

MEDIA RELEASE

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GOVERNMENTS NEED TO UP THE ANTE ON CLOSING THE GAP

Today's release of updated data on Closing the Gap outcomes shows Governments need to fire up their efforts if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are to have the same opportunities as other Australian children.

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children CEO Catherine Liddle said the new figures show the devil is in the detail when it comes to life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

“It's heartening to see the overall trend showing the gap is closing in some of the target areas. But scratch the surface of the data and as always, the detail provides a different picture,” Ms Liddle said.

“And the details show this is not the time to be claiming any great turnaround in the frankly sloth-like pace in closing the gap.

“Overall, Governments need to get serious about working with us, making real efforts to change the way they work and resourcing our community-controlled organisations to put in place the solutions.

“It's beyond time for the rubber to hit the road with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people driving the Closing the Gap express.

Ms Liddle welcomed the decline in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in detention and the increase in children enrolled in early years education that has occurred since 2018-19.

“While it is encouraging to see the rate of our young people in detention declining when compared to the baseline year, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people still make up an unacceptable percentage of the total number of young people in detention.

“Based on the data in the dashboard, in 2021-22 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people made up 59.6% of the total number of young people in detention.

“By comparison, in 2021 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up only 5.8% of the total population of young people in Australia.

“And while preschool enrolments are increasing, under Target 4, that children thrive in their early years, there has been a decline in the indicator relating to developmental strengths.

“This means that our children continue to be behind the 8 ball when it comes to being developmentally ready for school.

“Another indicator of this Target shows a positive but slight increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled integrated early years services, up to 108 from the 2016 baseline of 86 services.

“Again, this is a mixed result across jurisdictions. But what the data does show is that in areas of greatest need, and the most disadvantage, progress is slow or going backwards.

“Our children continue to be removed from family and placed in out-of-home care at disproportionate rates, a target that is way off track.

“All Governments need to live up to the ambition of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

“A Constitutionally enshrined Voice can work together with our peak bodies, calling Governments to account on their promises, providing a mechanism to push our communities’ priorities for change and offer some protection from our people always being at the mercy of political whim.”

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