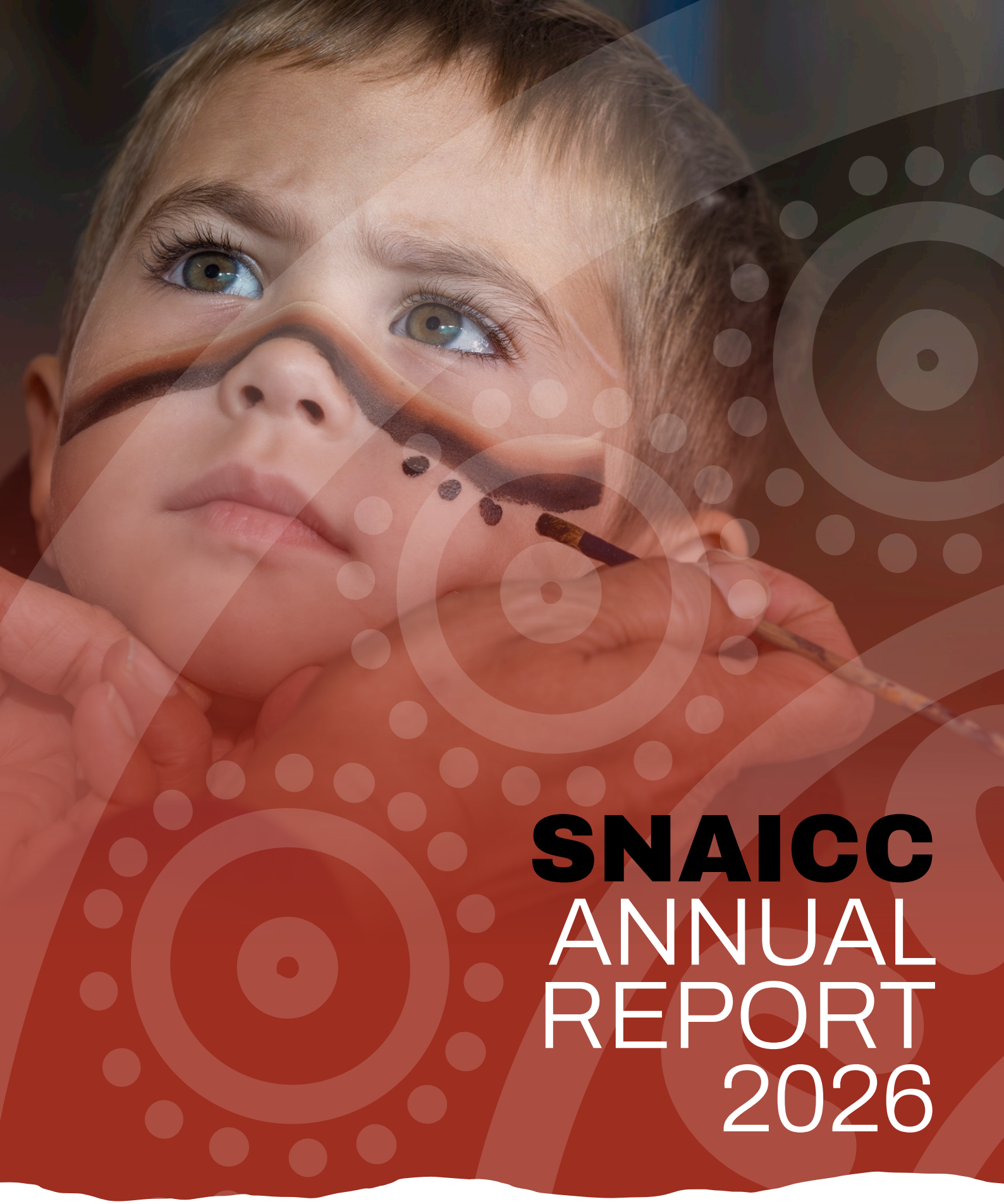

SNAICC ANNUAL REPORT 2026

Strong Children, Strong Futures

SNAICC
National Voice for our Children



Acknowledgments

SNAICC shows respect by acknowledging the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connections to land, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and Elders past and present.

We acknowledge and respect their continued connection to Country, care for community and practice of culture for generations uncounted. We also acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, parents, families and kinship carers who are the custodians of caring practices that have kept children safe and thriving for more than 65,000 years.

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Chairperson's Message

On behalf of the SNAICC Board and Council, I am pleased to present the 2025–2026 Annual Report.

Acting as a strong national voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families is one of our core strategic priorities. So, I'm particularly proud to report on the significant progress made this year with our Youth Voice initiative, turning our theoretical model into a functioning body.

Young people are now formally recognised as decision-makers in SNAICC's governance through a Youth Voice Subcommittee to the SNAICC Council. Members of this subcommittee have the mandate, independence and support to shape the national work we do with young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

I would like to make special mention of the 11th SNAICC National Conference, dubbed SNAICC'25, which was officially Australia's largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conference and one of the largest ever First Nations conferences in the world.

In October 2025, SNAICC'25 welcomed more than 2000 delegates to the beautiful lands of the Turrbal and Yuggera peoples in Meanjin/Brisbane. Communities, organisations, governments, researchers and allies all came together to share knowledge and drive reform.

Organised around the theme of *Our Culture. Keep it Strong. We Belong.*, SNAICC'25 celebrated the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures while reaffirming the vital role that culture, identity and belonging have in the lives of children and young people.

Maintaining financial stability is a top priority for the SNAICC Board, as it allows us to deliver on our strategic priorities. I am proud to report that SNAICC continued to bolster its robust financial position this year, reinforcing an already-strong base and ensuring the longevity and sustainability of our vital programs.

I am honoured to chair this team and look forward to continuing to support their work advocating for and strengthening our communities, children and families.

A special thanks to our members, the SNAICC Board, and our many supporters who work tirelessly to achieve better outcomes for our children. I'd like to especially note the exceptional leadership and depth of skills we are fortunate to have in the SNAICC team.

I commend this report to you as a record of SNAICC's achievements, financial performance and compliance.

Professor Muriel Bamblett
Chairperson



CEO's Message

Werte,

SNAICC has celebrated so many significant achievements over the past year, it's going to be hard to select just a few to highlight. Overall, I am so proud of how we have continued to grow as an organisation. In expanding, we have broadened and deepened our support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities right across the country - creating new initiatives and strengthening existing areas of work.

Decades of sustained advocacy paid off this year in the most historic and wonderful way. On National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, 4 August 2025, Australia's first National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People was appointed. We were thrilled to see Wurundjeri and Ngurai Illum Wurrung woman Professor Sue-Anne Hunter step into the role and we look forward to working closely with her for the betterment of our children and families.

Sector transformation was a major theme for us this year. We ramped up the vital work of changing systems at every level to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities more authority over decisions that affect their children and families. Through the tireless dedication of our Transformation Team, we supported the transition of services and resources from mainstream organisations to ACCOs and the return of cultural authority, which, in turn, strengthened community control and self-determination across early years and child and family services.

We co-designed the publication of the Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices plan, which is Australia's first dedicated national framework for ending family, domestic and sexual violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. We have always been resolute in our position that preventing violence must move beyond crisis-driven and punitive approaches, and our advocacy through the design process is no different. We're already seeing significant reform outcomes flow directly from this work with the creation of a national peak body dedicated to responding to this violence, called Our Ways Strong Together and we are positive about the future of this initiative.

We published another edition of the Family Matters report. This year's theme was Strong, Loved and Full of Potential and delivered a very clear message: invest in families, not crisis. While governments have made notional commitments to child and family wellbeing, the report shows that Australia's child protection systems continue to prioritise surveillance, investigation and removal over prevention, early support and family preservation. Until that changes, we will continue to hold governments to account by publishing these reports.

Finally, I was rapt that we joined the podcast revolution with the launch of Kids, Culture, Community – SNAICC Yarns. With podcast use surging, we thought "why not us?". We've already made some excellent episodes, so keep an eye (and ear) out for our upcoming episodes. I'm so proud of these achievements and all the others you'll read about in this report. I now look forward to the future, building on this work and pursuing our vision for widespread reform rooted in self-determination, culture and children's rights.

Kele.



Catherine Liddle
CEO

About SNAICC – National Voice for our Children

Who We Are

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (SNAICC) is the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak body leading systemic and structural reform to protect and advance the rights, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities across Australia.

Established in 1981, SNAICC was founded through the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders, families and child care agencies in response to the disproportionate removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by state and welfare systems. Our establishment was driven by the landmark 1979 Aboriginal Child Survival Seminar on Wurundjeri Country in Naarm/Melbourne, where more than 200 delegates called for a national peak body to advocate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children at the highest levels of decision-making.

Today, we are one of the longest-standing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies in Australia and have a leading role in shaping national policy, reform and public understanding across early childhood education and care, child protection, family support, family safety, youth justice, disability inclusion, health and wellbeing and children's rights. Our work is grounded in more than 45 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leadership and over 65,000 years of care, kinship, culture and knowledge.

We exist to amplify the voices of children, young people, families, communities and our members to drive progress towards the fulfilment of children's rights through culturally led, self-determined and evidence-based approaches.

For more than four decades, we have been a staunch advocate in the strengthening of national and jurisdictional systems, policies and services that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities. We provide independent advice to governments, lead reform initiatives and strengthen the capability and sustainability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to deliver culturally strong, holistic services for children, young people and families.

Most recently, we have led significant national reform and advocacy, including advancing implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, convening one of the largest First Nations conferences ever in the world, leading National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, publishing the annual Family Matters reports and helping secure the establishment of a National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People.

At the heart of everything we do is a clear vision: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people thriving in culture, raised within strong families and self-determining communities and empowered to reach their full potential. This vision continues to guide and strengthen our work as the national voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.



What We Do

Community and Sector Voice

As the national voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, we engage, elevate and amplify the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, communities and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector. Through our membership, networks, partnerships and engagement across urban, regional, rural, remote and very remote Australia, we bring community priorities, aspirations and solutions to decision-making forums at local, state, territory and national levels. We create meaningful opportunities for children, young people and families to contribute directly to policy, reform and advocacy as a clear recognition of their right to participate in decisions that affect them.

Research, Policy and Leadership

We lead national research, policy development and advocacy that advances the rights, wellbeing and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Drawing on community knowledge, cultural expertise, evidence and data, we translate what works into policy, reform and practice across child and family wellbeing, early childhood development and education, family safety, youth justice, child protection, disability inclusion, health and related areas. As a trusted national leader, we provide community-informed, evidence-based advice to governments, parliamentary inquiries, commissions and other decision-making forums. Through this work, we help shape culturally responsive legislation, policies, funding arrangements and services that strengthen families and communities while driving long-term systems and structural change.

Sector Development

We strengthen the capability, sustainability and growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations as a key expression of self-determination. Our work supports organisational capability, governance, leadership, workforce development and service quality to ensure children, young people and families have access to culturally strong, holistic and responsive supports. We work to strengthen culturally responsive, trauma informed and community-led practice while growing a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce across child and family services, early childhood education and care, family support and related sectors. We also advocate for reforms that shift resources, authority, commissioning and service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and ensure that the sector has the investment, infrastructure and support required to deliver sustainable outcomes for children, young people and families.

Our Vision, Purpose and Strategy

Our Vision

Grounded in over 65,000 years of care, nurture and cultural knowledge, our vision is for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to thrive in culture, be raised within strong families and self-determining communities, and be empowered to reach their full potential.

Our Purpose

Our purpose is to be the national voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children by engaging and amplifying the voices of children, young people, families, communities and our members to drive progress towards the fulfilment of children's rights through culturally led, self-determined and evidence-based approaches.

Our Strategic Priorities

Our Strategic Plan for 2025–2028 and its priorities respond to what our members, communities and leaders have identified as the critical building blocks for achieving our vision and purpose. The Strategic Plan aligns with the four Priority Reforms under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap as a roadmap for systems transformation.

Strong national voice driving action on systems and structural change

For change to happen at the community level, we need our voices front and centre in decisions that impact us, to shift decision-making power back to our communities where it belongs, to be changemakers in the systems and structures that are failing us and be strong partners holding all accountable to better outcomes for our communities.

Building a further strengthened community-controlled sector

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations are an act of self-determination, with their expertise and capabilities being a critical factor in achieving holistic, wraparound supports for our children and families. Growing and supporting a stronger community-controlled sector with the decision-making power and resources we need to deliver for our people is key to progress.

Leading knowledge, evidence and data practices

As storytellers and knowledge holders, we continue our rich practices of sharing our wisdom and passing on the lessons that speak to our strength in culture and excellence in caring for and nurturing our families. This sharing will support further changes in policies, systems, ways of working and understanding that better reflect our ways of knowing, doing and being.





Our Approach

From grassroots communities to national policy tables, we work to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe, strong in culture, connected to family, community and Country, with their rights upheld, their voices heard and their futures shaped by their own aspirations and leadership.

We achieve this by:

- Translating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, research, evidence and community experience into independent policy advice, advocacy and reform that influences systems, structures and legislation.
- Amplifying the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, communities and community-controlled organisations so they are central to decision-making at every level.
- Influencing governments, policymakers and service systems through advisory bodies, partnerships, inquiries, commissions and strategic forums to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.
- Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations through sector development, workforce initiatives, governance support, leadership development and capability building.
- Advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led knowledge, evidence and data practices that uphold data sovereignty, strengthen accountability and support better policy and service responses.
- Partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, researchers, service providers, governments and non-government organisations to strengthen collaboration, shared decision-making and accountability across systems.
- Promoting culturally strong, trauma-informed and rights-based approaches that recognise the strengths, aspirations and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.
- Building national awareness, understanding and action through initiatives such as National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, Family Matters, the SNAICC National Conference and sector transformation initiatives.

Through this work, we contribute to culturally strong families and communities, culturally responsive systems and services, and a thriving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector.

Governance and Accountability

Overview

SNAICC's governance and accountability structure is grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control, cultural authority and self-determination. As the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, we are accountable to our members and to the communities whose voices, knowledge and lived experience shape our work. Our governance model ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership remains at the centre of our advocacy, policy development, organisational decision-making and national reform efforts.

Our governance is representative by design. Through our membership, Council, Board, subcommittees and governance structures, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from every state and territory contribute to the strategic direction of the organisation to ensure our priorities reflect the diverse aspirations, strengths and experiences of communities across Australia. This model strengthens accountability, supports transparent decision-making and reinforces our commitment to self-determination, community-led solutions and systemic reform.

Throughout 2025–26, we continued to strengthen our governance and organisational capability by enhancing oversight, supporting effective risk management and financial stewardship, and expanding opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and participation in decision-making, especially for young people. Together, these governance arrangements ensure we remain a strong, accountable and culturally grounded national voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.

Board of Directors

SNAICC is governed by a Board of Directors that provides strategic leadership, governance and oversight on behalf of our members and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia. The Board ensures our strategic direction, advocacy and organisational operations remain aligned with the priorities and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.

Working closely with SNAICC's Council, Chief Executive Officer and Executive team, the Board oversees organisational strategy, performance, financial sustainability, enterprise risk management and statutory compliance. The Board comprises seven Council-elected Directors, including the Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary, alongside Specialist Directors appointed for their expertise in key areas. All Directors are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and serve two-year terms with a maximum of four consecutive terms.

Throughout 2025–26, the Board oversaw implementation of SNAICC's Strategic Plan 2025–2028, monitored organisational performance and financial sustainability, and provided strategic leadership across major national reform initiatives, organisational growth and governance. The Board also maintained oversight of organisational risk, compliance and stewardship to ensure SNAICC remained well positioned to deliver on its purpose and responsibilities to members and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Board met four times during 2025–26, including two in-person meetings: on the lands of the Turrbal and Yuggera peoples in Meanjin/Brisbane in October 2025, to coincide with the SNAICC National Conference, and on Bwgcolman/Palm Island in May 2026.

Board of Directors

Professor Muriel Bamblett, Chairperson



Aunty Muriel Bamblett AO Hon DLitt SW is a proud Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung woman and one of Australia's foremost leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family wellbeing. As Chief Executive Officer of VACCA since 1999, she has led one of Australia's largest Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and is widely recognised for advancing Aboriginal self-determination in child and family services. Aunty Muriel has received numerous honours, including appointment as an Officer of the Order of Australia, in recognition of her outstanding contribution to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities, and National NAIDOC Person of the Year. A former SNAICC Chairperson from 1998 to 2008, Aunty Muriel returned to the role in 2020.

Aunty Rachel Atkinson, Deputy Chairperson



Aunty Rachel Atkinson is a proud Yorta Yorta woman with more than 25 years' experience improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through community-controlled health and child and family services. Rachel is the founding CEO of Palm Island Community Company, established in 2007, and has led the organisation's growth as a significant provider of culturally grounded services for Bwgcolman/Palm Island community. She is a strong advocate for community-led approaches, self-determination and systemic reform across child protection, health and family wellbeing. Rachel also serves as Chair of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak and contributes to strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led reform across Queensland.

John Leha, Treasurer



John Leha is a proud Birri Gubba, Wakka Wakka and Tongan man and CEO of AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation. John brings extensive experience across government, community-controlled organisations and Aboriginal community leadership, with expertise in advocacy, policy reform, organisational leadership and community development. He is committed to advancing self-determination, strengthening systems and improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, families and communities across New South Wales.



Selina Walker, Secretary

Selina Walker is a proud Ngunnawal woman and community leader based in Canberra. As a founding member and Chair of Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation, Selina has played an important role in strengthening support for Aboriginal children, families and communities across Ngunnawal Country. Her leadership spans child and youth protection, reconciliation, justice and community wellbeing, and she is a strong advocate for culturally safe systems that centre Aboriginal voices and community leadership.



Joanne Della Bona

Joanne Della Bona is a proud Noongar yorga from Whadjuk and Balardong Boodja in Western Australia. With more than 30 years' experience across education, community services and child wellbeing, Joanne brings deep expertise in early childhood development, governance and culturally responsive practice. She is committed to strengthening culturally strong foundations that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities to thrive.



Craig Rigney



Craig Rigney is a proud Ngarrindjeri and Kaurna man and CEO of Kornar Winmil Yunti (KWY) Aboriginal Corporation. Craig brings extensive experience in Aboriginal community-controlled services, family safety, child protection and systems reform. Through his leadership at KWY, he has supported the delivery and growth of culturally grounded services that strengthen Aboriginal families, promote safety and wellbeing, and uphold the rights of children and communities.

Wendy Moore



Wendy Moore is a proud Palawa woman from Lutruwita/Tasmania, with family connections to Truwana/Cape Barren Island and Tayaritja/ Flinders Island. Wendy brings extensive experience supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, alongside a strong commitment to advocacy and systemic change. Through her work with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and broader community leadership, Wendy has contributed to strengthening culturally informed approaches that support Aboriginal self-determination and community wellbeing.

Barbara Henry



Barbara Henry is a respected Noongar leader with more than 40 years' experience advocating for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, women and communities. As Director of the Noongar Family Safety and Wellbeing Council, Barbara brings extensive knowledge in family safety, policy reform and culturally informed approaches that strengthen Aboriginal families and support children's connection to family, culture and community.

Phillip Brooks



Phillip Brooks is a descendant of the Bidjara people, the Kairi people and the Ducabrook Clan of Central Queensland, and CEO of the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak. Phillip brings more than 25 years' experience across government and community leadership, with expertise in child protection, youth justice, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy reform and advancing self-determination. He is committed to strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions that improve outcomes for children, families and communities.

Council

SNAICC Council members bring deep sector knowledge, community leadership and jurisdictional expertise that reflect the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the organisations working to strengthen outcomes for children, young people and families. The Council comprises Board members and representatives elected by Full Members from every state and territory, with representation from both the early childhood development and child and family safety and wellbeing sectors.

Meeting multiple times throughout the year, the Council brings together diverse jurisdictional perspectives and community expertise to inform SNAICC's strategic priorities and national advocacy. Through this representative structure, the Council strengthens accountability to our membership, provides advice on emerging sector issues and reform opportunities, and ensures our work remains grounded in the experiences and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

List of 2025–26 Council Members

Jurisdiction	Organisation & Member	Description
ACT	**Yerrabi Yurwang – Child & Family Aboriginal Corporation** (Selina Walker)	Yerrabi Yurwang is an ACCO supporting Aboriginal children, families and communities on Ngunnawal Country through culturally safe child and family services, advocacy and community-led programs.
NSW	**Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation** (Richard Weston)	Maari Ma is an ACCHO providing comprehensive health, social and wellbeing services for Aboriginal communities across the far western region of NSW.
NSW	**AbSec – NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation** (John Leha)	AbSec is the peak body for Aboriginal child, family and community services in NSW, advocating for Aboriginal children, young people and families and strengthening Aboriginal-led approaches across the sector.
NT	**Danila Dilba Health Service** (Rob McPhee)	Danila Dilba is one of the Northern Territory's largest ACCHOs, providing culturally safe primary health care and social and wellbeing services for Aboriginal communities across the Top End.
NT	**Central Australian Aboriginal Congress** (Dawn Ross)	Central Australian Aboriginal Congress is one of Australia's oldest and largest ACCHOs, delivering comprehensive health, social and wellbeing services across Central Australia.
Qld	**Palm Island Community Company Limited** (Aunty Rachel Atkinson)	Palm Island Community Company is an ACCO providing culturally grounded health, family support, social and community services for the Bwgcolman/ Palm Island community and surrounding region.

Jurisdiction	Organisation & Member	Description
Qld	**Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak** (Phillip Brooks)	QATSICPP is the Queensland peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled child protection, family support and youth justice services, advocating for self-determination and better outcomes for children and families.
SA	**KWY Aboriginal Corporation** (Craig Rigney)	KWY is a statewide ACCO providing culturally informed family safety, healing, wellbeing and justice services that support Aboriginal individuals, families and communities across South Australia.
Tas	**Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre** (Wendy Moore)	The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre is the peak Aboriginal organisation in Lutruwita/Tasmania, delivering health, cultural heritage, language, legal and community services while advocating for Aboriginal rights and self-determination.
Vic	**Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency** (Muriel Bamblett)	VACCA is Victoria's largest ACCO supporting Aboriginal children, young people and families through child and family services, early years programs, cultural strengthening and community-support initiatives.
Vic	**Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated** (Neville Atkinson)	VAEAI is the peak Victorian Aboriginal education organisation, advocating for Koorie education, cultural inclusion and improved outcomes for Aboriginal learners from early childhood through to tertiary education.
WA	**Coolabaroo Neighbourhood Centre** (Joanne Della Bona)	Coolabaroo is an Aboriginal community-controlled early childhood and community organisation providing culturally safe early learning, family support and community programs for Aboriginal children and families in Boorloo/Perth's south-east region.
WA	**Yorganop Association Incorporated** (Barbara Henry)	Yorganop is Western Australia's leading Aboriginal foster care and family support organisation, providing culturally appropriate out-of-home care, family support and reunification services to Aboriginal children and families.

