



#### **Acknowledgement**

The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country across the continent and islands and their continuing connections to land, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and Elders past and present and emerging. We acknowledge and respect their continued connection to Country, care for community and practice of culture for generations uncounted.

We also acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, parents, families and kinship carers who are the custodians of caring practices that have kept children safe and thriving for more than 65,000 years.

#### **Artwork**

#### **Guiding Stars**



#### **Artist attribution**

#### **Guiding Stars description**

This vibrant artwork, titled "Guiding Stars," symbolises the unity and shared decision-making embodied by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership.





The central motif of interconnected patterns and shapes represents the coming together of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, families, and government representatives, all working harmoniously to ensure the well-being and cultural richness of the youngest children. The bright, swirling elements signify the Guiding Stars, an ancestral reminder of the wisdom and strength that guide the community in making decisions for a brighter future. Surrounding footprints depict the journey of collaboration and continuous support from the community, creating a nurturing environment where every child can thrive and remain connected to their heritage. This piece is a celebration of the ECCDPP's commitment to fostering early childhood development and closing the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

#### Artist bio

Tovani Cox is a proud Bunuba, Gija and Karajarri woman from the Kimberley region of Western Australia. Born in Broome, Tovani is passionate about art and design and often her inspiration is from her long standing commitment to self-determination and rights of first nations people and communities. She was predominantly raised in Noongar country in Perth, and since early 2017 has been living in Melbourne on Wurundjeri country, and travels home to the Kimberley as often as she can to connect with kin and country. Tovani has qualifications in Digital Graphic Design from RMIT University and wants to pursue further skills and training using art as therapy and healing.

#### **Artist attribution**

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#### Design attribution

Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership logo and creative elements designed by Coolamon Creative.





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## A Message from the Co-chairs

As Co-chairs of the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP/the Partnership), we are pleased to present the Partnership's second annual report. This report details the achievements and progress of the Partnership in its second year of operation, from December 2023 to December 2024.

The Partnership's activities in 2024 have focused on building on our foundations to embed best practice in shared decision-making and drive policy reform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Whilst we know more needs to be done and further efforts are required by the Partnership to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, we are proud of what the Partnership has been able to achieve in its second year of work.

This year, the Partnership made its first recommendations to the Joint Council on Closing the Gap (Joint Council). The 7 recommendations, building on the Partnership's Year 1 Priorities, were all accepted by Joint Council and are now being progressed across jurisdictions. Making recommendations to Joint Council is a primary function of the Policy Partnership, so this was a key milestone for the ECCDPP in elevating our priorities. We look forward to working with members to progress implementation of these recommendations and developing our second set of recommendations for Joint Council consideration.

In 2024 we finalised our Year 1 Priorities, which are the 6 key actions that our Partnership identified and committed to in 2023. In February 2024, the Australian Government announced the establishment of a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People (National Commissioner). This was a Year 1 Priority for the Partnership and an ongoing community campaign that the ECCDPP was able to support, in collaboration with the Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031 (Safe and Supported) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group.

This year, we also advanced the Partnership's Year 1 Priorities on early childhood education and care (ECEC) by publishing two major reports, the <u>Funding Model Options</u> for Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) Integrated <u>Early Years Services</u> report and the <u>Evidence on Optimal Hours of Early Childhood Education and Care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children</u> review.

These research projects provided the Partnership the opportunity to engage with the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Early Childhood Education and Care. In response, the Inquiry recommended that governments should consider funding arrangements for ACCOs delivering ECEC and other integrated early years services through a process of shared decision–making. It also supported the





Partnership's recommendations that ACCOs require a needs-based and sustainable funding model, which recognises their knowledge and expertise to deliver the ECEC priorities of their communities. To improve access and affordability to ECEC, in its report *A path to universal early childhood education and care*, the Productivity Commission also recommended removing the current Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Activity Test to increase access to subsidised ECEC. In response, the Australian Government announced in the 2024–25 Mid-Year Economic Financial Outlook (MYEFO) it is replacing the CCS Activity Test from January 2026. Families caring for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child will be eligible for 100 hours of subsidised ECEC per fortnight, for each child, lifting the current automatic baseline entitlement from 36 to 100 subsidised hours<sup>1</sup>. This reform closely aligns to the ECCDPP research outcomes and priorities progressed by the Partnership.

For Year 2, the ECCDPP expanded its priority areas of work with a focus on collaboration across the Closing the Gap policy partnerships, Safe and Supported governance and Peak organisations to drive reform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families through joined-up policy recommendations and implementation advice for Ministerial consideration. We look forward to continuing these important collaborations as the work of the Partnership progresses. The Partnership agreed to a further set of 16 priorities, building on the Year 1 Priorities and members' aspirations for the future of the ECCDPP. The priorities are grouped across 6 themes covering ACCO funding for services delivering ECEC and child and family safety services, workforce reform, research, and connection and collaboration across Closing the Gap and relevant governance bodies.

The Partnership also developed a communications and engagement strategy to further strengthen community voices in the ECCDPP's shared decision-making. As part of our communications work, we commissioned a custom artwork from talented Bunuba, Gija and Karajarri woman and artist Tovani Cox. The 'Guiding

Families will still be eligible to receive 100 hours of subsidised ECEC per fortnight if they meet participation requirements or have a valid exemption.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> On 13 February 2025, the Early Childhood Education and Care (Three Day Guarantee) Bill 2025 passed both Houses of Parliament and it received Royal Assent on 20 February 2025. Under the 3 Day Guarantee:

All CCS-eligible families will be entitled to at least 72 hours of subsidised ECEC per fortnight, per eligible child, regardless of their activity levels.

Families caring for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child will be eligible for 100 hours of subsidised ECEC per fortnight for each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child.



Stars' artwork symbolises unity and shared decision-making and depicts the journey of the Partnership and its commitment to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive and remain connected to culture and community.

The Partnership has made significant progress but continues to face challenges implementing shared decision-making between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments. Governments continue to hold significantly more power than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and navigating this tension continues to be a focus for the Partnership. Members are also aware that the Partnership operates within a context where the scale and pace of reform needed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can be slow when working within government systems and government members continue to look for opportunities to transform those systems. Our upcoming ECCDPP evaluation and the Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap will guide our work to address these challenges in 2025.

As the Partnership approaches the end of its initial three-year term, we want to thank all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and government members for their time and commitment not only in 2024, but across the life of the ECCDPP. Our Partnership is a relationship, and it is the openness, honesty, and dedication of our members that has enabled the ECCDPP to make the progress it has to date. We would also like to thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations and other stakeholders who have contributed to our work. The Australian Government's announcement in December 2024 to extend the ECCDPP for another 3 years to 2028 is a testament to the commitment of our members to working in partnership and the strong foundations we have built together.

This year, our Partnership meetings have taken place across Australia. We acknowledge and thank the Traditional Owners who welcomed us onto their lands: the Palawa, Yagera and Turrbal, Ngunnawal and Ngambri, and Kaurna Peoples.

Finally, we thank Joint Council for engaging with the Partnership's annual report and look forward to submitting more recommendations for Joint Council decision.

Kind regards,

#### Catherine Liddle and Kylie Crane

Co-chairs of the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership





## **Executive Summary**

The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (the Partnership/ECCDPP) was established in August 2022 under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) to drive transformative action to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The Partnership supports shared decision-making between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and Australian governments under Priority Reform 1 of the National Agreement, in recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a right to self-determination and are the experts on matters concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The purpose of the Partnership is for governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties to develop a joined-up approach to policy that ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy, supported to thrive with strong families and proud in culture. The scope of the Partnership includes outcomes 2, 3, 4, 12 and 13 under the National Agreement, which span Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander maternal and child health, early childhood education, childcare, child safety and children and families (out-of-home care and family violence)<sup>2</sup>.

The Partnership held 4 in-person meetings across Australia in its second full calendar year of operation. During this time, the Partnership focused on building its strong foundation for shared decision-making, leading collaboration, and progressing its priorities for policy reform in the early years. The Partnership worked towards 6 priority areas for action in its first year and has further agreed to 16 new priorities to take forward in 2024-25 and beyond. The priorities reflect the Partnership's remit and its intention to lead transformation of government, ways of working and join up approaches and initiatives to deliver holistic policy reform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Key achievements during 2024 include:

- Commissioned and delivered 2 pieces of independent <u>research</u> including:
  - Funding Model Options for ACCO Integrated Early Years Services
     Report; and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Note, Closing the Gap Outcomes 2, 3 and 4 relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-5 years and Outcomes 12 and 13 to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people aged 0-17 years.





