

MEDIA RELEASE

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Early Years Support Program Strengthens ACCO-Led Early Childhood Sector in Tamworth

The Early Years Support (EYS) program run by SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children is strengthening ACCO-led early childhood services across the country by improving workforce capability and outcomes for children, including at Birrelee Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Service (MACS), in Tamworth.

SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle said EYS was designed to fill a critical gap in support for ACCO-run early years services and it is delivering exactly what the Closing the Gap reforms call for.

“Running an ACCO early years’ service is incredibly rewarding, but it is also complex,” Ms Liddle said.

“Through EYS, Aboriginal community-led early years services receive “head-office” like support which many mainstream ECEC services rely on such as practical tools, mentoring and tailored guidance to strengthen their quality practices, plan their workforce and stay on top of changing requirements.

“Our services uphold culture, community and identity while navigating demanding regulatory and administrative systems, often without the administrative infrastructure larger providers have access too.

For Birrelee MACS Centre Director, Rachael Phillips, the impact of EYS on her service in Tamworth, NSW, has been profound.

“The EYS program has played a significant role in helping Birrelee MACS improve our service quality and better meet the National Quality Standard (NQS),” Ms Phillips said.

“They provide targeted information, updates and practical examples through workshops, gatherings and one-on-one support which is always tailored to our needs.

“We found as a MACS service, we faced misconceptions about being “out of scope”, which undermined educator confidence during assessment and reporting - EYS addressed that head-on.

“Their team came to our service, observed our practice and helped our educators see that many of our everyday cultural practices were examples of best practice which completely shifted our

confidence.

“EYS helped us demonstrate how our culturally embedded practices like Gamilaraay language lessons, community engagement, holistic care and strong governance mapped directly to exceeding themes under the NQS.”

Birrelee also relied on EYS to navigate administrative demands that were affecting staffing and receive updates on rapid, accurate legislative and regulatory updates.

“SNAICC’s support with the administration associated with the Workers Retention payment support meant our application was successful and ensured positive outcomes for our staff,” she said.

“If the SNAICC EYS program were to not only continue but expand nationally, it would mean that our voices have truly been heard and valued.

“When pilot programs deliver real results, backed by both data and participant feedback, those successes should be recognised and built upon.”

Ms Liddle said Birrelee’s experience is a clear example of why ACCO-led early years services need sustained and secure support like the EYS Program; however, funding is due to end at the end of 2025.

“When ACCOs are supported to lead, children thrive - strong, proud and connected to culture. Our early years sector needs this support now more than ever.

“SNAICC is urging the Government to commit to ongoing secure investment to ensure EYS continues to help strengthen services like Birrelee MACS.”

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For all media queries, please contact Charlie Bowcock on 0417 042 308 or media@snaicc.org.au