

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Data suggests Aboriginal-Led Early Childhood Programs are making a difference, but greater investment is still needed

New national data from the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) suggests that while key early childhood Closing the Gap targets are stalling, targeted programs and initiatives may be helping turn the tide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The data shows a stabilisation in Outcome 4 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which aims to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the AEDC. This is a shift from a previous downward trend, though the rate of improvement remains too slow to meet the target and close the gap by 2031.

Catherine Liddle, CEO of SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, said the data sends a clear message to governments to double down on their commitments under the National Closing the Gap Agreement.

“It’s not good enough that targets for our children are flatlining,” Ms Liddle said.

“We still aren’t seeing the action and improvement needed to close the gap.

“However, this data also gives us a signal that Aboriginal-led programs under Closing the Gap are not only making a difference but are a major part of the solution.

“While developmental outcomes for children nationally have declined, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children appear more resilient to this trend.”

Ms Liddle said governments must urgently scale up support for ACCO early education and care (ECEC) services to accelerate progress.

“Evidence shows that there is change happening. We know that ACCO-led and self-determined initiatives are working.

“Governments must listen, invest and act now if we’re serious about closing the gap for our children.”

The AEDC is the nation's only census measuring early childhood development. Under the National Agreement, governments aim to lift the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five areas to 55% by 2031.

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