- Evidence on Optimal Hours of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Literature Review.
- Provision of both reports to inform the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into ECEC, with the Partnership's engagement and advice informing the recommendations of the Productivity Commission's final report. In response, the Australian Government announced in the 2024-25 MYEFO it is replacing the current CCS Activity Test from January 2026. Families caring for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child will be eligible for 100 hours of subsidised ECEC per fortnight, for each child, lifting the current automatic baseline entitlement from 36 to 100 subsidised hours.
- Collaborated with Safe and Supported governance to drive progress towards the establishment of a fully empowered and legislated National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children, which began operations in January 2025 under an appointed Acting Commissioner.
- Delivered the Partnership's first set of recommendations to Joint Council on Closing the Gap (Joint Council), all of which have been accepted and are being progressed by governments.
- Developed a Probity Framework to support the Partnership in shared decision-making by enhancing transparency, impartiality and accountability.
- Commissioned research to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Evidence Guidance Framework, to be completed in late 2025.
- Engaged with the Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, including reporting by governments to the Partnership on their progress in implementing the Review's findings and recommendations.
- Strengthened the promotion of the Partnership and its work to communities and across government, through a communications and engagement strategy for the Partnership, including commissioning of a custom artwork

   'Guiding Stars' by Tovani Cox.
- Agreed 16 priorities and developed a Year 2 Workplan to guide the activities and progress of the Partnership's next year.





In 2025, the Partnership will continue to identify and progress priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through shared effort and decision-making. This will include making recommendations to Joint Council.





# Part 1 – Working in Partnership: About the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership

#### **Background**

The ECCDPP was established in August 2022 and is one of 5 Policy Partnerships established under the National Agreement. The Partnership enables a joined-up approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood care and development policy, with a focus on:

- ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (0-5 years) are born healthy and remain strong, nurtured by strong families and thrive in their early years; and
- ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's safety and care in family and addressing the impacts of child protection and out-of-homecare (OOHC) systems on children's health, wellbeing and development<sup>3</sup>.

The Partnership gives effect to the core commitment of Priority Reform 1: formal agreements and shared decision–making, by establishing a mechanism for shared decision–making and policy development between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community representatives. The establishment of the Partnership recognises that previous ways of developing and implementing policy targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have not worked and a new approach is required. The shared decision–making model underpinning policy partnerships acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are experts in their own lives and respects the cultural authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to develop and decide policy in equal partnership with government. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the Partnership represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the country, providing an essential connection between the Partnership and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, families and children it serves.

The National Agreement sets out the principles of partnership and shared decision-making in Priority Reform 1. These principles are reflected in the Partnership's membership and working arrangements and are detailed in the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people aged between 0-17 years.





<u>Agreement to Implement</u>, which sets out its objectives, deliverables and overarching governance arrangements.

The Partnership is Co-chaired by SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (SNAICC) and the Australian Government Department of Education. SNAICC is the non-government national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and a national member of the Coalition of Peaks (CoP).

To enact the partnership model set out in the National Agreement, membership of the Partnership consists of CoP members and independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, as well as representatives from all Australian governments.

The Partnership has 11 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. These members are a mix of elected representatives from the CoP and independent representatives with specialist knowledge of the early childhood care and development sector. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the Partnership are deeply connected to their communities and carry the aspirations and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families on the ground, into Partnership meetings.

At the Australian Government level, the Department of Education represents the jurisdiction, supported by a partner each from the Department of Social Services and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA). To ensure both education and community services portfolios are represented on the Partnership, all government members across each jurisdiction are accompanied by an additional partner. To maintain equal representation in decision–making between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, governments parties are represented by one vote per jurisdiction.

A full list of members and partners for 2024 is at Appendix A.

## **Partnership Operations**

The Partnership is supported by a Co-secretariat with functions shared by SNAICC and the Department of Education, which further embeds the shared decision-making model.

To support the establishment of the Partnership, the Australian Government committed \$10.2 million over 3 years from 2022-25 in the October 2022-23 Budget. This includes \$5.02 million over 3 years for SNAICC to Co-chair the Partnership, take part in the Co-secretariat for the Partnership, facilitate engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, and conduct research.





The Department of Education oversees the remainder of the Partnership's funding, with:

- \$2.8 million to manage the Co-secretariat, meet administration costs and develop whole-of-government policy advice to support the Partnership;
- \$2.0 million to support research and engagement under the direction of the Partnership; and
- \$0.44 million to support meeting costs as well as an evaluation of the Partnership after 3 years.

In the Mid-Year Economic Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) Budget 2024-25, the Australian Government provided \$11.4 million to extend the Partnership over 3 years, from 2025-26 to 2027-28. This will enable the Department of Education and SNAICC to continue their roles as Co-chair and Co-secretariat of the Partnership. The extension also continues the research fund that enables the Partnership to commission research.

In pursuing its objectives in 2024, the Partnership has continued to draw on its research funding, which supports the ECCDPP to advance its identified policy reform priorities. The ECCDPP Research Fund provides \$2 million from 2022–25 for the Partnership to commission research and engagement activities to support informed and evidence-based advice and recommendations. This funding provisionally sits with the Department of Education, for use as directed by the consensus of Partnership members.

The first piece of research commissioned through the ECCDPP Research Fund was the ECCDPP Priority 1 ACCO funding model research project, undertaken by SNAICC and published in May 2024. As part of its second-year priorities, the Partnership has also commissioned an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Evidence Guidance Framework through the Research Fund. Further detail is provided on the Evidence Guidance Framework in Part 3 of the annual report under ECCDPP Priority 5A.

The second source of research funding is administered by SNAICC as part of SNAICC's grant funding for its role as Partnership Co-chair and Co-secretariat. This research funding supports SNAICC as the lead Peak to strengthen the evidence base and investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research and data projects to inform discussions. SNAICC used this funding to commission the ECCDPP Priority 2 systematic evidence review into optimal hours of ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, which was released in June 2024.





### **Making Recommendations to Joint Council**

The primary function of the Partnership is to make recommendations to Joint Council which reflect member consensus on actions to improve early childhood care and development outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. These recommendations are non-binding and may have either a national, jurisdictional or local focus.

In July 2024, the Partnership delivered its first set of recommendations to Joint Council. The policy recommendations had a strong evidence base that built on the Partnership's research and work across government to progress potential policy reform opportunities. The Partnership made a total of 7 recommendations, which were all accepted<sup>4</sup>.

Recommendation	Action from Joint Council	Progress
1. The delivery and publication of the 2023 Annual Report and Three-Year Strategic Plan.	Noted	The 2023 Annual Report was published in August 2024.  The Strategic Plan will be published as of February 2025.
2. The finalisation of the first two commissioned research projects of the ECCDPP:  a. Funding Model Options for ACCO Integrated Early Years Services.  b. Evidence review on optimal hours of early childhood education and care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.	Noted	Both reports have been finalised and published as of July 2024:  • Funding Model Options for ACCO Integrated Early Years Services Final Report.  • Evidence on optimal hours of ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children.
3. That jurisdictions develop implementation advice in response to the findings of the research reports commissioned by the ECCDPP and report progress through the	Agreed	Priorities 2A and 2B were agreed to by the ECCDPP in June 2023 to progress this recommendation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> One government party abstained from agreeing to one of the Joint Council recommendations. The government party has since indicated their support for the intent of this recommendation through other governance channels.





Recommendation	Action from Joint Council	Progress
implementation planning reports and the Partnership's Annual Reports to Joint Council.		
4. That the Australian Government partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in line with the principles of shared decision-making, in the establishment and process for the government appointment of a legislated, independent and empowered National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People (National Commissioner). The National Commissioner should be established within the lifespan of the Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023–2026, to drive progress against Closing the Gap Outcomes 2, 3, 4, 12 and 13 and the cross-cutting priority area of disability.  To support this work, all jurisdictions will continue to commit to implementing the minimum requirements for independent, effective and empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioners or similar that is being progressed as an action under Action 7 of the Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023–2026 <sup>5</sup> .	Agreed	The establishment of the National Commissioner was announced on 4 October 2024 and is operational as of 13 January 2025.
5. That jurisdictions develop coordinated responses to reviews and inquiries relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families with disability in partnership with community, relevant peaks and the sector, in line with the Partnership's	Agreed	Priority 4B was agreed to by the ECCDPP in July 2024 to progress this recommendation, led by the Department of Social Services (DSS) and First

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The WA Government's position on this recommendation is 'supported in principle noting the governance for this matter remains within the Safe and Supported Framework.