Subcommittees

SNAICC's Board and Council are supported by several subcommittees and leadership groups that provide focused governance, strategic advice and oversight across key areas of the organisation's work.

The subcommittees include the Finance, Audit and Risk Management Subcommittee and the National Transition Subcommittee. Additionally, two new Council Subcommittees were established during the 2025–26 financial year: the Youth Voice Subcommittee and the Early Years Policy Leadership Group Subcommittee.

Members of the SNAICC Board and Council also contribute to several national leadership groups that support and guide SNAICC's advocacy agenda, including the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, Safe and Supported Leadership Group and Family Matters Leadership Group.



SNAICC maintains robust governance, risk management and compliance systems to support effective decision-making, organisational resilience and accountability. The Board oversees strategic and operational risks through regular reporting, organisational risk registers and governance processes that monitor financial sustainability, compliance, cybersecurity, workforce, operational delivery and reputational risk. These systems support informed decision-making, responsible stewardship of resources and the successful delivery of SNAICC's strategic priorities.

SNAICC is registered with the Australian Securities and Investments Commission and the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, reflecting our commitment to transparency, accountability and good governance.

Finance, Audit and Risk Management Subcommittee

The Finance, Audit and Risk Management (FARM) Subcommittee supports the Board by overseeing financial management, budgeting, audit and compliance activities, enterprise risk management and workforce-related matters. The Subcommittee meets quarterly, reviews financial performance and audit outcomes, monitors organisational risks and internal controls, and provides assurance that SNAICC maintains strong financial governance and compliance with regulatory obligations. Membership of the FARM Subcommittee includes the Treasurer, two Board members, the Chief Executive Officer, the Commercial Director, and the Director of Corporate Services.



The National Transition Subcommittee

The SNAICC Board National Transition Subcommittee (the Transition Subcommittee) provides cultural and strategic leadership of the national transition agenda to ensure reform efforts remain grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, community control and the expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

Throughout 2025–26, the Transition Subcommittee met quarterly to guide SNAICC's national transition agenda and provide strategic oversight of reform initiatives supporting the transition of services, decision-making and investment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

Key areas of focus included implementation of the Sector Transformation Principles Framework, in alignment with the National Child and Family Investment Strategy, monitoring and evaluation approaches, and the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led commissioning and procurement pathways.

Through this oversight, the Transition Subcommittee continues to strengthen the community-controlled sector by ensuring transition efforts remain grounded in cultural authority, self-determination and collective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership.

Youth Voice Subcommittee

2025–26 was the year the SNAICC Youth Voice moved from aspiration to structure. In 2024–25, we reported that a Youth Voice mechanism was being established. Today, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people hold a formal place in SNAICC's governance through a Youth Voice Subcommittee to the SNAICC Council, with the mandate, independence and support to shape the national work done in their name.

The foundations were laid by young people themselves. The *Youth Voice Engagement Report*, published this year, documents the national co-design process behind the initiative: more than 150 people; young people, Elders, ACCOs, ACCHOs, community leaders and children's commissioners, guardians and advocates across 13 remote, regional and urban locations.

The message that came from this process was consistent and clear; that young people are too often engaged in tokenistic or advisory-only ways without genuine power-sharing. They called for something different: an action-oriented, youth-led approach grounded in culture and community authority and built from existing youth-led and community-led efforts rather than duplicating them. The Youth Voice framework that answers this call was formally endorsed by the SNAICC Board and Council in late 2025.

From a conference stage to a seat at the table

At the 2025 SNAICC National Conference, members of the SNAICC Youth Advisory Group took the main stage for the Youth Voice plenary, sharing the story of the eight-month co-design journey and what it means for young people to be the experts in their own lives. That conversation became the first-ever video podcast in the SNAICC Yarns podcast series, carrying young people's voices well beyond the conference walls.



Within months, the structure young people helped design was real. The Terms of Reference for the Youth Voice Subcommittee were finalised in March 2026; recruitment ran through a culturally responsive process and the Subcommittee's inaugural in-person meeting was held in July 2026 on Gimuy Walubara Yidinji Country in Gimuy/Cairns.

Independence is built into the design. Subcommittee sessions are independently facilitated through a partnership with Deadly Inspiring Youth Doing Good, a Queensland-based, youth-led organisation that ensures young people's voices are heard and recorded on their own terms, then amplified by SNAICC. This is just one example of a deliberate approach.

The Youth Voice is an ecosystem with multiple entry points: the Subcommittee, jurisdictional youth connections, supporting other existing and developing youth voice initiatives, Youth Gatherings, ambassador pathways and community engagements, which all reflect the diverse strengths, aspirations and lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people.

Young voices in national advocacy

Since the endorsement of the Youth Voice framework, young people's perspectives have shaped our national advocacy throughout 2026, including a contribution from the Youth Voice subcommittee in a Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Racism, Hate and Violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that detailed young people's experiences of schools and online spaces, and young people’s desire to be participants in national debate, not subjects of it. Additionally, the Youth Voice launched its own newsletter in early 2026 that opens a direct channel between SNAICC and young people across the country.



Looking ahead

In September 2026, SNAICC will host the inaugural SNAICC Youth Gathering on Kaurna Yerta in Tarntanya/Adelaide. For this gathering, young people from across the country will come together to set priorities and design solutions on the issues that matter to them, with their direction carried into SNAICC's national advocacy platform. The year ahead will also grow the wider ecosystem: jurisdictional connections, ambassador pathways and practical opportunities for young people to step into leadership in their own communities.



Members

SNAICC has a national membership of almost 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and non-Indigenous community-based organisations working across early childhood education and care, child and family safety and wellbeing, foster care, youth services, family support and related sectors throughout Australia.

Our members are at the core of our work, providing the expertise, community connections and sector leadership that inform our advocacy, policy development and strategic direction. Membership comprises Full Members, Associate Members, Individual Members and Life Members. Full Members are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations delivering services across the early childhood development and/or child and family safety and wellbeing sectors. Associate Members include organisations and individuals working alongside these sectors who support our vision and purpose.

Members have a central role in SNAICC's governance and accountability through consultation, engagement and representative decision-making. Throughout 2025–26, members informed policy positions, contributed to organisational consultations and reform initiatives, and elected representatives to the Council and Board. This governance model ensures we remain accountable to the communities and organisations we represent while keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership at the centre of our national advocacy and organisational direction.

The full list of Members is available on the SNAICC website.

Organisational Units

SNAICC is a growing national organisation with 100 staff located across the country. Our workforce supports advocacy, policy development, research, sector strengthening, early childhood development, learning and development, and program delivery through four core units.

Office of the CEO

Executive Leadership

- **Mandy Taylor – Executive Director, Office of the CEO**
- Amanda Duncan – Director, Communications & Events
- Fran Whitty – Director, Corporate Services
- Srini Vasan – Commercial Director

The Office of the CEO provides organisational leadership, governance support and strategic coordination across the organisation. The unit oversees Communications, media and events, financial and commercial operations, corporate services, people and culture, business systems, organisational planning, governance, helping to ensure strong governance, accountability, and organisational capability. The unit also supports engagement with governments, partners and stakeholders, and coordinates organisation-wide delivery against our strategic priorities.

Social Policy and Research

Executive Leadership

- **John Burton – Executive Director, Social Policy & Research**
- Siobhan McCann – Director, Social Policy & Research

The Social Policy and Research unit leads our national policy, research and advocacy initiatives. The unit drives systems and structural reform by turning community knowledge, evidence and lived experience into policy positions, submissions, advocacy, reports and reform initiatives across early childhood development, child and family wellbeing and family safety. The unit has a central role in major national reform mechanisms and in advancing the rights, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

Programs

Executive Leadership

- **Michael Currie – Acting Executive Director, Programs**
- Nadia Currie – Acting Director, Sector Engagement & Innovation

The Programs unit leads SNAICC's sector development, learning and development and sector strengthening work. It partners with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and non-Indigenous organisations across Australia to support capability building, leadership development, training, knowledge sharing and service improvement. Through sector engagement, innovation and transformation initiatives, the unit helps strengthen the sustainability, effectiveness and long-term growth of the community-controlled sector.



Childhood Development

Executive Leadership

- **Simon Fewings – Executive Director, Childhood Development**
- Karen Minter – Director, Early Years Support New South Wales
- Nikita Hart – Director, Early Years Support Victoria
- Miranda Edwards – Director, Early Years Support Western Australia

Established as a distinct unit in 2025–26, the Childhood Development unit leads our work in early childhood development and community-led, place-based early years initiatives. The unit delivers programs including Connected Beginnings, Early Years Support, First Nations Playgroups and other place-based initiatives that strengthen early childhood systems, expand access to culturally strong services and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to have the best possible start in life.





Business Systems

Over the past 12 months, SNAICC has focused on strengthening business systems with regard to security compliance, data management, reporting and customer relationship management. To support improved governance and compliance, the Business Systems team reviewed and updated key policies and processes for onboarding and offboarding system users. These improvements align with the Australian Government's Essential Eight cybersecurity framework, strengthening access controls and reducing risks associated with inactive and legacy accounts.

A new contract and milestone tracking system has also been implemented that provides a centralised overview of contracts under negotiation and active projects. By bringing contract milestones into a single platform, we have improved organisational oversight, strengthened project monitoring, enhanced reporting and enabled earlier identification of delivery risks.

During the year, we also implemented a SwiftFox Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that creates a central repository for organisational contacts and communications. While still in the early stages of implementation, the CRM is already supporting more streamlined membership management, event engagement and digital communications, while providing a more comprehensive view of the individuals, organisations and communities we work alongside.

Together, these initiatives have strengthened organisational capability, improved governance and reporting, and provided more robust systems to support evidence-informed decision-making across the organisation.



Sustainability and Environment

SNAICC's sustainability approach recognises that ecological sustainability and social justice are deeply connected. We acknowledge that communities experiencing social and economic disadvantage are often the most vulnerable to the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change.

We are committed to operating in a responsible and sustainable way that protects and strengthens both the environment and communities. Our head office is located within a 6-star Green Star-rated building designed to support low-impact, carbon-conscious operations. During the 2025–26 financial year, we received the building's Green Award in recognition of our workplace recycling efforts. We also continue to source our Christmas tree through an environmentally responsible program that enables trees to be reused or replanted.

We encourage our staff, participants, volunteers, members, stakeholders and the broader community to share our commitment to environmental sustainability and social justice. Guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges and the enduring responsibility to care for Country, we recognise that healthy environments, strong cultures and thriving communities are interconnected and essential to the wellbeing of children, families and future generations.

National Systems Reform for Children and Families

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The **National Agreement on Closing the Gap** (the National Agreement) is one of the most important frameworks for achieving structural reform and improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities. It represents a joint commitment between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and organisations to transform how policies, services and programs are designed, governed and delivered through genuine partnership, shared decision-making and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership.

Throughout 2025–26, we maintained strong and sustained advocacy for the full and consistent implementation of the National Agreement and the Priority Reforms that underpin it. Across national reform forums, government engagement and public advocacy, one of our key messages has been that while the National Agreement provides a strong foundation for change, implementation remains uneven and progress is not occurring at the scale or pace required to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities. There is an urgent need for governments to move beyond rhetoric and fulfil their commitments through sustained investment in what works, stronger accountability and action at the scale required. National data makes clear why this is so important with progress against key targets for children continuing to stall or, in some cases, go backwards.

Now at what is effectively the midpoint of the National Agreement, the gap between its ambition and implementation is increasingly evident. Significant concerns remain across key areas affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, including early childhood development, school readiness and the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. We have been consistent in our message that the challenge is not a lack of evidence about what works; rather, it is the failure to fully implement agreed reforms, adequately resource community-controlled solutions and transfer decision-making authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations.

A central focus of our advocacy throughout 2025–26 was strengthening implementation of the Priority Reforms, particularly Priority Reform Two: building the ACCO sector. We have continued to advocate that genuine partnership requires more than consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders; it requires Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations to have shared decision-making authority over the policies, services and systems that affect their communities. In relation to this, a significant development during the year was the ACCO sector's leadership in supporting the establishment of Our Ways Strong Together, a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak body dedicated to responding to family, domestic and sexual violence.



Despite this progress, implementation of the National Agreement remains inconsistent and insufficient to achieve the scale of transformation required. Throughout 2025–26, we continued to highlight that fragmented investment, short-term funding cycles, administrative barriers and incomplete implementation of the Priority Reforms limit the ability of communities and ACCOs to deliver sustained change. Achieving genuine reform requires governments to shift from short-term responses towards long-term investment in community-controlled solutions, prevention and early intervention.

Another persistent point of advocacy for us has been the need to rebalance investment away from crisis-driven statutory systems and towards prevention, early intervention and family support. The continued over-reliance on child protection responses, coupled with insufficient investment in community-controlled prevention and early support, remains a key driver of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. Evidence from ACCO models shows that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are properly resourced and empowered to lead, services can respond holistically to children and families' needs, strengthen cultural identity and connection, support family wellbeing and reduce escalation into statutory systems.

Programs such as Connected Beginnings and Early Years Support also continue to illustrate the effectiveness of integrated, place-based and culturally safe approaches. These programs show what is possible when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations are supported to design and deliver solutions that reflect local priorities and strengths. However, despite their proven success, especially in active efforts to close the gap, these approaches remain under-scaled and underfunded.

Accordingly, we have been consistent in our call for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led services, programs and models to be properly scaled and supported through long-term, secure funding to achieve system-wide impact. Our message throughout 2025–26 has been clear: achieving meaningful progress towards Closing the Gap requires sustained investment in what works, stronger accountability for government commitments, reduced administrative barriers for ACCOs and full implementation of the Priority Reforms. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations already hold the knowledge, expertise and solutions required for change. Governments must enable, resource and partner with communities to deliver these solutions.

SNAICC remains committed to working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peaks, ACCOs and governments to ensure the National Agreement fulfils its promise of genuine structural reform and delivers lasting improvements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.

Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031

Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031 (Safe and Supported) is Australia's ten-year, whole-of-government strategy for improving the safety and wellbeing of children, young people and families. It establishes how governments will work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and the non-government sector to ensure children and young people grow up safe and supported, free from harm and neglect. Safe and Supported is also the main national strategy supporting Target 12 of the National Agreement, which aims to reduce the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031.

Throughout 2025–26, we continued to have a central role in the implementation and governance of Safe and Supported, supporting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group for Safe and Supported. The Leadership Group comprises leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experts in child and family services and provides a critical mechanism for shared decision-making with governments on implementation of the two existing Action Plans, including the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023–2026.

Working alongside the Leadership Group, ACCOs and governments, our focus has been on ensuring national commitments translated into meaningful action for children, families and communities. This included advocating for stronger prevention and early intervention, increased investment in ACCOs, greater accountability for government commitments and stronger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decision-making across the child and family wellbeing system.

Significant progress was made across several Safe and Supported priorities during the year, including:

- **National Child and Family Investment Strategy:** All governments endorsed a National Child and Family Investment Strategy to support a shift towards adequate and coordinated investment in early, targeted and culturally safe services delivered by ACCOs. Governments are due to finalise implementation plans by the end of 2026.
- **National Commissioner:** The appointment of Sue-Anne Hunter as the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, alongside legislation establishing the role as an independent statutory agency with strong powers and functions to protect children's rights.
- **Jurisdictional Commissioners:** Minimum requirements for the powers and functions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioners were finalised, with the majority of jurisdictions progressing development of these roles.
- **National Centre for Excellence:** A design report was developed for a National Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Safety, with funding and an announcement expected from the Department of Social Services.
- **Innovation Grant Fund:** We partnered with the Australian Government Department of Social Services on the design and implementation of the Innovation Grant Fund, with $10 million committed over three years to ten new ACCOs to provide prevention and early intervention supports and help prepare for the transfer of resources and funding to ACCOs.
- **Delegated authority:** Work progressed to develop a national definition and jurisdictional scan of delegated authority, alongside a national workshop to support shared learning across jurisdictions.

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle:** Work progressed on national standards for active efforts to implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.
- **Monitoring, evaluation and data:** A Monitoring and Evaluation Strategy for Safe and Supported was finalised, with Indicator Frameworks and a Data Development Plan also progressing.
- **National Out-of-Home Care Standards:** We partnered on consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to inform work to refresh the National Out-of-Home Care Standards.

These achievements, detailed further throughout this report, show the significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in national reform processes and the importance of sustained advocacy to ensure government commitments translate into practical change. The Leadership Group and SNAICC have continued to work with governments to ensure policy outcomes reflect the needs and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, while holding governments to account where commitments have not been implemented.

As the current Action Plans approach completion at the end of 2026, Safe and Supported is entering an important transition period. While the framework has established significant national governance structures, partnerships and reform initiatives, implementation remains uneven across jurisdictions. Continued advocacy is needed to address fragmented investment, short-term funding approaches and gaps in shared decision-making that limit the capacity of the framework to deliver lasting system transformation. A central focus of our advocacy has remained the need to shift investment away from crisis responses and towards prevention, early intervention and family support. Sustained investment in ACCOs is critical to building a child and family wellbeing system that can respond early, strengthen family and cultural connections and reduce reliance on statutory child protection and out-of-home care.

SNAICC and the Leadership Group have also been consulting with the ACCO child and family services sector to inform the Second Action Plans for Safe and Supported, which will commence in 2027. This work seeks to ensure the next phase reflects the needs, priorities and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and strengthens the conditions for more children and young people to remain connected to their family, community, culture and Country.

We will continue working alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, governments and the broader sector to strengthen the next phase of Safe and Supported. This includes advocating for sustained investment in ACCOs, stronger transparency and accountability for implementation, and genuine shared decision-making that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to lead the transformation of systems affecting their children and families.





Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership

The **Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership** (the ECCDPP, the Partnership) was established in August 2022 under the National Agreement to drive transformative action and improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families through genuine shared decision-making. The Partnership brings together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, including Peaks and independent experts, alongside government representatives to provide advice and make shared decisions on matters affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

In 2025, the ECCDPP completed its initial three-year term and, following confirmation of funding in late 2024, commenced a second three-year term extending through to mid-2028. During 2025–26, the Partnership met across Australia on the lands of the Noongar, Gadigal, Wurundjeri, Ngunnawal and Palawa peoples. We acknowledge and thank Traditional Owners for welcoming Partnership members onto their Country. Across these meetings, the Partnership continued to progress its 16 priority areas, supporting implementation of the National Agreement and contributing to progress towards Targets 2, 3, 4, 12 and 13.

Throughout the year, the Partnership strengthened collaboration with other shared decision-making bodies and key national policy forums, including Safe and Supported and other Closing the Gap Policy Partnerships. This collaboration supported a more coordinated approach to reform, reduced duplication and strengthened alignment across shared priorities. A significant focus was advancing funding reform for ACCOs delivering integrated early years and child and family services. The Partnership worked closely with governments to provide advice on new funding approaches that recognise the central role ACCOs play in supporting self-determination, delivering culturally safe services and improving outcomes for children and families. The Partnership also commissioned SNAICC to develop funding model options for ACCOs delivering child and family services, with the research completed in March 2026 and the final report published in July 2026.

A key focus of the Partnership's work has been ensuring its advice translates into national action and accountability. In November 2025, the Partnership presented its second set of recommendations to the Joint Council on Closing the Gap (the Joint Council). The Joint Council acknowledged the significant body of work underway through the ECCDPP and supported continued collaboration between the Partnership and Safe and Supported governance arrangements to drive progress towards Target 12 of the National Agreement. In May 2026, the Partnership presented a third set of recommendations that focused on the need for accelerated action on Target 12 and identifying funding model reform for child and family services as a critical mechanism to improve service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.



The Partnership also continued to strengthen the foundations for shared decision-making, evidence reform and culturally informed practice. This included the development of *Creating Structural Change Through Shared Decision-Making*, practical guidance designed to support governments and organisations to embed meaningful, accountable and culturally responsive partnership practices across the early childhood sector and beyond. The guidance also provides practical support for implementation of Priority Reform One under the National Agreement. The Partnership further strengthened its governance and accountability through the development and publication of its Probity Framework, supporting transparent, accountable and culturally responsive decision-making processes.

Work also progressed on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Evidence Guidance Framework, delivered by a consortium led by QATSICPP and the Jumbunna Institute. The framework aims to strengthen understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems and support more culturally informed approaches to the development, interpretation and use of evidence. The project is expected to be finalised in late 2026.

The influence of the Partnership's work was also seen in several significant national reforms and milestones during the year. Members welcomed the appointment of Wurundjeri and Ngurai Illum Wurrung woman Adjunct Professor Sue-Anne Hunter as Australia's inaugural National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, following longstanding advocacy from the ECCDPP, SNAICC and the broader sector. Members also welcomed the Australian Government's announcement that, from 5 January 2026, all Child Care Subsidy-eligible families would receive a minimum entitlement of 72 hours of subsidised early childhood education and care per fortnight. Families caring for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child became eligible for 100 subsidised hours per fortnight, significantly expanding access to early learning. This reform aligns with the Partnership's sustained advocacy to remove barriers to early childhood education and care and improve equitable access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

To support accountability and continuous improvement, the Partnership commissioned an independent evaluation of its work, undertaken by Yamagigu Consulting. Completed in early 2026, the evaluation provided valuable insights to inform the next phase of the Partnership's work and strengthen its contribution to Closing the Gap outcomes. The Partnership also considered findings from the Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Review of Closing the Gap and the Australian National Audit Office audit of Closing the Gap in early childhood development and schooling, using these findings to inform future priorities and reform opportunities.

The Partnership will continue to build on these foundations, advancing reforms that place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities at the centre of decision-making. Through genuine shared decision-making, strengthened accountability and continued collaboration, the ECCDPP will support the ongoing transformation of early childhood and child and family wellbeing systems.

The National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

For many years, SNAICC, alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and national peak bodies, has advocated for the establishment of a legislated National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People. Through Safe and Supported, Family Matters, the ECCDPP, independent reports, submissions and broader National Agreement reform efforts, we have consistently called for a National Commission that is independent of government, properly resourced and empowered to provide rights-based accountability and oversight, advocate for evidence-based change and hold governments accountable for their commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.

