

MEDIA RELEASE

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FEDERAL BUDGET: 30 HOURS' FREE CHILDCARE WOULD SET ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN UP FOR SUCCESS AT SCHOOL AND BEYOND

The national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's peak is calling on the Federal Government to make childcare more affordable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the upcoming Federal Budget.

SNAICC is proposing the current government subsidy, which covers up to 90 per cent of the cost of at least 18 hours of childcare a week, be increased to 95 or 100 per cent for 30 hours.

SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle said addressing inequity had to start in the early years.

“Childcare is not just a place for children to go while their parents are at work, it is hugely beneficial for building children’s social and cognitive skills, and getting them school-ready,” Ms Liddle said.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are less likely to attend early learning and more likely to start school developmentally vulnerable. And the evidence shows that when children start school behind, they struggle to catch up and are more likely to disengage.

“Investing in early learning is one way to ensure fewer children end up in the child protection and youth justice systems down the track. These systems are costly and perpetuate harm and trauma for children.”

Ms Liddle said early childhood centres run by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) had many benefits, but struggled with uncertain funding.

“Families trust and want to send their children to ACCO-run centres because they provide culturally safe programs for children that support their cultural identity, knowledge and connection.

“They provide holistic, wraparound services that provide so much more than just childcare, often acting as an entry point for families to access broader health and social support services.”

SNAICC is calling on the Federal Government to commit to more consistent and sustainable funding for Aboriginal community controlled early childhood services, which struggle with a lack of funding certainty.

Such a call has also been made by the ACCC and the Productivity Commission in their recent enquiries into the early childhood system.

A report recommending new funding models for ACCO integrated early years services has just been released by SNAICC and the Australian Government on behalf of the ECCDPP, a policy partnership under Closing the Gap, supporting the need for secure, adequate funding.

SNAICC is also calling for the Government to abolish the childcare subsidy Activity Test, which determines how much of a family's childcare costs the Government will cover based on how many hours they work.

“The Activity Test is preventing the most vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, whose families may be in precarious work or under-employed, to miss out on the educational opportunities they need to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and injustice.

“We are also wanting to see continued investment in the Early Years Support program, that builds and develops early childhood services and the workforce.

“On Budget day we will be looking to the Government to make a long-term investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by setting them up to thrive from the start.”

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