable and flexible programs that meet the needs of parents, and the cultural and educational needs of our children at the most crucial stage of their development," Ms Atkinson said.

"We expect the evidence that emerges from a genuine consultation process will demonstrate the real need for further operational funding. BBF services should not be expected to operate for far less than other services."

However, Ms Atkinson said SNAICC was concerned the Government's discussion paper was not opening any scope for increased funding to the BBF program — a critical issue currently forcing many services to become mono-functional.

She said it was crucial the review took into account the various important roles that these services play in the community beyond childcare.

"Our services, including the Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services — or MACS — are very distinct from mainstream services. They serve all the children in the community, not just those who walk through the door.

"They are community hubs, providing a range of services including outreach to families in need of but not accessing support, and a link for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander kids between home, community life and school.

“The child, family, culture and community are central in the MACS model.”

Ms Atkinson said SNAICC was pleased the Government recognised the importance of reviewing how the BBF program can "better be targeted to support access to ECEC (early childhood, education and care) services where market failures would otherwise exist".

“Access to affordable services is vitally important to the wellbeing and future of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities in rural and remote areas,” Ms Atkinson said.

She said the success of the review would hinge on the consultation process.

“We call on the Government to ensure its consultations — with families, services and communities — are culturally appropriate, genuine and will enable meaningful discussions.

“This requires significant notice to people to participate, requires time to sit and yarn with people on the issues, and requires openness about what the solutions may be.”

Ms Atkinson said the Australian Human Rights Commission has developed clear and simple principles for [consultation](#) with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and called on the Government to use these principles to conduct its review.

She urged everyone to get involved in the consultation process — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parents, services, peak bodies and community organisations.

“This review has potential to strengthen support for our children and enable us as services to ensure strong development and learning outcomes are achieved.”

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