



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

8 June 2013

Our children need action now – governments must commit to survival of Aboriginal children and family centres

Representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and family centres across Australia have called on the Australian and state-territory governments to urgently confirm funding for the centres beyond June 2014 and ensure their long-term future.

Representatives from 22 centres met at the SNAICC national conference in Cairns this week and urged governments to act quickly or risk the closure of centres and the withdrawal of crucial support services for vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait families, for whom the centres were designed.

38 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and family centres have been established under a \$300m national partnership agreement between the Australian and state-territory governments.

This funding ends in June 2014 and centres have been advised to prepare for funding through the mainstream child care benefit system.

“This approach will have grave consequences for our Centres. Centre closure, a lapse of key integrated family support services and the exclusion of the most vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families for whom these Centres were designed, are all likely,” centre representatives said in a signed statement.

“The 38 Centres cannot be left to fail just four years after federal investment of \$300 million Indigenous-designated funds. They have huge potential to see change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, in accordance with their objectives under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development.

“With the prospect of no funding within 12 months, our Centres cannot plan for the future, offer contracts for staff beyond June 2014, invest in critical local workforce development or develop long term service partnerships to work towards closing the gap for and *with* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our communities.”

Representatives called on governments to confirm funding for the centres after June 2014 and to reach a bipartisan ten-year commitment to enable them to meet their core objective of integrated service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

SNAICC: The national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

Statement by 22 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and family centres

Our energy for the set up and operation of our Aboriginal Children and Family Centres is tireless and unwavering. We have made commitments to our communities. We have inspired them to have faith, one more time, in the promise of truly community-driven, integrated services that respond to the needs of our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Without future commitment of support these promises are at risk of being broken. It will cause irreversible damage to our services' reputations to have built up the expectations of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities only to fail them again with unfulfilled promises.

The 38 Aboriginal Children and Family Centres were set up through one-off funding under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development. This funding ends in June 2014. *One year away.*

The only news we have received is to prepare for funding through the child care benefit. This approach will have grave consequences for our Centres. Centre closure, a lapse of key integrated family support services and the exclusion of the most vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families for whom these Centres were designed, are all likely.

The 38 Centres cannot be left to fail just four years after federal investment of \$300 million Indigenous designated funds. They have huge potential to see change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, in accordance with their objectives under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development.

With the prospect of no funding within 12 months, our Centres cannot plan for the future, offer contracts for staff beyond June 2014, invest in critical local workforce development or develop long term service partnerships to work towards closing the gap for and *with* Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our communities.

This creates barriers for trusting relationships in our communities and an end to prospects of local employment for many staff in remote areas. The 38 Centres need to be recognised for the broader agenda that they serve in local workforce development, local governance, leadership and community empowerment.

If the Early Years is truly a valued time for learning, the Government needs to act quickly.

Our concerns to date have fallen on deaf ears. Please. Now is the time for commitment and action to continue empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to work in the flexible, community determined, strengths based ways we have successfully been doing. We need to continue to strengthen how we work together for outcomes for our communities.

We call on the federal and state governments to confirm to us today what funding will be provided to the 38 Centres as of June 2014.

We call on the federal and state governments to confirm commitment today to work towards a bipartisan ten-year commitment to the 38 Centres to meet their core objective of integrated service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

Statement by:

1. Baya Gaiwy Buga yani Jandu yani u Centre, Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia
2. Brewarrina Children and Family Centre, NSW
3. Bubup Wilam for Early Learning Inc., Whittlesea, Victoria
4. Bunjum Aboriginal Cooperative Limited - Ballina Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, NSW
5. Ceduna Aboriginal Children and Family Centre, SA
6. Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Nowra, NSW
7. Dumaji Children & Family Centre, QLD
8. Gabmididi Manoo Children and Family Centre, Whyalla, SA
9. Ganjuu Child and Family Centre Logan, QLD
10. Ipswich Child and Family Centre, Qld
11. Kununurra Children and Family Centre, WA
12. Lightning Ridge Children and Family Centre, NSW
13. Mackay Children and Family Centre, QLD
14. Mareeba Children and Family Centre, QLD
15. Ngakulwen Nyerrwe "Everyone's Place", Mornington Island, QLD
16. Nikinpa Children and Family Centre, Awabakal Children's Services, NSW
17. Ningkuwum-Ngamayuwu Children and Family Centre, Halls Creek, QLD
18. Nukathati Children and Family Centre, Mt Isa, QLD
19. Palm Island Children and Family Centre QLD
20. Rockhampton Children & Family Centre, QLD
21. Taikurrendi Children and Family Centre, Adelaide, SA
22. Winanga-Li Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Gunnedah, NSW
23. The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

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(0419) 508 125; Lisa Thorpe, Chairperson of Bubup Wilam
for Early Learning centre (Victoria) will be available to
speak to media.**