Recommendation	Action from Joint Council	Progress
cross-cutting remit and with reference to the <u>Disability Sector Strengthening Plan</u> .		Peoples Disability Network (FPDN).
6. That the Commonwealth develop actions to implement the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families review, with other jurisdictions to provide advice on relevant recommendations of the review.  That all jurisdictions report on progress through the implementation planning process and the Partnership's Annual Reports to Joint Council.	Agreed	In August 2024, DSS finalised the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families (SASF) Part 2 project. The outcomes and recommendations of both SASF Part 1, which resulted in SNAICC's Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families report, and SASF Part 2 are informing the design of future DSS grant policy and processes.
		Priority 1A agreed to by ECCDPP in June 2024 will progress this recommendation.
7. That jurisdictions collaborate on improving the transparency and effectiveness of reporting on Closing the Gap in partnership with the Policy Partnerships, drawing on the lessons learned through the ECCDPP.	Agreed	Ongoing reporting processes for jurisdictions to update the Partnership on progress towards the ECCDPP Priorities have been established. The ECCDPP is working with NIAA to link into existing reporting on the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and Targets relevant to the ECCDPP, including reporting on progress to implement the recommendations of the Productivity Commission Review into Closing the Gap.  ECCDPP Co-chairs are
		ECCDPP Co-chairs are also working with other





Recommendation	Action from Joint Council	Progress
		Policy Partnership Co- chairs to improve governance processes via the Policy Partnership Co-chairs forum.

Table 1. First Recommendations to Joint Council

### **Scope of Partnership**

The Partnership's remit encompasses several sectors focusing on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families across early childhood education and, childcare, maternal and child health, child safety, and children and families (out-of-home-care and family violence). While these are the key focus areas of the Partnership, there are many social determinants that impact a child's early care and development journey, and these determinants align with the intersecting areas of justice, disability and housing. The Partnership seeks opportunities to work collaboratively across these areas, where appropriate and in line with its annual workplans.

Wherever possible, the Partnership is leveraging existing governance structures, such as the Education Ministers Meeting and Joint Council, to socialise and progress its priorities. The Partnership also has oversight of or strong linkages with the following:

- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy (NATSIECS);
- Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan (SSP);
   and
- Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031(Safe and Supported).

The Partnership's scope focuses on actions that will deliver progress towards the Closing the Gap Outcomes 2, 3, 4, 12 and 13<sup>6</sup>. The ambition for the Partnership and the focus of its activities is to drive improvements across these Outcomes through

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Note, Closing the Gap Outcomes 2, 3 and 4 relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-5 years and Outcomes 12 and 13 to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people aged 0-17 years.





a joined-up approach to policy recommendations and actions at the community level, including further partnering with the other Policy Partnerships to progress priorities.

The table below details these Outcomes and related Targets, as well as the status (as at July 2024).

	National Agreement on Closing the Gap Outcome and related Target	National Indicators (July 2024 data compiled by the Productivity Commission)
Outcome 2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong.  Target:  By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91%.	On track to be met Nationally in 2021, 89.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies born were of a healthy birthweight.  This is an increase from 88.8% in 2017 (baseline year).
Outcome 3	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years.  Target:  By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95 per cent.	On track to be met Nationally in 2023, 101.8% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the YBFS age cohort were enrolled in a preschool program.  This is an increase from 76.7% in 2016 (baseline year).
Outcome 4	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years.  Target:  By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55 per cent.	Worsening Nationally in 2021, 34.3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children commencing school were assessed as being developmentally on track in all five AEDC domains.  This is a decrease from 35.2% in 2018 (baseline year).
Outcome 12	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not over-represented in the child protection system.	Worsening Nationally in 2023, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children





	National Agreement on Closing the Gap Outcome and related Target	National Indicators (July 2024 data compiled by the Productivity Commission)
	By 2031, reduce the rate of over- representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent.	aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care was 57.2 per 1,000 children in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.  The 2023 rate is below the rate in 2021 (57.6 per 1,000 children) but it is an increase from 54.2 per 1,000 children in 2019 (baseline year).
Outcome 13	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and	No data available since
	households are safe.	the baseline year
	By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero.	Nationally in the baseline year, 2018-19, 8.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females aged 15 years and over experienced domestic physical or face-to-face threatened physical harm.

Table 2. Closing the Gap Outcomes

## **Ways of Working**

In 2024, the Partnership continued to refine its ways of working, both internally and in engagement beyond the ECCDPP. Co-chairs and the Co-secretariat have prioritised developing strong engagement and support processes for members to promote collaboration, build consensus and ensure transparency in the lead up to meetings to enable the Partnership to have robust discussions. This includes distributing papers at least two weeks in advance of meetings for members to review, where possible, holding separate pre-briefs and debriefs for government members and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members to caucus, and advancing the work of the Partnership out-of-session where possible to build momentum outside of the quarterly meetings.

The Co-secretariat teams at SNAICC and the Department of Education work together closely to ensure every piece of work is developed and delivered collaboratively. ECCDPP materials are drafted, reviewed and finalised jointly, as are decisions related to planning meetings. In 2024, the Co-secretariat has also





prioritised building engagement with the Co-secretariats of other Policy Partnerships to progress shared priorities and areas of work across forums.

The ECCDPP has also engaged with the broader Closing the Gap oversight and accountability mechanisms, in particular, the Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Members welcomed the Final Report as an opportunity to continue to improve ways of working. This included government members reflecting on the need to continue to work to change internal processes and policies that may present barriers to shared decision—making and self–determination. For example, government members have worked to streamline approval processes so that the ECCDPP's recommendations can be more quickly considered by Joint Council.

The Department of Education has also shown flexibility in its approach to commissioning research to support data sovereignty under Priority Reform Four. The Department of Education worked with SNAICC to commission research on behalf of the Partnership. This has meant that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and intellectual property could be held by an ACCO (rather than owned by a government department), while still allowing the Department of Education to use the research on behalf of the ECCDPP. In addition, the Department of Education and SNAICC are progressing the ECCDPP Probity Framework, a resource that will assist the Partnership in having strong probity practices within shared decision-making and the commissioning of projects from the research fund.

At its core, the Partnership is a relationship. As the ECCDPP matures, it has become a more effective forum for shared decision-making by establishing strong, collaborative relationships between members and building a shared understanding and commitment to the Partnership's work across membership and the agencies and organisations they represent. Holding regular meetings in person and creating space for relationship building between members has been critical to creating a forum where members can respectfully challenge each other and work together through difficult issues.

In 2024, the ECCDPP prioritised supporting members at every level to engage with and drive the work of the Partnership and will continue to do so moving into 2025.





## Part 2 - Year 2: Building on Our Foundations

The focus of the Partnership's second year has been to build on the solid foundations for shared decision-making established in year one and drive opportunities for collaboration with other Closing the Gap Policy Partnerships and Peak organisations and to drive reform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families through joined-up policy recommendations and implementation advice for Ministerial consideration. Under the Agreement to Implement, the Partnership's objectives are to:

- identify reforms to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to achieve their potential in the early years, to set them up for long-term success
- conduct or commission research, data analysis or reports to contribute to the development of policy reforms across the early childhood care and development sector
- identify opportunities to work more effectively across governments, the Coalition of Peaks and community organisations
- support efforts to implement the National Agreement, including harnessing the Priority Reforms to enact change and support community-led initiatives
- enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, communities; and organisations to negotiate and implement agreements with governments to support Closing the Gap.

#### **Key Developments and Achievements**

In its second year of work, the ECCDPP progressed a number of activities, including funding independent research to build an evidence base grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and family perspectives and the achievement of key priorities. The Partnership has also been able to bring a coordinated national focus to issues and priorities. While the Partnership has faced systemic challenges, its achievements have shown that working in partnership to coordinate the efforts of members to work around barriers and achieve change even in new or challenging policy environments.

In 2024, the Partnership celebrated the achievement of one of its key priorities, the establishment of a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People. In February 2024, the Australian Government announced the establishment of a National Commissioner role. The ECCDPP





played an important role in the establishment of the National Commissioner, alongside Safe and Supported leadership, by creating a forum where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership could build a shared understanding with governments about the importance of an independent Commissioner role. The ECCDPP also acknowledges the many years of advocacy from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and service sectors recommending a National Commissioner as the most effective and urgent action from Government to address over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care and youth detention.

The National Commissioner commenced operations on 13 January 2025, with Ms Lil Gordon, a Ngemba woman, operating as the Acting Commissioner until the formal appointment process is finalised. The establishment, acting appointment, and commitment to introduce primary legislation for the National Commission is a breakthrough achievement, reflecting the strength of community advocacy as well as the scope of the ECCDPP as a mechanism to progress change in partnership. Success against this priority was made possible by genuine partnership at the ECCDPP and between the Partnership and Safe and Supported governance. The path to the establishment of the National Commissioner highlights the strength of shared decision-making and the ECCDPP in driving action on community-led priorities.

Part of the Partnership's role is to commission independent research building the evidence-base of early childhood care and development policy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families that the ECCDPP and the system at large can draw on in decision-making. In 2024, the Partnership published two commissioned research projects, the <u>Funding Model Options for ACCO Integrated Early Years Services Report</u> and the <u>Evidence on Optimal Hours of ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Literature Review</u>.

