

MEDIA RELEASE

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Governments Must Back ACCOs to Address Childcare Deserts

As Education Ministers come together today in Adelaide, the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is calling on governments to work with community-controlled services to deliver the best outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through the Building Early Education Fund (BEEF).

Catherine Liddle, CEO of SNAICC- National Voice for our Children said the targeted funding presented a real opportunity to close the gap for children no matter where they live by ensuring access to quality and culturally safe early childhood education and care (ECEC).

“BEEF represents a huge opportunity to address the real and long-standing accessibility issues in early education facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across the nation.

“A childcare desert is defined as having more than three children per childcare place – that number is stretched even further for Aboriginal community-controlled (ACCO) ECEC services.

We are calling on Education Ministers to fulfil their commitments under the Closing the Gap Agreement by agreeing to dedicate funding to ACCO ECEC services and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to start determining locations for new early learning centres.

“Engaging the ACCO sector is a critical part of ensuring that BEEF investment actually benefits the children and families it is designed to support.

“ACCO childcare deserts exist in towns and cities, not just in rural and remote regions. Each of these communities holds insight, knowledge, and challenges that are unique to their circumstances.

“It’s also critical to consider the potential impact of new ECEC centres on existing services.

“ACCO services see better engagement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families because they provide holistic, innovative supports that meet the needs of local communities.

“This becomes even more critical when we consider the impact of early supports across the entire lifespan of our children.”

Studies highlight that early childhood education and care interventions play a crucial role in reducing juvenile offending rates.

“With conversations about addressing juvenile detention happening across the nation, it’s more important than ever to address the drivers into the youth justice system - like access to quality education and care.

“Improved access to culturally safe, high-quality ECEC services will help ensure our children are developmentally ready for big school and have the support they need to thrive.”

END

For all media queries, please contact Charlie Bowcock on 0417 042 308 or media@snaicc.org.au.