



## Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

4 May 2016

### **ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ISSUES CONSPICUOUS BY THEIR ABSENCE IN FEDERAL BUDGET**

*Canberra, Australia:* The 2016 Federal Budget has been handed down with little surprising news for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector, with no new funding secured for long-standing priorities.

The *Jobs for Families* Child Care Package Bill, which the social services sector – including SNAICC – believes has not yet got the balance right, was deferred until July 2018. While SNAICC welcomes the extra time to consider this Bill and work towards a better package, unfortunately the delay has been attributed ‘...to Family Tax Benefit reforms (payment reductions to families) required to fund the child care package not being passed.’ This is a reform which is unfair, unnecessary and which will only see struggling families worse off. Interim relief will also be critical for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services that are struggling to survive.

SNAICC CEO Gerry Moore urges the government to ‘...seriously examine the needs of Australia’s most disadvantaged families when considering the content and purpose of both of these Bills in the near future to ensure:

- current Family Tax Benefits payments are maintained;
- at least two full days (20 hours) subsidised access to early childhood education and care for all children, regardless of their parent’s circumstances; and,
- an adequately resourced federal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care program to support access for the nation’s most vulnerable children.’

Marked in this budget by its absence, the widely criticised Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) garnered no extra funding. Again, SNAICC calls on the government to:

- reinstate the \$534.4 million over five years funding cuts made to the Indigenous affairs budget in recent years;
- invest in genuine engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including in the development and application of policy and programs



## Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

through adequate funding of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and other national peaks, including SNAICC and the NATSILS; and,

- commit further resources to grow the capacity and service delivery role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in the early childhood, and child and family support sectors.

SNAICC does welcome the \$5.1 million commitment in the Third Action Plan under the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020* to deliver two trials aimed at increasing the wellbeing and future economic and social outcomes of children and young people.

These trials include the **Building Capacity in Australian Parents** trial (\$1.2 million) to build parenting skills in the first 1000 days of a child's life and the **Towards Independent Adulthood** trial (\$3.9 million) to support young people as they move from out-of-home care into adulthood. SNAICC believes that the First 1000 days initiative needs to be Indigenous-led, and build on work being undertaken by Professor Kerry Arabena for a coordinated, comprehensive intervention to address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from (pre)conception to two years of age and their families. With adequate resourcing this project could have far-reaching implications for transforming outcomes for our most vulnerable children.

SNAICC also welcomes the inclusion of \$3 million funding over three years to redress family violence as a starting point to change on this critical issue that impacts all Australians, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in particular.

Overall, SNAICC is disappointed at the overall lack of focus on the Indigenous sector by the federal government with Mr Moore calling for '... a renewed whole-of-government effort towards meeting Australia's agreed Close The Gap targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.'

**/ENDS**



## **Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care**

For media enquiries please contact Jess Brennan, SNAICC Communications Coordinator, [jessica.brennan@snaicc.org.au](mailto:jessica.brennan@snaicc.org.au) (03) 9489 8099 / 0421334918

### ***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.