



**FINAL REPORT – SNAICC Early Years Support
Evaluation Update (January 2025 – July 2025)
SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children**

27 August 2025

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Deloitte Access Economics acknowledges the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, sea, and community. The country we live, work and travel on has been loved, celebrated, and cared for over many millennia by the people and their spiritual and physical ownership has never been ceded. We thank them and pay our respects to them, to their cultures, and to the Elders both past and present.

Deloitte Access Economics would like to pay respects to the following groups of people and individuals whose contributions to this project have been significant. Without their contributions, this evaluation would be undoubtedly much less rich, to the detriment of those working to support Aboriginal children and young people, and to sharing best practices and knowledge with Australia's regional and remote communities.

- **Early years services**, who participated in consultations and the surveys. Their observations and feedback contributed to the research and evidence for this evaluation.
- **The SNAICC Early Years Support team**, who facilitated this project and its data collection process.

Glossary

Acronym	Full name
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
DE	Department of Education
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
LGA	Local government area
MACS	Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NQF	National Quality Framework
NQS	National Quality Standard
NSW	New South Wales
PLM	Program Logic Model
QIP	Quality Improvement Plan
SNAICC	SNAICC – National Voice for our Children
SSP	Sector Strengthening Partnership
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
UN	United Nations
VAEAI	Victorian Aboriginal Education Australia Inc.
VET	Vocational Education and Training
Vic	Victoria
WA	Western Australia

Executive summary

Deloitte Access Economics was previously engaged by SNAICC – National Voice of our Children (SNAICC) to conduct an evaluation of SNAICC Early Years Support (previously known as THRYVE; referred to at times throughout this report as “the Program”) from 2022 to 2024. Three annual reports were produced. In 2025, Deloitte Access Economics was further engaged by SNAICC to provide an *Evaluation Update* (this report).

SNAICC Early Years Support is a community-controlled intermediary program that represents and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services. This support is centred in enabling high-quality and culturally responsive service delivery, which flows through to improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and communities. In line with this, the stated aspiration of SNAICC Early Years Support is: *“to support and represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early years services to deliver high quality, responsive, accessible and culturally strong supports for our children, families, and communities.”*

The purpose of the evaluation has been both developmental (to support formative insights to improve and strengthen SNAICC Early Years Support’s implementation) and summative (seeking to isolate and articulate the impact of SNAICC Early Years Support). It focuses on implementation changes over this period, evidence of impact, and offers formative guidance for SNAICC Early Years Support. This *Evaluation Update* provides findings based on evidence from January 2025 to July 2025. Where relevant, it draws on findings and learnings from previous SNAICC Early Years Support evaluation reports to ensure continuity and depth of understanding.

SNAICC Early Years Support

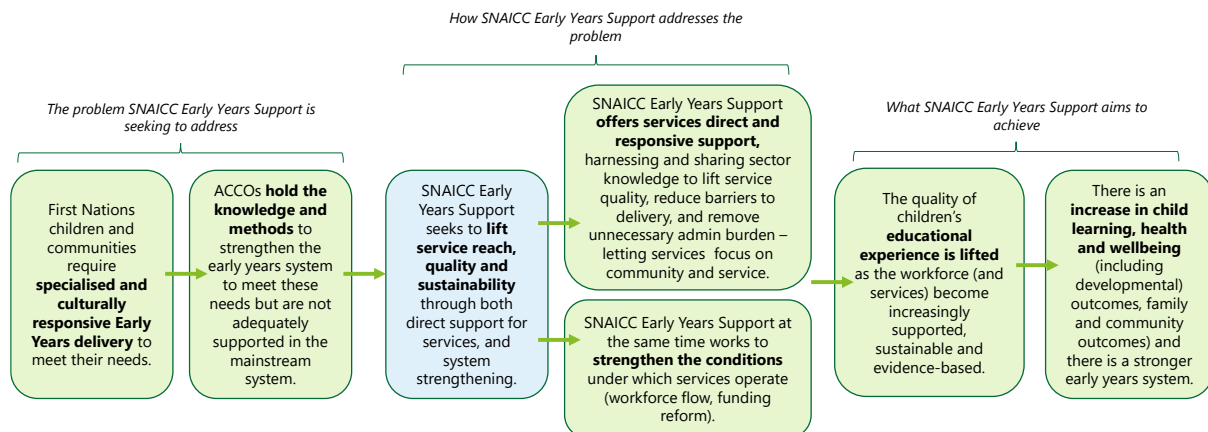
As prior evaluation reports have highlighted, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children’s engagement with early years services – and the positive outcomes this drives – relies on the cultural strength and community focus of programs. Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are uniquely positioned to deliver services that are culturally responsive and community-centred, offering a depth of connection and accountability not matched by mainstream providers. The refreshed Closing the Gap agenda recognises this, setting national priorities to increase access to culturally appropriate preschool and ensure more children are developmentally on track, while emphasising the essential role of community-controlled organisations in achieving these targets.

Despite this recognition, ACCOs continue to face significant operational and systemic challenges. These stem mainly from funding and policy frameworks that are often not aligned to the ACCO model, limiting their capacity to deliver high-quality and accessible services. Prior to the introduction of SNAICC Early Years Support, many ACCOs operated in isolation, with little interaction with other organisations and inconsistent support from government systems. This isolation compounded the underlying challenges they face, leaving services feeling as though they were operating alone as they navigated complex regulatory and funding requirements unsuited to their needs.

In response, SNAICC Early Years Support was established in 2020 to help address these operational and systemic challenges. This Program places services and communities at its centre, tailoring support to meet evolving needs. SNAICC Early Years Support pursues two overarching objectives: providing responsive service support and capability building, while also fostering a collective voice to influence broader policy reform and strengthen the operating environment for ACCOs.

SNAICC Early Years Support primarily focuses on ACCO early years services and strengthening leadership within these organisations. By recognising that each ACCO is best positioned to address the distinct needs of its community, the Program’s implementation has centred on building service capacity through culturally responsive, place-based support. This approach is designed to drive better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, in line with the theory of change (see Figure I).

Figure i: SNAICC Early Years Support theory of change



Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

The Evaluation Update

The *Evaluation Update*, consistent with previous evaluation reports, explores both the implementation and impact of SNAICC Early Years Support:

- the **implementation stream** assesses how the Program has been delivered, including the extent to which it has been implemented as intended.
- the **impact stream** assesses the short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes of SNAICC Early Years Support, aligned with the Program Logic Model (PLM).

In partnership with SNAICC, Deloitte Access Economics developed an evaluation framework to guide this evaluation (see Appendix B). This framework comprises key domains and evaluation questions that form the analytical structure for the evaluation and underpin the findings presented in this report. Since the evaluation commenced in 2022, the evaluation questions have evolved – reflecting a deepened understanding of SNAICC Early Years Support and the way in which it drives impact.

Evaluation findings

The evaluation has adopted a mixed-method approach, drawing on multiple sources of evidence to provide a comprehensive assessment of SNAICC Early Years Support. Central to this evaluation is the voices of services, captured through targeted surveys and consultations. Additional consultations were conducted with a diverse range of stakeholders, including government representatives, sector partners, and members of the SNAICC Early Years Support teams. The evaluation also incorporates secondary data sources, including service-level reporting where available (this is detailed in Section 1.3.4). Data informing the evaluation is summarised in Figure ii.

The qualitative data gathered offers rich and comprehensive insights into the design, implementation and impact of SNAICC Early Years Support as experienced by member services. However, data to substantiate impact and outcomes is more limited – this is due to challenges in the availability and accessibility of consistent service-level data. While considerable effort has been made to validate findings through data triangulation, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the available data when interpreting the findings of this evaluation (see Section 1.3.5).

Figure ii: 2025 Evaluation Update data collection

Primary data sources			Secondary data sources
 Government stakeholders • Department of Education (Commonwealth) • NIAA • Department of Education (Vic) • Department of Education (NSW)	 SNAICC Early Years Support • National Director • 3x State Directors • 2x SNAICC Central Leadership	 Early Years Services • Survey (42 responses – 24 NSW, 15 Vic, 4 WA) • 4 x NSW services consulted • 6 x Vic services consulted • 4 x WA services consulted	The Evaluation Update also draws on secondary data provided by SNAICC Early Years Support - including, financial information, PowerBI Dashboard, and reports.
			Previous years' data Where appropriate, this report considers data collected in previous years.

Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

The evaluation findings for both the implementation and impact streams are summarised below. These findings reflect analysis of the evidence collected and provide insights into how SNAICC Early Years Support has been delivered, as well as the outcomes it is contributing to across participating services and their communities.

Implementation

Alignment and uptake

SNAICC Early Years Support was founded on a strong commitment to co-design, ensuring that service voice was central from the very beginning. In 2025, most survey respondents affirmed that this focus remains a core feature of the Program's operations, although a small number noted that the influence of service voice appears to have lessened over time.

The Program's maturity continues to vary across jurisdictions: NSW is the most established jurisdiction, Vic continues to mature at a similar pace, while WA's implementation lags behind. Unsurprisingly, the slower progress in WA has limited early years services' engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support, as well as the overall impact of the Program observed in the state.

Fidelity and quality

SNAICC Early Years Support has consistently been recognised as a trusted and effective partner in the ACCO early years sector, with most services in 2024 and 2025 highlighting its role in fostering culturally safe environments and providing culturally appropriate resources.

Engagement with the Program remains strong in 2025 among participating services, although recent changes at the state director level across all states have generated mixed reactions from services. Some stakeholders view these changes as opportunities for new perspectives, while others are concerned about potential loss of organisational knowledge and the impact on established relationships.

Despite these personnel shifts, the Program has made significant strides in clarifying its purpose and service offerings for both internal teams and external stakeholders. However, some early years services, particularly in WA, continue to seek greater clarity around the Program's scope and available supports.

Importantly, the Program is actively adapting and evolving, and continuing to consider refinements to the model, addressing identified gaps and integrating feedback – from stakeholders and the evaluation – to enhance its effectiveness. Notably, SNAICC Early Years Support is transitioning towards a national model that preserves critical state-specific elements. Such a shift would be expected to strengthen collaboration among state advisers and promote greater consistency in service delivery and operations across jurisdictions.

Sustainability

In considering the successes of the Program to date, the evaluation has found several design features that have been central to the ways in which SNAICC Early Years Support has developed into a trusted intermediary within the ACCO early years sector. These include:

- a recognition that high quality working relationships (and trust) with early years services are the primary avenue through which SNAICC Early Years Support can influence change. In this context, the capability and skills of site advisors, time spent with services, and the responsiveness of the SNAICC Early Years Support team have all been key investments in the early years of implementation.
- a relentless focus on keeping the needs and voices of ACCOs early years services at the heart of SNAICC Early Years Support. With a broad remit and a diverse range of opportunities and competing priorities, the Program has stayed true to the intention of being ‘a service for services, designed by services.
- being built on the principles of cultural governance, respect and responsiveness. As a support designed to fill gaps left in the mainstream system, the importance of the strong cultural foundations of SNAICC Early Years Support are not to be understated. The opportunities provided by SNAICC Early Years Support for practice and knowledge sharing, community building and advocacy all work to continue to build the strength of culturally strong early years services.
- listening, adapting and being responsive to feedback collected from services, and through evaluation findings. Actively listening, adapting and responding to feedback collected both from early years services but also through evaluation findings are critical in communicating the impact of SNAICC Early Years Support. This ensures that the support provided continues to be aligned with service needs and allows for continuous improvements, ensuring continued relevance and effectiveness.

Cost effectiveness

The evaluation finds that, under the right conditions, SNAICC Early Years Support has been effective in enabling services to deliver high-quality, responsive, accessible, and culturally strong supports (see Section 3).

The Program’s \$5.5 million budget supported 74 services in 2024-25, representing an average annual investment of approximately \$75,000 per service or \$1,850 per child. Noting, the benefit of SNAICC Early Years Support may also extend to children beyond those directly enrolled in these services.

To fully assess its value, it is important to consider the counterfactual – what outcomes might be expected if SNAICC Early Years Support did not exist. The Program’s varied, culturally responsive, and tailored supports make direct comparisons to other initiatives both complex and limited. Moreover, the specialist skillsets, cultural legitimacy, and deep responsiveness of SNAICC Early Years Support teams are unlikely to be replicated by alternative providers at scale with equal effectiveness.

The SNAICC Early Years Support’s unique features – including its extensive relationship networks and specialist cultural leadership – leave few viable alternatives for achieving the outcomes it is on track to deliver and, in some cases, already delivering. Accordingly, cost-effectiveness considerations are best framed around optimising efficiency and identifying opportunities for the Program to grow in both value and impact over time.

To achieve efficiency in operation, it is important to:

- **Recognise highest value investments:** It is crucial to identify and prioritise investments that will bring the highest value to services. This includes considering factors such as the alignment with service needs, the link to long-term benefits (e.g., children and family outcomes), and the overall resource requirements for each investment.
- **Ensure resources are allocated efficiently:** To achieve maximum cost effectiveness, it is essential to allocate resources efficiently. This involves making informed decisions about how resources are distributed and utilised across different jurisdiction and supports. There is a need to closely monitor and manage resources, to identify scope for inefficiencies or areas where resources may be underutilised or misallocated. This allows for necessary adjustments and reallocation of resources to areas that require greater support or have a higher potential for generating value.

The evaluation outlines a number of future considerations (Section 5) to continue to refine SNAICC Early Years Support to optimise operating efficiency.

Impact

Appropriateness

SNAICC Early Years Support continues to reflect priorities of the early years sector. In the 2025 survey, most services indicated that the support they receive is responsive to their needs. However, there were notable jurisdictional differences. Services in NSW and Vic reported particularly high levels of agreement, with over 90 per cent affirming that support was responsive. In contrast, fewer than 25 per cent of respondents in WA reported the same.

In consultations, most services acknowledged the value of the support received from SNAICC Early Years Support, with only a few noting a decline in responsiveness and tailoring over the past six months, compared to previous years. One service attributed this change to their increasing maturity, observing that the level of support diminished as their experience, maturity, and time in the Program grew.

Effectiveness

Over the past four years, SNAICC Early Years Support has played a critical role in delivering direct, responsive support to services – support that has contributed to improved service quality, reduced barriers to effective delivery, and alleviated administrative burden. Historically, 84 per cent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that SNAICC Early Years Support had benefitted their service. It has helped to drive quality improvement that is culturally and contextually responsive, tailored to the specific needs of each service. This year, however, some services have indicated that this support has felt less tailored and responsive than in previous years. This shift is not unexpected, as both service needs and the Program's offerings continue to evolve. Ensuring continued alignment between the two will be essential to maintaining SNAICC Early Years Support's effectiveness and relevance for the services it supports.

A key strength of SNAICC Early Years Support lies in its facilitation of knowledge sharing across services, which has led to measurable improvements in service delivery. This improvement is reflected in rising National Quality Standard (NQS) ratings, indicating that the Program's focus on culturally responsive and community-led continuous improvement is having positive effects not only on internal practice but also on external recognition of improved compliance and quality.

Further, in recognition of the importance of workforce capability, SNAICC Early Years Support has invested significantly in building the ACCO early years workforce, with a strong emphasis on service leader development. This investment has helped build the capacity of services to deliver high-quality, sustainable programs. However, there are broader sector conditions limit the extent to which workforce challenges can be fully addressed.

In addition to on-the-ground assistance, SNAICC Early Years Support's back-office support has helped services meet compliance standards and strengthen operational capacity, and helped services to strengthen their funding base, enhancing financial sustainability. By reducing operational and administrative burden, SNAICC Early Years Support enables service leaders to reinvest time and capacity into their services and communities – also contributing to enhancements in quality and program delivery. It has further strengthened services' understanding of legislation and policy changes, enabling them to adapt their practices effectively.

At a broader level, SNAICC Early Years Support has served as a collective and representative voice for the ACCO sector in government dialogues. Through this advocacy, SNAICC Early Years Support has influenced policy directions in ways that benefit both services and governments alike. The Program has also fostered connections between services, which has strengthened community and shared practice in ways that contribute to a sense of shared purpose, continual improvement and sector sustainability. Alongside this, SNAICC Early Years Support has a positive impact on workforce wellbeing by fostering stronger connections across the sector.

Ultimately, by providing responsive support aimed at improving quality and delivery, SNAICC Early Years Support is helping to enhance the early educational experience of children. While some variations in

support remain across jurisdictions (as discussed earlier), evidence suggests that SNAICC Early Years Support is laying a strong foundation for improvements in children's learning, health, and wellbeing outcomes. However, it remains too early to measure and quantify long-term outcomes in these areas.

Equity

Consistent with findings from previous years, the context in which a participating service operates can, should, and does influence the way they interact with and derive benefit from SNAICC Early Years Support. This includes:

- **Geographical context:** An important aspect of the support that SNAICC Early Years Support aims to offer is based on visiting services face to face, building relationships and creating understanding of service needs. Further, services tend to be in more regional and remote areas compared to the mainstream services. This means that travel distance to remote services can be a barrier.
- **Level of service establishment:** SNAICC Early Years Support has been designed to be responsive to service needs and provide the tailored necessary supports for each service. Given the Program is more reactive to the acute needs of the service, it can lead to more impact being focused on newer services who have more acute needs, compared to a reduced impact at more established services that require less support. This differentiated impact for established services has continued to be observed over the years.

Conclusion

SNAICC Early Years Support has made significant progress in bringing together, empowering, and strengthening a historically underrepresented sector. The strong relationships built by SNAICC Early Years Support have opened the doors for effective policy influence and development – fostered by a more connected ACCO sector. This has created critical opportunities to work collectively with governments to lift child, family and community outcomes – in an increasingly co-ordinated, cohesive, and culturally strong ACCO service system.

Indications of impact suggest that SNAICC Early Years Support, with the right supporting conditions, is progressing toward – and in some cases, already delivering – outcomes in accordance with service need and the theory of change. To date, this has been observed with improvements in service quality and sustainability, which flow directly through to benefits for children, families and communities.

The evaluation presents a range of future considerations regarding how SNAICC Early Years Support can continue to be refined as the Program matures and considers further expansion. The considerations span communication, governance, support providing, personnel management, resourcing, and data collection and monitoring.

Notably, beyond program and/or internal refinements, the ongoing impact of SNAICC Early Years Support is closely tied to the broader policy environment and the conditions under which it operates. Given this, as SNAICC Early Years Support transitions from its pilot phase, it will be important to consider robust and stable policy foundations – including a clear policy framework and long-term vision for the role of an intermediary body in the ACCO early years sector. These should be considered alongside funding certainty, an effective resource allocation program and the governance arrangements that are required to realise the long-term impact aspirations.

1 Introduction

Deloitte Access Economics was previously engaged by SNAICC – National Voice of our Children (SNAICC) to conduct an evaluation of SNAICC Early Years Support (previously known as THRYVE) from 2022 to 2024. Three annual reports were produced. In 2025, Deloitte Access Economics was further engaged by SNAICC to provide an *Evaluation Update* (this report).

The purpose of the evaluation has been both developmental (to support formative insights to improve and strengthen SNAICC Early Years Support's implementation) and summative (seeking to isolate and articulate the impact of SNAICC Early Years Support). It focuses on implementation changes, evidence of impact, and offers formative guidance for SNAICC Early Year Support. This *Evaluation Update* provides findings based on evidence and observations from January 2025 to July 2025. Where relevant, draws on findings and learnings from previous SNAICC Early Years Support evaluation reports to ensure continuity and depth of understanding. This evaluation continues its focus on all three participating jurisdictions – New South Wales (NSW), Victoria (Vic), and Western Australia (WA).

The 2025 *Evaluation Update* differs from previous evaluation cycles in both scope and scale. This update covers a shorter reporting period, from January to July 2025, and is based on a lower intensity of data collection relative to earlier evaluation reports. Despite this, the report provides valuable insight into recent changes in program implementation, evidence of impact, and offers formative guidance to support the ongoing refinement of SNAICC Early Years Support.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 National and state priorities

High-quality early years services generate significant long-term social, educational, and economic benefits for children and families. There is increasing national recognition of the importance of ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have access to culturally safe early childhood education and care (ECEC).

The refreshed Closing the Gap agenda reinforces this priority by aiming to increase culturally appropriate preschool participation and developmental outcomes. It also highlights the critical role of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) in delivering early years services and underscores the importance of shared decision-making in achieving equitable outcomes.¹ Further, the Productivity Commission has identified under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in ECEC as a persistent and systemic challenge, driven by barriers related to access, affordability, and cultural safety. To address this, it recommends the establishment of a sustainable funding model to support ACCO-led early years services and enable community-led and culturally grounded solutions.²

State governments also acknowledge the importance of ACCOs in supporting children:

- **WA:** *The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy* commits to increasing ACCO-led service delivery.³
- **NSW:** *The First Steps Strategy* supports ACCO sustainability, with SNAICC as a sector partner.⁴

¹ Australian Government, *Closing the Gap Report 2020* (2020).

² Productivity Commission, *A path to universal early childhood education and care Draft Report* (2023).

³ Government of Western Australia, *Whole of Government ACCO Strategy* (2024).

<https://www.wa.gov.au/government/publications/whole-of-government-acco-strategy>

⁴ Department of Education New South Wales, *First Steps – the NSW Aboriginal Children's Early Childhood Education Strategy 2021-2025* (2021), < <https://education.nsw.gov.au/early-childhood-education/operating-an-early-childhood-education-service/current-service-providers/making-services-accessible-for-all-children/aboriginal-access/strategy#First2>>

- **Victoria:** *Marrung – Aboriginal Education Plan* aims to improve early childhood outcomes for Koorie children through better access and participation.⁵

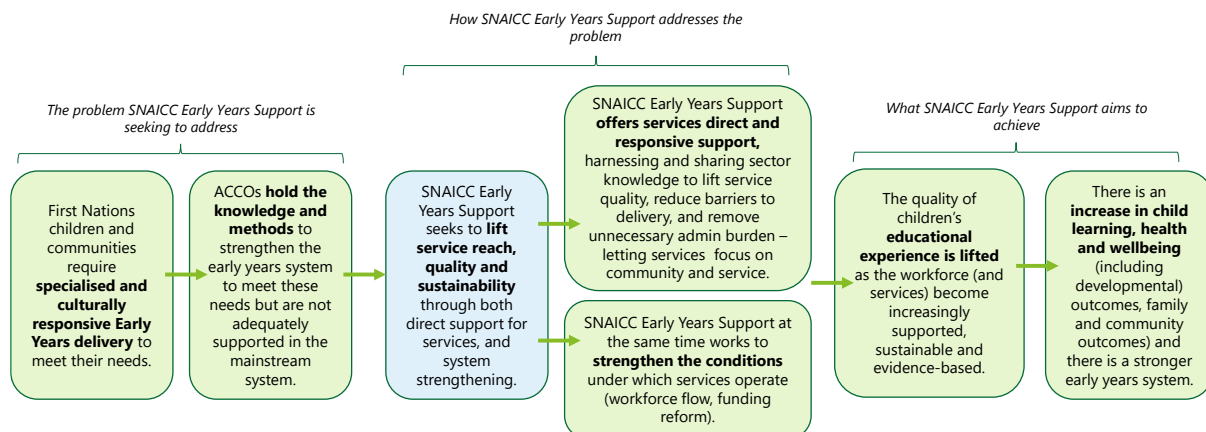
1.2 SNAICC Early Years Support

SNAICC Early Years Support is a community-controlled intermediary program that represents and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services. The aspiration of SNAICC Early Years Support is: *“to support and represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled EYS to deliver high quality, responsive, accessible and culturally strong supports for our children, families, and communities.”*⁶

SNAICC Early Years Support is designed to provide backbone support to the community-controlled ECEC sector by fostering vital connections between services, delivering needs-based and timely support, and amplifying a collective voice to advocate for policy reform.

