

MEDIA RELEASE

11 December 2024

Scrapping Activity Test a Gamechanger for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children

The Federal Government's commitment to effectively remove the childcare subsidy Activity Test for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has the potential to significantly close the gap in life outcomes.

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children CEO Catherine Liddle said today's announcement by the Prime Minister would see thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children able to access early education and care.

“This can be a game-changer for our babies. It will mean more children developmentally ready for school, setting them up for a thriving future.

“Families will be better supported by having access to wrap around services in Aboriginal community-controlled (ACCO) centres.

“SNAICC has strongly advocated for the removal of the Activity Test for many years. I am very pleased the evidence and strong voices of our sector are being heard.

“The activity test effectively denied many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children the opportunity to access crucial early learning services.

“Our families are five times more likely to access only one day of care as a result of the activity test, and many families disengage completely because of the small amount of subsidised care available.

“All the evidence shows vulnerable children get the most benefits from accessing at least 60 hours of quality ECEC a fortnight. So this announcement of 100 hours of subsidised early education and care removes a significant barrier.

“These reforms to early education and care also have the potential for wider impacts in the community, with recent studies showing interventions in ECEC settings with vulnerable children and their families may be the key to reducing youth crime.”

The Government also announced a Growth fund for new centres in thin markets, marking ACCO's and NRF's as a priority for this funding. Childcare deserts or thin markets exist more acutely in regional and remote areas.

“Outside of the activity test, access to childcare places in regional and remote areas where many Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander families live is a significant factor in early learning,” Ms Liddle said.

“We need to see this new growth fund support growth for our ACCO’s that are best placed to deliver early learning services to our children. ACCOs are proven to get the best engagement with our families and ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander children grow up strong in culture before they transition to big school.

“Closing the gap starts with our children and that starts in early education and care. If we get support right in the early year, we are setting our children up to thrive in all life stages.

“Ultimately, we should be aiming for bi-partisan support for this commitment and for a free universal early childhood education and care system that will build a more prosperous, equitable and sustainable future for all Australian children.”

END

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