

Early Childhood Care and Development
Policy Partnership
Annual Report 2023

Acknowledgement

The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country across the continent and islands and their continuing connections to land, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and Elders past and present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect their continued connection to Country, care for community and practice of culture for generations uncounted.

We also acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, parents, families and kinship carers who are the custodians of caring practices that have kept children safe and thriving for more than 65,000 years.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	2
A Message from the Co-Chairs.....	4
Executive Summary.....	6
Part 1 – Working in Partnership: About the Early Childhood Policy Partnership.....	8
Establishment of the Partnership.....	8
Scope of Partnership	9
Making recommendations to Joint Council	10
Part 2 – Year 1: Laying a solid foundation for progress.....	11
Meetings	13
Year 1 Workplan	15
Part 3 – Progressing reform in the ECCD sector: Six priorities.....	18
Appendix A – List of Members	23
Appendix B – Acronym and abbreviation list.....	26

A Message from the Co-Chairs

As Co-Chairs of the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (the Partnership), we are pleased to present the Partnership's inaugural annual report. This report details the achievements and progress of the Partnership in its first 16 months of operation, from its establishment in August 2022 to November 2023.

The Partnership's activities in 2023 have focused on laying a solid foundation to support genuine shared decision-making between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and government jurisdictions.

This year, the Partnership engaged deeply with the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Closing the Gap and Inquiry into the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) System. This work represents an opportunity to address the systems-level barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families accessing high-quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education and care. This engagement will continue to be a theme in Year 2 for the Partnership as recommendations are handed down, with clear implications for the remit and ways of working of the Partnership. We thank the Commissioners and Assistant Commissioners for their time this year.

The Partnership has a strong interest in *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031* (Safe and Supported) and its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-26, aligned to our focus on ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up connected to their family and kin and preventing entry to out-of-home care. In 2023, the Partnership worked closely with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of Safe and Supported governance bodies to accelerate progress in relation to the establishment a fully empowered and legislated National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, which was one of the Partnership's 2023 priorities. We look forward to furthering this collaboration with Safe and Supported governance bodies in 2024 to continue to progress this work, advance other shared priorities and demonstrate the power of shared decision-making.

The Productivity Commission's interim report on Closing the Gap delivered an important pulse-check on the health of the National Agreement, including a review of shared-decision making bodies established under Priority Reform 1. The report acknowledges that whilst the policy partnerships are showing early signs of impact, they may re-create funding and decision-making siloes if not sufficiently resourced to work across policy areas. We are confident that our work in Year 1 has laid the foundations for the Partnership to achieve positive outcomes through new ways of working which centre shared decision-making. In Year 2 we will continue to consider whether any adjustments are required to improve collaboration across policy areas.

Our Partnership meetings have taken place across Australia. We acknowledge and thank the Traditional Owners who welcomed us onto their lands, the Kurna, Wurundjeri, Arrernte and Gadigal Peoples.

We wish to thank all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and government members for their time and commitment, and to approaching their role in the Partnership with good faith and a dedication towards fostering a genuine and strong Partnership during our first year.

Finally, we thank Joint Council on Closing the Gap (Joint Council) for engaging with the Partnership's annual report and look forward to submitting recommendations for Joint Council decision in 2024.

Kind regards

Catherine Liddle and Kylie Crane

Co-Chairs of the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership

Executive Summary

The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (the Partnership or ECCDPP) was established in August 2022 under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) to drive transformative action to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Partnership supports shared decision-making between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and Australian governments under Priority 1 of the National Agreement, in recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a right to self-determination and are the experts on matters concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The purpose of the Partnership is for governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties to develop a joined-up approach to policy that ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy, supported to thrive with strong families and proud in culture. The scope of the Partnership includes outcomes 2, 3, 4, 12 and 13 under the National Agreement, which span maternal and child health, early childhood education and care (ECEC) and child and family safety.

The Partnership held four in-person meetings across Australia in its first 16 months of operation. During this time, the Partnership has focused on establishing a strong foundation for shared decision-making, developing a forward plan to drive progress and engaging with relevant external forums. The partnership identified six Year 1 priority areas for action to focus its efforts, as below:

Year 1 Partnership Priorities

Priority 1: Progress a research project on funding model options for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) that deliver ECEC, including integrated early years services

Priority 2: Increasing the base entitlement of 30 hours per week of subsidised ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–5

Priority 3: Commission research and evidence development on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led models of family support

Priority 4: A cross-sector project to identify collaborative efforts required to break down siloes and address social determinants of tertiary systems intervention for children and families

Priority 5: Establishment of a fully empowered and legislated National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner

Priority 6: Oversee and require regular reports on progress to implement the outcomes and recommendations of the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families review completed by DSS and SNAICC

Key achievements during the first year include:

- Developing a Year 1 work plan and agreeing on the six priorities
- Commissioning research into funding model options for ACCOs delivering ECEC (Priority 1)
- Commissioning a systematic review into optimal hours of ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (Priority 2)
- Scoping work to build the evidence base for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led models of family support and opportunities to break down service system silos for families (Priorities 3 and 4)
- Accelerating progress toward the establishment of a fully empowered and legislated National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children with two collaborative workshops held with Safe and Supported governance and the Partnership (Priority 5)
- Engaging with the Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and Inquiry into the ECEC system, to advocate for the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

- Promoting information sharing between Partnership members to support a better understanding of work to address Priority Reforms under the National Agreement across jurisdictions

In year two, the Partnership will continue to identify and progress priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through shared effort and decision-making. This will include making recommendations to Joint Council.

