



Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

LABOR ANNOUNCES PROMISING WAY FORWARD FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EQUALITY

16 June 2016

Sydney, Australia: SNAICC welcomes a series of announcements made today by the Australian Labor Party in Redfern, Sydney. Following on from the landmark [Redfern Statement](#) by Australia's Aboriginal leaders last Thursday, these announcements show a genuine dedication to progressing equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. SNAICC looks forward to responses from the other major parties.

Specifically, SNAICC strongly welcomes Labor's child-centred approach to Closing the Gap, with a strong focus on investment in the early years shown through a pledge of \$57 million to support the expansion of places and the delivery of a range of holistic services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Labor's policy statement notes the 15,000 place gap in early childhood places for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is unacceptable and confirms that "...there is a clear need to invest in quality holistic, integrated and culturally appropriate early years' services to address this unmet need".

Contrary to the much maligned '[Jobs for Families' Child Care Package](#), which promised to abolish Budget Based Funded (BBF) Services – the specific program created for communities where a user-pays model is not feasible (80% of these services are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander), today's announcements confirm that a Shorten Labor Government would not only retain, but further invest in BBF services.

Furthermore, it would also increase investment in the 38 highly successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Family Centres (ACFCs) to build capacity of places and service delivery with Labor recognising the value of these centres, noting that they "... provide holistic, culturally safe early learning, health and family support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in the early years before formal schooling".

SNAICC Chairperson, Sharron Williams, comments: "SNAICC is excited to see that finally all the irrefutable evidence on the benefits of quality early years education and care is being recognised. We know these early years of life are the most critical in breaking the cycle of disadvantage for our kids and we know that community-owned services are the most effective at seeing positive outcomes for struggling children and



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families. We welcome Labor’s progressive policies that could really allow generational change for our children.”

Furthermore, this investment in the early years will be backed by an increased \$36 billion investment in schools over the next decade, ensuring the required resources are available to improve results and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Importantly, today’s policy announcements signal a significant, more inclusive approach to genuine partnerships with Aboriginal leadership, services and peoples: “...Labor understands that Indigenous-led services which involve local families and community are best placed to be responsive to community needs and deliver improvements in the health and education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children...” and that “...Labor believes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be equal and active partners in determining the priorities and decisions which affect their lives”.

Other important announcements included:

- A fairer funding approach, moving away from the competitive tender process under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. Labor indicates that this strategy would offer a consultative, community needs-based processes clearly aligned with the Closing the Gap framework.
- A commitment of \$15 million over 3 years to supporting the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples – ensuring Congress has a “...central partnership role in decisions that affect their communities”.
- The re-introduction of an annual Indigenous affairs budget statement for greater transparency.
- Multiple investment commitments to tackle family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, including \$4.5 million to build the capacity of the Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (FVPLS).
- Commitment to a new Closing The Gap justice target, signalling Labor is listening to Aboriginal leadership through the *Change the Record Campaign*, which has presented powerful evidence of the need for this target and a coherent strategy for change.
- Commitment that the roll out of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) includes adequate support to address the complex social circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with a disability.



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Sharron Williams states: “These announcements break the silence on political directions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues in this election campaign. We welcome the opportunity for respectful dialogue as equals with all major parties, and Labor’s recognition of the importance of representative bodies and community-controlled services in meeting the needs of our people.”

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For more information please visit 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.