In 2025–26, this longstanding advocacy reached a historic milestone with the establishment of the National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People and the appointment of Australia's first National Commissioner. The National Commission was established on 13 January 2025, and on 3 August 2025, Adjunct Professor Sue-Anne Hunter was appointed as the inaugural National Commissioner. A proud Wurundjeri and Ngurai Illum Wurrung woman, Commissioner Hunter brings more than two decades of leadership across child and family systems reform, including senior roles with SNAICC, VACCA and the Yoorrook Justice Commission. We welcomed her appointment as a significant step forward in strengthening national advocacy, oversight and accountability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Following the establishment of the role, our advocacy continued to focus on ensuring the National Commission was supported by the legislative authority, independence and powers required to protect and promote the rights and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and drive meaningful system reform. Following a process of negotiation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group for Safe and Supported, Commonwealth legislation came into effect on 1 July 2026 that established the National Commission as a statutory agency. The legislation gives the National Commissioner the independence, functions and powers needed to protect and promote the rights and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. This was a defining moment in national rights-based accountability and a significant achievement following decades of advocacy by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and the sector.

SNAICC and the Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group have also worked across 2023–25 to develop strong minimum requirements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioners to ensure they have the powers, mandate and independence to promote the rights of children and young people effectively.

While the establishment of the National Commission represents a significant achievement, strong independent oversight must also exist across every jurisdiction that ensures a consistent system of rights-based accountability to protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, regardless of where they live.

Jurisdictional Commissioners for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

Throughout 2025–26, we continued to advocate for every Australian jurisdiction to establish a dedicated, legislated, independent and appropriately empowered Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People. This work sits alongside the establishment and strengthening of the National Commissioner and is critical to building a consistent national system of rights-based accountability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Under Safe and Supported, all governments have committed to establishing and strengthening dedicated Commissioner roles. SNAICC, working with the Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group, has contributed to the development and negotiation of Minimum Requirements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioners, setting out the powers, functions, independence, mandate and resourcing needed for these roles to effectively promote and protect the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. The Minimum Requirements were endorsed by the Australian Government, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group and some states and territories in October 2025.

There has been important progress during the year, but significant gaps remain. The ACT and South Australia have legislated Commissioner roles that largely meet or exceed the Minimum Requirements. Victoria continued to maintain a dedicated Commissioner role and, in June 2026, appointed Dharug man Dallas Widdicombe as its new Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People. Tasmania passed legislation in December 2025 to establish a Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People as part of a new statutory Commission for Children and Young People, with the role progressing towards establishment during 2025–26.

Queensland has established the Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner. However, the role remains located within the Queensland Family and Child Commission and does not yet provide the fully independent, legislated oversight and powers sought through the national Minimum Requirements. We have continued to advocate for Queensland to establish a dedicated, legislated and independent Commissioner.





New South Wales, the Northern Territory and Western Australia have not yet established dedicated Commissioner roles that meet the national Minimum Requirements. Instead, they rely primarily on broader children's commissioner, guardian or advocacy arrangements. In New South Wales, the Government confirmed in March 2026 that consideration of a dedicated Aboriginal Children's Commissioner remained ongoing.

At the 2025 SNAICC National Conference, we brought together Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates from across Australia to strengthen national advocacy for empowered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioner models. A main stage discussion highlighted the need for governments to move beyond symbolic oversight and establish legislated models with the powers, independence and resources required to drive meaningful reform across child protection, youth justice and related systems.

Strong jurisdictional Commissioner roles, working alongside the National Commissioner, are essential to creating a consistent system of rights-based accountability and ensuring governments are held to account for the safety, wellbeing, rights and cultural connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people should not have different levels of rights protection, independent advocacy or government accountability simply because of where they live.

We will continue advocating for independent, properly resourced and empowered Commissioner roles in every jurisdiction, aligned with the national Minimum Requirements and grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination. These roles must have the powers, mandate and independence required to protect rights, strengthen accountability and drive lasting, evidence-based reform across child and family wellbeing, child protection and youth justice systems.

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036

SNAICC was engaged by the Australian Government Department of Social Services in 2024 to support the co-design of Australia's first national plan dedicated to addressing family, domestic and sexual violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

Published by the Australian Government on 10 February 2026, **Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices** is Australia's first dedicated national framework focused specifically on ending family, domestic and sexual violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. Throughout the development of the plan, we had a significant leadership role in ensuring the final version reflected the priorities, expertise and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader ACCO sector.

The development process, undertaken across 2024–25 and into 2025–26, was grounded in extensive national engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ACCOs, children and young people, people with lived experience, sector leaders and government partners. A 24-member National Steering Committee provided cultural authority and strategic oversight throughout the co-design process, ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, knowledge and lived experience were embedded in the development of the plan.

A central focus of our advocacy around the plan has been to ensure responses to violence move beyond crisis-driven and punitive approaches and instead address the underlying structural drivers of harm. These include poverty, housing insecurity, intergenerational trauma, systemic racism, unmet disability and developmental needs, mental health challenges, substance use and persistent gaps in culturally safe service delivery across child protection, justice, health, housing and education systems. Addressing these drivers requires long-term investment in prevention, healing, family safety and community-led solutions.

A significant outcome that has come from Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices has been the establishment of **Our Ways Strong Together**, the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak body dedicated to responding to family, domestic and sexual violence. SNAICC is a founding member of Our Ways Strong Together and welcomed its establishment as an important step towards strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, sector coordination and accountability at a national level.

With the national plan now released, work is progressing to develop a dedicated Action Plan and strengthen monitoring, evaluation and accountability arrangements, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation from each state and territory. We continue to advocate for sustained, long-term investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led prevention, healing and family safety approaches grounded in culture, community strength and self-determination.

Major National Sector Advocacy and Initiatives

SNAICC National Conference 2025

The biennial **SNAICC National Conference** is a unique national event for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, governments, researchers and allies to come together to share knowledge, build relationships and drive reform. It is one of the few opportunities for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector to gather in person at a national scale, creating space for connection across communities, jurisdictions and disciplines in a culturally safe and welcoming environment.

In October 2025, we hosted the **11th SNAICC National Conference** (SNAICC'25) on the lands of the Turrbal and Yuggera peoples in Meanjin/Brisbane. SNAICC'25 welcomed more than 2,130 delegates representing over 685 organisations and associations from across Australia, making it Australia's largest Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conference to date and one of the largest First Nations conferences held internationally. Under the theme **Our Culture. Keep it Strong. We Belong.**, SNAICC'25 celebrated the strength, diversity and continuity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures while reaffirming the fundamental role that culture, identity and belonging have in the lives of children and young people.

Across three days, the conference showcased excellence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led practice, elevated lived and living experience alongside research and evidence, and advanced collective advocacy to improve outcomes for children, families and communities. The conference featured six plenary sessions, 84 breakout sessions, more than 200 presenters, 52 exhibitors and stallholders, and 24 performances involving more than 40 young performers.

These opportunities enabled organisations, practitioners and leaders to exchange knowledge, showcase community-led solutions, build partnerships and strengthen collective action for self-determination.

Evaluation results highlighted the conference's impact across the sector, with 92% of delegates reporting they left feeling inspired and motivated in their work, 93% making meaningful professional connections and 92% enhancing their knowledge and learning. Delegates consistently described SNAICC'25 as a culturally safe space grounded in belonging, connection and shared purpose.

SNAICC'25 also provided an important national platform for advocacy, generating 292 media stories and reaching more than 11 million people through social media. The conference amplified calls for stronger accountability across systems affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, with delegates, Commissioners and advocates from across Australia speaking on the need for independent oversight mechanisms with the authority, independence and resources required to investigate systemic failures and drive meaningful reform.

Planning is now underway for the 12th SNAICC National Conference, which will take place on Kaurna Yerta in Tarntanya/Adelaide. The conference will continue to bring together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, leadership and knowledge to shape collective action and support a stronger future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.



National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day 2025

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day (Children's Day) is a national celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, held each year on 4 August since 1988. One of our major initiatives, Children's Day is an annual celebration of children growing up strong in culture, grounded in identity and connected to family, community and Country.

The Children's Day 2025 theme was **Little Footsteps, Big Future** and celebrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children as the bright leaders of tomorrow and creative minds shaping our future. The theme honoured the journeys our children take as they grow, with each step guided by culture. Our vision for Children's Day 2025 was for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to thrive, be strong in culture and deeply connected to kin, community and Country. Across Australia, this vision was brought to life through thousands of celebrations that centred children, celebrated who they are and supported them to grow with pride in their identity.

Kulai Preschool: Children's Day 2025 Flagship Event

Each year, we host a national flagship Children's Day event in partnership with a community. In 2025, we were fortunate enough to join annual celebrations on Gumbaynggirr Country at Kulai Preschool Aboriginal Corporation (Kulai Preschool) in Garlambirla/Coffs Harbour to host the national flagship event.

More than 200 children, families, educators and community members gathered at Kulai Preschool alongside Director of Kulai Preschool Aunty Julie Carey and her family, educators from Kulai Preschool, Gumbaynggirr Giingana Freedom School (now known as Maam Giingana Gumbaynggirr) and Gummyaney Aboriginal Preschool, and the Gumbaynggirr community. The celebration was filled with joy, as children danced their songs, spoke their language and were held strong by mums, dads, aunties, uncles, nanas and grandpas. It was a living example of what we celebrate and promote every year on Children's Day.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to Aunty Julie Carey and her family, Clark Webb, the staff at Kulai Preschool, Gumbaynggirr Giingana Freedom School and Gummyaney Aboriginal Preschool, and all the children and families who welcomed us into their celebration.



Community participation for Children's Day 2025

To celebrate Children's Day across the country, thousands of early learning services, schools, libraries, sporting clubs, organisations and communities lead their own celebrations in ways that reflect local cultures, knowledge and priorities. We love seeing the celebrations each year and support these community-led celebrations by developing and sharing resources, including more than 20,000 Children's Day Bags, online event listings, promotional materials and activity ideas.

In 2025, 122 Children's Day events were registered on our website, with social media activity indicating that many more organisations across Australia participated in celebrations throughout the day and the surrounding weeks. More than 22 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations registered events, alongside approximately 50 mainstream services, 31 schools and preschools and more than 20 libraries and community centres. Some of the standout community-led events included:

- **Arrernte Country:** The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Connected Beginnings Program celebrated in Mparntwe/Alice Springs.
- **Gumbaynggirr Country:** Lifetime Connect in Ngambagabaga/Nambucca Heads held a mini-Olympics at Buz Brazel Oval and Giiguy Gamambi Preschool hosted their own celebrations.
- **Larrakia Country:** The Darrandirra Child and Family Centre and Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation hosted festivities in Garramilla/Darwin.
- **Mamu Country:** Mamu Health Service hosted an event in Inarlinga/Innisfail.
- **Ngarluma Country:** One Tree Gurlu Gurlu Maya Children's Service hosted celebrations in the remote community of Ieramugadu/ Roebourne.
- **Thul Garrie Waja and Wulgurukaba Country:** Garbutt Magpies Sporting and Cultural Association held their annual Garbutt Magpies Cup and Children's Day celebrations in Gurambilbarra/Townsville.
- **Wadawurrung Country:** Regional and rural communities across Wadawurrung Country celebrated the day with events in Ballarat hosted by the City of Ballarat in partnership with the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative.
- **Wirangu Country:** The Adelaide Crows Foundation travelled across Wirangu Country along the far west coast of South Australia, visiting Yalata, Oak Valley and Koonibba Aboriginal Schools, where children engaged in the Crows on Country/STEM Footy program.
- **Wudjari Nyungar Country:** Escare Family Support Service and Youth Service celebrated the day in Kepa Kurl/Esperance.
- **Yamatji Country:** The Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service hosted celebrations in Jambinu/Geraldton.
- **Yorta Yorta Country:** Rumbalara Aboriginal Co-operative celebrated in Mooroopna.

From coastal towns and regional centres to remote desert communities, Children's Day 2025 was celebrated in every corner of the country, with events and gatherings bringing together families, communities and organisations across metropolitan, regional, rural, remote and very remote Australia to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Children's Day 2025 Bags

Each year, we produce a specially curated Children's Day Bag to support celebrations and bring the day to life in early learning services, schools and communities. In 2025, the Children's Day Bag featured a bold red design, and bags were distributed to support hundreds of celebrations nationwide. The bag included a range of fun and educational items, including a bandana, keyring boomerang, paint set with brush, silicone disc frisbee, temporary tattoos and activity booklets designed to encourage creativity, play and a love of learning. Additionally, we were proud to include a special donation from the Indigenous Literacy Foundation: a copy of **I Saw We Saw**, which was included in every Children's Day Bag.



I Saw We Saw: Children's Day 2025 Book

The Indigenous Literacy Foundation generously donated **I Saw We Saw**, created by Yolŋu students from Nhulunbuy Primary School in North-East Arnhem Land through the Indigenous Literacy Foundation's Community Publishing Program. Developed through workshops with authors Ann James and Ann Haddon alongside Elders and community, the book was written and illustrated by students in both English and Dhangu, a Yolŋu Matha language. We acknowledge and thank the Indigenous Literacy Foundation for our ongoing partnership and commitment to supporting children's access to culturally strong books and languages across the country.

Thank You for Celebrating Children's Day 2025

Children's Day 2025 was a particularly strong year for engagement and national reach. High numbers of online event registrations, widespread social media and news media engagement, and the sharing of stories from communities across Australia brought the day to life and showed a strong national recognition of the importance of celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

We would like to thank everyone who celebrated Children's Day in 2025, shared their events and helped strengthen the day through their participation and engagement. We look forward to celebrating with communities across the country once again in 2026.

Family Matters Report 2025 – Strong, loved and full of potential

Family Matters is our flagship annual report monitoring government removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from families and examining government action to reduce the over-representation of children in child protection systems. Led by SNAICC and a national Family Matters Leadership Group of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders in the sector, the report brings together evidence, data, lived experience and community-led solutions to hold governments to account while advancing a clear vision for child and family wellbeing system reform grounded in self-determination, culture and children's rights.

Family Matters Report 2025 – Strong, loved and full of potential (Family Matters 2025) is the tenth edition of the report and delivers a clear message: **invest in families, not crisis.** While governments have made commitments to transform child and family wellbeing systems through the National Agreement and Safe and Supported, the report finds that Australia's child protection systems continue to prioritise late, punitive interventions, surveillance, investigation and removal over prevention, early support and family preservation. Despite decades of evidence showing what works for children, families and communities, and years of commitments to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, progress has stalled.



Family Matters 2025 found that:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are 9.6 times more likely to be in out-of-home care or on third-party parental responsibility orders than non-Indigenous children.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infants are 8.9 times more likely to be placed in out-of-home care.
- Only 7.3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care or on third-party parental responsibility orders were reunified with family, compared with 10.1% of non-Indigenous children.
- 37.6% exited out-of-home care to 'other' circumstances, including independent living, homelessness and detention.
- Only 15.6% of total child protection expenditure was spent on family support services.
- Nationally (excluding WA), only 6.8% of spending was directed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, with most jurisdictions investing less than 10% through community-controlled services.
- 32.1% of children in out-of-home care were placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives or kin.

These findings show that Australia remains well off track to meet Target 12 of the National Agreement and reinforce the urgent need to rebalance child and family wellbeing systems towards prevention, early intervention and sustained investment in ACCOs. Conversely, Family Matters 2025 shows what works: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early intervention, prevention and family support programs that keep children safe and connected to kin, community, Country and culture. While these services are successfully keeping children safe, connected to family and thriving in culture, they remain critically underfunded. Instead, crisis-driven systems continue to receive the bulk of funding.

Family Matters 2025 was launched on 10 December 2025 on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country at the Koorie Heritage Trust in Naarm, bringing together leaders from ACCOs, governments and the broader child and family wellbeing sector. Speakers included Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung Elder Aunty Muriel Bamblett, Arrernte and Luritja woman Catherine Liddle, Wiradjuri man Associate Professor Paul Gray, Meriam man Richard Weston, Gumbaynggirr man Clark Webb, Gumbaynggirr woman Ellie Buchanan and Barkindji woman Wendy Knight.

Following its launch, Family Matters 2025 continued to strengthen our national reform agenda. The report remains one of the most visited project pages on our website and is our most downloaded report. It generated extensive national media coverage, with 487 media items reaching more than 4.1 million people, including coverage across ABC News, The Guardian, SBS, ABC TV and Radio, AAP syndicated outlets, and widespread regional and community publications and radio. The report also generated strong engagement across social platforms:

- 67.4k Facebook views and 2.1k interactions,
- 14.3k Instagram views and 670 interactions, and
- 18.2k LinkedIn impressions related to the report.

For more than a decade, Family Matters has been a leader in Australia's evidence base for child and family wellbeing reform, amplifying the voices of communities, documenting the impacts of child protection systems and strengthening accountability. This includes contributing to the establishment of the National Commissioner, and supporting improved national oversight, transparency and understanding of children's and families' experiences within child protection systems.

Consistent with our advocacy throughout 2025–26, Family Matters calls on governments to honour their commitments under the National Agreement by expanding culturally safe early years and family support services, transferring authority and investment to ACCOs, implementing the Child Placement Principle in full, strengthening pathways to reunification and establishing robust Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led accountability through Commissioners and genuine shared decision-making.

Family Matters 2025 reaffirmed what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities have always known: our children are strong, loved and full of potential. They are deeply loved by their families, Elders and communities, and culture is central to their safety, identity and wellbeing. Ten years after the first Family Matters report, the evidence is indisputable. Family Matters has shown that the challenge is no longer understanding what works; it is acting with urgency to invest in families and communities, transfer decision-making and resources, and build systems that keep children safe, connected and thriving.

Family Matters 2026 is currently being drafted and will continue this work, building on the evidence, advocacy and accountability established over the past decade.

Sector Transformation

Sector transformation is central to SNAICC's vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to have authority over the systems, services and decisions that affect their children and families.

Through the work of the SNAICC Transformation Team, we support the transition of services, decision-making, resources and authority from mainstream organisations to ACCOs, strengthening self-determination, community control and culturally grounded systems of care. This work directly supports the structural reform commitments of the National Agreement and Safe and Supported, and advances priorities of Family Matters, the ECCDPP and other key reform and advocacy initiatives. These efforts contribute to shifting power and resources towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to early years and child and family service systems that are designed, governed and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Throughout 2025–26, the Transformation Team continued to lead and influence Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led transition and transformation at jurisdictional, national and international levels. Through strategic partnerships, governance leadership, sector capability building and the development of nationally significant reform initiatives, the team advanced SNAICC's strategic priorities of strengthening self-determination, growing a strong and sustainable ACCO sector, and driving structural and systems reform.

During the year, the team shared SNAICC's approach to transition and transformation internationally at the 7th International Indigenous Voices in Social Work Conference in Mohkinstsis/Calgary, Canada, sharing lessons from Australia's experience and building relationships with First Nations leaders, researchers and practitioners working to strengthen Indigenous led systems of care. Nationally, the team presented alongside the Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) and KWY at the KWY Conference on Kaurna Yerta in Tarntanya/Adelaide, highlighting the HIPPY transition journey in Goordnada/Port Augusta as an example of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led partnership, shared learning and community-controlled reform in practice.

The team also contributed to sector capability building through the Australian Institute of Family Studies' Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning online education resources, promoting culturally safe and culturally responsive approaches to evaluation, and participated in sector forums with Family and Relationship Services Australia to share practical insights on transition, cultural governance, culturally responsive partnerships and community-led implementation.

Collectively, this work has strengthened SNAICC's role as a national leader in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led transition and transformation, supporting the shift from mainstream-dominated systems towards community-controlled systems of care.



Sector Transformation Principles Framework

A significant achievement for the SNAICC Transformation Team during 2025–26 was the development and publication of the **Sector Transformation Principles Framework** (the Framework), officially launched on Ngunnawal Country at Parliament House in Canberra on 26 March 2026.

The Framework establishes a nationally consistent foundation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led transition and transformation. It provides governments, ACCOs, mainstream organisations and partners with shared principles to guide reform grounded in self-determination, cultural authority and community leadership. While providing a common approach, the Framework recognises that every community is different and that transformation must be locally led, culturally informed and responsive to community priorities and aspirations.

The Framework was shaped through extensive engagement led by the Transformation Team across 22 locations throughout Australia. Through on Country conversations and culturally safe engagement, the team heard directly from Elders, ACCOs, families and community leaders about what genuine transition and transformation require. The Framework was further strengthened through collaboration with the SNAICC National Transition Subcommittee and sector partners.

At its core, the Framework recognises that sustainable transformation occurs when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities determine the pace, priorities and direction of reform, and when governments and mainstream organisations commit to genuine partnership, shared accountability, trust-building and the progressive return of authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Sector Transformation Principles Framework directly advances our Strategic Plan 2025–2028 by strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, growing the capability and sustainability of the ACCO sector, influencing systems reform and reinforcing SNAICC's leadership in transition and transformation. It also supports implementation of the National Agreement, particularly Priority Reform Two; building the ACCO sector, and Priority Reform Three; transforming government organisations, by embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, shared decision-making and cultural governance into reform initiatives.

Partnerships

Brotherhood of St Laurence

SNAICC's partnership with BSL supports the transition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HIPPY services from mainstream providers to ACCOs, advancing shared priorities of strengthening the ACCO sector, promoting self-determination and improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

As BSL progresses Phase Two of transition across 34 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HIPPY sites, we continue to provide strategic leadership through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander HIPPY Governance Network, supporting culturally grounded governance, shared decision-making and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led program design.

The partnership also strengthens sector capability through the Transformation Community of Practice, transition capability-building webinars, practical support for organisations undertaking transition and ongoing on Country engagement. Together, these initiatives support stronger cultural governance, organisational capability and collaboration across the early years sector.



Sites progressing through Phase Two from July to December 2025 included:

- Marapikurrinya/Port Hedland (Kariyarra Country): transitioned to Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation.
- Inala (Yuggera Country): transitioned to Wandarrah Preschool and Neighbourhood Centre.
- Kalgoorlie (Marlinyu Ghoorlie Country): remained with the current service, with transition arrangements under review.
- Wellington (Wiradjuri Country): remained with the current service, with transition arrangements under review.
- Mt Isa (Kalkadoon Country): non-active site, with future arrangements under review.

Life Without Barriers

The strategic partnership between SNAICC and Life Without Barriers (LWB) continued to advance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, sector capability and systems reform. Throughout the year, the SNAICC–LWB Strategic Working Group provided governance, strategic direction and oversight to transition and transformation initiatives across jurisdictions.

This work informed the development of a renewed three-year partnership agreement, reflecting a shared commitment to sustainable reform, cultural governance and long-term investment in the ACCO sector. SNAICC and LWB also shared Australia's experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led transition and transformation internationally through the 7th International Indigenous Voices in Social Work Conference. The presentation highlighted the progress being achieved through genuine partnerships, cultural governance and shared accountability, while acknowledging the systemic barriers that remain.



