



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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SNAICC congratulates Dala Yooro Children and Family Centre and says to government: guarantee its future

The peak national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, SNAICC, has welcomed tomorrow's official opening of the Dala Yooro Children and Family Centre at Bairnsdale — and called on the Australian Government to guarantee its long-term funding.

“This is a great day for Aboriginal children and families in East Gippsland. They have a new facility and qualified staff that will support parents and help give children a solid platform for success at school and beyond,” SNAICC Chairperson, Sharron Williams, said.

“Congratulations to all those people — from local Aboriginal and other organisations, as well as government agencies — who have worked to make the Dala Yooro centre a reality. It's a magnificent achievement.”

Ms Williams said Dala Yooro and the other 37 Aboriginal Children and Family Centres (ACFCs) across Australia had a crucial role to play in achieving the Government's new Closing the Gap target on school attendance.

“By the time that children reach school, it is too late. We are behind and struggling then to catch up. If the Prime Minister wants to see progress in this target, action is needed now to confirm ongoing operation of these services,” she said.

“These services provide the foundation for getting both children and families ready for school, breaking down the barriers to participation and providing affordable, culturally-strong integrated services across a host of educational, health, family support and other areas.”

However, despite their critical importance, Ms Williams said the 38 ACFCs across Australia faced funding uncertainty just four months away. “This may mean services closing just as soon as they have opened,” she said.

“The 38 new centres represent a \$300m investment by the Council of Australian Governments and yet they face the very real prospect of zero funding after June 2014. This is a totally unacceptable, some would say ludicrous, situation.”

**SNAICC: The national peak body for Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander children and family services**
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She said SNAICC was working hard to work with the Government to secure sustainable, long-term funding certainty for ACFCs and other Indigenous community-controlled early childhood services across Australia.

“Our message to the Government is clear: the research shows the economic as well as educational and development benefits from investment in early education, particularly for disadvantaged children. We must invest in centres such as Dala Yooro if we are serious about closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage,” Ms Williams said.

“On behalf of SNAICC, I wish staff and directors of the Dala Yooro centre, and the Aboriginal children and families they are supporting, every success.”

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