SNAICC Early Years Support provides assistance to the ACCO sector, through the service leaders, to deliver place-based early years education to children. While the support is directed towards services, the ultimate goal is to benefit children, families, and communities. By undertaking activities that improve access and participation, workforce development, quality delivery, and system cohesion, it is expected that these efforts will lead to improvement in outcomes for children.

Figure 1.1: SNAICC Early Years Support theory of change



Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

The key objectives and activities of SNAICC Early Years Support are outlined in Figure 1.2. These have been informed by SNAICC Early Years Support's co-design process (between SNAICC and early years services), the evaluation's Program Logic Model (PLM – see Section 1.3.3) and a workplan developed by SNAICC teams (which set out the context, scope, key stakeholders, implementation timeline, and evaluation of SNAICC Early Years Support).

⁵ Department of Education Victoria, *Marrung – Aboriginal Education Plan 2016 – 2026* (2016), <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/programs/aboriginal/Marrung_Aboriginal_Education_Plan_2016-2026.pdf>

⁶ SNAICC, 'SNAICC National Intermediary SNAICC Early Years Support Program Project' (2022), <<https://www.snaicc.org.au/sector-development/thryve-project/>>

Figure 1.2: Key SNAICC Early Years Support objectives and activities



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, SNAICC.

1.2.2 The need for SNAICC Early Years Support

The Productivity Commission reports that Australia is on track to meet Target 3 of the National Agreement – 95 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in early childhood education by end of 2025. However, progress on Target 4 – improving developmental outcomes across all five AEDC domains – has declined. This highlights that access alone is not enough; the quality and cultural relevance of early years experiences are essential.⁷

Culturally strong, community-led programs - like those delivered by ACCOs - are critical to improving outcomes. As affirmed by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous communities must have control over education that reflects their languages and cultural practices. ACCOs provide tailored, holistic, and culturally grounded services that respond to the complex needs of their communities and often set the standard for best practice. Sharing ACCO-developed knowledge and models across the early years system can help close the developmental gap and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive.

Despite being recognised as best practice, ACCOs face persistent barriers due to misaligned funding and policy systems. Key challenges include:

- **Sustainability:** challenges in ensuring long-term viability amidst limited resources
- **Workforce shortages:** struggling to attract and retain qualified staff, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.
- **Geographical constraints:** operating in remote and vulnerable communities and recognising differences in community need and expectations.
- **Access to expertise:** limited availability of specialised knowledge and skills
- **Economies of scale:** often difficulty achieving cost efficiencies as services operate at a community, rather than aggregate, level.
- **Government support:** inadequate support for culturally informed service delivery
- **Policy representation:** lack of representation in key national and/or state policy and decision-making processes.⁸

ACCOs often provide more comprehensive and complex support than mainstream ECEC services but without adequate funding frameworks. Many operate in isolation, lacking formal opportunities to

⁷ Productivity Commission, *Annual Data Compilation Report* (July 2025), < <https://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/annual-data-report/closing-the-gap-annual-data-compilation-july2025.pdf>>

⁸ SNAICC, *Funding program options for ACCO integrated early years services* (2024), < <https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/240507-ACCO-Funding-Report.pdf>>

collaborate or share knowledge. This has amplified operational pressures and left services feeling unsupported.

In response to these service, operational, and systemic barriers, SNAICC Early Years Support was established in 2020. From the outset, the Program was intentionally designed to differ from mainstream programs in its governance, approaches, and delivery. SNAICC Early Years Support was designed, governed, and implemented through a First Nations leadership lens – ensuring that its design and operations were grounded in the values, priorities, and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

SNAICC Early Years Support places ACCOs and the communities they operate in at the centre of its approach, tailoring support to meet their evolving needs. The Program pursues two overarching objectives: providing responsive service support and capability building and fostering a collective voice to influence policy reform and strengthen the broader operating environment for ACCO early years services.

SNAICC Early Years Support primarily focuses on ACCO early years services and strengthening leadership within these organisations. Grounded in the understanding that each ACCO is best positioned to address the unique needs of its community, SNAICC Early Years Support has centred on building service capacity through culturally responsive, place-based approaches. The Program is designed in such a way to drive improvements in outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, in line with the theory of change (see Figure 1.1).

1.3 The 2025 Evaluation Update

1.3.1 Evaluation principles

From the outset of the evaluation, it was recognised that long-term evaluations must operate within a dynamic and evolving environment. This is particularly relevant in the context of a developmental evaluation, where responsiveness to emerging insights and changing conditions is essential. The adaptive, place-based nature of SNAICC Early Years Support further underscores the need for an evaluation approach that accommodates flexibility and adaptability.

It was anticipated from the beginning that the aspirations, delivery approaches, and ways of understanding impact within SNAICC Early Years Support would evolve over time. As such, to ensure a consistent approach throughout this process, a set of evaluation principles were established at the commencement of the evaluation. These principles have provided a foundation for the evaluation partnership between SNAICC and Deloitte and have guided how the evaluation is conducted and how its findings are interpreted. The principles, and their application across the evaluation, are outlined below.

Table 1.1: Evaluation principles and how they were applied

Key principles	How the principle has been applied throughout the evaluation
The centrality of Voice and Listening: respecting that in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, all processes begin with listening	- The evaluation sought to provide a multitude of culturally safe and responsive avenues for service and stakeholder voice to contribute to the evaluation, spanning consultation, surveys and interactions at SNAICC Early Years events. - The evaluation refined the approach to listening overtime, with stakeholder engagement tools and methods modified in response to service and stakeholder feedback. - The evaluation made space for the testing and refinement of findings through sessions with SNAICC Early Years Support, ensuring stakeholders were provided opportunity to understand how evidence had been interpreted and continue to advice on the way the evaluation defined outcomes, lines of inquiry and findings.
Cultural leadership: Not just as a matter of safety, but as a matter of responsibility and	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, knowledge, community relationality and connections with Elders has been privileged in evaluation data collection and sense-making.

care for shared outcomes.	- The evaluation has benefited from the leadership of Professor Deen Sanders OAM, a Worimi man and Giparr (cultural leader) in his community. - The evaluation has sought to work in close partnership with SNAICC Early Years Support (and through their governance – ACCO services themselves) which has been central in enabling the ACCO early years sector's leadership to inform evaluation methods and approaches.
Active Learning. Active improvement: evidence is shared early and collected in a way that maximises opportunities for continuous improvement	- In line with data sovereignty principles, findings were shared iteratively throughout the evaluation, including through formal reflection sessions and playbacks to participating services. - Reflection sessions were purposefully designed to support evaluation evidence to inform strategic decision making in relation to SNAICC Early Years Support implementation and forward-looking priorities.
Place-based, systemic and systematic: Ensuring analysis method are flexible and systemically responsive to differences in place.	- All data collection instruments, as well as the sampling approach, were constructed in line with realist evaluation approaches and a desire to understand how SNAICC Early Years Support worked across service and place-based contexts. - Throughout the evaluation there has been a focus on continuing to use the emerging evidence on what works and for whom, to articulate SNAICC Early Years Support with increased precision and nuance.
Rigorous: Ensuring findings are well-substantiated, valid and transferable.	- The evaluation framework has underpinned all data collection and evaluation activities, ensuring longitudinal integrity and alignment with the evaluation lines of inquiry. - A variety of techniques and evidence sources were triangulated to demonstrate effectiveness and impact. Limitations of the evaluation methodology are clearly acknowledged.

Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

1.3.2 Evaluation domains

Evaluation domains and questions are central to defining the scope and focus of an evaluation. For this evaluation, the domains and evaluation questions were co-developed by SNAICC and Deloitte Access Economics in 2022, at the commencement of the evaluation period.

The continued relevance of these domains and questions has been reviewed annually through collaborative workshops with SNAICC. As a result of the most recent of these reviews, the 'Awareness and Understanding' domain was removed in 2025 and is no longer assessed as part of this Evaluation Update. This is because SNAICC Early Years Support is now fully operational, with awareness and understanding no longer a core focus area, and a comprehensive assessment has been included in the 2024 Annual Report.

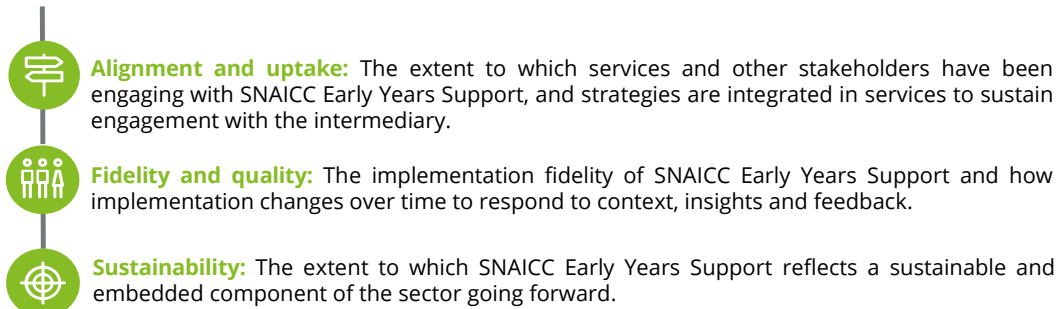
This Evaluation Update considers two streams:

- the **implementation stream** assesses how the Program has been delivered, including the extent to which it has been implemented as intended.
- the **impact stream** assesses the short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes of SNAICC Early Years Support, aligned with the PLM. Noting, there is a greater emphasis on assessing and articulating SNAICC Early Years Support's impact

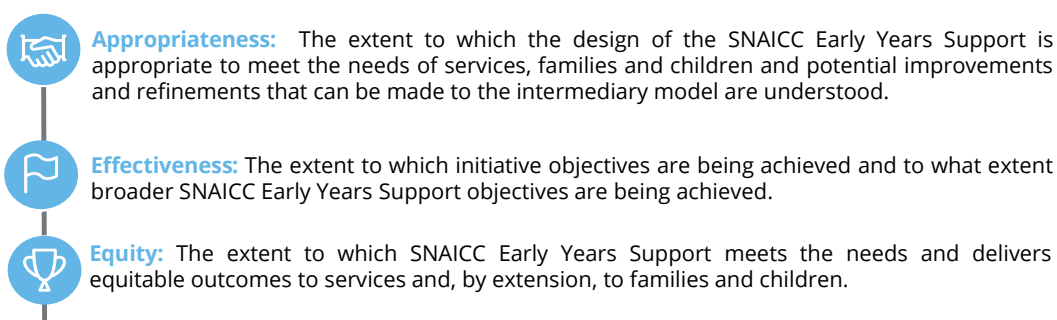
The evaluation is structured around eight evaluation domains (see Figure 1.3). Evaluation questions for each domain are outlined in Appendix B.

Figure 1.3: Domains of the SNAICC Early Years Support Evaluation Update

Implementation domains



Impact domains



Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

1.3.3 Program Logic Model

A PLM defines a program's expected chain of cause and effect. It articulates the inputs, activities and outputs that will contribute to the achievement of short-, medium- and long-term outcomes. The PLM was developed by Deloitte Access Economics (with inputs and feedback from SNAICC Early Years Support) in 2022.

The PLM was reviewed and refined annually (in collaboration with SNAICC Early Years Support), to ensure it remained relevant and aligned with the evolving context of the Program. Through this iterative process, it was confirmed that the overarching aims, and the logic of the model remained broadly valid over the life of the Program.

However, as understanding deepened – both in terms of evolving service needs and priorities, and where SNAICC Early Years Support was demonstrating the greatest impact – certain areas of focus sharpened to better reflect these insights. The PLM is provided in Appendix B.

1.3.4 Data collection

In seeking to respond rigorously and comprehensively to the evaluation questions, this report draws on a range of primary and secondary data sources.

1.3.4.1 Primary data collection

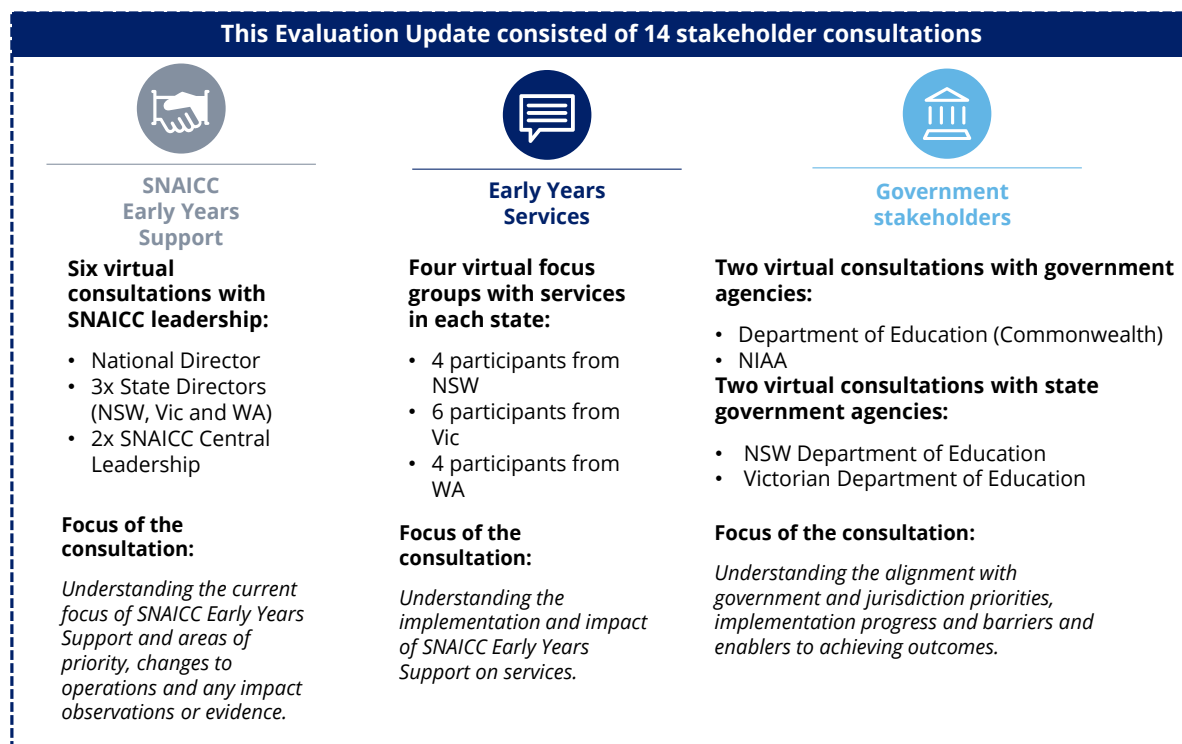
This evaluation, while smaller in scope and scale, adopted a similar approach to data collection as prior evaluation reports. Two key stakeholder engagement activities were undertaken to capture insights and data on the elements of SNAICC Early Year's Support implementation that have worked well and led to an impact on the service, and what could be improved SNAICC Early Years Support's:

- **Consultations** were conducted with key stakeholders. Including, early years services leader, SNAICC Early Years Support staff, and government stakeholders.
- A **survey** was developed and distributed to service leaders and educators (building on the previous survey).

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Consultations

Figure 1.4: Stakeholder consultations in the 2025 Evaluation Update



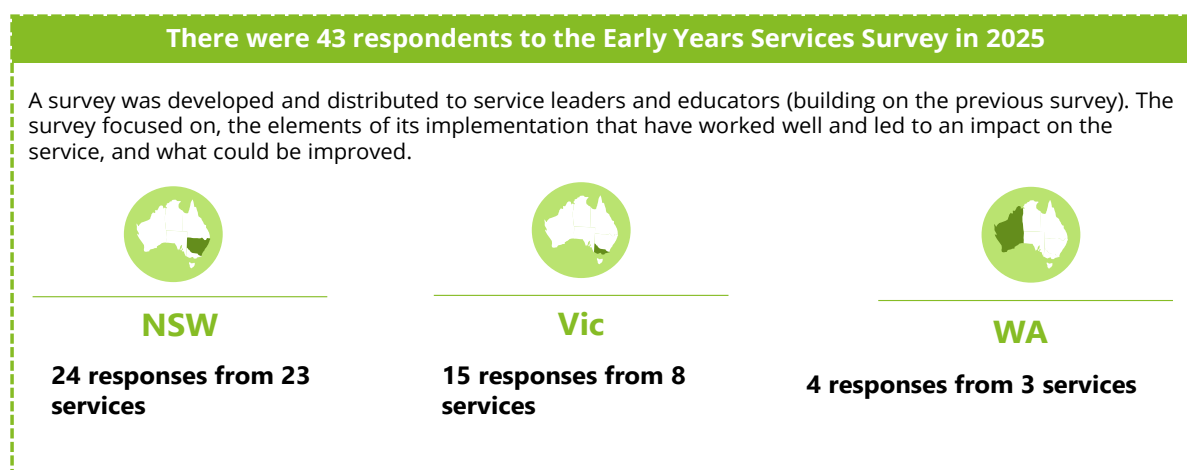
Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

Note: The WA Department of Education was invited to participate but did not respond.

These consultations build on data collected between 2022 – 2024. For further detail refer to the 2024 Evaluation Report.

Survey

Figure 1.5 Survey respondents to the 2025 Early Years Services Survey



Source: Deloitte Access Economics.

A similar survey was previously distributed to service leaders and educators in 2022, 2023, and 2024. For further detail refer to the 2024 Evaluation Report.

1.3.4.2 Secondary data

Observations outlined in the report are also based on the findings from secondary data provided by SNAICC or publicly available information. The secondary data examined in this report includes SNAICC Early Years Support program documentation (for financial data and summary reports) and publicly available service quality ratings. However, limited-service level quantitative data (such as enrolment and participation data) was made available to the evaluation.

1.3.5 Considerations for interpretation of findings

This report presents findings based on primary and secondary data collected throughout the evaluation. While significant effort has been made to validate and strengthen the derived findings through data triangulation methods, there are several data limitations present. These limitations include:

- **Limited number of services consulted with:** While all services were invited to participate in the Evaluation Update through the Network Meetings, the number of services that ultimately took part in consultations was limited (14 out of 77 services). This low participation may affect the generalisability of the findings, as the insights gathered may not fully represent the diversity of perspectives and experiences across all services.
- **No family and community voice:** The theory of change for SNAICC Early Years Support does not closely connect to families and communities and, as a result, they were not consulted with as part of this evaluation update (this decision was made in collaboration with SNAICC). Instead, the focus of the evaluation primarily involves service stakeholders, including service leaders, directors and educators, who are expected to experience the changes and outcomes linked to SNAICC Early Years Support. However, it is important to note that children and families are ultimately the beneficiaries of these changes in the long-term.
- **Lack of child outcomes measurement:** While there is evidence that SNAICC Early Years Support can positively impact the educational experience of children, it is still too early to measure outcomes for child learning, health, and wellbeing. Therefore, this report presents child outcomes primarily informed by anecdotal qualitative data from early years services.
- **Lack of quantitative data:** There is limited quantitative data available to measure the impact of SNAICC Early Years Support. Therefore, the impact findings are predominately determined by qualitative data (collected through surveys and consultations). However, this report explores future data collection improvements in Section 5.1.7.
- **Low survey response rate in WA:** There was a relatively low response rate in WA. Therefore, the findings derived from the survey may not be representative of all WA services receiving support from SNAICC Early Years Support. However, wherever possible, survey findings have been triangulated with other data sources, including service voice attained through consultations.
- **Differences in sample size and mix of services responding to the survey in 2024 and 2025:** When comparing survey results between 2024 and 2025, it is important to consider the differences in sample size as well as the composition of services that participated in the survey each year. These differences could contribute to observed changes that reflect shifts in the sample rather than true changes in underlying trends or outcomes.

1.4 This report

The remainder of this document is set out as follows:

- **Section 2** describes the implementation journey
- **Section 3** describes the impacts of SNAICC Early Years Support.
- **Section 4** describes the conditions required for ongoing impact.
- **Section 5** outlines the future considerations and conclusion for the evaluation.

Additional detail is provided in the appendices on:

- **Appendix A** outlines the list of participating services
- **Appendix B** provides an overview of the Evaluation Framework
- **Appendix C** includes the full analysis of the 2025 SNAICC Early Years Support Survey
- **Appendix D** provides the questionnaire of the 2025 SNAICC Early Years Support Survey

2 The implementation journey

This Section examines the implementation of SNAICC Early Years Support, aligned with the evaluation framework’s implementation domains, with a focus on changes and developments observed in 2025.

Overview	
Evaluation domain	Key findings
Alignment and uptake	- In 2025, most survey respondents believe that service voice remains central to the Program’s operations, although a small number noted that collaboration with services has decreased, and supports were less aligned to service needs. - Further, the Program continues to display varying levels of maturity across different jurisdictions: NSW is the most established jurisdiction, Vic continues to steadily mature, while WA’s implementation lags behind. - The slower progress in WA has limited early years services’ engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support, as well as the overall impact of the Program in the state. - Over time, targeted initiatives have improved understanding of SNAICC Early Years Support among the internal team, service providers, and external stakeholders. However, a small number of services and stakeholders still seek greater clarity about the Program and its offerings.
Fidelity and quality	- SNAICC Early Years Support has consistently been recognised as a trusted and effective partner in the ACCO early years sector, with most services in 2024 and 2025 agreeing that they had a good relationship and built trust with SNAICC Early Years Support. - Engagement with the Program remains strong in 2025 among participating services, with higher engagement in NSW and Vic than in WA – reflective of the differences in operational maturity. - Recent changes at the state director level across all states have generated mixed reactions from services. - Importantly, the Program is actively adapting and evolving, and continuing to consider refinements to the model, addressing identified gaps and integrating feedback – from stakeholders and the evaluation – to enhance its effectiveness.
Sustainability	<i>Sustainability is discussed in Section 4.</i>

This Section explores how SNAICC Early Years Support has been implemented, and whether this aligned with expectations. It focuses on the overall implementation journey, with particular focus on changes and developments observed in 2025. Findings draw on survey responses, consultation feedback from SNAICC staff, non-government organisations, government stakeholders, and participating services, alongside program documentation (see Section 1.3.4). This Section is structured around the implementation domains and questions outlined in the evaluation framework and presented above.

Implementation of SNAICC Early Years Support has progressed in line with expectations in NSW and Vic, while progress in WA has been slower. The varying levels of maturity across jurisdictions are influenced by several factors, explored later in this report.

Now in its fourth year, most services are familiar with SNAICC Early Years Support, clearly understand its offerings, and engage with the Program regularly. This is underpinned by a foundation of trust, built over time through continued investment by SNAICC Early Years Support teams, enabling meaningful and sustained engagement.

