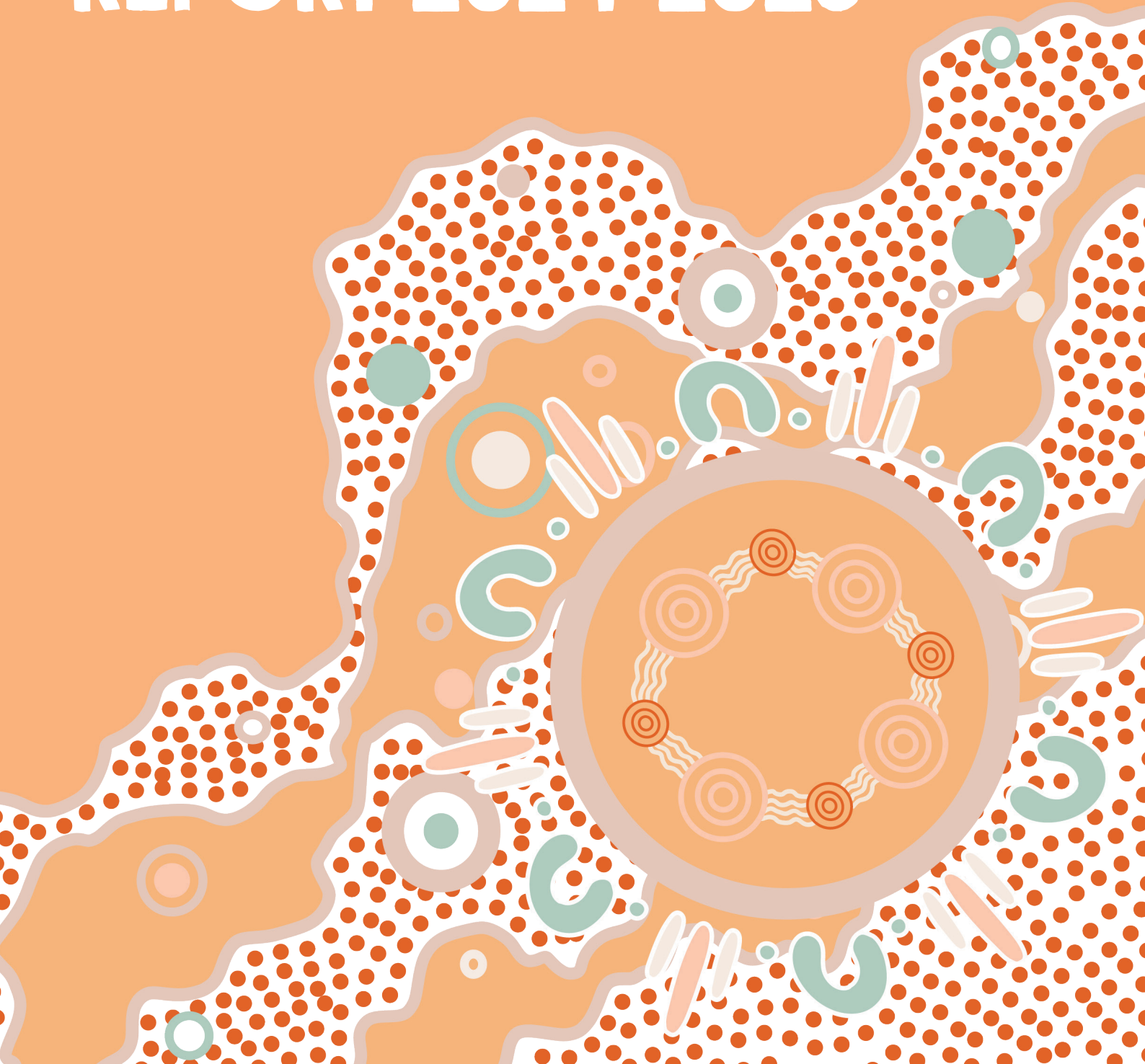


SNAICC

National Voice for our Children

SNAICC ANNUAL REPORT 2024-2025





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SNAICC shows respect by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia 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.

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.

SNAICC Annual Report 2024-25 | © SNAICC October 2025

Artwork by Tovani Cox





Marulu - Tovani Cox, Bunuba, Gija and Karajarri Artist

Marulu is a Bunuba word. It means precious, worth nurturing. Every child is precious, and each child deserves to be loved, nurtured, supported, and safe.

As the national peak SNAICC continues to pursue and strive for a society where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's voices and needs are prioritised in a community, program, and policy setting.

SNAICC is represented as the main circle image in this piece. The inner circle images are the core business and work of SNAICC through its people, both its workers and the governing board. The outer layer images represent the various existing State and Territory Peaks and lead organisations.

The flow of the artwork represents our journey, ensuring that our children are loved, nurtured, supported and safe, and they are represented by the small dots.

The larger circles and dots are representative of the various programs, policies, and reform priorities that SNAICC works with or is leading as their role as the national peak and voice for our children.

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WHO WE ARE

SNAICC is the national non-government peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

SNAICC works for the fulfilment of the rights of our children, to ensure their safety, development and wellbeing. We do this by:

- supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations through collaborative workshops, resources and training
- conducting research to inform our positions on policies, and providing advice to government on issues relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families
- acting as a collective voice for SNAICC

member organisations, calling for change and equality

- fostering partnerships and undertaking joint projects with other NGOs, including non-Indigenous agencies, to improve service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- participating on various committees to advocate on behalf of our children, families and member organisations, and
- sharing knowledge and garnering support to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children through campaigns and events such as Family Matters, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day and the biennial SNAICC conference.



CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE



On behalf of the SNAICC Board and Council, I am pleased to present the 2024-2025 Annual Report.

The past 12 months have certainly provided an environment of change, opportunity and growth for SNAICC and our sector.

I'm very happy to report that we ended the 2024/2025 year in a strong, stable financial position with a firm foundation to weather any future uncertainty and challenges.

Having a greater degree of financial stability has enabled SNAICC to have an even greater focus to realise the aspirations, needs and wants of our sector. We have developed programs, policies and advocacy campaigns in response to priorities identified by members and the sector, which you will see highlighted throughout this Annual Report.

I'm particularly proud that SNAICC has been establishing a Youth Voice mechanism, which will work directly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to understand what's important to them, guide and shape SNAICC work and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to contribute to national policy and advocacy.

A Youth Voice subcommittee to SNAICC Council will be formed in the second half of 2025 to inform members of the work and identified priorities of young people to guide our work and deliberations.

As always, advancing the rights and wellbeing of our children and communities remain our driving force. To this end, the Board approved a new Strategic Plan to guide SNAICC's work over the next three years.

The Strategic Plan strongly articulates our Vision, Purpose and Strategic Priorities and I urge everyone to take the time to read this document on the SNAICC website and watch the accompanying animation.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of former SNAICC Board members Kathleen Pinkerton from WA who retired earlier this year and Garth Morgan from Queensland. On behalf of the Board and Council, I extend my thanks for their work and dedication to ensuring a strong and successful national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Thank you to all our supporters for your input and backing over the past year. I commend this report to you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Muriel Bamblett'.

Professor Muriel Bamblett
Chairperson

CEO'S MESSAGE

Werte,

This past year has been a remarkable and challenging period for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, as well as for SNAICC. We have made significant strides in advancing our priorities, growing our influence, and delivering impactful initiatives. However there is still much work ahead.

Despite a climate of uncertainty prior to the Federal election, SNAICC remained steadfast in our advocacy efforts. We proudly amplified the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, urging policymakers to support commitments that ensure our children's safety, well-being, and connection to culture and community.

This year, we celebrated key milestones. The establishment of the Office of the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People marked a significant step towards safeguarding the rights of our children. Again, there is significant work to do in making sure the National Commissioner is supported by strong and meaningful legislation that gives them the powers they need to change the systems that see our children overrepresented in child protection and youth justice systems.

A long-held priority was realised with the introduction of the Early Childhood Education and Care (Three Day Guarantee) Bill 2025, removing barriers like the Activity Test by providing 100 hours of subsidised early education for our children—an essential move towards closing the gap.

The December Mid-Tear Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) saw the continuation of funding for the Early Years Support (EYS) program for another 12 months and \$11.4 million to extend the Early Childhood Care & Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP) for three years.



We continue to work towards funding security for EYS and its expansion into other jurisdictions.

The release of the Productivity Commission's final report on ECEC underscored the importance of dedicated funding for Aboriginal community-controlled early years services and the removal of outdated barriers. Our advocacy is now more vital than ever as we work tirelessly to shape policies that empower our communities.

We are excited to progress our Youth Voice initiative. By establishing a Youth Advisory Group and engaging directly with young people and youth organizations, we aim to embed their voices in our work, policies, and advocacy efforts, embodying our commitment to empowering the next generation.

Our strategic vision remains focused on ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years, are safe, and remain connected to their families, communities, cultures, and Country.

As we reflect on our achievements and look ahead, I am proud of the resilience, dedication, and unity of our team, partners, and communities. Together, we will continue to stand up for the rights of our children and build a future where they can all thrive.

Thank you for your ongoing support and commitment.

Catherine Liddle
CEO

WHAT WE DO

A core component of the work we do is strengthening and bolstering the sector and services that support and work with these children. Our work and efforts are formed by three interconnected roles to deliver on this purpose and achieve our organisation's vision.

Sector Development

SNAICC works with and supports the sector to enhance the quality, access and sustainability of services. We do this through our dedicated sector development work and activities supporting members and other community-controlled organisations working across the sector.

Community and Sector Voice

SNAICC engages with Community and the sector to understand their needs and aspirations, give a strong voice to these perspectives and to influence change. We do this through engaging and working with our members, bringing the sector together to discuss and consider community needs and aspirations, spending time in and with our community, and building respected relationships with decision makers.

Research, Policy and Leadership

SNAICC seeks to understand and share what works to drive better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families and translate this into policy and practice. We do this through our dedicated policy, research and leadership work.

OUR STRATEGY

OUR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

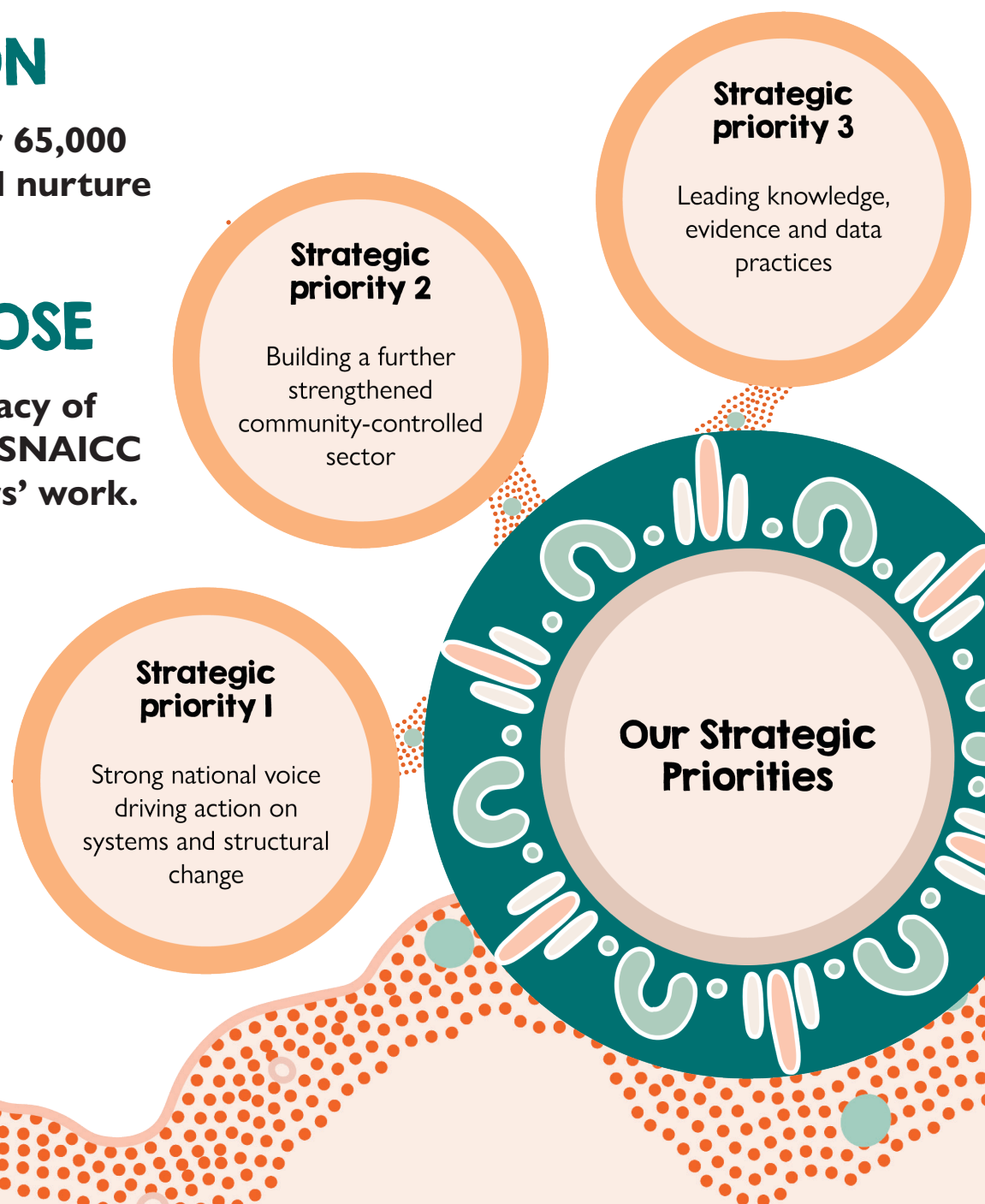
Through our strategic priorities we are responding to what our members, communities and leaders have identified as critical building blocks of change towards our vision, aligned to the four Priority Reforms under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap as the roadmap for systems transformation.

OUR VISION

comes from over 65,000 years of care and nurture of our families.

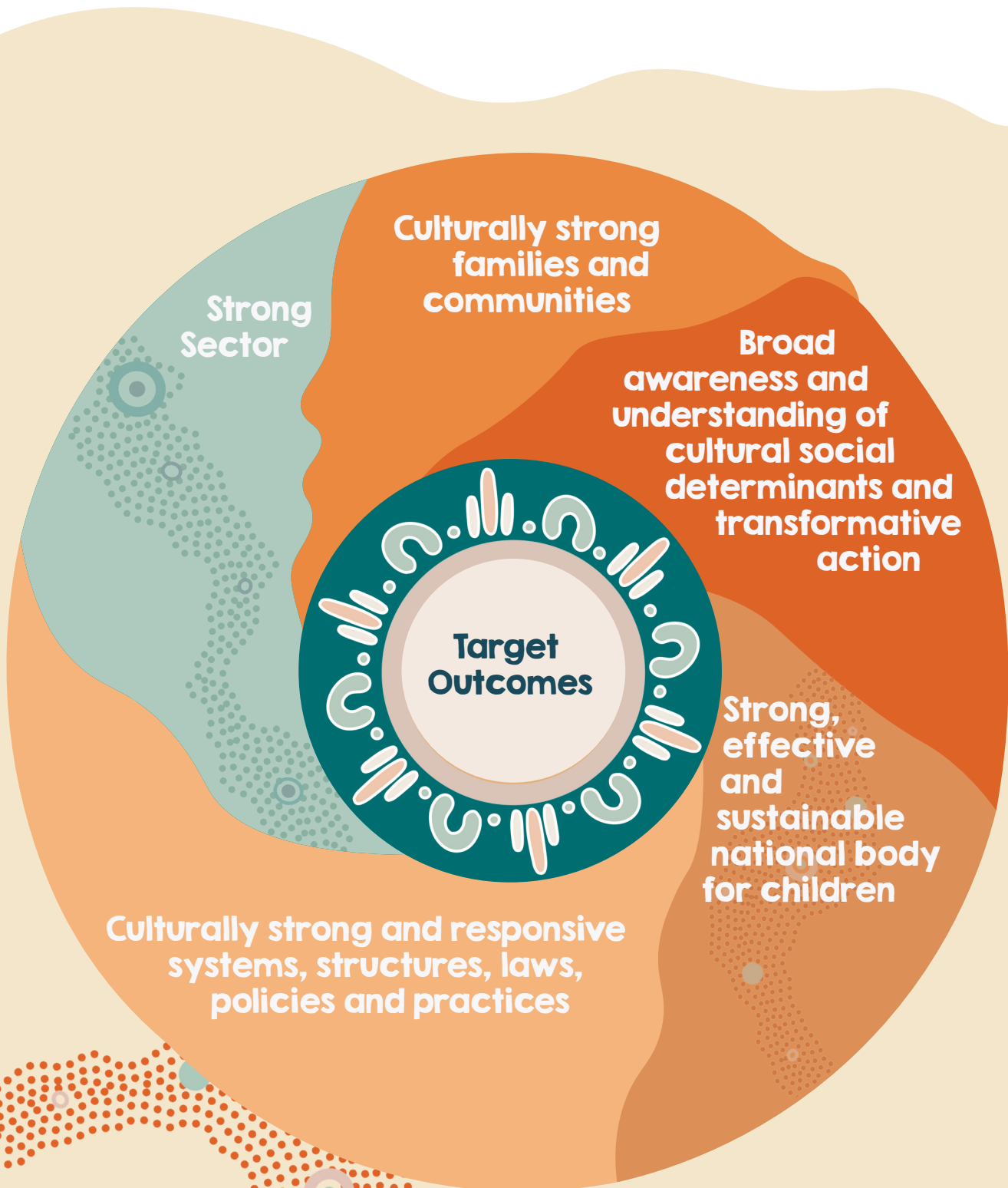
OUR PURPOSE

advances the legacy of over 40 years of SNAICC and our members' work.



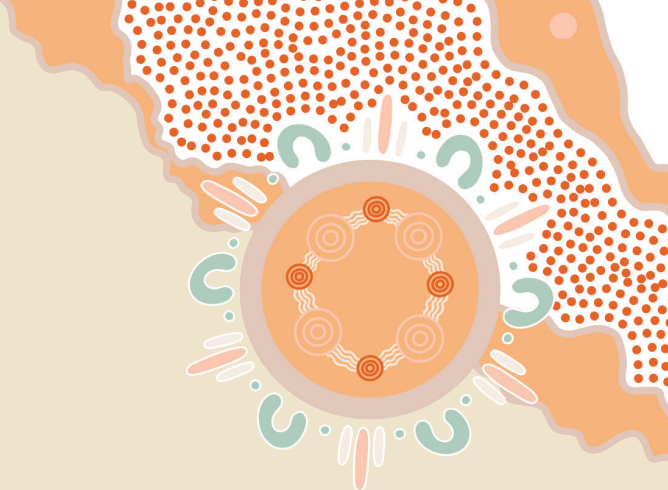
OUR OUTCOMES

SNAICC's overarching outcomes integrate our work, from the grassroots to the national policy tables, as we work towards our vision. As we move along our journey of impact measurement, our outcomes will continue to frame our progress and provide direction. These outcomes will also be used for SNAICC to measure our progress and share back with our members and communities.



SNAICC GOVERNANCE

OUR BOARD



Professor Muriel Bamblett, Chairperson

Muriel is a Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung woman and one of Australia's leading experts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child welfare, particularly in the area of child and family services. Muriel has been the CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) since 1999 and has returned as Chairperson for SNAICC after holding the position from 1998–2008.



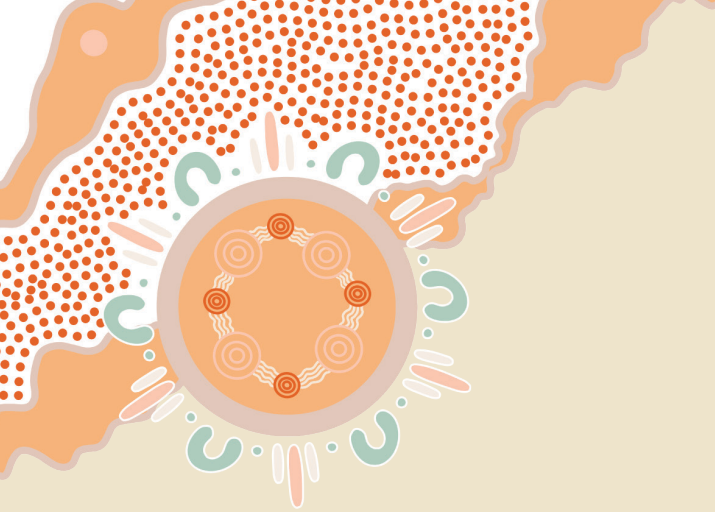
Rachel Atkinson, Secretary

Rachel is a proud Yorta Yorta woman. She was instrumental in the creation of the Palm Island Community Company and has been CEO since its founding in 2007. She is the Chair of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP), and a board member of the Queensland First Children and Families Board. She was formerly President of the Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council, and CEO of the Townsville Aboriginal and Islanders Health Service.