The Funding Model Options for ACCO Integrated Early Years Services Report was developed by SNAICC, with support on economic modelling and financial viability analysis from Deloitte Access Economics. SNAICC also contracted dandolopartners and Dr Jessa Rogers to lead an evidence review and conducted interviews and engagements with ACCOs and government representatives to inform the report. Based on mixed methods data, consultation and analysis, the report recommended the implementation of a dedicated ACCO Early Years Service Model for funding reform. The model proposed by the report delivers on the principles of certainty, control, reliability, responsiveness and administrative simplicity that support the best outcomes for ACCOs and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities they support. The report made a total of 7 recommendations that would support a successful ACCO Early Years Service Model across jurisdictions.





The ECCDPP also commissioned dandolopartners to develop a literature review of the evidence on optimal hours of ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, which was published in July 2024. The review shows that high-quality and culturally safe early learning services support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in their self-regulation, language and cognition, and wellbeing. These positive outcomes were particularly consistent for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who begin attending ECEC at age 3, and accessing more hours of early learning was generally associated with better developmental outcomes. Both the ACCO Funding Model Report and the Evidence on Optimal Hours of ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children Literature Review formed the basis of the ECCDPP's Joint Council Recommendation 3, to develop implementation advice in response to the findings of these research reports. The research reports have also informed the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into ECEC, with the final report recommending flexible, needs-based funding and support models for ECEC services to support inclusion (Recommendation 2.3), removing the CCS Activity Test to ensure families can access at least 30 hours of quality ECEC per week (Recommendation 6.1), and dedicated funding arrangements for ACCOs determined through shared decision-making (Recommendation 7.7) $^{7}$ .

In the 2024-25 MYEFO, the Australian Government announced it is replacing the CCS Activity Test from January 2026. Families caring for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child will be eligible for 100 hours of subsidised ECEC per fortnight, for each Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child, lifting the current automatic baseline entitlement from 36 to 100 subsidised hours <sup>8</sup>. The Partnership will continue to build on the findings of these reports in its third year, guided by the commitment to these priorities as ECCDPP Priorities 2A and 2B (explained further in Part 3). These priorities will keep the ECCDPP focused on progressing the implementation of the findings of these research projects to deliver tangible changes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and the ACCOs that support them.

As has been highlighted throughout the annual report, the work of the ECCDPP requires strong and consistent engagement with the organisational systems and

https://budget.gov.au/content/myefo/download/myefo2024-25.pdf.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Productivity Commission 2024, 'A path to universal early childhood education and care: Inquiry report – volume 1'. Retrieved from:

https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/childhood/report/childhood-volume1-report.pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Commonwealth of Australia 2024, 'Budget 2024-2025: Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2024-25', p. 10. Retrieved from:



broader Closing the Gap architecture that it sits in. In 2024, the Partnership engaged with our fellow Policy Partnerships through the Co-chairs Forum (held twice this year), collaboration at the Co-secretariat level on shared priorities, and inviting Co-chairs of other Partnerships to present at ECCDPP meetings to share learnings and opportunities. Connection between our Partnerships and the other mechanisms of Closing the Gap is essential for developing holistic policy responses and making the most of our resourcing and impact.

The ECCDPP also worked with the NIAA and Coalition of Peaks to streamline approval processes with Joint Council to progress work and build a stronger network of relationships in the system we operate in. The Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap has also been a point of engagement for the Partnership, with the final report provided to Joint Council in February of this year. The Partnership has continued to consider the findings of the Review, with government members providing updates on their jurisdictions' responses and progress on implementing the recommendations of the Productivity Commission. The Partnership will continue to engage with the Partnership Working Group and Joint Council. The ECCDPP achieved some significant process milestones in 2024. In July, the Partnership made its first set of recommendations to Joint Council (see Table 1 of this report), which were accepted. Having Australian governments and the relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives agree to the direction of the Partnership's work demonstrates the quality of the recommendations made and the effectiveness of the ECCDPP's processes.

The Partnership also developed a Probity Framework to support transparent and impartial shared decision-making at the ECCDPP, due to be finalised in early 2025. The Probity Framework ensures that the Partnership upholds transparent and accountable processes and equips Co-chairs, the Co-secretariat and members with practical strategies to identify and manage probity risks as they arise. The Probity Framework is also being used to inform other shared decision-making forums and partnerships to support ethical decision-making underpinned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing.

This year, the ECCDPP also commissioned a consortium led by Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP), the Jumbunna Institute and Onemda Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing to deliver an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Evidence Guidance Framework. The project will build a shared understanding between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led services, communities and governments on what is understood as 'evidence' in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led child and family support services. It will contribute to reform in how governments consider evidence and data in their work with Aboriginal and Torres





Strait Islander people, communities and organisations. Work on the Evidence Guidance Framework is currently underway, with a final report expected in November 2025.

Given the significant progress against the Partnership's Year 1 priorities, in 2024 members agreed to refresh the ECCDPP's focus with a new set of priorities. These priorities were led by the Peaks and Independent member caucus, ensuring community voice and leadership in the direction of the ECCDPP. Sixteen new priorities were agreed by members, which are detailed further at Part 3. Through the shared decision-making process, government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members worked collaboratively to agree to these priorities. These priorities will guide the Partnership's work going forward.

In December 2024, the Australian Government announced funding to extend the ECCDPP for another 3 years to mid-2028. This extension is reflective of the progress the Partnership has made over its initial three-year term and a testament to the achievements of the ECCDPP to date, whilst recognising there is still essential work we need to do to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families to thrive. Moving forward, the Partnership will continue to develop its best practice in shared decision-making and drive reform that holds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their wellbeing at the centre.

#### **ECCDPP Meetings**

The Partnership convened 4 in-person meetings during 2024. The in-person nature of meetings has helped to foster connections and build trust between the government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. With these relationships strong, members can work through barriers to negotiation and progress to decision-making points more quickly. In year 2, these relationships have continued to grow, and the Partnership has continued to demonstrate its capacity to engage in frank and difficult discussions.

Each meeting begins with a joint presentation from the government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives of the jurisdiction where the meeting is being held, grounding members in the purpose of the work and how it is playing out across the country.

The Partnership has also invited outside stakeholders to observe shared decision-making in action and present on work that has direct relevance to the Partnership priorities. This has included presentations from the Co-chairs of the Languages Policy Partnership on their work to date, the Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) and the Australian National University (ANU) on their key findings towards developing a comprehensive measurement framework for the Priority Reform indicators. The Partnership has also heard a presentation from the





Productivity Commission on their preliminary recommendations from the Inquiry into ECEC draft report.

A summary of the outcomes for each of these 4 meetings, along with other key documents, is available on the <u>Department of Education</u>'s and <u>SNAICC</u>'s websites. High-level summaries of Meetings Five to Eight are below:

- Meeting Five, 31 January–1 February 2024 (nipaluna, Hobart, palawa Country): The meeting took place at the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre at piyura kitina, with discussions held against the backdrop of the local Aboriginal Children's Centre and the surrounding Country. The meeting objective was to discuss the Partnership's draft recommendations to Joint Council and the pathway for approval. Progress against the Year 1 Priorities was also a focus, with members noting the latest updates and progressing decision points. The Partnership heard updates on the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into ECEC, the Probity Framework, and shared understandings of the Closing the Gap architecture. During a Partnership Health Check, Members reflected on the need to speed up reforms to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- Meeting Six, 30 April-1 May 2024 (Meanjin, Brisbane, Yuggera and Turrbal Country): The Partnership was welcomed to Yuggera and Turrbal Country with reflection on enduring connections to the Maiwar (Brisbane River), flowing just outside the meeting venue. The meeting objectives were to agree to new priorities for Year 2 and provide final updates on the Year 1 priorities. This included identifying five key themes for the new priorities and agreeing to finalise the specific priorities out-of-session. The NIAA, ANZSOG and ANU presented the key findings of their project to develop a comprehensive measurement framework that intends to measure and track progress against the Priority Reform indicators.
- Meeting Seven, 24–25 July 2024 (Canberra, Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country): The meeting took place at the Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation and opened with a smoking ceremony to welcome members to Ngunnawal Country. The meeting objectives were to finalise the ECCDPP Priorities for Year 2 and discuss the Partnership's strategic approach to collaboration. The Co-chairs of the Languages Policy Partnership presented on the work of their partnership and opportunities for collaboration with the ECCDPP. Members agreed that government members and partners would provide the Partnership with progress updates on the implementation of the Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap moving forward.





• Meeting Eight, 11-12 November 2024 (Tarntanya, Adelaide, Kaurna Country): Meeting Eight was held on beautiful Kaurna Country, where members were welcomed by Uncle Mickey O'Brien. The meeting objective was to consider the progress against the ECCDPP Year 2 Priorities and governments' responses to the Productivity Commission Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The Partnership discussed the process for developing the 2024 Annual Report and agreed to an approach to the independent evaluation of the ECCDPP.

#### **Year 2 Workplan**

To support the objectives of the Partnership and guide the actions and activities of the second year (2024-25) of the ECCDPP, the Partnership agreed to a Year 2 Workplan that contained 11 strategic and procedural actions (see the <u>ECCDPP's Year 2 Workplan Summary</u>).

