

MEDIA RELEASE

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Services in WA working to Close the Gap for Aboriginal children with EYS Support

With the release of Closing the Gap Report, it's clear that a strong Aboriginal Community-controlled Early Childhood Education and Care Sector is instrumental in achieving Closing the Gap outcomes.

Services like Jalygurr–Guwan Aboriginal Corporation in Broome receive backbone support through SNAICC's Early Years Support (EYS) Service, which aims to address the disparities in early childhood education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Many Closing the Gap targets surrounding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not on track, including targets around Developmental Readiness for big school. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experience far higher levels of developmental vulnerability compared to Western Australia overall, with trends reflecting similar disparities across the state.

SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle said that EYS is closing the gap in action.

“Access to culturally safe early childhood education and care is what will help close the gap for our children, and it's programs like EYS that will help steer targets relating to our children in the right direction.

“EYS offers ACCO-led ECEC services with head office like support in ACCO ECEC services in WA, VIC and NSW, taking away the administrative burdens that running a service can bring which ensures staff can focus on what's most important, the children.”

EYS supports ACCO-led early childhood services across NSW, WA and VIC by enhancing workforce capability and improving outcomes for children, including in regional and remote areas.

For Jalygurr–Guwan Aboriginal Corporation CEO, Mystique Dia, EYS has given the Broome based service the backing it needs to be heard.

“As the only ACCO ECEC in Western Australia that is not connected to a backbone organisation, Jalygurr has never had the backing of a larger entity which has led to challenges such as limited resources, accessing additional funds, reducing personal risk and less visibility and influence in the political and business world.

“The SNAICC EYS program has given us a voice.”

Jalygurr–Guwan has also benefited from the connections facilitated by EYS, connecting them with other ACCO ECEC services from not only the state, but nationally.

“The SNAICC team have given us a space to connect with other stand-alone ECECs that understand the challenges of operating without larger organisational backing.

“They also provide us with regular meetings where we can connect, reflect on and celebrate our service to children and community, and more importantly allows us to discuss things we would like SNAICC to advocate for.”

Ms Dia also emphasised that community-led early education is essential for the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

“Community-led early education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children isn’t just a ‘nice to have’ or ‘ticks the boxes’, it is essential.

“When communities lead, children thrive. When culture is centred, identity is strengthened. And when families have genuine control, not just a seat at the table, early learning becomes a place of belonging rather than assimilation.”

Ms Liddle said that despite the significant positive impact of the EYS program, funding to support its continued success remains uncertain.

“While the program has already demonstrated its ability to strengthen ACCO-led services and improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, there is an ongoing need for sustained funding to ensure its long-term effectiveness.

“SNAICC is urging the government to commit to long-term investment for EYS so that the program can continue to help strengthen services like Jalygurr to do what they do best.”

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