

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

5 March 2024

### **NEW EARLY LEARNING AND CARE MODEL NEEDED TO CLOSE THE GAP FOR CHILDREN**

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children has called for a new early years services model that reflects the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and services.

The peak body’s submission to the Productivity Commission’s inquiry into early childhood education and care (ECEC) supports the vision of a universal ECEC system that strengthens Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families’ engagement in culturally-centred and high-quality education and care and integrated early years services.

CEO Catherine Liddle will tell the Commission’s inquiry today that SNAICC supports the majority of the recommendations of the Commission’s Draft Report, in particular the need for sustainable funding for ACCO early years services.

“We reiterate our call for the scrapping of the Childcare Activity Test. As step towards this, we are pleased to see the PC’s draft recommendation for universal access to at least 30 hours of ECEC per week for our children.

“Ultimately we should be aiming at a free universal early childhood education and care system that will build a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable future for all Australian children.

“The market-based funding model is failing our most vulnerable children. It also perpetuates childcare deserts in many areas where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children live.

“Closing the gap starts with improving outcomes for our children, and that means changing systems to what we know works so our children are developmentally ready for school.”

To achieve this, SNAICC is calling for

- A new, dedicated funding model incorporating block and needs-based funding for ACCO ECEC services, that matches resources to wrap-around support needs in each community
- The building and sustaining of a decided Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years workforce
- Ongoing funding for ACCO early years services backbone support

Ms Liddle said SNAICC supports the intent of establishing an ECEC Commission to oversight better coordination and delivery of ECEC policies and provide accountability.

“But an ECEC Commission must not inadvertently displace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector leadership or undermine self-determination.

“Our view is that many of the proposed ECEC Commission functions should remain with the community-controlled sector.

“Our findings and recommendations reflect what SNAICC heard through extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early years services, in researching and developing funding model options.

“Part of the failure of previous ECEC policies has been the disconnection from community, how they determine quality and success and whether services effectively meet their needs.

“Ensuring shared-decision making and true partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples will set our children, families and communities up to thrive.”

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Pls note – Ms Liddle is scheduled to appear at the Productivity Commission public hearings on Tuesday March 5 at 11am.

Please contact the Productivity Commission for details regarding the hearing broadcast.