A table outlining each of the 11 actions, their completion status, and progress to date, is below.

Action	Progress to date
Action 1:	Status: Ongoing
Meet quarterly to progress	<b>Progress:</b> The Partnership held Meetings Seven, Eight, and Nine
policy and research priorities	between July 2024 and March 2025, with Meeting Ten
that have been considered	scheduled for July 2025. Each meeting agenda includes items
and agreed to by the	focused on the ECCDPP Priorities and reporting on progress
Partnership.	against them.
Action 2:	Status: Completed
Make recommendations to	<b>Progress:</b> The Partnership delivered its first set of
Joint Council for all	recommendations to Joint Council in July 2024 and will work
Governments to take	towards developing a second set of recommendations for
tangible action to improve	Joint Council consideration, drawing on the Partnership's
early childhood and	priorities.
wellbeing outcomes for	
Aboriginal and Torres Strait	
Islander children and	
families.	
Action 3:	Status: Completed
Agree on priorities that drive	<b>Progress:</b> The Partnership endorsed in full 15 ECCDPP Priorities
development of policy	at Meeting Seven and agreed to the inclusion of a sixteenth
reforms outlined in the	priority focused on family, domestic and sexual violence
National Aboriginal and	(Priority 4D). Priority 4D will be brought to the ECCDPP for
Torres Strait Islander Early	endorsement at Meeting Nine, finalising the 16 priority areas of
Childhood Strategy and	work for the Partnership in 2024-25.
Early Childhood Care and	





Action	Progress to date
Development Sector Strengthening Plan and	
begin work to implement the	
priorities.	
Action 4:	Status: Ongoing
Progress intersectional	<b>Progress:</b> Eight of the 16 priorities agreed to by the Partnership
policy priorities with other	are collaboration priorities, progressing integrated policy
shared decision-making	priorities and approaches in partnership with Safe and
partnerships, including Safe	Supported governance and other partnerships established
and Supported, Policy	under the National Agreement. The Co-chairs and Co-
Partnerships and Place-	secretariat have been progressing collaboration with these
based Partnerships.	forums and providing regular updates to the Partnership on developments.
Action 5:	Status: Completed
Deliver commissioned	<b>Progress:</b> The Partnership has commissioned a research
research to build the	project to develop models for adequate and coordinated
Aboriginal and Torres Strait	funding of ACCOs delivering child and family services. A
Islander-led evidence base	supplier for this project is being procured and members will
for child and family services	engage with the work as initial findings are developed. This
and use commissioned	piece of work is reflected in ECCDPP Priority 1B.
research to increase access	ECCDPP Priorities 2A and 2B are focused on delivering needs-
to ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander	based and sustainable funding for ACCOs delivering ECEC services and increasing the hours of free ECEC available for
families.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across
	jurisdictions. Government representatives have reported on
	their progress against these priorities regularly to the
	Partnership. Government members are working to progress
	the development of implementation advice on funding models
	for ACCOs through the appropriate government forums.
Action 6: Support jurisdictional	Status: Ongoing Progress: At Meeting Seven, the Partnership agreed to regular
implementation efforts	updates from government representatives about their
relating to the findings and	response to and progress against the findings and
recommendations of the	recommendations of the Productivity Commission's Closing
Productivity Commission's	the Gap review. Government members and partners delivered
Closing the Gap review and	the first of these reports at Meeting Eight. Members agreed
provide advice on gaps and	that ongoing reporting mechanisms should align with
areas for greater focus.	reporting made through the Partnership Working Group.
Action 7:	Status: Ongoing  Progress: SNAICC on behalf of the Barthership, developed a
Develop a strategic communication and	<b>Progress:</b> SNAICC, on behalf of the Partnership, developed a communications and engagement plan to engage Aboriginal
engagement plan to support	and Torres Strait Islander communities and ACCOs in the work
Aboriginal and Torres Strait	of the Partnership and ensure community voices are centred in





Action	Progress to date
Islander communities to engage with the work of the Partnership. This plan will leverage the strong community feedback loops established by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members.	ECCDPP decision-making. The Partnership agreed to the proposed communications and engagement strategy at Meeting Seven, and endorsed the custom artwork created by Tovani Cox for the ECCDPP in August 2024. This piece – 'Guiding Stars' – is now the basis of the Partnership's branding, completing the first phase of the ECCDPP's communications plan and supporting phase two, where SNAICC is engaging directly with community and ACCOs for their input into the
	work and direction of the Partnership.
Action 8: Undertake an annual Partnership Health Check to maintain alignment with Strong Partnership Elements (Clause 22 of the National Agreement).	<b>Status:</b> On track for mid-2025 <b>Progress:</b> The Partnership conducted its Year I Partnership Health Check at Meeting Five in nipaluna/Hobart. Members reflected on the Partnership's shared decision-making practices, ways of working, and how the Partnership could respond to changes in the Closing the Gap landscape. The Year 2 Partnership Health Check is scheduled for mid-2025 to align with the timing of findings from the evaluation of the ECCDPP.
Action 9: Develop an Annual Report to Joint Council.	Status: On track for mid-2025  Progress: Members agreed to the outline and process for developing the 2024 Annual Report at Meeting Eight. The Cosecretariat progressed a draft and final report for ECCDPP endorsement, and the final report is expected to be considered by Joint Council in July 2025.
Action 10: Develop a third-year workplan for the Partnership.	Status: On track Progress: The Partnership is developing a third year workplan.
Action 11: Implement the ECCDPP Probity Framework	Status: Ongoing Progress: The Partnership agreed to a draft version of the ECCDPP Probity Framework at Meeting Five. The Co-secretariat is finalising the framework for endorsement in 2025.

Table 3. ECCDPP Year 2 Workplan Summary

## Challenges and Approach Taken

In year one, a key challenge for our Partnership was driving policy reform at the scale and pace required to close the gap, while also navigating new ways of working in shared decision-making. In year 2 our processes and ways of working have matured, which has helped address some of these issues. However, the ECCDPP continues to face challenges when putting shared decision-making into practice and driving the reforms needed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. These challenges are not unique to the ECCDPP,





and the strategies taken to address them may be relevant to other shared decision-making forums.

The Partnership has had some significant successes since its establishment but Closing the Gap Outcomes 4 and 12 are still worsening. Strong foundations and ways of working within the ECCDPP have limited impact if the Partnership's priorities and purpose are not being implemented on the ground and across jurisdictions.

The ECCDPP has heard and recognised that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members have a greater sense of urgency for action and meaningful results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, whilst government systems and processes can slow the progress of change. This sentiment is also echoed in the findings of the Productivity Commission's Review of Closing the Gap. Government members are not directly accountable to community in the same way as the Peak and Independent representatives who directly represent particular community groups, which often creates a distinct difference in how problems and solutions are framed by either government or Peak/Independent members. The ECCDPP should be not only a space for discussion but for ambitious action to drive reform and deliver on outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Embedding this implementation focus and urgency in the Partnership's ways of working will continue to be a focus for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members in 2025. The ECCDPP Priorities for year 2 are focused on implementing reforms and provide a clear framework for tracking progress. This work will be supported by broader changes underway across the Closing the Gap landscape to create clearer accountability for governments for their work on Closing the Gap, including through Independent Mechanisms, the Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led review and implementing the Productivity Commission Review recommendations.

This imbalance between Peaks and Independent members and government representatives is also evident in terms of power. As governments hold the authorising environment, it is their timeframes that reform works to, and ultimate decision-making responsibility sits with individuals who are generally not directly engaged with the Partnership. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members are engaged in only one part of this broader structure, and they have limited to no opportunity to expediate timelines, challenge ways of working, and drive change outside of the ECCDPP. While the power balance is fundamentally asymmetrical, Peaks and Independent representatives are still held accountable for the pace and outcomes of the work and have to manage relationships and trust with not only their fellow Partnership members but also the communities they represent.





Policy Partnerships provide an effective forum to help re-balance power between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, but continued efforts are needed to embed and strengthen power sharing.

It has been an ongoing challenge for the ECCDPP that government structures are not built to change and move as quickly as they need to, and that bureaucracies are entrenched in ways of working that are often not responsive to community needs. Government ways of working often have long associated timeframes and final authority sits outside the Partnership where decisions are reached. ECCDPP members have engaged in frank discussion about these challenges, which have been facilitated by the strong and respectful relationships that the members and partners have with each other. These discussions have been valuable for strengthening shared understanding, and where possible, identifying solutions. For example, this has included streamlining approvals processes for Joint Council recommendations to reduce long approval timeframes.

The Partnership works across 9 jurisdictions, further complicating the structural challenges for timely decision-making. Political shifts and caretaker periods delay certain decisions and approval pathways, and the work of the Partnership is often not able to progress between sessions or as quickly as members would like it to. In 2024, members have openly discussed how the Partnership can plan for these disruptions to ensure work continues as smoothly as possible.

