

MEDIA RELEASE

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BUDGET A MIXED BAG FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Budget 2023 is a missed opportunity by the Albanese Government to deliver funding that supports its commitments to improve life outcomes and safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children CEO Catherine Liddle welcomed the Government’s commitments to make childcare cheaper for all families and support the skills and training of workers in early childhood education.

But much more needs to be done to remove the barriers facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families accessing early education and to close the gap so children can thrive.

The Closing the Gap outcomes on children being developmentally ready for school, and reducing the over representation in out-of-home care are off track and worsening.

“We recognise the Albanese Government has already announced initiatives such as reforming the Activity Test so all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can access 36 hours of subsidised childcare a fortnight from July 2023,” Ms Liddle said.

“This is welcome but to really make the difference so our children meet developmental milestones and are ready for school, the Activity Test must be removed.

“This was recognised by the *Senate Select Committee on Work and Care*, which also recommended an immediate increase in funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early education and care services.

“We are disappointed not to see Budget-backed efforts to reduce the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.

“Earlier this year the Government released Action Plans under Safe and Supported, the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children.

“Safe and Supported has the potential to be a game changer in keeping our children safe and connected to family and culture and out of the child protection and youth justice systems.

“But unless the commitments are backed up by funding they are just words on paper.

“We acknowledge the Government’s increases to working age payments which will benefit about 150,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

“What we’d also like to see is a renewed commitment to the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap priority reforms, so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people drive some of these Budget commitments, such as the \$200m to tackle community disadvantage through place-based reforms.”

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