The renewed partnership will continue to support nationally coordinated approaches to culturally governed transition through executive Communities of Practice, the LWB State Directors Gathering and the co-design of practical resources, including a Workforce Transition Strategy and Transition Practice Guide.

Uniting NSW/ACT

SNAICC and Uniting NSW/ACT are progressing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a strategic partnership guiding collaborative work from 2026–2028.

Building on joint workshops held since December 2025, the partnership has developed a shared vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led transition and broader systems transformation. The MoU establishes a framework for collaboration focused on strengthening ACCOs, embedding culturally led governance and supporting sustainable reform across the child and family sector.

Together, these partnerships advance our Strategic Plan 2025–2028 by strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, growing ACCO capability, supporting genuine partnerships and driving reform that returns decision-making authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

National Transition Framework Working Group

In 2025–26, the National Transition Subcommittee and SNAICC identified the development of a National Transition Framework as a strategic priority, recognising the need for nationally coordinated, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led reform.

This led to the establishment of the National Transition Framework Working Group, bringing together sector partners to co-design a Framework grounded in Aboriginal leadership, culturally grounded governance and genuine partnership. The Framework will support implementation of the National Agreement by strengthening community authority and guiding transition towards community-controlled systems.

The Working Group first met at SNAICC'25 in October 2025, bringing together representatives from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, Life Without Barriers, OzChild, Brotherhood of St Laurence and SNAICC. The inaugural workshop established a culturally grounded roadmap for development of the Framework, including governance arrangements, milestones and shared responsibilities. The Working Group has continued to meet quarterly to guide development of the Framework. Members have provided feedback on initial outlines and discussion papers to ensure the Framework reflects collective expertise, lived experience and sector priorities while remaining practical and responsive.

Alongside the Framework's development, the Working Group commenced co-design of a monitoring, evaluation and learning approach focused on measuring meaningful progress beyond project milestones. Early discussions have centred on indicators reflecting cultural integrity, partnership strength, shared accountability and the extent to which transition initiatives support the progressive return of authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Child and Family Wellbeing

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

SNAICC is resolute in our advocacy for full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (the Child Placement Principle) as a foundation in child protection systems and to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain connected to family, community, culture and Country.

The Child Placement Principle is a critical framework for transforming child and family wellbeing systems, recognising that children's safety and wellbeing are strengthened when decisions are grounded in culture, family and community connection, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have genuine authority in decisions affecting their children.

The Child Placement Principle comprises five elements:

- Prevention
- Partnership
- Placement
- Participation
- Connection

These five interconnected elements provide a framework for ensuring children and families receive culturally safe support, communities have genuine decision-making authority and children in care maintain strong cultural and family connections. Together, they provide a holistic approach to preventing unnecessary child removal, strengthening family support and ensuring children who enter care remain connected to their identity, culture, kin and community.

In 2025–26, we continued advocating for governments to move beyond legislative recognition of the Child Placement Principle and fully embed it across policy, practice, investment and accountability systems. Full implementation requires governments to strengthen prevention and early support, invest in ACCOs, support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decisions affecting children and ensure child protection systems are accountable to the communities they serve. It also requires governments to recognise that implementation cannot be achieved through placement practices alone, but through sustained reform across all five elements of the Child Placement Principle. This work is central to achieving the commitments under the National Agreement, especially Target 12 to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.

Implementation Reviews

Throughout 2025–26, we continued to hold governments to account for their implementation of the Child Placement Principle through the publication of jurisdictional Child Placement Principle Implementation Reviews.

The Implementation Reviews map progress, identify gaps across jurisdictions and provide an evidence base to hold governments accountable to their commitments under Safe and Supported and the National Agreement. The 2025 Implementation Reviews found:

- ongoing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care,
- insufficient investment in culturally safe early intervention and intensive family support services,
- significant gaps in implementation of the five elements of the Child Placement Principle,
- inconsistent systems to enable meaningful family and community involvement in decision-making affecting children, and
- the need for sustained resourcing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to lead culturally responsive responses and system reform.

The reviews continue to show that legislative recognition of the Child Placement Principle alone is insufficient. While all jurisdictions have some legislative or policy recognition of the Child Placement Principle, implementation remains inconsistent and incomplete, with significant gaps in prevention, partnership and participation. Meaningful implementation requires active efforts by governments to prevent unnecessary child removal, strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation and decision-making, support ACCO capability and ensure children remain connected to family, culture, community and Country.

We used findings from the reviews to inform advocacy with governments, peak bodies and sector partners, and to call for stronger accountability, improved implementation and sustained investment in ACCO approaches to child and family wellbeing. The reviews continue to provide an important accountability mechanism that ensures government commitments translate into meaningful improvements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Jurisdictional Advocacy

Through advocacy, submissions, public statements and engagement with governments and ACCOs, we work to ensure child protection reforms strengthen rather than undermine Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority, family decision-making and children's rights to remain connected to family, community, culture and Country.

During 2025–26, significant child protection reform activity occurred across jurisdictions that created important opportunities to strengthen implementation of the Child Placement Principle. We continued advocating that legislative and policy reform must be accompanied by genuine shifts in authority, investment and accountability to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have the power and resources to lead decisions affecting their children and families.

In the Northern Territory, we worked alongside ACCOs and sector partners to respond to proposed legislative changes to the Care and Protection of Children Act and broader child protection reforms. We raised significant concerns that proposed changes risked weakening implementation of the Child Placement Principle, reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in decisions affecting children and families and moving away from the principles of self-determination and community control. Our submission to the Northern Territory Legislative Scrutiny Committee on the *Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026*



stressed that reform must be evidence-based and strengthen, rather than diminish, children's rights, cultural safety and Aboriginal decision-making authority. We advocated for reforms that uphold the Child Placement Principle's five elements and align with commitments under the National Agreement and Priority Reform Two.

In Queensland, we continued advocating for transformational reform following the Child Safety Commission of Inquiry and broader child protection reform processes. Our submission to the Inquiry highlighted the ongoing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems and called for urgent systemic reform, including full and accountable implementation of the Child Placement Principle, stronger prevention and early intervention, increased investment in ACCOs, expansion of Delegated Authority and greater Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decision-making power.

Through this ongoing jurisdictional advocacy, we continue working to ensure the Child Placement Principle fulfils its purpose: creating child and family systems where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are safe, supported and connected, and where communities have the authority, resources and decision-making power to shape the decisions that affect their children.



Child and Family Systems Reform and Advocacy

Families and Children Activity Programs

During 2025–26, SNAICC continued advocating for reforms to child and family support systems that strengthen prevention, early intervention and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control. The Australian Government Department of Social Services Families and Children (FaC) Activity Review represented a critical opportunity to influence the transition of funding to ACCOs and drive transformation in how, and by whom, services are delivered for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Following engagement with the Safe and Supported Leadership Group, our submission to the Families and Children (FaC) Activity Review urged the Department of Social Services to seize this opportunity for meaningful funding reform and enable a fundamental shift towards greater Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control over the design and delivery of services. We advocated for funding and service delivery arrangements that better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities, including increasing the proportion of FaC Activity-funded services delivered by ACCOs in alignment with Priority Reform Two of the National Agreement.



In our submission, we highlighted the critical role of ACCOs in delivering holistic, culturally safe and community-led supports that strengthen families, promote children's wellbeing and prevent unnecessary engagement with statutory systems. We advocated for investment settings that recognise the expertise, leadership and cultural authority of ACCOs, remove structural barriers to accessing Australian Government funding and enable services to be shaped by the strengths, priorities and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

In May 2026, the Department of Social Services announced that the new Children and Family Support (CaFS) Program would replace the FaC Activity from 1 July 2027. We remain engaged in supporting the implementation of CaFS and its transition funding pool, which will support ACCOs to build readiness and work in partnership with existing mainstream providers to transition and transform services previously delivered by their partnered organisations.

Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry

Commencing on 1 July 2025, the Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry was established to identify and address systemic issues within Queensland's child safety system, including the experiences of children and families involved with the system and opportunities for reform. We provided a submission to the Inquiry that highlighted deep concerns about the continued and increasing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care in Queensland, and the need for urgent systemic reform grounded in self-determination, cultural safety and community control.

Our submission focused on concerns about the growing reliance on residential care, especially for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. Evidence shows that residential care can contribute to poorer outcomes, including placement instability, disconnection from family, kin and culture, and increased pathways into the youth justice system. We called for reforms that strengthen prevention and early intervention, expand investment in ACCOs, embed genuine shared decision-making and reduce reliance on systems that remove children from family and community.

The Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry's final report, *From Pressure to Purpose: Reforming Child Protection in Queensland*, found significant systemic issues within the state's child protection system and made 52 recommendations for reform. The findings made it clear that children and families are not being adequately supported by the system as it currently operates, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experiencing the greatest impacts through ongoing over-representation and disproportionate involvement in out-of-home and residential care.

Refreshing the National Out-of-Home Care Standards

Action 5 of the Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan focuses on improving out-of-home care systems so that the wellbeing of children and young people is centred and better supported. In partnership with the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), we finalised a major activity under this action in 2025–26: a Department of Social Services funded project to undertake sector and community engagement on priority changes to the National Out-of-Home Care Standards (National Standards).

The 13 National Standards provide guidance on what helps ensure positive experiences for children and young people in out-of-home care. First developed in 2011, the National Standards have not been updated since their introduction, creating an important opportunity to better reflect the specific needs and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and communities. The project aimed to develop recommendations for changes that ensure the National Standards align with international human rights frameworks, reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and prioritise what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people need to stay strong in mind, body and spirit while living in out-of-home care. The review also sought to strengthen the National Standards' alignment with contemporary understandings of child development, wellbeing and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination.

A critical component of the project was hearing directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and carers with lived experience of out-of-home care. We held nine face-to-face Yarning Circles across the country in partnership with eight local ACCOs and peak bodies that created opportunities for young people and carers to share their experiences, priorities and aspirations for change. We also engaged sector, system and community stakeholders across every state and territory, including ACCOs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Commissioners and Guardians, key non-Indigenous organisations and government agencies working across out-of-home care and child and family systems.

We analysed the expert knowledge gathered through these engagements and worked with AIFS to develop findings and recommendations. The project concluded in December 2025, with SNAICC and AIFS submitting a final report to the Australian Government Department of Social Services and the Safe and Supported governance structure. The report is currently being considered for response through Safe and Supported governance processes and is expected to be published in late 2026.

The project shows the importance of grounding national standards in the voices, knowledge and lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities, and provides a strong foundation for strengthening the national approach to out-of-home care.

Reforming and Strengthening the Northern Territory Child and Family Sector

In early 2026, SNAICC commenced a project to support the growth and sustainability of the ACCO child and family sector across the Northern Territory to improve Aboriginal children and families' access to culturally safe, community-led prevention, early support and family services.

The reform project aligns with the National Agreement, particularly Priority Reform Two, and the Safe and Supported reforms by strengthening shared decision-making, improving commissioning approaches and supporting greater Aboriginal community control. Working alongside ACCOs, the NT Government and community partners, we are developing a Sector Strengthening Plan, Market and Gap Analysis, Commissioning Framework, and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework to support long-term sector growth and reform.

The project team has completed in-person engagement on Larrakia Country in Garramilla/Darwin and Palmerston, on Arrernte Country in Mparntwe/Alice Springs and Ntaria, on Warlpiri Country in Yuendumu, and on Yolŋu Country in Nhulunbuy and Yirrkala. Engagement will continue throughout the project through workshops, Yarning Circles and ongoing collaboration with ACCOs and communities to ensure all recommendations are grounded in the perspectives, priorities and expertise of Aboriginal communities and the ACCO sector across the Northern Territory.

The final Sector Strengthening Plan, Commissioning Framework and accompanying Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning guidance remain on track to be delivered to the NT Government in early 2027.

Senate Inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System

In December 2025, we provided a submission to the reformed Senate Inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System that highlighted the urgent need for national action to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in youth justice systems.

Our submission outlined the failures of current approaches, including the ongoing reliance on punitive responses, insufficient investment in prevention, early intervention and diversion, and the need for greater support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled solutions. Additionally, it called for reform that is grounded in self-determination, community control and children's rights, and aligned with commitments under the National Agreement.

In March 2026, SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle appeared before the Inquiry, speaking on concerns that increasingly punitive youth justice policies and practices risk entrenching harm, failing children and undermining national commitments to reduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child incarceration.

The Committee's final report is due to be handed down on 31 August 2026.





The NT Legislative Scrutiny Committee Review of the *Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026*

The *Care and Protection of Children Legislation Amendment (Every Child Matters) Bill 2026* was introduced into the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly on 13 May 2026 and referred to the Legislative Scrutiny Committee with a requirement to report by 8 July 2026.

We strongly opposed the Bill and provided a submission to the Committee that raised concerns that the proposed amendments risked weakening critical cultural safeguards for Aboriginal children, expanding statutory intervention and increasing compliance-based approaches within a system already delivering profoundly unequal outcomes for Aboriginal children and families. SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle and Executive Director, Social Policy and Research John Burton also appeared before the Committee at a public hearing on 4 June 2026 to outline these concerns and advocate for reform grounded in self-determination, community control and the rights of Aboriginal children and families.

Our submission highlighted that meaningful child protection reform must strengthen, not diminish, the Child Placement Principle, increase Aboriginal participation and decision-making in matters affecting children, and align with commitments under the National Agreement and Priority Reform Two. The Bill risked moving further away from these commitments by expanding government authority without corresponding safeguards to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have genuine influence over decisions affecting their children and families.

The Inquiry received 150 submissions and heard evidence from 38 witnesses representing 16 organisations with the majority of submissions and witnesses opposed the bill as drafted. We remain strongly opposed to the Bill and will continue advocating for approaches that strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family wellbeing, including an Aboriginal led Board of Inquiry into the Northern Territory child protection system to examine systemic failures and identify pathways for genuine reform.

Thriving Kids Initiative

Throughout 2025–26, SNAICC continued to provide national leadership and policy advice on the Australian Government's Thriving Kids initiative, a major reform intended to improve access to developmental and disability supports for children in the early years. With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experiencing disproportionately high rates of developmental vulnerability and disability, we have consistently advocated that getting these reforms right is critical to improving outcomes for children, families and communities.

We engaged extensively with Ministers, senior government officials and departments across the Commonwealth and states and territories to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives were reflected in the design and implementation of the reforms. Our advocacy focused on the need for governments to work in genuine partnership with ACCOs, embed shared decision-making, strengthen the ACCO early years sector and ensure children receive supports through culturally safe, trusted and community-led services.

A key milestone during the year was the release of our *Thriving Kids Policy Paper*, which outlined how the reform can address longstanding inequities in access to developmental and disability supports. The paper highlighted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have the most to gain from earlier, more accessible and culturally safe supports, but warned that without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led design and delivery, the reform risks reinforcing existing barriers and inequities. The paper called for ACCOs to be recognised as partners in the reform, not just stakeholders, and for investment to build on the strengths of existing ACCO-led early childhood and integrated early years services.

We also had a significant role on the Thriving Kids Advisory Group, which was established to provide advice to governments on the national model for the reform. Through ongoing participation in Advisory Group meetings, deep-dive workshops and review processes, we worked to ensure the interests and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families were reflected throughout the development of a final report. This advocacy contributed to key recommendations recognising ACCOs, Aboriginal Medical Services and ACCHOs as providers of first choice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, alongside calls for dedicated investment in ACCO led delivery models.

As governments move towards implementation, our advocacy continues. Thriving Kids presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform access to developmental supports; however, the benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children will depend on whether governments commit to genuine partnership, culturally safe delivery and sustained investment in ACCO services. We will continue to advocate for reforms that strengthen self-determination, support children to thrive in culture and community, and ensure no child is left behind during the transition to the new system.





UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

Ahead of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' visit to Australia in September 2026, we provided a submission highlighting key systemic issues affecting the rights, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities, and outlining priority areas for reform.

The submission invited the Special Rapporteur to meet with SNAICC leadership to discuss evidence, systemic findings and reform priorities, including the ongoing over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and youth justice systems, the need for stronger investment in prevention and early support, and the importance of self-determination and community control in decisions affecting children and families.

We also invited the Special Rapporteur to visit communities and locations where rights concerns are particularly acute to hear directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities and children about their experiences and priorities for change.

Commissioned Research Projects

In June 2025, SNAICC commissioned two ECCDPP-funded national research projects that will each run for approximately 15 months. These projects contribute to strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led evidence base, supporting policy reform, research and program design that is grounded in community expertise, lived experience and the priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Guided by SNAICC's Council and the ECCDPP Policy Priorities, the projects aim to generate evidence that supports culturally safe, community-led approaches and informs ongoing child and family system reform.

Aboriginal Family-Led Decision Making Research

In 2025–26, we undertook a research project to build the evidence base for Aboriginal Family-Led Decision Making (AFLDM) further and strengthen national understanding of its social, cultural and economic impacts. AFLDM is a culturally grounded, rights-based approach that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to lead decision-making processes affecting their children and family wellbeing. It recognises that families and communities hold the knowledge, relationships and cultural authority needed to make decisions about children's safety, wellbeing and futures. Rather than decisions being made for families by statutory systems, AFLDM creates culturally safe processes where children, parents, kin, Elders, communities and service providers work together to develop solutions that prioritise children's safety, belonging, identity and connection to family, culture and Country.

Delivered by a consortium including Lumenia, Arney Chong Consulting, Associate Professor BJ Newton (University of New South Wales) and Candice Butler (University of Technology Sydney), and guided by a Community Governance Group made up of six experienced Aboriginal leaders who oversee AFLDM programs, the project will develop the first Aboriginal-led Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis of AFLDM. Analysis will draw on

literature, community and family voices, and ACCO expertise from across Australia to better understand and quantify the value and impact of AFLDM and strengthen national advocacy for its expansion.

The research is grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, with community governance guiding the development of the SROI framework and measures of impact. This work forms part of our broader advocacy to transform child and family systems by shifting decision-making authority, resources and responsibility towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities and ACCOs.

We published the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family-Led Decision Making: Summary Evidence Review* in May 2026, which brought together national and international evidence on the benefits of family-led approaches and identified the key principles that underpin effective implementation. The review also detailed the importance of self-determination, cultural authority, family participation and community control in achieving positive outcomes for children and families.

Through this work, SNAICC continues advocating for AFLDM to be recognised not as a discretionary program or one-off intervention, but as an essential reform approach for building child and family systems where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain connected to family, culture and community, and where families are supported to lead decisions about their children's futures.

Further outputs from this project, including the final Evaluation and SROI Report, are expected to be published in late 2026.

Pre-Birth Notifications and Infant Removals Data Project

As part of our ongoing advocacy to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's rights, self-determination and family preservation, we are supporting research to improve understanding of pre-birth notifications, infant removals and early child protection pathways.

Led by the Australian Centre for Child Protection (Adelaide University) and with Onemda: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing (University of Melbourne) as a partner, the project examines the availability and quality of data relating to pre-birth notifications, infant removals and early child protection pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

The project responds to longstanding concerns about the lack of nationally consistent information on pre-birth child protection involvement and infant removals. Through data mapping and consultation with governments, researchers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, the research aims to identify data gaps, barriers to access and opportunities for improved monitoring and accountability.

The research centres Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and knowledge systems to ensure future policy and practice responses are informed by the experiences, expertise and priorities of families and communities. By improving understanding of the factors contributing to pre-birth notifications and infant removals, the project will support stronger prevention approaches and early, culturally safe responses that enable families to access support before child protection intervention is required.

Findings from the project will help inform future policy reform, improve understanding of pathways leading to infant removals and support efforts to strengthen culturally safe, community-led responses that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to stay together from the start.



Delegated Authority

Delegated Authority is a key reform approach to progressing self-determination and the transfer of power in child protection systems. It supports the transfer of statutory child protection authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations, recognising the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decision-making in matters affecting children, families and communities.

As part of a multi-pronged approach to progressing Action 1 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan of Safe and Supported, SNAICC and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group for Safe and Supported developed a national definition of Delegated Authority. The definition provides a shared basis for work across jurisdictions on legislative and system reform to support self-determination and the transfer of power in child protection systems.

During 2025–26, we also partnered with Candice Butler to develop a comprehensive jurisdictional scan of domestic and international approaches to transferring statutory child protection authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations. Candice is a former SNAICC Board Director, the inaugural Director of the QATSICPP Centre of Excellence and is currently undertaking a PhD examining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' reclamation of child protection authority.

The jurisdictional scan is building a knowledge base about the system requirements needed for successful implementation of Delegated Authority and beginning to map how these changes can best be enacted. This work is intended to inform state and territory governments as they develop approaches to transitioning statutory child protection authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, while strengthening their understanding and capability to implement Delegated Authority mechanisms.

Delegated Authority is an important shift towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control of decisions affecting children and families. When appropriately designed, resourced and supported, transferring authority can strengthen self-determination and enable decisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be informed by culture, kinship, community and Country.

The jurisdictional scan will also contribute to our forthcoming Best Practice and Critical Elements Framework. The Framework will provide practical guidance to state and territory governments seeking to implement Delegated Authority, including by identifying critical elements for effective implementation, supporting governments to troubleshoot challenges and enabling approaches to be adapted to different jurisdictional contexts.

We will continue advocating for Delegated Authority as a critical component of child and family system transformation, supporting jurisdictions to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander authority and ensuring that reforms are underpinned by the capacity, resources and structural conditions needed for genuine community control.

Improving Multidisciplinary Responses Program

The **Improving Multidisciplinary Responses (IMR) Program** continues to demonstrate the strength of ACCOs in designing and delivering community-led solutions for children and families experiencing multiple and complex needs. As a national initiative under Safe and Supported, the program supports broader efforts to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems by strengthening prevention, early intervention and culturally safe, integrated service responses.

Each IMR site reflects the unique priorities, strengths and aspirations of its community, while sharing a common commitment to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children grow up safe, connected to culture and surrounded by strong families and communities. Across Yuwi Country in Mackay, Djaara Country in Bendigo, Larrakia Country in Garramilla/Darwin, Kariyarra Country in Marapikurrinya/Port Hedland, the Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, Ngarrindjeri Country in the Murraylands, Wiradjuri Country in Orange, the many Nations of Far North Queensland, Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country in the ACT, the many Nations across Victoria and beyond, IMR sites deliver locally designed approaches that respond to community priorities while contributing to national reform.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led organisations are strengthening multidisciplinary collaboration, improving access to culturally safe services, embedding prevention and early intervention, supporting families to navigate complex systems and building stronger partnerships across health, education, child protection and community services through the program. Importantly, these approaches are shaped by community voices, lived and living experience, and Aboriginal governance that ensures solutions are grounded in local knowledge, cultural authority and self-determination. Sites are implementing a diverse range of locally led initiatives to meet community needs. These include developing multidisciplinary models of care, establishing community governance groups, strengthening workforce capability, creating new pathways for collaboration across service systems and developing outcomes and evaluation frameworks. Collectively, these initiatives are generating valuable evidence to inform future service delivery while responding to the immediate needs of children and families.