The Productivity Commission's Review has supported the Partnership to build a shared understanding of what needs to change, and to what extent, to close the gap. At Meeting Eight, government members and partners presented on their jurisdiction's responses to the Productivity Commission's Review, focusing on their main actions, challenges, and learnings from the review's findings. The Partnership will continue these discussions in 2025.

The Partnership has also focused on joining up work across portfolios and collaborating with different policy partnerships. Collaboration is a key feature of the ECCDPP Priorities and essential for progressing reform under Closing the Gap. The success of the ECCDPP's outcomes is dependent on progress in other portfolios and the Partnership continued to reflect on the barriers of government siloes and strategies to work across these. The ECCDPP has developed priorities that support joined-up approaches across housing, justice, languages, disability, perinatal health, and Safe and Supported initiatives to deliver more integrated and holistic policy recommendations and responses. Reforms in other portfolios such as housing, health and youth justice, that either improve or worsen outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, will have direct impacts on the ability of the ECCDPP to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in 2025 and beyond.





## Part 3 - Progressing Reform: The ECCDPP Priorities

# Second Year Priorities: Strengthening Collaboration and Implementation

In line with Action 2 in the Year 2 workplan, the Partnership agreed to pursue 16 priorities across early childhood care and development policy areas<sup>9</sup>.

These 16 priorities are a significant expansion of the Partnership's work in Year 1, when the ECCDPP worked to six agreed priorities. As with the Year 1 Priorities, the ECCDPP Priorities were identified and brought forward to the Partnership by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members, reflecting their expertise and sector knowledge, and leveraging shared policy objectives between Australian, state and territory governments.

The 16 priorities reflect the ECCDPP's remit under the National Agreement, its leadership of the ECCD Sector Strengthening Plan (SSP), and intersections with Safe and Supported. They have been organised according to theme and responsibility, with each priority falling under one of:

- **Government and community led priorities**, led by government members in their own jurisdictions in partnership with Peaks and ACCOs, both within and outside of the Partnership. Priorities 1A, 2A, 2B, and 3A are government and community led priorities.
- A **Partnership priority**, led by Co-chairs and the Co-secretariat. Priorities 1B, 1C, 4D, and 5A are Partnership priorities.
- A **collaboration priority**, where leadership is shared with another forum and facilitated by the Co-secretariat. Priorities 1D, 3B, 4A, 4B, 4C, 5B, 6A and 6B are collaboration priorities.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Agreeing to the priorities means that members agree that these policy areas will be the focus of the ECCDPP's work. Priorities agreed by the Partnership do not represent formal government commitments until they have progressed through Closing the Gap governance and/or are reflected in the policy commitments of individual governments.





Figure 1. List of ECCDPP priorities and status as of mid-January 2025

#### Theme 1: Child and family services funding and workforce reform

**Priority 1A:** Increase the proportion of child and family services funding to ACCOs with consideration to the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children involved in child protection systems, across Commonwealth and jurisdictions in line with the recommendations of the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families Report (SASF) and Family Matters Report. (**Government and community led priority**)

**Status:** Underway

Each jurisdiction is progressing this priority. Some jurisdictions have committed to ensuring a certain proportion of expenditure on child and family services is directed to ACCOs.

**Priority 1B:** Develop models for adequate and co-ordinated funding of ACCOs that deliver child and family services, in consideration of the real cost of service delivery, including core functions, capital infrastructure, wage parity and other workforce costs. (**Partnership priority**)

**Status:** Anticipated to be completed by December 2025.

The project will develop recommendations for a funding model for ACCOs in the child and family services sector, complementing the Funding Model Options for ACCO Integrated Early Years Services Report developed through the Partnerships first-year priorities. As with the early years model, the child and family services funding model is being developed to respond to the current and future needs of the sector to deliver their community-led, culturally safe and high-quality services to families.

The Co-secretariat is undertaking a procurement process to contract a supplier for the funding model to deliver a final report for ECCDPP endorsement by December 2025.

**Priority 1C:** Monitor and engage with reform agendas that are central to responding to the needs and priorities of the ACCO early years and child and family services workforce, including particularly: (a) The National Skills Agreement (NSA) (b) The Australian Government's response to the Australian Universities Accord Final Report. (**Partnership priority**)

Status: Underway.





#### Theme 1: Child and family services funding and workforce reform

This priority seeks to keep workforce reform, funding and support at the forefront of the ECCDPP, in recognition of its remit of the ECCD Sector Strengthening Plan and the importance of workforce sustainability for ACCOs. The Co-secretariat has engaged with the First Nations Partnership team in the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to map areas of alignment and scope linkages between the NSA, Australian Universities Accord and Productivity Commission's Inquiry into ECEC.

Once the Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Skills Policy Partnership is established in 2025, the ECCDPP will explore collaboration opportunities in developing its approach to Priority IC.

**Priority 1D:** Collaborate with Safe and Supported and other Policy Partnerships on delivering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led, place-based commissioning models in each jurisdiction to address child and family needs. (Collaboration priority)

**Status:** ECCDPP is holding this priority whilst decisions on funding requirements to support new place-based commissioning models are being considered by Safe and Supported governance. The priority will progress in alignment with these decisions.

#### Theme 2: Early years funding reform

**Priority 2A:** Coordinate and guide the development, in partnership with peaks, ACCO sector and communities, of jurisdictional and cross-jurisdictional implementation advice in relation to a dedicated, needs-based, sustainable funding model for ACCOs delivering early years services, including integrated early years services, in response to the findings of the ECCDPP Year 1 Priority research project. (**Government and community led priority**)

**Status:** Underway.

The Commonwealth and Victorian Departments of Education are co-leading work to progress this priority on behalf of all jurisdictions, in addition to jurisdiction's individual actions. All jurisdictions have met twice (informally) to discuss how to progress Recommendation 3 to Joint Council on Closing the Gap (development of implementation advice on 2A and 2B).





#### Theme 2: Early years funding reform

On Friday 24 January 2025, Education Ministers agreed for the Early Childhood Policy Group (ECPG) to oversee the development of implementation advice in response to the findings of these reports and provide updates to the Education Ministers Meeting and ECCDPP as appropriate. The Commonwealth and Victorian education departments will continue to lead the process to develop implementation advice, including by establishing a Steering Committee that will involve SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, to help provide close guidance on the progress of the project ahead of broader engagement with ECCDPP and ECPG, and a joint ECCDPP-ECPG workshop in March 2025.

**Priority 2B:** Coordinate and guide the development of jurisdictional implementation advice in relation to increasing the hours of free early childhood education and care available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, in response to the findings of the ECCDPP Year 1 Priority research project. (**Government and community led priority**)

Status: Underway.

See Priority 2A above, noting a key development in progressing this priority was the Commonwealth Government's response to the PC Inquiry into ECEC, announced in the December MYEFO 2024-25 Budget, which commits to replacing the Activity Test with a 3 Day Guarantee for all Australian families and 100 hours per fortnight of subsidised care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, regardless of activity levels.

## Theme 3: Strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and accountability for governments

**Priority 3A:** Support and resource communities and ACCO sector to establish and operate peak bodies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education, care and development, and child safety sectors across each jurisdiction, noting the design of the peak would vary depending on community needs and priorities in each jurisdiction. (**Government and community led priority**)

Status: Underway.

Each jurisdiction is progressing the priority individually. State and territory governments where early childhood care and development sector peaks are not yet established or are under development are responsible for progressing





# Theme 3: Strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and accountability for governments

this priority together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

**Priority 3B:** Support and provide advice on the establishment and process for the appointment of a legislated, independent, and empowered National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner, in line with the principles of shared decision-making, and in collaboration with Safe and Supported governance. (**Collaboration priority**)

Status: Underway.

This priority builds on the ECCDPP's Year 1 Priority to establish a National Commissioner role, which was committed to by the Federal Government in February of 2024. The ECCDPP agreed that ongoing support of the National Commissioner in both establishment and operation should be a priority of the Partnership. The ECCDPP will work with Safe and Supported governance and the National Commissioner's office, to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's rights, safety and wellbeing.

The National Commission commenced operations on 13 January 2025 as a separate and independent entity within the Social Services portfolio. Ms Lil Gordon, a Ngemba woman, is operating as the Acting National Commissioner until the formal appointment process is finalised.

The ECCDPP has worked with Safe and Supported governance to follow the progress of the National Commissioner and the updated Minimum Requirements and provided advice on the establishment of a legislated and empowered National Commissioner. In 2025, the Partnership will engage with the National Commissioner directly to inform their work agenda and support their advice to the Commonwealth Government.

