MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW preschool funding cuts put Aboriginal community-controlled early learning services at risk

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children warns the NSW Government's new Universal Preschool Funding program could leave Aboriginal community-controlled early childhood services across the state facing significant funding shortfalls, with a $150 million cut to long day care funding set to come into effect next year.

The changes risk putting services under greater financial pressure, making it harder to maintain quality education, retain and grow their workforces and provide the additional support many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families rely on.

If the NSW Government follows through with the $150 million cut it risks destabilising services that hundreds of families across NSW depend on and undermining progress on Closing the Gap. Families need to know their children will continue to have access to quality, culturally safe early education and the support that comes with it.

Debbie Swanson, director of Dalaigur and Scribbly Gum Preschools in Kempsey, said the NSW Government calculator indicated her services could lose up to $100,000 each, creating significant uncertainty about their future.

"For us, it could look like we could lose up to $100,000 per service.

"Reducing the funding that we get to pay our staff just doesn't make sense when the whole sector and the department is focused on uplifting quality, safety and implementing new child safety reforms. How can we meet supervision needs without being able to pay the staff to be there?

"As an Aboriginal community-led preschool, we have different wraparound services like our transport and meals which fall outside our core budget but are an important part of what we provide for our families.

"With this change, there is uncertainty about how we can continue to deliver that level of care. We potentially lose excellent staff or our trainees that we're trying to grow, which is added pressure on our workforce in NSW.

"We have already started our enrolment processes for next year, which means we have allocated placements, but we don't even know what that actually looks like now because we don't know if we need to raise fees – and I don't want to do that to our families.

"It's not fair to them, it's not fair to us."

SNAICC is calling on the NSW Minister for Education and Early Learning to urgently meet with SNAICC to discuss these issues, restore the $150 million cut to preschool provision in long day care and provide clarity to community preschools about how the new funding arrangements will affect their services.

END

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