

MEDIA RELEASE

12 February 2026

Closing the Gap statement puts early childhood at the centre of reform

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children welcomes the Prime Minister’s clear focus on early childhood education and care in today’s Closing the Gap statement.

Prime Minister Albanese delivered his annual Closing the Gap remarks in Parliament this afternoon, reinforcing the Government’s commitment to delivering new early childhood education and care centres in remote Australia and preparing for the transition of child and family services under the National Child and Family Investment Strategy.

Catherine Liddle, CEO of SNAICC- National Voice for our Children said on the eve of the Anniversary of the National Apology to the Stolen Generations we are reminded of how important the policies and measures that impact our children’s lives are to their safety and wellbeing, and the horrific, life-long impact of getting that wrong.

“The Prime Minister’s comments today reinforced what we know to be true - closing the gap starts with our children,” Ms Liddle said.

“The statement set out a clear resolve from this Government to reform early childhood education and care so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and the services that support them on their journey to big school, are able to thrive.

Ms Liddle said the removal of the activity test was a significant reform that would have a direct impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across the country.

“This change increases much-needed access to early learning services. The next step is ensuring the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector is properly supported through programs like the Early Years Services so they can continue delivering a gold standard of care while navigating complex funding and policy frameworks.

“Governments, including the Commonwealth, will not achieve Closing the Gap outcomes in the early years unless ACCO services are equipped to manage increasingly complex operational, funding and regulatory environments.”

The statement also highlighted the expansion of childcare support through the Closing the Gap Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, with a focus on ensuring First Nations children thrive in the crucial early years.

The report made significant note of the success of the Connected Beginnings program, which brings early childhood education, health services, family supports and community leadership together in a coordinated approach, so education and health investments reinforce each other.

“This program is making a real difference on the ground, with case studies showing a significant increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being on track across all five developmental domains,” Ms Liddle said.

“Scaling up programs like Connected Beginnings and Early Years Services nationwide is critical if we are to see meaningful progress against Closing the Gap targets for our children.

“What this report shows is where we are getting it right. It also highlights the importance of having a specialist peak with a focus on early childhood and families, with 45 years of experience of working in and with communities and the sector.

“We need Government to stay on this path and double down on the programs that are proven to get better results for our children and families.”

SNAICC also welcomes the expansion of the Food Security Resilience Package, with an additional 75 remote stores set to receive funding, supporting families and children in remote parts of Australia.

“Reliable access to healthy food remains a real challenge in remote Australia,” Ms Liddle said.

“It is a fundamental need, and one that must be met if our children and families are to thrive.”

END

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