

MEDIA RELEASE

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Thriving Kids a potential “Medicare Moment” for children

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children gave evidence at a Committee Hearing for Thriving Kids in Federal Parliament, saying the initiative represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform developmental support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Appearing before the Inquiry, SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle described Thriving Kids as a “Medicare Moment”.

“This is an incredible moment of reform and if we get it right, this will be a Medicare moment for our children,” Ms Liddle said.

“I am also really clear that if we get it wrong, these incredible reforms that everyone has been working on may be shattered into pieces.

“The importance of this moment makes it essential that we get it right and that we don’t squander this chance and risk coming back here years down the track asking why it isn’t working.

“There are disproportionately high rates of developmental vulnerability and disability among our children, and too many are beginning big school with challenges that have been misidentified, misunderstood or missed entirely.

“That also means that for the first time, our children might be disproportionately helped by the reforms that come under Thriving Kids by addressing unattended vulnerabilities throughout a child’s life.”

Ms Liddle stressed that Thriving Kids must not replicate the clinical, diagnostic-first pathways that many families currently face.

“This is not about replacing the NDIS with another system, it’s about creating a soft-entry pathway where the first touchpoint for families is a culturally grounded service, not a GP clinic and not the NDIS,” Ms Liddle said.

“Our children should be able to access developmental supports in places where they feel comfortable such as ACCO playgroups, early learning centres or child and family hubs.

“And the evidence supports what we’re hearing on the ground - when an environment is culturally strong and welcoming, our children’s needs are identified earlier, and they are supported better.

Ms Liddle reaffirmed SNAICC’s commitment to co-designing Thriving Kids in genuine partnership.

“If the Thriving Kids Initiative is built with us, in shared decision-making with community, it can be transformational. It has the potential to redress decades of system failure but only if it is designed to strengthen, not replace, the existing Aboriginal community-controlled early years system.”

END

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