Part 1 – Working in Partnership: About the Early Childhood Policy Partnership

Establishment of the Partnership

The Partnership was endorsed by Joint Council in August 2022 and is one of five policy partnerships to be established under the National Agreement. The Partnership enables a joined-up approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood care and development policy, with a focus on:

- ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and remain strong, nurtured by strong families and thrive in their early years; and
- ensuring children’s safety and care in family and addressing the impacts of child protection systems on children’s health, wellbeing and development.

The Partnership gives effect to the core commitment of Priority Reform 1 by establishing a mechanism for shared decision making and policy development between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives. In recognition that previous ways of developing and implementing policy that impacts Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have not worked, the shared decision-making model underpinning policy partnerships acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are experts in their own lives and respects the cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to develop and decide policy in equal partnership with government. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the Partnership represent thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the country. These members provide a connection between the Partnership and the communities, families and children they represent.

The National Agreement sets out the principles of partnership and shared decision making in Priority Reform 1. These principles are reflected in the Partnership’s membership and working arrangements and detailed in the [Agreement to Implement](#), which sets out its objectives, deliverables and overarching governance arrangements.

The Partnership is co-chaired by SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (SNAICC) and the Commonwealth Department of Education. SNAICC is the non-government national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and a national member of the Coalition of Peaks (CoP).

To enact the partnership model set out in the National Agreement, membership of the Partnership consists of CoP members and Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives as well as representatives from all Australian governments.

The Partnership has 11 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. These members are a mix of elected representatives from CoP and Independent representatives with specialist knowledge of the early childhood care and development sector. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the Partnership are deeply connected to their communities and carry the aspirations and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families on the ground, into Partnership meetings.

To ensure there is equal representation between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members on matters that require decision, governments parties are represented by one vote per jurisdiction. At the Commonwealth Government level, the Department of Education represents the jurisdiction, supported by a partner from the Department of Social Services. To ensure both education and community services portfolios are represented on the Partnership, all government members are accompanied by an additional partner.

A full list of members and partners since establishment is at [Appendix A](#).

The Partnership is supported by a co-secretariat with functions shared by SNAICC and the Commonwealth Department of Education, which further embeds the shared decision-making model.

To support the establishment of the Partnership, the Commonwealth Government committed \$10.2 million over 3 years from 2022-25 through the October 2022-23 Budget. This includes \$5.02 million over three years for SNAICC to co-chair the Partnership, take part in the co-secretariat for the Partnership, facilitate engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, and conduct research.

The Commonwealth Department of Education oversees the remainder of the Partnership's funding, with:

- \$2.8 million to manage the co-secretariat, meet administration costs and develop whole-of-government policy advice to support the Partnership;
- \$2.0 million to support research and engagement under the direction of the Partnership; and
- \$0.44 million to support meeting costs as well as an evaluation of the Partnership after three years.

Scope of Partnership

The Partnership's remit encompasses several sectors including early childhood education, childcare, maternal and child health, child safety and children and families. It is recognised that whilst these are the focus of the Partnership, there are many social determinants that impact a child's early care and development journey, and these determinants align with the intersecting areas of justice, disability and housing. The Partnership seeks opportunities to work collaboratively across these areas, where appropriate and in line with its annual workplans.

Wherever possible the Partnership is leveraging existing governance structures, such as Education Ministers' Meeting and Joint Council, to socialise and progress its priorities. The Partnership also has oversight or strong linkages with the following strategies:

- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy (NATSIECS)
- Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan (SSP); and
- Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 (Safe and Supported)

In relation to the National Agreement, the Partnership's scope focuses on actions that will deliver progress towards the Outcomes 2, 3, 4, 12 and 13. The ambition for the Partnership and the focus of its activities is to drive improvements across these Outcomes through a joined-up approach to policy recommendations and actions at the community level, including further partnering with other policy partnerships to progress priorities.

The table below details these Outcomes and related Targets, as well as the status (as at July 2023).

	National Agreement on Closing the Gap Outcome and related Target	National Indicators (July 2023 data compiled by the Productivity Commission)
Outcome 2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong. Target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91 per cent. 	Improvement but target not on track to be met
Outcome 3	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years. Target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95 per cent. 	Good improvement and target on track to be met
Outcome 4	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years. Target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55 per cent. 	Worsening
Outcome 12	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not over-represented in the child protection system. Target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent. 	Worsening
Outcome 13	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe. Target: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero. 	No data available since the baseline year

Making recommendations to Joint Council

The primary function of the Partnership is to make recommendations to Joint Council which reflect member consensus as to what policies will improve early childhood care and development outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. These recommendations are non-binding and may have either a national, jurisdictional or place specific focus.

During 2023, the Partnership has been preparing for its first set of recommendations by building an evidence base and working across government to progress potential policy reform opportunities. It is anticipated that the first set of recommendations will be made to Joint Council in 2024. Once endorsed by Joint Council, the Partnership will report on actions against the recommendations in future annual reports.