While each community's journey is unique, together the IMR sites are contributing to a growing body of evidence that demonstrates that community-led, culturally safe and holistic approaches achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. As the program's Community Partner, we are proud to walk alongside participating organisations by supporting capability development, shared learning and continuous improvement, while amplifying the knowledge and evidence emerging from communities to inform broader systems reform.

During the second half of 2025 and throughout 2026, many IMR sites commenced evaluations of their work to better understand and demonstrate the impact of their locally led approaches. These evaluations will strengthen the evidence base for community-controlled multidisciplinary responses and provide important insights to inform future policy, practice and investment. We look forward to sharing these stories and learnings more broadly as they become available.

National Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support

Action 3 of the Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan calls for building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infrastructure for data sovereignty and improving the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base. SNAICC and the Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group have long advocated for this action to be delivered through the development and establishment of a National Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support (the Centre).

The Centre will be an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led body that drives evidence-based approaches to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families to thrive. It will play a critical role in shaping a national research agenda grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and data sovereignty, as well as producing and commissioning innovative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led research.

Through evidence-informed advocacy, showcasing best practice and developing practical guidance for policymakers and practitioners, the Centre will be pivotal in ensuring that policies and programs are genuinely responsive to the priorities of our communities. The Centre will also help grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research workforce by offering support, training and development opportunities to emerging researchers. These outcomes will drive a fundamental transformation of the research landscape, which, at present, often fails to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on child and family wellbeing at the heart of research.

In 2023, we were engaged by the Australian Government Department of Social Services to undertake scoping and design for the Centre. Guided by leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics and ACCO sector representatives, we developed a design report outlining the Centre's purpose and functions, alongside the structural and operational elements required to ensure that community voice and self-determination are at its heart. The final design report was completed in September 2024, and our advice will inform the Department of Social Services' next steps for establishing the Centre in 2026–27, including the selection of a suitable organisation to lead the establishment process.

Since delivering the final design report, we have continued to progress an ambitious research agenda that reflects and complements the ECCDPP priorities, the Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan and Family Matters Building Blocks. This has included commissioning research on the social return on investment attributable to AFLDM programs, to be delivered by a consortium of Lumenia, Arney Chong Consulting and leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics from three universities. We have also contributed to consultations on refreshing the National Out-of-Home Care Standards and progressed research on the data landscape for pre-birth notifications and infant removals, to be delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics at the Australian Centre for Child Protection and the University of Melbourne. These are outlined elsewhere in this report.

Together, this work is strengthening the evidence base needed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led approaches to child and family wellbeing and laying important foundations for the Centre's future role in transforming research, evidence and practice.

National Child and Family Investment Strategy

The **National Child and Family Investment Strategy** (the Investment Strategy) is a landmark reform under Safe and Supported and delivers on Action 2 of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan, which calls for governments to shift towards adequate and coordinated funding of early, targeted and culturally safe supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The Strategy provides a national framework for transforming how governments invest in child and family services with a focus on increasing investment in prevention and early intervention and shifting funding towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled solutions.

We developed the Investment Strategy in partnership with QATSICPP and Social Ventures Australia across 2023–24 and 2024–25, drawing extensively on the long history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and advocacy for reform of child and family service systems. Throughout its development, we worked with the Australian Government Department of Social Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, ACCOs, governments and sector partners to ensure the Investment Strategy was grounded in community expertise and priorities.

In October 2025, the Investment Strategy was endorsed through the highest level of Safe and Supported governance by all governments (except Queensland, which indicated in-principle support while reserving its position pending the conclusion of the Child Safety Commission of Inquiry). The Investment Strategy has since been jointly published by SNAICC and the Australian Government Department of Social Services and provides governments and the sector with a shared framework to guide future investment reform.

The Investment Strategy aims to grow the proportion of funding invested in earlier supports, rather than tertiary child protection, for all children, while ensuring funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is increasingly directed to the ACCO sector. By setting out a pathway to transition Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific expenditure away from non-Indigenous organisations and towards ACCOs, the Investment Strategy will support growth in the number, scale and capacity of ACCOs delivering child and family services. This is critical to ensuring children and families can access services that understand their holistic needs and are accountable to their communities.

The Investment Strategy sets out overarching principles and system elements for growing earlier supports and transitioning funding to ACCOs. It also includes implementation guidance, including best-practice examples, to support governments to bring these system changes to life. All governments have committed to developing jurisdictional implementation plans in partnership with ACCOs by October 2026. These plans will provide a pathway for translating the Investment Strategy's commitments into action and will support greater transparency and accountability while aligning funding, policy and service delivery with its principles. The endorsement of the Investment Strategy represents a significant step towards reshaping how governments invest in child and family wellbeing.

SNAICC will continue working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, ACCOs and governments to support implementation and advocate for the sustained investment and system reform needed to strengthen prevention, early intervention and community-controlled responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Early Childhood Development

Community Partner

CCCFR Expansion Program

SNAICC's Community Partner arrangement with the Australian Government Department of Education concluded at the end of 2025. Since commencing the role in 2022, we have worked alongside ACCOs and communities to support the establishment of culturally safe, community-led early childhood education and care (ECEC) services in remote and very remote communities. This work has contributed to Closing the Gap by increasing access to quality early learning while strengthening community control and self-determination.

While the Community Partner team will continue to support ACCOs delivering the CCCFR Expansion Program in other capacities, our formal role in supporting the establishment of new CCCFR Expansion sites has concluded. Throughout the partnership, we supported sites through governance, workforce capability, Communities of Practice (CoPs) and tailored establishment support that helped build strong, sustainable services shaped by community priorities and aspirations.

As this chapter comes to a close, we would like to acknowledge and thank the ACCOs, communities and local leaders for their dedication, leadership and resilience in establishing culturally safe ECEC services that will continue to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for generations to come.

We congratulate Wunan Foundation, Central Australia Aboriginal Congress, Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council and Kowanyama Aboriginal Shire Council on the successful opening of their ECEC centres on Miriwoong Country in Kununurra, on Arrernte Country in Mparntwe/Alice Springs, on Alngith Country in Napranum and on the lands of the Kokoberra, Yir Yoront and Kunjen peoples in Kowanyama, respectively.

Connected Beginnings

Connected Beginnings was launched in 2016 and is jointly funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Education and the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing. It is a place-based initiative supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged zero to five to meet learning and developmental milestones through the integration of early childhood education, health and family support services and programs. The program currently supports approximately 24,800 First Nations children and, as of 2025, is delivered in 50 communities across Australia following an Australian Government investment of $81.8 million in 2023–24 to expand Connected Beginnings nationally.

Throughout 2025–26, we have continued to have a central role as the Connected Beginnings Community Partner, working in close partnership with the Australian Government Department of Education and Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to strengthen integrated, place-based responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Connected Beginnings Sites



As Community Partner, we support the establishment of new sites, provide ongoing capability-building and tailored support to existing sites, facilitate shared learning across the national network and co-chair the Connected Beginnings Advisory Group. Through this collaboration, we support alignment across early childhood education, maternal and child health and family support systems, advancing the targets and Priority Reforms of the National Agreement.

During 2025–26, we continued strengthening opportunities for Connected Beginnings sites to share knowledge, build relationships and influence program implementation through peer networks, CoPs and culturally safe learning spaces. These approaches support sites to share local knowledge, identify shared priorities and strengthen collective action to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Sector Transformation

Throughout 2025–26, the SNAICC Transformation Team continued to support the Connected Beginnings team by providing strategic leadership, advice and support to facilitate culturally led transition conversations with communities across Australia. Working alongside local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, ACCOs, government partners and service providers, the team supported community-led discussions to explore transition readiness, build shared understanding, strengthen local governance and decision-making authority, and identify pathways towards increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control.

This work reinforced our strategic commitment to self-determination, community-controlled service delivery and genuine shared decision-making, while contributing to the growth and sustainability of the ACCO sector. It ensured that transition planning remained grounded in community aspirations, cultural authority, local priorities and long-term approaches that support stronger outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

ACCO Leadership Transition Framework

The **ACCO Leadership Transition Framework** (the ALTF) supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to advance self-determination and strengthen community control, cultural authority and decision-making within the Connected Beginnings program. The framework provides a culturally grounded process for transitioning program leadership, governance and accountability to ACCOs and ACCHOs, recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are best placed to determine the services, priorities and approaches that support their children and families.

The ALTF contributes to broader efforts to strengthen the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector by supporting the transfer of authority, responsibility and resources to community-controlled organisations wherever possible. At the heart of the ALTF is the principle that transition journeys must be community-led and occur at the pace determined by community. Rather than applying a prescriptive model, the framework creates opportunities for communities, Elders, ACCOs and ACCHOs, service providers and other key stakeholders to come together, build shared understanding and determine locally appropriate pathways for leadership and governance. Our role is to facilitate these conversations, support relationship-building, provide tailored transition assistance and advocate for greater Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander control of programs and funding that impact their children and families.

During 2025–26, we continued to facilitate stakeholder conversations and transition planning activities across several communities with Connected Beginnings sites. Significant milestones included the successful transition of Connected Beginnings backbone responsibilities to ACCOs and ACCHOs: on Wiradjuri Country in Wagga Wagga, where leadership transitioned to Riverina Medical and Dental Aboriginal Corporation; on Biripi Country in Taree, where leadership transitioned to Biripi Aboriginal Corporation Medical Centre; and on Kaalamaya Kapurn Country in Kalgoorlie, where leadership transitioned to Ngunytju Tjitji Pirni Aboriginal Corporation.

Transition planning and partnership strengthening also progressed in Gurambilbarra/Rasmussen, where Connected Beginnings is transitioning to an ACCO, Townsville Elders for Change. In Galiwin'ku, East Arnhem Land, transition discussions continued with Yalu Aboriginal Corporation, a Yolŋu led ACCO. On the lands of the Gangalidda, Waanyi, Garrawa and Yunjulla peoples in Doomadgee, Queensland, we undertook on Country engagement and continued conversations with community stakeholders to explore future pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and community control within Connected Beginnings. Conversations with stakeholders in Doomadgee are ongoing.

Together, these transitions are representative of the growing strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership across Connected Beginnings and the importance of creating the conditions for communities to lead decisions about the services, supports and systems that affect their children and families.

Through the ALTF, we continue to support approaches that build sustainable, culturally strong early years systems grounded in community authority, self-determination and the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Foundational Support

1. **Understanding Measurement, Evaluation and Learning**

   Understanding Measurement, Evaluation and Learning (UMEL) is Connected Beginnings' measurement, evaluation and learning approach designed to support sites to understand what the data is showing, reflect on what is working and use evidence to guide continuous improvement. Support delivered across 2025 and 2026 evolved in response to community needs and priorities, moving from foundational capability building towards more applied, place-based approaches that enable sites to lead their own learning and improvement journeys. We developed tailored resources to support sites to engage confidently with data indicators, including practical workshop materials, guides and examples.

   Building on this foundation, support in 2026 increasingly focused on face-to-face, collaborative learning opportunities where sites engaged in shared reflection on reporting domains, collective impact principles and locally relevant evaluation approaches. This progression reflects a shift empowering sites to lead their own continuous improvement processes, with strong peer learning, cross-site connection and alignment to community-led priorities underpinning the way UMEL is embedded in practice.

2. **First Nations Working Group (FNWG)**

   The **First Nations Working Group** (FNWG) is a national, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led advisory and peer forum that brings together representatives from Connected Beginnings sites. Across three quarterly meetings held in August 2025, March 2026 and June 2026, the FNWG continued to grow as a culturally safe, peer-led space where Connected Beginnings sites could share knowledge, build capability and shape collective approaches to program implementation.

   The March 2026 meeting, chaired by Catherine Liddle, reinforced national priorities and the importance of articulating community-defined outcomes and measures of success. Discussions across meetings focused on innovative, culturally grounded approaches to family engagement and developmental support. The FNWG supported cross-site learning through shared practice and spotlight presentations, while enabling collective problem-solving on key challenges including data sharing, service integration and early engagement with families.

   Overall, the FNWG has played an important role in elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, strengthening relationships between sites and supporting more coordinated, responsive and culturally grounded approaches across the Connected Beginnings network.

3. **Connected Beginnings Jurisdictional Networks**

During 2025–26, SNAICC continued strengthening connections across the Connected Beginnings program through the development and facilitation of the **Connected Beginnings Jurisdictional Network** initiative. Grounded in the principles of community leadership, relationship-building and shared learning, the initiative provides opportunities for Connected Beginnings sites, health partners and key stakeholders to come together, learn from one another and strengthen collective efforts to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The initiative was developed in response to feedback from Connected Beginnings sites through the mid-term evaluation process and reflects the program's commitment to supporting self-determination, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and community-led approaches. We supported the network by convening co-designed online gatherings throughout the year, creating culturally safe spaces for sites to share experiences, celebrate successes, discuss challenges and exchange knowledge.

A significant milestone was the first face-to-face Jurisdictional Network workshop, held on Ngunnawal Country in Canberra in November 2025. The gathering brought together Connected Beginnings sites, health partners and program partners from across NSW and the ACT, including representatives from the Australian Government Department of Education and Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, and NACCHO. Hosted by Connected Beginnings site Yerrabi Yurwang, the workshop strengthened relationships and trust while creating opportunities for deeper collaboration and collective reflection. The workshop also reinforced the value of coming together on Country to share stories, learn from one another's experiences and identify common priorities for action. The network also supported collaboration across shared priorities including workforce development, integrated service delivery, early intervention, maternal and child health, school readiness and culturally safe supports for children and families. Through these conversations, sites explored common challenges, shared community-led solutions and strengthened partnerships across the early years service system. Importantly, the network demonstrated the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led collaboration and the value of creating spaces where sites and communities can learn from one another, elevate local voices and collectively advocate for the needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The relationships developed through the network continue to support stronger coordination across education, health and family support services.

Building on the success of the NSW/ACT network, we have identified opportunities to expand the Jurisdictional Network model, with plans to establish an additional network by the end of 2026 and a further network during 2027. Over time, this expansion will support stronger connections between Connected Beginnings sites and health partner organisations nationally, creating a stronger community of practice that centres Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, supports shared learning and contributes to improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.



Exploring Aboriginal-led organisational models and definitions

The understanding of what constitutes an ACCO has evolved beyond a narrow definition based solely on formal registration with the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). While ORIC registration remains one recognised indicator, there is growing recognition that true community control is defined by how organisations are governed, led and held accountable to their communities. This includes strong cultural authority, genuine community engagement and decision-making that reflects local priorities and ways of working.

We are exploring how this broader definition can better recognise and support organisations that are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led in practice. This work seeks to ensure funding models are more responsive to diverse community governance structures and better reflect the principles of self-determination, enabling more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led organisations to access and lead funding opportunities in ways that align with community needs and aspirations.

Connected Beginnings at the Regional, Rural and Remote Early Childhood Australia Conference 2026

In March 2026, the Community Partner team presented at the Regional, Rural and Remote Early Childhood Australia Conference 2026 on Gumbaynggirr Country in Garlambirla/Coffs Harbour.

The presentation shared insights from the Connected Beginnings program with service providers from across the country, highlighting Connected Beginnings as a community-led, place-based approach that strengthens how early years, health and family support systems work together around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The session explored why Connected Beginnings is particularly important in the current policy context, showing how it functions as important system infrastructure that supports the Priority Reforms of the National Agreement, culturally led design and long-term reform across the early years.

The presentation was well received and contributed to growing interest in expanding culturally grounded, place-based approaches across the sector. Attendees' responses reflected growing sector appetite for community-led models that move beyond programmatic delivery to systemic reform and positioned Connected Beginnings as a credible, scalable approach for strengthening early years, health and family support systems around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

First Nations Playgroups Program

The **First Nations Playgroups Program** supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to lead and deliver culturally safe, community-controlled playgroup models that strengthen early learning, family connection, culture and children's wellbeing. Through the program, SNAICC provides responsive, site-tailored support that centres community voice and strengthens ACCO capability, while informing broader advocacy for early years systems that better recognise and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing.

Throughout 2025–26, we continued to work alongside First Nations Playgroup ACCOs to strengthen program delivery, support workforce capability and create opportunities for shared learning across the sector. Insights from sites continued to shape our advocacy for more culturally grounded early years systems, including reforms to funding models, DEX reporting and approaches to measuring success that recognise cultural impact, relationships, community connection and outcomes that matter to families. Additionally, practical, on-the-ground support strengthened delivery through one-on-one guidance, culturally safe resources and regular engagement with facilitators and organisations. In response to workforce pressures, we adapted our approach by offering flexible engagement options that reduced burden on sites while maintaining accessibility and continuity of support.

We also continued strengthening connections between First Nations Playgroup sites through CoPs, shared learning opportunities and tailored support. This included welcoming Tangentyere Council into the First Nations Playgroups Pilot Program and supporting sites to share practice, resources and approaches that respond to local community priorities. Partnerships with organisations, including Minderoo Foundation and Playgroups Victoria, also created opportunities for ACCO-led playgroups to participate in broader early years sector conversations, strengthen relationships and share the impact of culturally grounded, community-led approaches.

Despite ongoing challenges associated with short-term funding arrangements and workforce pressures, ACCOs continued to demonstrate strong capability, cultural leadership and innovation in delivering playgroups. Across the sector, there was a consistent call for greater long-term stability, including sustainable funding, culturally appropriate reporting approaches and evaluation frameworks that recognise the full impact of community-led programs. Through responsive support, shared learning and sector advocacy, we continue to work alongside ACCOs to strengthen First Nations Playgroups as culturally strong, community-led foundations for children, families and communities.

Community of Practice

Across the 2025–26 financial year, CoPs highlighted the strong cultural and community impact of First Nations Playgroups, with ACCOs demonstrating innovation and responsiveness through flexible delivery models, wraparound supports and the development of local playgroup champions. There was a shared commitment to culturally safe, community-led early years programming, with sites emphasising the importance of meaningful engagement with families, including fathers, Elders and extended kin, and the role playgroups play in strengthening culture, connection and wellbeing.

The CoP provides a culturally safe space for ACCOs to share experiences, reflect on practice, exchange resources and identify collective priorities. These conversations strengthen peer learning, build connections between organisations and ensure our program support and advocacy remain grounded in the priorities, experiences and aspirations of communities.

A consistent theme raised through CoPs was the need for systemic reform to better align early years systems with community realities. Sites highlighted the importance of culturally responsive reporting approaches that move beyond compliance-driven measures, alongside sustainable funding that supports continuity, workforce development and core operational needs. Practical enablers, including transport, infrastructure and access to flexible venues, were also identified as critical to supporting participation and maintaining strong community connections. Additionally, there was strong consensus that decision-makers would benefit from witnessing the impact of playgroups firsthand, which has reinforced a collective vision for a more equitable, culturally grounded and sustainable early years system.

Partnerships

Our partnerships with the Minderoo Foundation and Playgroups Victoria have strengthened opportunities for ACCOs to actively participate in and influence the broader early years sector. Through these partnerships, we have supported greater recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led approaches and worked alongside sector partners to strengthen cultural safety and inclusion across early childhood spaces.

Through this collaboration, sites including Ngunga, Yerrabi, Dalaigur and Bundiyarra were supported to attend the Playgroups Victoria 2026 Conference, which has enabled their participation in a key national early years forum. In the lead-up to the conference, we worked closely with Playgroups Victoria to provide advice and support to strengthen cultural safety across the conference program and design. This created valuable opportunities for ACCOs to build relationships, share knowledge and engage with sector peers — opportunities that are often limited by distance and resourcing constraints.

The partnership approach reflects a shared commitment to recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in the early years sector, creating pathways for ACCOs to influence sector practice and ensuring culturally grounded approaches are visible, valued and embedded across early childhood systems. These partnerships also supported us to work alongside sites to amplify community-led practice and storytelling.

Additionally, engagement at the conference enabled the capture of locally driven video content with Dalaigur and Bundiyarra to highlight the strength and impact of culturally grounded playgroup delivery. This content, currently being developed by SNAICC's Strategic Engagement and Communications team, will contribute to strengthening sector visibility, advocacy and understanding of First Nations Playgroups.

Together, these collaborative efforts demonstrate how partnerships can create meaningful pathways for ACCOs to connect, lead and shape the future of the early years sector.





Community Partner Reflections and Sector Impact

Across the First Nations Playgroups pilot, we have identified key learnings that reinforce the importance of culturally strong, community-led approaches to early years programming. Cultural safety emerged as central to meaningful engagement, with playgroups grounded in culture, language and respect enabling families to feel safe, connected and valued. Programs that were co-designed with community were better able to respond to local priorities, with ongoing feedback loops and flexible delivery models supporting greater accessibility, participation and relevance for families.

The pilot also highlighted the value of holistic, wraparound support, with families benefiting from access to additional services alongside play-based learning. Our role as Community Partner strengthened program quality, workforce capability and sustainability through tailored support, planning and evaluation guidance and sector advocacy. By working flexibly alongside ACCOs, supporting workforce transitions, adapting to local capacity and facilitating peer learning, we have contributed to stronger partnerships, increased staff confidence and more consistent, culturally grounded playgroup delivery across sites.

"It just shows the power of having these playgroups through an ACCO… it's the Elders that are leading it."

— **Trina Stoddart**, Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation.

"Our community desperately love it and need it… I'm not letting our playgroup go."

— **Sonya Dawson**, Bundiyarra Aboriginal Corporation.

"If we don't get commensurate funding to match the reporting and expected outcomes, we wouldn't accept the funding again."

— **Trina Stoddart**, Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation.

Disconnect Between Government Metrics and Community Impact

A recurring experience raised by ACCOs is the disconnect between government reporting metrics and the realities of community-led playgroups. Systems like DEX prioritise quantitative data, which often fails to capture meaningful outcomes such as cultural connection, child development, confidence and smooth transitions into early learning. This misalignment places pressure on services to report in ways that do not reflect their strengths, bringing to light the need for more culturally responsive, narrative-based approaches that value community voice, relationships and lived experiences.

"What does success look like to them? Because what it looks like to us is completely different."

— **Sonya Dawson**, Bundiyarra Aboriginal Corporation.



