

SNAICC Associate Member Statement of Commitment

Purpose

This statement reflects our intent to work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their organisations to support the goals and objectives of SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, and the guiding principles that align with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, including the following:

Principles and Actions

We hereby commit to the following principles and actions:

Principle 1: Applying a child focused approach

We recognise that in all actions concerning children, their best interests should be the paramount consideration and that ensuring their safety is essential. We understand that the best interests of an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander child can only be determined with the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Advancing the best interests of children requires the holistic realisation of their rights, including rights to safety, family, housing, health, education, culture and participation.

Actions:

- We will ensure that the best interests of the child, informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, is the paramount consideration in all decisions about the care and protection of children.
- We will promote the inclusion of children's voices in all decision that affect them.

Principle 2: Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations participate in and have control over decisions that affect their children

We believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the strengths and the right to lead change for their own children. Governments and services should provide mechanisms and supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, communities and organisations to participate in and drive decision-making about the early education and development, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Actions:

- We will build and transfer capacity to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to provide services that respond to the needs of their communities.
- We will ensure policies and mechanisms to facilitate the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families in all decisions that affect them.
- We will recognise the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to drive local solutions to local issues.
- We will work in partnership and not in competition with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

Principle 3: Protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's right to live in culture

We recognise that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, connections to their family, community and culture are critical to their learning, development, wellbeing, and positive self-identity. We also recognise the evidence that cultural and community networks support safety for children, and that continuity of cultural identity promotes healthy development. We believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have the right to practise their cultures with their families and communities.

Actions:

- We will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to learn and grow strong in their cultural identity
- We will promote and enable the full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in line with its intent to maintain quality cultural connections for children throughout their involvement with child protection systems.
- We will develop the capability of organisations and staff to work in culturally safe and competent ways to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in early education and care settings.

Principle 4: Pursuing evidence-based responses

We believe our efforts should be based on the evidence of what works to support children's development, early education, safety and wellbeing. This evidence-base critically includes the knowledge, wisdom and experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Actions:

- We will respect and practically apply research findings on what is effective to respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, recognising the critical importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and participation in research to the quality of the evidence base.
- We will listen to the knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on how best to respond to the needs of their children and families, including by resourcing and supporting community-led program evaluation and research.

Principle 5: Supporting, healing and strengthening families

We recognise that family is the foundation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's social, cultural and emotional wellbeing and is their most important life-long support. We acknowledge the unique need for healing supports to address the impacts of inter-generational trauma on families that has resulted from experiences of colonisation, the Stolen Generations and other discriminatory government policies. We recognise and respect the evidence that shows that early support is critical to heal and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to care for their children and ensure they thrive.

Actions:

- We will promote and drive increased early supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families
- We will support and promote a priority to safely reunify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their families wherever it is possible to do so.

Principle 6: Challenging systemic racism and inequities

We acknowledge that the current challenges facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families result from a history of injustice and racism that remains embedded within the laws, policies and practices of our society, systems and institutions.

Actions:

- We will take actions to ensure laws, policies and practices are designed to respond to the root causes of poverty and disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- We will challenge racism where we see or experience it in laws, policies, procedures or behaviours.

Principle 7: Service provision by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled organisations should always be the first option

We are committed to the transfer of resources and responsibility for early years child and family services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

Actions:

- We will support investment into capacity-building programs for First Nations organisations, to strengthen their governance structures, leadership, and management approaches to facilitate community control.
- We will commit and take actions to progressively step away from providing out-of-home care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and support the transfer of resources and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to undertake these services

Principle 8: Improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and strengthening early childhood education

We recognise that Closing the Gap starts with improving outcomes for **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Strengthening early childhood education** is crucial for promoting equity and ensuring a brighter future.

Actions:

- We will prioritise cultural competency training for staff ensuring an understanding and respect for cultural practices, beliefs, and values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- We recognise that building strong connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities is vital, and will commit to actively involving parents, caregivers, and community members in decision-making processes related to early childhood education.
- We will focus on delivering culturally responsive high-quality early childhood education programs. This includes providing stimulating environments, play-based learning, and supportive interactions using a trauma informed approach.

Pledge

We hereby commit to implementing this Statement of Commitment.

Name: _____

Organisation: _____

Signature (by an authorised person): _____ **Date:** _____

As **Associate Members** we will only display the **SNAICC Associate Member logo** on any material or publications as appropriate.