Part 2 – Year 1: Laying a solid foundation for progress

The focus of the Partnership's first year has been to lay a solid foundation for shared decision-making by embedding strong partnership principles into the Partnership's operations and building links across governments and into communities. This foundation underpins the Partnership's objectives as set out in the Agreement to Implement, which include to:

- identify reforms to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to achieve their potential in the early years, to set them up for long-term success
- conduct or commission research, data analysis or reports to contribute to the development of policy reforms across the early childhood care and development sector
- identify opportunities to work more effectively across governments, the Coalition of Peaks and community organisations
- support efforts to implement the National Agreement, including harnessing the Priority Reforms to enact change and support community-led initiatives
- enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, communities; and organisations to negotiate and implement agreements with governments to support Closing the Gap

A significant part of this foundation includes addressing longstanding structural barriers to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The elements of strong partnership set out in the National Agreement lay the groundwork for new ways of working between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and government that must guide all aspects of process, discussion and decision-making within the Partnership. In practice, the National Agreement requires all governments to fundamentally transform policies and processes to share power and recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people know what is best for their own communities. This includes understanding the ways in which government approaches to policy development, decision-making and communication can unintentionally set boundaries around the reform goals and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members.

These challenges stem from the power structures present within the Partnerships operating environment. For example, government decision-making processes often have long timeframes for review and approvals, and endorsement processes include multiple layers across multiple government agencies. While the Partnership provides an opportunity to bring government representatives together, the effectiveness of this forum is limited by the external machinery of government requirements that exist across all jurisdictions.

Work must be done both within the remit of the Partnership and in the broader structures of government to ensure there is an effective and appropriate authorising environment for the Partnership to operate within. The extended timeframes that come from government processes translate to real world, immediate impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who continue to be removed from their families at higher rates than non-Indigenous children and experience poorer health and wellbeing outcomes than non-Indigenous children. For the Partnership arrangements to succeed, governments must embrace new ways of working, in line with their commitments under the National Agreement.

Another constraint in the Partnership environment is the cautious and neutral language favoured by government that can obscure the real-life impact of the decisions being made. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members strive to keep the stories of their children and families central to these discussions, this is challenging to do within a bureaucratic environment that focuses on systems and is largely incompatible with a human-centred approach. The importance of language cannot be

overlooked as it sets the tone and parameters for everything from the Partnership's vision and goals to the recommendations it puts forward to Joint Council.

The Partnership is seeing positive emerging practices within its work, including through the co-chair and co-secretariat arrangements between SNAICC and the Department of Education. The co-chairs and co-secretariats work closely together in their work supporting the Partnership, from setting the agenda, facilitating discussion and progressing activities to making decisions. However, as outlined above, the effectiveness of these practices is heavily impacted, and often limited by, the government processes that sit outside of the Partnership itself. The Partnership is continuing to build on its current good practices as well as identifying and implementing ways to address these challenges, supported by strong, ongoing advocacy from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members.

These challenges will take time to overcome, and this work cannot be done by the Partnership alone. However, the strong advocacy of Partnership members is beginning to drive progress towards more effective shared decision-making, and this work will continue in Year 2 of the Partnership.

To support shared decision-making in practice and support the Partnership's objectives, the Partnership has developed and endorsed key documents that set out its ways of working. This includes the Partnership's Operating Protocols (which puts the Agreement to Implement in practice by outlining the roles of all parties, and providing advice on meeting protocols, operations, communication and more), the Working Group Ways of Working guidelines for Partnership working groups to progress key priorities, and Engagement Criteria for external stakeholders requesting to engage with the Partnership.

Bringing shared decision-making to life requires governments to share power and acknowledge that they do not know what is best for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Trust must be intentionally built and maintained between shared decision-making members. This trust can be built by governments showing a willingness to cede some decision-making power. Trust must also stem from a foundation of truth telling. This includes understanding and acknowledging both the historic and ongoing harmful impacts of colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The Partnership has invested significant effort into building strong, trusting relationships between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, based on mutual respect. This is necessary to enable the transparent, robust and productive discussions and decision-making needed to drive transformative change.

These relationships have been established over time and through discussions in and out of session. In-person meetings, consistent attendance and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing have been important in laying the foundations for trust. The strength of these relationships positions the Partnership well to engage in the challenging discussions that are necessary to move these priorities forward. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members feel able to raise concerns and push back on government processes and decision-making while government members engage transparently with the broader Partnership, having open and frank discussions about the challenges and barriers faced in progressing key issues.

It is important to note that throughout shared decision-making, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members carry significant additional cultural responsibility in their roles and are directly accountable to their communities. In addition to building trust within the Partnership, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members must maintain the trust of the communities they work with and represent. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members engage in significant work consulting with their member organisations and communities, which is often not visible to government members. Government processes can also create challenges for maintaining trust with communities, such as when members

are required to account for government timelines presenting delays in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The inherent power imbalance between government members, who hold access to reform levers, and Peaks and Independent members, results in the labour of relationship building and negotiating being much greater for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members are less well-resourced to engage in the Partnership than government members. Government members are supported to participate by their own government structures and resources. This disparity can reinforce ‘business as usual’ approaches that can prioritise government ways of doing, rather than recognising the need for government transformation, as outlined in Priority 3 of the National Agreement.

For Independent members in particular, participation in the Partnership is not part of their core organisational or community role. While these members prioritise this work, it is often alongside a multitude of competing priorities and commitments. The additional labour for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working under the National Agreement is not acknowledged in government reporting on progress towards Closing the Gap. The Partnership explicitly acknowledges that engaging with the Partnership requires a different type and amount of labour from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and that the success of the Partnership is the direct result of this additional effort and burden.

