



SNAICC – National Voice for our Children
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation
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MEDIA RELEASE

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GAP WIDENS FOR CHILDREN IN EARLY YEARS

It is critical that Governments act now to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children if there is to be progress on closing the gap.

For the second time in a week new data shows the gap is widening in critical areas relating to young people.

The Australian Early Development Census National Report released yesterday shows there has been a decrease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child development overall across key measures (domains).

SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle said the declines highlighted the importance of Governments acting on the solutions put forward by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early childhood services.

“From 2009 to 2018 there had been a steady increase in the percentage of our children on track across all five domain areas, driven in large part by the focus on community-controlled and culturally strong service delivery,” Ms Liddle said.

“For the first time, the 2021 data shows a reversal in this trend. Less Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are on track in all 5 domains (down to just 34.3 per cent).

“While the findings reflect overall changes for all children nationally, the decline has been greater for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, further widening the gap.

“The AEDC found these results were mainly driven by decreases in the percentage of children on track in the language and cognitive skills domain in 2021.

“While overall some of the decline can be tied to COVID-19 pressures, clearly the widening gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children shows other factors are also impacting.”

The Closing the Gap target aims to increase the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are on track in the five domains to 55 per cent by 2031.

“We now have the evidence this target, like others, is off track,” Ms Liddle said.

“Last week data released by the Productivity Commission showed more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were going into out of home care, pushing this Closing the Gap target more off track.

“If we are to turn around life outcomes, to set our children up for the best start in life, to allow them to thrive in their early years, there must be a concerted effort by all levels of Government.

“Resources have to be aligned to the Closing the Gap targets.

“We are calling for fundamental reforms to the Federal early childhood education and care model that is failing to ensure our children are on track when they start school.

“We need a dedicated funding program to build and increase the number of our incredible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander integrated early years services.

“We also need to get barriers like the child care activity test out of the way and ensure our children have access to at least 30 hours of free or heavily subsidised child care each week.

“We have the evidence and solutions to demonstrate what works to help our kids thrive.

“What we need is the support from Government partners in Closing the Gap to make investments in community-controlled early years approaches a reality.”

Catherine Liddle SNAICC CEO

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About SNAICC – National Voice for our Children:

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children is the national non-governmental peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We work for the fulfilment of the rights of our children, in particular to ensure their safety, development and wellbeing.

Founded in 1981, SNAICC was established to engage in activities that promote and accommodate a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. Over the past 40 years SNAICC’s efforts have driven achievements both in policy developments at state, territory and federal levels and in developing innovative and useful resources for the sector.

For more information, please visit www.snaicc.org.au and www.familymatters.org.au