

MEDIA RELEASE

Change is possible when Governments commit but key outcomes for children are going backwards

The Productivity Commission's latest Closing the Gap annual data report highlights that where governments are making a concerted effort to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, there are improvements in outcomes.

Unfortunately, many critical outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are worsening. Federal, State and Territory Governments have the power and the responsibility to change this by acting on the commitments they have made to close the gap.

The latest data from the Productivity Commission shows a decline in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being developmentally on track for school, an increase in their over-representation in child protection systems and no improvement in the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in youth detention.

Catherine Liddle, CEO of SNAICC - National Voice for our Children, said these results point to a lack of government follow-through, not a lack of solutions.

“The update makes it clear that these results are not the failings of our children, families or communities. They are the failings of governments who continue to fall short on their obligations under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap,” said Ms Liddle said.

“Early childhood education and care is a foundational building block for lifelong outcomes but we’re seeing a decline in children being developmentally on track which tells us that access alone isn’t enough.

“The update shows that when governments work in true partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, we see real change. Progress in areas like land rights and employment shows what’s possible when communities are empowered and governments step up.

“These improvements haven’t happened by chance but have been driven through governments working directly with our communities and backing Aboriginal-led solutions.”

SNAICC is urging all levels of government to apply the same commitment to areas where

outcomes for children are worsening, especially in early childhood development, child protection and youth justice.

“In jurisdictions like the Northern Territory we are seeing the deliberate and calculated ignoring of national agreements they have signed up to.

“They ignore their responsibilities to their constituents to improve lives and outcomes. And it's the children who suffer the most from a lack of government commitment, action and frankly, care.

“Closing the gap starts with our children and that means investing in quality, culturally strong early education and care, and systems that support families rather than continue cycles of removal and criminalisation.”

END

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