



Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**15 May 2014**

### **The skills, knowledge and experience of Indigenous people make our communities and families stronger**

Today marks the start of National Families Week, the annual event held by Families Australia to recognise the fundamental importance of families. This year's theme is *Stronger Families: Stronger Communities*.

The theme highlights the important role families play in our communities and that community wellbeing is enhanced by family wellbeing.

This year's theme is extremely relevant for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly in remote and regional Australia. In those small, discrete communities, community wellbeing is *driven by* family wellbeing, especially as large extended families are an integral part of community life.

National Families Week is also a time to acknowledge and celebrate the diversity and strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities.

It is a timely opportunity to remind governments that — in their critical role to promote the economic, social and cultural wellbeing of families and communities — it's not just about expenditure, it's also about the strengths and values embedded in Indigenous policies and programs, including the benefits of community control.

Governments and non-government organisations can support our families and communities by encouraging the meaningful engagement and partnership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander citizens in the design and delivery of policies and programs that affect their lives.

Before we can close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and ensure funds are spent effectively, governments must close the gap on the inclusion and participation of our communities and organisations.

As well as efforts to reduce duplication and red tape, governments must show a commitment to strengthening the capacity, including leadership and governance, of community-controlled organisations to implement local solutions — whether

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

it's delivering health and early childhood services, improving housing and infrastructure, keeping women and children safe, or addressing the needs of young people and Elders. Directing efforts in this way will help to ensure that services are culturally safe, welcoming and effective for our families, and contribute to secure the long-term economic development of our communities.

During National Families Week, it is worth reflecting that much more needs to be done to improve the situation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Critical to building stronger families and communities — and sustained success in closing the gap — will be how we use and build on the strengths, skills and expertise that already exist in our communities.

SNAICC is proud to support National Families Week 2014 — the SNAICC CEO, Frank Hytten, is once again an Ambassador for the week — and we honour and acknowledge all those, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, working to create stronger families and communities across Australia.

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