



SNAICC
National Voice for our Children
(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation)
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SNAICC CALLS FOR EARLY INTERVENTION MEASURES AGAINST COVID-19 FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ON NATIONAL CLOSE THE GAP DAY

19 March 2020

As we mark National Close the Gap Day in the midst of the escalating COVID-19 virus, we are reminded of the vulnerability of many in our communities, particularly our children and our elderly. SNAICC urges the Federal Government to communicate clearly and decisively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities about what they need to do to stay safe.

The Government must ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities continue to receive up-to-date warnings and advice, especially in local languages where English is not the first language.

Our families may be experiencing anxiety about the impending closures of schools and early education and care services. The Government needs to ensure early education and care services, particularly those educating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children such as Aboriginal Child and Family Centres (ACFCs) and Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACs), are resourced to cope with the ever changing environment that will be forced upon our communities during this difficult time.

Our early education and care services are crucial for keeping our kids connected to culture. They need stability in these uncertain times and we know that routine is integral to keeping our children happy and thriving.

Social distancing is a challenge for many of our families, particularly in more regional and remote areas because inadequate housing means many families are living in over-crowded conditions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more likely than non-Indigenous children to live in multi-generational households. Every action that can be taken to prevent this virus getting into communities where poor housing infrastructure exists must be taken early.

SNAICC CEO Richard Weston said, "Advice is changing on a daily basis, and it is important that our communities aren't left in the dark.

"Looking after our Elders has always been a priority for our mob. In these times of heightened anxiety we need to be vigilant in our hygiene practices, and we can support our Elders by helping with their groceries and providing medical support."

Chairperson Muriel Bamblett represents SNAICC on the Coalition of Peaks and the Joint Council for Closing the Gap. Ms Bamblett commented:

“We echo the message of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19 (the taskforce), and the need for targeted support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, particularly those in remote communities – to minimise the likelihood of exposure to COVID-19 and enable an effective response if an outbreak occurs. Our children and families are the most vulnerable and testing must be a priority.

“It is important to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to keep our families and children safe at a time when support services are withdrawing.”

– SNAICC Chair Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett

In these uncertain times, the health and wellbeing of all Australians must be the priority. The spread of COVID-19 could have significant consequences for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families now and into the future. Our community leaders must be supported with up-to-date information on the virus and how to minimise its impacts so that they are able to set the tone for action in their families and communities.

The Federal Government needs to recognise the critical importance of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in the crisis that we are experiencing now. Our early years services and health services must be supported with additional resources as required and provided with up-to-date public health advice to help them support our children and families effectively.

ENDS/

For more information please visit 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-government peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It works for the fulfilment of the rights of children to ensure their safety, development and wellbeing.

Founded in 1981, SNAICC was called Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care until it was changed to SNAICC – National Voice for our Children. For over 30 years SNAICC has achieved key milestones in policy development at state, territory and federal levels and developed innovative and useful resources for the sector.

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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