The development and design of the Program have been shaped by ongoing collaboration between SNAICC and participating services. This collaboration has ensured that SNAICC Early Years Support remains responsive to both service-level and broader sector priorities. Through continuous feedback and reflection, SNAICC Early Years Support has evolved over time, incorporating feedback and lessons learned to strengthen its implementation and operations. As a result, SNAICC Early Years Support is making steady progress toward its objectives and is consistently reported as being highly valued and trusted within the ACCO sector.

SNAICC Early Years Support staff noted that the key objectives of the pilot (see Figure 1.2) have remained consistent over its four years of operation. While these objectives have not changed, SNAICC Early Years Support has remained flexible in responding to evolving service needs. As the Program matures, there is an opportunity to balance short-term, reactive supports with long-term, proactive supports – whilst still ensuring supports are responsive to service need (see Section 5.1.6 for further detail).

2.1 Development and operation of SNAICC Early Years Support

Service voice remains a defining feature of SNAICC Early Years Support. Established with a strong commitment to co-design, the Program embedded service voice from the outset and, in 2025, most survey respondents reported that service voice continues to be central to its operations.

The design of SNAICC Early Years Support – including the type of activities and support it provides to early years services – was shaped through a collaborative co-design process with participating services across the three jurisdictions. This approach has been central to SNAICC Early Years Support's ability to understand service needs and to establish strong, trust-based relationships with services. Results from the 2025 survey highlight this success: 86 per cent of respondents (37 of 43) agreed or strongly agreed that SNAICC Early Years Support has built trust with their service, and 88 per cent of survey respondents (38 of 43) agreed or strongly agreed that the support provided was responsive to service needs.

While the majority of services responding to the survey reported positive experiences; a minority expressed a different perspective in consultations. One stakeholder noted that, in the earlier years of implementation, SNAICC Early Years Support adopted a more collaborative approach and provided more tailored resources. However, by 2025, they felt that this collaboration had decreased and that the supports offered were less aligned with their service's needs.

Challenges in leadership and operations over the past six months may have contributed to this perceived shift in approach. Services consistently identified communication as a key enabler of effective collaboration – emphasising the importance of clear and timely communication. This is critical to ensuring that services feel engaged, their voices remain central and strong relationships between SNAICC Early Years Support and participating services are maintained.

“We are grateful for the resources...it would have been better to get something we need.”– Vic Early Years Service Director.

Since the initial co-design stages between SNAICC and early years services – beginning in 2020 in NSW and 2022 in Vic and WA – there has been notable growth in the number of services supported. In its first year, SNAICC Early Years Support engaged 17 services in NSW (increasing to 47 in 2025), 11 in Vic (14 in 2025), and 6 in WA (13 in 2025).

As new services have joined after these foundational co-design stages, there is a risk that their unique needs and priorities may not have been fully reflected in the original program design. To support ongoing responsiveness, however, all jurisdictions hold monthly network meetings, providing a forum for services to raise concerns and request additional supports. There remains a valuable opportunity for SNAICC Early Years Support to further strengthen its responsiveness to service voice and evolving needs (see Section 5.1.1).

The Program continues to display varying levels of maturity across different jurisdictions.

New South Wales

Unsurprisingly, New South Wales is the most established jurisdiction, with several factors contributing to its maturity. While SNAICC Early Years Support NSW has been fully operational since June 2021, staffing constraints led to reduced capacity throughout 2022. Despite this, the Program has continued to progress steadily, benefiting from longer implementation – with more time to refine its approach and embed the Program.

In 2023, SNAICC was also selected as the “Sector Strengthening Partner” in New South Wales, resulting in 26 new ACCOs being supported through SNAICC Early Years Support NSW. This demonstrates SNAICC Early Years Support’s alignment to government priorities which has also factored into its successful establishment.

Over time, SNAICC Early Years Support NSW has shifted priorities aligned to gaps or needs identified in the sector. Earlier in its implementation the focus was to build trust and relationship with services, which evolved into providing responsive support as well as advocacy support. It was noted by the State Director that in 2025, *“all NSW services are in scope, but what it is for now is that the focus is more on quality care and education. How do we get services to go from meeting [standard] to exceeding”*. In 2025, NSW experienced a change in their State Director - the impact of this change on services is not clear at this stage (see Section 2.3.1 for further details on the activities SNAICC Early Years Support is conducting to mitigate personnel risk).

Victoria

SNAICC Early Years Support Vic has continued to steadily mature throughout its implementation. SNAICC Early Years Support Vic has been fully operational since March 2023. In 2023, the focus of the Vic team remained on building trusted relationships with each service. As the model evolved, in 2024 SNAICC Early Years Support Vic focused on building capacity of services, connecting services, as well as continuing to expand awareness and relationships. In 2025, the focus in Vic is to improve service quality and continue building the awareness of the offerings provided and to maintain relationships with services.

Western Australia

The establishment of SNAICC Early Years Support WA has been slower than other jurisdictions - with WA experiencing the greatest delay in initial establishment. A key factor is turnover across early years services and SNAICC Early Years Support in WA. In 2023, SNAICC Early Years Support WA focused on raising awareness of their service and its offerings, this continued longer than expected due to services experiencing turnover at the senior leadership or board level and changing priorities. Further, the delivery of SNAICC Early Years Support WA has been interrupted by turnover of the WA State Director at the start of 2024, and in 2025.

Services and SNAICC Early Years Support staff noted that the unique context of WA presents ongoing challenges to engagement. The state’s remote geography, diverse service landscape, high travel costs, and the impact of natural events all limit consistent engagement. Additionally, the limited staff capacity also reduces the team's ability to visit and support services spread across vast distances.

Compared to other jurisdictions, SNAICC Early Years Support WA supports a more diverse range of service types such as kindergartens, long day cares and playgroups – with support for playgroups being unique to WA. This limits opportunities to leverage resources or apply key learnings from other states to ensure all services receive consistent support. This has also likely contributed to the slowed implementation in a state that already faced ongoing challenges to engagement.

Consultations also revealed that some stakeholders expressed that having a state director based in WA would benefit services as well as the SNAICC Early Years Support team by providing a greater degree of contextual responsiveness. Despite these factors, SNAICC Early Years Support has been able to continue its operations and support to services.

“I think with WA, there were challenges with the leadership and the staffing, but they have still got on with the job at hand.” – SNAICC Early Years Support staff.

All states have experienced personnel changes at the state director level, leading to mixed views among consultees regarding the impact of these changes on the Program's implementation. Some see it as a chance for new perspectives, while others are concerned about potential knowledge loss and impact on relationships with services.

Over the course of the Program's implementation, all jurisdictions have experienced changes in state director leadership. Such changes are not unique to SNAICC Early Years Support and are to be expected for such a Program, which has been operating for more than three years. However, the perceived impact of this turnover has varied between stakeholders.

A minority of services noted that this turnover has at times felt like a loss for the SNAICC Early Years Support team and created challenges for continuity of established relationships, with one Victorian service director stating that, *"losing the [state director] was a huge detriment to the state, losing [that person] who [was] culturally sound and supportive"*. While leadership changes inevitably cause some disruption, SNAICC Early Years Support has maintained continuity by successfully appointing state directors in each state from within SNAICC Early Years Support team – individuals who already had established relationships with services.

Several stakeholders also highlighted that changes in leadership can bring benefits, including fresh perspectives and a culture that remains adaptable and open to improvement: *"I think there is a positive impact from staff changes because it has enabled growth, and created a mindset that is more open to change and development."* – SNAICC staff member.

Although there is an inherent risk of losing role-specific knowledge and established relationships, one stakeholder expressed confidence that the risk to the Program is minimal, given SNAICC's strong reputation and established connections:

"I think there is a risk anywhere in terms of staff turnover that you lose corporate knowledge. I think you lose the ability to build those connections. I think SNAICC is a well-known organisation, so I think even if there were personnel changes, the risk would be minimal." – Government stakeholder

Over time, targeted initiatives have improved understanding of SNAICC Early Years Support among the internal team, service providers, and external stakeholders. However, a small number of services and stakeholders still seek greater clarity about the Program and its offerings.

SNAICC Early Years Support has increasingly made efforts to increase clarity of the Program. Given the Program is responsive, place-based and contextual to jurisdictions and services, this increases the risk that services may not be sure of the complete list of supports offered through the Program. As a pilot program established through a co-design model, a clear and consistent view of the SNAICC Early Years Support and offerings took time to emerge - noting that in 2024, clear descriptions of the SNAICC Early Years Support model and offerings were made available through a menu of services and introductory modules.

In 2025, SNAICC Early Years Support staff have continued to put efforts to increase clarity of the Program to services. A few of these activities include:

- printing cards for services educating them on SNAICC Early Years Support
- ensuring awareness of service offerings to all service staff beyond leadership
- establishing greater and more consistent engagement with external stakeholders

Over the course of the Program, SNAICC Early Years Support staff members have shown an increased understanding of the Program's offerings. Through an increased understanding, staff members have clearer expectations, confidence in their role and can better deliver for service needs. In 2025, one SNAICC Early Years Support staff member reflected that, *"We are refining our practice as an Early Years Support team. We are clearer about what we are delivering."*

In consultation, many services have demonstrated a high level of awareness of SNAICC Early Years Support and its offerings. However, in 2025 some services have still reflected a lack of clarity on the full scope of offerings provided through the Program. In WA, some services reflected that there was a lack of clarity and awareness of the Program within community, which is expected given WA's slowed implementation. This

presents an opportunity for SNAICC Early Years Support to continue demonstrating its offerings and conducting activities to increase awareness in WA (see Section 5.1.2).

Clarity of the SNAICC Early Years Support to external stakeholders – such as government, and jurisdictional peak bodies – has also increased over time. This has been established through the ongoing communication and collaboration between SNAICC Early Years Support and these stakeholders. In 2025, government stakeholders demonstrated an understanding of the Program and the support it offers to services and reflected on the positive impact on services. However, consultations revealed that there are still lingering gaps in understanding the unique value of the Program. This presents opportunities for building greater clarity to be built with external stakeholders through continued and enhanced collaboration with government bodies.

“The main thing for us, which could be more about it being really unclear for a lot of teams about what the real service offering is and distinguishing it from other programs”. – Government stakeholder.

SNAICC Early Years Support is transitioning towards a national model that preserves critical state-specific elements. This shift is expected to strengthen collaboration among state advisers and promote greater consistency in service delivery and operations across jurisdictions.

The SNAICC Early Years Support model was co-designed to be adaptable and responsive to the needs of individual jurisdictions. However, there is a recognised need to centralise certain elements of the model to support a consistent, best-practice approach. Without greater centralisation, variations in the establishment and maturity of SNAICC Early Years Support across jurisdictions risk creating inconsistent outcomes and potential inequities.

Moving towards a national model would enable the national team to focus on their areas of expertise, providing specialised support on a needs-basis and leveraging efficiencies associated with centralised delivery. In 2025, the Program commenced preliminary activities to support this transition. While the full impact of such a model is not yet known, it is expected to enhance the consistency of supports, improve resource sharing across jurisdictions, and create efficiencies that benefit staff and services alike. As the National SNAICC Early Years Support Director explained, the model is: *“designed to shift people where expertise can be used more effectively.”*

Importantly, the national model will also retain a strong local presence. SNAICC Early Years Support staff on-the-ground will continue to maintain relationships and communicate directly with services – something many services identified as highly valuable to them. Local advisors – who understand the needs of the services and their communities – will remain the day-to-day contacts for services, while the national team provides targeted, strategic advice.

This more centralised approach is anticipated to reduce duplication, increase efficiency, and allow staff to focus on providing strategic support and higher-value activities. By strengthening both national expertise and local engagement, the model aims to uplift service quality in a way that benefits services and, ultimately, delivers sustainable improvements for children and families (discussed further in Section 5.1.3).

The type of support services require varies based on levels of maturity – ranging from resource intensive assistance and back-office support to advocacy.

All services provided different examples of the support they received through the Program showcasing SNAICC Early Years Support’s tailored approach to service provision (see Figure 2.1).

“I also think that’s how it was set up to do, I think it should be based on need. That allows [SNAICC Early Years Support] to use their time more flexibly. You don’t want someone to be reaching out to you and ringing you if you don’t need it” – NSW Early Years Service Director.

Newer services in the Program tended to appreciate and reflect on more direct supports such as outdoor equipment, security cameras, yoga mats and cards, and language resources. Whereas mature services and those that have participated in SNAICC Early Years Support for longer tended to reflect on their appreciation of the advocacy and back-office support. Another service stated that their support from SNAICC Early Years Support has also reduced as they have become more mature. This could be reflective of

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reduced need for SNAICC Early Years Support, however SNAICC Early Years Support will need to remain aware of mature service need and ensure that the services can continue meeting their need (see Section 5.1.6).

“We don’t have anywhere near that support and that might be because [that service] is newer, we used to get more support when we were newer” – NSW Early Years Service Director.

Although all services strongly shared the sentiment that SNAICC Early Years Support has provided supports, a few services noted that the service support is not aligned to their service needs. One Victorian service reflected that the Program’s support has deteriorated overtime and stated that, *“initially when the Program started it was hands on and a lot of face-to-face valuable experience. I feel that [at this service] in the last 6 months it has not been face to face”.*

Figure 2.1: Sample of survey reflections on what services typically reach out to SNAICC Early Years Support for



Source: Deloitte Access Economics Early Years Service Survey 2025

Most WA services reflected on the various helpful forms of support offered through the Program, however one service held the view that SNAICC Early Years Support has not been helpful for their service as they felt they had been categorised in the *“too hard basket”* because of the level of support they required from the Program.

Although SNAICC Early Years Support has made improvements to ensure that services receive consistent support, it will be important that SNAICC Early Years Support continues to take the time and effort to ensure a thorough understanding of service needs – balancing responsiveness and unique service needs, whilst ensuring there is consistency in offerings and quality across services (see Section 5.1.1 and 5.1.6).

Adequate and sustained funding is essential to the effective implementation and long-term sustainability of SNAICC Early Years Support.

Most stakeholders recognise that funding is crucial for SNAICC Early Years Support to provide quality supports to services, as well as contributing to the sustainability of the Program. Despite funding constraints, services have reflected on the resources provided by SNAICC Early Years Support and the benefits they have

received from regular engagement. However, with sufficient funding, it is expected that the level of supports offered by the Program to services would be further enhanced and provided at a greater extent.

“There is really solid work being done in SNAICC Early Years Support...in terms of what the SNAICC Early Years Support is doing. But I think that has been incredibly constrained by the funding environment. But they’ve done it despite [this].” – SNAICC staff member.

Other stakeholders reflected on the impact of short-term funding on staffing in the Program. The short-term nature of funding negatively impacts SNAICC Early Years Support operations, including influencing staff turnover, impacting relationships with services and leading to uncertainty among key stakeholders. In consultation, one state director reflected on their inability to reflect on key impacts of SNAICC Early Years Support in 2025 because, *“funds have been short”*, further highlighting the importance of funding to the successful implementation of the Program.

“Funding is the biggest elephant in the room, but employment surety is a big thing. Also, with [limited] funding, SNAICC is only able to offer short-term employment. Having that job security for workers is one thing. The hope is that in 2025 they can have job surety. But also, some services are a bit concerned about engaging with us because there is no assurance around funding the Program” – SNAICC Early Years Support Staff.

2.2 Relationships, trust and engagement

SNAICC Early Years Support is recognised as a trusted partner in the ACCO early years sector, culturally safe environments and providing culturally appropriate resources.

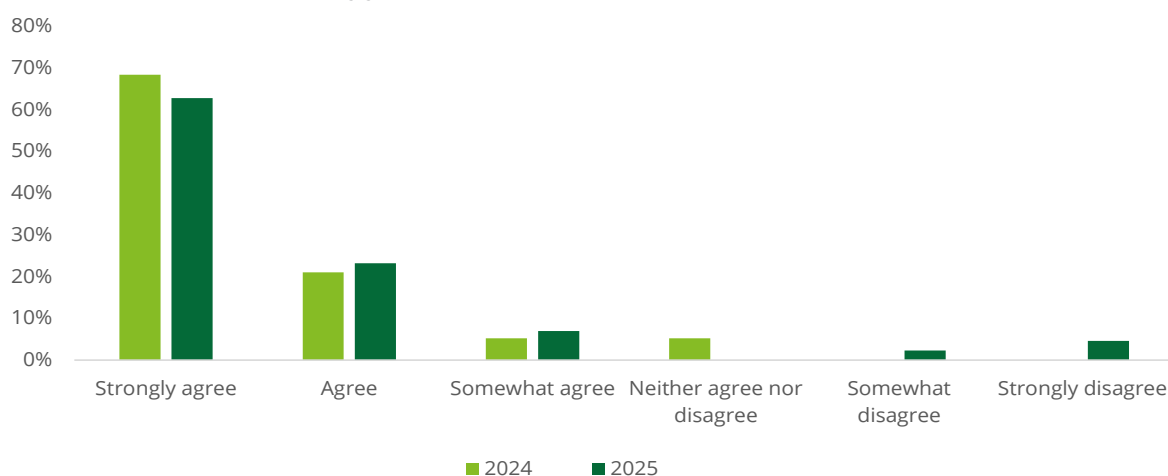
Although SNAICC Early Years Support is now fully implemented in NSW, Vic and WA, building strong, trust-based relationships with early years services has taken time and continues to require sustained commitment. Many services reported that, prior to SNAICC Early Years Support, they often felt unsupported or had participated in short-lived or ineffective initiatives. These past experiences left some services cautious and, at times, hesitant to engage with external supports.

Both services and SNAICC Early Years Support staff emphasised that strong relationships are critical to the Program’s successful implementation, with trust being a central factor in services’ engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support. One Early Years Service Director from NSW noted: *“...they do relationships well and they stay long enough for us to know that they are there for us to be able to call them if needed.”*

Since the Program’s full implementation in 2023, these relationship-building efforts have been reflected in positive feedback from services. In 2025, 84 per cent of survey respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they developed a good relationship with the SNAICC Early Years Support team – only slightly lower than 90 per cent in 2024 (Chart 2.1)

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Chart 2.1: Survey results from question 'To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding your service's experience with SNAICC Early Years Support: SNAICC Early Years Support has a good relationship and built trust with this service', by year

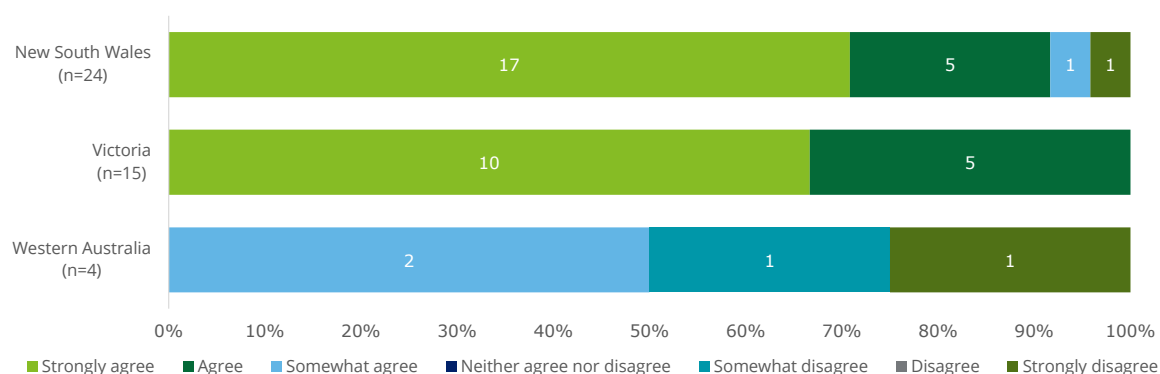


Source: Deloitte Access Economics Early Years Service Survey 2024 and 2025

Services in NSW and Vic have demonstrated strong and consistent levels of confidence in their relationship with the SNAICC Early Years Support team – reflecting the longer period of operation in these jurisdictions – with the majority strongly agreeing that they feel supported and connected.

In contrast, most respondents in WA reported only somewhat agreeing that they have a good relationship and trust with the SNAICC Early Years Support team. This reflects a decline from 2024, when most services in WA reported a strong relationship. While WA's survey response rate was relatively low and may not fully reflect the breadth of service experiences, the results highlight the need for continued investment of time and resources to build and strengthen relationships in WA (see Section 5.1.2). Strong, trust-based relationships are a key enabler of engagement, service responsiveness, and Program impact – underscoring the importance of prioritising relationship-building efforts as the Program continues to mature.

Chart 2.2: Number and proportion of survey respondents that felt they have developed a good relationship and built trust with SNAICC Early Years Support in 2025



Source: Deloitte Access Economics Early Years Service Survey 2025

The Program's culturally responsive approach is a core strength. In both 2024 and 2025, over 80 per cent of surveyed services agreed or strongly agreed that SNAICC Early Years Support provides a culturally safe environment and offers culturally appropriate resources. An Early Years Service Director reflected: *"...it's culturally safe, they speak the language and it's totally helpful."*

While this feedback is overwhelmingly positive, consultations also identified areas for improvement. One service director noted that not all supports or resources were culturally appropriate, citing instances where materials were outdated materials or too generic resources and were not tailored to the specific needs of

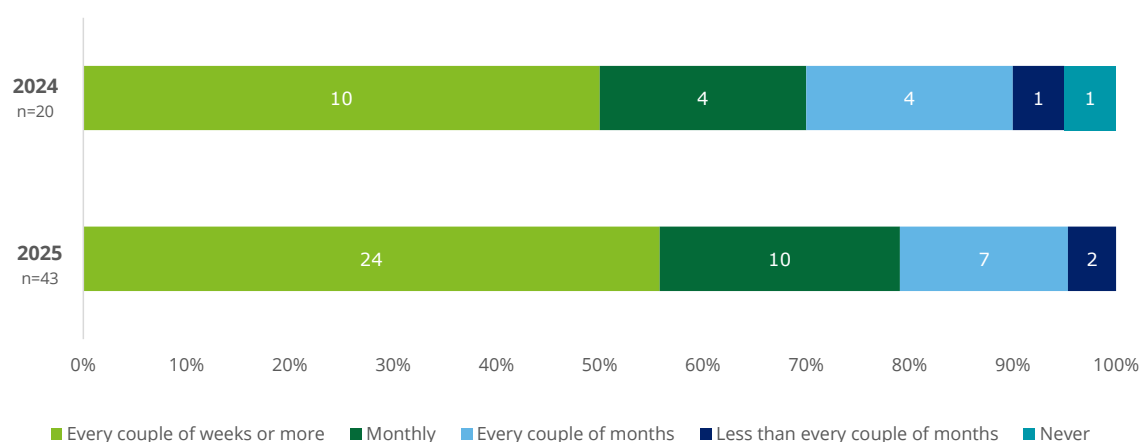
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their service or community. Concerns were also raised regarding the cultural sensitivity of interactions by some non-Aboriginal SNAICC Early Years Support staff members, highlighting the importance of ongoing cultural competency development to ensure all aspects of delivery remain strong and locally relevant.

Most services are engaging frequently with Program supports, with higher engagement in NSW and Vic than in WA – reflecting differences in operational maturity.

Since its inception, the Program has achieved consistently high levels of service engagement with SNAICC. In 2025, this trend continued, with 79 per cent of survey respondents reporting engagement at least once a month, and the majority connecting every two weeks or more frequently. This is an increase from 2024, when half of the services reported engagement every two weeks or more frequently (see Chart 2.3). However, differences in sample size and mix of services responding in 2024 and 2025 should be considered when comparing results across years.

Chart 2.3: Survey results from question ‘How often do you engage with SNAICC Early Years Support comparison 2024 -2025

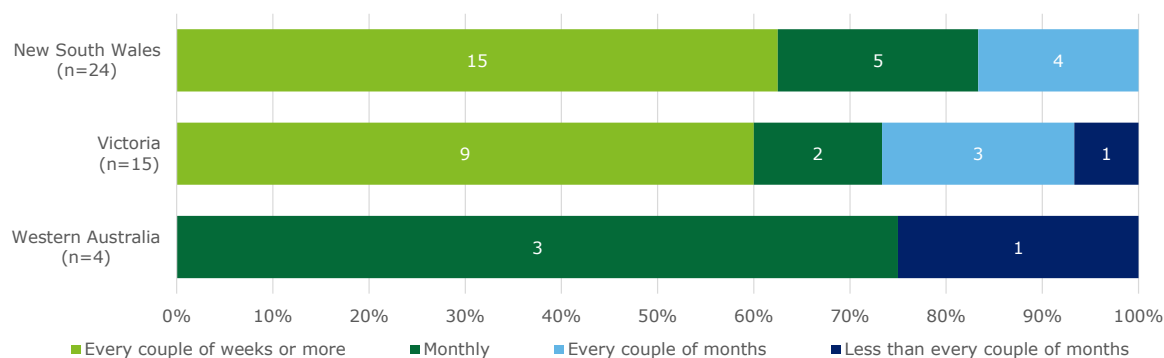


Note: In 2025, the ‘Never’ category was excluded from the survey

Source: Deloitte Access Economics Early Years Service Survey 2024 and 2025

There are minor jurisdictional differences in the frequency of engagement reported, which likely reflects the differences in operational maturity. NSW and Vic reported higher levels of engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support, with over 60 per cent connecting every two weeks. Most services in WA, however, reported engaging with the Program monthly. Even though, comparatively, this reflects a slightly lower frequency, it still represents a strong level of engagement across all three states (see Chart 2.4).

Chart 2.4: Survey results from the question ‘How often do you engage with SNAICC Early Years Support?’

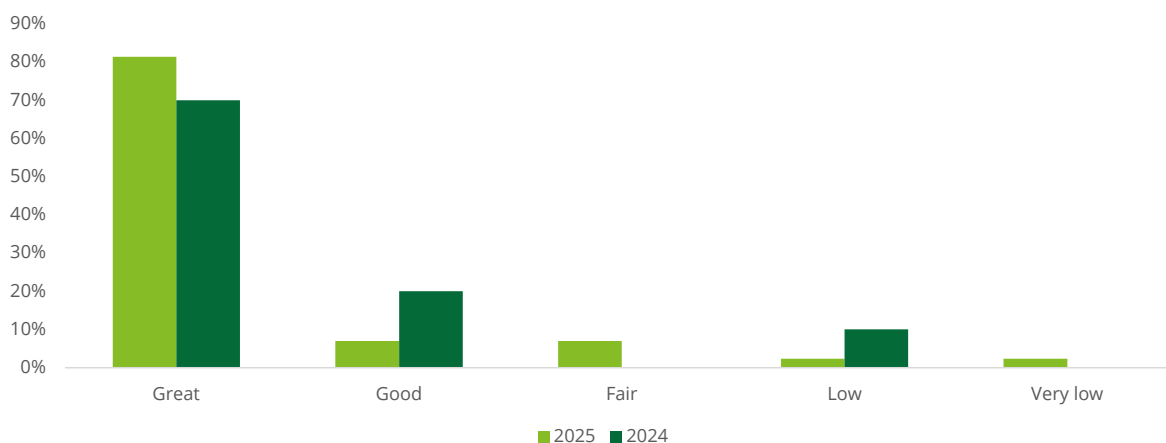


Source: Deloitte Access Economics Early Years Service Survey 2025

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Over the course of the Program, services have consistently spoken positively about their engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support. In 2025, 81 per cent of survey respondents (35 out of 43) reported their engagement as 'great' compared to 70 per cent of respondents (14 out of 20) in 2024 – an indication of growing satisfaction and perceived quality of engagement (see Chart 2.5).

Chart 2.5: Survey results from question 'How would you rate the quality of your engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support' comparison 2024 -2025



Note: The 'Fair' and 'Very Low' categories were new additions in the 2025 survey

Source: Deloitte Access Economics Early Years Service Survey 2024 and 2025

This trend was particularly evident in NSW and Vic, where most of services who responded to the survey reported positive and consistent feedback, emphasising the value of their engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support.

In WA, however, services expressed mixed views on the quality of their engagement with the Program. Some reflected positively about the opportunities to connect with both SNAICC Early Years Support and other services, reporting that these interactions helped alleviate feelings of isolation. However, as outlined in Section 2.1, the relatively lower level of Program maturity in WA – combined with changes in the State Director role – has limited the depth of connection for some services. For these services, such factors have influenced their overall engagement experience, with some reporting a diminished sense of relationship with the Program.

"I guess from a fairly remote position, we need to prioritise face to face visits to our service. We try to do that, but we are restricted by weather. We can't go out during the wet season. So, we have a short window to visit our services and its often restricted to a couple of visits a year." – WA SNAICC Early Years Support Staff.

2.3 Changes to the SNAICC Early Years Support model

SNAICC Early Years Support has continually refined its model in response to identified gaps and recommendations for improvement.

SNAICC Early Years Support has been intentionally designed with flexibility to adapt based on to evaluation findings and service feedback. Evaluation reports have generated actionable considerations to guide future refinements. Examples include the development of the 'menu of supports' to improve service awareness and understanding of available offerings, and the adoption of a more consistent approach to data collection and management – evident in the creation of a Power BI platform for tracking engagement and workforce statistics (discussed in detail below).

Throughout the implementation of the Program, services have reflected that they often have the chance and take the opportunity to provide feedback to the SNAICC Early Years Support team. Often, services have reflected on their ability to share specific feedback with advisors directly, whilst others shared the opportunity to provide feedback at Gathering events.

Some of the key changes that have been made to the Program in 2025, in response to evaluation findings and considerations are outlined in the Sections below.

2.3.1 Mitigating personnel risk linked to individual relationships with services

The success of SNAICC Early Years Support is contingent upon its ability to forge strong relationship with services. SNAICC Early Years Support recognises that with a strong emphasis on relationship building, there is an associated personnel risk. In 2025, SNAICC Early Years Support team has shared service relationships across multiple team members. Practically, SNAICC Early Years Support has made efforts to have different SNAICC staff members visiting one service to ensure that these services are exposed to a range of staff members and as a mechanism to ensure they can develop relationships with other staff members. By so doing, this mitigates the risk that services have a relationship with just an individual but instead have a relationship with SNAICC Early Years Support as an organisation.

Although these efforts have been implemented by SNAICC Early Years Support, these are still early in implementation and in consultations, services tended to speak about their relationship with a specific adviser as opposed to their relationship with the organisation itself. As mentioned in Section 2.1 SNAICC Early Years Support has experienced staff turnover, with State Director changes exhibited within each state. Although there have been mixed reactions towards the personnel changes, the Program has continued to operate relatively smoothly with new appointments which could demonstrate a reduction in personnel risk.

2.3.2 Improving collection and management of quantitative data

Although SNAICC Early Years Support was initially designed with the intent to support services with improved data access and sovereignty, and improved capacity to measure and understand service impact – throughout implementation the focus has shifted into building leadership capacity. This occurred in response to service needs and priorities. Over the implementation of the Program, there has been progress made towards improving data collection activities – including collecting data from services and the development of data dashboards. In 2025, SNAICC Early Years Support has made changes to ensure that there is better consistency in the data collected. This includes:

- streamlining the questions asked of services, to ensure only relevant data is captured and alleviating the reporting burden from services
- integrating data with other secondary data to develop a better picture of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children

The SNAICC Early Years Support team are conducting preliminary activities to support the collection, storage and display of data.

Box 2.3 – Case study: Improving consistency of data collection

SNAICC Early Years Support uses Power BI dashboards to efficiently capture, analyse and present data for each service it supports whilst maintaining a statewide overview. As SNAICC Early Years Support has matured, these dashboards have become increasingly important in enabling informed decision-making and enabling service improvements.

In 2025, SNAICC Early Years Support implemented changes to ensure greater consistency and relevance in the data collected. This involved refining data collection questions for services by only focusing on essential and actionable information, whilst streamlining processes to make it easier for services to provide accurate responses. These adjustments ensure more accurate data collection, whilst also simplifying the way SNAICC Early Years Support staff interact with the dashboards.

SNAICC Early Years Support is also exploring ways to further enhance data collection and input processes. By tailoring data requirements to the different types of service types, for example recognising workforce qualifications are less relevant for playgroups than for long day care centres, it is expected that this will ensure that data collection aligns with service-specific needs.

2.3.3 Ensuring governance structures are appropriate and utilised effectively

Overall, the governance structure of SNAICC Early Years Support has been perceived by SNAICC Early Years Support staff and services to be appropriate and work well. It was, however noted that there was limited attendance and genuine engagement with State Advisory Committee members. The State Advisory Committees were intended as a formal mechanism to ensure that SNAICC Early Years Support would be service-led and accountable to the needs of services.

In 2025, SNAICC Early Years refined governance arrangements to enable consistency across the states – all states have implemented monthly Network Meetings (with all services invited). WA and Vic have discontinued the State Advisory Committee meetings, while NSW has reduced frequency of their State Advisory Committee meetings (now twice a year). It is important that SNAICC Early Years Support continues to review and refine governance structures to ensure they are fit for purpose (see Section 5.1.3 and 5.1.4). This evaluation however does not assess the effectiveness of these changes to the governance structure.

While the service voice has remained central to operations, its role has evolved over the course of the Program. Consultations indicated ongoing uncertainty about what this role will look like moving forward. A small number of services expressed a desire for greater involvement in day-to-day operations—such as contributing to the recruitment of future SNAICC Early Years Support staff, having more influence in leadership forums, and initiating opportunities for knowledge sharing across services (Section 5.1.5).

3 The impact of SNAICC Early Years Support

This Section presents the assessment of SNAICC Early Years Support’s impact, aligned with the impact domains in the evaluation framework.

Overview

Evaluation domain	Key findings
Appropriateness	- SNAICC Early Years Support drives quality improvement that is culturally and contextually responsive, tailored to the specific needs of each service. - This has improved service quality, and reduced delivery barriers and administrative burden, though some services report less tailored support in 2025 compared to previous years.
Effectiveness	<i>Direct and responsive support</i> - SNAICC Early Years Support fosters knowledge sharing, networking, and leadership capacity-building, driving improvements in service delivery and generating meaningful connections across the sector. Its culturally and community-responsive approach to continual improvement has enhanced service quality, reflected in improved NQS ratings and compliance outcomes. - SNAICC Early Years Support is building the capacity of the ACCO early years workforce, particularly service leadership, ensuring services have the skills and resources needed to deliver sustained, high-quality outcomes. However, while SNAICC Early Years Support aims to strengthen the workforce, broader sector conditions limit the extent to which workforce challenges can be fully addressed. - In addition to on-the-ground assistance, SNAICC Early Years Support’s back-office support has helped services meet compliance standards and strengthen operational capacity, and helped services to strengthen their funding base, enhancing financial sustainability. By reducing operational and administrative burden, SNAICC Early Years Support enables service leaders to reinvest time and capacity into their services and communities – also contributing to enhancements in quality and program delivery. It has further strengthened services’ understanding of legislation and policy changes, enabling them to adapt their practices effectively. <i>Strengthening the conditions under which services operate</i> - SNAICC Early Years Support facilitates a collective and representative ACCO voice to government, strengthening policy influence while delivering benefits to both services and governments.

Evaluation domain	Key findings
Effectiveness <i>(continued)</i>	- SNAICC Early Years Support has fostered connections between services, which has strengthened community and shared practice in ways that contribute to a sense of shared purpose, continual improvement and sector sustainability. Alongside this, SNAICC Early Years Support has a positive impact on workforce wellbeing by fostering stronger connections across the sector. - SNAICC Early Years Support has invested in the growth of the ACCO sector by ensuring capabilities for culturally strong delivery. However, supporting service establishment has been a lower priority as the Program has evolved. <i>Achieving outcomes for children and families</i> - While there is evidence that SNAICC Early Years Support can positively impact the educational experience of children, it is still too early to measure outcomes for child learning, health, and wellbeing. Nevertheless, evidence of those positive impacts indicates that the conditions for improvements in outcome measures are being created.
Equity	- By providing responsive support that improves service quality and delivery, SNAICC Early Years Support can enhance children's educational experience – though inconsistency remains between jurisdictions. - Workforce development is also subject to challenges in the sector that are outside of the control of SNAICC Early Years Support, such as workforce shortages. These challenges can also affect different jurisdictions in different ways, having a stronger impact on more remote services.

The findings on the impact of SNAICC Early Years Support draw on a range of evidence sources, including program documentation, survey data, and insights gathered through consultations with SNAICC staff, participating services, non-government organisations, and government stakeholders.

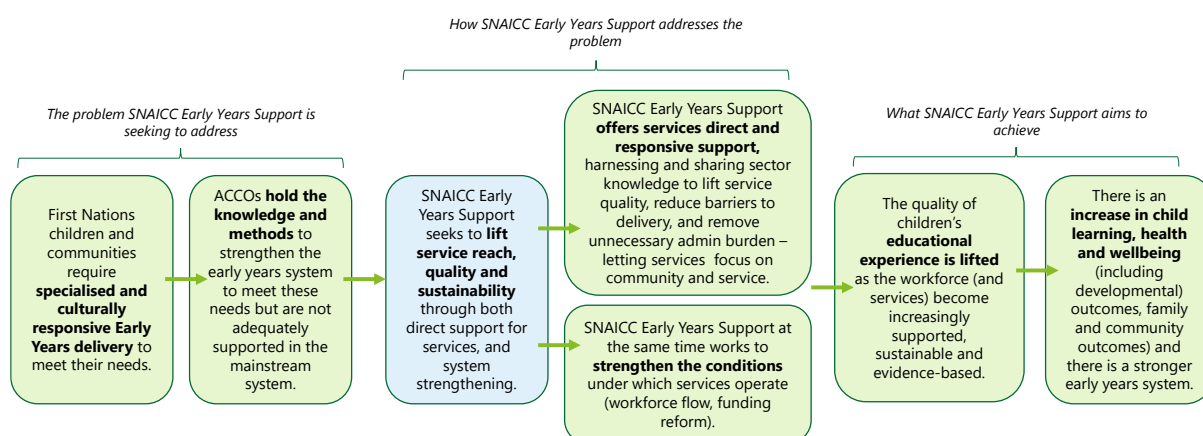
SNAICC Early Years Support was implemented with a clear rationale, underpinned by a theory of change developed as part of the evaluation. This theory of change, which is presented below, provides the foundation for the analysis in this Section and articulates how SNAICC Early Years Support aims to strengthen the delivery of early years education to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

3.1 Theory of change

The theory of change for SNAICC Early Years Support is presented in Figure 3.1. SNAICC Early Years Support supports the ACCO early years sector to deliver place-based education to children that is culturally responsive, safe, and tailored to the needs of the children and their communities. This is intended to be achieved through both providing direct support to individual services and strengthening the broader systems and conditions in which these services operate.

The intended impact of this support is to influence children's educational experiences over time, laying the foundations for improved developmental outcomes. While these outcomes are not expected to follow a linear path, and their relationships are shaped by complex and contextual factors, the use of a theory of change and PLM enables clearer interpretation and visibility of these pathways.

Figure 3.1: Theory of change for the SNAICC Early Years Support model



Source: Deloitte Access Economics (2025)

As outlined in Section 2.1, the level of program maturity varies across jurisdictions, with NSW being the most progressed. These differences have implications for where each jurisdiction sits along the theory of change. NSW is better positioned to provide responsive support and influence the conditions in which services operate – contributing to a greater impact on children's educational experiences. In contrast, such impacts are less likely to be observed in WA, given its earlier phase of implementation.

Both direct support and efforts to strengthen sector conditions are critical to improving outcomes for children; however, they operate on different timelines. Direct support typically generates more immediate, short-term outcomes, while strengthening operating conditions is a longer-term process that requires sustained effort.

Figure 3.2 outlines the SNAICC Early Years Support objectives mapped against these two forms of support. Direct and responsive support includes activities such as service design and quality uplift, workforce planning and development, and back-office assistance. In contrast, condition-strengthening efforts relate to advocacy, sector-wide capability-building and strengthening, and sector growth.

Figure 3.2: SNAICC Early Years Support objectives, grouped against activities from the theory of change.



Source: Deloitte Access Economics, SNAICC

The following Sections of this report are structured around the theory of change and provide an assessment of the impacts achieved against each of the six Program objectives.

3.2 Direct and responsive support for services

The direct and responsive support from SNAICC Early Years Support has improved service quality, and reduced delivery barriers and administrative burden, though some services report less tailored support in 2025 compared to previous years.

The tailored and practical supports provided by SNAICC Early Years Support have contributed to improved service quality, reduced administrative burden for service leadership and staff, and helped services remain open and compliant. These supports include ACCO-specific tools for continuous improvement – such as the ACCO checklist, snapshots, and action plans – as well as practical and hands on assistance with Assessment and Rating (A&R) processes. This needs-based support model has been the basis of SNAICC Early Years Support and has helped to generate positive impacts since its establishment – being generally perceived well by services and reflected on positively within SNAICC.

However, there were services who raised concerns about support being less responsive in 2025, becoming less “hands-on” in the past six months (as noted in Section 2). This may reflect some of the challenges that SNAICC Early Years Support has faced in 2025, which have included personnel changes, funding uncertainty, and limited timeframes.

One service also commented that in 2025, as their service matured, the level of support they received decreased compared to newer services. While this does reflect some natural progression in the hierarchy of needs of services, where support would become less ‘reactive’ over time – as well as the SNAICC Early Years Support design of needs-based support – it is also important that connection and engagement are maintained, and that responsive support is potentially replaced by other forms of support. This helps to mitigate a risk of more mature services finding SNAICC Early Years Support less beneficial (see Section 5.1.6).

3.2.1 Service design and delivery

A core objective of SNAICC Early Years Support is to support to early years services in the design and delivery of high-quality programs. This support is intended to enable services to improve their practice excellence, respond to community needs, develop culturally appropriate programs, meet and exceed NQF assessments, and to effectively integrate and share practice with other services.

Evidence collected over the course of SNAICC Early Years Support’s implementation suggests that the Program has been effective in meeting this objective, helping services to lift their quality in meeting the needs of children, families and communities. Throughout the Program’s Pilot, this has been accomplished through a series of investments in:

- building the capacity of service leadership
- embedding culture and responsiveness to community in service’s understanding of and measurement of quality
- facilitating knowledge and practice sharing, and exposing services to new methods of delivery
- providing a range of other service- level supports as guided by service needs.

In 2025, these supports have been well-received by services, with many acknowledging their role in driving quality improvement. For example, a service representative from NSW reflected on a webinar: *“There is no doubt there is contribution to the improvement on service quality. They provide trainings that are relevant for services and that help to improve your service quality”.*

Similarly, multiple survey respondents highlighted the support they had received on their Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) as a way SNAICC Early Years Support had assisted and strengthened the quality within their service.

SNAICC Early Years Support’s quality improvement frameworks – namely NSW’s Action Plans and the Vic/WA ACCO Early Years Service Review Checklist – have been developed over the pilot period in response to a deepening understanding of how ACCO services can define, measure and continually improve quality delivery. Importantly, this conception of quality practice, and what supports quality practice in an ACCO services, has been developed from the ground up, informed by service leader and community feedback and experiences rather than being solely anchored to mainstream quality or compliance frameworks (such as the NQS).

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While these frameworks do support NQS compliance, they are grounded in a broader, longer term, and community-driven understanding of the practices that underpin sustainable and effective ACCO early years service delivery. Reflecting this, the benefits of quality uplift are considered here in two dimensions: firstly, SNAICC Early Years Support's unique and community-centred approach to quality improvement and, secondly, how this approach can also strengthen performance against mainstream quality measures.

3.2.1.1 Quality from the SNAICC Early Years Support perspective

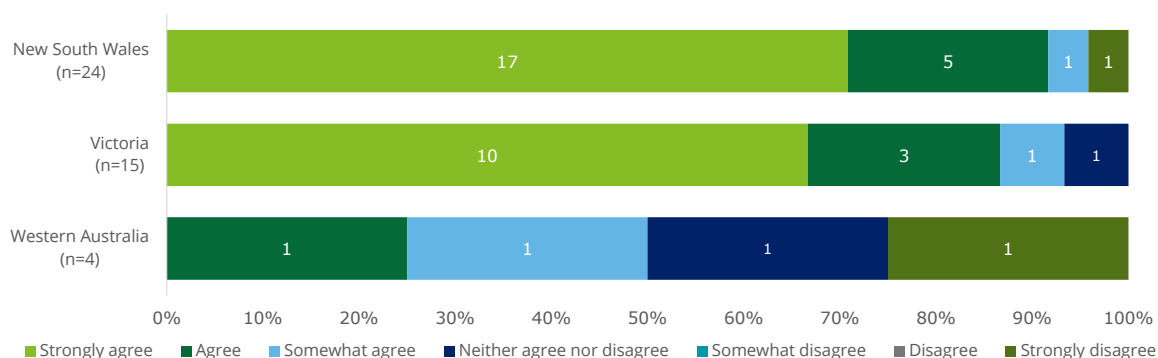
SNAICC Early Years Support drives quality improvement that is culturally and contextually responsive, tailored to the specific needs of each service.

Cultural safety is a critical component of high-quality service delivery for children and families, yet improvements in this area are not always captured in formal ratings. Ensuring cultural safety means that children feel respected, valued, and connected within their educational environments – fostering a sense of belonging and well-being that, in turn, supports engagement, participation, and learning outcomes.

Consultations with early years services highlighted the value of SNAICC Early Years Support in providing culturally responsive assistance in a way that shapes quality service delivery. This has included targeted cultural training for staff who do not identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, with participants reporting increased understanding and appreciation of culturally safe practices. SNAICC Early Years Support has also developed and distributed resources that embed cultural safety in day-to-day service delivery.

Survey data from 2025 reflects this impact, with 63 per cent (27 of 43) survey respondents strongly agreeing that SNAICC Early Years Support provides culturally appropriate and safe resources, and a further nine respondents agreeing – totalling 84 per cent across the two categories (see Chart 3.1 below). This sentiment was consistent between NSW and Vic respondents, while feedback from WA was more mixed. While the small sample size in WA may partially explain this variation, it may also reflect delivery challenges and lower engagement rates in that jurisdiction. As discussed in Section 2, engagement is fundamental to responsive support, yet certain operational and contextual factors make engagement in WA more difficult than in other jurisdictions.

Chart 3.1: Survey results from the question 'To what extent do you agree: SNAICC Early Years Support provides culturally appropriate and safe resources and services?', by jurisdiction



Source: Deloitte Access Economics Early Years Service Survey, 2025

SNAICC Early Years Support facilitates knowledge sharing and networking that strengthen service delivery and foster meaningful connections across the sector.

SNAICC Early Years Support is intentionally designed to foster knowledge sharing between services, creating opportunities to access, exchange, and learn from a range of service design models and delivery methods. These opportunities to share practices between services have directly contributed to continuous

improvements in program design and delivery, as services apply new ideas, approaches, and tools gained through these exchanges.

SNAICC Early Years Support has actively facilitated these connections since its establishment – through national and state Gatherings, informal service-to-service connections, and targeted resource sharing – and this has continued in 2025. Services consistently attributed their strengthened networks and collaboration to SNAICC Early Years Support's efforts; with many noting these would not have occurred otherwise. Many reported that the relationships built among services have provided not only practical solutions to operational challenges but also a sense of solidarity and shared purpose.

Survey feedback indicates that opportunities for connection are one of the most valued and impactful aspects of the Program, with many services crediting this support as a driver of improvements in practice. This is explored in greater detail in Section 3.3.2.

SNAICC Early Years Support strengthens service leadership through targeted development opportunities, driving improvements in quality and workforce capability.

SNAICC Early Years Support emphasises support for service leaders by delivering leadership programs and other workforce development that ultimately helps to build quality. These leadership programs have seen good uptake and are well received by service leaders across 2023 and 2024. This has included monthly leadership forums and leadership events. In Vic and WA, the ACCO Early Years Service Review Checklist helps to define the trajectory of leadership development, alongside the access to tailored support and advocacy from SNAICC Early Years Support. Leadership and workforce are explored in further detail in Section 3.2.2.

3.2.1.2 Translating to mainstream quality measures such as the NQS

SNAICC Early Years Support's culturally and community-responsive approach to continual improvement is driving uplifts in service quality and NQS ratings, demonstrating positive flow-on effects to mainstream compliance and quality standards.

As noted previously, NQS ratings do not fully capture the quality of ACCO services; however, they remain a fundamental 'ticket to play' for service operation. SNAICC Early Years Support's focus is on achieving a broader quality uplift to meet the needs of children, families, and communities, with improvements in NQS emerging as a positive impact of this.

In addition to the focus on quality improvements, SNAICC Early Years Support provides targeted support for services undertaking the NQS rating process. For example, in NSW, a dedicated NQS Toolkit was developed to assist and guide services through A&R preparation, which was then adapted into three quality improvement webinars. Services have also benefitted from practical tools such as the ACCO Early Years Services Review Checklist and mock audits – both cited by services as contributing directly to improved ratings.

Over the course of the SNAICC Early Years Support pilot, more than 10 services have been supported to move from *Not meeting* to *Meeting* quality standards, and there are now no provisionally approved ACCOs operating within any participating jurisdictions. Importantly, SNAICC Early Years Support also supports services with other NQS-related matters in years when they are not undergoing formal assessment, ensuring continuous improvement. In 2025, four survey respondents – all from NSW – explicitly identified A&R support as a key benefit of SNAICC Early Year's support, with one Early Years Service Director commenting: *"They were a big help in our A&R and with the self-assessment tool."*

While the quality uplift achieved by services extends beyond what is captured in rating changes, the scale and speed of these improvements highlight the effectiveness of SNAICC Early Years Support's tailored, relationship-based approach. This offers valuable lessons for the mainstream system on the impact of culturally informed, context-specific supports delivered through trusted expert relationships.

3.2.2 Workforce planning and development support

SNAICC Early Years Support is designed to assist services with recruitment, staff retention, training and growing the capability and sustainability of the workforce.

SNAICC Early Years Support is building the capacity of the ACCO early years workforce, particularly service leadership, ensuring services have the skills and resources needed to deliver sustained, high-quality outcomes.

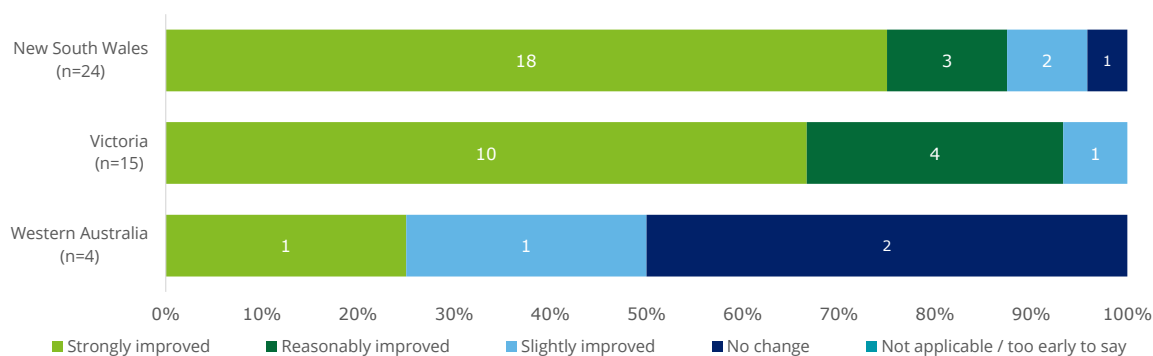
The SNAICC Early Years Support leadership program is based on a leadership framework containing a range of modules that service leaders can engage with and progress through, alongside the access to tailored support and advocacy from SNAICC Early Years Support. Although the details of the leadership training can vary between jurisdictions, it has been noted that there is uptake across all three and across multiple years. In NSW and Vic, there have been multiple SNAICC-hosted leadership events that have been attended by staff – with the leadership program being recognised by as an important point of connection and relationship for emerging sector leaders, and a potential ‘jumping-off point’ for services to access additional support. There have also been other forms of workforce development and training, such as trauma-informed training being completed by staff across all three jurisdictions.

“The professional development opportunities facilitated by SNAICC...have helped build educator confidence in delivering culturally responsive and trauma-informed practices. These sessions have sparked meaningful reflection and changes in how we approach our work with children and families” – NSW Early Years Service Director

“One of the most life-changing supports I’ve received was through their help in accessing funding to complete my ECT degree. Without that scholarship and their support in helping me access it, I wouldn’t have even taken it on. It was the only reason I felt it was possible. Knowing I had that backing and that I wasn’t doing it alone kept me going through the tough times. I didn’t want to let my mob down, their belief in me gave me the strength to believe in myself. SNAICC didn’t just support me professionally, they empowered me personally, and for that, I’ll always be deeply grateful” – NSW Early Years Service Director

In the 2025 survey, around 74 per cent of respondents indicated that identifying workforce training opportunities was strongly or reasonably improved because of SNAICC Early Years Support (Chart 3.2). NSW was a larger driver of this – in contrast, respondents from WA did not feel that there had been as much impact. Again, this may reflect the differing phases of implementation between jurisdictions (see Section 2.1 for further detail).

Chart 3.2: Survey responses to the question ‘To what extent do you agree with the following statement: My service has benefitted from identifying workforce training opportunities?’, by jurisdiction



Source: Deloitte Access Economics Early Years Service Survey, 2025

The SNAICC Early Years Support State Reports indicate that there have been several professional development sessions and events that services have been able to participate in over the first six months of 2025. These include:

- eight unique professional development sessions in NSW
- five unique professional development sessions in Vic (with 55 total participants)
- eight sites visits and professional engagement at services in WA, as well as engagement with a national webinar schedule.

Further, the reports provide detail on leadership development. This has included:

- 15 sessions for leadership development in NSW, which includes the 12-part ECA Leadership Program
- targeted support for services based on the domains of the ACCO Early Years Review Checklist in Vic
- support for services using the ACCO Early Years Review Checklist and Getting Started module in WA

While SNAICC Early Years Support aims to strengthen the workforce, broader sector conditions limit the extent to which workforce challenges can be fully addressed.

Broad workforce challenges across the ECEC and ACCO sectors continue to affect the impact that can be achieved by SNAICC Early Years Support in relation to strengthening the workforce, with these challenges being especially pronounced in WA. SNAICC Early Years Support has provided support to assist services with recruitment and retention. For example, SNAICC Early Years Support assisted in planning a recruitment drive for a service to hire local staff, and enable these staff to complete a traineeship, to build *“a sustainable pipeline”*. Nevertheless, the difficulties associated with recruiting in regional and remote areas mean that there is less opportunity to see impact on workforce in WA:

“I can't say it's looked much different this year compared to last year...[but] it's because of not having a workforce to draw from. In the capital cities they have turnover of staff, but they can reasonably expect to get a response to a job ad. We have been supporting the newer services to be able to support their staff to be able to get their Cert III, but that's still been hard”– SNAICC Early Years Support WA Staff

Survey results from 2025 also indicated that recruitment and retention are areas where challenges are being faced, with only 42 per cent of respondents (18 of 43) indicating that there had been strong or reasonable improvement – making it the lowest ranked among areas included in the survey. All four respondents from WA indicated that there had been no change in this respect, consistent with findings from consultations.

More broadly, there are workforce challenges across the entire sector, which can be outside of SNAICC Early Years Support's control. A general workforce shortage and low staff wages continue to pose significant challenges for recruitment and retention. The demanding nature of the work can also leave staff feeling overburdened, further contributing to retention issues.

To help address this, SNAICC Early Years Support has supported some services through funding their staff well-being days to prevent staff burn-out which has led to positive outcomes for the services. Services have noted the importance of retaining staff due to the skills shortage and inability to easily replace staff once they no longer work for the service. Services have previously noted that SNAICC Early Years Support has improved staff retention through reducing the negative impacts of isolation. Services often work independently, focusing on the unique needs of their local communities with limited opportunities or vehicles for interaction with other services. This isolation has exacerbated the challenges faced by services, including difficulties around recruiting and retaining workforce. Through creating connections between services, SNAICC Early Years Support has helped to mitigate some of the barriers that the previous sense of isolation had created.

There have also been examples of recruitment assistance to services being provided by SNAICC Early Years Support. One such example is in Vic, where enhanced recruitment assistance based on consistent themes from site visits. This support includes conducting preliminary interviews, aiding in applicant screening and shortlisting, performing reference checks, and assisting with follow-up paperwork. This assistance has been provided to two services so far. In WA, there has also been recruitment support which included tips and FAQs on recruitment, interview questions and techniques, and advertising. The aim of this was to support remote communities specifically, as they have access to a smaller pool of potential employees.

3.2.3 Back-office support

Recognising the different priorities of early years services, one of the objectives for SNAICC Early Years Support is to assist services with administration, grant and funding applications as well as compliance and policy transition. In 2025, a commonly raised example of SNAICC Early Years Support's impact was around support in applying for the federal government's Worker's Retention Payment (WRP). Stakeholders from both services and SNAICC Early Years Support reflected that the application process for the WRP was challenging for services, adding a layer of complexity and administrative burden. However, many services

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were reportedly able to benefit from the guidance provided by SNAICC Early Years Support – as this was noted across all three jurisdictions, it is indicated that this was an area of consistent support in 2025.

“Certainly, the workforce retention grants...it has been good to work individually with the centres and help them to get that... It's quite complex, but that's been very helpful for services” – SNAICC Early Years Support staff

In addition to on-the-ground assistance, SNAICC Early Years Support’s back-office support has helped services meet compliance standards and strengthen operational capacity.

SNAICC Early Years Support supported services with auditing and compliance support, in addition to acquiring consultant support for compliance and ratings improvement. There have already been signs of progression in compliance standards through the changes in the NQS assessment rating, as noted in Section 3.2.1.2 – where tools such as the ACCO Early Years Services Review Checklist implemented by SNAICC Early Years Support have contributed to the positive impacts. Further, 72 per cent of survey respondents indicated that achieving service compliance had been strongly or reasonably improved in 2025, with one respondent from Vic commenting that *“since engaging with SNAICC we have seen an improvement in staff compliance. With SNAICC providing policy and procedures, our service staff have become more responsive. The policy and procedures have also been supplemented with additional resources to support understanding and implementation within the service”*.

SNAICC Early Years Support has helped early years services to strengthen their funding base, enhancing financial sustainability.

Across the entire evaluation period, survey respondents have consistently indicated that identifying and accessing funding opportunities as a priority for their service. This continued in 2025, with 91 per cent of respondents (39 of 43) reporting that identifying and accessing funding opportunities was either essential or high priority.

SNAICC Early Years support recognises this need and have worked towards this over the course of years by helping services strengthen their funding base and consolidate funding streams. This has contributed to greater levels of financial sustainability, more effective resource allocation within and across services and greater alignment between funding and need and supporting grant recipients in effective use of funding. This has continued, with consultees in 2025 providing examples of how SNAICC Early Years Support had helped services to secure funding. It was also recognised in survey results, with 77 per cent of respondents (33 of 43) indicating that identifying and accessing funding opportunities was an area that had been strongly or reasonably approved. Among these, 25 per cent indicated it was strongly improved, which was the third-highest rate among all areas.

By reducing operational and administrative burden, SNAICC Early Years Support enables service leaders to reinvest time and capacity into their services and communities – also contributing to enhancements in quality and program delivery.

SNAICC Early Years Support has prioritised reducing the administrative burden for services over the course of its implementation. While reducing administrative burden did rank lower among service priorities for support, it is an important element of its offering, in terms of the direct support that services can receive and the way in which it enables service leaders to reinvest their time and capacity towards enhanced service quality and delivery.

SNAICC Early Years Support can offer practical assistance regarding processes related to funding applications, data collection, newsletters, and quality ratings. A recent example raised during consultations was from a service where SNAICC Early Years Support helped them to navigate challenges in a Departmental application:

“We had to get a waiver with the Department [regarding the number of places]. [SNAICC Early Years Support] pointed us in the right direction with that. We were deemed out of scope, so it was challenging getting on the portal. They helped us getting the paperwork” – NSW Service Director

As part of the initial design, it was expected that SNAICC Early Years Service would invest in the development of data systems to support the monitoring of impact (ultimately reducing services’

administrative burden). However, the focus on this has reduced over time in response to concerns from services regarding data sovereignty and administrative complexity. This is discussed further in Section 2.3.2.

SNAICC Early Years Support has strengthened services' understanding of legislation and policy changes, enabling them to adapt their practices effectively.

Over time, understanding legislation and policy changes and their implications has grown as a priority area among services, according to survey results across the evaluation. This may indicate that services are deepening their relationship with SNAICC Early Years Support and turning to them for higher-level forms of support – i.e. those related to legislation and policy.

To date, services and government alike valued the role SNAICC Early Years Support in supporting services to access, understand and implement policy changes in a service-specific context. In 2025, services continued to indicate the importance of SNAICC Early Years Support in this area, with 79 per cent of survey respondents feeling that it had been strongly or reasonably improved – making it the second highest out of all areas.

3.3 Strengthening the conditions under which services operate

SNAICC Early Years Support works to strengthen the conditions under which services operate. While this can be across a range of areas, it is most aligned the objectives of advocacy, building sector strength and cohesion, and growing the sector. This type of supports works in conjunction with direct and responsive support to ultimately lift the educational experience of children – while still itself being responsive and elevating the voices and needs of services to higher levels.

3.3.1 Advocacy

SNAICC Early Years Support facilitates a collective and representative ACCO voice to government, strengthening policy influence while delivering benefits to both services and governments.

SNAICC Early Years Support plays a critical role in service-level advocacy by focusing on empowerment, self-determination, and amplifying the voices of early years services it supports and the broader ACCO sector. Through on-the-ground community connections and a deep understanding of service needs and priorities, SNAICC Early Years Support provides an avenue for collective service voice, enabling the ACCO sector to share their needs, experiences, and stories.

This service-level advocacy led by SNAICC Early Years Support differs from the system-level advocacy efforts of SNAICC's broader teams, which aim at influencing larger policy frameworks. However, critically, this collaboration allows SNAICC to channel insights from service-level experiences into its system-level efforts, ensuring service voices are effectively represented in broader advocacy initiatives. This leads to evidence-informed policy processes, ensuring that government policies are grounded in real experiences and consider the critical and unique needs of the ACCO sector.

Given the nature of advocacy, tangible outcomes can unfold over longer time periods. However, there are recent examples of the advocacy work undertaken by SNAICC Early Years Support. Two such examples are SNAICC Early Years Support teams accompanying early years service leaders, travelling to Canberra to share stories; and the inclusion of a cultural safety training module for assessors working with ACECQA.

Moreover, beyond the service-level advocacy, SNAICC Early Years Support ensures that services are well-prepared and engaged in policy discussions. Services supported by SNAICC Early Years Support have been reported to have a better understanding of critical policy issues (discussed in Section 3.2.3) and are more willing to participate in key policy consultations or discussions.

This increased engagement in policy discussions by early years services comes because of the trust and relationships that SNAICC Early Years Support has built over time. Initially, services reported being apprehensive of sharing some of the challenges they face. Over the evaluation period, as the relationship between SNAICC Early Years Support and services has strengthened and this trust has deepened, services have become more open to share critical issues facing them individually or the sector more broadly.

Services have also noted the positive impacts of advocacy work in 2025, with 60 per cent (26 out of 43) respondents feeling that advocacy on behalf of services was an area that had been strongly improved. In

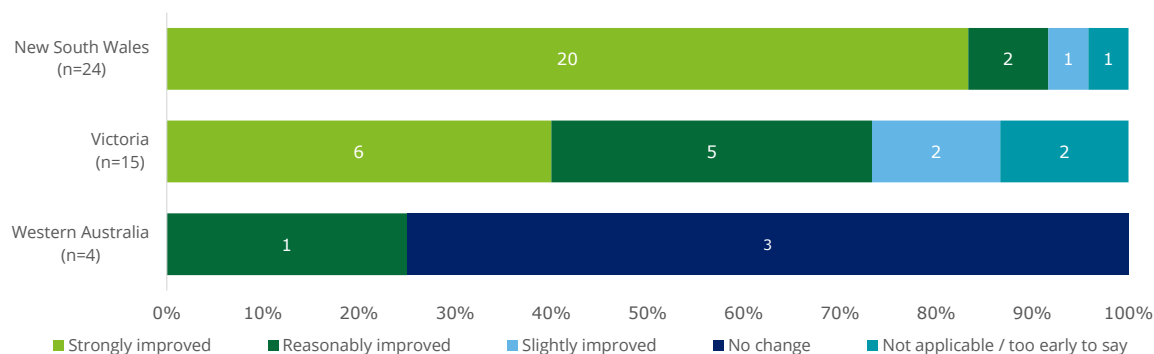
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the survey, one service director commented on the value that is added by having SNAICC Early Years Support to assist with advocacy, reflecting that losing SNAICC Early Years Support could *“lessen the voice of the service in broader policy discussions that affect early childhood education, particularly for Indigenous children and families”*. In consultations, one service director from NSW noted that they *“think the...thing SNAICC does really well, is that they advocate really well”*.

This feedback is positive but does also reflect the differences between jurisdictions – with advocacy being furthest progressed in NSW as the most mature of the three branches. As shown in Chart 3.3, NSW respondents drive most of the positive survey results, while Vic has a more modest proportion of respondents indicating that advocacy had been strongly improved.

The proportion of WA respondents indicating ‘no change’ is also reflective of the jurisdiction’s stage of implementation. Although advocacy is seen as an important element of the support that is offered, building a stronger foundation of practical and responsive support may be a greater priority for WA. One stakeholder noted that although *“the SNAICC national brand has been a great asset when accessing advocacy support”*, there was a preference that more emphasis would be placed on *“supporting and expanding ACCO childcares in [WA]...because we are considered childcare deserts”*.

Chart 3.3: Survey responses to the question ‘To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding how your service has benefitted from interactions with SNAICC Early Years Support this year: My service has benefitted from policy advocacy on behalf of services’, by jurisdiction



Source: Deloitte Access Economics Early Years Service Survey, 2025

While these jurisdictional differences do not invalidate the good progress that is being made in advocacy, it does highlight areas for future growth of SNAICC Early Years Support. A mechanism for continuing this work is collaboration between Early Years Support and the broader SNAICC team – with the Early Years Support team already having contributed towards several wider advocacy pieces, helping to elevate service voice to government. The system-level advocacy efforts of SNAICC are informed by the service-level advocacy of SNAICC Early Years Support, providing an increasingly evidence-based understanding of service needs and priorities. Moving forward, it is important that this voice is consistent and representative across the full range of services among the jurisdictions.

3.3.2 Sector strength and cohesion

SNAICC Early Years Support has fostered connections between services, which has strengthened community and shared practice in ways that contribute to a sense of shared purpose, continual improvement and sector sustainability.

By tailoring its support to each service, and ensuring this aligns closely with service need, SNAICC Early Years Support strengthens the entire ACCO sector. As part of this, one of SNAICC’s key objectives is to facilitate knowledge sharing, collaboration, and networking opportunities across the sector. This is accomplished through the hosting of various opportunities for services to build and make connections, such as network meetings, gatherings, conferences and the former state advisory committees.

This has been well-received, with survey respondents consistently indicating across multiple years that connection to other services and facilitating knowledge sharing was the area that was most improved – in

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2025, around 67 per cent of all respondents (29 of 43) felt it had been strongly improved, and a further 16 per cent felt it was reasonably improved, totalling 84 per cent across the two categories. This also reflects alignment between SNAICC Early Years Support's impacts and the priorities of the sector, as connection between services was tied with policy advocacy and help accessing funding opportunities as the highest ranked priority, with 58 per cent (25 of 43) respondents indicating that it was 'essential' (and 79 per cent indicating that it was 'essential' or 'high priority').

Services commented on how the connections that were facilitated not only helped to reduce feelings of isolation, but enabled practice and knowledge-sharing between services: *"You do feel isolated as an ACCO. The biggest value is the networking opportunities and the connections"* – Vic Early Years Service Director.

"We have built connections with another centre who are really struggling. We have been able to share example policies [with them]... if it wasn't for our [SNAICC Early Years Support] advisors, we wouldn't be able to have this" – NSW Early Years Service Director

Beyond SNAICC facilitated events and conferences, SNAICC Early Years Support also helps early years services attend other events such as the Cairns Early Childhood Conference and the Early Childhood Australia Conference. These mechanisms enable services to network and share best practices, thereby enhancing their capabilities.

Alongside strengthening sector sustainability, SNAICC Early Years Support has a positive impact on workforce wellbeing by fostering stronger connections across the sector.

While connection and networking can have benefits at the service level, there is also a tangible impact on a more personal level for many of the staff involved between services and SNAICC Early Years Support. Stakeholders have reported the positive impacts on wellbeing that have arisen from engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support.

Across both the survey and consultations in 2025, multiple comments have been made about the value that comes from having SNAICC Early Years Support staff available to talk to, both in terms of practical assistance, as well as support in a challenging and sometimes overwhelming environment.

"I've not come across an [organisation] so full of people that are purpose driven and have so much heart and drive for their work and the children we work with. It's inspiring" – Vic Early Years Service Director

The importance of relationship-building between SNAICC Early Years Support and services is discussed further in Section 2.2.