John Leha, Treasurer

John is a proud Birri Gubba, Wakka Wakka and Tongan man born and raised on Gadigal land and has been the CEO of AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation since 2021. He has a wealth of knowledge and strategic thinking to address the many challenges facing Aboriginal children and families in NSW. John has worked extensively in Indigenous health, education and employment programs across state and federal governments and is well known as a health ambassador.



Joanne Della Bona, Board Member

Joanne Della Bona is a Noongar yorga (woman) from Whadjuk (Perth) and Balardong (Wheatbelt) Boodja (country) in Western Australia. Joanne has more than 30 years' experience in the community services sector, in early childhood education and care, education, housing, child protection, and governance. Joanne commenced her career with qualifications of a Bachelor of Education. She is passionate about early childhood education for Aboriginal children and providing children with a solid development foundation through education. In 1994 Joanne was Awarded Western Australian of the Year – Youth Category. Joanne has held Board positions at Noongar Radio, Aboriginal Family Law Services, Noongar Family Safety Wellbeing Council (NFSWC) and Western Australian Council of Social Services (WACOSS). Joanne is currently a Board Member of SNAICC, Campaign member of Family Matters and Trustee to the Wongatha Peoples Education and Recreation Trust.

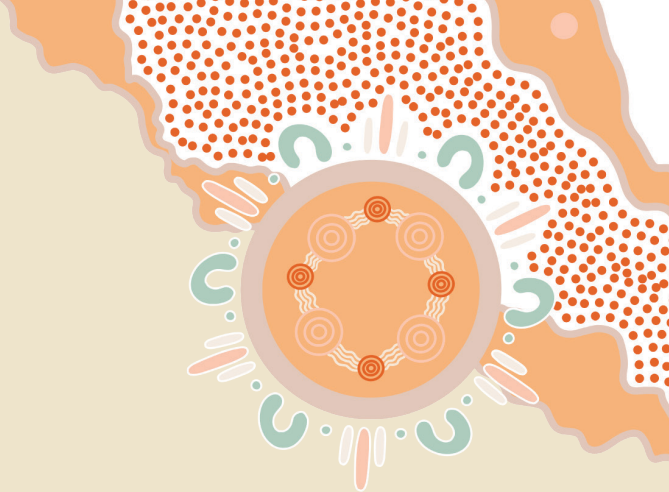


Wendy Moore, Board Member

Wendy Moore is a proud Palawa woman from Lutruwita/Tasmania. Wendy has family connections to the Furneaux Islands, specifically Cape Barren and Flinders Island. Wendy's family are the inspiration and motivation for the work she does in advocating and supporting positive changes for Aboriginal children and youth in Lutruwita/Tasmania.

Wendy is a qualified social worker, who has worked at the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre for 18 years. She is currently employed as the Statewide Family and Children's Program Manager and recently spent 12 months working on the Tasmanian Commission of Inquiry into child sexual abuse in government institutions.





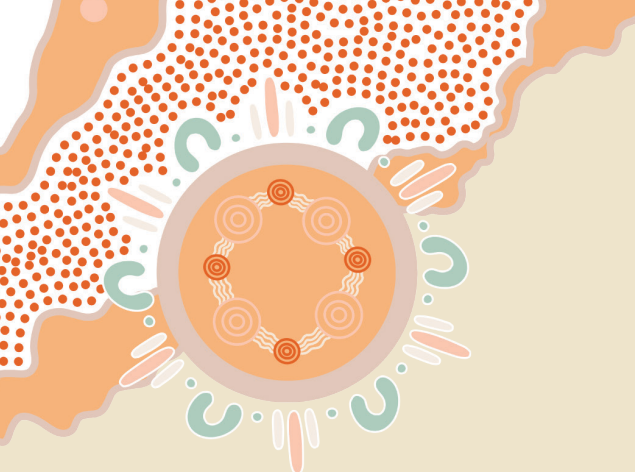
Selina Walker

Selina Walker is a proud Ngunnawal woman and dedicated leader from Canberra, who has worked for over twelve years across the ACT human services sectors, including child and youth protection, homelessness, mental health and women's services. As co-chair of the ACT Reconciliation Council since 2018, Selina has been a strong advocate for reconciliation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights. She is a founding member of Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation, working to improve outcomes for Aboriginal families and children, and advocates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the justice system as a member of the ACT Victims of Crime and Justice Committee.



Barbara Henry, Board Member

Barbara Henry is a respected Aboriginal leader from the Noongar Nation with over 40 years advocating for the rights and wellbeing of Aboriginal families, women, children and communities. Barbara currently serves as Director of the Noongar Family Safety and Wellbeing Council, an organisation committed to the safety of families, especially women and children, ensuring families stay safe together and children are not unnecessarily removed and placed into care. Barbara has held key roles requiring policy and program intervention, particularly in family and domestic violence, helping shape more culturally responsive approaches across Western Australia. She has also contributed her expertise as a member of the Western Australian Government's Family and Domestic Violence Taskforce.



Lizzie Adams, Board Member

Lizzie Adams is a proud Aboriginal woman from South West Queensland and the Chief Executive Officer of Goolburri Aboriginal Health Advancement Co Ltd and Chairperson of QATSICPP. Beginning her career in nursing, Lizzie's passion for improving healthcare outcomes for her people evolved into a distinguished leadership role within one of the largest Aboriginal Community Controlled Health and Social Care Organisations in the Darling Downs and Western Queensland. A strategic thinker and advocate for innovation, Lizzie has been instrumental in advancing place-based, integrated approaches to health and social care.



Kylie Degenhardt, Board Member

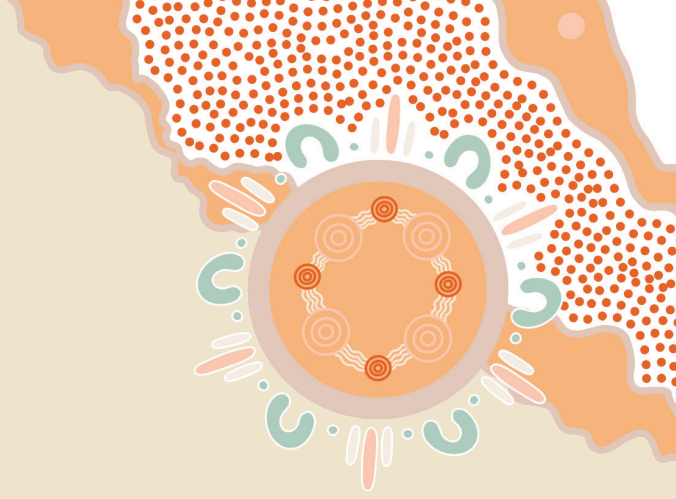
Kylie Degenhardt is a proud Palawa woman and Executive Manager Cultural Clinician at Aboriginal Family Support Services, bringing over 15 years of experience across the public and not-for-profit sectors in areas including health, mental health, homelessness, family support and child protection. A highly respected leader, Kylie has worked extensively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, developing and leading culturally responsive programs that support high-needs clients and strengthen community wellbeing. She has played a key role in driving organisational change through her leadership of Reconciliation Action Plans, national cultural awareness training initiatives and cross-sector collaborations.



Kathleen Pinkerton, Board Member (Retired)

Kathleen is a proud Widi woman from the Yamatji Nation in Western Australia. She is a Chairperson of Yorganop Association Incorporated and a graduate of Edith Cowan University with a Bachelor of Social Science in Indigenous Services. Kathleen's background includes having worked in child protection, early childhood and training sector where she developed extensive experience in facilitating, coordinating and delivering programs, particularly in rural and remote communities.





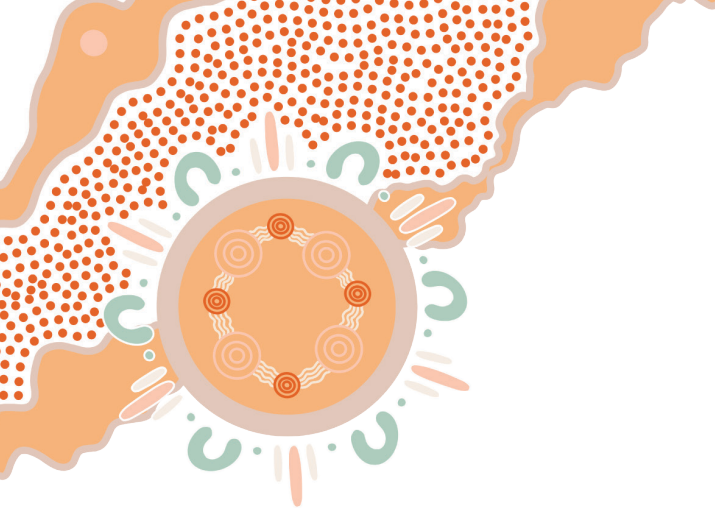
Sharron Williams, Board Member (Resigned)

Sharron is a Narungga/Kurna woman who has been the CEO of Aboriginal Family Support Services (AFSS), the peak Aboriginal child welfare organisation in South Australia, since 1997. Sharron's experience includes 15 years with Correctional Services in strategic and policy development positions. Sharron's strengths are building relationships with government and industry on behalf of the community, based on respect and a commitment to protecting the rights of the Aboriginal community. Sharron has been with SNAICC since 1999.



Garth Morgan, Board Member (Resigned)

Garth has dedicated his professional career to improving health and community services from the government and not-for-profit sector. He has significant executive experience, including on several boards across health (including mental health), housing, media and recruitment. Garth is passionate about supporting organisations to improve their strategy implementation, strategic and operational governance and manage change. He is currently CEO of Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Ltd (QATSICPP) and leads the evaluation of the Youth Justice Family Led Decision Making trial, the establishment of a Centre of Excellence and the development of 33 Family Wellbeing service catchment profiles. Garth provides high-level evidence-informed policy analysis and strategic advice on issues and opportunities that positively impact on the rights and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

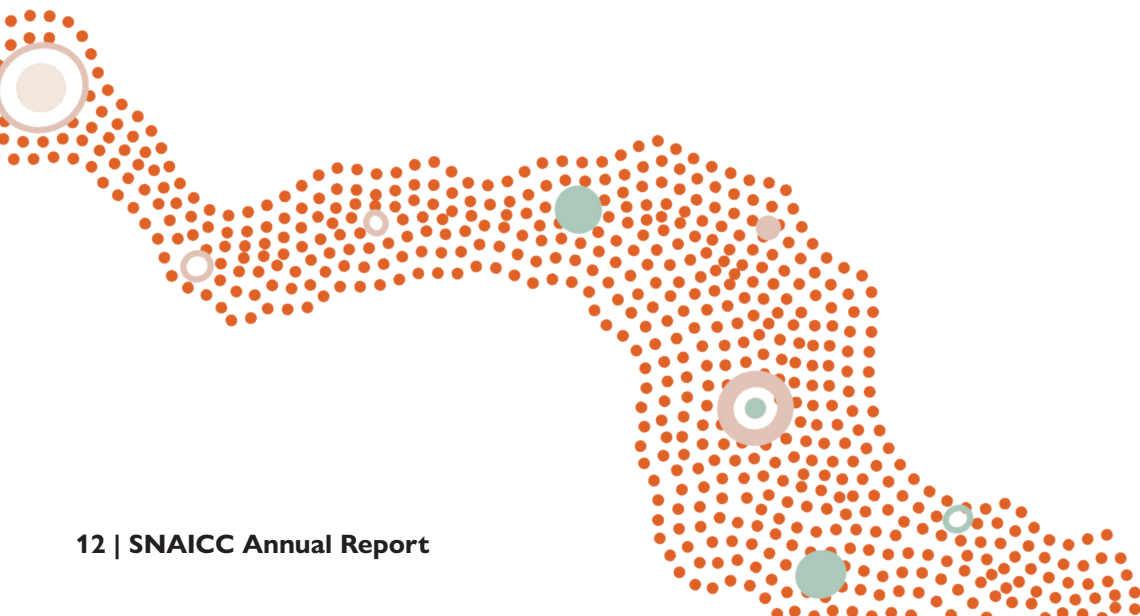


GOVERNANCE REVIEW

In 2024, the Board finalised an independent review it commissioned into SNAICC's governance arrangements. The subsequent report included several recommendations that were adopted, including:

- that SNAICC transfer registration from the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (CATSI Act) to a company limited by guarantee (CLG) under the Corporations Act 2001
- a revised Constitution
- the tightening of its membership criteria, including the requirement for Associates to sign a Statement of Commitment to demonstrate an intent to work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their organisations to support the goals and objectives of SNAICC, and the guiding principles that align with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- an updated fee structure scaled according to membership type and size, to contribute to greater equity and sustainability across our member base.

The changes were adopted via an Extra-Ordinary General Meeting on July 26, 2024. In the year since we have been implementing new systems to promote and manage these changes that will further strengthen our governance and organisation.



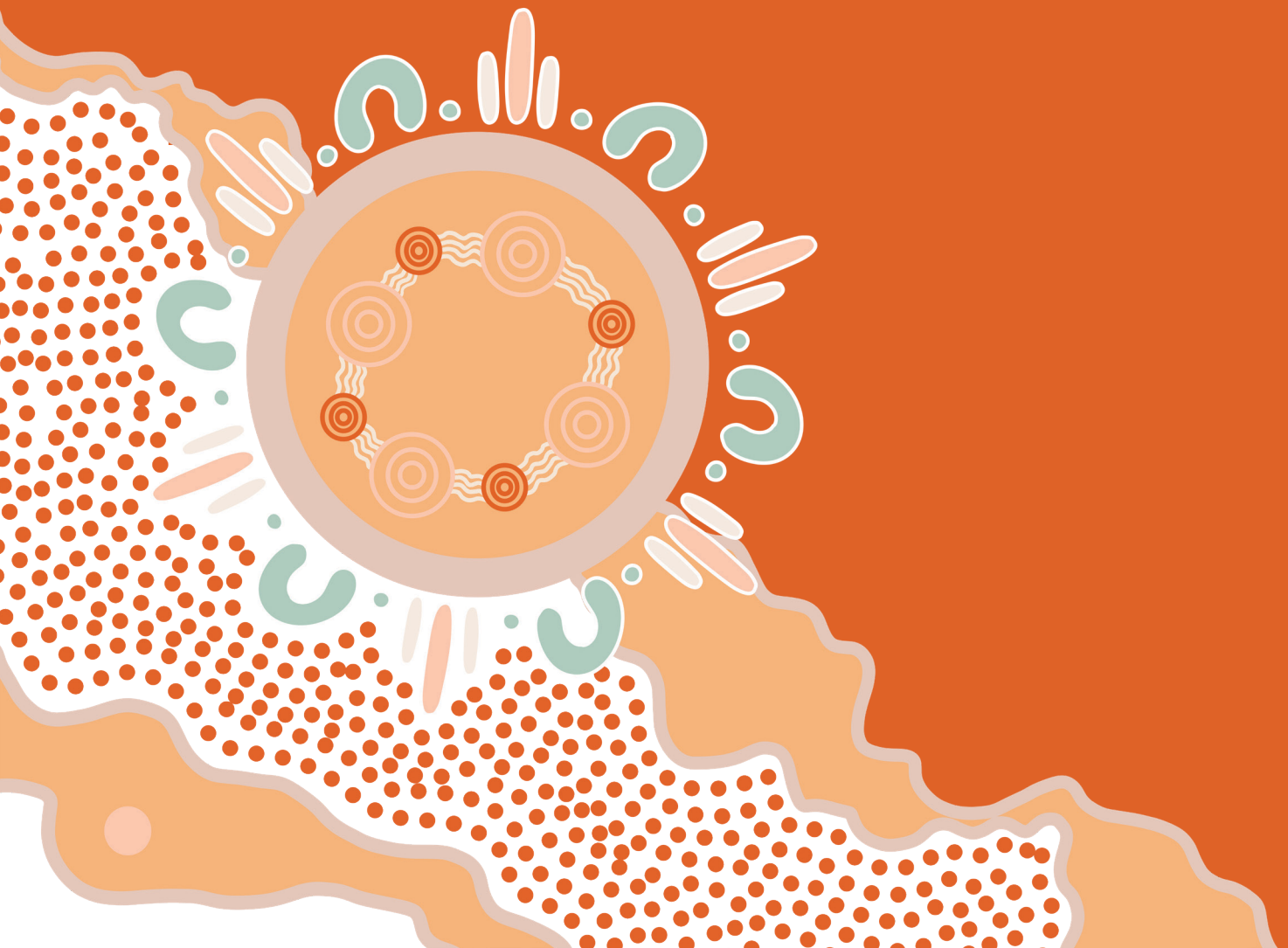
OUR COUNCIL MEMBERS

The SNAICC Council includes the Board members and additional representatives from SNAICC member organisations in each jurisdiction.

The Council provides strategic and policy advice and is structured to bring cross-sector state and territory experience and knowledge to foster interstate information exchange and engagement.

State/Territory	Organisation	Delegate
Australian Capital Territory	Yerrabi – Child & Family Aboriginal Corporation	Selina Walker
New South Wales	Muloobinba Aboriginal Corporation	Emma Beckett
	NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec)	John Leha
Northern Territory	Danila Dilba Biluru Butji Binnilutlum Health Service Aboriginal Corporation	Rob McPhee
	Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (CAAC)	Dawn Ross
Queensland	Palm Island Community Company Limited (PICC)	Rachel Atkinson
	Queensland Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP)	Lizzie Adams
South Australia	Aboriginal Family Support Services (AFSS)	Kylie Degenhardt
Tasmania	Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC)	Wendy Moore
Victoria	Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA)	Muriel Bamblett
	Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. (VAEAI)	Neville Atkinson
Western Australia	Coolabaroo Neighbourhood Centre	Joanne Della Bona
	Yorganop Associated Inc.	Barbara Henry

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES





NATIONAL COMMISSIONER FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN

On 13 February 2024, the Australian Government announced the establishment of a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People. This was the result of decades of advocacy by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the sector.

The National Commissioner was established on 13 January 2025, with an Acting Commissioner appointed while the selection process for the ongoing Commissioner role took place.

SNAICC and the sector have consistently advocated for a fully empowered, fully resourced and fully legislated National Commissioner, which was reflected in the Prime Minister's announcement. Through the development and implementation of *Safe and Supported: the National Plan for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031*, SNAICC and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group have worked to develop strong minimum requirements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioners, ensuring they have the powers, mandate and independence to effectively promote the rights of our children and young people.

The Acting National Commissioner has commenced their work in the role, while SNAICC and the Leadership Group continue to strongly advocate for legislation to deliver on the commitment for a fully empowered and resourced National Commissioner. The National Commissioner will be a game-changer for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. It will focus on providing rights-based accountability and oversight and advocating for evidence-based change to policies and systems that will ensure our children grow up safe and connected to their family, culture and community.

Work on the National Commissioner sits alongside work to establish and strengthen independent and empowered Commissioner roles in every jurisdiction, ensuring a consistent system of rights-based accountability to protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. This includes developing and negotiating minimum requirements for the powers and functions of Commissioner roles with governments as an action under *Safe and Supported*.

The Australian Capital Territory and South Australia have already established strong Commissioner roles which largely meet or exceed the minimum requirements, and Tasmania has progressed work on draft legislation to establish a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People, working in partnership with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre.



Children's Day Poster 2024

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN'S DAY 2024

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day is our national day dedicated to celebrating our children and has been recognised every year on August 4 since 1988. Children's Day gives all Australians the opportunity to show their support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and learn about the impact that culture, family and community play in the life of every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child.

Children's Day is a SNAICC initiative, and each year, communities across the continent hold their own unique celebrations; in 2024, there were a record 102 events registered through the SNAICC website.

These took place across the continent from Kirriri/Hammond Island in the Torres Strait, to Galiwin'ku in the Northern Territory, Eaton in Western Australia, Moruya on the south coast of New South Wales, and Gunditjmara Country/Tae Rak in regional Victoria. Of these registered events, 30 were proudly hosted by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and programs.

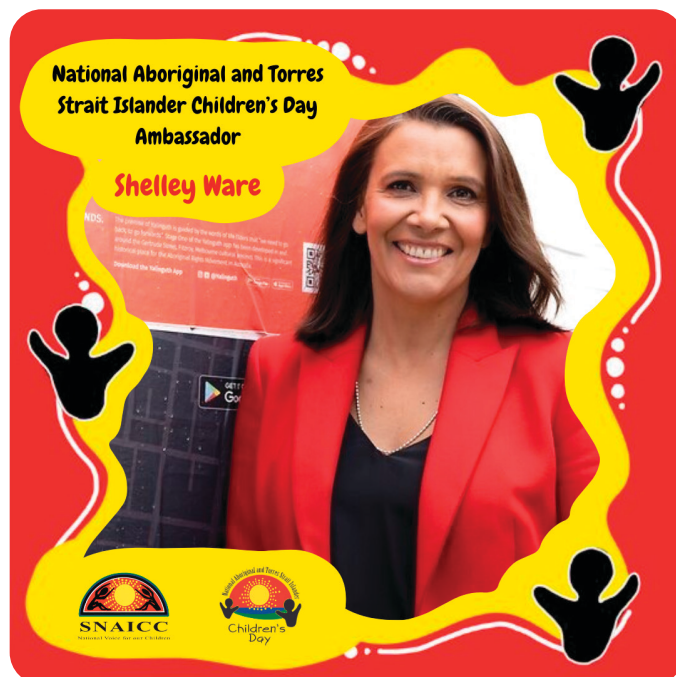
This year also saw an unprecedented demand for Children's Day resources. SNAICC distributed a record 20,000 Children's Day bags (up from 15,000 in 2023) with an extra 5,000 produced in response to overwhelming demand and feedback from organisations that often miss out. The entire stock sold out within a month.