Playgroups as a Soft Entry into Early Childhood Education and Care

Playgroups have proven to be a vital soft entry point into the ECEC system, particularly for families facing barriers to formal enrolment. They provide culturally safe, welcoming environments where families can build trust, access support and engage in early learning, supporting children's social, emotional and developmental readiness for kindy and school. Beyond early learning, playgroups fill a critical service gap in communities with limited access to ECEC as they offer connection, wraparound support and opportunities for family wellbeing. Their role in strengthening relationships, supporting child development and enabling smoother transitions into formal education illustrates the need for sustained investment and recognition within the broader early years system.

"Playgroups are a pathway into our early education system… we have huge waitlists, but we can refer families to playgroup."

— **Debbie Swanson**, Dalaigur & Scribbly Gum Dalai

Building on these learnings, we will continue advocating for reforms that strengthen the sustainability, visibility and impact of First Nations Playgroups. Key priorities include:

- secure multi-year funding agreements to strengthen program stability and allow ACCOs to plan with confidence,
- co-design culturally responsive reporting tools with ACCOs and the Department of Social Services to ensure accountability frameworks reflect cultural integrity and community priorities, invest in workforce development through targeted training and leadership pathways, supporting ACCOs to grow strong, skilled teams, and
- prioritise infrastructure solutions for sites facing space constraints, ensuring families have safe and welcoming environments for playgroups.

Through our role as Community Partner, we will continue working alongside communities, ACCOs, governments and sector partners to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, support culturally safe and integrated early years systems, and contribute to lasting reform so children can grow up strong, connected, and supported to thrive.





Early Childhood Education and Care Reform and Advocacy

Building Early Education Fund

Throughout the year, SNAICC engaged extensively with government to ensure the Building Early Education Fund (the Building Fund) creates meaningful opportunities for ACCOs to grow their infrastructure, service capacity and long-term sustainability.

The Building Fund is a $1 billion Australian Government commitment designed to expand access to early childhood education and care in areas of need. The fund supports providers to establish new services, expand existing capacity and upgrade facilities, helping to provide more children and families with access to high-quality early learning opportunities. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and services, the Building Fund presents an important opportunity to expand access to culturally safe, community-controlled early childhood education and care in communities where access has historically been limited.

Since the announcement of the fund in December 2024, we have consistently advocated with the Australian Government Department of Education and the Minister for Early Education for a fair and meaningful share of investment to flow into ACCO early childhood infrastructure. In July 2025, we provided the Department of Education with a business case outlining how the Building Fund could support growth in the ACCO ECEC sector. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children represent 7.5% of Australia's children in the early years, yet ACCO ECEC providers account for just 0.5% of the nation's 18,990 approved providers. This disparity underpinned our advocacy for 20%, or $67.5 million, of the unallocated fund to be directed to ACCOs. We emphasised that targeted infrastructure investment is critical to addressing persistent gaps in access to ECEC, particularly in communities where market-based provision has not met local need. As a result of this advocacy, the Department of Education committed $20 million to ACCO specific projects. While this fell short of our recommendation, it does represent a significant outcome and directs a meaningful proportion of the total Building Fund commitment towards strengthening ACCO led early childhood services.

To support strong ACCO participation in the fund, we mobilised our networks to raise awareness of the opportunity, share grant information and provide targeted assistance to organisations seeking to apply. Following this work, we were engaged by the Department of Education as its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partner to support ACCO ECEC services accessing the dedicated Building Fund funding stream. More than 30 organisations have since expressed interest in receiving support, and we will provide intensive support to selected grant recipients to help ensure their capital projects successfully expand access to culturally nourishing early learning opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Early Childhood Education and Care (Three Day Guarantee) Act 2025

During 2025–26, we continued our longstanding advocacy for equitable and universal access to high-quality early childhood education and care, welcoming the Australian Government's **Early Childhood Education and Care (Three Day Guarantee) Act 2025** as a significant step towards removing barriers to ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The Three Day Guarantee replaced the Child Care Subsidy (CCS) Activity Test from 5 January 2026. All CCS-eligible families can now access at least 72 hours of subsidised ECEC per fortnight without meeting activity requirements. Families caring for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child can access 100 hours of subsidised ECEC per fortnight for each child, regardless of their level of recognised participation.

Removing the Activity Test and increasing subsidised access to 100 hours for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children has been one of our longstanding advocacy priorities. We consistently advocated for an ECEC system that recognises early learning as important to children's development, wellbeing and school readiness, rather than making access conditional on parents' employment, study or other activity. Our advocacy has also called for a universal ECEC system that is affordable, culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

This reform was an important advocacy achievement, supported by the collective work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, communities, ACCOs and the broader ECEC sector. Through the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership and engagement with the Productivity Commission's ECEC Inquiry, we advocated for removal of the Activity Test, increased subsidised access, and reforms that recognise the unique role of ACCO-led early years services. The Partnership's work included research into the optimal hours of ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and funding models for ACCO integrated early years services, contributing to the policy reform that delivered the 100-hour entitlement.

However, increased subsidised access must be matched by access to services. Throughout 2025–26, we have continued to advocate for the structural reforms and investment needed to make increased access meaningful, including a dedicated funding model for ACCO-led ECEC and integrated early years services, investment to expand services in areas where markets do not meet community need, and sustained investment in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years workforce. We have also advocated for investment in ACCO backbone support and other measures that enable community-controlled services to provide the culturally safe, integrated and wraparound support that children and families need.

We will continue to advocate for an ECEC system that is accessible, affordable, culturally safe and grounded in the strengths and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Early Childhood Education and Care Worker Retention Payment Engagement Program

Across 2025–26, SNAICC was funded by the Australian Government Department of Education to support ACCO ECEC providers and services to understand, apply for and meet the conditions of the Worker Retention Payment (WRP).

The WRP is an Australian Government grant program designed to support workforce retention in the ECEC sector by enabling participating providers to deliver a 15% wage increase for eligible educators, addressing workforce shortages and the longstanding undervaluation of the sector. On 17 June 2026, the Australian Government announced a $3.6 billion extension of the program that ensures continuation of the wage increase for educators until 30 June 2028.

As of June 2026, we successfully supported 70% of eligible ACCO ECEC providers to enter executed agreements with the Australian Government to receive the WRP. This achievement comes down to our ACCOs prioritising pay and conditions for their staff and the range of supports we have provided, including:

- service visits to step staff through the WRP application form and determine historical leave loading,
- email, phone and Teams meeting supports to discuss fee cap waivers, workplace instruments, WRP payment schedules and funding review applications,
- the creation of support resources and guiding documents for our ACCO ECEC services,
- connecting services with King & Wood Mallesons Legal for the creation of customised Individual Flexible Arrangements and Industrial Relations guidance, and
- contacting the Australian Government Department of Education directly on behalf of ACCO ECEC providers to escalate enquiries and funding review timelines.

Additionally, Miranda Edwards, SNAICC's National Workforce Manager, presented on:

- **Navigation of Worker Retention Payment for ACCO ECEC Service**s; Early Childhood Australia National Conference 2025, Boorloo/Perth, 4 October
- **Universal not Reform: Reflecting on the Worker Retention Payment Implementation**; SNAICC'25 Conference, Meanjin/Brisbane, 8 October.

So far, SNAICC has assisted with a total of $8,379,437.94 in Worker Retention Payments to 35 approved providers across 42 ECEC services until November 2026. The majority of these providers are ACCOs, with a small number being providers that support high proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in ECEC participation. Our national reach is further illustrated in the accompanying map, which shows the geographic distribution of ECEC services supported through our WRP engagement across Australia.

**LDC refers to Long Day Care, and OSHC refers to Out of School Hours Care.*





In February 2026, the SNAICC Strategic Engagement and Communications team and an Early Years Support (EYS) Victoria Leadership Advisor visited Yirram Burron Early Learning Centre on Wadawurrung Country in the Ballarat suburb of Sebastopol. During the visit, the SNAICC team interviewed leadership staff from the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC), an ACCO providing ECEC services in the region. The interviews were used to develop video assets highlighting how the WRP is supporting greater recognition of educators, improved workforce stability and stronger staff retention. Video highlights include:

"The worker retention payment has helped keep our staff, maintain our team and help them feel they are valued, as they are."

- **Bridget Buttacavoli**, Kindergarten Manager and Teacher.

"Being acknowledged and supported with their right to decent pay, they are finding their jobs more meaningful. It's helped them remain in the job that they want to be in because they can afford to do so."

- **Casey Brown**, General Manager of Early Childhood.

BADAC has two services receiving the WRP.

Early Education Service Delivery Prices Project

During 2025–26, SNAICC continued our leadership role in the Early Education Service Delivery Prices (SDP) Project, a national initiative examining the reasonable costs of delivering high-quality ECEC across Australia.

The SDP Project is an Australian Government initiative that is significant because it will help inform future funding, pricing and commissioning settings across the ECEC sector to ensure government investment better reflects the true costs of delivering quality services in diverse community contexts. As a key project partner, we are working alongside Deloitte Access Economics to ensure the experiences, expertise and operating realities of ACCOs are embedded throughout the research and policy outputs of the SDP Project. This includes contributing to the design of the project methodology, reviewing consultation materials and the draft ECEC Service Standard, and supporting the testing of data collection tools with ACCO providers. We also led the recruitment and engagement of ACCOs participating in the research to help ensure the project captures the realities of service delivery across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

ACCO ECEC services deliver integrated models that extend beyond traditional early learning, incorporating cultural connection, family support, community engagement, health and developmental supports. A central focus of our contribution to the SDP Project has been advocating for a broader understanding of quality within early childhood education and care. The SDP Project recognises that existing quality frameworks do not always capture the full range of activities undertaken by ACCOs to support children and families. Through consultations and policy advice, we have highlighted the importance of culturally safe and community-controlled service models, including building trusted relationships with

families, embedding local culture and knowledge, strengthening cultural identity, supporting parenting capacity and responding holistically to community needs. These are fundamental to quality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and communities and must be reflected in future funding and pricing arrangements.

The SDP Project builds on our longstanding advocacy for dedicated, sustainable funding models that recognise the full value of ACCO integrated early years services. By contributing their knowledge and experience, ACCOs are helping shape a new national dataset that will inform future funding reform and strengthen advocacy for policy and funding settings that better support culturally strong, community-controlled early childhood services. Throughout 2026, we supported ACCOs across Australia to ensure their expertise and service delivery realities were reflected in this work.

The final outputs of the project are expected to provide governments with a new evidence base for understanding the costs of quality ECEC delivery, including the development of an ECEC Service Standard and pricing approaches that better reflect differences in community need and service context. We are contributing to this work to ensure future funding reforms recognise the value of community-controlled early years services and embed the principles of self-determination, cultural safety and Closing the Gap.

First Nations Education Policy

In 2025–26, SNAICC was engaged by the Australian Government Department of Education as one of five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partner organisations supporting the development of the new First Nations Education Policy (FNEP). The FNEP will be the first national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education policy to formally include ECEC.

Drawing on our extensive policy, research and community engagement work since 2020, we undertook targeted consultation with the ACCO early years sector and key stakeholders. This included ten consultation sessions involving 61 participants, a survey of ACCO early years providers that received 22 responses and a validation workshop with participants to test and refine findings. Participants consistently reaffirmed that ACCO-led integrated early years services are the gold standard for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. As one participant noted, 'Culture is everything', reflecting the central role of culture, identity, language and community connection in children's learning and wellbeing.

These consultations informed SNAICC's FNEP Engagement Report, which contained 20 recommendations under six priority areas for reform:

1. recognising ECEC as a distinct and foundational education system,
2. strengthening ACCO-led integrated early years services as the preferred model for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families,
3. embedding culture across ECEC,
4. improving cultural safety,
5. growing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, and
6. strengthening shared decision-making, governance and accountability.



While welcoming the inclusion of ECEC in national education policymaking and planning for the first time, we have continued to advocate for stronger recognition of the unique role of ACCO early years services and the need for dedicated early years implementation, governance and accountability mechanisms in the FNEP. We will continue to use our FNEP Engagement Report to guide ongoing advocacy with Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

Senate Inquiry into the Quality and Safety of Australia's Early Childhood Education and Care System

In October 2025, SNAICC provided a submission to the Senate Education and Employment References Committee Inquiry into the Quality and Safety of Australia's ECEC System. The Inquiry was called to examine concerns about the quality, safety and accessibility of Australia's ECEC system and to identify reforms needed to ensure all children and families can access high-quality, culturally safe and equitable services.

The Inquiry provided an important opportunity to advocate for structural reforms that improve the quality, safety and accessibility of ECEC for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. While much of the Inquiry's attention was focused on child safety, a major focus of ours was messaging that achieving a high-quality and safe ECEC system requires addressing the structural determinants that underpin service quality, including workforce capacity, funding, accessibility, cultural safety and self-determination, recognising that regulatory responses alone will not deliver lasting systemic improvement.

Catherine Liddle appeared before the Committee to provide evidence on the unique strengths of the ACCO early years sector and the reforms required to deliver a genuinely high-quality and safe ECEC system. Catherine reiterated the core arguments of our submission: that the surest way to keep Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children safe is to invest in ACCOs, which are uniquely placed to provide culturally safe, holistic and community-led early childhood education and care.

While she acknowledged that strong regulation is important, lasting improvements in quality and safety depend on addressing the underlying drivers of outcomes, building a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce, supporting self-determination, upholding data sovereignty and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can access services that are grounded in culture, community and connection.

"We can't have high-quality early learning systems if we don't invest in regulation. But we also know it's not the end game. We know that piling more and more compliance up will not work on its own … we must reinforce the guardrails; they are so fundamentally important. Developing them in conjunction with the sector that they are supposed to help will be critical to getting this right."

— **Catherine Liddle**

Early Childhood Outreach Project

The **Early Childhood Outreach (ECO) Project** supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–8 years with developmental concerns, developmental delay or disability. Funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services, the project is delivered through a partnership between SNAICC and the First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN).

The ECO Project builds on evidence and community knowledge to address policy gaps, strengthen disability-inclusive practice across ACCO early years services and identify and reduce barriers experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with developmental delay or disability and their families.

Key achievements from the ECO Project in 2025–26 include:

- Development of a comprehensive evidence review examining barriers, opportunities and evidence-informed approaches to early childhood disability support. The review highlights the importance of culturally safe, community-led and integrated approaches, while identifying systemic barriers including underfunding, complex service pathways, data gaps and limited access to culturally responsive supports.
- Consultations and discussions with Aboriginal early years services were held between July and December 2025 across WA, Victoria, NSW and the NT. These engagements explored the barriers services experience in providing supports to children with developmental concerns, delays and disability, as well as the strengths and existing practices of services. Findings from these engagements informed the design of the ECO Project activities.
- Development of co-design sessions and disability-focused support plans for 19 Aboriginal early years services to strengthen their capacity, resources and approaches to supporting children with disability and autism. The plans are bespoke to each service to meet their specific disability priorities and needs.
- Delivery of a series of webinars to more than 100 participants from Aboriginal early years services. Delivered through the EYS network, topics included foundational disability awareness, navigating the NDIS and trauma-informed approaches to supporting neurodivergent children and children who have experienced trauma.
- At the SNAICC EYS Gatherings in WA, Victoria and NSW, spaces were created for services to share how they are supporting children with disability and to learn from disability experts, including on understanding behaviour and Key Word Sign.
- Together, SNAICC and FPDN are developing a suite of wise practice case studies with ACCOs across Australia. These case studies capture the strengths, experiences and innovations of ACCOs supporting children and families, exploring the relationships, cultural approaches, early supports and service models that enable positive outcomes. The stories span SA, WA, NSW, Victoria and Queensland and highlight the challenges services continue to navigate and the practical solutions communities have developed in response.

SNAICC and FPDN's multidisciplinary work through the ECO Project is contributing to a stronger understanding of what works in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with developmental concerns, developmental delay and disability. This work will inform future policy recommendations, resource development and sector supports, while promoting shared learning across the ACCO early years sector.

Early Years Support

National Program Overview

Throughout the 2025–26 financial year, the SNAICC Early Years Support (EYS) program consolidated implementation across the pilot jurisdictions of New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia, while laying the groundwork for expansion into South Australia and Queensland. Additionally, significant organisational changes during the year included SNAICC's restructure to include the newly established Childhood Development unit, bringing EYS together with Connected Beginnings and the national playgroups program, and the transition of funding administration from the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) to the Australian Government Department of Education.

The year saw the completion of Deloitte Access Economics' independent evaluation of the program, which confirmed EYS as a highly valued and effective model for strengthening ACCO ECEC services. The evaluation found the program builds trusted, culturally safe relationships, strengthens service quality, reduces administrative burden and enhances collaboration across the ACCO early years sector, providing an important evidence base for the program's continued development. Guided by these findings, the EYS team centralised key national functions while maintaining strong place-based delivery through state intermediary teams.

Key national initiatives established during the year included a standardised webinar schedule, the 'Getting Started' induction module, standardised participant reporting through Microsoft's Power BI, monthly State Leaders Network meetings and the integration of policy advisers and inclusion specialists into state intermediary teams to strengthen service support and national advocacy.

National Key Statistics and Reach

Face-to-face engagements: Across its national footprint, the EYS program delivered 210 service engagements, comprising 113 in New South Wales, 62 in Victoria, 24 in Western Australia and 11 in South Australia. *(Note: This total differs from NIAA quarterly performance figures because state operational reporting captures a broader range of workshops, mentoring, developmental support activities and tailored service engagements.)*

National conferences and sector leadership: SNAICC'25 was a significant national milestone, with 87 participants from 44 EYS-participating services attending and delivering seven dedicated presentations. State leadership gatherings across New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia engaged more than 103 workforce members representing 49 ACCO ECEC services.

Professional development: The national webinar program delivered multiple professional learning sessions, reaching more than 300 participants across participating jurisdictions and strengthening connections between services through shared learning and peer support.

Workforce, Policy and Expansion Initiatives

The EYS program continued to have a significant role in national policy reform and sector development throughout 2025–26.

As mentioned previously in this report, the Australian Parliament passed legislation in February 2026 that removed the Child Care Subsidy Activity Test, which backs long-standing advocacy by SNAICC and the EYS network to improve equitable access to early childhood education and care. The national workforce team also led extensive engagement with ACCO providers on the ECEC WRP, supporting services in understanding funding requirements and participating in workforce reforms designed to improve educator retention.



Building on the recommendations of the independent evaluation, we continued to strengthen the national intermediary model through enhanced policy support, quality improvement, workforce capability and service sustainability initiatives. The evaluation found that 86% of participating services reported stronger relationships through the program, highlighting EYS's role in reducing isolation, strengthening collaboration and supporting continuous quality improvement across the ACCO early years sector.

To support future sector growth, SNAICC secured $2 million from Coaxial to pilot the 'Nest and Nurture' initiative, establishing Australia's first licensed national ACCO early years operator model. We also partnered with Deloitte Access Economics on the ECEC SDP Project and worked with the First Peoples Disability Network to co-develop national resources supporting culturally safe early intervention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with developmental delay and disability.

These initiatives are featured in more detail throughout this Annual Report and, importantly, position the EYS program to continue strengthening ACCO early years services and advancing the National Agreement priorities through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership.

Early Years Support New South Wales

Program Overview

Throughout the 2025–26 financial year, the EYS NSW team continued to provide targeted backbone support to ACCOs. This support strengthened early childhood education and care services by building organisational capability, supporting continuous quality improvement and ensuring services remained culturally responsive and aligned with the National Quality Standard (NQS). Support was delivered through a coordinated mix of on-site visits, virtual engagement, tailored capacity-building initiatives and bespoke professional development. The EYS NSW team also supported services to respond to evolving policy and funding reforms while strengthening collaboration across the ACCO early years sector through the national intermediary model.

Key Statistics and Reach

Service engagements: The EYS NSW team conducted 113 on-site visits and face-to-face training sessions throughout the financial year, complemented by 492 remote engagements via phone, email and virtual meetings.

National and state gatherings: Twenty-four participants representing 15 EYS NSW services attended SNAICC'25. A further 51 participants from 25 services attended the 2026 NSW Early Years Gathering that took place on Tubba-Gah Country in Dubbo, with a focus on community-led practice, leadership and sector collaboration.

Professional development: EYS NSW delivered ongoing national webinars and tailored on-site coaching focused on trauma informed practice, active supervision, disability inclusion and implementation of the National Child Safe Principles and related reforms.

Sector Expansion and Growth

EYS NSW provided tailored support to ACCOs navigating funding opportunities, service expansion and organisational development. Ongoing assistance was delivered to four ACCOs funded through the Building Early Learning Places Program: Allira Aboriginal Multi-Purpose Centre on Tubba-Gah Country; Birrelee MACS on Gamilaroi Country; Ngayaamba Waluura Aboriginal Corporation (Giiguy Gamambi Preschool) on Gumbaynggirr Country; and Koori Kindermanna Preschool on Wiradjuri Country.

The team also supported significant governance milestones across the sector. CommunityXChange Preschool on Darug Country successfully transitioned to an ACCO, ensuring decisions about children's learning and wellbeing remain community led. In June 2026, another ACCO on Darug Country, Yanala Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, secured Provider Approval, which is a significant milestone towards re-establishing its Early Learning Centre.

Workforce Sustainability and Advocacy

Addressing workforce shortages remained a key priority throughout the year. EYS NSW supported services in navigating the Australian Government's WRP, providing practical guidance on funding processes, wage implementation and review processes when funding allocations did not reflect actual wage costs.

The EYS NSW team also had an important role in informing state and national policy. When services raised concerns about consultation timeframes for the First Nations Education Policy review, the team coordinated roundtable discussions between ACCO leaders and SNAICC's Policy team to ensure ACCO ECEC perspectives informed the review process. EYS NSW also partnered with the Australian Centre for Child Protection to review and strengthen the development of mandatory National Child Safety training to help ensure the content was culturally safe and reflected ACCO practice.

Projects and Innovation

- **TAFE NSW Partnership:** EYS NSW successfully secured a tender to co-design and develop the curriculum for TAFE NSW's Early Childhood Education and Care Professional Learning Program. This work ensures the Leadership Development Program is culturally safe, relevant and accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators.
- **PreBoost Project:** As a Practice Partner with the University of Wollongong and the NSW Government Department of Education, EYS NSW supported seven ACCO services to implement the Preschool Attendance Boosting (PreBoost) Project.
- **Inclusion and accessibility:** Working alongside the First Peoples Disability Network, EYS NSW contributed to the Early Childhood Outreach (ECO) Project, supporting the development of a national suite of culturally safe and disability-inclusive resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.



Early Years Support South Australia

Program Overview

Throughout the 2025–26 financial year, SNAICC expanded the EYS initiative into South Australia, establishing foundational partnerships and strengthening support for 13 ACCO and Aboriginal led early years services across metropolitan, regional and remote communities. As this was the inaugural year, the primary objective centred on deep listening, building trust and understanding the unique operational contexts, strengths and aspirations of South Australian services.