## Theme 4: Breaking down government silos to deliver integrated support for families

**Priority 4A:** The ECCDPP, building on the existing workstreams of the Housing Policy Partnership (HPP) where possible, will identify initiatives relevant to supporting the provision and prioritisation of stable and appropriate housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families where children are at risk of or are in contact with child protection. This is as part of broader work by the ECCDPP to





## Theme 4: Breaking down government silos to deliver integrated support for families

break down silos to address the social and economic determinants of child protection involvement and provide holistic support for families. (**Collaboration priority**)

Status: Underway.

This priority seeks to join up policy priorities and responses at the ECCDPP and HPP to provide integrated housing support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who are at risk or currently in contact with the child protection system. Members of the ECCDPP have endorsed this priority in recognition of the importance of stable housing in facilitating families staying together and reunification. The Partnership will work with HPP to determine the best avenues of collaborative policy approaches.

The Co-secretariat will work with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association (NATSIHA) and DSS to agree to a shared project plan for progressing Priority 4A. Early work on this priority by the ECCDPP will focus on gathering data to build the evidence base for prioritising housing security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

**Priority 4B:** Oversee and support joined-up responses to reviews and inquiries relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families with disability in partnership with community, relevant peaks and the sector, in line with the Partnership's cross-cutting remit and with reference to the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan. This work should have a focus on capable and culturally driven services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with developmental delay and disability, and their families, including integrated health and allied health assessments and evidence-based supports. (**Collaboration priority**)

Status: Underway.

Priority 4B considers the ECCDPP's intersections with the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan in addition to the Partnership's broad priority to address social, health and economic determinants of child protection involvement and early learning outcomes. The ECCDPP will work with FPDN and DSS to advise the establishment of priorities under the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan and ensure prioritisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with developmental delay and disability.





## Theme 4: Breaking down government silos to deliver integrated support for families

The Co-secretariat is developing a high-level approach to this priority and will work with FPDN and DSS to finalise a more detailed options paper for ECCDPP endorsement in 2025.

**Priority 4C:** Identify, promote, and research options to expand existing successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led therapeutic models of care to support the perinatal health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies and parents and prevent infant removals by child protection authorities. (**Collaboration priority**)

Status: Underway.

The ECCDPP is progressing priority work to prevent at-birth removals in alignment with the National Women's Health Strategy and the National Action Plan for the Health of Children and Young People 2020–2030. This priority aligns with the Partnership's remit over Closing the Gap Outcome 2 and the importance of perinatal health and wellbeing in preventing child protection involvement before, at and after birth.

The Partnership is working with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and Department of Health and Aged Care to progress an appropriate approach for the ECCDPP to lead in this space. The Cosecretariat anticipates that a detailed project plan will be brought to the ECCDPP for endorsement in mid-2025.

**Priority 4D:** Wording for the priority is to be finalised and agreed by Members.

**Status:** Wording anticipated to be agreed by Meeting Nine.

At Meeting Seven (24-25 July 2024), members discussed including an additional priority to the original agreed list of 15 ECCDPP priorities relating to family, domestic and sexual violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

This was in recognition of the intersection of family, domestic and sexual violence across the policy remit of the ECCDPP, including being a social determinant of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people having contact with the child protection system.

The final wording of Priority 4D will be presented to members for agreement by Meeting Nine.





## Theme 5: Commission research and evidence development on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led models of family support to prevent entry into outof-home care

Priority 5A: Commission research that is grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, practice wisdoms and theoretical frameworks to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Evidence Guidance Framework to build a shared understanding between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led services, communities and governments on what is understood as 'evidence' in the context of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led child and family support services. Once the Framework is complete, ensure that it is used to promote a better understanding of the value of community-led approaches to child and family support, to support government decision-making, and implement the Framework across jurisdictions. (Partnership priority)

Status: Anticipated to be completed and endorsed by November 2025.

One of the Partnership's initial priorities was the commissioning of independent research and evidence development on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led models of family support. As the foundation for this research base, the ECCDPP proposed the development of an evidence guidance framework outlining how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples understand and define evidence. This priority has been put forward as a response to current perspectives and understandings of evidence, particularly those used by governments, not recognising and valuing the evidence created and used by ACCOs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The framework is intended to create a shared understanding between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led services, communities and governments on what is understood as 'evidence' and identify the key elements of a new approach to applying evidence in a way that embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing.

**Priority 5B:** Collaborate with Safe and Supported on any shared opportunities to progress research priorities, working with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support once it is established. (**Collaboration priority**)

Status: Underway.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support (National Centre for Excellence) will be another key player in





# Theme 5: Commission research and evidence development on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led models of family support to prevent entry into out-of-home care

policy making for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the sectors that provide support services to them and their families. The ECCDPP, in line with its independent research role, will work with Safe and Supported and the National Centre for Excellence once it is established to progress shared research priorities and align research initiatives to build a strong evidence-base for best practice approaches to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The final design report for the National Centre for Excellence was accepted by DSS in October 2024. DSS is currently working with Safe and Supported partners in a shared decision–making model to determine the successful organisation where the National Centre for Excellence will be established and expect this process to be completed by mid-2025. Once established, developing a research agenda is expected to be one of the first priorities of the National Centre for Excellence, and the ECCDPP will be available to support the Centre in this work. The Partnership will also collaborate with Safe and Supported to identify shared research priorities and knowledge sharing opportunities.

#### Theme 6: Connection and collaboration

**Priority 6A:** Work with the Justice Policy Partnership (JPP) and Safe and Supported governance to identify opportunities to increase the capacity of specialist ACCO legal services to provide support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in contact with both the justice and child protection systems. This will include consideration of any findings from the SNAICC and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) ACCO Legal Supports Scoping Study and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan. (**Collaboration priority**)

Status: Underway.

This priority recognises the relationship between child protection and youth justice systems, particularly the 'pipeline' from out-of-home care to youth detention. The ECCDPP is working with JPP to progress the findings of the 'Barriers Experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families Accessing Legal Supports Scoping Study' report, received by DSS in September 2024. This study delivers on Action 6 in the Safe and Supported





#### Theme 6: Connection and collaboration

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan, and the ECCDPP will develop Priority 6A's project plan in collaboration with Safe and Supported governance as well as JPP.

The Co-secretariat is collaborating with DSS and the JPP to develop an approach to progressing this work.

**Priority 6B:** Work with the Languages Policy Partnership (LPP) to develop a shared Priority to identify opportunities to promote traditional and local languages in early years education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (0-5 years), including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander non-verbal languages. (**Collaboration priority**)

Status: Underway.

High-quality and culturally safe ECEC services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children should centre local language education in response to the importance of language to communities, Country and cultures. The LPP is working towards seven national priorities to increase language use, support language practitioners, legislate and fund the future of languages, raise awareness of the importance of languages, and bringing languages home to communities. Each of these priorities is supported by language education in the early years.

Members of the LPP agreed to collaborate on progressing this priority and to the approach of a research project exploring the benefits of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages education in ECEC. The Co-secretariat is working with LPP to scope and plan this research project, including developing a proposed governance approach that involves both Partnerships.





### Part 4 – Looking Forward

Moving into its third year of work, the Partnership will be progressing its Priorities across jurisdictions and collaborative partnerships. The ECCDPP is focused on driving implementation under Priorities 1A, 2A, 2B, and 3A, as governments take forward the recommendations of the Partnership and their commitments under the National Agreement by strengthening ACCOs and Peaks in their jurisdictions and increasing free ECEC entitlements.

In 2025, the Partnership will continue to monitor progress against these priorities and support implementation by working together to identify and break down barriers. The ECCDPP will also support and advise the National Commissioner and the National Centre for Excellence, prioritising its collaborative role in a broader support system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. As a relatively new forum, the Partnership is beginning to see the tangible impacts of its work and is looking forward to achieving further outcomes in 2025 and beyond.

The Partnership is seeking to complete several research and capacity-building projects in 2025, strengthening the evidence base of the ECCDPP and its stakeholders. These projects will contribute to the growing evidence base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research and analysis that is publicly available and can be drawn upon by the sector more broadly decision-making and policy advice. Each of these pieces of work addresses a distinct challenge or priority for the Partnership and Closing the Gap, including best practice in shared decision-making, understandings of evidence, data accessibility, funding for ACCOs, and supporting families to avoid contact with child protection. These pieces of work will be determined and funded by the Partnership but intended as resources for other forums, Peak bodies, ACCOs, communities and governments to utilise as they develop evidence-based proposals relevant to Closing the Gap. Intersecting with the communications and engagement work of the Partnership, the ECCDPP will work to grow the awareness and capability of the sector and communities to engage with these resources and utilise them in their own work.

Collaboration is a cornerstone of the ECCDPP's work and will be even more critical in 2025 as new Policy Partnerships are stood up and the existing Partnerships move beyond their establishment phases. The Partnership will continue its close collaboration with Safe and Supported and work with newly established bodies such as the National Commissioner and the National Centre for Excellence to align and maximise the efficacy of our respective work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The ECCDPP will seek to utilise its experience and leadership to pursue integrated and holistic responses and drive outcomes





across Closing the Gap. As of the July 2024 data compilation, only 4 of the 17 socio-economic targets are on track to be met. The ECCDPP will prioritise collaborative approaches to support all the targets currently lagging, while leading on initiatives to progress targets 4, 12, and 13.