Over the course of multiple years, stakeholders have also made specific reference to the SNAICC Early Years Support Gatherings to bring services and people together. This is explored in greater detail in Box 3.1 below.

Box 3.1 – Case study: Facilitating connection and wellbeing through Gatherings

The State and National Gatherings are a key element for how SNAICC Early Years Support builds connections between services. These Gatherings provide an opportunity for services to:

- connect and network with both the SNAICC Early Years Support team as well as other services,
- share knowledge,
- enhance their awareness and understanding of SNAICC Early Years Support,
- contribute to policy discussions and forums,
- provide feedback and inform continual refinement of SNAICC Early Years Support offering and priorities.

SNAICC Early Years Support financially supported services to send two members of staff to attend the Gatherings, to encourage wide participation (however, there are still sometimes limitations to the availability of staff, especially in the face of workforce challenges). The agendas include presentations, workshops, informal table yarns, and feedback sessions, fostering a culturally strong, safe space for open knowledge-sharing.

Across all jurisdictions, the Gatherings have been well received - many consultees and survey respondents in 2025 commented on the benefits of connection and learning, as well as feeling encouraged to engage with SNAICC Early Years Support to a greater extent. Although WA has seen less impact overall, they also shared positive views.

“Gatherings have been essential to us building connections and support across the industry - these have to continue!” – WA Early Years Service Director

“The gatherings hosted by SNAICC are absolutely deadly. They create such a strong sense of community, connection, and cultural pride. Being surrounded by other mob working in early years spaces, sharing stories, knowledge, and support, has been incredibly uplifting. These gatherings have reminded me why we do what we do and have given me the motivation to keep going, even when the work feels heavy” – NSW Early Years Service Director

Specific reference was also made to the NSW Gathering in October 2023, which was shortly after the he Voice to Parliament Referendum. Despite the result, the Gathering provided an opportunity for connection and togetherness that was impactful for services – highlighting the importance of SNAICC Early Years Support in facilitating this.

“I was fairly rattled from the Vote, but there was nothing like going to the [Gathering].it filled your cup. I said... I can go back to work now, and I can pick up where I left off. It fills your cup; and its more than the networking for me. I mean the networking is great, but you know people who have been in a similar place as you and everyone is happy to help. But you can't get help if you don't know those services are there” – NSW Early Years Service Director

3.3.3 Growing the sector

SNAICC Early Years Support has invested in the growth of the ACCO sector by ensuring capabilities for culturally strong delivery. However, supporting service establishment has been a lower priority as the Program has evolved.

SNAICC Early Years Support aims to help grow the ACCO sector by helping to identify opportunities, and support service establishment. In the early stages of the Program, identifying new sites and expanding ACCO delivery was a more significant focus area. This specific element did not occur to the extent initially anticipated, primarily due to the broader policy conditions, and focus being placed on other priorities for services.

Nevertheless, organic growth has occurred for SNAICC Early Years Support, wherein the number of supported services has expanded over the course of the four years (see Section 2.1) – the Sector Strengthening Partnership in NSW is a key example of this, which added 26 new services in 2024. SNAICC

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Early Years Support is also well positioned to support ACCO transitions when they arise. This is in addition to possible opportunities for expansion into new jurisdictions.

There have also been some examples where SNAICC Early Years Support has helped services to expand the number of places at their services. In NSW, five ACCOs were supported to prepare applications and any necessary documentation to apply for funding to support capital works projects that will create additional licensed spaces at their service. This was in response to concerns raised by services as to the complexity of applying for this grant. As of July 2025, the outcome of these applications is still pending.

3.4 Achieving outcomes for children and families

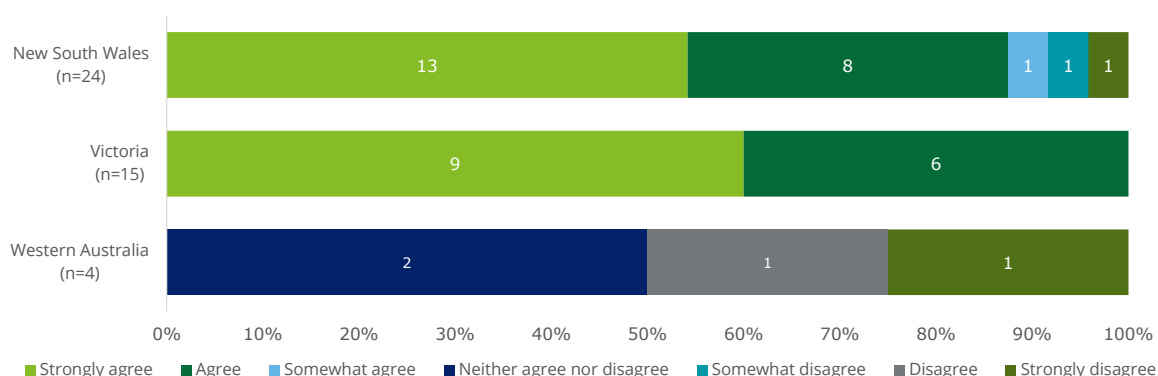
3.4.1 Lifting education experiences

By providing responsive support that improves service quality and delivery, SNAICC Early Years Support can enhance children's educational experience – though inconsistency remains between jurisdictions.

SNAICC Early Years Support is designed to promote a stronger early childhood system, in which service voice and evidence feeds directly through to system improvements, supporting a responsive sector focused on the needs of children and families. Ultimately these activities lead to improvements for the services that enhance the educational experiences and developmental outcomes for children and create better long-term outcomes for families and communities.

A limitation to this evaluation is that family voice has not been included. For this reason, the impact for children and families cannot be directly reported on, in terms of family views. However, there is belief among services that these impacts are indeed being carried through – for example, Chart 3.4 shows that 84 per cent of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that children at their service have benefitted from their engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support. However, this belief was only evidenced in NSW and Vic, whereas in WA benefits for children were not reported. This is consistent with the maturity of the respective jurisdictions (see Section 2.1) – in WA, outcomes may not be far enough progressed for there to be a clear impact being generated for children and families.

Chart 3.4: Survey results from the question 'To what extent do you agree with the following statement: Children and families at this service have benefitted from this service engaging with SNAICC Early Years Support', by jurisdiction



Source: Deloitte Access Economics Early Years Service Survey, 2025

Although supporting services in delivery quality has flow-on effects for children, SNAICC Early Years Support can also directly impact educational experiences through the provision of physical resources and other materials that benefit children.

Examples of such resources that have been provided in 2025 include language cards (as well as other card-based learning materials) and upgrades and maintenance of playground equipment. One particularly notable example provided during consultations was funding support to help a service build a sensory room for their children, many of whom had sensory needs. The sensory room has been reported to have

positively benefitted the children and provided peace of mind to families that children are safe – as well as helping educators to focus more on their role.

“Without [SNAICC Early Years Support], we wouldn’t be able to do this... for one child in particular, it’s changed their world” – NSW Early Years Service Director

Outside of physical resources, actions taken by SNAICC Early Years Support can also have a direct positive impact in terms of lifting education experiences. For example, there have been services that have completed trauma-aware training, to help educators better understand and deliver appropriate and effective trauma-informed learning and care services and resources for children in the centre. In the past it has also been noted that SNAICC Early Years Support has helped services in hosting family days, and provision of training to non-Aboriginal staff that allows them to have culturally safe interactions with families.

The extent to which these would not be possible without SNAICC Early Years Support supports the claim that it is creating a positive impact for children and families that would not be otherwise present. However, continual improvement of the support that is offered will help this to become more consistent between jurisdictions and allow the actions of SNAICC Early Years Support to follow through to children and families.

3.4.2 Children learning and wellbeing outcomes

While there is evidence that SNAICC Early Years Support can positively impact the educational experience of children, it is still too early to measure outcomes for child learning, health, and wellbeing. Nevertheless, evidence of those positive impacts indicates that the conditions for improvements in outcome measures are being created.

Sections 3.2.1 and 3.4.1 have illustrated some of the ways that SNAICC Early Years Support can create an uplift in service quality in ways that provide a basis for improved outcomes for children, families, and communities. This includes mechanisms through which SNAICC Early Years Support directly lifts education experiences for children, as well as creating conditions in which children can thrive.

However, it may still be too early for the impacts of SNAICC Early Years Support to flow through to quantitative outcome measures such as AEDC. There are multiple factors for this:

- These measures can take time to emerge. This is twofold – firstly, that it will take ongoing impact from SNAICC Early Years Support to systematically influence these outcomes; but also secondly on a more practical level, that the cadence of AEDC assessment means that outcomes may require up to three years to be measured, even if they exist
- While SNAICC Early Years Support could generate these measurable outcomes for services, metrics at the community level or higher may not always reveal the influence of a targeted program.
- The nature of participating services – such as tending to exist in remote communities – may mean greater degrees of variation and fluctuation in factors than can influence outcome measurement, such as capacity and attendance. For instance, some services noted that the number of children attending at a given age level can vary significantly between calendar years.

Despite these limitations to the measurement of developmental outcomes for children, the existence of impact that lifts educational experiences suggests that the preconditions for these outcomes are being established. SNAICC Early Years Support creating these impacts can help children to feel safe and supported, which in turn can build a foundation for healthy social and emotional development.

Creating impact that influences these measurable outcomes will be dependent on delivering consistent and responsive support. While this means sustaining efforts in more mature jurisdictions like NSW, it also means developing the impact in jurisdictions such as WA such that flow-through effects to children, families, and communities can begin to exist more consistently.

4 Conditions for ongoing impact

This Section explores the conditions required to sustain SNAICC Early Years Support's impact over time and assesses its cost-effectiveness.

Overview

Evaluation domain	Key findings
Sustainability	The evaluation has identified several design features that have been central to the ways in which SNAICC Early Years Support has developed into a trusted intermediary within the ACCO early years sector: • high quality working relationships (and trust) with early years services as the primary avenue through which SNAICC Early Years Support can influence change • keeping the needs and voices of ACCOs early years services at the heart of SNAICC Early Years Support • a delivery program that is built on the principles of cultural governance, respect and responsiveness • listening, adapting and being responsive to feedback collected from services, and through evaluation findings. There are also several conditions to support SNAICC Early Years Support's ongoing success as it moves from its pilot phase. These include a clear policy framework and long-term vision, funding certainty, and effective governance arrangements.
Cost-effectiveness	• The unique program that SNAICC Early Years Support presents - the deep network of relationships and the specialist cultural leadership and expertise - leaves few alternatives for achieving the outcomes SNAICC Early Years Support is on track to deliver. • Considerations of cost effectiveness are most usefully centred in efficiency optimisation, and the ways in which the program can grow in value and efficiency over time. • To achieve efficient operation, it is important to recognise high value investments and to ensure resources are allocated efficiently.

Findings from the implementation and impact Sections highlight the elements of SNAICC Early Years Support most closely linked to its overall impact, providing a basis for refining, strengthening, or scaling the model in the future. As part of this, a key consideration in this process is the Program's cost-effectiveness.

4.1 Design features

In considering the early successes of the Program, the evaluation has found several design features that are critical to SNAICC Early Years Support being a trusted intermediary within the ACCO early years sector. These include:

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- a recognition that **high quality working relationships (and trust) with early years services** are the primary avenue through which SNAICC Early Years Support can influence change.
 - The capability and skills of site advisors, time spent with services, and the responsiveness of the SNAICC Early Years Support team are core investments in the early years of implementation.
 - Over the past 6 months, there is evidence that SNAICC Early Years Support staff changes have impacted relationships and trust with early years services (see Section 2.2). While some disruption is expected and SNAICC Early Years Support is implementing measures to mitigate these impact (including sharing relationships across staff), there is a need to prioritise the development, maintaining and deepening of the relationships with early years services.
- a relentless focus on keeping the **needs and voices of ACCOs early years services** at the heart of SNAICC Early Years Support.
 - A key enabler of trust is the centring of all activities and decisions within service need and priorities (above and beyond that of governments, SNAICC or other stakeholders). The program of service delivery is intended of being ‘a service for services, designed by services’, in governance and in practice.
 - In the survey, most services reported that SNAICC Early Years Support aligns well with their needs. However, in consultations a small number of services indicated that, over the past six months, certain aspects of the support provided have not met their expectations or requirements (discussed further in Section 3.2)
 - There is also a consideration into how service voice is an active contributor to the operation of SNAICC Early Years Support – particularly with the shift from State Advisory Committees to Network Meetings. With a small number of services requesting greater involvement and improved communication in the operation of SNAICC Early Years Support (including influencing recruitment of SNAICC Early Years Support staff)
- a delivery program that is built on the **principles of cultural governance, respect and responsiveness**.
 - The importance of the strong cultural foundations in SNAICC Early Years Support are not to be understated and are key to its effectiveness.
 - The opportunities provided by SNAICC Early Years Support for practice and knowledge sharing, community building and advocacy all work to continue to build the strength of culturally strong early years services, and a sense of community and shared purpose and value across the ACCO sector.
 - SNAICC Early Years Support should continue to prioritise the strength of the cultural knowledge of its staff when recruiting. Including, State Directors being based in their respective regions, and professional learning for non-Aboriginal SNAICC Early Years staff.
- **listening, adapting and being responsive to feedback** collected from services, and through evaluation findings.
 - Actively listening, adapting and responding to feedback collected both from early years services but also through evaluation findings are critical in ensuring that the support provided continues to be aligned with service needs and priorities.
 - There is strong evidence that SNAICC Early Years Support has continued to refine the model in line with identified gaps and recommendations for improvement.

4.1.1 Supporting conditions

Beyond the design and delivery of the Program itself, the ability for SNAICC Early Years Support to continue to generate impact in line with what this evaluation has observed it is on track to do, is dependent on several supporting policy conditions being in place.

The design features outlined in the Section above, and key drivers of the early success observed in the Program, stem from the procurement and funding arrangements that supported the Program’s establishment and development.

Short-term funding and funding uncertainty in the past six months of the Program has been observed to negatively impact the ability of SNAICC Early Years Support to support services – including impacting staff

retention, ability to allocate resources, plan effectively for the longer term and ultimately impacted the trust between services and SNAICC Early Years Support. This works against the ambition of government to support a self-determining program, and risks undermining the value of the Program.

The policy foundations that need to be established to support SNAICC Early Years Support's ongoing success as it moves from its pilot phase are:

- **A clear policy framework and long-term vision** for SNAICC Early Years Support in the ACCO early years system. This includes a clear policy framework and long-term vision for the role of an intermediary in supporting ACCOs in lifting child and family outcomes.
- **Funding certainty** to enable strategic resource allocation and planning, ensuring that resources are allocated to address the specific needs of ACCOs and the communities they serve. This would include the development of a resourcing model to link expected outcomes to investment.
- **Effective governance arrangements** to facilitate collaboration, decision-making, and accountability within the ACCO early years system. This includes establishing clear lines of authority, defining roles and responsibilities, and promoting transparent communication and decision-making processes.

It is worth noting that if SNAICC Early Years Support was ceased or reduced, while some impacts generated over the Program period would continue, especially where capabilities in services and leaders have been built, reducing the current support ACCOs receive risks these benefits being quickly lost – or overcome by the issues which rendered the original need for SNAICC Early Years Support.

4.2 Cost effectiveness

Cost-effectiveness refers to the extent to which SNAICC Early Years Support delivers value for money (relative to alternative avenues to achieving the same objectives). In this evaluation, a full, quantified cost-effectiveness analysis has not been undertaken due to the early operation of the Program and limits on data availability. Rather, cost-effectiveness is assessed in relation to the SNAICC Early Years Support budget and its observed effectiveness to date.

As SNAICC Early Years Support has only recently become fully operational across all jurisdictions, the analysis presented here should be considered as preliminary. Evidence is still emerging, and it remains challenging at this early stage to distinguish between costs associated with establishment, service design and relationship building, and those that will represent ongoing service delivery expenses.

4.2.1 SNAICC Early Years Support budget

The SNAICC Early Years Support budget is comprised of funding from NIAA, philanthropic funding as well as State government funding.

Table 4.1: SNAICC Early Years Support expenditure (2025)

	2022-23 (AUD '000s)	2023-24 (AUD '000s)	2024-25 (AUD '000s)	Total (AUD '000s)
National intermediary	\$2,070	\$2,929	\$1,918	\$6,917
NSW intermediary	\$1,527	\$1,028	\$1,745	\$4,300
WA intermediary	\$1,180	\$1,128	\$847	\$3,155
VIC intermediary	\$1,242	\$1,050	\$1,042	\$3,334
Total (AUD '000s)	\$6,019	\$6,135	\$5,552	\$17,706

Source: Deloitte Access Economics, using SNAICC Early Years Support Budget data.

In the 2024–2025 period, a total of 74 services are receiving support through the SNAICC Early Years Support initiative. Representing an average annual investment of approximately \$75,000 per service or \$1,850 per child enrolled at a service supported by SNAICC Early Years Support. In considering the impact of this investment and, therefore, the cost effectiveness, it is important to note that while children enrolled at services supported by SNAICC Early Years Support are the primary beneficiaries, the nature of the benefits generated by the initiative mean that other children also benefit (albeit to a lesser degree).

There are an array of factors that influence the cost associated with SNAICC Early Years Support delivering its support to services. For example, service location (e.g. remoteness), cultural identity (e.g. Aboriginality), and family circumstances (e.g. vulnerability or risk) can significantly affect cost (and budgetary requirements) across jurisdictions. To ensure supports are delivered appropriately and equitably, planning must account for these variations, with SNAICC Early Years Support guiding how funding should be tailored to local circumstances.

4.2.2 The cost effectiveness of SNAICC Early Years Support

While the above budget demonstrates the annual expenditure of SNAICC Early Years Support, to understand how this translates into cost-effectiveness, expenditure needs to be linked with activities, outputs and outcomes.

SNAICC Early Years Support was established in response to the unique and substantial operational challenges faced by ACCO providers, which are considerably greater than those encountered by mainstream early years services. This need remains unchanged, and the evaluation supports that strengthening ACCO capacity, capability, reach and sustainability benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. The evaluation also highlights the broader value in the learnings the mainstream early years sector can take from ACCO delivery in providing holistic and culturally responsive services, learnings which are shared and made increasingly accessible through SNAICC Early Years Support.

The evaluation determined that SNAICC Early Years Support, under the correct conditions, has been effective in supporting ACCO services to deliver high quality, responsive, accessible and culturally strong supports. Further detail on the effectiveness of supports is shown in Section 3, and the need for SNAICC Early Years Support in Section 1.

To fully appraise the value of SNAICC Early Years Support brings, the counterfactual needs to be considered – what outcomes would be observed if SNAICC Early Years Support did not exist? The varied, culturally responsive, and tailored nature of supports offered by SNAICC Early Years Support makes a comparison against other programs quite complex and challenging. Additionally, the unique skillsets and capabilities held by SNAICC Early Years Support teams and staff, including cultural legitimacy and responsiveness, limits the potential that alternative providers could deliver similar services, at scale, with the same effectiveness.

In consultations, most services reported that SNAICC Early Years Support is the only initiative they are aware of that provides the type and depth of support offered by SNAICC Early Years Support. While some similar support is available from local peak bodies in certain jurisdictions, these are limited in scale and scope. The national reach and breadth of SNAICC Early Years Support make it a highly distinct offering, with many services indicating that its cessation would have a significant negative impact.

SNAICC Early Years Support occupies a distinct position in the early years landscape, with no directly comparable substitute. Its role as a community-controlled, culturally grounded intermediary enables it to provide wrap-around support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services. While some mainstream models, such as Early Years Management in Vic, share certain functions – such as governance support, service-quality uplift, or training delivery – SNAICC Early Years Support differs in its national reach, cultural legitimacy, alignment with ACCO principles, and its focus on self-determination and Indigenous-led practice.

In terms of costs, the Victorian Government allocates approximately \$31.2 million annually to support Early Years Management.⁹ There are 59 organisations receiving funding – noting it is unclear the number of services supported by each organisation. This funding supports administrative management, leadership, and quality assurance for early childhood education providers but is not designed to deliver culturally tailored support for Aboriginal services.

By contrast, the SNAICC Early Years Support pilot had a total program budget of approximately \$17.7 million (2022 – 2025). The level of targeted investment reflects the intensive, relational, and culturally embedded nature of SNAICC Early Year Support's work, which provides tools, governance support, and culturally safe capacity building that are not replicated in any other model.

4.2.3 Operating efficiencies

The unique program that SNAICC Early Years Support presents - the deep network of relationships and the specialist cultural leadership and expertise - leaves few alternatives for achieving the outcomes SNAICC Early Years Support is on track to deliver. As such, considerations of cost effectiveness are most usefully centred in efficiency optimisation, and the ways in which the program can grow in value and efficiency over time.

There is emerging evidence that SNAICC Early Years Support is beginning to realise operational efficiencies. This is through refinement and changes over time in response to identified gaps and stakeholder recommendations for improvement (refer to Section 2.4 for further detail).

In addition, total expenditure for the 2024–2025 period is lower compared to the two preceding financial years (see Table 4.1). While this reduction may indicate improved cost-effectiveness or streamlined operations, the specific factors contributing to the decrease are not yet clear. It remains uncertain whether this downward trend in expenditure reflects sustainable long-term efficiencies or is the result of short-term or external factors.

To continue to achieve efficiency in its operations, it is important to:

- **Recognise highest value investments:** It is crucial to identify and prioritise investments that will bring the highest value to services. To ensure that our resources are allocated to supports that have the greatest impact- currently, this is focused on building service leadership. This includes considering factors such as the alignment with service needs, the link to long-term benefits (e.g., children and family outcomes), and the overall resource requirements for each investment.
- **Ensure resources are allocated efficiently:** To achieve cost effectiveness, it is essential to allocate our resources efficiently. This involves making informed decisions about how resources are distributed and utilised across different jurisdiction and supports. There is a need to closely monitor and manage resources, to identify any inefficiencies or areas where resources may be underutilised or misallocated. This allows for necessary adjustments and reallocate resources to areas that require greater support or have a higher potential for generating value.

As SNAICC Early Years Support transitions from pilot and early operations into more mature and ongoing delivery, its cost profile is also expected to shift. However, SNAICC Early Years Support is still evolving, and expansion into new service areas or geographies will influence total delivery costs. Where such growth is guided by clear evidence of need and strong potential for outcomes, it can also enhance cost-effectiveness by leveraging economies of scale.

Several future considerations are presented in Section 5 that may help continue to refine SNAICC Early Years Support to optimise operating efficiency.

⁹ 'Early Years Management', *Victorian Government* (27 June 2025), <https://www.vic.gov.au/early-years-management>

5 Future considerations

This section presents evidence-informed considerations for strengthening and extending SNAICC Early Years Support's impact into the future, with a focus on its transition from pilot to ongoing delivery.

As highlighted throughout this report, emerging evidence indicates that, where key enabling conditions are in place, SNAICC Early Years Support is delivering measurable impacts.

The evaluation is intended to support evidence-based refinements to SNAICC Early Years Support. This section outlines future considerations – grounded in evaluation findings – on how the Program can sustain and further extend its impact, particularly as it transitions from its pilot phase. These considerations focus on potential areas of refinement or extension within the current model to position the Program for ongoing success.

