

MEDIA RELEASE

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Closing the Gap is turning the tide but governments must stay the course

SNAICC - National Voice for our Children is encouraging governments to double down on their commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap this NAIDOC week as evidence confirms the positive impact of community-led early years programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The theme of NAIDOC 2025 *The Next Generation: Strength, Vision and Legacy* highlights the importance of taking action to close the gap for children.

Catherine Liddle, CEO of SNAICC, urged all governments to keep their promises to our children by staying the course and scaling up investment in Aboriginal community-controlled early education and care services.

“The recent results from the 2024 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) show Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have demonstrated greater resilience than some national trends of declining developmental outcomes.

“This is a clear sign that targeted supports under the Closing the Gap National Agreement are beginning to turn the tide and that change happening.

“Community-led, culturally strong early years programs are helping our children thrive. We should be investing in these policies because we know they work, not ones that continue to entrench disadvantages.

Despite the progress we are seeing under the Agreement, SNAICC is deeply concerned by the rising trend of punitive, tough on crime youth justice laws that disproportionately target Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

“You can’t punish a child into thriving. Locking up our kids instead of supporting them is a policy failure,” Ms Liddle said.

“These laws don’t make communities safer. Investing in early years, in strong families, in culturally safe supports that build connection and confidence does.

“This is not about being soft on crime, it’s about being smart on solutions.

“We know what works - prevention, not punishment is how we keep our children and communities safe.

“The results from the AEDC data are part of a legacy of change driven by decades of advocacy and are built on the work of those who have fought for self-determination, access to culturally strong services and for a better future for our children.

“Now, it’s up to us to keep going, to honour that legacy by giving the next generation every opportunity to succeed.”

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