Key Statistics

Service Engagements: The team conducted 11 site visits across South Australia, alongside ongoing conversations with service leaders and educators and regular online yarning opportunities.

Co-Design Workshops: A statewide co-design workshop was held on Barngarla Country in Galinyala/Port Lincoln, bringing together 11 participants representing seven services, supported by flexible online engagement channels to ensure all 13 services contributed.

National Conference and Event Attendance: Eight staff members from four services participated in SNAICC'25, while 20 educators and leaders from nine services attended the 2026 Cairns Early Years Conference.

Sector Networking: Monthly Network and Knowledge Sharing meetings were established in February 2026, creating a continuous peer-learning forum.

Workforce Sustainability and Leadership

Building workforce capability and leadership was a core focus of the inaugural year. Through consultations and service yarns, priorities emerged around workforce attraction and retention, mentoring, traineeships, cultural capability and staff wellbeing. Participants emphasised the importance of culturally safe spaces where services can connect, share experiences and shape future supports together.

One participant reflected: *"The workshop was meaningful, culturally safe and strengths based. The future looks amazing, and what we can achieve collectively for our children, families and communities is something I look forward to."*

Another noted: *"It was wonderful to spend time with everyone, sharing and listening to each centre's journey."*

Capacity Building and Professional Learning

To address locally identified priorities, we facilitated access to culturally responsive training and professional learning opportunities through partnerships with Aboriginal training providers, sector organisations and education stakeholders. This included Cultural Capability Training for educators, supporting culturally safe and trauma informed practice. Additionally, resource packs were provided to all participating services to celebrate National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day to promote cultural pride, identity and connection for children, families and communities.



Strategic State Initiatives and Co-Design

A major milestone for South Australia was the formal partnership with Social Ventures Australia to co-design a bespoke South Australian Aboriginal Early Years Support Model. Drawing on insights gathered through service yarns and site visits, the co-design process laid the groundwork for a flexible, service-led framework. Supported by ongoing investment from the South Australian Office for Early Childhood Development, a second co-design workshop was planned for July 2026 to review and refine the draft model to ensure long-term sustainability and positive outcomes for children, families and communities across the state.

Early Years Support Victoria

Program Overview

Throughout the 2025–26 financial year, the EYS Victoria team worked alongside ACCOs to build relational trust and embed cultural integrity across the state's ECEC sector. The program expanded its reach from supporting 14 ACCO ECEC services in the first half of the financial year to 15 services in 2026, transitioning from individual leadership development to a whole-of-service capability model that empowers leaders, educators and entire staff teams.

Key Statistics

Service Engagements: EYS Victoria conducted a total of 62 on-site visits across the financial year, comprising 39 visits between July and December 2025 and 23 visits between January and June 2026.

Mentoring and Coaching: The team delivered intensive support throughout the year, including 320 hours of mentoring and coaching during the first half of the financial year alone (consisting of 80 hours on-site and 240 hours via phone and virtual meetings).

National and State Gatherings: Twenty-four participants from 12 ACCO ECEC services attended SNAICC'25. Additionally, 24 participants representing 11 services gathered on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country in Healesville for the 2026 Victorian Early Years Support Leadership Event.

Professional Development: The team facilitated ten shared professional learning events in the latter half of 2025 to bring staff together from across different services.

Workforce Sustainability & Advocacy

Workforce sustainability remained a central pillar and was supported through monthly Leaders Network Meetings and the EYS Advocacy Register to capture frontline challenges. Significant advocacy was focused on the WRP Grant; while wage increases were welcomed, service leaders highlighted ongoing frustrations regarding the exclusion of many kindergarten educators, which risks creating workforce disparities and exacerbating staff shortages. The EYS Victoria team also navigated complex regional recruitment hurdles and provided continuous support for staff wellbeing.

Capacity Building & Professional Learning

Professional learning was delivered through a responsive model tailored to service requests and identified needs, incorporating whole-staff training modules such as active supervision, trauma-informed practice, diversity and autism awareness and cultural healing. Capacity-building initiatives also included the distribution of targeted resources, physical education policy packs, Aboriginal flags and funding support for nature-inspired play spaces. Newsletters were regularly published to celebrate service milestones, share lesson plans and highlight staff achievements.

Strategic State Initiatives & New Innovations

A key strategic innovation for Victoria was the embedding of the ACCO Early Years Review Checklist across all participating services to track growth across nine domains ranging from cultural celebration to governance and transitions. Furthermore, the program pioneered EYS CoPs and structured leadership events, such as the Healesville gathering themed **Yarning for Growth: Listening, Learning, Leading Together**, which focused heavily on disability inclusion, NDIS navigation and relational approaches to children's behaviour.



Early Years Support Western Australia

Program Overview

Throughout the 2025–26 financial year, EYS WA continued to provide tailored, responsive support to 13 ACCO and Aboriginal-led ECEC services across metropolitan, regional and remote communities. The program supported six ECEC services operating long day care, including a service on the lands of Nyikina and Warrwa peoples in Derby, which was in the process of establishing its service, alongside seven additional early years services, including Aboriginal playgroups and child and parent centres. Relationships with participating services deepened significantly, resulting in an increased volume and specificity of requests that reflected growing trust and leadership capacity.

Key Statistics

Service Engagements: EYS WA delivered 15 site visits between July and December 2025, followed by 11 site visits between January and June 2026. Visits included Moorditch Gurlongga Association and Child and Parent Centre Swan on Whadjuk Nyoongar Country in Boorloo/Perth; Ngunga Women's Group on Nyikina and Warrwa Country in Derby; Julyardi Aboriginal Corporation on Kariyarra Country in Hedland; and Broome Youth and Families Hub, Jalygurr-Guwan Aboriginal Corporation and the Yawuru HIPPY service on Yawuru Country in Rubibi/Broome.

Network & Governance Meetings: Monthly online network meetings maintained strong attendance, alongside the transition of state steering group functions to streamline collaboration and reduce administrative burden on services.

State Leadership Gathering: 36 leaders and educators gathered for the 2026 EYS WA Leadership Event held on Whadjuk Nyoongar Country featuring keynotes on disability inclusion and bush tucker experiences at Kaarta Koomba/Kings Park.

Workforce Sustainability & Advocacy

Workforce sustainability remained a core focus, particularly in regional and remote areas facing tight labour pools. The EYS team provided intensive, hands-on support for services navigating the WRP scheme to secure 15% wage increases for eligible educators. This support included application assistance, addressing historical leave loading, advising on Individual Flexibility Arrangements and connecting complex services with pro bono legal support through King and Wood Mallesons. Advocacy was also directed at navigating WA state kindergarten reform agendas, including the rollout of 3-year-old kindergarten on school sites.

Capacity Building & Professional Learning

Professional learning was delivered via a mix of targeted online webinars and on-site mentoring. Key learning topics included trauma informed practice, writing meaningful observations and play-based curriculum design tied to Country. Furthermore, a specialised partnership with the First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) and the Early Childhood Outreach (ECO) project provided individualised support plans and case studies (such as at Child and Parent Centre Swan) to assist services in supporting children with developmental delays and disabilities.

Strategic State Initiatives & New Innovations

A major innovation for EYS WA was partnering with Playgroup WA to map 30 community-run Aboriginal playgroups in regions outside traditional EYS reach, including the Wheatbelt, Kinjarling/ Albany, the Goldfields and the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. This partnership focuses on engaging families, building local workforce pipelines and supporting community-led playgroups.

Additionally, EYS WA is providing targeted governance and leadership support to the Ngunga Group Women's Aboriginal Corporation. Following the organisation's success in securing the landmark $20 million Building Fund grant, EYS WA is actively collaborating with stakeholders to support the planning, coordination and governance structures required for the new build of its Early Learning and Family Centre.







The Boori Milumba Program

SNAICC is in our fourth year of providing cultural, operational and strategic support to Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre (Cullunghutti) for the implementation of the Boori Milumba program trial on Wandi Wandi Ngurra of the Yuin Nation in Nowra.

Boori Milumba is an Aboriginal-led, co-developed intensive ECEC program that integrates local community expertise, Aboriginal knowledge and evidence-informed early years practice to support children to thrive and start school as confident learners who are strong in culture and identity.

Program Update

- 36 boori (children) are currently enrolled,
- eight children from the first cohort will begin primary school in 2027,
- Family on Country sessions continue to strengthen family connections and support families to engage with and understand their children's learning,
- two new preschool classrooms are under construction, creating an additional 40 places for children aged three to five years,
- in March 2026, SNAICC coordinated in-person meetings of both the Co-Development Steering Committee and the Project Development Implementation Team in Nowra,
- the one-year Boori Milumba program evaluation report by the University of Melbourne is expected to be published in late 2026, and
- in mid-2025, Cullunghutti successfully purchased the Aboriginal Child and Family Centre from the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, securing the service's future under community control.

"It means security for the future of the service. It means that Cullunghutti will always remain in community. It means that many generations to come will be able to have access to all of Cullunghutti's services."

— **Tara Leslie**, CEO, Cullunghutti Aboriginal Child and Family Centre.

Speaking Engagements

SNAICC works closely with Cullunghutti to create opportunities for executive and leadership team members to share the cultural impact of the Boori Milumba program, their professional experience and wisdom, while building connections across the ECEC sector locally, statewide, nationally and internationally.

2025 speaking engagements:

Boori Milumba – Where Children Shine in a Culturally Enriched Intensive Early Childhood Education Program: Presented by Charlie Ashby, Cultural Leader, and Marg Sutherland, Early Childhood Development Consultant, at SNAICC'25 on 8 October, and by Tara Leslie and Charlie Ashby at the World Indigenous Peoples Conference in Education in Tāmaki Makaurau, Aotearoa on 19 November.



2026 speaking engagements:

- **Impactful Collaboration Through a Co-developed Early Childhood Education and Care Program:** Presented by Tara Leslie and Miranda Edwards, EYS WA Director, at the Cairns Early Years Conference on Gimuy Walubara Yidinji Country on 21 May.
- **Boori Milumba Program Overview:** Presented by Tara Leslie at the EYS WA Gathering on Whadjuk Noongar Boodja in Boorloo on 27 May.
- **Country Centred Learning:** Presented by Charlie Ashby and Jacinta McMahon, Educator, at the Beyond the Bush Symposium on Tharawal Country in Wollongong on 15 May and by the EYS NSW Gathering on Tubba-Gah Wiradjuri Country in Dubbo on 24 June.

Program Insights

Marg Sutherland is a proud Murrawarri woman and a member of Cullunghutti's multidisciplinary leadership team as an Early Childhood Development Consultant. With more than 40 years' experience in inclusion support and almost three decades leading Aboriginal programs, Marg reflected on the third year of the Boori Milumba program trial:

"January 2026 saw the launch of our Cultural Framework, which now shapes every aspect of our work with children and families and recognises that our booris identities are carried in Culture. The Cultural Framework is not about embedding Culture into our program – it is our program. Being on Country and learning through traditional cultural ways of sharing knowledge, including storytelling, song, dance and art, are not separate from trauma informed practice; they are trauma informed practices, strengthening children's identity, belonging, resilience and wellbeing.

The Cultural Framework has supported educators to reflect on traditional Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning. It is grounded in principles of equity, inclusion, respect and place-based pedagogy, ensuring children's learning is shaped by relationships, culture and connection to Country.

Children's voice, choice and participation are at the heart of our program, recognising children as capable and valued contributors to their own learning journey.

Educators work in partnership with families through regular family yarns. We recognise that walking alongside families builds strong, positive relationships, which in turn supports children's social, emotional and cognitive development."

Current and Future Program Sustainability

In May 2026, the Australian Government announced that the Intensive ECEC Trial would conclude as scheduled with no extension of trial funding beyond December 2026. We are continuing to work closely with Cullunghutti and the co-development partners to secure alternative funding and ensure the Boori Milumba program can continue beyond the life of the trial, so that children and families across the Shoalhaven community can continue to access high-quality, culturally grounded early childhood education and care.

Learning and Development, Programs and Sector Capability

Building sector capability around children, families and culture

SNAICC's Learning and Development and Programs teams strengthen the people, organisations and systems supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Through culturally grounded learning, sector support and community-led programs, we work alongside ACCOs, mainstream services and cross-sector workforces to build capability, strengthen culturally responsive practice and support the delivery of child and family-focused services. This work advances our vision for children and young people thriving in culture, strong families and self-determining communities, while contributing to all three priorities in the SNAICC Strategic Plan 2025–2028. By strengthening culturally responsive practice, early support, prevention and sector capability, these teams also advance Targets 4 and 12 of the National Agreement.



A Place for Culture

Strengthening culturally responsive early years practice.

Throughout 2025–26, SNAICC progressed the delivery of A Place for Culture, a professional learning and development opportunity for educators and leaders in non Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC services. A Place for Culture supports educators and leaders in building culturally responsive and inclusive ECEC spaces where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families feel valued and where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are celebrated and woven with respect into everyday practice.

A Place for Culture combines self-paced online learning, in-person workshops and a shared reflection yarn. This blended learning approach supports participants to build knowledge at their own pace before coming together to reflect, share experiences and explore practical approaches to strengthening cultural responsiveness in their services. The online learning component is one of SNAICC's first end-to-end Learning Management System (LMS) projects. It has also strengthened organisational capacity through integration with a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. The integration has streamlined enrolment, learner management and future program delivery. The six online modules provide more than six hours of learning and, in 2025–26, more than 130 participants have engaged with the learning management system.

During 2025–26, five workshops were delivered across Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia, including on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country in Bulleke-bek/Brunswick, on Wathaurong Country in Djilang/Geelong, on Gadigal Country in Sydney, on Tharawal Country in Wollongong and on Kaurna Yerta in Tarntanya/Adelaide. These workshops had strong demand, with waitlists exceeding 100 people across several of the locations and interest extending beyond the intended audience. A further six workshops are planned, with delivery scheduled to be completed by the end of December 2026, using ACCO venues where possible.

A Place for Culture builds understanding of culture as a protective factor and supports participants to examine how colonisation, bias and institutional practices affect children and families. Participants identify practical ways to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, respectful relationships and culturally responsive practice across leadership, curriculum, service environments and family engagement. The learning and development opportunity also supports participants to recognise the importance of strong cultural identity, belonging and respectful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities.

Preliminary evaluation findings show strong early outcomes. Across 71 participant surveys collected from the first five workshops, 92% reported increased confidence in providing a safe, nurturing and educational environment, while 93% agreed the opportunity met their needs, was well delivered and beneficial. Similarly, 93% of participants said they would recommend A Place for Culture to their colleagues.

By strengthening mainstream cultural capability, A Place for Culture also supports more respectful engagement with ACCOs and reinforces that practice must be informed by local, place-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and leadership. A shared yarning circle is included at the conclusion of the opportunity to support reflection and peer learning. Strong participant interest has also highlighted the need for ongoing CoPs to sustain connection, share practice and support continued learning beyond the workshop.

ASQ-TRAK

Expanding culturally responsive developmental screening capability.

In 2025–26, SNAICC commenced work with STRONG kids, STRONG future (SkSf), a University of Melbourne Department of Paediatrics team working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, on the successfully funded expansion of the Ages and Stages Questionnaire–Talking about Raising Aboriginal Kids (ASQ-TRAK) Training and Support Model. ASQ-TRAK is a culturally adapted, strengths-based developmental screening tool designed to support earlier identification of developmental needs among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, while recognising and celebrating their strengths.

Work is underway to develop culturally responsive sector training for developmental screening, combining SNAICC's cultural and sector leadership with SkSf's ASQ-TRAK research and training expertise. In collaboration with SNAICC's EYS teams, the first phase has focused on connecting eligible member services with the Royal Children's Hospital Victorian Priority Access Scheme for fee-free practitioner training across metropolitan and regional Victoria. The project will continue to evolve in early 2027 through further development of the training model, implementation support and pathways for broader sector delivery nationally.

Believe, Inquire, Respond to Disclosures

Throughout 2025–26, Project **Believe, Inquire, Respond to Disclosures** (Project BIRD) progressed the development and pilot delivery of a trauma aware, healing informed and culturally appropriate national training package for health care professionals under the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse and its First National Action Plan.

Project BIRD aims to strengthen culturally responsive and trauma informed approaches across the primary health care system, ACCOs and allied health providers, to improve support and referral pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors of child sexual abuse. The training equips health professionals to respond to disclosures in ways that are culturally safe, minimise further harm and strengthen access to appropriate support and referral services.

Co-designing a culturally grounded training package

Project BIRD has been shaped through an extensive national co-design process involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members, practitioners and subject matter experts from across Australia. Insights gathered through these engagements informed the BIRD Research Report, published in August 2023, which provides the evidence base for the training package. The report applies a decolonising approach that centres Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worldviews and narratives to strengthen responses to victim-survivors of child sexual abuse.

Building on this foundation, the SNAICC Project BIRD Team and Yamurrah came together on Gadigal Country in July 2025 to redevelop the training content and evaluation framework. During the workshop, the team developed a program logic to clarify the intended outcomes of the project and strengthen the evaluation approach. The training package also includes dedicated resources to support responses for victim-survivors who experience additional barriers due to prejudice and discrimination, including people from LGBTIQA+ communities and people with disability, while addressing strategies to prevent and respond to vicarious trauma experienced by health professionals.

Alignment with SNAICC Strategic Priorities

- **Strong national voice driving action on systems and structural change:** Project BIRD contributes to systems change by increasing awareness and understanding of child sexual abuse prevention and response, advocating for community-led solutions and supporting greater accountability across systems to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.
- **Building a further strengthened community-controlled sector:** Project BIRD partners with ACCOs and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to ensure the program is informed by community expertise, priorities and leadership while building local capability and strengthening culturally safe responses.
- **Leading knowledge, evidence and data practices:** Project BIRD applies decolonising research and evaluation methodologies that uphold Indigenous Data Sovereignty, ensuring data collection, analysis and reporting are strengths-based, culturally responsive, community-governed and responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aspirations.



Pilot delivery across Australia

Following development of the training package, NIAA selected five locations to pilot the program between January and June 2026. Five-day training sessions were delivered on Palawa Country in Nipaluna/Hobart, on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country in Naarm/Melbourne, on Gimuy Walubara Yidinji Country in Gimuy/Cairns, on Yawuru Country in Rubibi/Broome and on Ngunnawal Country in Canberra. Each pilot was delivered in partnership with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, ensuring the training remained culturally grounded, locally informed and connected to community.

Early evaluation findings

Pre- and post-training surveys show strong early outcomes across the pilot sites (not including Canberra). Participants entered the program with well-developed knowledge of trauma informed practice, professional responsibility, intergenerational trauma and vicarious trauma. The greatest learning needs related to cultural responsiveness, Country centred approaches and applying Aboriginal frameworks in professional practice.

Across the pilot sites, three key findings emerged:

- participants generally commenced the program with strong foundations in trauma informed and professional practice,
- cultural responsiveness and Country centred practice represented the greatest areas for professional growth, and
- the training was most effective in increasing confidence in practical application and response skills, while deeper cultural capability and navigating complex intersectional contexts require ongoing professional learning.

Following the training, participants reported the strongest improvements in responding to disclosures, translating theory into practice and confidently applying trauma informed approaches in their work. The findings also highlighted that strengthening cultural responsiveness, Country centred practice and applying Aboriginal frameworks are areas that benefit from continued learning beyond the initial training.

Looking ahead

Early evaluation findings identified several opportunities to strengthen the program and broader service system. These include expanding specialist training on child sexual violence prevention, developing train-the-trainer models with ACCOs, delivering shorter one-day modules in remote communities, supporting further research into priority issues such as intrafamilial abuse, online-facilitated abuse and developmental understandings of consent, and strengthening culturally responsive post-disclosure healing pathways through communities of practice and locally designed resources.

Journey to Big School

Strengthening culturally responsive school transition

Throughout 2025–26, SNAICC continued delivery of Journey to Big School, a learning and development program that supports ACCO early childhood services, schools, families and local partners to develop shared approaches to culturally responsive school transitions. The program recognises that successful transitions are strengthened when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families are supported through strong relationships, cultural connection, continuity of learning and community-led approaches.

During 2025–26, Journey to Big School was delivered across three locations, including two completed sites in Victoria and ongoing implementation at a site in New South Wales. We strengthened the program's co-design approach by working with service leadership and programs, such as Connected Beginnings, to understand local priorities, relationships and intended outcomes before delivery. At the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative (BADAC) Perridak Burron and Yirram Burron services on Wadawurrung Country, this informed locally tailored workshop content grounded in the strengths, aspirations and cultural knowledge of the community, rather than applying a standardised model.

Collaborative discussions and community story mapping brought together educators, schools, allied health professionals and family and community services, with ACCO leadership at the centre. Participants described the workshops as culturally safe and valuable opportunities for connection, reflection and practical action. Following the workshops, the services shared their learning at a regional Early Years Gathering and requested ongoing support to extend the program to additional services. Participants also described the program as an 'outlook changing' experience that shifted their thinking and supported more intentional planning for culturally responsive transitions.

All respondents reported greater confidence in working in culturally responsive ways with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Services also adapted resources for local use and strengthened ongoing transition planning. These outcomes show how our learning and development approach can strengthen ACCO leadership, local coordination and the relationships that lay the foundations for positive, inclusive and culturally responsive educational experiences, rather than operate as an isolated training activity.



SNAICC Early Language and Literacy Approach

Specialist prevention that grows local capability

During 2025–26, SNAICC's Learning and Development team progressed the SNAICC Early Language and Literacy Approach (SELLA) grant proposal. SELLA is a culturally safe, community-led early years disability inclusion and workforce capability model designed for ACCO staff, Aboriginal Health Workers, educators, family and supported playgroup workers, allied health providers, carers, kin and other trusted adults who support children and families. If funded, SELLA will commence in July 2027 across four staggered pilot sites in regional, rural and remote communities before scaling nationally. The model draws on the expertise of speech and language pathologist, educator and national literacy leader and author Mary-Ruth Mendel, whose work has supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for more than two decades.

SELLA is designed to strengthen non-specialist workforces by translating specialist knowledge into practical strategies that can be embedded in children's everyday routines, play, communication and learning. Through training, mentoring, shared problem-solving and relationship-based support, the model will build on the cultural knowledge and sustained family relationships of local workers. Participants will develop their capability to support listening, oral language, vocabulary, communication, early literacy, social participation and emotional regulation. The model complements rather than replaces specialist assessment and intervention where access to allied health services is limited or delayed. By building and sustaining capability within ACCOs and communities, SELLA is intended to support earlier and more consistent intervention, help identify emerging needs, connect families with additional support and extend the impact of specialist investment.

