



Media Release

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BIG WIN FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER FAMILIES

Senate Committee recommends scrapping activity test and more funding for early childhood education and care services

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families may have fairer access to early childhood education and care after the *Senate Select Committee on Work and Care Interim Report* recommends increased funding for services and removing the mandatory activity test for accessing subsidised childcare.

The report includes a number of promising recommendations made by SNAICC informed by its members that would benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services and those they assist, including:

- an immediate increase in long term funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care services, and
- the removal of the activity tests required of families to receive childcare subsidies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in early childhood education and care is significantly lower than in other communities,” says SNAICC Chief Executive Officer, Catherine Liddle.

Ms Liddle said activity tests are one of the more significant barriers to accessing these services, disproportionately disadvantaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in regional and rural areas.

“Families working short term contracts and casual or unpredictable hours cannot commit to additional hours of work without guaranteed childcare, nor can they commit to more childcare hours when they risk failing the activity test and incurring more costs they can’t afford.

“This cycle must stop. Removing the activity test will go a long way toward giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families fairer access to the resources their children need to grow and thrive.”

Ms Liddle said it was encouraging to see the Committee make special note about the current funding model not enabling early childhood education and care providers to establish culturally safe and holistic services in high-need areas.

“SNAICC welcomes the recommendations to increase funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care services and abolishing the activity test for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

“All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families should have fair access to culturally safe and holistic services that consider the unique socioeconomic and education circumstances of their communities.

“We are encouraged by the urgent recommendations of the Interim Report to improve early years services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, making particular reference to the evidence SNAICC has been presenting for many years.

“We look forward to progressing these recommendations with the Federal Government.”

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