STRONG IN CULTURE, STRONGER TOGETHER

The theme for the 2024 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day Strong in Culture, Stronger Together elevates the intention of Children's Day, focusing on the strength of our children that comes from their connection to culture and mob. The Children's Day 2024 theme aimed to empower our children, making them feel proud of who they are and where they come from. Showing them that their culture is one of the most sacred, strong and important assets that they can have. If they are strong in culture, then they are strong in their identity, and this is important for future generations to come.

SHELLEY WARE: 2024 CHILDREN'S DAY AMBASSADOR

Yankunytjatjara and Wirangu woman Shelley Ware was the 2024 Children's Day Ambassador. Shelley is a well-known TV and radio presenter, columnist and teacher, bringing warmth and visibility to this year's celebrations. She narrated the Children's Day campaign video and shared a special reading of the 2024 Children's Day book Wamparla Apira, Possums and Tall Trees.





FLAGSHIP EVENT

The 2024 national flagship event was held on Wirangu Country in Ceduna, South Australia, in partnership with Ngura Yadurirn Child and Family Centre and Minya Bunhii Childcare Centre. SNAICC has an ongoing relationship with Ngura Yadurirn through the Connected Beginnings program and was proud to support their Children's Day celebrations.

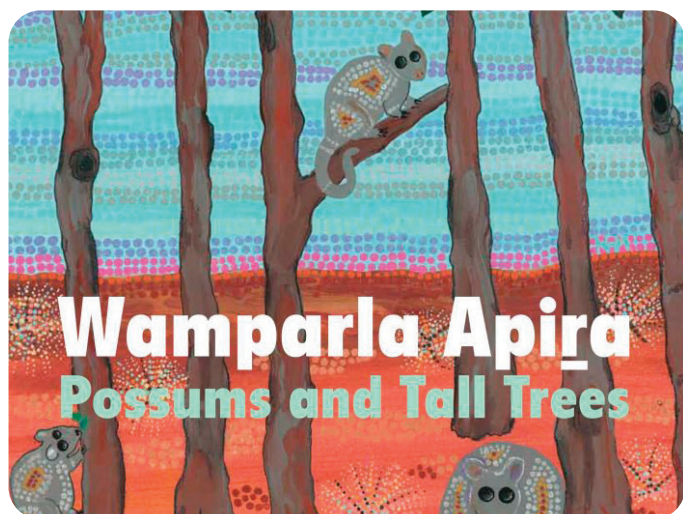
The event welcomed over 200 children, families and community members. Highlights included a Welcome to Country by Uncle Peter Miller, speeches from SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle and Ngura Yadurirn Director Susie Bowden, and a day full of fun, culture and connection. Children enjoyed activities such as boomerang painting, face painting, decorating Aboriginal flag cupcakes, making damper, reading tracks and hearing a reading of the Children's Day book. They were treated to a community barbecue featuring kangaroo tail, damper and fresh fruit, and every child took home their very own Children's Day bag.



WAMPARLA APIRA, POSSUMS AND TALL TREES: 2024 CHILDREN'S DAY BOOK

The Indigenous Literacy Foundation generously donated Thanthi Syd Strangways' book, Wamparla Apira, Possums and Tall Trees, illustrated by Kathy Arbon, for this year's Children's Day.

Arabana Elder Thanthi Syd Strangways tells the fascinating story of Wampala Apira, Possums and Tall Trees, in both Arabana and English, with beautiful illustrations by Kathy Arbon. In the book, it is described how people climb apira (tall trees) to hunt wamparla (possums) for clothing and food. Thanthi Syd writes that hunting is not permitted everywhere by elders, describing that in an area called Yarripulanha, there are few possums and they are considered sacred. When Thanti Syd was a child, they would camp and go possum hunting for food and clothing with their grandparents and other Arabana tribespeople.



PLANNING THE 2025 SNAICC NATIONAL CONFERENCE

As with many major projects, planning for SNAICC'25 commenced more than two years in advance of the event that will take place 7-9 October 2025 at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre in Meanjin/Brisbane. The development, planning and delivery of SNAICC's flagship national event is supported by all three business units led by the Strategic Engagement and Communications team.

As of June 2025, conference planning is well advanced; more than 50% of registrations have been taken up, the full program of six plenary sessions and 84 breakout sessions have been confirmed and are available on the conference website. The program will also offer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander singers, musicians and artists who will perform throughout the three days of the conference during breaks and social events. The Gala Cocktail Party on the final evening will feature Christine Anu and local DJ Big Mike.

The response to the coordinated and proactive approach to sponsorship and sales of exhibition booths has been similarly strong, reaching 97% of the board-approved stretch target.

The event planning and logistics are well advanced and on track to deliver a successful 2025 SNAICC National Conference on time and within budget.

THE NATIONAL AGREEMENT ON CLOSING THE GAP

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap remains one of the most powerful levers for SNAICC to work in genuine partnership with all levels of government to improve outcomes for our children. Through the National Agreement, all governments have committed to four Priority Reforms that change how they work with our communities, and 17 socio-economic targets aimed at achieving equity in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This year, the first ever Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review of the National Agreement was released. This landmark review placed the voices, experiences and solutions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the centre. Thousands of people from across the country contributed through surveys, submissions, community forums and conversations.

The message from the Review is clear, governments are not living up to their commitments under the National Agreement. Communities reported a wide gap between what was promised and what is being delivered. The Review is a call to action, highlighting that for the National Agreement to succeed, governments must share power, invest in communities, and follow through on their commitments.

SNAICC continues to play a leading role in progressing the National Agreement through our membership of the Coalition of Peaks – a collective of over 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations representing more than 800 Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). The Coalition came together as an act of self-determination to be formal partners with governments in the design and delivery of the National Agreement. Our CEO, Catherine Liddle, serves as one of two deputy lead conveners of the Coalition, alongside Lead Convener Aunty Pat Turner.

SNAICC takes its responsibility as a member of the Coalition of Peaks seriously and contributes to working groups and shared decision-making forums on a wide range of cross-cutting structural issues including:

- Justice Policy
- Workforce development
- Economic inclusion
- Sovereignty and self-determination
- Evaluation and monitoring
- Public sector reform

In addition to this cross-cutting work, we continue to bring the voices of our members to national policy forums, advocating for reform in early childhood education and care and child protection.

SNAICC remains committed to working in partnership with our fellow Peaks and holding governments accountable for fully implementing the National Agreement.



Paths to Purpose, Youth Voice artwork by Tovani Cox

YOUTH VOICE

In late 2024, SNAICC engaged in an initial nine month scoping project to develop a model for a Youth Voice structure within SNAICC. The project aims to gather diverse perspectives, ensure inclusivity, and build a strong, representative Youth Voice structure that reflects the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and aims to ensure meaningful engagement with stakeholders to amplify the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

Youth Voice is an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to shape and contribute to SNAICC's work. A youth voice mechanism will also help cultivate young people's interest in policy, politics, programs, advocacy and system reform and develop their

leadership skills. The project also creates an opportunity to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth to contribute to national policy and advocacy in a safe, supported and reciprocal environment that centres Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing.

In August 2025, the SNAICC Board and Council endorsed a Youth Voice proposal based on the findings from a nine month engagement process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples, Communities and key stakeholders. This engagement process included one-on-one meetings, submissions and in-person workshops.

The SNAICC Youth Voice will continue to evolve, being guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young peoples who engage with the SNAICC Youth Voice.

OUR WAYS, STRONG WAYS - THE NATIONAL PLAN TO ADDRESS FAMILY, DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITIES

In 2024, SNAICC was commissioned by the Commonwealth Government to develop the first dedicated national plan for addressing family, domestic and sexual violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Led and developed by community in partnership with all Australian governments, *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices* is the key national strategy to achieve Target 13 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap — to reduce family violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities by 50% by 2031, as progress towards zero.

Family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) affects every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in Australia. The roots of FDSV are deeply embedded in the ongoing effects of the violence of colonisation: achieving Target 13 requires a whole-of-government, whole of community effort to support people experiencing and using violence and to promote healing.

Through the project steering committee, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders have worked closely with Commonwealth, state and territory governments to engage with communities, the family violence sector, academic experts and Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander people with lived experience to develop a truly community-centred response to family, domestic and sexual violence.

SNAICC undertook broad engagement centred around the voices of those with lived experience, as well as a public submissions process, and targeted engagements with people who have experienced FDSV, children and young people, and the ACCO sector that are experts in supporting our people to address violence and find safety and healing.

The process of preparing *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices* has worked to move away from top-down government approaches, and instead centres community-led, place-based responses to increase safety and promote healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and communities. The evidence is overwhelming that community-centred and community-driven solutions work. A draft plan was provided to the Government prior to the Federal election and SNAICC looks forward to supporting the finalisation and plans for the implementation of the plan and to seeing practical outcomes in our communities.



Unified Strength: Building a Network of Family
Safety artwork by Tovani Cox

SUPPORTING A STRONG SECTOR

INTEGRATED EARLY YEARS SERVICE FUNDING REFORM

In February this year, the Federal Parliament passed the *Early Childhood Education and Care (Three-Day Guarantee) Bill 2025* effectively removing the long-standing, inequitable barrier to childcare access for our children. For years, SNAICC has been joining the ACCO sector in calling for the removal of the Activity Test, which prohibited many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families participating in early learning services.

In 2024-25, SNAICC took the opportunity to call for the Activity Test's removal in our submissions to, and engagement with the Productivity Commission's inquiry into what it will take to create a truly universal early childhood education and care (ECEC) system, and the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's childcare inquiry. These influential reports reinforced what our sector has known for a long-time: the activity test had to go. This long-overdue reform will significantly improve equitable access to quality early learning, boosting school readiness and lifelong outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



For SNAICC, this is a welcome first step on a longer road towards ACCO early years services finally enjoying a funding system which works for them. The Commonwealth Government's market-based funding system for the ECEC service sector has historically undermined access and affordability. This system effectively excludes many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families from the services they need for their children to grow up strong in culture, developmentally on track, ready to start school well, and to thrive. Across many conversations SNAICC has had with them, ACCOs have continually highlighted that their funding is piecemeal, inadequate, administratively burdensome, and does not reflect the true cost of providing holistic, high-quality early learning and family supports proven to make a difference for our families.

We continue to press for a dedicated, supply-side funding model for ACCOs, designed in partnership with ACCOs, and which meets the unique, culturally informed and family-centred service provision of ACCOs. In 2023-24, we developed the *Funding Model Options for ACCO Integrated Early Years Services Report*, with support on economic modelling and financial viability analysis from Deloitte Access Economics. 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 children, families and communities they support.

We are working with the Commonwealth, state and territory departments of education to develop concrete advice to Ministers on implementation of the funding model. The three-day guarantee was a positive first step, but a dedicated ACCO funding model will be a true game-changer.

In parallel, the Commonwealth Department of Education has commissioned the Early Education Service Delivery Price (SDP) project to comprehensively take stock of what it costs to deliver high quality and responsive ECEC to Australian communities, families and children. We will be working with Deloitte Access Economics to ensure that ACCOs and their communities are thoroughly included, and that the actual costs of their unique approaches to early years service provision are reflected in the research and price benchmarks. This project is in an early phase, and we look forward to engaging meaningfully with our membership through 2025-26.



EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY PARTNERSHIP

Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership

ECCDPP logo designed by Samantha Campbell & Coolamon Creative

ECCDPP PRIORITIES

Over the past year, the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP) has continued to progress its work to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families through genuine shared decision-making. In 2024, the Partnership endorsed a second set of 16 priorities across early childhood care and development policy areas. These build on the Partnership's Year 1 priorities and reflect its remit in supporting progress against Closing the Gap Targets 2, 3, 4, 12 and 13.

Key areas of focus include:

- Implementing Year 1 priorities and translating research into action through the Data Lake, Shared Decision-Making Guidance and Evidence Guidance Framework

- Reforming funding arrangements for ACCOs delivering high-quality, culturally safe services
- Commissioning new research grounded in holistic understandings of child and family wellbeing
- Strengthening collaboration with other shared decision-making bodies such as *Safe and Supported* and other Policy Partnership forums including the Justice Policy Partnership.

The ECCDPP will continue building its collaboration with *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children*, with a particular focus on Target 12 – reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.



Guiding Stars, ECCDPP artwork by Tovani Cox



RESEARCH PROJECTS

Through ECCDPP funding, SNAICC has delivered a range of strategic research and capability-building projects aligned with the Partnership's priorities. In 2024, this included the completion of a new Data Lake to enhance SNAICC's capacity to store, analyse and apply data across its work. The platform features three interactive dashboards enabling staff to access data relevant to children and families nationally and by jurisdiction. With over 1,200 data tables, it lays a strong foundation for evidence-based advocacy and supports progress under Priority Reform Four of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The Data Lake will continue to grow, helping to promote Indigenous Data Sovereignty and inform sector-wide action.

SNAICC is also leading the development of a Shared Decision-Making Guidance Project to support governments to embed more meaningful and accountable partnership practices in the early childhood care and development sector. Informed by national consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies, ACCOs and government representatives, the guidance aims to be a practical tool for strengthening shared decision-making under Priority Reform One.

Another major initiative has been the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Evidence Guidance Framework. This work aims to reframe how 'evidence' is defined and used by governments, by recognising and embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems. It will help build a shared understanding between governments, ACCOs and communities around how evidence can be applied in culturally safe and community-led ways. A consortium led by QATSICPP, the Jumbunna Institute and Onemda is delivering the framework, with the final report expected in November 2025.

As part of a shared priority with the Languages Policy Partnership, SNAICC is also collaborating with First Languages Australia on a project exploring how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are taught and promoted in early learning. The research highlights the value of language in early childhood development and the importance of supporting ACCOs and language practitioners to embed languages in service delivery.

IMPROVING THE COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

The Communities for Children (C4C) program, delivered by DSS, is one of the largest funding streams for child and family wellbeing administered by the Australian Government. It aims to provide early-intervention, non-intensive support services to children aged 0-12 years and their families in communities experiencing socioeconomic vulnerability and disadvantage. C4C operates in a place-based 'backbone' structure across 52 communities, funding Facilitating Partners who subcontract service delivery to local providers in each region (Community Partners).

Facilitating Partners are required to allocate at least 50% of their funding to evidence-based programs, with the set processes for demonstrating a program's evidence base having been critiqued – including by SNAICC – as disadvantaging ACCOs by prioritising Western standards of evidence at the expense of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and methodologies. In 2024-25, DSS commissioned AIFS to reshape the evidence-based requirements by developing a new, more flexible and culturally responsive tool to assess a proposed program's alignment with the evidence base (along with resources to support quality monitoring, evaluation and learning).

AIFS partnered with SNAICC on this project to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence, and the perspectives of ACCOs delivering relevant support services, were appropriately centred. We conducted a rigorous literature review to identify the key characteristics of programs that most effectively support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, incorporated these characteristics into the draft tool, and tested the tool extensively with ACCOs across the country to maximise its relevance and usability.

SNAICC's vision for this project was to better enable ACCOs to demonstrate the strengths of their programs, support greater investment in the ACCO sector through C4C (in-line with Priority Reform Two of the National Agreement), and increase C4C's effectiveness in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. We also continue to advocate for broader change to the C4C program to improve its alignment with the Priority Reforms.



EARLY YEARS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years workforce with appropriate skills, capabilities and experience is an essential pillar of a thriving and sustainable community-controlled sector, and a key feature of our efforts to close the gap in early childhood education and development.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and teachers are essential to supporting our children to grow up strong in culture, because we know that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families are more likely to consistently use ECEC providers when their children are taught by their community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators and teachers bring cultural knowledge, connection, and community trust to early learning environments. It is these factors which support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children stay developmentally on track while strengthening their identity and sense of belonging.

SNAICC is continuing to advance calls for sufficient investment into developing a highly skilled, well-paid and supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce in ACCO early learning settings. It is critical that the value of our educators and ECEC workers is recognised in their wages. In 2024-25, SNAICC advocated strongly for a sector-wide wage increase for the ECEC workforce.

In September, we celebrated passage of the *Wage Justice for Early Childhood Education and Care Workers (Special Account) Bill 2024*, establishing the Worker Retention Payment (WRP) grant opportunity – an opt-in payment by the Commonwealth government to eligible ECEC services running centre-based day care through the childcare subsidy system for a 15% pay increase for their staff.

While welcome, the WRP grant was not designed with the unique context of the ACCO ECEC sector in mind, resulting in increased challenges for ACCO ECEC services in applying for the grant. As a result, the Department has commissioned SNAICC to provide support to ACCO ECEC services to submit their applications for the pay increase, and this program has been a major focus of SNAICC's Workforce, EYS and Policy and Research teams throughout 2024-2025. Nearly 50% of eligible ACCO ECECs have applied for the WRP grant to date.

We have advocated for improvements to the process so no ACCO service is left out or unable to access the pay increase. This advocacy has resulted in:

- changes to the WRP grant process to make it easier for ACCO ECEC services to apply
- extensions to deadlines to ensure ACCOs are not inequitably impacted by inadequate timeframes, and
- changes in funding calculations to ensure ACCO ECEC services are adequately funded under the grant.

In 2023-2024, SNAICC also led and contributed to a range of initiatives to strengthen the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years workforce. We remain closely engaged with the Jobs and Skills Council, driving the advancement of education and workforce development in ECEC, as well as on ACECQA's Shaping our Future Advisory Group.

The Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relationships has committed \$36 million dollars to establish a VET Policy Partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members of the Coalition of Peaks. The VET Policy Partnership is being established under the National Skills Agreement and the National Agreement for Closing the Gap from early 2026. To represent the needs and voices of our early years membership, SNAICC is a member of the Interim Partnership Committee responsible for establishing the VET Policy Partnership alongside our partner peak bodies. Like the ECCDPP, the VET Policy Partnership will represent a unique forum to advance the change needed to ensure our children are being taught, cared for and strengthened in their culture in their first years by a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

We have also developed a business case for a Workforce Innovation Fund (WIF); a bold, ACCO-led initiative to address the underrepresented and under-resourcing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC workforces, and strengthen their educational pathways into VET and beyond. With enough funding from government and philanthropic sectors, the Fund will aim to finance, incubate and scale Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled workforce development initiatives across Australia over four years. Led by SNAICC, the concept of the Fund is grounded in the principle that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community knows best how to grow its workforce and support its children. This fund will invest in a responsive mixture of training, wraparound supports, mentorship, leadership development, and recognition of cultural knowledge as a key competency for early years educators.



CHILD SAFETY IN INTEGRATED EARLY YEARS SETTINGS

The wellbeing and safety of children should be a fundamental guiding principle for all early childhood care provider. Recognising this, in 2023, all Australian governments commissioned a review of the child safety arrangements under the National Quality Framework, the quality improvement and regulation system for early childhood education and care. Following the conclusion of the review, undertaken by ACECQA, a suite of regulatory and policy adjustments were recommended, and are being considered by all Departments of Education.

In 2024-25, SNAICC has advocated strongly for the child safety review and its recommended regulatory changes to account for, accommodate and strengthen the ACCO sector and the ways that it keeps children and their families safe; not just physically safe, but culturally safe too. Alongside Deloitte Access Economics, in 2024-25 SNAICC led consultations with ACCOs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders to ensure their voices and perspectives are included in decisions made about the child safety regulatory decisions.

We also made our own submission to the Child Safety Review Regulatory Impact Statement, providing advice on the importance of not just physical safety, but also cultural and psychological safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and that regulatory reform to improve general child safety should be accompanied with system-wide improvements to ensure our children are made to feel proud of their identities in their earliest years.





In 2024-25, high-profile child abuse cases exposed distressing failures in the childcare sector. While we welcomed reforms to address risks to children, we have urged the government to ensure that they are grounded in the realities that face the sector.

Ensuring safety requires that underlying systemic issues impacting Australia's early learning and care sector be properly addressed, including the current Child Care Subsidy funding model which contributes to a profit-driven environment, where some providers can put financial gain ahead of the wellbeing of children. ACCOs models in contrast provide family-centred, community-embedded, culturally safe environments.

We continue to support strong calls from the sector for a new Commission for ECEC, as recommended by the Productivity Commission's A path to universal early childhood education and care report. However, more regulation is not top priority when it comes to keeping children safe. ECEC quality and safety require ongoing, adequate investment, system stewardship and attention to workforce and building conditions. An ECEC Commission would provide leadership over improvements to the ECEC system and identify the levers from all levels of government that would lead to structural improvements in ECEC provision, including those which must be undertaken in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DISABILITY AND DEVELOPMENTAL SUPPORTS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have shown enduring commitment to the care and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities. Our communities recognise the diversity of cultures, languages, knowledge systems and beliefs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and that these are identified as cultural determinants of living well. It is the only disability model that focuses on what keeps people strong, as distinct from managing or medicalising the impact of difference.