Another key mechanism that supports the objectives of the Partnership is its two sources of research funding, which support the Partnership to advance its identified policy reform priorities. The ECCDPP Research Fund provides \$2 million from 2022-25 for the Partnership to commission research and engagement activities to support informed and evidence-based advice and recommendations. This funding provisionally sits with the Commonwealth Department of Education, for use as directed by the consensus of Partnership members. The first piece of research commissioned through the ECCDPP Research Fund was the ECCDPP Priority 1 ACCO funding model research project, undertaken by SNAICC. Further detail is provided in Part 3 of the annual report under ECCDPP Priority 1.

The second source of research funding is administered by SNAICC as part of SNAICC’s grant funding for its role as Partnership co-chair and co-secretariat. This research funding supports SNAICC as the lead Peak to strengthen the evidence base and investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research and data projects to inform discussions. SNAICC used this funding to commission the ECCDPP Priority 2 systematic evidence review into optimal hours of ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Further detail is provided in Part 3 of the annual report under ECCDPP Priority 2.

The Commonwealth Department of Education, on behalf of the Partnership, also commissioned the development of a Probity Framework, which will provide guidance on any future commissioning of work and probity considerations related to the Partnership’s research fund.

Meetings

The Partnership has convened four in-person meetings during the first 16 months in locations across Australia. The in-person nature of meetings has built trust between the government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. With these relationships strong, members can work through barriers to negotiation and progress to decision-making points faster. For government members, the meetings provide opportunities to share information between jurisdictions and accelerate their implementation of the Priority Reforms by engaging the expertise of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members.

The Partnership has also invited outside stakeholders to observe shared decision-making in action and present on work that has direct relevance to the Partnership priorities. This has included Productivity

Commissioner Natalie Seigel-Brown who provided an update on interim findings from the PC's Closing the Gap Review, and Productivity Commissioner Lisa Gropp and Associate Commissioner Deborah Brennan who provided an update on the PC's Inquiry into the ECEC system.

A summary of the outcomes for each of these four meetings, along with other key documents, is available on the Commonwealth Department of Education's [website](#). The Partnership's Sydney meeting was also transcribed by a visual artist, to explore more accessible and culturally appropriate ways of communicating the work of the Partnership. High-level summaries of Meetings One to Four are below:

- **Meeting One, 14 November 2022 (Tarntanya, Adelaide):** The meeting objective was to create a strong and culturally safe partnership, centred around shared decision-making and informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Members highlighted their aspirations for the Partnership and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members proposed opportunities for the Partnership to focus its efforts in its first year.
- **Meeting Two, 15-16 March 2023 (Naarm, Melbourne):** The meeting objective was to set the course for the year ahead. This included planning strategic engagement with national reforms, developing the Year 1 workplan, and agreeing on six priorities for the first year (see Part 3 for detail). The Partnership agreed to commission a research project to develop funding model options for ACCOs delivering ECEC (ECCDPP Priority 1).
- **Meeting Three, 28-29 June 2023 (Mparntwe, Alice Springs):** The meeting objective was for government parties to provide an overview of the implementation of the National Agreement in their jurisdiction, including how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and communities were engaged during development of Implementation Plans, and how the Priority Reforms are being embedded across the early childhood care and development sector. These presentations facilitated two-way learning between parties, and highlighted opportunities for jurisdictions to strengthen implementation.
- **Meeting Four, 9 October 2023 (Eora, Sydney):** The meeting objective was to consider the future strategic direction of the Partnership, including potential recommendations to Joint Council in June 2024. Updates were provided on progress against the six Year 1 priorities, including discussing the interim findings from the ACCO funding model research project (ECCDPP Priority 1) and the systematic evidence review into optimal hours of ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (ECCDPP Priority 2). Government members also provided an update on the progress of the National Agreement Priority Reforms in their jurisdiction.

Three working groups were also formed during the year to progress specific priorities outside of the formal meetings and support the yearly workplan. Two working groups were established to progress ECCDPP Priority 3 and 4 respectively, and a third working group was established to refine the Priority Reforms in Action updates which relate to jurisdictional Closing the Gap implementation plans.

Year 1 Workplan

To support the objectives of the Partnership and guide the actions and activities of the first year, the Partnership agreed to a Year 1 Workplan that contained nine strategic and procedural actions (see the [ECCDPP's Year 1 Workplan](#)).

A table outlining each of the nine actions, their completion status, and progress to date, is below.

Action	Progress to date
<p>Action 1: Make recommendations to Joint Council to improve early childhood outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.</p>	<p>Status: <i>Ongoing, with first set of recommendations to be delivered in 2024</i></p> <p>Progress: During its first year, the Partnership has been working towards developing its first set of recommendations through building an evidence base and working across government to progress potential policy reform opportunities. This work has been supported by the commissioning of two research projects, the establishment of two working groups, and joint workshops between Partnership members and Safe and Supported governance bodies on shared priorities.</p>
<p>Action 2: Have oversight and drive development of policy reforms outlined in the NATSIECS and the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Sector Strengthening Plan.</p>	<p>Status: <i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>Progress: The ECCDPP's six Year 1 priorities are aligned with the five goals of the NATSIECS, and with reform opportunities identified in the ECCDPP Sector Strengthening Plan.</p> <p>For example, the ACCO funding model research project (ECCDPP Priority 1) will bring effect to the Australian governments' commitments in the ECCD Sector Strengthening Plan to review ECEC program and funding arrangements to determine and implement changes needed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early education and care services. It will also drive Goal 2 of the NATSIECS, which is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are supported to thrive in their early years.</p>
<p>Action 3: Have high level oversight and address policy reform opportunities and challenges identified in implementing national strategies with existing and aligned partnership governance structures, while not duplicating existing</p>	<p>Status: <i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>Progress: In early 2023, the ECCDPP mapped out the Commonwealth-led strategies, reviews or reform processes occurring across the ECCD sector in the first three years of the Partnership. This was to support the Partnership to consider any existing reform efforts the Partnership could support or strengthen, any reform opportunities the Partnership could leverage to advance its priorities, and any potential gaps that the Partnership could fill.</p> <p>For example, the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into ECEC system was identified as a key engagement mechanism for the Partnership to leverage its ECEC related priorities. To support this engagement, the Productivity Commissioners have attended several ECCDPP meetings to facilitate two-way discussion on the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and ACCOs in the early years sector.</p>

