

**MEDIA RELEASE – 30 JULY 2020**

## **SNAICC welcomes new National Agreement on Closing the Gap to strengthen outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families**

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children came together with more than 50 other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak bodies to negotiate a comprehensive National Agreement on Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The new National Agreement is a commitment from all governments to fundamentally change the way they work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

Representing SNAICC on the Coalition of Peaks, SNAICC Chair Muriel Bamblett says,

“The new Closing the Gap Agreement takes a positive step towards improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

“The Priority Reforms in the agreement focus on partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, building the capacity of our community-controlled services and improving data to make sure we are capturing a true picture of the lives and wellbeing of our children.”

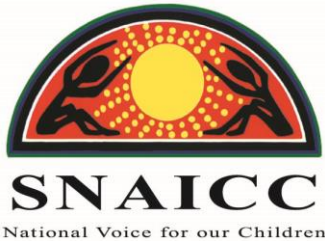
More than 4000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participated in our engagements on what should be included in the new National Agreement guiding us in our negotiations.

Governments have made a substantial commitment to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031, which aligns strongly with the calls of SNAICC and the Family Matters campaign to eliminate the over-representation of our children in out-of-home care by 2040.

“Achieving this target will require greater efforts and investment in early intervention and prevention, and in reunification of our children with their families, if we are to keep our children connected to family, culture and kin,” says Ms Bamblett.

The National Agreement brings a new and welcomed focus on early developmental outcomes for children, with a target to increase the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track against the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55% by 2031. Currently, 35% of our children are developmentally on track in all five domains.

Ms Bamblett states, “We know that supporting our children from an early age will improve their future outcomes. Achieving this target will require a greater investment in early childhood development and learning supports for children aged 0-5.”



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While SNAICC acknowledges the importance of achieving 95% enrolment of 4-year-olds in pre-school, a repeated target from the last agreement, it is essential to focus on improving outcomes for children aged 0-3 years if we are to Close the Gap in AEDC outcomes.

The agreement includes a Priority Reform to build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services, with early childhood services one of the first four sectors to be strengthened.

“If governments invest in our Aboriginal community-controlled early childhood education services to support our children and families we can ensure our children have access to vital early years education so that they have the opportunity to thrive.

“There is significant work to do but we are steadfast in our commitment to working with community-controlled organisations and governments through the Closing the Gap Agreement and the new National Early Childhood Strategy that the Prime Minister announced in February.

“As we work together on policies and programs that impact the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, we are reminded of how far we have come, and how the future of our children rests on us moving forward together.”

– SNAICC Chair Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett

To read the full new National Agreement on Closing the Gap, head to the Coalition of Peaks website: <http://coalitionofpeaks.org.au/final-national-agreement-on-closing-the-gap/>

### **For more information and media enquiries**

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