5.1 Positioning SNAICC Early Years Support for success

Based on the evidence gathered through this evaluation, the following focus areas have been identified as priorities for strengthening SNAICC Early Years Support's long-term impact:

- Prioritise delivery of support based on service need.
- Strengthen communication and clarify SNAICC Early Years Support's offering to services – with a particular focus on improving engagement in WA.
- Advance the development of a national specialised team while maintaining strong local, on-the-ground delivery capacity.
- Continue to mitigate personnel risks to ensure stable and consistent service delivery.
- Explore the role of services in governance and shared ownership of the SNAICC Early Years Support model.
- Tailor supports to better meet the needs of mature services while maintaining relevance for newer or less established services.
- Enhance the collection, analysis, and management of quantitative data to inform decision-making.
- Monitor and assess SNAICC Early Years Support's impact over time to guide continuous improvement.
- Consider opportunities for expansion to additional jurisdictions where there is demonstrated need and capacity.

The future considerations discussed in this section seek to build on the key features of the Program established in Section 4. These considerations are assumed to be in the addition to continuation of investment in these central design components.

5.1.1 Prioritise delivery of support based on service need

As outlined in Section 3.2, the support provided by SNAICC Early Years Support is generally well-aligned with service needs. However, a small number of services observed that, in the past six months, the support had been less tailored and responsive compared to previous years.

There is a need to ensure that supports provided are aligned with the needs and expectations of services. There is an opportunity for SNAICC Early Years Support to recalibrate and re-engage with services (particularly as new personnel enter roles) to ensure the supports provided continue to be responsive, relevant, and culturally grounded. This also includes tailoring support to service maturity (see Section 5.1.6). Maintaining and strengthening strong, two-way communication with services will be key to understanding shifting local contexts and emerging priorities. This can be achieved through regular check-ins, collaborative planning, active listening and feedback loops – with locally-based staff and trusted relationships being a key enabling to this.

Moreover, this feedback offers a chance to reflect on and strengthen internal systems for assessing service needs, monitoring satisfaction, and adapting delivery. Ensuring support remains flexible and grounded in genuine partnership with services will help uphold the Program's core goal: empowering communities to lead the way in early childhood development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

5.1.2 Strengthen communication and clarity SNAICC Early Years Support's offering to services

Overall, there is a high level of understanding of SNAICC Early Years Support across stakeholders (see Section 2.1). However, understanding often reflects the stage of operation in each jurisdiction. In WA – where SNAICC Early Years Support is less established – there is a clear opportunity to strengthen communication and articulation of the support available and clarify what SNAICC Early Years Support teams can offer.

To address this, existing resources could be adapted (for example, the menu of services) to the WA context. This adapted resource should provide a detailed list of example activities and areas of support, while reinforcing flexibility and adaptability remain core features of the offering.

In NSW and Vic – where Program delivery is more established – the focus should be on maintaining and reinforcing understanding. This includes ensuring new service staff are well informed about the Program's role, capabilities, and available supports, and highlighting examples of how it has contributed to quality and sustainability in the past. By continually communicating and tailoring the offering to service needs, the Program can maximise engagement and ensure services are leveraging opportunities to seek assistance as they arise.

5.1.3 Advance the development of a national specialised team while maintaining strong local, on-the-ground delivery capacity.

As discussed in Section 2.3.3, SNAICC Early Years Support has progressed the opportunity of realigning its governance structure – with the aim for a specialised national team in combination with continued local presence.

This work should focus on developing national roles within SNAICC Early Years Support that are focused on particular areas of expertise - allowing for the expertise to be delivered on a needs basis and utilising efficiencies associated with the scale of national delivery. Examples of national roles and resources could include a national "resource bank", communications and events, workforce support, compliance support, human resource support or financial support.

However, importance of local presence cannot be overstated, with it being a core requirement to relationship building, understanding the needs of services, and being responsive to these needs. Therefore, there should still be teams (including local leaders) based locally in each jurisdiction – to support understanding of the jurisdiction, services, and relationships.

5.1.4 Continue to mitigate personnel risks to ensure stable and consistent service delivery

Critical to the success of SNAICC Early Years Support is the strength and quality of its relationships with services. These relationships are foundational to the Program's ability to provide culturally safe, responsive, and trusted support. Services often associate their connection to SNAICC Early Years Support with specific individuals, rather than with the organisation. While this reflects the depth of trust and rapport built by individual team members, it also creates a degree of vulnerability, particularly when staff turnover occurs, or capacity is stretched.

As discussed in Section 2.3, SNAICC Early Years Support has already taken steps to mitigate risks associated with personnel changes. Moving forward, this work should continue with a deliberate focus on ensuring that relationships are not solely reliant on one individual. This includes:

- embedding a team-based approach where service engagement is shared among a couple local team members
- introducing services regularly to national team members who can provide strategic or additional support (discussed further in Section 5.1.3).

Creating shared visibility and continuity across the local and national teams will strengthen service confidence, minimise disruption from staff turnover, and reinforce the perception of SNAICC Early Years Support as an organisation-wide partner rather than a service tied to individuals.

5.1.5 Explore the role of services in governance and shared ownership of the SNAICC Early Years Support model

As the Program transitions out of its pilot phase, it is important to establish appropriate mechanisms for service ownership and program governance. Central to this transition is a commitment to embedding structures that uphold the principles of self-determination, accountability, and genuine power-sharing between SNAICC and the services it supports. This means ensuring that services are not only informed but are actively engaged in shaping the direction, priorities, and operational decisions of the Program.

To achieve this, it is critical to foster the conditions that enable meaningful and informed participation. This includes creating space for services to contribute to decisions that affect them directly, building their governance capability, and embedding processes that respect the time, knowledge, and cultural authority of the services.

Strengthening mechanisms like Network Meetings would reinforce the Program's commitment to shared decision-making and ensure that the people delivering support reflect the priorities and expectations of the services they serve.

Network meetings provide a practical forum through which services can contribute to collective learning, raise shared concerns, and co-design future directions. Although Network Meetings were not formally evaluated in this update, several services highlighted their potential as a platform for deeper engagement. For example, a few Vic early years services expressed a desire to have input into SNAICC Early Years Support staffing decisions - such as identifying the desired attributes, values, or cultural knowledge expected of SNAICC Early Years Support Directors and Advisors. While services do not currently influence staffing decisions, this feedback points to a strong interest in being more meaningfully involved in shaping the qualities and competencies of those in key roles.

5.1.6 Tailor supports to better meet the needs of mature services while maintaining relevance for newer or less established services

As SNAICC Early Years Support continues to evolve and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education services, it is important to acknowledge that the current support model – while designed to meet the needs of all services – may not be equally effective across different stages of service maturity. There is emerging evidence that more mature early years services often find the support less beneficial compared to newer or emerging services (see Section 3.2). These services typically have established processes, experienced staff, and stronger internal capacity, reducing their reliance on foundational backbone support.

The SNAICC Early Years Support team also noted that providing high-value, strategic support to mature services is inherently more complex than supporting less established services. This is due to the nature of their needs, which often require specialist expertise and a different mode of engagement. Given this, SNAICC Early Years Support should consider tailoring its approach to better support mature services through long-term, proactive engagement, with a focus on areas such as governance, advanced leadership development, and policy influence. This has implications for the current model: to effectively engage with mature and/or more established services, a different resourcing approach would be required. This could include recruiting or contracting specialist advisors with targeted expertise, building a pool of subject-matter-experts, and ensuring adequate resourcing for longer-term, strategic service support.

Such an approach could enable mature services not only to sustain high-quality delivery, but also to play a more active role in mentoring emerging services, contributing to sector-wide knowledge sharing and influencing systemic change. Further specialisation and investment in high-value activities – leveraging national resources and expertise – would also create efficiencies while maintaining quality and impact of SNAICC Early Years Support's assistance.

5.1.7 Enhance the collection, analysis, and management of quantitative data to inform decision-making

It is recognised that, over the past four years, SNAICC Early Years Support has made progress towards improving its data collection activities – including collecting data from services and the development of data dashboards. The refinements are still ongoing, particularly as it relates to the quality and accuracy of this

Therefore, refinements to existing data will ensure it is sufficient for SNAICC Early Years Support to provide a value add for services through reducing data and administrative asks from government and others in relation to sector planning, compliance or advocacy; sharing back with the sector and particular services data informed insights and improvement strategies; comprehensive data for impact analysis for the purpose of monitoring, evaluation; or the introduction of new tools and processes to enable services to better engage with and utilise their own data.

While the additional burden placed on services will remain a consideration for SNAICC Early Years Support, there is an opportunity to centralise data support, management, and sovereignty, and potentially reduce the pressure on services. An improved data management system will support reporting, transparency, and development of an enhanced evidence base. Further, there is an opportunity for SNAICC to improve data collection through regular collection mapped against reporting requirements.

This will be most effective if SNAICC Early Years Support can build a value proposition for early years services to provide data and support services – for example, reducing their administrative burden, improving data-based guidance and supports across the sector and using data for policy making.

5.1.8 Monitor and assess SNAICC Early Years Support's impact over time to guide continuous improvement

SNAICC Early Years Support should continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of the supports provided – to ensure the Program remains appropriate and responsive to service needs, and to build an increasingly robust evidence base as to the value of these supports. This could include regular internal monitoring, the development of a review plan, and improved data collection at the service level (discussed further above).

This will assist in communication and understanding of the benefit of SNAICC Early Years Support and, critically, would inform potential refinements. There should be consideration of the perspective of families and communities to understand the longer-term impacts of the SNAICC Early Years Support, which has not been a feature of this evaluation.

5.1.9 Consider opportunities for expansion to additional jurisdictions where there is demonstrated need and capacity

In line with the need outlined in Section 1.2.2 of this report, ACCOs face similar challenges across all of Australia's jurisdictions, with no evidence of similar programs of support operating to fill these gaps. SNAICC Early Years Support, under the correct conditions, has evidenced its ability to provide localised support, with national backing, across different jurisdictions. There is evidence of demand in other jurisdictions for a program like SNAICC Early Years Support to exist – including South Australia and Queensland.

Nationally, there are significant advantages to having a single and centralised point of support across jurisdictions (in combination with regional on-the-ground personnel). A unified approach across states and territories can create opportunities for economies of scale, leading to increased efficiencies and streamlined processes. A truly national program has the potential to enhance resource allocation, reduce administrative overheads, and foster consistent quality across services – for example, through the development of centralised resources and guidance. Moreover, a national program has the potential to align more effectively with broader reform priorities, supporting cohesive policy implementation and driving systemic change across the early years sector.

5.2 Conclusion

SNAICC Early Years Support has made significant progress in bringing together, empowering, and strengthening a historically underrepresented sector. By fostering strong, trust-based relationships, it has enhanced sector cohesion and created new pathways for effective policy influence and development. This more connected ACCO early years sector has, in turn, generated critical opportunities to work collectively

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with governments to improve outcomes for children, families, and communities in a coordinated, culturally strong way.

Evidence collected throughout the evaluation indicates that, under the right enabling conditions, SNAICC Early Years Support is progressing toward – and in some jurisdictions already achieving – its intended outcomes as outlined in the theory of change and, importantly, as underpinned by service need. To date, this impact is most visible in enhanced capability, improved service quality, and strengthened sustainability, with clear flow-on benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Ceasing or significantly reducing the support services receive from SNAICC Early Years Support would risk undoing these benefits – potentially leaving the sector in a weaker position than before the pilot began, undermining trust, and eroding confidence in the commitment to ACCO services.

The evaluation identifies several priorities to position the Program for long-term success including strengthening governance, managing personnel risks, optimising resources, enhancing data collection and monitoring, and tailoring supports for different stages of service maturity.

Notably, beyond Program's future impact is closely tied to the broader policy and funding environment and the conditions under which it operates. As SNAICC Early Years Support considers a transition from its pilot phase to ongoing delivery, there is a need for clear and stable policy foundations, a long-term vision for the role of an intermediary in the ACCO early years sector, sustainable funding arrangements, and governance structures that can support its long-term aspirations. Together, these measures will be critical to ensuring the Program continues to deliver significant and sustained positive outcomes.

Appendix A: List of services

As discussed in Section 1, SNAICC Early Years Support involves the establishment of a national unit and three state-wide bodies in Western Australia (WA), New South Wales (NSW), and Victoria (Vic).

SNAICC Early Years Support has 47 services in NSW, 13 in WA and 14 in Vic. These services and their locations are outlined in Table A.1. The locations range from major city areas (e.g. Campbelltown, NSW) to very remote areas (e.g. Halls Creek, WA).

Table A.1: Location and remoteness of participating services

Service name	Location	Remoteness
NSW		
Allira Multi-Purpose Gathering Association	Dubbo	Inner Regional
Awabakal Community Preschool	Glendale	Major Cities
Awabakal Preschool - Wickham	Wickham	Major Cities
Ballina Aboriginal Child & Family Centre (ACFC)	Ballina	Inner Regional
Birrelee Multifunctional Aboriginal Childrens Service	Tamworth	Inner Regional
Collarenebri Preschool Inc	Collarenebri	Remote Australia
CommunityXChange Ltd	Mt Druitt	Major Cities
Cullunghutti Early Learning Centre	Nowra	Inner Regional
Cullunghutti Preschool	Nowra	Inner Regional
Dalaigur Pre-School & Children's Services	Kempsey	Inner Regional
Doonside Aboriginal Child and Family Centre (ACFC)	Doonside	Major Cities
Gainmara Birrilee Preschool	Brewarrina	Very Remote
Giiguy Gamambi Preschool	Nambucca Heads	Outer Regional
Girrawong Preschool	Purfleet	Inner Regional
Goodooga Preschool Inc	Goodooga	Very Remote
Griffith Wiradjuri Aboriginal Pre-School	Griffith	Outer Regional
Gujaga Multifunctional Aboriginal Children Service Aboriginal Child Care	La Pouse	Major Cities
Gujaga Preschool	La Pouse	Major Cities
Gummyaney Aboriginal Corporation	Grafton	Inner Regional
Jarjum Centre Inc	Ballina	Inner Regional

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Darambil ACFC	Brewarrina	Very Remote
Kiah Pre-School	Moree	Outer Regional
Koolyangarra Aboriginal Preschool Corporation	Walgett	Outer Regional
Koori Kindermanna Preschool	Glenroy	Inner Regional
Kulai Preschool Aboriginal Corporation	Coffs Harbour	Inner Regional
Little Yuin Preschool	Central Tilba	Outer Regional
Mindaribba Local Aboriginal Land Council Preschool	Metford	Major Cities
Minimbah Preschool and Primary School Aboriginal Corporation	Armidale	Inner Regional
Murrin Bridge Preschool	Lake Cargelligo	Remote Australia
Nanima Preschool	Wellington	Outer Regional
Ngallingnee Jarjum Tabulam & District Community Preschool Inc	Tabulam	Inner Regional
Nikinpa Aboriginal Child and Family Centre	Toronto	Major Cities
Nikinpa Preschool	Toronto	Major Cities
Noogaleek Children's Centre	Berkeley	Major Cities
Oorunga Wandarrah Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services	Tharawal / Campbelltown	Major Cities
Scribbly Gum Dalai	South Kempsey	Inner Regional
Towri Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services	South Bathurst	Inner Regional
Walanbaa Dhurruli Early Learning Centre	Lightning Ridge	Remote Australia
Waranwarin Early Learning Centre	Minto	Major Cities
Winanga-Li Early Learning and Care Service	Gunnedah	Outer Regional
Winanga-Li Preschool	Gunnedah	Outer Regional
Winnangay Pre-School	Berkeley	Major Cities
Wiradjuri Community Child Care Centre	Wagga Wagga	Inner Regional
Wunanbiri Preschool	Alexandria	Major Cities
Yalbillinga Boori Day Care Centre	Cowra	Inner Regional
Yawarra Community and Child Care Centre	Sydney	Major Cities
Yenu Allowah Aboriginal Child and Family Centre	Mt Druitt	Major Cities

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Western Australia		
Baya Gawi Children & Family Centre	Fitzroy Crossing	Very Remote
Moorditch Gurlongga Assoc. Inc	Thornlie	Major Cities
Halls Creek Child and Parent Centre / Little Nuggets	Halls Creek	Very Remote
Jalygurr Guwan Aboriginal Corporation Childcare	Broome	Remote
Kununurra Child and Parent Centre	Kununurra	Very Remote
Wanyanyakem Taam – Early Learning Centre (ELC)	Warmun	Very Remote
Child and Parent Centre Swan	Stratton	Major Cities
Gurlu Gurlu Maya Child Parent Centre – One Tree Child and Parent Centre Roebourne	Roebourne	Very Remote
HIPPY, Nyamba Buru Yawuru	Broome	Remote
Stepping Stones Kununurra	Kununurra	Very Remote
Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation	South Hedland	Remote
Ngunga Women's Group ¹⁰	Derby	Very Remote
Broome Youth and Families Hub, Broome Primary Kindilink, HIPPY, Our Mob, Cable Beach Primary School Kindilink ¹¹	Broome	Remote
Victoria		
Berrimba Child Care Centre	Echuca	Inner Regional
Bubup Wilam Aboriginal Child and Family Centre	Thomastown	Major Cities
Bung Yarnda / Lake Tyers Early Learning Centre	Lake Tyers	Outer Regional
Dala Yooro Kindergarten - GEGAC	Bairnsdale	Outer Regional
Gunai Lidj Child Care Centre	Morwell	Inner Regional
Gyndarna Preschool ¹²	Dareton	Outer Regional
Koori First Steps Pre-School - Mungabareena Aboriginal Corporation (Wodonga)	Wodonga	Inner Regional
Lulla's Children & Family Centre	Shepparton	Inner Regional

¹⁰ Note that on some SNAICC Early Years Support documents, WA is noted as having eight services. Ngunga Women's Group has three locations, which would take the total number of services to eight if counted separately. However, we are currently considering Ngunga Women's Group as a single organisation.

¹¹ Note that SNAICC Early Years Support reports on the Broome Youth and Families Hub, Broome Primary Kindilink, HIPPY, Our Mob, Cable Beach Primary School Kindilink as one organisation.

¹² Technically speaking, this service is in NSW. However, Dareton / Mildura borders the Murray River which divides NSW and Victoria. As such, despite being 'in between' the two states, it is under the jurisdiction of SNAICC Early Years Support Victoria.

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Murray Valley Aboriginal Cooperative Early Learning Centre	Robinvale	Outer Regional
Perridak Burrong Early Learning Centre (Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-operative Limited)	Brown Hill	Inner Regional
Yappera Children's Service	Thornbury	Major Cities
Yirram Burrong Early Learning Centre (Ballarat & District Aboriginal Co-operative Limited)	Sebastopol	Inner Regional
Yaluk Burrong Early Learning	Ballan	Inner Regional
Djimbaya Kindergarten (Bendigo & District Aboriginal Co-operative)	Bendigo	Inner Regional

Source: SNAICC, Social Ventures Australia, ABS Remoteness Area Correspondence Tables

Appendix B: Evaluation framework

B.1 Evaluation domains and questions

The evaluation focus includes both the implementation and impact of SNAICC Early Years Support with a greater focus on the impact of SNAICC Early Years Support in 2025.

Evaluation domain	Evaluation questions
Implementation	
Alignment and uptake	- How, and to what extent, are the intermediaries used by services and other stakeholders? - How, and to what extent, do the intermediaries respond to local needs and context? - Are there any changes that could be made to encourage greater engagement?
Fidelity and quality	To what extent are the learnings feeding into continual improvement?
Sustainability	- To what extent is there trust in the intermediary model and bodies? - What conditions are required for the ongoing success of the intermediaries?
Impact	
Appropriateness	To what extent does the design of the intermediaries reflect the priorities of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years sector?
Effectiveness	- To what extent are the intermediaries realising their intended objectives? - Are there any unintended outcomes or impacts observed to be generated by the intermediaries? - In what contexts are the intermediaries more likely to create impact?
Equity	To what extent are outcomes realised across all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children, families and communities?

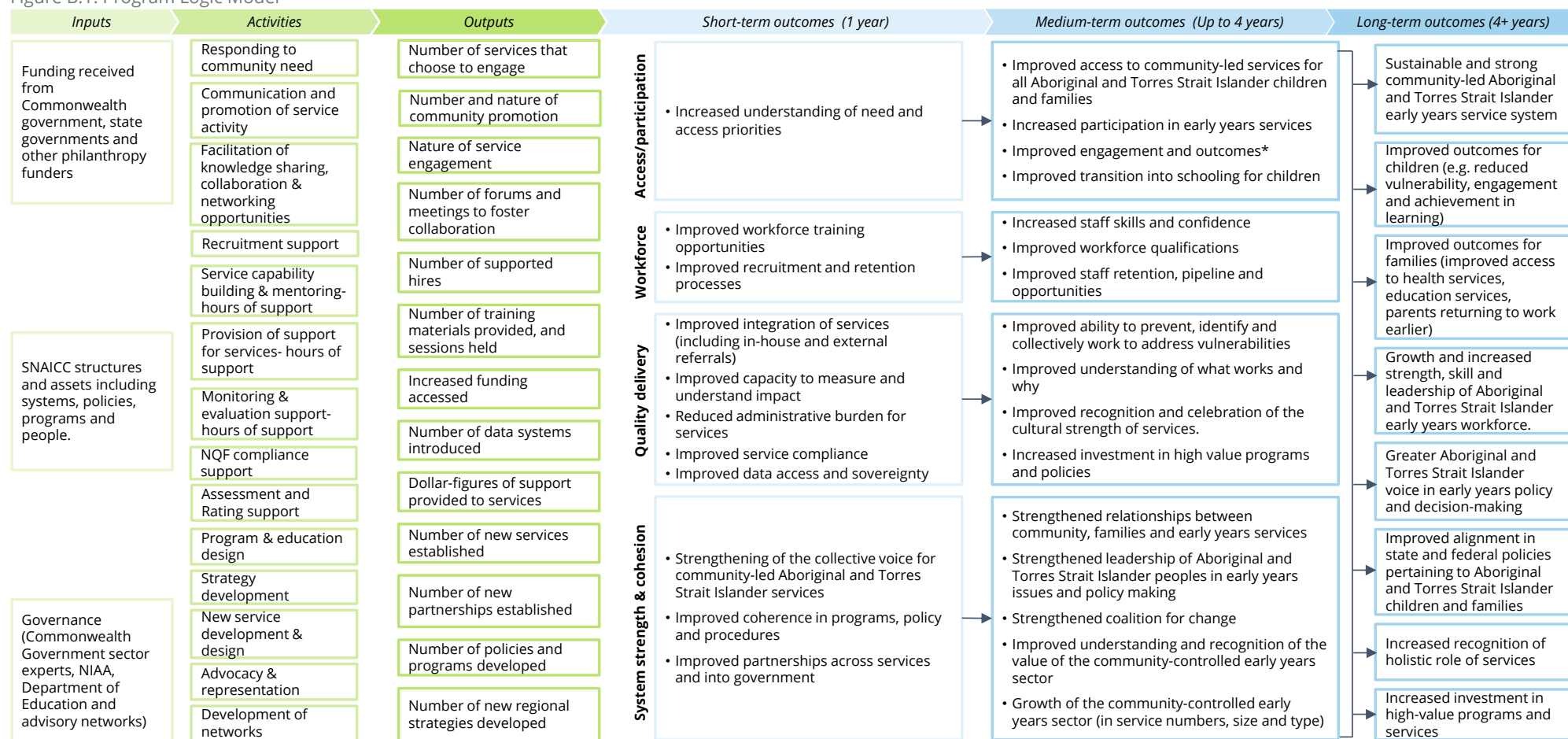
B.2 Program Logic Model

The evaluation team and SNAICC have designed a Program Logic Model (PLM) for the purposes of this evaluation.

