



SNAICC  
National Voice for our Children  
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## **SNAICC WELCOMES ANNOUNCEMENT OF FORMAL PARTNERSHIP APPROACH TO CLOSING THE GAP REFRESH**

**Melbourne, Australia:** SNAICC – National Voice for our Children welcomes today’s joint communiqué from COAG and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peaks that commits to the establishment of a formalised partnership arrangement to oversee the Closing the Gap ‘refresh’ process.

Over the past year, SNAICC and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies have raised significant concerns over the limited involvement of our communities and representatives throughout the ‘refresh’ process.

“The Closing the Gap strategy will only succeed through the real and meaningful participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people,” said Muriel Bamblett, SNAICC Chairperson.

The Closing the Gap strategy represents the major framework adopted by all Australian governments to promote better outcomes and achieve equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It is essential that the framework for the refreshed strategy has the buy-in and support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their representative organisations and peak bodies.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies play a unique role in this space, representing the interests of our peoples across the service sector, and they must be at the very centre of the strategy design process,” said Ms Bamblett.

The structure proposed by COAG today, that nominates states as having lead responsibility for target areas of national concern – including in relation to child protection – is problematic.

“The Commonwealth has significant responsibility across many of the key sectors that can meaningfully address the over-representation of our children in out-of-home care,” said Ms Bamblett. “The Commonwealth must step up and lead a national approach to end the crisis level of intervention in the lives of our families.”

Achieving equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within a generation necessitates a focus on children and young people. We have a shared responsibility

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to ensure the right of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child to be safe and thrive in family, community and culture.

Accordingly, SNAICC welcomes the inclusion of a strengthened draft Closing the Gap target around early childhood development outlined in the COAG communiqué.

We note that a target to eliminate the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is being considered alongside a target to eliminate violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. These are two devastating issues that require separate, nuanced strategies, and must both be individually and adequately resourced. Sub-targets that address the underlying causes of child protection intervention will also be critical to changing outcomes for children.

While these Closing the Gap targets will be important to drive and focus efforts to improve outcomes for our children, even more important will be the strategies adopted to achieve them. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are over 10 times more likely to be removed from their parents than non-Indigenous children. This represents a crisis level of intervention in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family life that requires a national and cross-government response. SNAICC is calling for the development of a comprehensive COAG-level national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's strategy, led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

"An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's strategy is absolutely vital to ensuring a refreshed Closing the Gap leads to actual, sustained, positive change for our children," said Ms Bamblett.

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

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