<p>governance. This would include, for example, Safe and Supported and the <i>National Plan to End Violence Against Women and their Children 2022-2032</i>.</p>	<p>In its first year, the Partnership has also engaged with multiple other governance structures to support a joined-up approach for cross-portfolio priorities. For example, the ECCDPP has engaged with the co-secretariats of the Justice Policy Partnership and Safe and Supported to scope the approach for ECCDPP Priority 4, given the similar priorities between these forums and the intersections between the child protection system and the youth justice system.</p> <p>To formalise the ECCDPP's engagement processes, the ECCDPP has also developed a set of <u>Engagement Criteria</u> for external stakeholders requesting the ECCDPP's engagement on policy development or initiatives that will impact the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.</p>
<p>Action 4: Agree on key early childhood policy areas for ECCDPP consideration, to accelerate progress towards early childhood outcomes.</p>	<p>Status: <i>Completed</i></p> <p>Progress: The ECCDPP agreed to six priorities for the Partnership to progress in 2023. These priorities were identified as early opportunities by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and are aligned with reform opportunities identified through the NATSIECS, the ECCD Sector Strengthening Plan, and Safe and Supported.</p>
<p>Action 5: Undertake/commission targeted research and policy development processes that advance policy reform priorities identified.</p>	<p>Status: <i>Completed</i></p> <p>Progress: In 2023, the Partnership has commissioned two research projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ECCDPP Priority 1 - Funding model options for ACCOs that deliver ECEC, including integrated early years services (final report due January 2024) • ECCDPP Priority 2 - Systemic evidence review of optimal hours of ECEC required for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (completed December 23) <p>The outputs from these research projects will support the development of recommendations to Joint Council</p> <p>The Partnership also commissioned the development of a Probity Framework, which will provide guidance on any future commissioning of work and probity considerations related to the Partnership's research fund.</p>
<p>Action 6: Consider jurisdictional implementation plans relating to the National Agreement early childhood outcomes and provide recommendations on gaps and areas for greater focus.</p>	<p>Status: <i>Ongoing</i></p> <p>Progress: At Meeting Three (June 2023), government parties provided an overview of their jurisdictional implementation plans, including process, case studies on how the Priority Reforms are being embedded, reflections and areas for greater focus. At Meeting Four (October 2023), government parties provided a further update on how the Priority Reforms are being implemented across the ECCD sector in their jurisdiction.</p> <p>Further updates will continue to be considered at future ECCDPP meetings to enable the identification of gaps, key learnings and opportunities for cross-jurisdictional collaboration.</p>

<p>Action 7: Develop an Annual Report to the Joint Council on the actions of the ECCDPP and its progress against objectives and targets.</p>	<p>Status: <i>On track for publication mid-2024</i></p> <p>Progress: The Partnership’s first annual report was developed following the first 16 months of operation. The annual report will be provided to Joint Council at its meeting in June 2024.</p>
<p>Action 8: Develop a 3-year strategic plan aligning National Agreement priority reforms and agreed key early childhood policy areas.</p>	<p>Status: <i>On track for publication mid-2024</i></p> <p>Progress: The Partnership commenced development of its 3-year strategic plan at the end of its first 16 months of operation. With reference to the ECCDPP’s scope and objectives, the plan will articulate a shared vision and purpose, as well as annual goals and outcomes the Partnership is working towards over its first three years. The 3-year strategic plan will be provided to Joint Council at its meeting in June 2024.</p>
<p>Action 9: Develop a second year work plan.</p>	<p>Status: <i>On track for mid-2024</i></p> <p>Progress: A work plan for the Partnership’s second year will be developed by mid-2024. The Year 2 Workplan will consider key actions and deliverables for the Partnership, including any additional ECCDPP priorities to accelerate progress towards early childhood outcomes.</p>

Part 3 – Progressing reform in the ECCD sector: Six priorities

First year priorities: Working together to implement the Priority Reforms.

In accordance with Action 4 in the Year 1 workplan, the Partnership agreed to pursue six priorities across early childhood care and development policy areas. These priorities were identified and brought forward to the Partnership by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, reflecting their expertise and sector knowledge, and leveraging shared policy objectives between Commonwealth, state and territory governments. Priorities agreed by the Partnership do not represent formal government commitments until they have progressed through Closing the Gap governance and/or are reflected in the policy commitments of individual governments.

The six priorities are aligned with the five goals of the NATSIECS, the SSP and outcomes under the Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026. The Partnership has been able to support Priority 1 and 2 by identifying and leveraging reform opportunities within the ECCD sector, such as the positive enabling environment created by the Productivity Commission Inquiry into ECEC and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Inquiry into ECEC price settings. The impact of these reviews is discussed further in relation to Priorities 1 and 2. Priorities 1, 2, 3 and 4 intend to contribute to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECCD evidence-base and assist governments to design policy with stronger alignment to Aboriginal ways of knowing, doing and being.

ECCDPP Priority 1: Commission research to develop funding model options for ACCOs that deliver ECEC, including integrated early years services.

Status: Anticipated to be completed by January 2024

Participation in quality ECEC supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by preparing them to start school, building their social skills and strengthening their connection to culture.

The ACCO Funding Model research project was endorsed by the Partnership in March 2023 and commissioned in June 2023. The aim of the project was to examine the current and future needs of the ACCO ECEC sector, and develop dedicated, reliable and consistent funding model options designed to suit the types of services required by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The project aligns with several Priority Reform areas of the National Agreement, including shared decision-making (Priority Reform 1) and building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector (Priority Reform 2).

Following a procurement process, SNAICC was contracted to deliver this project. SNAICC subcontracted dandolopartners to conduct an evidence review synthesising the existing literature, and Deloitte Access Economics (Deloitte) to support the economic modelling required for the project. SNAICC and Deloitte consulted widely with ACCOs, Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and the broader early years sector to ensure the needs and aspirations of the sector were captured. This included:

- **3** workshops with the national ECEC sector
- **34** interviews with ACCO ECEC and integrated early years services around Australia.
- **11** interviews with state and territory government departments responsible for the provision of ECEC.
- **203** responses to the online data collection tool, 41 of which were by ACCOs.

At Meeting Four in October 2023, SNAICC and Deloitte presented the initial project findings and consultation themes, including proposed principles for a needs-based funding model. The draft final project report was delivered to the Partnership in December 2023, with the final report to be delivered in January 2024. The information and models presented in the final project report will be an essential input to the deliberations of the Partnership in 2024.

The Partnership has engaged the Productivity Commission over the course of its Inquiry into the ECEC System (as requested within the [Inquiry's terms of reference](#)). The final project report will be provided to the Commission to inform its final report, due mid-2024.

Priority 1 is likely to inform a Partnership recommendation to Joint Council in 2024.

ECCDPP Priority 2: Increasing the base entitlement to 30 hours per week of subsidised ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-5.

Status: Anticipated to be completed in January 2024

In 2023, the Partnership agreed to take this priority forward by contributing to the evidence base on optimal hours of ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Partnership agreed that SNAICC, on the Partnership's behalf, would commission a systematic evidence review collating and analysing existing evidence relating to the number of hours of ECEC, as well as quality considerations and levels of access, that best support education and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

SNAICC contracted public policy consulting firm, dandolopartners to undertake the review, in partnership with Wiradjuri researcher Dr Jessa Rogers to maintain a strong cultural lens on the review.

At Meeting Four in October 2023, dandolopartners presented the interim findings of the systematic evidence review to the Partnership, with the draft review circulated to members for feedback. The final systematic evidence review was provided to the Partnership in December 2023.

In line with its Terms of Reference, the Productivity Commission agreed to consult with the Partnership on matters relating to First Nations children, families, and services on its Inquiry into the ECEC system. This has included participation in feedback sessions on this research project. The final report from the systematic evidence review will be provided to the Commission to inform its final report, due mid-2024.

Priority 2 is likely to inform a Partnership recommendation to Joint Council in 2024.

ECCDPP Priority 3: Commission research and evidence development on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led models of family support to prevent entry into out-of-home care.

Status: Underway

To achieve Target 12 of the National Agreement (reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care), a priority of the Partnership is to focus on supporting the growth of ACCO services that prevent entry to out-of-home care and provide wrap around supports for families. An evidence base that demonstrates what is working in Aboriginal-led models, in line with community-led research priorities and ways of measuring success, will support this priority. A challenge identified by the Partnership in the current evidence base is that Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander communities and government understand evidence differently in the context of child and family services.

At Meeting Two, the Partnership agreed to establish a working group to identify the scope and objectives of this priority, including possible project approaches. The Priority 3 Working Group met in July and September 2023.

At Meeting Four the Partnership supported a project proposal developed by the Priority 3 Working Group to commission the development of a community-led evidence guidance framework in early 2024. The purpose of this framework is to develop a shared understanding of how to create, understand and apply evidence in the child and family support sector in ways that are consistent with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, doing and being.

The project will support government implementation of Priority Reform 2 (Building the community-controlled sector), Priority Reform 3 (Transforming government processes) and Priority Reform 4 (Shared access to data and information at a regional level). There is close alignment with Action 3 of the *Safe and Supported: First Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan* (build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infrastructure for sovereignty of data and improve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base) and the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support. The Partnership will work closely with Safe and Supported governance bodies to consider linkages and opportunities to support these complementary activities.

ECCDPP Priority 4: Progress a cross-sector project to identify the collaborative efforts required to break down siloes and address social determinants of tertiary systems intervention for children and families.

Status: Underway

Action to reduce over-representation in out-of-home care and progress Closing the Gap Target 12 must consider the whole service system and the underlying causes of tertiary system (i.e. child protection system) intervention. Drivers of tertiary systems intervention include things like poverty, housing, education, disability, family violence, justice and health. However, the Partnership has identified that families are not always able to access the support they need in these areas from the relevant services, due to services being split across government silos. These are points in the system where families can fall through the gaps or their needs go unmet because of a lack of coordinated efforts to address all of the determinants of child and family wellbeing. Work under this priority aims to identify where families cannot access the support they need because services are not joined-up.

Due to the complexity and breadth of this issue, at Meeting Two the Partnership agreed to establish a working group to focus on scoping approaches for the Partnership to address this priority. The Priority 4 Working Group met in September 2023.

The Priority 4 Working Group is considering current activities and actions underway across government that aim to break down system siloes, such as Safe and Supported activities, to understand potential gaps or opportunities to leverage complementary work. Scoping work to support Priority 4 will continue in 2024, including exploring the potential to build off existing successful place-based models of service integration.

ECCDPP Priority 5: Establish a fully empowered and legislated National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioner.

Status: Underway

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have been calling for increased transparency and independent accountability of systems affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for decades. The current system is not working to protect the rights and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children sufficiently, as demonstrated by the worsening of many CTG targets, most notably Target 12 (reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care). The establishment of a legislated, fully empowered and resourced National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People (National Commissioner) would provide a mechanism for increased transparency and accountability across all elements of system and service delivery to uphold the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Action 7 of the *Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026* (the Action Plan) commits to establish and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Commissioners. Action 7c references that opportunities for a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People will be considered throughout the life of the Action Plan. Given that a National Commissioner is a shared area of focus for both the Partnership and Safe and Supported, it was agreed by co-chairs of both forums to join up efforts to progress this work, noting the authorising environment sits within Safe and Supported governance.

In September and November 2023, DSS convened two full-day discovery and design workshops with representatives from the Partnership and Safe and Supported to explore how to strengthen government accountability and elevate the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young, including the potential for a National Commissioner. These workshops were also attended by representatives from the Commonwealth Attorney-General’s Department and First Nations Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates from states and territories. First Nations Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates joined to add their voice to the design process and expressed their support for a National Commissioner to back in state and territory commissioner effort, share information between jurisdictions, and monitor progress towards national strategies aimed at supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Across these workshops, Partnership and Safe and Supported members discussed minimum requirements for this role and tabled viable models for a National Commissioner, with three essential pre-requisites: statutory powers, independence from government and a specific focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Attendees at the second workshop discussed that the role of the National Commissioner would include:

- improving government accountability for the outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people;
- raising awareness and supporting the development of policy responses to systemic national issues where these are indicated;
- elevating the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and;
- working in collaboration with state and territory Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates.

Attendees discussed four possible options for a National Commissioner. They agreed that a National Commissioner established outside of the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) was the preferred option, as it best aligns with the three elements of strong accountability and self-determination. Community consultation including with First Nations children and young

people, around the specific role, skills and expectations of the legislated National Commissioner role would be conducted to ensure the role is based in the needs and expectations of First Nations stakeholders.

The design process will continue in 2024, sustained by joint efforts of the Partnership and Safe and Supported. This approach has supported progress towards the goal of a fully empowered and legislated National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner, and respects the cultural authority, time and energy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders who are members of the Partnership and Safe and Supported.

Priority 5 is likely to inform a Partnership recommendation to Joint Council in 2024.

ECCDPP Priority 6: Oversee and require regular reports on progress to implement the outcomes and recommendations of the *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families* review.

Status: Ongoing

The *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families* initiative aims to increase ACCO involvement in delivering Department of Social Services (DSS) funded Family and Children Activity (FaC) programs. The *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families* report, which was commissioned by DSS from SNAICC and delivered in 2022, found the structure of government funding is a well-known barrier to holistic service delivery for ACCOs, and that funding silos impede ACCOs' ability to deliver services that work best for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Priority Reform 2 (Building the Community-Controlled Sector) requires all governments to break down funding siloes which prevent ACCOs from accessing appropriate levels of funding and perpetuate a misalignment between how services are funded, and the services communities want and need. In acknowledgment of this, the Partnership sought to oversee the implementation of *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families* as one of its priorities.

In 2023, the Partnership received updates from DSS on their implementation of the report recommendations, which included grant reform and partnership activities. Implementation updates will continue in 2024.

Whilst the report focused on a review of DSS funding to ACCOs for child and family services, there are opportunities for all state and territory governments to implement the report recommendations in their jurisdictions, given the alignment with commitments under the National Agreement to build the Aboriginal community-controlled sector and to apply community-led investment strategies, procurement policies and funding models. For example, the South Australian government is currently considering how the *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families* report findings can be applied within their jurisdiction as they strengthen and build the capacity of their ACCO sector.

In 2024, DSS will develop 'common principles' for ACCO funding activities based on the report recommendations. These common principles will be applicable across relevant Commonwealth agencies within the early childhood care and development portfolio and central agencies. The Partnership will be provided with the common principles to consider how they could be applied within their contexts.

Priority 6 is likely to inform a Partnership recommendation to Joint Council in 2024.

Appendix A – List of Members

Note: This table represents Partnership members and partners between August 2022 to December 2023

Representing	Name	Tenure
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Representatives		
SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (SNAICC)	Co-chair and member: Catherine Liddle <i>Chief Executive Officer, SNAICC</i>	August 2022 – current
	Partner: Muriel Bamblett <i>Chair of SNAICC</i>	August 2022 - current
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)	Donnella Mills <i>Chair, NACCHO</i>	August 2022 - current
First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN)	Dr Talia Avrahamzon <i>Policy and Impact Manager, FPDN</i>	September 2023 – current
	Proxy for member: Tennille Lamb <i>National Policy Director, FPDN</i>	August 2022 – September 2023
Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC)	Lisa Coulson <i>North-West Regional Manager and Children and Families Spokesperson, TAC</i>	August 2022 - current
Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI)	Neville Atkinson <i>Programs and Policy Manager, VAEAI</i>	August 2022 - current
Aboriginal Family Support Services (AFSS)	Dan Mitchell <i>Acting Chief Executive Officer, AFSS</i>	October 2023 – current
	Proxy for member: Sharron Williams <i>Chief Executive Officer, AFSS</i>	August 2022 – September 2023
Independent member	Joanne Della Bona <i>Chief Executive Officer of Coolabaroo</i>	August 2022 - current
Independent member	Associate Professor Paul Gray <i>University of Technology Sydney, Jumbanna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research</i>	August 2022 - current
Independent member	Darcy Cavanagh <i>Chief Executive Officer of REFOCUS</i>	August 2022 - current
Independent member	Garth Morgan <i>Chief Executive Officer of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSCIPP)</i>	March 2023 - current
	Sandra Anne Miller <i>Community advocate</i>	August 2022 – March 2023
Independent member	Keara Baker-Storey <i>Indi Kindi Team Leader</i>	August 2022 - current
Government Representatives		

Commonwealth Government	<p>Co-chair and member: Kylie Crane <i>Deputy Secretary, Department of Education</i></p> <p>Former co-chair: Brenton Philp <i>Former Deputy Secretary, Department of Education</i></p> <p>Partner: Letitia Hope <i>Deputy Secretary, Department of Social Services</i></p> <p>Partner: Julie-Ann Guivarra <i>Deputy Chief Operating Officer, National Indigenous Australians Agency</i></p>	<p>March 2023 – current</p> <p>August 2022 – March 2023</p> <p>March 2023 – current</p> <p>October 2023 - current</p>
Australian Capital Territory Government	<p>Member: Dr Nicole Moore <i>Executive Branch Manager, ACT Education Directorate</i></p> <p>Partner: Chris Simpson <i>Executive Branch Manager, ACT Community Services Directorate</i></p> <p>Former Partner: Anne-Marree Sebellico <i>Community Services Directorate</i></p>	<p>August 2022 – current</p> <p>June 2023 – current</p> <p>March 2023 – June 2023</p>
New South Wales Government	<p>Member: Mark Barraket <i>Relieving Deputy Secretary, NSW Department of Education</i></p> <p>Former member: Gillian White <i>Deputy Secretary, Department of Education</i></p> <p>Partner: Claire Beattie <i>Acting Deputy Secretary for Transforming Aboriginal Outcomes</i></p> <p>Former partner: Brendan Thomas <i>Deputy Secretary, Department of Communities and Justice</i></p>	<p>September 2023 to current</p> <p>August 2022 – September 2023</p> <p>December 2023 - current</p> <p>August 2022 – December 2023</p>
Northern Territory Government	<p>Member: Gabrielle Brown <i>Executive Director, Department of Territory, Families Housing and Communities</i></p> <p>Partner: Agnes McGrath <i>Senior Director, NT Department of Education</i></p>	<p>August 2022 – current</p> <p>August 2022 - current</p>
Queensland Government	<p>Member: Tania Porter <i>Deputy Director-General, Department of Education</i></p> <p>Partner: Kate Connors <i>Deputy Director-General, Department of Children, Youth Justice and Multicultural Affairs</i></p>	<p>August 2022 – current</p> <p>August 2022 - current</p>
South Australian Government	<p>Member: Kathryn Jordan <i>Acting Head of the Office for the Early Years, SA Department of Education</i></p> <p>Former member: Natalie Atkinson</p>	<p>November 2023 - current</p>

	<p><i>Head of the Office for the Early Years, SA Department of Education</i></p> <p>Former member: Jackie Bray <i>SA Department for Education</i></p> <p>Former member: Peta Smith <i>SA Department for Education</i></p> <p>Partner: Shirley Smith <i>Senior Manager, SA Department for Education</i></p> <p>Former partner: Tina Quitadamo <i>Advisor, SA Department for Education</i></p>	<p>May 2023 – November 2023</p> <p>March 2023 – May 2023</p> <p>August 2022 – March 2023</p> <p>June 2023 – current</p> <p>March 2023 – June 2023</p>
Tasmanian Government	<p>Member: Jodee Wilson <i>Deputy Secretary, Department for Education, Children and Young People</i></p> <p>Partner: Vidya Chelliah <i>Director, Department for Education, Children and People</i></p>	<p>August 2022 – current</p> <p>August 2022 - current</p>
Victorian Government	<p>Member: Mathew Lundgren <i>Executive Director, Department of Education</i></p> <p>Partner: Simone Corin <i>Executive Director, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing</i></p>	<p>August 2022 – current</p> <p>August 2022 - current</p>
Western Australian Government	<p>Member: Caron Irwin <i>Assistant Director-General, Department of Communities</i></p> <p>Partner: Lisa Criddle <i>Executive Director, Department of Education</i></p> <p>Former partner: Andrew Rayner <i>Department of Education</i></p>	<p>August 2022 – current</p> <p>June 2023 – current</p> <p>August 2022 – June 2023</p>

Appendix B – Acronym and abbreviation list

ACCO / ACCOs – Aboriginal community-controlled organisation/s

CCS – Child Care Subsidy

DSS – Department of Social Services

ECCDPP – Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership

ECCD – Early Childhood Care and Development Sector

ECEC – Early Childhood Education and Care

FaC – Family and Children Activity programs

Joint Council – Joint Council on Closing the Gap

National Agreement – National Agreement on Closing the Gap

NATSIECS – National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy

Safe and Supported – Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021-2031

SNAICC – SNAICC – National Voice for our Children

SSP – Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan

The Partnership – Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership

VACCA – Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

END