The PLM provides an overview of what a program is intending to achieve in the short, medium and long term. It outlines the program inputs, activities, and outputs, and how these will drive the targeted change. Figure B.1 outlines the key components of a PLM.

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Figure B.1: Program Logic Model



Source: Deloitte Access Economics

Appendix C: 2025 Early Years Service Survey

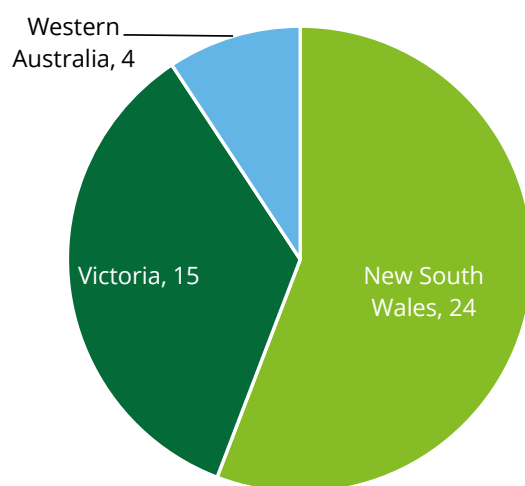
The 2025 Early Years Service Survey was distributed to staff working at participating services via an email. It was open from 26 May 2025 for all jurisdictions – SNAICC Early Years Support State Directors let services know that the survey was coming and encouraged staff to complete it. The survey was closed on 7 July 2025.

Overall, there were 43 respondents across the three jurisdictions. Note that the summary presented in this Appendix only considers the quantitative questions in the survey. The survey also included several free-text questions which are listed in the full questionnaire (see Appendix D).

C.1 Demographic questions

NSW had the greatest number of responses with 24 (5 in 2024), 15 responses from Victoria (12 in 2024), and 4 from WA (3 in 2024).

Chart C.1: Respondent jurisdiction



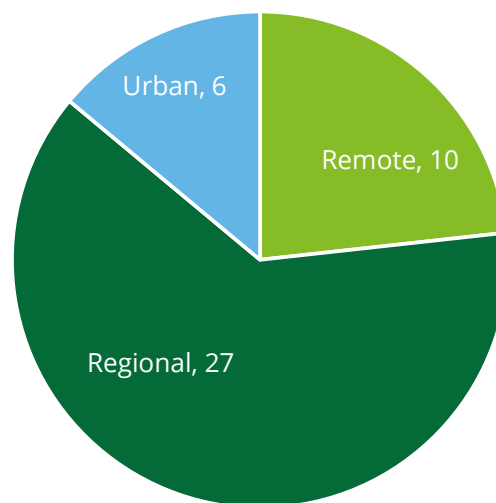
Note: n = 43. Q – Which state is the Early Years Service which you represent located in?

Source: Deloitte Access Economics 2025 Early Years Service survey.

As expected, most respondents were based in regional services, forming 62 per cent of all responses (70 per cent in 2024) (see Chart C.2). Six respondents were from urban centres (five in 2024), and ten were from a remote service (an increase from one in 2024).

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Chart C.2: Respondent Regionality

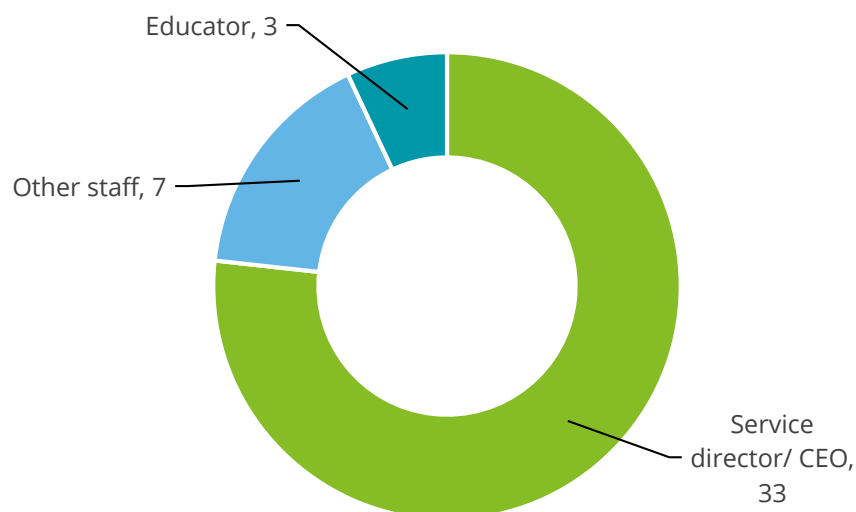


Note: n = 43. Q - Is the early years service which you represent located in a remote, regional or urban area?

Source: Deloitte Access Economics 2025 Early Years Service survey.

In the 2025 survey, over 75 per cent of the respondents were service directors, with 33 (an increase from nine in 2024). Seven respondents selected 'Other staff' (eight in 2024). The 'Other staff' category comprised of teachers, education leaders, assistant directors and managers. Only three respondents were educators (three in 2024), as shown in Chart C.3).

Chart C.3: Respondent role



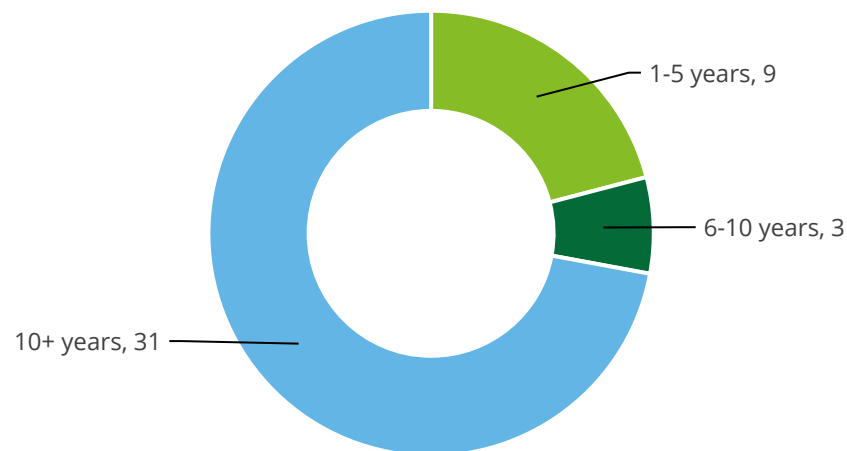
Note: n = 43. Q - What is your role at the service?

Source: Deloitte Access Economics 2025 Early Years Service survey.

Most respondents of the survey were in services that have been established for over a decade (72 per cent) of respondents. Only 12 respondents were at services that were operational for 10 years or less.

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Chart C.4: Years of operation



Note: n = 43. Q – How many years has your service been operational?

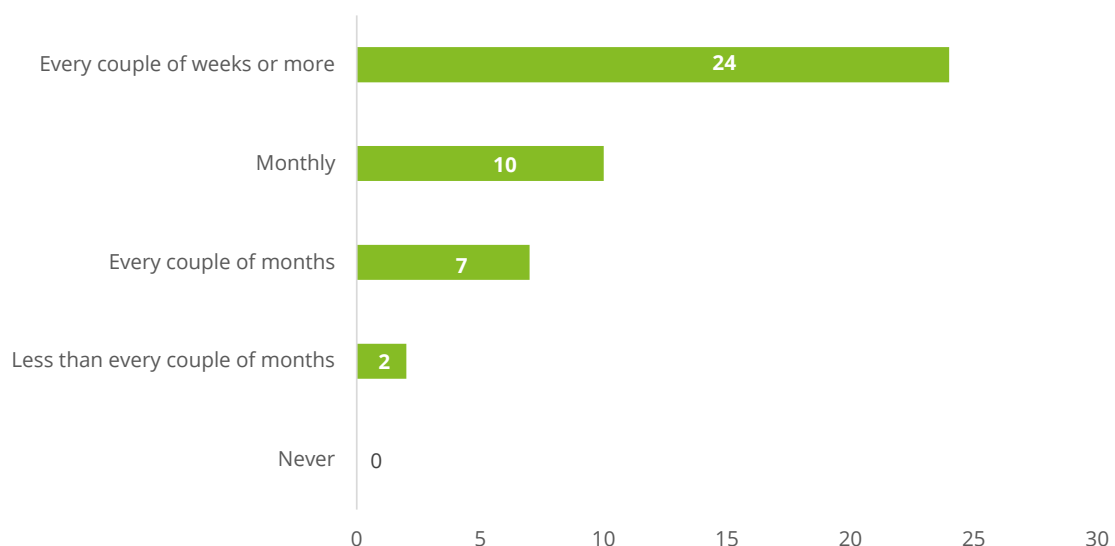
Source: Deloitte Access Economics 2025 Early Years Service survey.

C.2 Engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support

This block of questions comprised of Likert-scale and rating-based questions which asked respondents about aspects of their engagement and understanding of SNAICC Early Years Support.

Respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they engaged with SNAICC Early Years Support. The majority had engagement every couple of weeks or more, as shown below in Chart C.5. None of the respondents selected that they had never engaged with SNAICC Early Years Support.

Chart C.5: Frequency of engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support



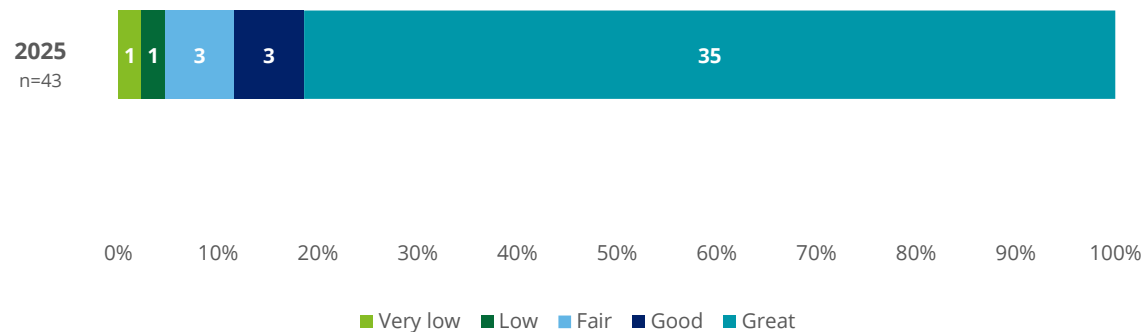
Note: n = 43. Q – How often has your service interacted with SNAICC Early Years Support, over the past year?

Source: Deloitte Access Economics 2024 Early Years Service survey.

Following this, they were also asked to rate the quality of their engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support. Most respondents felt that the quality of engagement was 'great', as shown below in Chart C.6.

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Chart C.6: Quality of engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support

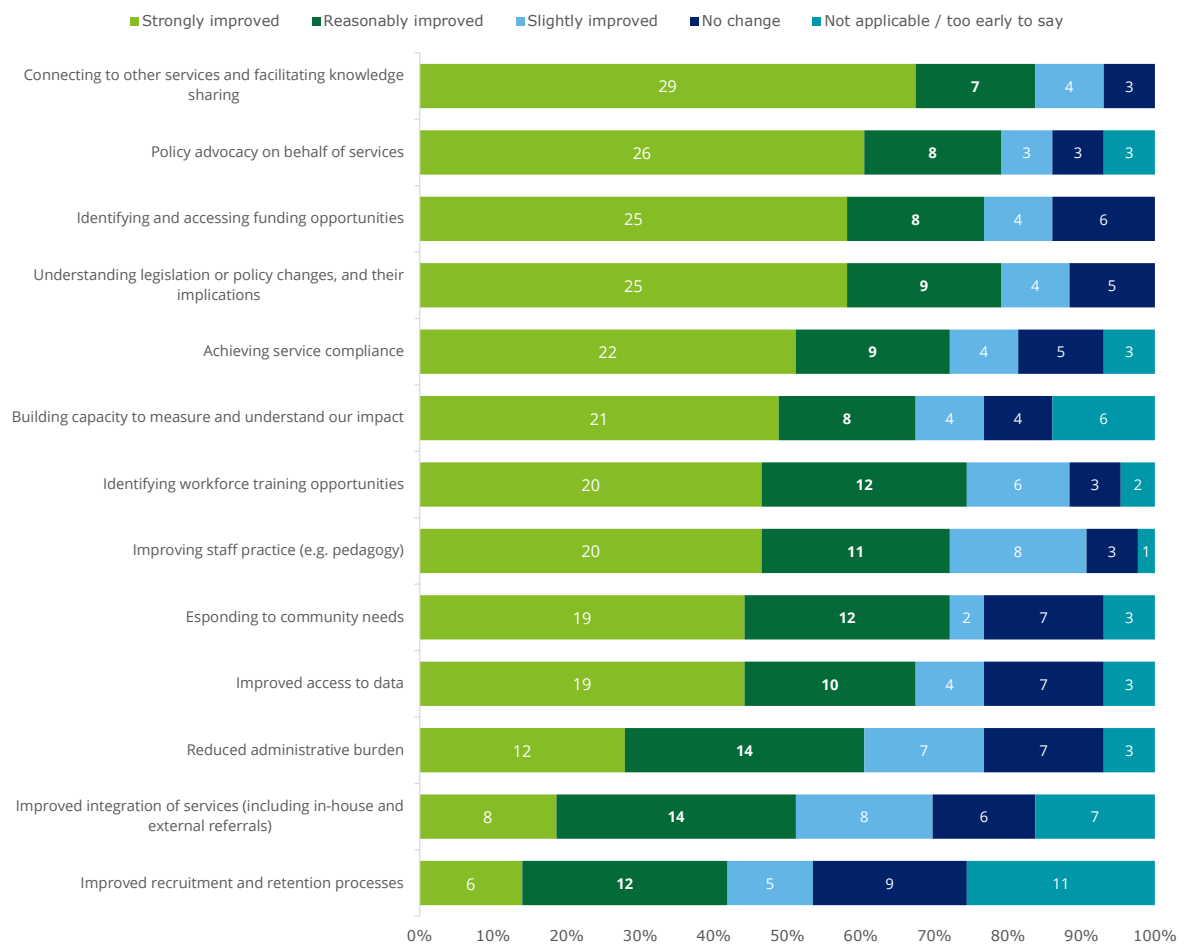


C.3 Impact of SNAICC Early Years Support on services

In this section, respondents were asked about the extent to which the services extended by SNAICC Early Years Support meet the needs and preferences of their service. Respondents were first asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that their service had benefitted from engaging with SNAICC Early Years Support in 2025, in certain areas, responding on a five-point scale from ‘no change’ to ‘strongly improved’ (Chart C.7 below). There was also an option to indicate that an area was not applicable, or that it was too early to say whether it had been improved.

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Chart C.7: Areas where services had benefited from engaging with SNAICC Early Years Support (sorted by greatest number of ‘significantly improved’ and ‘strongly improved’ responses)



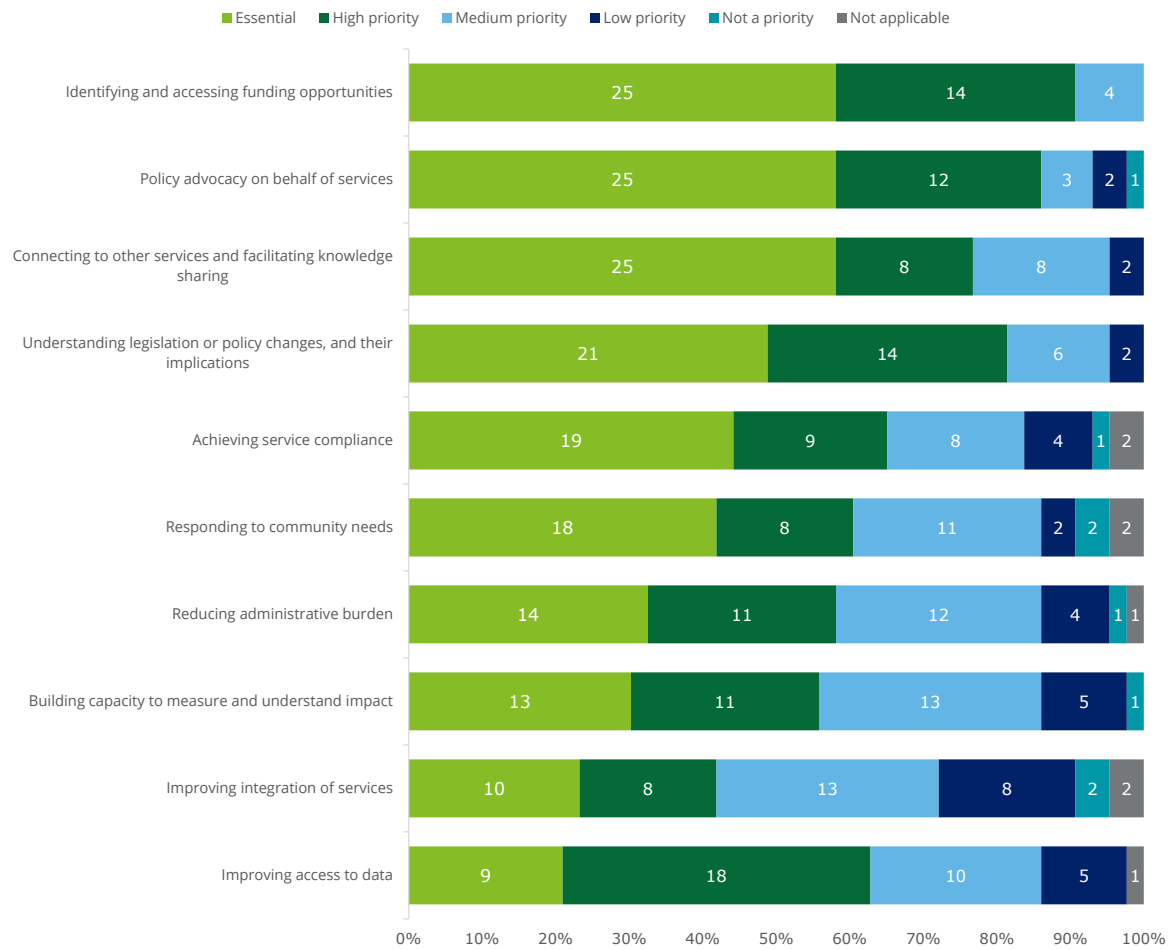
Note: n = 43. Q – Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements regarding how your service has benefitted from engaging with SNAICC Early Years Support this year.

Source: Deloitte Access Economics 2025 Early Years Service survey.

Secondly, respondents were asked about the areas where they would like more support. This was a five-point scale from ‘not a priority’ to ‘essential’, plus an option for ‘not applicable’ (Chart C.8).

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Chart C.8: Priority areas where services would like further support from SNAICC Early Years Support (sorted by greatest number of 'essential' responses)



Note: n = 43. Q – Please indicate the extent to which the following are priority areas with which your service, would like further support from SNAICC Early Years Support.

Source: Deloitte Access Economics 2025 Early Years Service survey.

Appendix D: Early Years Service Survey 2025 Questionnaire

D.1 2025 Early Years Service Survey questions

The questions within the 2025 Early Years Service survey are included in Table D.1 below.

Table D.1: 2025 Early Years Service Survey questions

About your service

In these first few questions we will ask some questions about the early years service you are a part of.

Which state is the early years service which you represent located in?

New South Wales

Victoria

Western Australia

Is your early years service located in a remote, regional, or urban area?

Remote

Regional

Urban

What is your role at the service?

Service director/CEO

Educator

Other staff [text box]

How many years has your service been operational for?

1-5 years

6-10 years

10+ years

Your engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support

How often has your service interacted with SNAICC Early Years Support, over the past year?

Every couple of weeks or more

Monthly

Every couple of months

Less than every couple of months

Never

What do you typically engage with SNAICC Early Years Support for?

[Compulsory free text]

How would you rate the quality of your interaction with SNAICC Early Years Support this year?

Great
Good
Fair
Low
Very low
Not applicable

If you would like to elaborate on your rating, please do so below:

[Optional free text]

To what extent do you agree which the following statements regarding your service's experience with SNAICC Early Years Support this year:

SNAICC Early Years Support's initiatives and support are responsive to this service's needs.
This service has benefitted from SNAICC Early Years Support.
SNAICC Early Years Support provides support that is not offered by others.
Children and families at this service have benefitted from this service engaging with SNAICC Early Years Support
SNAICC Early Years Support will provide ongoing benefits to this service in the future
SNAICC Early Years Support has a good relationship and built trust with this service
SNAICC Early Years Support provides culturally appropriate and safe resources and services

Strongly disagree
Disagree
Somewhat disagree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat agree
Agree
Strongly agree

The impact of SNAICC Early Years Support on your service

This Section will ask you about the extent to which the services extended by SNAICC Early Years Support meet the needs and preferences of your service.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements regarding how your service has benefitted from interactions with SNAICC Early Years Support this year:

My service has benefitted from...

- ...identifying workforce training opportunities.
 - ...improved recruitment and retention processes.
 - ...improved integration of services (including in-house and external referrals).
 - ...building capacity to measure and understand our impact.
 - ...responding to community needs.
 - ...reduced administrative burden.
 - ...improving staff practice (e.g. pedagogy)
 - ...achieving service compliance.
 - ...improved access to data.
 - ...identifying and accessing funding opportunities.
 - ...understanding legislation or policy changes, and their implications.
 - ...policy advocacy on behalf of services
 - ...connecting to other services and facilitating knowledge sharing
-

Commercial-in-confidence

Strongly improved
Reasonably improved
Slightly improved
No change
Not applicable/too early to say

If possible, please provide one or two examples of how your service has benefitted from engagement with SNAICC Early Years Support, this year:

[Optional free text]

If support from SNAICC Early Years Support were to end, what impact would that have on you and your service?

[Compulsory free text]

To what extent are the following priority areas with which your service would like *further support* from SNAICC Early Years Support:

My service would benefit from support in...

- ...identifying workforce training opportunities.
- ...improving recruitment and retention processes.
- ...improving integration of services (including in-house and external referrals).
- ...building capacity to measure and understand our impact.
- ...responding to community needs.
- ...reducing administrative burden.
- ...achieving service compliance.
- ...improving access to data.
- ...identifying and accessing funding opportunities.
- ...understanding legislation or policy changes, and their implications.
- ...policy advocacy on behalf of services
- ...connecting to other services and facilitating knowledge sharing

Not a priority
Low priority
Medium priority
High priority
Essential
Not applicable

Feedback and submission

If you have any stories about SNAICC Early Years Support that you would like to share, please feel free to do so below:

[Optional free text]

Do you have any other comments or feedback you would like to add?

[Optional free text]

Limitation of our work

General use restriction

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