



Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

5 April 2016

**SENATE COMMITTEE INQUIRY REPORT ON THE JOBS FOR FAMILIES
CHILD CARE PACKAGE IGNORES EVIDENCE, FURTHER
DISADVANTAGING INDIGENOUS CHILDREN**

Melbourne, Australia: Significant evidence before the Senate Committee inquiry on the Jobs for Families Child Care Package has been ignored in the disappointing majority report handed down by Coalition Senators on Monday afternoon. The report recommends that the Senate pass the Bill unchanged.

SNAICC is deeply concerned that the Coalition majority remains fixed on workforce participation objectives despite far-ranging evidence presented to the Committee on the anticipated exclusion of vulnerable children from the critical early childhood education and care services under this Bill.

SNAICC welcomes the dissenting reports by the three Labor and Green Senators, which give consideration to the significant evidence before the Committee and the anticipated impact of the package on vulnerable children. In particular, SNAICC is encouraged by the amendments proposed in the dissenting report of the Labor Senators which focus on ensuring evidence-informed policy and meeting the needs of vulnerable children.

Importantly, both dissenting reports also recognise the critical role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services in increasing access to early years services for our most vulnerable children. These reports recognise the need for amendments to the package to not only ensure access for Indigenous children does not decrease but also to address the existing 15,000 place gap for Indigenous access to early learning. The report by the Labor Senators specifically recommends the package "...ensure that families in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities not be worse off under the reforms by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community based program within the new Child Care Safety Net."

A series of recommendations in the dissenting reports also redress the major concerns identified with the operation of the “activity test”, with Senator Hanson-Young recommending changes to ensure that “all children have access to a minimum of 24 hours of subsidised child care per week.”

SNAICC Deputy Chairperson, Geraldine Atkinson, said: “We know how critical the early years are for vulnerable kids. Why are Coalition members not concerned about evidence that the Jobs for Families Child Care Package may punish the children that need our support most?”

Evidence provided to the Committee from Deloitte Access Economics, commissioned by SNAICC, shows that the key components of the package may significantly reduce early learning access for vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, increase child care costs for families in poverty, and threaten viability of community-owned services – particularly in rural and remote areas. Australian National University evidence presented to the inquiry confirmed that one-third of all families will be worse off under this Bill.

The impact of all this may be that services will close and some of Australia’s most vulnerable children won’t have access to early childhood education, which is in direct contradiction to national Closing the Gap targets and policy.

As stated in SNAICC’s submission to the enquiry, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific program is strongly recommended to enable ongoing three-year funding to top up service income from the mainstream subsidy and fees in vulnerable areas to ensure ongoing viability. SNAICC also strongly advocates a minimum of two full days of subsidised care for all children are needed to ensure these anticipated consequences are avoided.

SNAICC Deputy Chairperson, Geraldine Atkinson, notes: “This report makes it strongly apparent that the Government is using this Bill to progress its ideology on workforce participation. This is not about children. It is about deciding who is worthy and who is not in our society. We need to get back to the rights and needs of all of our children.”

SNAICC implores all Parliamentarians to closely examine the detail of the Jobs for Families Child Care Package in light of available evidence, and not to support it until amendments are made that ensure the needs of the most vulnerable children will be met.

ENDS/

For more information please visit <http://www.snaicc.org.au> or contact:

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About SNAICC:

SNAICC is the national non-government peak body in Australia representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Founded in 1981, SNAICC was established to engage in activities that promote and accommodate a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

Over the past 30 years SNAICC's efforts have resulted in many key milestones and achievements both in policy developments at state, territory and federal levels and in developing innovative and useful resources for the sector.

SNAICC is governed by an influential National Executive made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled children and families' services.