



3 October 2016

## **ABORIGINAL EARLY YEARS CENTRES TO CLOSE UNDER UNWORKABLE JOBS FOR FAMILIES CHILD CARE PACKAGE MAINSTREAM MODEL**

**Melbourne, Australia:** At today's public Senate Committee hearing addressing the Jobs for Families Child Care Package Bill (2016), SNAICC – National Voice for our Children presented a new feasibility report showing that the Government experiment to set up 38 Aboriginal Child and Family Centres (ACFCs) under a mainstream funding model has failed.

The experience of these centres shows that the roll out of this same approach under the Jobs for Families Child Care Package is similarly flawed. It may see hundreds of early years services supporting vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children close – with a number already considering closure plans.

The feasibility report by [Juliet Frizzell Consulting](#) on leading Victorian Aboriginal Child and Family Centre [Bubup Wilam for Early Learning](#) was undertaken to assess the critical impact of this centre. It shows that while Bubup Wilam is directly contributing to the achievement of central targets set by the Australian and Victorian governments to improve the health and well-being of Aboriginal people, it will be forced to cease operating in the near future due to inadequate funding.

The report finds that Bubup Wilam – developed as an ACFC that provides holistic child and family services to the local Aboriginal community – is not viable under the mainstream early childhood education and care system, with an approximate \$900,000 annual deficit.

Geraldine Atkinson, SNAICC Deputy Chairperson, comments: “Sadly this is not an isolated case. Not one of the 38 ACFCs are anywhere near viable under this mainstream system.”

In response, many state governments have had to step in with short-term funding for the centres. Bubup Wilam in Victoria and the five Western Australia ACFCs now need urgent support.

Ms Atkinson explains: “While short-term funding is essential to prevent service cut backs and closure, a longer-term intergovernmental approach is required. And certainly the solution is not to roll out the same failure to the other 300 services around Australia that provide critical early learning supports our most vulnerable children. It is clear that *mainstreaming* Aboriginal services simply does not work.”

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The Jobs for Families Child Care Package does not take into account that Indigenous early years services have a different purpose to mainstream services. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander centres support the development of the most vulnerable children in communities, and through their unique features, overcome many of the identified service access barriers that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families' experience. If greater consideration is not given we will see many more children fall out of the system and their life-long opportunities diminish.

“The good news is that the package only requires very minor changes to avoid reducing access to early years services for our children and, instead, redress the current 15,000 place gap in early learning places that the Productivity Commission has identified for these children. We urge the Senate Committee to seriously consider our recommendations and not subject our kids to further disadvantage,” Ms Atkinson concludes.

*The public hearings on the Jobs For Families Child Care Package Bill (2016) run from Monday 3 October to Tuesday 4 October in Melbourne. In addition to SNAICC, the enquiry panel will be hearing from major sector representatives including Early Childhood Australia, Anglicare, The Parenthood, Goodstart Early Learning and [many others](#).*

**/ENDS**

For more information please visit [www.snaicc.org.au](http://www.snaicc.org.au) or contact:

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***About SNAICC – National Voice for our Children:***

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children is the national non-governmental peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We work for the fulfilment of the rights of our children, in particular to ensure their safety, development and well-being.

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.

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**SNAICC**

National Voice for our Children

Over the past 30 years SNAICC's efforts has 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 Board of Directors made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled children and family services.

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