

MEDIA RELEASE

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Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations require a sustainable funding model recognising their knowledge and expertise: Productivity Commission

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, welcomes the findings and recommendations laid out by the Productivity Commission in their Draft Report into early childhood education and care.

SNAICC has long called for universal access to at least 30 hours of ECEC per week for our children, and is pleased to see this call has been recognised and supported in the draft report.

The Productivity Commission’s draft findings on early childhood education and care (ECEC) in Australia include:

- Evidence shows children benefit from attending high-quality ECEC
- Children who would benefit most from ECEC the least likely to attend
- All children aged 0-5 years should be able to attend up to 30 hours or three days of quality ECEC a week for 48 weeks per year

Significantly, the Productivity Commission made a draft recommendation for families with an annual income of up to \$80,000 to be eligible for a 100% subsidy rebate.

SNAICC CEO, Catherine Liddle noted the findings relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their under-representation in ECEC services because mainstream providers are not always available or affordable, or they may not be culturally safe environments.

“The Productivity Commission’s draft report highlights the need for sustainable funding for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to enable them to deliver tailored programs that meet community priorities.

“We know placing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at the centre with community - controlled services as their supports makes the absolute difference in their wellbeing and development.

“Improving cultural safety and capability across ECEC services is vital to achieving the Closing the Gap targets for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

“The report has also recognised that *integrated services* have a critical role to support children and families experiencing vulnerability and connect children with other child and family services, such as health and family supports. Our ACCOs have led the way in providing integrated and holistic early years services for decades, but as the Productivity Commission has pointed out, funding models have been inadequate to support this critical work.

“One size does not fit all when it comes to ECEC services and funding models. We are pleased the Productivity Commission’s findings reflect the different needs of communities across the country, especially those in regional and remote areas.

“No measure to improve early learning access will lead to positive outcomes without concrete action on addressing the lack of services in Australia’s regional and remote communities.

“Addressing the issues and challenges with ‘Childcare Desserts’ should also be a key priority for the Federal Government.

“We support the Productivity Commission’s draft recommendation for a new review of the National Quality Framework. SNAICC has long advocated for a framework that reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural perspectives, knowledge and expertise in ECEC service delivery.

“We’ve heard countless examples of how the Activity Test has and continues to act as a significant barrier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families wanting to access early learning services.

“Further, we know that its removal will improve early learning participation rates for Indigenous children because it did exactly that when the Activity Test requirements were removed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families during the pandemic.

“The Productivity Commission’s draft report now joins several other official Governmental panels and reviews in calling for the removal or serious modification of the Activity Test.

“It is high time the Federal Government scrap this punitive test.

“We look forward to contributing to the Productivity Commissions information requests on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and ECEC services,” Ms Liddle said.

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