The growth of the Partnership to date has shown that time is essential to building and strengthening the relationships between members, partners and stakeholders that successful shared decision–making depends on. In 2025, Cochairs and the Co-secretariat will continue to centre the processes and ways of working that support the Partnership to thrive. With a finalised Probity Framework, the ECCDPP will strive to refine its ways of working with each other and the architecture outside it. Transformation of this architecture and of the ways our members and partners approach the work of the Partnership will be the key to embedding best practice and achieving policy reform with urgency. The Partnership will build on the trust it has established to ensure members are able to engage in frank and fearless discussions about the issues and work of the ECCDPP and streamline its processes to facilitate effective decision–making.

The ECCDPP is commissioning an independent evaluation of the Partnership to be completed in 2025. The evaluation will examine both the functioning of the Partnership and impact against its objectives, evaluating how the ECCDPP has worked as a group as well as the policy objectives it has been able to achieve in its initial three-year funding period. This first evaluation of the ECCDPP offers an important opportunity for the Co-secretariat and members alike to take stock of their successes and understand improvements that can be implemented as the Partnership continues. The Partnership hopes the evaluation will reflect learnings about government transformation and self-determination in its findings. These learnings are especially important in light of the Productivity Commission's Review of Closing the Gap and the Australian National Audit Office's current audit Closing the Gap in early childhood education and schooling, in which the Partnership is pleased to be participating.

The evaluation is expected to be completed in 2025, and the final report will be provided to Joint Council for endorsement. Preliminary findings and the final report will be utilised to support decisions about the future of the ECCDPP and the Policy Partnerships as appropriate.

In December 2024, the Australian Government announced an extension of funding for the ECCDPP for another three years to 2028. The Partnership will continue its growth and development, ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are supported by dedicated Closing the Gap leadership. The ECCDPP is proud of what it has achieved in its first three years of work and is looking forward to another three years of driving reform and achieving the best





possible outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children now and into the future.





## Appendix A – List of Members

**Note:** This table represents Partnership members and partners between January to December 2024.

Representing	Name	Tenure
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Representatives		
SNAICC - National Voice	Co-chair and member:	
for our Children	Catherine Liddle	August 2022 – current
(SNAICC)	Chief Executive Officer, SNAICC	August 2022 Current
(SIAISS)	Partner: Muriel Bamblett	
	Chair of SNAICC	August 2022 - current
National Aboriginal	Chair of Strates	
Community Controlled	Donnella Mills	
Health Organisation	Chair, NACCHO	August 2022 - current
(NACCHO)	Chair, NACCHO	
(MACCITO)	Damian Griffis (representing	
First Peoples Disability	Tenille Lamb)	January 2024 – current
Network (FPDN)	Chief Executive Officer, FPDN	Samuary 2024 Carrent
	Tahlia-Rose Vanissum	
	(representing <b>Tenille Lamb</b> )	
	National Systemic Advocacy	July 2024
	and Policy Manager, FPDN	
	Lisa Coulson	
Tasmanian Aboriginal	North-West Regional Manager	
Centre (TAC)	and Children and Families	August 2022 - current
John (1A5)	Spokesperson, TAC	
Victorian Aboriginal	Neville Atkinson	
Education Association	Programs and Policy Manager,	August 2022 - current
Incorporated (VAEAI)	VAEAI	7.09.00.202
	Dan Mitchell (representing	
Aboriginal Family	Sharron Williams)	
Support Services (AFSS)	Acting Chief Executive Officer,	October 2023 – July 2024
,	AFSS	
	Nikki Clinch (representing	
	Sharron Williams)	
	Manager Priority Reforms,	November 2024
	SAACCON	
	Joanne Della Bona	
Independent member	Chief Executive Officer of	August 2022 – current
	Coolabaroo	
	Associate Professor Paul Gray	
Independent member	University of Technology Sydney,	August 2022 – current
	Jumbanna Institute of	





Representing	Name	Tenure
, , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , , ,		
	Indigenous Education and Research	
	Partner: John Leha	July 2024 - current
	Chief Executive Officer, AbSec	July 2024 Current
	Darcy Cavanagh	
Independent member	Chief Executive Officer of	August 20022 - current
	REFOCUS	
	Garth Morgan	
In day and ant manuals as	Chief Executive Officer of	Manuals 2002
Independent member	Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child	March 2023 - current
	Protection Peak (QATSCIPP)  Sandra Anne Miller	
	Community advocate	August 2022 – March 2023
	Keara Baker-Storey	
Independent member	Indi Kindi Team Leader	August 2022 - 2024
Government	marian ream reade.	
Representative		
•	Co-chair and member: Kylie	
	Crane	
Australian Government	Deputy Secretary, Department	March 2023 – current
	of Education	
	Partner: Letitia Hope	
	Deputy Secretary, Department	March 2023 – current
	of Social Services	
	Partner: Julie-Ann Guivarra	
	Deputy Chief Operating Officer,	October 2023 - current
	National Indigenous Australians	Cotobol 2020 Cultonic
	Agency	
Australian Capital	Member: Dr Nicole Moore	
Territory Government	Executive Branch Manager, ACT	August 2022 – current
,	Education Directorate	
	Partner: Chris Simpson	
	Executive Branch Manager, ACT	June 2023 – current
	Community Services Directorate	
New South Wales	Member: Mark Barraket	September 2023 – current
Government	Relieving Deputy Secretary, NSW	
	Department of Education  Partner: Claire Beattie	
		December 2022 - February
	Acting Deputy Secretary for Transforming Aboriginal	December 2023 – February 2024
	Outcomes	2024
	Partner: Stuart Malcher	February 2024 – current
	. W. TIVI. VENNI E MINIOTO	1 Oblidary 2024 Carrolle





Representing	Name	Tenure
	Evacutive Director NCW	
	Executive Director, NSW  Department of Communities	
	and Justice	
	Member: Gabrielle Brown	
Northern Territory Government	Executive Director, Department of Territory, Families Housing	August 2022 – current
Government	and Communities	
	Partner: Agnes McGrath	
	Senior Director, NT Department	August 2022 - current
	of Education	
Queensland	Member: Tania Porter	August 2022 – current
Government	Deputy Director-General,  Department of Education	
	Partner: Fiona Ward	
	Deputy Director-General,	July 2024 – current
	Department of Children, Youth	July 2024 – Current
	Justice and Multicultural Affairs	
	Partner: Liz Bianchi A/Deputy Director-General,	
	Department of Children, Youth	April 2024 – June 2024
	Justice and Multicultural Affairs	
	Partner: Helen Mission	
	A/Deputy Director-General,	January 2024 – March 2024
	Department of Children, Youth	,
	Justice and Multicultural Affairs  Member: Kim Little	
South Australian	Chief Executive Officer, Office for	March 2024 – current
Government	Early Childhood Development	
	Member: Kathryn Jordan	
	Acting Head of the Office for the	November 203 – March 2024
	Early Years, SA Department of Education	
	Partner: Jackie Bray	
	Head of Office for the Yearly	
	Years, SA Department for	June 2023 – current
	Education	
Tasmanian Government	Member: Jodee Wilson	
	Deputy Secretary, Department for Education, Children and	August 2022 – current
	Young People	
	Partner: Vidya Chelliah	
	Director, Department for	August 2022 - current
	Education, Children and People	





Representing	Name	Tenure
Victorian Government	Member: Mathew Lundgren  Executive Director, Department of Education	August 2022 – current
	Partner: Simone Corin  Executive Director, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	August 2022 – February 2024 December 2024 – current
	Partner: Nathan Chapman A/Executive Director, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing	March 2024 – November 2024
Western Australian Government	Member: Caron Irwin Assistant Director-General, Department of Communities	August 2022 – current
	Partner: Lisa Criddle  Executive Director, Department of Education	June 2023 – current





## Appendix B – Acronym and abbreviation list

Acronym	Full name of acronym
ACCO/s	Aboriginal community-controlled organisation/s
СоР	Coalition of Peaks
DSS	Department of Social Services
ECCDPP	Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development Sector
ECEC	Early Childhood Education and Care
FPDN	First Peoples Disability Network
Joint Council	Joint Council on Closing the Gap
National Agreement	National Agreement on Closing the Gap
National Centre for	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for
Excellence	Excellence in Child and Family Support
National	National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Commissioner	Islander Children and Young People
NATSIECS	National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood
NATSIECS	Strategy
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
QATSICPP	Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child
	Protection Peak
SAACCON	South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled
	Organisation Network
Safe and Supported	Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting
sale and supported	Australia's Children 2021–2031
SNAICC	SNAICC – National Voice for our Children
SSP	Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening
	Plan
The Partnership	Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership