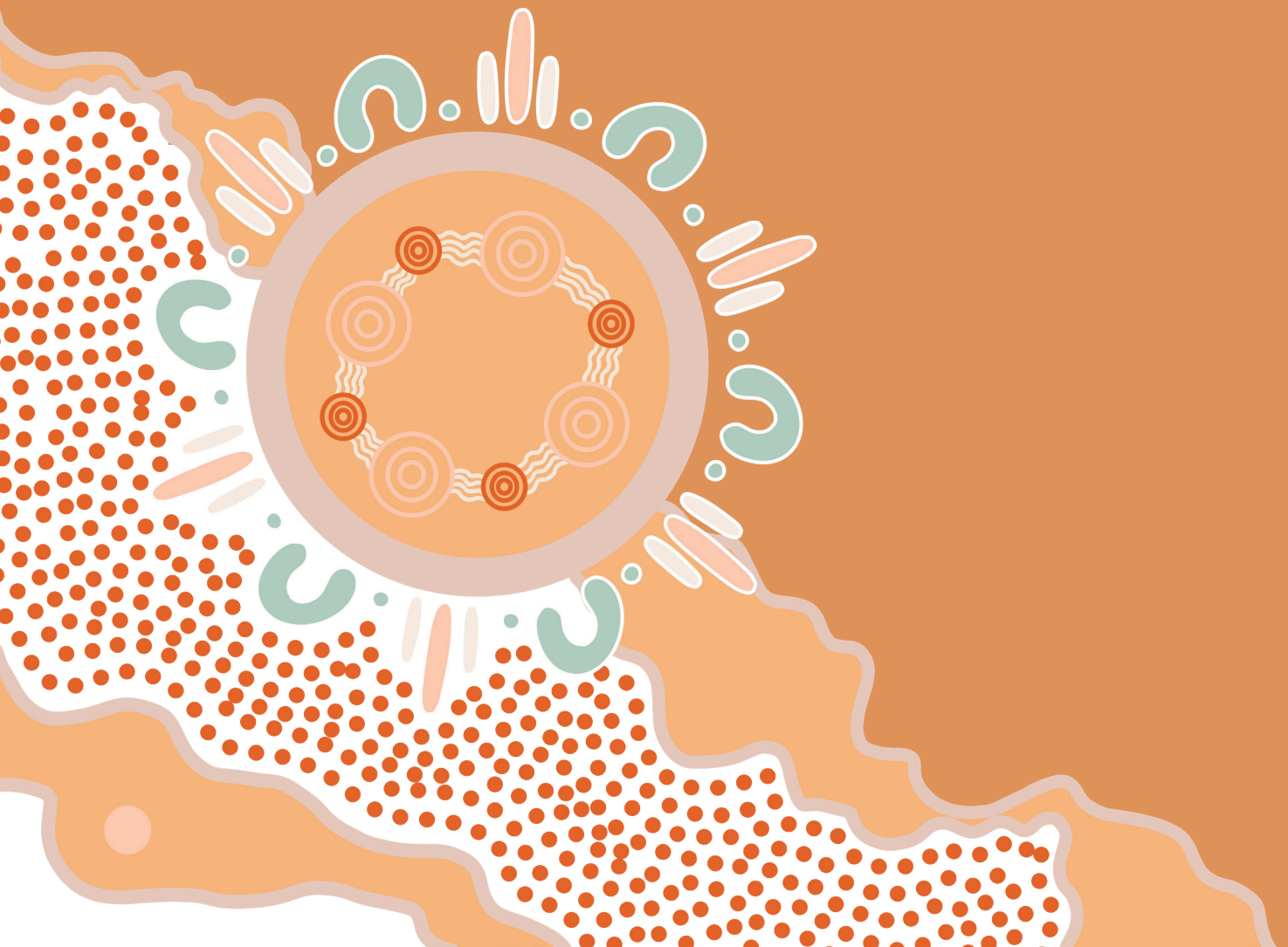
SNAICC and the First People's Disability Network have been commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to implement the Early Childhood Outreach project, a new initiative that aims to improve the life experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with disability aged between 0 and 8. SNAICC has partnered with First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN), bringing together the expertise and experience of ACCO early years services and those providing specialist disability supports.

Through a community of practice, the project will create opportunities for shared learning, and provide both national and targeted resources to support ACCO early years services. This project will be guided by a Steering Committee made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders in the disability space, ensuring the work is grounded in community knowledge and leadership.

Through the project, we are aiming to support the capability that exists in many ACCOs providing culturally strong, inclusive, and accessible early childhood disability services, and develop some targeted resources which highlight this strong, cultural practice.

The project is designed to contribute to broader disability sector reforms stemming from the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review, with a renewed focus on foundational supports and early childhood outreach, assessment and disability support pathways.

CHILD PROTECTION





FAMILY MATTERS REPORT 2024

Each year, the *Family Matters Report* tracks how governments across the country are responding to the pressing challenge of ending the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. It fosters transparency within child protection systems and centres Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions that strengthen outcomes for our children.

In November 2024, SNAICC released the ninth edition of the *Family Matters Report* at a launch event held in Warrane/Sydney. The gathering was opened by SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle and featured video messages from the Federal Minister for

Indigenous Australians, Malarndirri McCarthy. Attendees also heard from SNAICC treasurer and AbSec CEO John Leha, and Life Without Barriers CEO Claire Robbs. The event showcased videos celebrating the work of Kornar Winmil Yunti's *Improving Multidisciplinary Responses* program, and the Allies for Children.

To further elevate the Report's findings and share insights with the ACCO sector, SNAICC hosted a webinar in December 2024. Facilitated by CEO Catherine Liddle, the session spotlighted innovative practice from ACCOs around the country, including presentations by Melanie Briggs, Waminda's Senior Balaang Manager for Birthing on Country, and Theresa Simpson, CEO of Mookai Rosie Bi-Bayan.

Also presenting were Jamie Crosby, CEO of Families Australia, who outlined current efforts to support service transitions from mainstream to ACCO-led delivery; and Tabatha Feher, Life Without Barriers' Chief Advisor for Public Affairs and Advocacy, who spoke about transition work between Life Without Barriers and Kurbingui.

Planning for the tenth edition of the *Family Matters Report* is now underway, with the launch expected in early December. This next chapter will continue to amplify ACCO-led practice and spotlight the stories and solutions driving real change for our children and families.

SNAPSHOT DATA 2024



22,908

ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT
ISLANDER CHILDREN
IN OUT-OF-HOME
CARE¹

Making
up 41% of
children in
out-of-home
care, but
only 6% of
all children
in Australia

41%

= LESS THAN HALF
ARE LIVING WITH
ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT
ISLANDER RELATIVES
AND CARERS

10.8 x

MORE LIKELY TO
BE IN OUT-OF-
HOME CARE THAN
NON-INDIGENOUS
CHILDREN

11.5 x

MORE LIKELY BE
REMOVED INTO
OUT-OF-HOME
CARE AS AN
INFANT (<1 YEAR)

ALMOST

15%

OF CHILD PROTECTION
FUNDING IS SPENT
ON PREVENTION AND
OUT-OF-HOME CARE
SERVICES AS OPPOSED
TO PREVENTATIVE
SUPPORTS SUCH AS
FAMILY SUPPORT
SERVICES

ONLY

6%

OF CHILD PROTECTION
FUNDING WENT
TO ACCOS

SAFE AND SUPPORTED: NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN 2021-2031

In 2024-25, SNAICC continued supporting implementation of *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-31*. *Safe and Supported* establishes how all governments will work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and the non-government sector to ensure children and young people grow up safe and supported, free from harm and neglect. It is the main national strategy to address target 12 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, aiming to reduce the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care by 45% by 2031.

SNAICC supports the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group for Safe and Supported, which is made up of leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts in child and family services, to engage in shared decision-making with governments about implementing two existing Action Plans, including a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan lasting from 2023-26.

The Leadership Group and SNAICC have made significant progress in working with governments to ensure that key policy outcomes reflect the needs and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, including:

- developing a National Child and Family Investment Strategy to shift towards adequate and coordinated funding of early, targeted and culturally safe support services delivered by ACCOs
- developing a design report for a National Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Safety, which is expected to be funded and announced by the Department of Social Services (DSS) shortly
- developing a Legal Supports Scoping Study on the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families accessing legal supports to inform work by governments in partnership with the Leadership Group to improve access to culturally safe supports
- partnering with DSS on the design and implementation of the Innovation Grant Fund, with \$10 million being committed over three years to 10 new ACCOs to provide prevention and early intervention supports and prepare for transferring resources and funding to ACCOs
- developing a definition and jurisdictional scan of delegated authority
- progressing national standards for active efforts to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle
- finalising a Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy for *Safe and Supported* and progressing Indicator Frameworks and a Data Development Plan.

DELEGATED AUTHORITY: JURISDICTIONAL SCAN

As part of a multi-pronged approach to progressing Action 1 (Delegated Authority) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan, SNAICC partnered with Candice Butler to develop a comprehensive jurisdictional scan of domestic and international approaches to transferring statutory child protection authority to Indigenous people, communities and/or organisations. Candice is a former SNAICC Board Director and inaugural Director of the QATSICPP Centre of Excellence, and is currently undertaking a PhD that examines Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' reclamation of child protection authority.

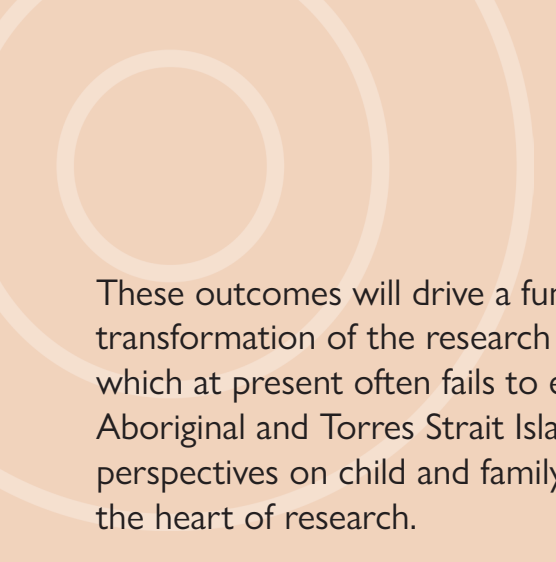
The jurisdictional scan seeks to build a knowledge base regarding the system needs required for successful implementation of delegated authority, and to begin mapping how these systems changes can best be enacted. This knowledge base is intended to inform state and territory governments' work to transition statutory child protection authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations. As well as supporting governments to build their understanding and capabilities in delegated authority mechanisms, it will also contribute to SNAICC's forthcoming development of a Best Practice and Critical Elements Framework. This Framework will help guide state and territory government efforts to implement Delegated Authority, troubleshoot challenges and adapt structures to suit their particular contexts.

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE DESIGN

Action 3 of the *Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan* calls for building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infrastructure for data sovereignty and improving the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base. SNAICC and the Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group have long advocated for this action to be delivered through the development and establishment of a National Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support (the Centre).

The Centre will be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led body that drives evidence-based approaches to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families to thrive. It will play a critical role in shaping a national research agenda that is grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and data sovereignty, as well as producing and commissioning innovative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led research.

Through evidence-informed advocacy, showcasing best practice and developing practical guidance for policymakers and practitioners, the Centre will be pivotal in ensuring that policies and programs are genuinely responsive to the priorities of our communities. It will also help to grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research workforce by offering support, training and development opportunities to emerging researchers.



These outcomes will drive a fundamental transformation of the research landscape, which at present often fails to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on child and family wellbeing at the heart of research.

In 2023, SNAICC was engaged by the Australian Department of Social Services (DSS) to undertake scoping and design for the Centre. Guided by leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics and ACCO sector representatives, SNAICC developed a design report outlining the Centre's purpose and functions, alongside the structural and operational elements required to ensure that Community voice and self-determination are at its heart. The final design report was completed in September 2024 and SNAICC's advice will now inform the Australian Department of Social Services' next steps for establishing the Centre in 2025-26, including the selection of a suitable organisation to lead the establishment process.

Since delivering the final design report, SNAICC has continued to progress an ambitious research agenda that reflects and complements the ECCDPP priorities, *Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan*, and the Family Matters Building Blocks. This has included commissioning research projects on the social return on investment attributable to Aboriginal Family-Led Decision-Making programs (to be delivered by a consortium of Lumenia, Arney Chong Consulting, and leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics from three universities) and the data landscape for pre-birth notifications and infant removals (to be delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics at the Australian Centre for Child Protection and University of Melbourne).

NATIONAL CHILD AND FAMILY INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The development of the first National Child and Family Investment Strategy, undertaken by SNAICC in partnership with QATSICPP and Social Ventures Australia across 2023-24 and 2024-25, represents another major step in *Safe and Supported* implementation. This Strategy aims to deliver on Action 2 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan ('Shift towards adequate and coordinated funding of early, targeted and culturally safe supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families').


The Investment Strategy aims to grow the proportion of funding invested in earlier supports (rather than tertiary child protection) for all children, as well as ensuring that funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is targeted at the ACCO sector. In setting out a pathway to transfer Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific expenditure away from non-Indigenous NGOs and towards ACCOs, the Strategy will support growth in the number, scale and capacity of ACCOs who deliver child and family services – so our children and families are supported by service providers who understand their holistic needs and are accountable to our communities. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and organisations have been advocating for this kind of system reform for many years, and SNAICC’s work on the Investment Strategy drew extensively on this long history of thought leadership.

The Strategy includes overarching principles and system elements for growing earlier supports and for transitioning funding to ACCOs, a commitment for all governments to develop an implementation plan on how they will bring these system elements to life, and a range of implementation guidance including ‘best practice example’ to support governments in implementing the shift. It is anticipated that the strategy will be progressed through *Safe and Supported* governance mechanisms for endorsement via shared decision-making in late 2025, allowing implementation to commence.

REFRESHING THE NATIONAL OUT-OF-HOME CARE STANDARDS

Action 5 of the First Action Plan focuses on improving out-of-home care systems to ensure that the wellbeing of children and young people is centred and better supported. In partnership with the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), SNAICC commenced a major activity under this action in 2024-25 – a DSS-funded project to undertake sector and community engagements on priority changes to the National Out-of-Home Care Standards (National Standards).

The 13 National Standards, which provide guidance on what helps to ensure positive experiences for children and young people in out-of-home care, have not been updated since they were first launched in 2011 – there is much scope for them to better target the specific needs and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and communities. Accordingly, SNAICC’s work on this project aims to develop recommendations for changes that ensure the National Standards align with international human rights frameworks, reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, and prioritise what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people need to stay strong in their mind, body and spirit when living in out-of-home care.



This crucial project has seen SNAICC engage sector, system and community stakeholders across every state and territory, including ACCOs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioners and Guardians, and key non-Indigenous organisations. A critical component of the project were the nine Yarning Circles we held to hear directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and carers who have lived experience of out-of-home care systems, which were held in partnership with eight local ACCOs and peak bodies across the country.

In 2025-26, the SNAICC team will analyse the expert knowledge gathered from these engagements, co-develop findings and recommendations with AIFS, and submit a final report to the *Safe and Supported* governance structure.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILD PLACEMENT PRINCIPLE REVIEWS

SNAICC conducts annual implementation reviews to assess the extent to which jurisdictions are complying with and implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. The reviews analysed quantitative and qualitative data from each state and territory to assess levels of compliance; identify required reform to achieve full implementation; and align the five elements of the Principle with five interrelated systems elements.

The reviews found that the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care remains an issue in all jurisdictions, with insufficient funding going to culturally safe early and intensive family support. Further, while all states and territories have made commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap to implement the Principle, there is an overall lack of action which is resulting in persistent and systemic failures to address persistent over-representation.

Some jurisdictions legislation or legislative amendments do not reflect community priorities, in allowing for, courts and relevant government departments to ignore the Principle. Even in jurisdictions that have made progress in legislating to improve compliance with the Principle and that have moved to support delegation of authority to ACCOs, there remains a disconnect between the intent of policies and legislation, and the real-world experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families' contact with the statutory systems.

The review confirmed that ACCOs play a critical role in delivering culturally safe and appropriate services for Aboriginal children and families, yet these organisations remain significantly underfunded. Advances are being made in delegating authority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care to ACCOs and this is having an impact in increasing reunification. Further funding and investment in the ACCO sector is needed to support self-determination and culturally safer responses in-line with the Principle.

PROJECT WATERWAYS TRAINING - CULTURAL RESPONSIVENESS & TRAUMA INFORMED PRACTICE

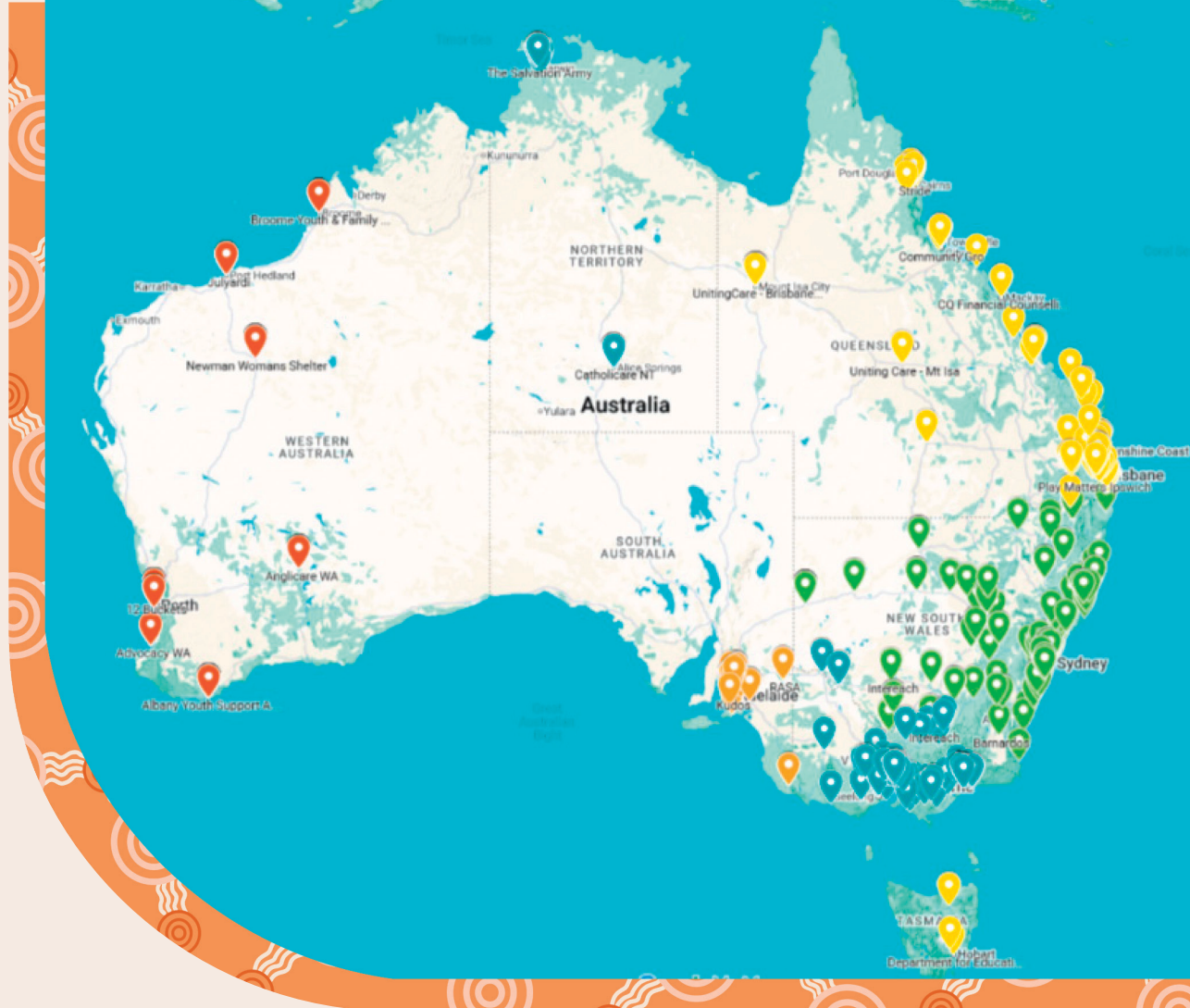
Project Waterways is an acronym for Weaving, Anti-racism, Trauma-Informed, Education, Responsiveness, With Wisdom, Awareness, Yarning, and Solidarity.

SNAICC, in partnership with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peaks and lead ACCOs AbSec, KWY, QATSICPP, VACCA and independent consultants Yamurrah, have co-designed and co-produced a national Cultural Responsiveness and Trauma Informed Practice training and development package. The partnership co-designed the training based on collective wisdom and experience from delivering similar training to develop a program specifically designed to meet Target 12 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Target 12 in the 2020 National Agreement is to reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander children (aged 0–17) in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031, from a 2019 baseline of 54.2 per 1, Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander children. Through strengthening the cultural responsiveness and trauma informed capabilities of the child and family sector with their practice and policy changes, we envision this work to help keep children with their families out of the out-of-home care system.



Training facilitators Belle Arnold and Nuriah Jadai delivering training in Kalgoorlie



Waterways Training – Geographic Reach

The partnership worked together in solidarity to build the cultural responsiveness of 500 services working with children and families across Australia. Critical to this project is the centring of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Worldviews and ways of knowing, doing and being.

Waterways training consists of 5 modules that have applications across sectors:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander World views
- Impacts of Colonisation
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Power, Privilege and Wise Practice
- Self Determination and genuine partnerships.

Project Waterways delivered training to 1035 people nationally. The project was funded by the Commonwealth Department of Social Services to provide training for specific organisations identified by the department. SNAICC worked with the department to increase the engagement of the training to include ACCOs, ACCHOs and community-controlled organisations.

SNAICC are working to continue the delivery of Waterways training as Cultural Responsiveness and Trauma Informed Practice continues to be identified as a prioritised need for our sector, communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and families.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILD PLACEMENT PRINCIPLE TRAINING

SNAICC has been funded by the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government, Community Services Directorate, to facilitate the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) training for Child and Youth Protection Services (CYPS - ACT) staff. The aim of the ATSICPP and its five elements (Prevention, Partnership, Participation, Placement and Connection) is to:

- ensure an understanding that culture underpins and is integral in the safety and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and is embedded in policy and practice
- recognise and protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, family members and communities in child welfare matters
- increase the level of self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in child welfare matters
- reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and the out-of-home care system.

The two-day training was delivered in November 2024. ACT CYPS staff had opportunities to deepen their understanding of the ATSCIPP and reflect on ways of working and embedding the ATSCIPP into everyday practice. SNAICC is currently discussing future delivering of the ATSCIPP training for CYPS staff.



PROJECT BIRD

SNAICC has commenced work on the next phase of Project BIRD to pilot and evaluate training. The BIRD Training Pilot and Evaluation project aims to improve the cultural safety and responsiveness of the primary health care system in order to drive improved support and referral outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors of child sexual abuse.

The target audience for this training package, the health sector, is a large-scale target audience, as 15% of Australia's workforce are situated in the Health Care and Social Assistance industry.

Project Believe, Inquire, Respond to Disclosures (BIRD) is funded under the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse (and is part of the First National Action Plan) and aims to improve the cultural safety and responsiveness of the primary health care system in order to drive improved support and referral outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors of child sexual abuse. The delivery of this phase of the project will include an update of the training modules to reduce the package time from 15 days to 10 days and deliver the training to the 5 identified locations.



Locations have been identified by the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) as:

- Broome
- Thursday Island
- Canberra
- Melbourne
- And, Hobart

This phase of Project BIRD builds on the earlier phases of the project including the Project BIRD research report which was centred on decolonised approaches and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing.

This phase of the project will include the following key activities:

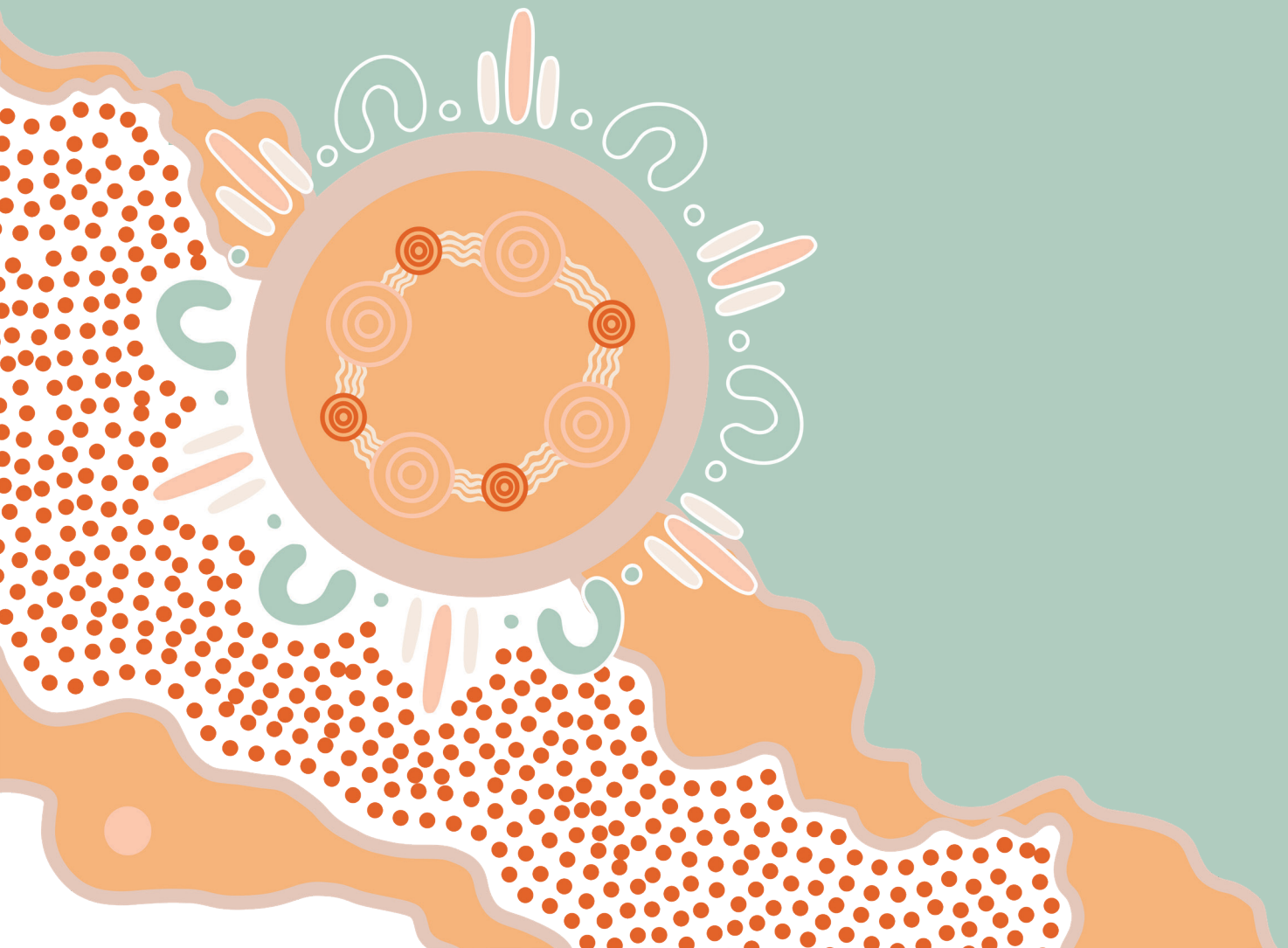
- Project Planning – including engagement and evaluation planning
- Redevelopment of Training
- Stakeholder Mapping Engagement
- Deliver 2 x pilot training sessions
- Evaluate and respond to evaluation to finalise training
- Deliver 3 x pilot sessions
- Evaluate
- Report and recommend next steps.

The BIRD Project aims to improve the cultural safety and responsiveness of the primary healthcare system to drive improved support and referral outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors of child sexual abuse. Resources to support training will be developed in consultation with victim-survivors who face additional challenges as a result of prejudice and discrimination, such as people from LGBTQIA+ communities and people with disability. Resources will also address preventing and responding to vicarious trauma experienced by health service staff.

SNAICC will work in partnership with Yamurrah, and continue the co-design process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts and seek to build partnerships with local relevant ACCOs to co-produce the training in the above communities. Through our process, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' wisdoms, experiences, stories of resistance and worldviews are voiced and embraced so they lead and guide our work.



EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



CONNECTED BEGINNINGS

On 16 January 2025, the 50th Connected Beginnings site in Kununurra, Western Australia was launched. This milestone finalises the expansion of the program, which ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children get the best start to life. Across the country, the program is now estimated to support up to 24,800 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



Map of Connected Beginnings Sites



ACCO LEADERSHIP TRANSITION FRAMEWORK

Participating communities have indicated the need for greater Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership to increase the engagement of families and children. SNAICC, in partnership with the Australian Government Department of Education, has developed the Connected Beginnings ACCO Leadership Transition Framework (ALTF). The framework is intended to inform and guide the transition of the Connected Beginnings backbone role from non-Indigenous organisations to ACCOs, where there is agreement and support from the community. SNAICC has applied the ALTF in 13 communities across Australia, as of June 2025, with 7 communities determining the backbone function move to an ACCO.

In March 2025, Community Partner team filmed the Connected Beginnings – Empowering Families video as a key communication tool to support understanding of the ALTF process. The video helps illustrate how the Connected Beginnings program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families by integrating early childhood, health, and family services, while also promoting community-led decision-making and self-determination.





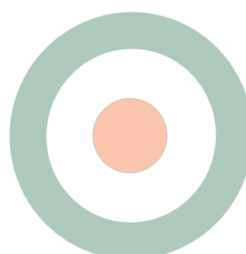
NATIONAL GATHERING

The 2024 Connected Beginnings National Gathering on Kurna Country was a powerful opportunity for site representatives, program partners, and key stakeholders to come together, share experiences, and strengthen connections. The event created a strong sense of community, with participants appreciating the opportunity to learn from each other, discuss challenges, and celebrate successes in delivering Connected Beginnings programs.

Guided by input from the First Nations Working Group, the program featured a mix of plenaries, presentations, and yarning circles, with a focus on collaboration between Health and Education Backbones. The gathering also provided space for

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to share their insights, reinforcing the importance of community-led approaches, with networking opportunities, and strong cultural presence woven throughout the event.

The National Gathering highlighted the need for continued investment in community-driven initiatives, with strong support for keeping health representatives involved and refining collaboration processes. The event provided a crucial space for ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families remain at the heart of policy and practice.



JURISDICTIONAL NETWORKING

The Connected Beginnings jurisdictional networks have been designed to facilitate robust discussions among sites on jurisdictional topics, key issues, and opportunities. The purpose is to support peer-to-peer learning through initiatives such as a mentoring or buddy system, enabling sites to conduct their own robust analyses and determine their own pathways for progressing key issues

The networks are structured to allow for cross-pollination of ideas and collaboration across state and territory boundaries. Participation is inclusive, with no formal membership restrictions. The model involves establishing a structured meeting forum to coordinate discussions across sites and delivering work through individualised approaches suited to each site's needs

The first workshop was held in mid-May with representatives from ACT and NSW Connected Beginnings sites coming together to define their own way forward.

FOUNDATIONAL SUPPORT AND SITE VISITS

SNAICC's focus on building the capacity of ACCOs supports a participatory process to plan what the program can look like in each community through the provision of ongoing support for all backbone organisations. This takes the form of one-on-one support tailored to each site's needs. SNAICC also facilitates opportunities for connection between backbone organisations, networking opportunities with health backbones, and

the development of resources and templates designed for use by all Connected Beginnings sites. During the 2024-2025 financial year, one-on-one or secretariat support was provided to all sites in contract, and the following visits were to:

- Ceduna – July 2024, Ngura Yadurirn Children and Family Centre
- Mt Druitt – September 2024, Ngroo Education
- Mareeba & Mackay – August 2024, Mulungu Aboriginal Corporation and Moonaboola Community Development Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation
- Tasmania – October 2024, Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre
- Port Augusta – February 2025, Marnbi Aboriginal Corporation
- Tasmania – March 2025, Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre
- Broken Hill – March 2025, Maari Ma Aboriginal Corporation
- Eagleby – March 2025, Beenleigh Housing & Development Company
- Ipswich – March 2025, Kummara Limited
- Adelaide – March 2025, Marnbi Aboriginal Corporation
- Port Adelaide – March 2025, Kura Yerlo Incorporated
- Ballarat – May 2025, Ballarat and District Aboriginal Corporation
- Whittlesea – May 2025, Yappera Children's Service Co-Operative
- Armadale West – June 2025, The Champion Centre and The Minderoo Foundation
- Broome – June 2025, Ngunga Group Women's Aboriginal Corporation & Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation

IMPROVING MULTIDISCIPLINARY RESPONSE (IMR) PROGRAM

In its second year of implementation, the Improving Multidisciplinary Responses (IMR) Program is continuing to transform the way services are designed and delivered for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Grounded in self-determination, cultural governance, and community leadership, the program centres Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being, and doing in all aspects of service delivery.

TAILORED SUPPORT FOR ACCOS

Walking alongside ACCOs, SNAICC delivers bespoke support that reflects each organisation's local aspirations, challenges and strengths. This includes regular online yarns, one-on-one engagement, in-person visits and quarterly Communities of Practice—spaces that foster peer connection, cultural safety and shared learning.

This support extends beyond technical assistance—it is deeply cultural. It recognises the cultural load carried by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and the importance of creating safe, supportive environments for reflection, adaptation and growth. Through regular engagement, SNAICC helps ACCOs build capability, embed cultural governance, and drive community-led program development.

PARTNERSHIP WITH ARNEY CHONG CONSULTANCY

SNAICC has continued its strong collaboration with Arney Chong Consulting to strengthen support for sites in the areas of learning and evidence development. Together, SNAICC and Arney Chong provide coordinated, streamlined assistance that embeds culturally grounded evaluation into broader program delivery.



IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

The IMR Program continues to demonstrate the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led, place-based approaches. ACCOs have made significant progress in embedding cultural authority, strengthening governance structures, and improving outcomes for children, young people and families.

“We’re sitting at around 90% redirection of families from child protection, which is incredible-and we’re really proud of that.”

— Orange Aboriginal Medical Service (OAMS)

Communities are increasingly engaging with culturally safe, community-led services. This growing trust is foundational to long-term wellbeing and systemic reform. Flexible, place-based funding has enabled ACCOs to direct resources to initiatives that embed cultural safety, build long-term capability and respond directly to community priorities.

Strong partnerships between ACCOs and their communities are driving more sustainable, responsive models of service delivery. These models are built on deep local knowledge and designed to evolve with the needs of the community.

Advisory structures established by sites are playing a critical role in elevating community voices and contributing to progress on Closing the Gap Target 12—reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031.

“It’s time for action, action is needed!”

— NPY Women’s Council Anangu Advisory Group

SNAICC remains committed to walking with communities to build a more culturally safe, just and self-determined future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.



FIRST NATIONS PLAYGROUPS

The First Nations Playgroups program continues to grow, deepening engagement across sites and reaffirming the value of culturally safe, community-led early years approaches. Grounded in self-determination and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing, the program supports ACCOs to deliver place-based, holistic playgroups tailored to local priorities.

While ACCOs continue to navigate challenges such as workforce shortages, infrastructure limitations, and communication barriers with government systems, SNAICC has remained steadfast in its commitment to supporting ACCOs to lead and deliver playgroups tailored to local priorities. These playgroups serve as trusted, culturally embedded spaces that provide soft, non-judgemental entry points into early childhood education and care, while also acting as vital hubs for family connection, parenting support, and child development.

The onboarding of Tangentyere Council as a new site this year marks a key milestone in the expansion of place-based, wraparound playgroup models. This addition builds on the program's momentum and reinforces the role of ACCOs in delivering holistic and culturally responsive early years services.

Across the country, ACCOs are demonstrating the enduring value of culturally grounded playgroups—not only as foundational learning environments for children, but also as entry points for families to access broader support systems.

Playgroups continue to reflect the aspirations and strengths of their communities, shaped by Elders, cultural leaders, and the lived experience of families.

This year has seen strong progress in family engagement, with sites reporting increased participation and greater community involvement. Many playgroup teams are partnering with local schools and service providers to strengthen transitions to education and amplify child development outcomes. Importantly, ACCOs are curating spaces where families feel welcome, respected, and connected—through spaces that reflect culture and community values in every element of their design.

As one participant shared, 'Stories are more important than numbers.' For many ACCOs, impact is not solely measured by attendance but by the strength of relationships, the growth of cultural pride, and the wellbeing of children and families.

SNAICC continues to walk alongside sites, offering tailored support through monthly catch-ups, resource development, and capacity-building initiatives.

Looking ahead, SNAICC will continue to prioritise foundational support for ACCOs, expand peer learning opportunities, and celebrate the leadership of communities in shaping early childhood systems. By investing directly in ACCO-led playgroups and community-identified models, the program builds toward a stronger, more equitable early years landscape for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

STRENGTHENING PRACTICE THROUGH SECTOR COLLABORATION AND PEEP TRAINING

With support from the Minderoo Foundation, ten ACCOs participated in the 2024 Playgroup Victoria Conference in Naarm/Melbourne. The conference provided space for sector advocacy, networking, and reflection, helping to strengthen ACCO leadership and amplify the impact of culturally responsive playgroup models.

Participants reported increased confidence, new skills, and stronger connections, highlighting the need for continued investment in ACCO-led innovation and systemic reform. The event also reinforced the power of community leadership in shaping inclusive, child-centred early years systems.

A highlight of the conference was the Peep Training program, which introduced structured approaches to play-based learning, developmental milestones, and parent-child engagement. Delivered through online and face-to-face learning, the training helped ACCOs enhance their existing programs while staying grounded in culture and community.

By becoming certified Peep Practitioners, ACCOs gained valuable tools to support parenting, family wellbeing, and developmental outcomes. This work directly supports Priority Reform Two of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap: building the ACCO sector to deliver services that meet the needs of First Nations families.

LOOKING AHEAD

The First Nations Playgroups Pilot Program continues to embody community empowerment, cultural integrity, and self-determination. As the program evolves, SNAICC remains committed to walking alongside ACCOs, listening deeply, and supporting playgroups that honour little footsteps and support big futures.





CCCFR EXPANSION PROGRAM

In 2022, SNAICC was announced as the Community Partner for the Australian Government Department of Education Community Child Care Restricted Funding (CCCFR) Expansion Program. The aim of the CCCFR Expansion Program is to increase participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within the Early Years sector. This is being implemented by collaborating with remote—or very remote—community providers to establish new early childhood education centres and support the professional development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators.

VISITS AND SUPPORT

As part of our ongoing commitment to foundational support and strengthening early years' service delivery, the team recently undertook a site visit to Central Desert Regional Council on Anmatjere Country in Ti Tree, engaging deeply with community stakeholders and service partners. The visit focused on supporting the development of the Ti Tree Child Care Centre under the CCCFR Expansion Grant, with key discussions around governance, policy adaptation, and culturally responsive procedures. The Community Liaison Officer (CLO), a certified Trainer and Assessor, played a pivotal role in facilitating local workforce development and community engagement.

A local advisory group was established to guide service governance, and a community survey was conducted to assess ECEC needs and inform planning.

In parallel, we connected with the Wunan Foundation during the SNAICC WA Early Years Support Leadership Gathering held in June on Yawuru Country in Broome. This was a great opportunity to engage directly with Wunan's team, hear updates in real time, and strengthen relationships face-to-face.

CELEBRATIONS

We were proud to celebrate the inspiring momentum of Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council who officially opened their centre. Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, and the Wunan Foundation also stand on the cusp of opening their new centres in community. These achievements reflect our sites steadfast commitment to strengthening local voices, fostering culturally safe environments, and delivering services that are responsive to community needs and aspirations.

EXPANSION SCOPING

Between November 2024 and June 2025, SNAICC was engaged to undertake site scoping through on-Country consultations with key stakeholders to expand the CCCFR program. As Community Partner, SNAICC played a key facilitation role in consultations, offering cultural engagement support, workforce planning, regulatory guidance, and helping embed trauma-informed and community-led practices.

SNAICC visited four communities: Port Augusta (SA), Broken Hill (NSW), Burnie (TAS), and Carnarvon (WA). The purpose of this work was to:

- determine, through a comprehensive community analysis, the feasibility of implementing the CCCFR Expansion Program to establish culturally safe and sustainable ECEC services and;
- identify suitable ACCO's to be invited to apply for the program, assuming need and feasibility.

Consultations revealed the evident need for ECEC services in these communities—with the lack of culturally safe spaces for young children impacting a spectrum of socio-economic outcomes beyond early education. Conversely, establishing ECEC services in childcare deserts will likely contribute to:

1. increased workforce participation;
2. increased economic activity;
3. improved developmental outcomes for children and;
4. improved social and emotional wellbeing for families.





BOORI MILUMBA

SNAICC is in our third year of providing cultural and strategic support to Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre for the Boori Milumba program.

In mid-March 2025, SNAICC facilitated a Reconnect Gathering on Yuin Country, Nowra, to celebrate one year of implementation into the Boori Milumba program and to enable program review and strategic planning. The on-Country session, staff celebration evening and round table gathering were attended by the Cullunghutti Board and Elders, Boori Milumba leadership team, SNAICC, Parkville Institute, Social Ventures Australia (SVA) and Australian Government Department of Education First Nations and Early Learning unit and University of Melbourne representatives. A video resource was filmed during the event: Boori Milumba - Community Impacts.

On 9 May, the Cullunghutti CEO and Cultural Lead, and SNAICC and Parkville Institute representatives co-presented on the Boori Milumba program at the 4th Reconciliation and Truth Telling Conference on Dharawal Country in Wollongong, New South Wales. Charlie (Cultural Lead) spoke about the importance of weekly on-Country sessions for children and educators and monthly on-Country whole team yarns for fostering:

- cultural understandings and awareness
- confidence in embedding Aboriginal culture
- aboriginal cultural values
- collective understandings of Aboriginal protocols
- Dharawal language use to learn Creation stories, stories of the land, protocols and Aboriginal ways of life.

On 2 July, SNAICC supported the Cullunghutti CEO and a board member with two Victorian ACCO ECEC service visits. Yappera Children's Services on Wurundjeri-willam Country in Thornbury shared how they strategically plan for their annual cultural camps and Bubup Wilam Child and Family Centre on Wurundjeri-willam Country in Thomastown yarned about becoming an ACCO ECEC Registered Training Organisation (RTO). Facilitating cultural camps and becoming an ACCO ECEC RTO are part of Cullunghutti's strategic planning to ensure ongoing viability of the Boori Milumba program past the trial's end date of December 2026.

Upcoming conference presentations on *Boori Milumba - Where children shine in a culturally enriched intensive early childhood and education program*, include:

- October 2025: Charlie (Cultural Lead) and Marg (Early Childhood Development Consultant) will present at the SNAICC conference, Meanjin/Brisbane
- November 2025: Charlie and Tara (Cullunghutti CEO) will present at the World Indigenous Peoples Conference in Education, Auckland, Aotearoa.



Boori Milumba logo and Learning cycle artwork was created by Cullunghutti Cultural Lead, Charlie Ashby.





ACCO TRANSFORMATION

INTRODUCTION

This summary celebrates a powerful year of progress for SNAICC's ACCO Transformation Unit, guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, cultural authority and deep community relationships that prioritise children and families first.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

In 2025, SNAICC's ACCO Transformation Unit continued to drive systemic change towards Aboriginal-led, self-determined child and family services. Central to this work has been embedding the ALTF, ensuring every transition is culturally safe, rights-based and guided by community voice.

A major highlight has been the establishment of the SNAICC Board National Transition Subcommittee, which held its inaugural meeting in February 2025. This subcommittee has provided a powerful governance platform for generating rich discussions, problem solving and creating momentum for transformative change. It has actively supported the development of the National Transition Framework, which aims to provide clear, consistent guidance for transitioning services nationally in alignment with Closing the Gap commitments.

The strong partnership agreement with Life Without Barriers stood out as a model of genuine partnership and courage to step aside for community leadership. This work will be recognised at the International Indigenous Voices in Social Work Conference

2025 in Calgary, Canada, where Wendy Knight and Nadia Currie will present on the successful transitions, positioning Australia as a global leader in community-led service transformation.

The HIPPY program transition work with the Brotherhood of St Laurence has also been a significant achievement. The successful completion of the first tranche involved direct transitions to ACCOs, strengthened community partnerships and collaborative governance models that prioritise cultural safety and local knowledge.

CHALLENGES & SOLUTIONS

Challenges included capacity limitations within ACCOs, resistance from mainstream providers and workforce shortages. These were addressed through strengths-based capacity-building strategies, grounded in deep listening and two-way learning. Each transition honoured local pace and cultural governance, ensuring that communities led every step of the journey.

OUTCOMES & IMPACT

The impact of these collective efforts has been transformative. More services are now delivered by ACCOs, with strengthened governance, enhanced workforce capability and renewed community confidence. These transitions directly support Closing the Gap targets by reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's over-representation in out-of-home care and reinforcing their rights to remain connected to kin, community and culture.

LOOKING FORWARD

Looking forward, the ACCO Transformation Unit will expand its efforts to increase transition support by 50% and secure long-term funding.

A major focus will be the continued development of the SNAICC Community Consultation Framework into a practical, culturally grounded practice guide. This resource will empower ACCOs, peaks and community partners to strengthen their consultation processes, improve tender readiness and embed cultural integrity into service design and delivery.

Additionally, the finalisation and rollout of the National Transition Framework will be a key priority. This framework will provide a consistent, culturally safe blueprint for all transitions nationally, ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination remains at the heart of all child and family service reforms.

By centring cultural authority, building strong tools and driving national consistency, SNAICC is leading a powerful movement towards community control and cultural justice for children and families across Australia.





A PLACE FOR CULTURE

SNAICC's *A Place for Culture* learning journey is in the development phase. It is being designed to support non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mainstream early years educators to create culturally safe and responsive environments where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families can thrive. The learning journey strengthens educators and service providers' confidence to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews, social and emotional wellbeing, and cultural identity into everyday practice. There is a focus on culture as a protective factor for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as they grow up strong.

Through a focus on self-reflection, connection to community, and strengthening practice, participants are supported to explore the impacts of colonisation and intergenerational trauma, consider how personal and systemic bias can shape service delivery, and identify meaningful actions at both an individual and organisational level. The *A Place for Culture* learning journey is aligned with the Early Years Learning Framework and the National Quality Framework to support planning and ongoing practice, reflection and improvement.


The learning journey includes a blended learning approach, combining an online learning component with a shared in-person workshop. SNAICC has been working on development of the online learning and in-person content. More details about accessing this learning opportunity will be available later in 2025.

THE JOURNEY TO BIG SCHOOL

Journey to Big School has been developed to support a positive transition to school for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Delivered over 3-4 months, face-to-face workshops and online yarning circles support a responsive approach tailored to the context of each community.

When facilitated in partnership with a local ECEC ACCO, opportunities are provided for local stakeholders, such as schools, health services and family support services, to connect, build networks and reflect on culturally responsive ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Through collaborative conversations, stakeholders are supported to identify potential actions both within their own organisations and as a collective group, to strengthen the transition experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

A series of resources have been developed to guide stakeholders' discussions within their organisations when planning for culturally responsive transitions to school. There is also a resource to support discussions with families.



Journey to Big School was scheduled to be facilitated in three locations in NSW during July 2024 and June 2025. SNAICC collaborated with a local ECEC ACCO and stakeholders in two locations. Feedback collected from stakeholders who participated outlined the value of collaborating and increasing awareness of local services to support transition to school and ways of working. Some services reported using the Journey to Big School resources as a guide for the development of localised activities and resources to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Unfortunately, it was necessary to postpone one location due to an extreme weather event in the week Journey to Big School was planned.

The SNAICC Training and Development team are working with SNAICC Early Years Support and Connected Beginnings teams as we plan for future locations for Journey to Big School facilitation.





SNAICC EARLY YEARS SUPPORT

The SNAICC Early Years Support (EYS) initiative is committed to supporting and representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services, fostering high-quality, responsive, accessible, and culturally robust early years programs for children, families and communities. While acknowledging the sector's ongoing challenges, the EYS program actively assists predominantly ACCOs in delivering early childhood education and care.

This year represents a crucial phase for the EYS National team, as the program continues to expand, deepening professional relationships and enhancing its capacity to deliver complex, quality-sustaining supports. The National focus remains on ACCO ECEC expansion, with growing engagement in South Australia, Queensland, and the Northern Territory.



NATIONAL INITIATIVES AND PROGRAM DESIGN

The EYS national team has refined its service delivery across New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. Key advancements include establishing monthly State Leaders Network meetings and a national webinar schedule. The program has also integrated an EYS policy advisor into state functions to bolster advocacy. New roles for intermediary teams have been designed to implement a framework with participating services, aiming to improve access and equity. Centralisation efforts continue to enhance efficiency, including a national approach to ACCO ECEC growth and a strategic shift from a response-based service to a provider of quality professional learning and development.

ACCO ECEC EXPANSION

EYS has initiated a national strategy to support the growth of new ACCO ECEC services, including efforts to establish a new National ACCO ECEC operator. This involves supporting numerous services with their growth aspirations across WA, NSW, Queensland and the Northern Territory. Additionally, a detailed feasibility study for a 'Nest and Nurture' model, a community-controlled service offering to support new ACCO early years services, has been undertaken.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

A significant shift has occurred towards elevating professional learning, growth and development opportunities, aiming to build individual practitioner skill competency and improve ECEC quality. During this period, nine webinars and three statewide learning events engaged 108 participants, covering leadership, curriculum, pedagogy, trauma-informed practice and wellbeing.

EVALUATION INSIGHTS

The 2024 Independent Evaluation Report provided valuable program design and implementation considerations. SNAICC has embraced these recommendations, committing to their implementation to enhance service quality and prepare for future expansion.

EARLY YEARS WORKFORCE & POLICY ADVOCACY

The Workforce Retention Payment (WRP) has been a significant focus, with SNAICC's Workforce team providing crucial support to ACCO ECEC services and advocating for necessary changes to the grant process. This collaborative approach has led to high engagement with the WRP across all three pilot states. National advocacy has also achieved significant wins, such as the removal of the Activity Test, easing ECEC access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. SNAICC continues to champion broad sector reform for ACCOs through its 'Funding Model Options for ACCO Integrated Early Years Services,' and actively advocates for funding for ACCO ECEC growth, ensuring the sector's voice is central to policy reform discussions.

SNAICC EARLY YEARS SUPPORT NSW

Throughout 2024-25, the NSW EYS team have continued to focus on uplifting the quality in each of the ACCOs that they support, in alignment with our key deliverables. This quality uplift involves continuous improvement initiatives focused on enhancing learning environments, teaching practices, and overall service delivery. This was achieved through a combination of face-to-face or virtual visits, phone calls, emails, professional development, tailored support programs, and a commitment to effectively implementing the National Quality Standard (NQS) in each of the services.

KEY 2024-25 STATISTICS

- Service Engagements: Over 70 Service visits
- National and State Gatherings: Over 35 attendees from our EYS NSW Services attended the EYS National Gathering in October 2024, and over 50 attendees attended the NSW EYS ACCO ECEC Leadership Event in June 2025.

PROJECTS

NSW EYS has implemented several projects based on the identified needs of the ACCO ECEC sector across NSW, supporting these services in their provision of high quality, culturally safe ECEC. These projects include:

- approved Provider training for ACCO ECEC boards and committees
- strengthening governance and that service's workforce pedagogy uplifts – embedding a strong sense of culture into language, literacy, and other domains of learning
- supporting services' Connection to country and community
- NQS toolkit – supporting services in using this tool to write self-assessments and QIP documents, and to uplift ratings for centres through embedding the use of the NQS Toolkit as default for enhancing quality facilitating webinars to support staff wellbeing and other important topics
- building services' capacity to support children with additional rights
- the release of the Bushland Animal Yoga cards across EYS services, and building services' capacity to use these cards to develop children's skills.



PREBOOST

NSW EYS are partnering with Early Start at the University of Wollongong (UOW) and Community Early Learning Australia to support the implementation and evaluation of the PRA Attendance Boosting (PreBoost) Project. The aim of this project is to build the evidence base around effective strategies to increase preschool attendance in the year before school among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and children who experience vulnerability and disadvantage.

NSW EYS participate in community consultations and are Practice Partners to facilitate and support the implementation of attendance-boosting activities in partnership with participating ECEC services and to support services to complete the funding application on Smarty Grants. 7 EYS NSW ACCO services are being supported.

NSW EYS have been heavily involved in each of the two phases below.

- **Phase 1:** Involved community-level consultation, whereby the UOW Team and NSW EYS will gather community insights from stakeholders to inform the delivery and implementation of PreBoost.
- **Phase 2:** Will involve the implementation of the PreBoost program and the evaluation of its acceptability among ECEC services and efficacy to shift outcomes in key focus areas (i.e. enrolment, attendance, engagement and service capacity).

BUILDING EARLY LEARNING PLACES PROGRAM

NSW EYS are working with five ACCOs to prepare funding applications for the Building Early Learning Places Program (BELP), which is designed to increase the number of ECEC places for communities with the greatest immediate need, through capital works projects that will create extra licensed spaces at their service for children aged 0 to 5 years of age.

The program is made possible by the NSW Government's Childcare and Economic Opportunity Fund (the Fund), which is focused on ensuring more NSW families can access affordable, quality ECEC to support increased workforce participation.

Due to the high level of support required by services during this process, NSW EYS supports have included the preparation of applications, getting required quotes for building works, ensuring that appropriate lease agreements were in place, providing guidance on the scope and the intent of the grant process.



NEW ABORIGINAL CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRES

NSW EYS have been working with the Department of Communities and Justice around the delivery of six new Aboriginal Child and Family Centres (ACFC) sites across priority locations of Western NSW, Orange and the Central Coast. The NSW Government have identified three potential Aboriginal organisations where NSW EYS are to support and provide guidance to submit establishment plans, implementation plans and budgets for the new sites.

The provision of a regulated ECEC Service is a mandatory component of the ACFC service model. ACFCs should provide either long day care or preschool, which is targeted to address gaps in existing service systems. The ECEC service needs to be a new service that creates new ECEC places and must be operated from the ACFC asset.

In March 2024, the NSW Government approved the delivery of six new ACFCs. The need to expand the ACFC Program was identified as one of six foundation initiatives as part of Brighter Beginnings – the First 2,000 Days of Life, which acknowledges the role culturally centred services delivered through ACFCs play in giving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children the best start in life.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CALENDAR

NSW EYS developed an online Professional Development Calendar based on service and sector needs. This calendar includes scheduled webinars, reflective yarns and round tables which cover nutrition, child safe standards/principles, wellbeing, the Early Years Learning Framework and trauma informed physical play spaces. These topics were based on feedback given by ACCOs at leadership events, monthly meetings and face-to-face visits to services.

NSW LEADERSHIP EVENT

NSW EYS hosted an ACCO ECEC Leadership Event in June 2025 on Kamilaroi/Gamilaroi/Gomeroi Country to bring together EYS services and service leaders from across the state to connect, reflect and share Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. The theme for this event was 'Shaping Care and Education for Our Children - Empowering Future Leaders - Nurturing Culturally Strong Foundations in ACCO Early Years Education.'

Key sessions included a panel discussion with NSW Department of Education, Allied Health and the NSW ECEC Regulatory Authority on sector challenges and updates, a language panel with service leaders, Catharine Hydon on quality leadership and the Treaty Commissioner, Naomi Moran on upcoming NSW Treaty consultations.



SNAICC EARLY YEARS SUPPORT VICTORIA

Throughout the 2024-25 financial year, the VIC EYS team has diligently continued its pivotal work in supporting the quality of early childhood education and care across the 14 ACCO ECECs it supports. This commitment to quality enhancement is deeply rooted in fostering strong relational trust with leaders and their teams, a hallmark that has consistently grown stronger, evidenced by the regular requests for support received by the VIC EYS team.

The approach to quality uplift is fundamentally guided by the ACCO Early Years Review Checklist, a bespoke tool comprising nine key domains designed to facilitate professional, reflective conversations. All 14 Victorian ACCO ECEC services actively engaged with this checklist, which serves as a foundation for thought-provoking discussions during visits and professional learning events.

KEY 2024-25 STATISTICS

- **Service Engagements:** All 14 Victorian ACCO ECEC services received on-the-ground coaching and mentoring with 92 visits conducted across all services.
- **National and State Gatherings:** Over 16 members from 7 services attended the National SNAICC EYS Gathering on Kurna Country in Adelaide in October 2024. In June 2025, the VIC EYS State Leadership Event on Wadawurrung Country in Anglesea brought together 27 participants from eleven ACCO ECEC services.

- **Mentoring and Coaching Hours:** A total of 320 hours of mentoring and coaching were provided, comprising 80 hours of on-site mentoring and 240 hours via phone and virtual meetings.
- **Promotional Films:** By the end of the financial year, promotional films for 11 of the 14 services had been completed, with plans in place for the remaining three.

ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

The VIC EYS team has played a proactive role in advocating for the sector, with increased awareness of EYS among key stakeholders in the sector. The team presented at various professional learning events and forums, often alongside Victorian ACCO Early Years leaders. A significant focus has been on supporting services to access initiatives such as the Worker Retention Payment, with 11 ACCO ECEC services successfully securing this vital funding. Ongoing advocacy also addresses challenges such as working with child protection services, the need for a specific funding model for ACCO ECEC and support for growth and expansion within the sector.



NETWORKING, SHARING AND LEARNING TOGETHER

The monthly Leaders Network Meetings have seen a rapid increase in participation, with leaders and 2iCs consistently attending. These meetings provide a safe and trusted space for leaders to connect, share experiences and collaboratively address challenges. Agenda items are shaped by the current needs of members, including service updates, professional learning opportunities, grant information and discussions on infrastructure improvements. These opportunities have fostered stronger connections, not only within Victoria but also interstate. Biannual face-to-face gatherings, such as the two-day trauma-informed care training in June 2024 and the 'Culture and Wellbeing' themed event in June 2025, have been highly valued by members, promoting professional growth and peer support.

RESOURCING

VIC EYS provides tailored resourcing support to meet the unique needs of each ACCO ECEC service. This includes both self-directed support, where the team builds the capability of services to increase their own resources and provides information on grants and a 'request and respond' stream for urgent needs. Over the reporting period, this included the provision of curriculum resource packs, physical education policy packs, cultural resource packs, sensory items and Aboriginal flags. Services have also highly valued the Infrastructure and Building Works Grant opportunities, utilising funding to enhance their learning environments.

MENTORING AND COACHING

Mentoring and coaching opportunities have been significantly increased for both leaders and educators. This targeted support, based on identified needs and insights from the ACCO Early Years Review Checklist, has focused on leadership development, supporting educators in their Cert III and Diploma studies and empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. A highlight has been the intensive work supporting non-Indigenous leaders and 2iCs to deepen their understanding of cultural protocols and strengthen relationships with Aboriginal staff, families and communities.

NEW INNOVATIONS: COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

A significant innovation during this period has been the development of EYS Communities of Practice, driven by the strengthened professional trust between VIC EYS and the ACCO ECEC leaders. This initiative enables leaders from one ACCO ECEC service to visit another, facilitating real-time sharing of practices and expanding awareness of diverse service delivery models. These discussions are consistently framed around the nine domains of the ACCO Early Years Review Checklist, ensuring a deep analysis of indicators for continuous improvement.

WORKFORCE SUSTAINABILITY

VIC EYS provides targeted support for workforce sustainability, drawing on Domain 6 of the ACCO EY Review Checklist (Recruitment, Retention and Succession of Early Years Staff). This includes assistance with recruitment processes, such as preliminary interviews, applicant screening, reference checks and follow-up paperwork. This support has already led to successful recruitment outcomes for services, demonstrating a tangible impact on workforce capacity. The team also actively supports services with Wage Increase Applications, further contributing to staff retention.

WELLBEING SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

A core commitment of VIC EYS is to foster the holistic wellbeing of the early years workforce. Professional learning opportunities are infused into all interactions and are tailored to individual service needs. These opportunities, based on feedback and the ACCO EY Review Checklist, cover crucial areas such as trauma-informed practices, self-regulation and team collaboration. The VIC EYS Leadership event in June 2025 notably incorporated workshops on 'Culture & Wellbeing' and 'Diversity & Autism', providing valuable insights and a safe space for reflection and connection. The positive feedback consistently highlights how these opportunities make leaders and educators feel valued and supported, preventing stagnation and inspiring continued growth.

NEWSLETTERS

Throughout 2024-25, VIC EYS distributed informative newsletters to members, funders and stakeholders. These newsletters serve as a vital communication tool, sharing team messages, updates from ACCO ECEC services, professional learning opportunities, current sector news and important dates such as NAIDOC Week support initiatives.



SNAICC EARLY YEARS SUPPORT WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Throughout the 2024-25 financial year, the Western Australian Early Years Support (WA EYS) team consistently progressed its vital work in supporting the standard of early childhood education and care across the 13 ACCOs it supports. This dedication to enhancing quality is deeply rooted in cultivating robust relational trust with leaders and their teams. This hallmark has progressively strengthened, as evidenced by the growing number of engagement requests and more precise, direct inquiries for assistance directed to the team.

The methodology for elevating quality is primarily informed by the ACCO Early Years Review Checklist, a bespoke instrument featuring nine core domains designed to facilitate insightful, reflective professional dialogues. All 13 WA ACCO ECEC services actively participated in this checklist, which forms the bedrock for stimulating discussions during site visits and professional development events.

KEY 2024-25 STATISTICS

- **Service Engagements:** The WA EYS team conducted 45 site visits between June and December 2024, followed by a further 8 visits from January to June 2025, culminating in a total of 53 on-site engagements across the entire financial year.
- **National and State Gatherings:** 19 representatives from 10 ACCO WA Early Years services attended the SNAICC National EYS Gathering on Kurna Country, Adelaide in October 2024. In June 2025, the WA EYS State Gathering, held on Yawuru Country in Broome, convened 36 leaders and 2iCs from various services.
- **Promotional Films:** Seven promotional films, showcasing the strengths and unique narratives of WA EYS participating members, were completed over the financial year.

ADVOCACY AND AWARENESS

The WA EYS team has actively contributed to sector advocacy, leading to heightened awareness of EYS among key stakeholders within the Western Australian Early Years sector. The team participated in and was incorporated into Kimberley Early Years Network Meetings and Headland Early Years Network Meetings. Advocacy efforts presented opportunities for members through diverse initiatives, including collaborative interactions at Leaders Network meetings, professional learning conferences and direct site visits. A substantial part of the team's efforts was dedicated to supporting with grant applications for essential building repairs and forging connections with state and federal stakeholders, as well as philanthropic organisations. The team also actively aided services in navigating the Workforce Retention Grant, with all eligible EYS participants successfully submitting their applications. Ongoing sector advocacy encompasses addressing concerns regarding the WA state government's early years reform agenda concerning three-year-old kindergarten provision within school settings.

NETWORKING, SHARING AND LEARNING TOGETHER

The monthly online Leaders Network meetings have proven crucial in cultivating trust and connections among members and with the SNAICC WA EYS Team. These gatherings offer a secure environment for leaders and 2iCs to exchange service updates, discuss challenges and share insights and wisdom. Agenda items are tailored to the current needs of members, encompassing

professional development opportunities, grant information and advocacy points. The National EYS Gathering in October 2024 significantly impacted WA EYS members, further expanding their ACCO Early Years network and access to professional learning. The WA EYS State Gathering in June 2025 fostered connections, allowed for shared approaches and provided avenues for debriefing and collaborative problem-solving. A notable new approach was the piloting of a peer-led professional learning event at Fitzroy Crossing, engaging participants from Halls Creek and Kununurra, with a focus on effective practices, collaborative service planning and leadership capacity development.

RESOURCING

SNAICC WA EYS has proactively provided educational resources, specifically tailored to the unique contexts of each ACCO Early Years service, based on communicated learning strengths and the needs of children. This included devising a School Checklist for ACCO Early Years Playgroups to facilitate smooth transitions to primary school. The team also involved members in collaborative planning for infrastructure and learning environment requirements, resulting in projects focused on rejuvenating outdoor play areas, installing shade sails, enhancing water systems and addressing long-standing maintenance issues. Support was also extended for murals promoting cultural connection and storytelling, alongside replenishing educational resources to better engage learners and support community and family learning initiatives.

MENTORING AND COACHING

Mentoring and coaching opportunities have seen substantial expansion, with site visits enabling direct, in-person coaching and support for leaders and educators to pinpoint and achieve their aspirational goals. These dialogues are structured by the SNAICC ACCO Early Years Review Checklist, ensuring discussions are focused and aligned with specific service needs. A key area of support has been workforce training aspirations, particularly for services in remote locations, involving strategic planning for educators' study pathways. Targeted leadership support, guided by the ACCO Early Years Review Checklist, assists leaders in broadening their understanding and proficiencies in shaping professional development. The team also offered a leadership development program, engaging four directors of long daycare providers and four aspiring leaders from these services.

NEW INNOVATIONS: WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT SUPPORT

A significant innovation introduced by WA EYS has been a unique, piloted workforce recruitment support system, which has garnered positive reception from services. This encompasses providing practical tips and frequently asked questions on recruitment, encouraging inventive and lateral thinking and offering advice on interview questions, techniques and advertising strategies. This support was specifically conceived for remote communities facing a smaller pool of potential employees. Furthermore, WA EYS has initiated the development of EYS Communities of Practice to foster deeper collaboration and knowledge exchange between services.

WORKFORCE SUSTAINABILITY

SNAICC WA EYS's primary strategy for building workforce sustainability is to offer access to high-quality professional learning opportunities, which are well-attended and positively received. The team actively aids services in developing and piloting their own approaches to workforce challenges. This includes collaborating with Early Years consultants to devise methods for staff in rural and remote areas to access Certificate III and Diploma training. Support was also extended for advertised positions and collective wisdom on recruitment strategies was shared during Leaders Network Meetings. The promotional films produced for services have also been leveraged as a tool for attracting new staff and securing funding opportunities.

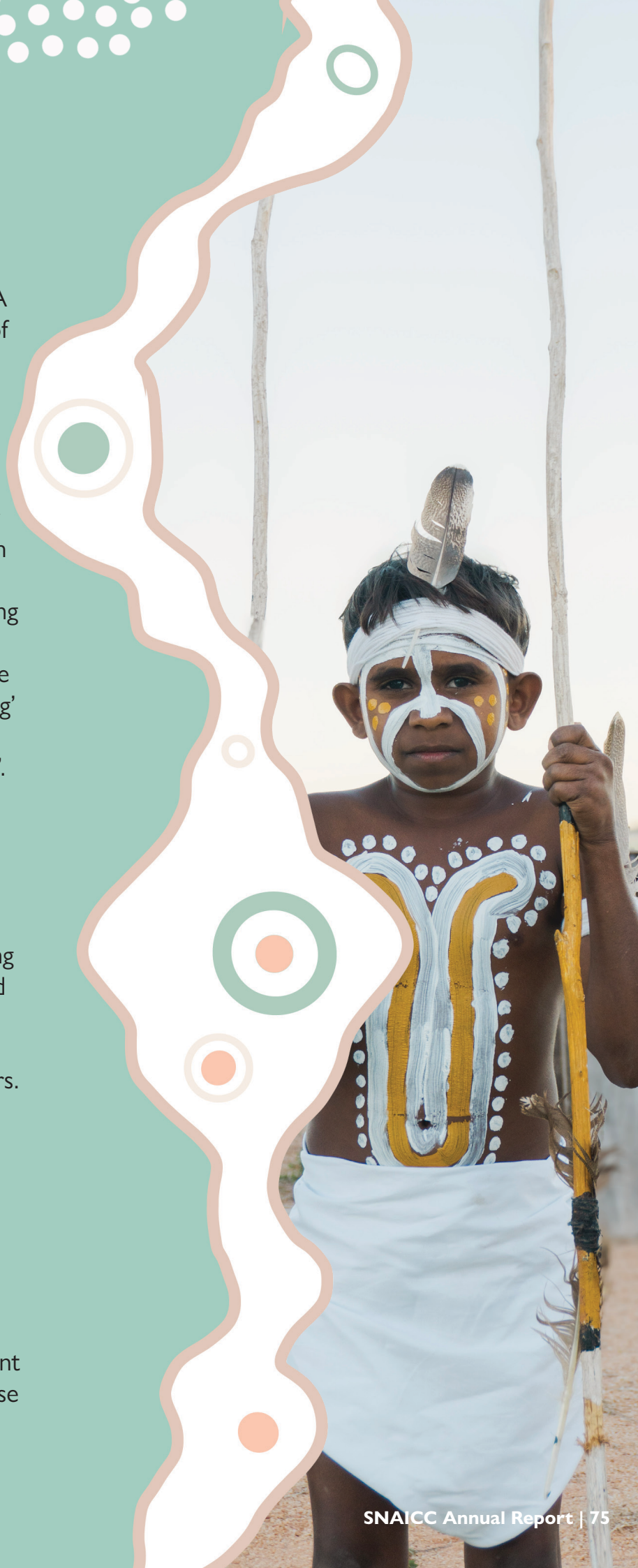


WELLBEING SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

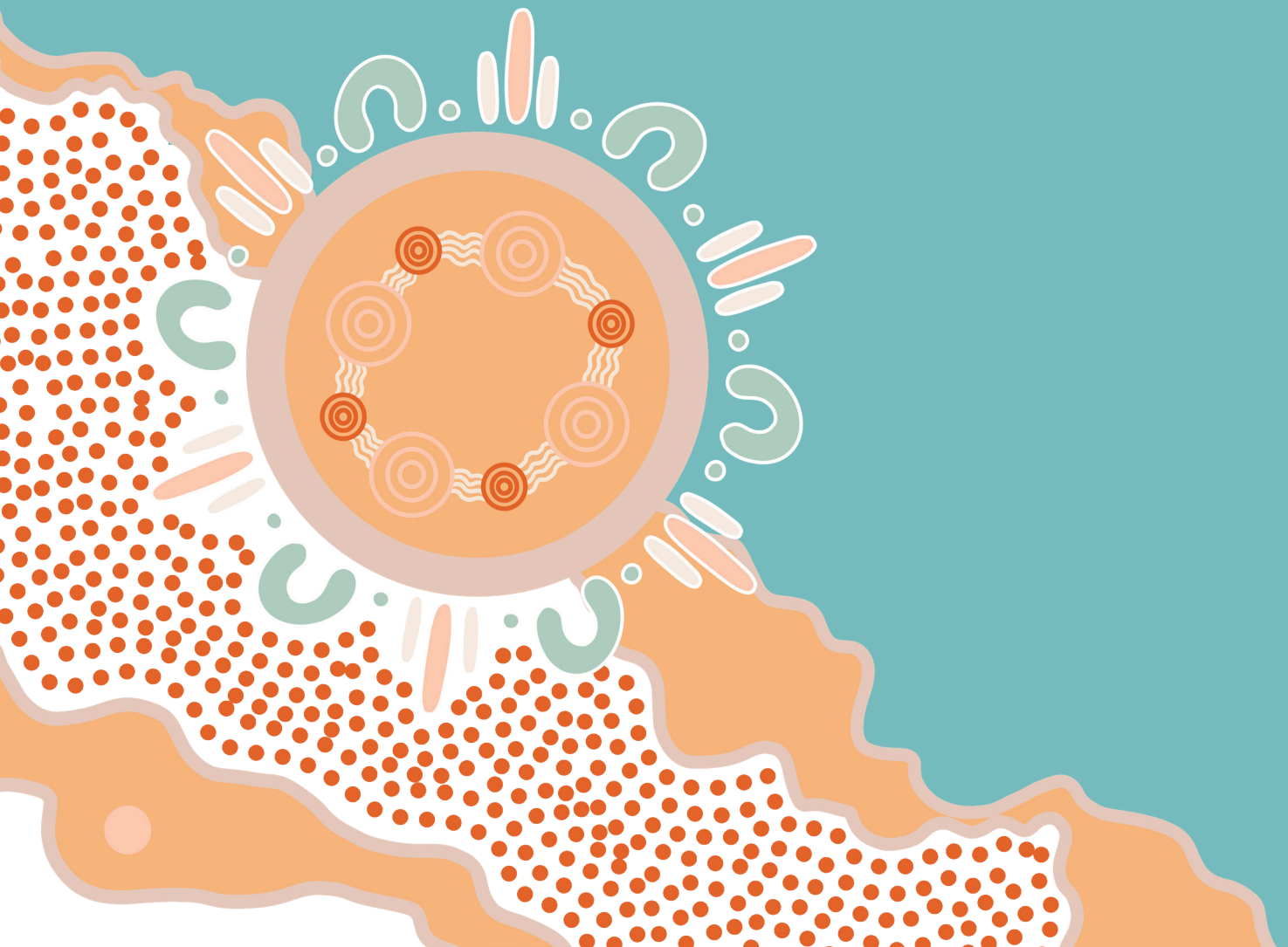
A central commitment of SNAICC WA EYS is to foster the holistic wellbeing of the early years workforce. Professional learning opportunities are seamlessly integrated into all interactions and are customised to individual service needs. These opportunities, informed by feedback and the ACCO EY Review Checklist, encompass critical areas such as trauma-informed practices and self-regulation. The WA EYS State Gathering in June 2025 specifically featured sessions on 'How Trauma can affect the developing brain,' 'Workplace Wellbeing' and the 'Culturally Informed Trauma Integrated Healing Approach (CITIHA)'. These sessions aim to strengthen leadership and educator capabilities, thereby preventing stagnation and inspiring continued growth. Challenges related to staff engagement and continuity, alongside issues of resourcing and training access, are being addressed through strategic planning, including grouping site visits by geographical proximity and augmenting staff numbers.

NEWSLETTERS

SNAICC WA EYS continues to utilise newsletters as a vital communication tool. The content of the newsletters is shaped around the current needs of members, including service updates, professional learning opportunities, grant information and details on wage increase support tools and webinars.



OUR PERFORMANCE



SPREADING THE WORD

During 2024 and 2025, SNAICC has continued to use earned media and social media to elevate the voices of the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector alongside our own, sharing community-led initiatives, advocacy efforts and policy developments to promote the rights and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

SNAICC's media advocacy has been highly effective in raising national awareness about the rights and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, influencing public discourse and policy reform. Being an election year, our strategic media engagement has contributed to significant outcomes, such as the scrapping of the activity test, the establishment of a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People and the current federal government declaring early childhood education and care as a key priority in this term.

SNAICC focused on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to share stories of success from within the sector and to communicate our key messages to members and stakeholders by keeping them up to date with our work through these platforms. We also released a bi-monthly newsletter and used traditional media to keep stakeholders, and the public informed of our work.

In 2024-25, SNAICC has seen a steady increase across all social media platforms relating to their overall engagement, reach and follower count. Our content on Facebook reached over of 200,000 users over the past 12 months. This reach reflects the effectiveness of our content that we are creating and sharing through our social media strategy.

Instagram has also seen a high percentage of users interacting with our posts, stories and re-shared content during this period with a 126.7% increase compared to the year before. As for LinkedIn, this platform continues to be our most highly engaged with social media platform as we welcomed more than 4,700 new followers over the last year. This is due to the type of curated content that we share, especially if it relates to media interviews with SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle, job opportunities and news coming out of the sector.



4,719
new
followers



126.7%
profile
reach
increase



204,104
profiles
reached

STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY

It's been a huge year of activity with three elections in 12 months keeping us on our toes – a Northern Territory election in August 2024, a Queensland State election in October 2024 and Federal election in May 2025.

SNAICC proactively advocated to election candidates about the importance of committing to shared decision making and community control to sustain improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

It was disappointing and harmful to see Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children weaponised in political debate and we fearlessly called this out, while demonstrating the success of community-led and designed policies and programs.

Following the elections, SNAICC has established new connections with incoming Ministers to ensure continuity of advocacy and continues to build on our existing strong relationships.

We welcomed the Prime Minister's commitment to achieving universal access to quality childcare for all Australian children and continue to urge decision-makers to ensure the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families are reflected in this ongoing work.

The removal of the Child Care Subsidy Activity Test, announced by the Prime Minister in September, was the culmination of many years of sustained advocacy by SNAICC and our sector. All the evidence shows vulnerable children get the most benefits from accessing at least 60 hours of quality ECEC a fortnight. The announcement of 100 hours of subsidised early education and care removes a significant barrier.

Our Strategic Engagement Strategy has continued to strengthen the organisation's reputation and advocacy reach and influence. The strategy combines targeted political engagement, strategic media messaging, and the development of resources and publications that support both advocacy campaigns and sector-wide information sharing.

Our focus areas and achievements this year:

- After direct lobbying to Federal Ministers and members, funding for the Early Years Support pilot program, which delivers critical tailored supports to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) in early childhood education and care, was continued for 12 months in the 2024 MYEFO.
- We continue to advocate for a new, dedicated funding model incorporating block and needs-based funding for ACCO services, that matches resources to wrap-around support needs in each community
- Transforming child protection through transitioning delivery of out-of-home care, supports and reunification to ACCOs

- Welcomed the Government's 15 per cent pay rise for early childhood workers, while highlighting the need to build and sustain a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years workforce
- The establishment of the Office of the new National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the anticipated appointment of a Commissioner with fully legislated powers. SNAICC thanks and acknowledges the work of Interim Commissioner Lil Gordon.

Urging all governments to meet their commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap continues to underly much of our work. Data releases from the Productivity Commission during the year continued to highlight how inconsistent government action to meet the Priority Reforms was frustrating progress for children.

The cost of this lack of action is directly felt by our children, who continue to be removed from their families at unprecedented rates and who continue to be vastly over-represented in the youth justice system

"Closing the Gap starts with our children, but the latest Productivity Commission data shows we haven't even reached the starting blocks." – Catherine Liddle

The release of the Productivity Commission report A path to universal early childhood education and care incorporated and reflected many of SNAICC's priorities outlined in our submissions. The report recommendations, if put in place, could chart a very different course for many of our children and families.

SNAICC also has a focus on forming strategic partnerships with our allies. We continue to be a proud partner in the Thrive by Five campaign, working towards a universal, high-quality early childhood education and care system where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services are adequately resourced and accessible.

We have also formed a strong relationship with the Allies for Children, a group representing mainstream not-for-profits committed to transforming systems and transitioning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care to ACCO services.

We look forward to continuing work with all governments, members and supporters to reform the early education, family services and out-of-home care systems to achieve better life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

WEBINARS

SNAICC's webinars and virtual discussions bring together professionals from across the continent to highlight what's working on the ground, build shared understanding and support sector-wide collaboration to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

In 2024, SNAICC hosted three key webinars, focusing on two core topics: the Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Retention Payment and Wage Increase and the release of the *Family Matters Report 2024*.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE WAGE INCREASE INFORMATION SESSIONS

On Friday 18 October, SNAICC partnered with the Department of Education to host a live information session on the ECEC Wage Amendments. With over 80 attendees, the session provided an opportunity to address common questions and concerns, offering practical guidance to help services navigate the new funding and wage structures.

A follow-up session was held on Friday 13 December, co-hosted by SNAICC and the Australian Childcare Alliance, featuring guest speaker Paul Mondo. This webinar supported over 40 participants in better understanding the Workforce Retention Package, ensuring that services felt informed and supported throughout the transition to the updated wage framework.

FAMILY MATTERS REPORT 2024 WEBINAR

On Friday 6 December, SNAICC hosted a national webinar to launch the *2024 Family Matters Report*. With over 525 attendees, the session unpacked key findings, community-led recommendations and case studies from Aboriginal community-controlled organisations providing culturally safe, wraparound support for children and families.

Speakers included:

- Catherine Liddle, CEO, SNAICC – National Voice for our Children
- Associate Professor Paul Gray, University of Technology Sydney
- Theresa Simpson, CEO, Mookai Rosie Bi-Bayan
- Melanie Briggs, Senior Balaang Manager for Birthing on Country, Waminda
- Jamie Crosby, CEO, Families Australia

The report emphasises the need for increased funding for Aboriginal-led prevention programs, empowering Aboriginal communities to control decisions affecting their children and implementing national standards for the Child Placement Principle.



FAMILY MATTERS

Strong communities. Strong culture.
Stronger children.

Family Matters 2024 Report Webinar
Friday 6 December



SNAICC CONTINUES TO GROW

SNAICC commenced the 2024/25 Financial Year with continued growth. As of 30 June 2025, our workforce reached 91 and is continuing to grow to adequately support all the projects and advocacy we are undertaking.

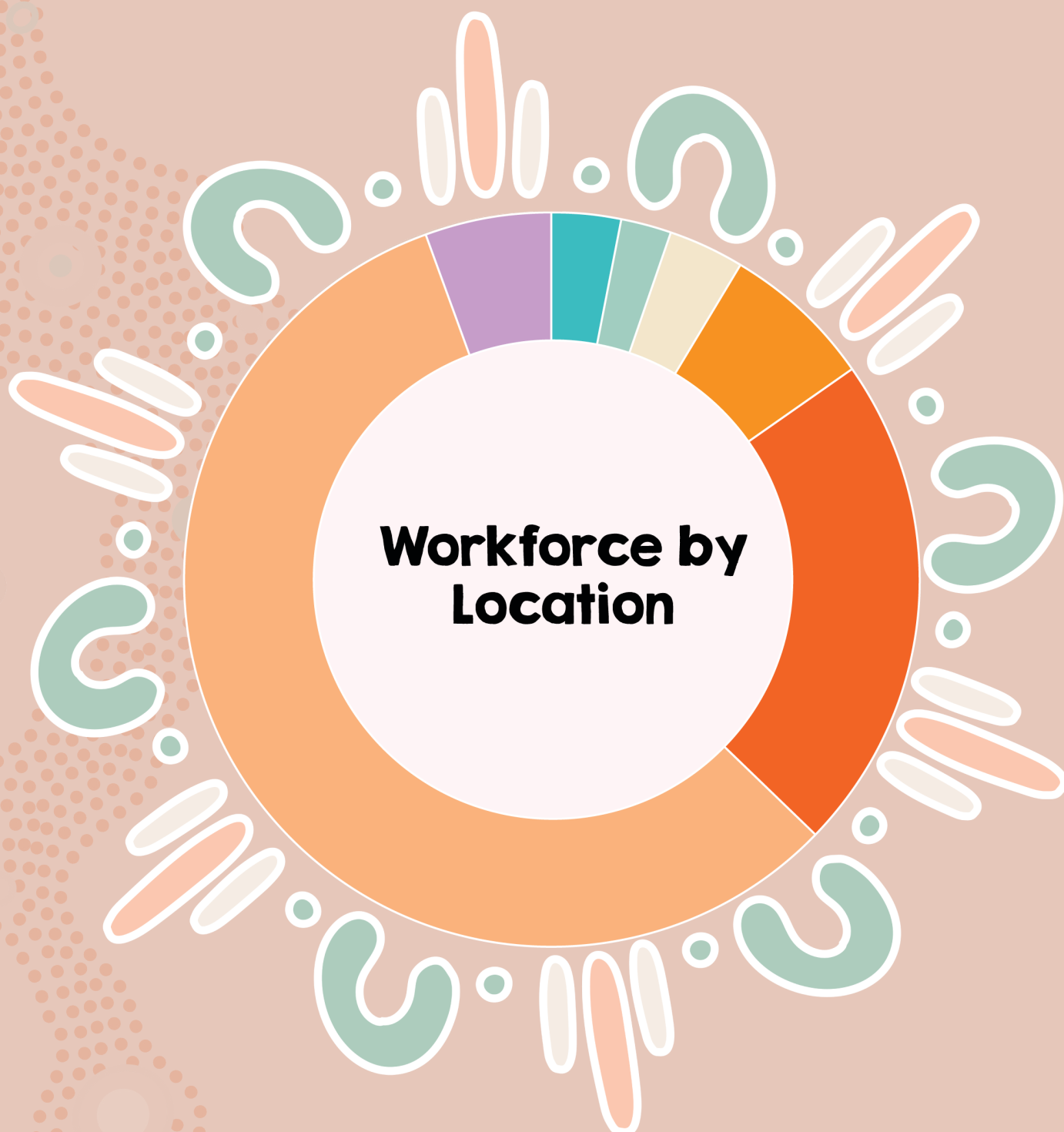
We are committed to enhancing our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce. Our current employment figures reflect that 34 out of 91 employees (37%) identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. 39 % of our leadership positions are held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff (i.e. 11/28 positions). Our workforce is predominately located in Victoria (57%) and as a national peak body we continue to grow across the country with 22% of staff in NSW; 3% in WA; 3% in SA; 7% in QLD; 5% in the ACT; and 2% in the NT.

SNAICC values our diverse workforce as it draws perspective from different lived experiences. This fosters collaboration, innovation, problem-solving, and in turn strengthens our ability to deliver culturally appropriate support.

SNAICC is dedicated to fostering inclusion and celebrating individual differences. The majority of our employees identify as female (73%), and 20% as male, 5% as gender diverse, and 2% prefer not to say. We have continued to enhance our human resources information system (HRIS) ELMO by implementing recruitment, onboarding and learning modules. As part of our commitment to attracting and retaining top talent, we continue to work on strengthening our employee value proposition. We are also investing in our workforce through identified learning and development initiatives promoting growth and skill across our workforce.



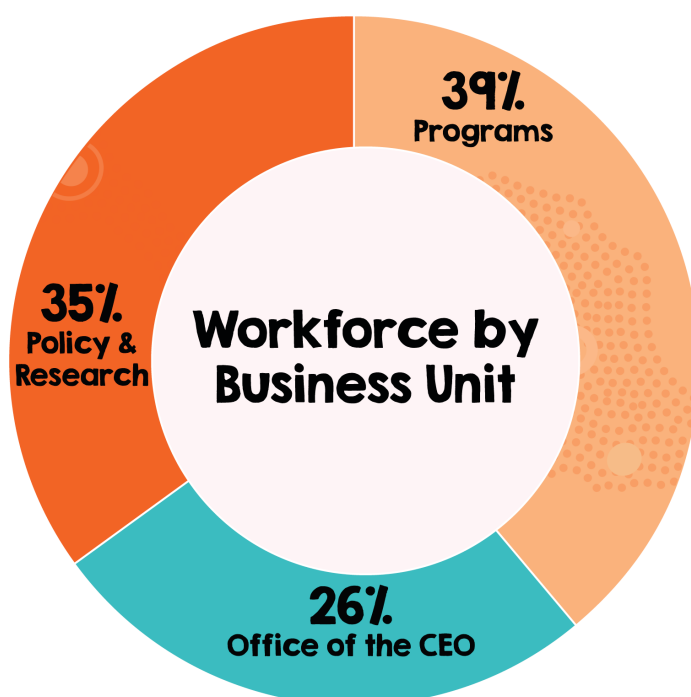
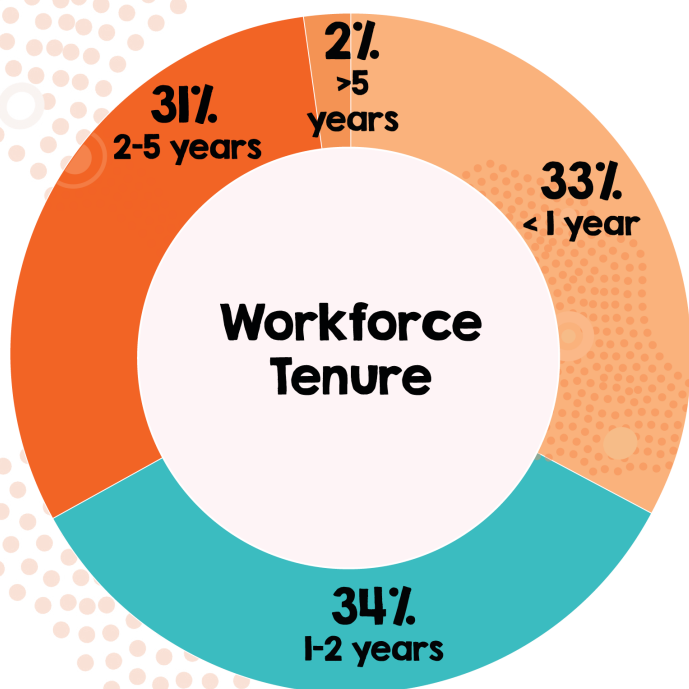
PEOPLE SNAPSHOTS



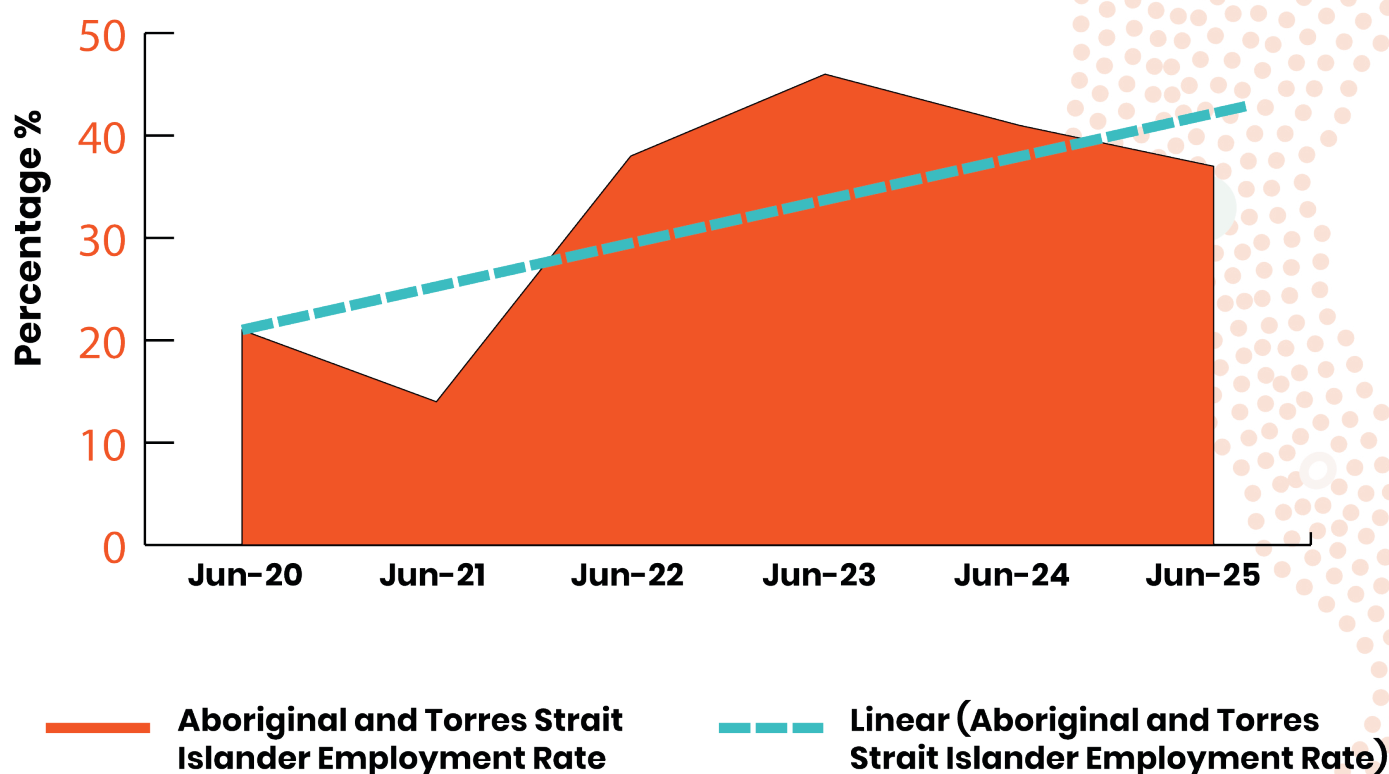
■ **WA** ■ **NSW** ■ **SA** ■ **NT** ■ **QLD** ■ **VIC** ■ **ACT**



■ 21-30 ■ 31-40 ■ 41-50 ■ 51-60 ■ 61-70



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Rate (%)



THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

SNAICC extends its gratitude for the generosity and support of the following organisations and individuals that funded and supported SNAICC's work in 2024-25.

SNAICC Donors

Andrew McGlashan
Cam Carter
Corina Horstra
Darragh Lynch
Liberty Financial
Malcolm Lambert
Martha Sinclair
Rod Harris
Samantha Forster
Virginia Balmain

Philanthropic Supporters

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Helen MacPherson Smith Trust
Keith & Jeannette Ince Fund, a sub-fund of Australian Communities Foundation
Lotterywest
Minderoo Foundation
Nicolas R Taylor Fund, a sub-fund of Australian Communities Foundation
Stan Perron Charitable Foundation
The Antipodean Family Foundation
The Ian Potter Foundation
The Ross Trust
The William Buckland Foundation

Partners

AbSec
Allies for Children
Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia
Brotherhood of St. Laurence
Coalition of Peaks
Deloitte Australia
Department of Communities, West Australian Government
Early Childhood Australia
Essential Media
Families Australia
First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence
First People's Disability Network Australia
Institute for Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University
Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, University of Technology Sydney
King & Wood Mallesons
KWY Aboriginal Corporation
Life Without Barriers
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)
National Office for Child Safety, Australian Government
Onemda Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing, University of Melbourne
Parkville Institute
Productivity Commission, Australian Government
Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak
School of Indigenous Studies, University of Western Australia
Social Ventures Australia
STRONG Kids, STRONG Future, University of Melbourne
The University of Queensland Poche Centre for Indigenous Health
Thrive by Five
University of Wollongong
Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency (VACCA)
Yardhura Walani, Australian National University

Government Funders

ACT Government

Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)

Department of Education, Australian Government

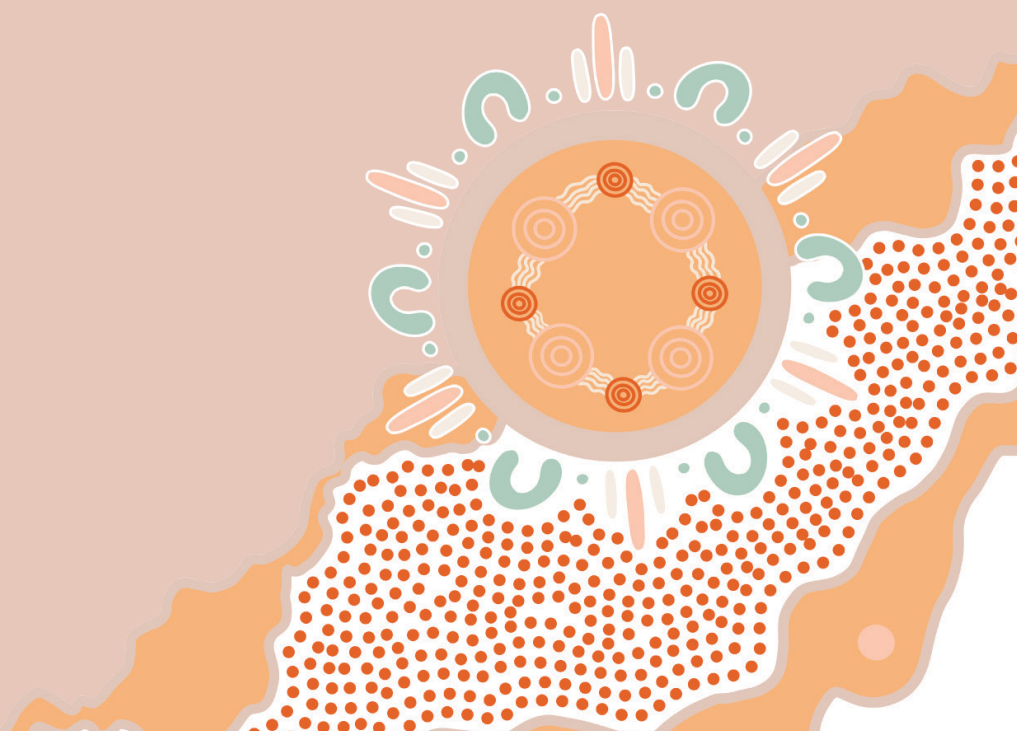
Department of Education, NSW Government

Department of Social Services, Australian Government

Department of Territory Families, NT Government

National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), Australian Government

Office for Early Childhood Development, South Australian Government



STATEMENT OF INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2024-25

INCOME

\$

Government grants	19,700,666
Non Govt grants, philanthropic and other donations	5,524,145
National conference income	39,000
Consultations, training & resource sales	150,682
Interest income	941,062
Investment income	30,445
Memberships & other income	278,828
Total income	26,664,828

EXPENDITURE

Employee benefits expenses	13,226,316
Consulting and professional fees	3,986,336
Office and administration expenses	1,689,609
Travel expenses	1,730,266
National conference expenses	119
Services and project expenses	852,060
Printing and design expenses	410,729
Depreciation and amortisation expenses	547,235
Lease expenses	119,960
Total expenses	22,562,630

Net income/(deficit)	4,102,198
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ASSETS

\$

Current assets

Cash & cash equivalents	25,834,609
Trade & other receivables	3,591,648
Financial Assets	1,036,331
Prepayments	686,035

Total current assets	31,148,623
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Non-current assets

Right-of-use assets	805,479
Plant and equipment	92,983

Total non-current assets	898,462
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Total Assets	32,047,085
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LIABILITIES

Current liabilities

Lease liability	370,641
Trade and other payables	2,189,781
Deferred income	14,788,926
Employee benefit provisions	998,292

Total current liabilities	18,347,640
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Non-current liabilities

Lease liability	471,309
Employee benefit provisions	10,381

Total non-current liabilities	481,690
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Total Liabilities	18,829,330
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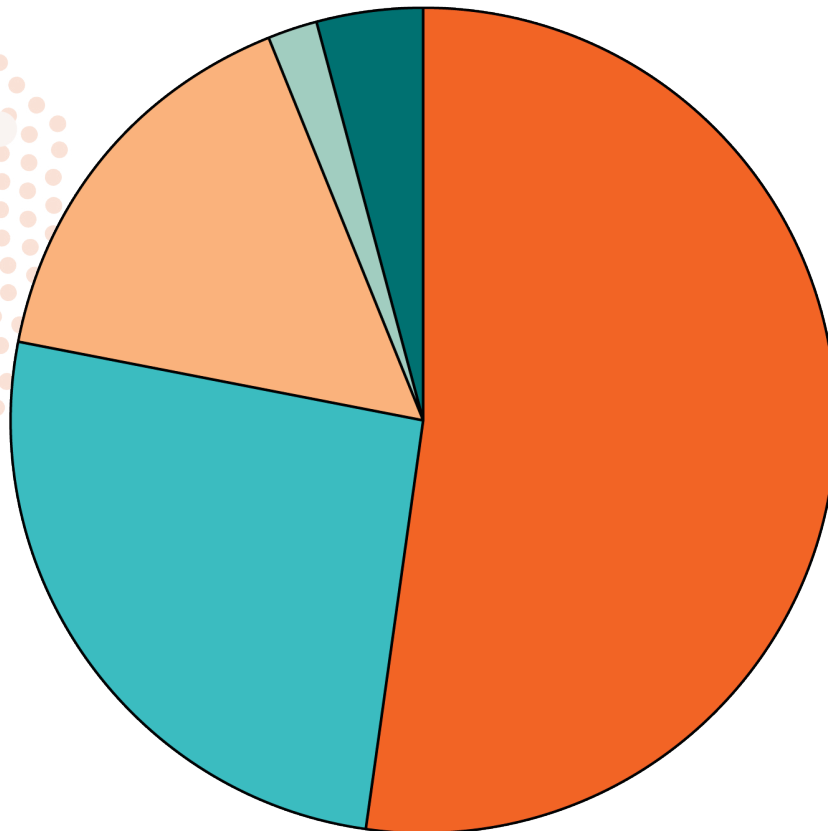
Net Assets	13,217,755
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Equity

Retained surpluses	13,217,755
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Total Members' Equity	13,217,755
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SNAICC SOURCES OF INCOME 2024-25



■ Fee for Service - 26%.

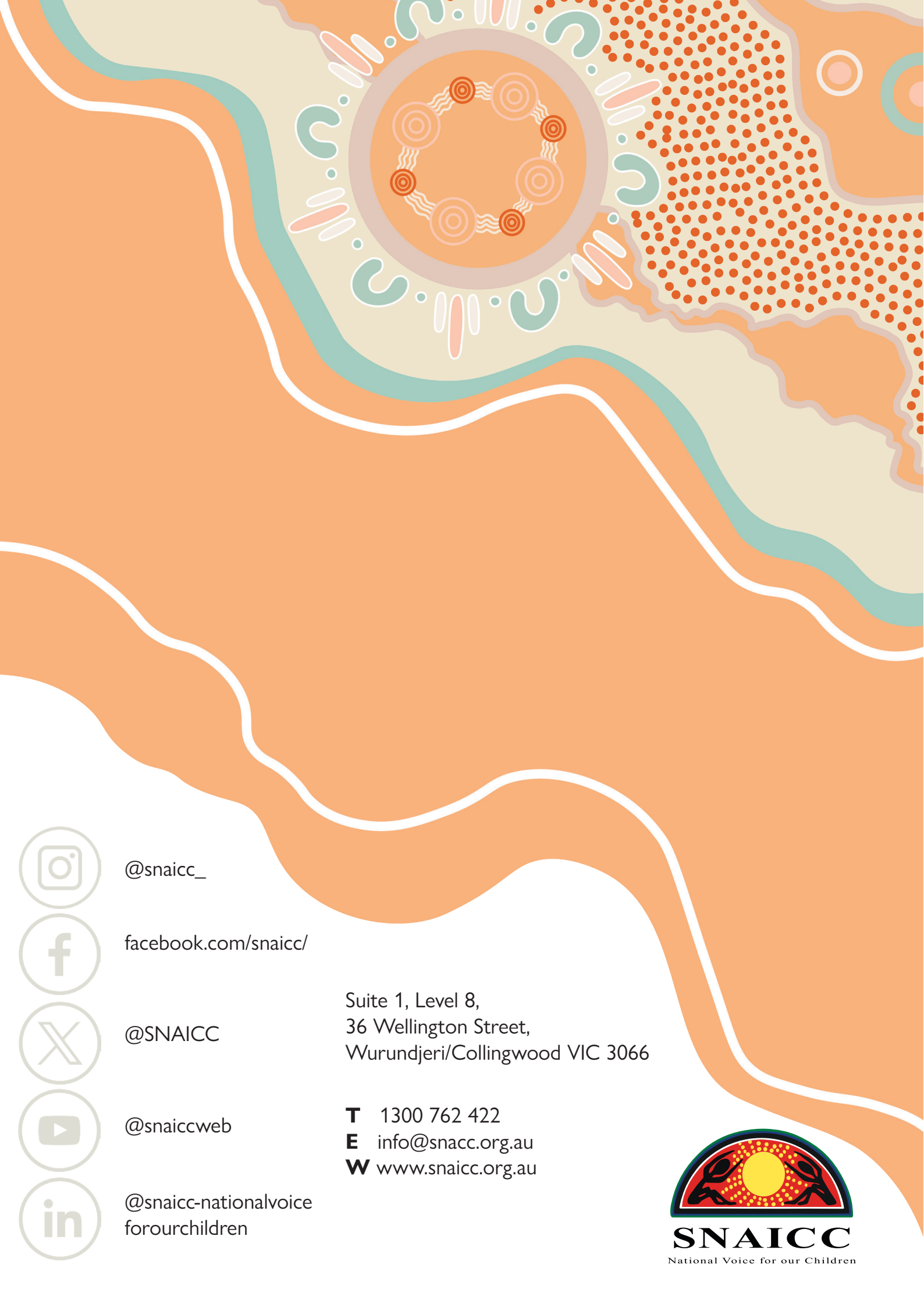
■ Interest and Investment Income - 4%.

■ Government Grants & Incentives - 53%.

■ Training and Resource Sales - 2%.

■ Non-Government Grants, Sponsorships and Donations - 16%.

NOTES



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