Supporting Healing for Families Mparntwe/Alice Springs

During 2025–26, SNAICC continued to support the delivery of the Supporting Healing for Families (SHFF) program in partnership with Tangentyere Council on Arrernte Country in Mparntwe/Alice Springs.

The SHFF program is a $12.92 million Australian Government initiative announced in 2021 to deliver culturally safe, trauma-informed healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children impacted by child sexual abuse and their families. The program forms part of the first Commonwealth Action Plan under the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030 and the Australian Government's response to the 2013 Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse.

SHFF integrates culturally based healing approaches that strengthen families and support safety, connection to identity and recovery from trauma. The program is being delivered across five locations nationally, with each community developing place-based approaches that reflect local priorities, knowledge and strengths. These locations include:

- Arrernte Country (Mparntwe/Alice Springs)
- Nyikina and Warrwa Country (Derby)
- Gunaikurnai Country (Inner Gippsland)
- Thul Garrie Waja and Wulgurukaba Country (Gurambilbarra/Townsville)
- Kaurna Yerta (Tarntanya/Western Adelaide)

In Mparntwe, we are working in partnership with Tangentyere Council to support local partnerships and the implementation of SHFF. Our role has been to support community-led healing approaches through partnership, co-design, workforce development, governance, and monitoring and evaluation. Aligned with our strategic priority to strengthen the ACCO sector, we have delivered culturally responsive and trauma-informed workforce development opportunities as part of SHFF. When asked what participants valued about the sessions, they shared:

"Love how I learn something new that will help me in life and to my work."

"Really enjoyed this training. It felt very ***trauma-informed*** *and the facilitation was kind and softly challenging. Being brought into the conversation was something that the group really valued."*

"Was a very good training and would like to see more of this out in the community."

We will continue to work in partnership with Tangentyere Council to support community-led healing approaches that result in culturally strong families and communities and a strong sector.



Waterways

W*eaving,* ***A****nti-racism,* ***T****rauma-informed,* ***E****ducation,* ***R****esponsiveness, with* ***W****isdom,* ***A****wareness,* ***Y****arning,* ***S****olidarity*

Background

Project Waterways was funded by the Department of Social Services through the Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Activity to strengthen cultural responsiveness, trauma-informed practice and anti-racist practice across the child and family sector.

The project aligns with Action 3 (Workforce Capacity and Capability) of the First Action Plan under Safe and Supported and contributes to achieving Target 12 of the National Agreement by strengthening the capability of organisations to provide culturally safe and responsive services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Between October 2024 and June 2025, Waterways pilot training was delivered nationally to 1,032 practitioners across 240 child and family organisations. The training supported organisations to deepen their understanding of the impacts of colonisation, power and privilege while building practical skills to respond to complex intergenerational trauma and embed culturally safe practice.

During 2025–26, we published the Waterways Project Report, documenting the development, delivery and learnings from the nationally delivered initiative. The report highlights the strength of the ACCO partnership model at the heart of Waterways and demonstrates how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations can lead large-scale workforce development through self-determined approaches based on co-design, co-production and co-delivery.



Alignment with SNAICC Strategic Priorities

- **Strong national voice driving action on systems and structural change:** Waterways strengthens the capability of the child and family sector to embed culturally responsive, trauma-informed and anti-racist practice while contributing to broader systems reform under Closing the Gap.
- **Building a further strengthened community-controlled sector:** Through partnerships and co-design with ACCOs and community leaders, Waterways centres Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in workforce development and organisational change.
- **Leading knowledge, evidence and data practices:** Waterways brings together evidence, lived experience and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges to develop practical learning resources that support culturally safe practice and continuous improvement across the sector.

How we do our work

Waterways was developed through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led co-design and co-production, with SNAICC working alongside partner organisations AbSec, KWY, VACCA, QATSICPP and Yamurrah, as well as cultural leaders, practitioners and knowledge holders. Together, these partnerships brought Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, expertise and lived experience into every stage of the program, supporting child and family organisations to strengthen culturally responsive, trauma-informed and anti-racist practice.

Grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing, Waterways centres cultural authority, community knowledge and lived experience. The approach recognises the impacts of colonisation, systemic racism and intergenerational trauma, while also recognising the strengths, resilience and enduring knowledge systems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, including kinship systems, collective child-rearing practices and cultural practices that support children to thrive.

The name Waterways reflects connection to Country and the significance of water as a place of healing, flow and connection. The acronym represents the core principles of the training: Weaving, Anti-racism, Trauma-informed, Education, Responsiveness, with Wisdom, Awareness, Yarning and Solidarity.

Building on the success of the pilot, we have begun planning the next phase of Waterways. This includes improving the accessibility of the training and exploring opportunities to expand the initiative as a national workforce development program focused on cultural responsiveness and systems change. A key component of this next phase is the delivery of train-the-trainer workshops in August 2026, supporting participating organisations to build internal capability and broaden access to Waterways within their communities.

Strategic Engagement and Communications

Speaking to Power

Our Strategic Engagement Strategy has continued to strengthen the organisation's reputation, reach and influence. The strategy combines targeted political engagement, strategic media messaging, working with allies and supporters to amplify our member voice and priorities, and the development of resources and publications that support advocacy campaigns and sector-wide information sharing.

A primary focus during 2025/26 was to continue building positive relationships across the new Federal Government. SNAICC led delegations to Canberra that included representatives from our sector to increase awareness of the vital work of ACCO early education and care services.

Outcomes from our political engagement work and priority focus areas include:

- successfully advocating for the continued funding of the Early Years Support program through the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO),
- providing a strong voice to ensure legislative reforms lead to a safer, more equitable early education system for all children,
- dedicated Building Early Education Fund resources for ACCO ECEC services,
- Joint Council on Closing the Gap commitment to stronger oversight on actions to achieve Target 12 to reduce the number of children in out-of-home care,
- legislation empowering the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People passed in Federal Parliament in February 2026 after decades of advocacy by SNAICC, and
- advocating for our children and ACCO services in the design and delivery of Thriving Kids which saw dedicated funding in Budget 2026 to support development and training for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

SNAICC played a strong role in supporting the family and community in the initial search for Kumanjayi Little Baby in Mparntwe/Alice Springs and in the aftermath of the tragedy. We continue to support the strong advocacy of local organisations in the Territory urging the NT Government to work with them in long overdue system reform.

Our strategic engagement with mainstream services saw more than one hundred people, including Ministers, Senators and MPs, attend a joint SNAICC/Allies for Children event at Parliament House in March 2026. The event highlighted the work of Allies for Children members, in partnership with ACCOs, to return children to family, kin and community and strengthen connection to culture. This includes shifting resources and responsibility from mainstream services to ACCOs, so they can better support their communities.



The Allies for Children are not waiting for Government to take the lead to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. They are showing the way and doing the right thing by the children in their care by committing to the journey of transition. The SNAICC Transformation Principles Framework was launched at a Parliament House event in March 2026 to provide practical guidance to help drive structural change. SNAICC is looking forward to continuing the partnership with Allies for Children that shows Closing the Gap is not just the responsibility of governments.

Our continuing partnership with the Thrive by Five campaign and Minderoo Foundation saw increasing support for a national Early Education and Care Commission that would provide strong stewardship for reforms and improve quality, safety, access, affordability and workforce supports.

Minderoo Foundation has also supported two aligned pieces of work being undertaken by our Strategic Engagement and Communications team. As the social media environment becomes increasingly dangerous and toxic for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals, we are working with Shape Agency and Insight Centre on a project that is examining how we can effectively and meaningfully influence online conversations concerning our children. We want to better understand what drives online engagement, counter misinformation and to improve online outcomes through tailored data and social media intelligence tools, ultimately building stronger conversations across values divides in online communities. Our aim is to provide a toolkit for our sector that will give them confidence to engage online.

This work is aligned with another Minderoo supported project, Measuring Early Childhood Mindsets in Australia. Working with the Frameworks Institute and other leading early childhood organisations, SNAICC is contributing to work that looks at how to shape the conversation about early childhood in Australia by producing framing and story-telling resources that resonate with people and communities to increase demand for reform.

The strength-based stories from our sector and members underpin our approach to advocacy for positive change and we thank the services, organisations, workers and families who generously share their stories and allow us to carry their voices to influence decision makers.



Kids, Culture, Community – SNAICC Yarns Podcast

Over 2025–26, we launched **Kids, Culture, Community – SNAICC Yarns**, a podcast that has grown into an important platform to elevate the voices of our children and the knowledge and leadership of the ACCO sector. As at June 2026, we have released 13 episodes across Apple Podcasts, Spotify, YouTube and other streaming platforms that share community-led initiatives, advocacy achievements and practical insights to support the rights, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Since its conception, the podcast has achieved nearly **6,000 full-episode organic streams and downloads**. Podcast episode cutdowns have also generated **more than 56,000 views across social media**. The strength of the podcast lies in the diversity of stories and conversations shared throughout the series. Across the 13 episodes, we explored Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth-led advocacy, the impact of politics and policy on our children and young people, systems reform, creativity, storytelling and the importance of community voices being heard.

Standout episodes included an in-person yarn with SNAICC's Youth Voice Lead, Joel Matysek, and Youth Advisory Group members Samuel Dela Bon, Rylie Cadd, Kasey Kopp and Jaharn Mundy-Drazevich, reflecting on the work to establish a formal youth voice structure within SNAICC. Another standout episode, recorded live on the main stage at SNAICC'25, brought Aunty Muriel Bamblett together with Children's Commissioners and Guardians to discuss the changes needed to improve outcomes.

As the audience grows, Kids, Culture, Community – SNAICC Yarns will remain focused on sharing knowledge, celebrating community-led practice and contributing to national conversations that support self-determination, culture and better futures for our children and families.

Media

During 2025–26, SNAICC continued to use earned media to elevate the voices of ACCOs, the sector and our own, sharing community-led solutions, policy developments and advocacy efforts that advanced the rights and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families.

We achieved more than **5,500 media mentions** during the year, reaching a combined audience of **more than 150 million people** and generating an Advertising Value Equivalency of **more than $4 million**. This strong media presence helped shape national conversations and ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and community-controlled solutions were represented in discussions on child protection, early childhood, youth justice and Closing the Gap.

Key advocacy priorities throughout the year included responding to proposed changes to child protection legislation that risk weakening the Child Placement Principle in several jurisdictions; advocating for legislation to establish the independence and powers of the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People; and raising awareness of and celebrating National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day and SNAICC'25.



Publications, Submissions and Resources

Throughout 2025–26, we published evidence, policy reform and submissions, and practical resources that advanced the rights, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities. Developed collaboratively across the organisation, these publications translate research, community knowledge and lived experience into accessible evidence that informed government decision-making, strengthened the ACCO sector and supported national reform.

Key publications included *Family Matters 2025*, the *Sector Transformation Principles Framework* and *Doing things differently: Funding ACCOs to keep families together. Additionally,* the *Early Years Support Evaluation* and *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family-Led Decision Making: Summary Evidence Review* further strengthened the evidence base for community-controlled approaches across the early years and child and family sectors. Practical resources, including *Creating Structural Change Through Shared Decision-Making*, supported understanding and implementation of community-led approaches across the sector.

SNAICC, primarily through the Policy and Research unit, also contributed to national and jurisdictional policy reform through submissions to parliamentary inquiries, reviews and consultations across child protection, early childhood, youth justice, Closing the Gap and children's rights. These included the **Queensland Child Safety Commission of Inquiry**, the **NT Legislative Scrutiny Committee's review of the Every Child Matters Bill 2026**, the **Senate Inquiry into the Quality and Safety of Australia's Early Childhood Education and Care System**, the **Review of Doli Incapax in New South Wales**, the **UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**, the **Parliamentary Inquiry into Racism, Hate and Violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**, and the **Australian National Audit Office audit of Closing the Gap in early childhood development and schooling**. This policy advocacy was complemented by major policy and evidence publications including the *National Child and Family Investment Strategy*, *Thriving Kids Policy Paper and a Pre-Budget Submission*.

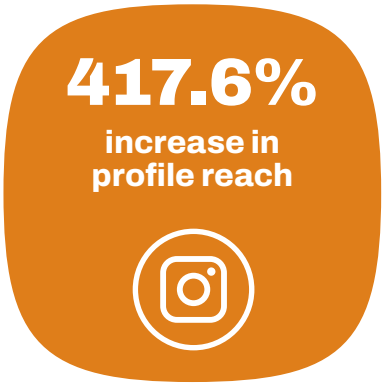


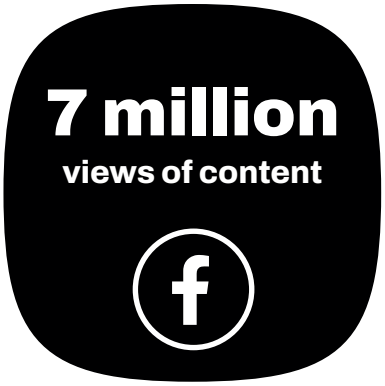
Social Media

In 2025–26, we saw a major increase in engagement, reach and follower growth across all social media platforms.

This growth was supported by major moments in the SNAICC calendar including SNAICC'25 and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day, alongside the implementation of an effective social media strategy. Increased engagement was driven by a more diverse content strategy that highlighted different areas of our work through a range of storytelling formats, while elevating a wide range of voices from across the sector and within the organisation. Content featuring media interviews with SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle, job opportunities and sector news also consistently performed strongly.







Videos

Throughout 2025–26, video storytelling provided another way to show the impact of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led approaches and share community knowledge with audiences beyond traditional policy and research publications.

We produced long-form videos, video podcasts and social media short-form videos. Two flagship Family Matters 2025 case study long form videos highlighted what is possible when services are designed and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. *Culture is the Core on Gumbaynggirr Country* showcased the Gumbaynggirr Giingana Freedom School's language immersion approach and how learning through language, culture and Country strengthens children's identity, belonging and connection. *Maari Ma Integrated Early Intervention Supports* focused on Maari Ma Health's Aboriginal-led model of integrated health, early learning and family support and demonstrated how culturally safe, holistic services strengthen families and keep children connected to culture, community and Country.

Additional videos strengthened sector knowledge and highlighted community-led innovation, including *The Importance of Acknowledgement of Country in Early Learning and Childcare*, an Early Years Support promotional video and How AEDC Data is *Strengthening Early Development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children in Lutruwita*. We also produced the SNAICC'25 Conference recap video that captured the strength, knowledge and leadership shared throughout the three days at the national gathering. Collectively, these videos, and many others, extended SNAICC's advocacy beyond traditional publications, making community voices, practice and evidence more accessible to broader audiences.



Webinars and Information Sessions

Throughout 2025–26, we delivered a range of national webinars and information sessions that supported ACCOs and the broader early childhood and development sector to engage with emerging reforms, funding opportunities and policy developments. Sessions covered key initiatives including shared decision-making guidance, the Building Early Education Fund, the Early Childhood Education and Care Worker Retention Payment and other significant national reforms. Alongside these national sessions, SNAICC's Childhood Development, Policy, Learning and Development and other teams delivered jurisdictional webinars, CoPs and professional learning opportunities that strengthened collaboration across the ACCO sector, supported capability development and enabled services to respond confidently to changing policy and practice environments.

Website

Throughout 2025–26, the SNAICC website continued to strengthen its role as one of our core public-facing platforms, connecting users with advocacy, research, policy positions, news, events and resources. During 2025, the website was used by more than **197,000 active users**, exceeding targets and continuing strong year-on-year growth. This has continued into 2026, with the first half of the year recording more than **128,000 active users**, including a **37% increase** in active users compared with the same period in 2025. The website has also remained an important resource hub with more than **41,700 PDF downloads** during 2025 and a further **18,000 downloads** in the first half of 2026. Resource downloads remain a particular strength of our platform, continuing the website's role as a trusted source of practical resources and evidence for the sector.

SNAICC recognised at 2026 Australasian Reporting Awards

SNAICC's 2024–25 Annual Report received silver at the 2026 Australasian Reporting Awards, recognising our commitment to transparent, accountable and clear reporting.

The awards celebrated excellence in annual reporting across Australia, New Zealand and Asia, encouraging organisations to strengthen transparency, accountability and communication.

The recognition highlights how SNAICC's Annual Report communicates the organisation's advocacy and achievements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, communities, families and children.

Recognised alongside reports from organisations across the region, the report showcased SNAICC's work on an international platform.

People and Culture

During 2025–26, SNAICC concentrated on continuing to build a capable, culturally strong and values-led workforce to support organisational growth. Leadership development remained a key priority, with 27 people leaders completing a People Management Foundations program. The program equipped leaders with practical skills to manage teams effectively, encourage positive workplace relationships and lead with confidence, building on the Executive Leadership Development program.

We also strengthened our commitment to a culturally safe workplace, with 31 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees completing specialised training on managing cultural load and cultural stress.

Across the workforce, we remained committed to building capability from within while strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and representation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees are represented at every level of the organisation, and we continue to work towards our target of at least 50% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.

Flexible ways of working remained embedded across the organisation, supporting employee wellbeing and work-life balance. During the year, 19 employees, approximately 20%, worked under formal flexible work arrangements, while 40% of our workforce has been based remotely across Australia.

Internal career development also remained a strong focus, with staff undertaking higher duties and secondments on 28 occasions. These opportunities enabled employees to broaden their experience, develop new skills and progress their careers. This focus on workforce development was supported by continued improvements to people-related processes, strengthening human resources governance and organisational transparency.



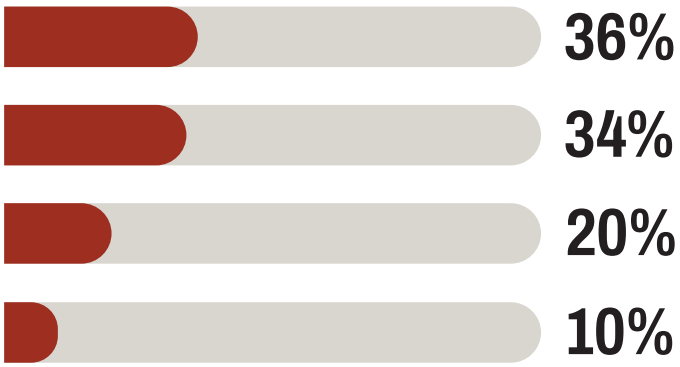
SNAICC at a glance

Our people are central to everything we do. The following visuals provide a snapshot of SNAICC's workforce, including where our staff are located, their tenure and other organisational statistics.

National Workforce

98 Employees

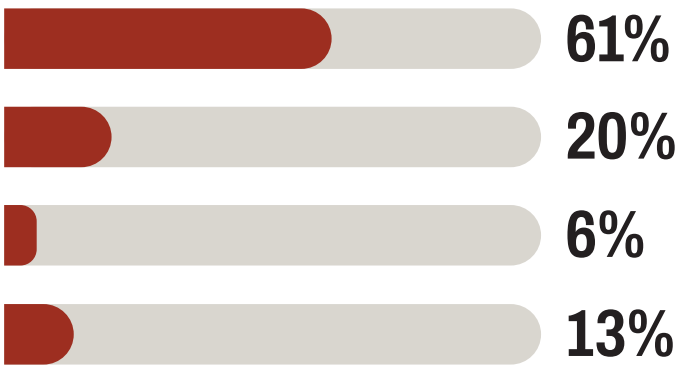
Policy and Research and the Office of the CEO account for 70% of SNAICC's workforce.



Workforce by Location

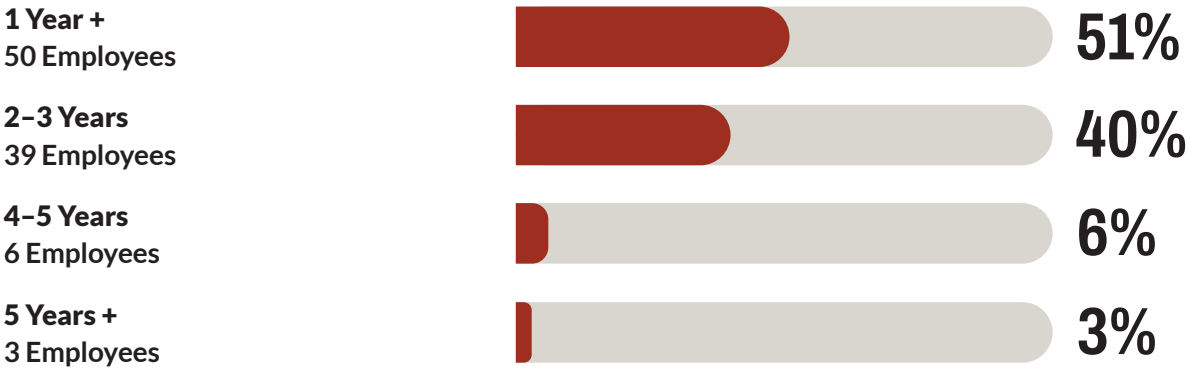
States & Territories

Victoria is home to 61% of the workforce, followed by NSW at 20%, with the remaining employees based across other states and territories



Workforce
Growth & Tenure

SNAICC's workforce continues to grow with 51% of employees joining in the past year and 40% with the organisation for two to three years.



Workforce
Representation

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees make up 34% of SNAICC's workforce.



Leadership
Representation

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees make up more than one-third of SNAICC's managers.



Statement of Income and Expenditure 2025-26

INCOME	$
Government grants	18,150,746
Non Govt grants, philanthropic and other donations	5,167,647
National conference income	2,663,074
Consultations, training & resource sales	89,152
Interest income	923,864
Investment income	55,690
Memberships & other income	286,747
Total income	**27,336,920**

EXPENDITURE	$
Employee benefits expenses	14,665,524
Consulting and professional fees	2,818,506
Office and administration expenses	1,748,363
Travel expenses	1,685,882
National conference expenses	2,128,362
Services and project expenses	511,217
Printing and design expenses	610,593
Depreciation and amortisation expenses	444,048
Lease expenses	98,836
Total expenses	**24,711,331**
Net income/(deficit)	**2,625,589**

ASSETS	$
Current assets	
Cash & cash equivalents	28,479,943
Trade & other receivables	1,044,419
Financial Assets	600,692
Prepayments	302,454
Total current assets	**30,427,508**
Non-current assets	
Right-of-use assets	429,881
Plant and equipment	66,955
Total non-current assets	**496,836**
Total Assets	**30,924,344**
LIABILITIES	
Current liabilities	
Lease liability	409,445
Trade and other payables	842,806
Deferred income	12,417,165
Employee benefit provisions	1,312,004
Total current liabilities	**14,981,420**
Non-current liabilities	
Lease liability	61,864
Employee benefit provisions	37,716
Total non-current liabilities	**99,580**
Total Liabilities	**15,081,000**
Net assets	**15,843,344**
Equity	
Retained surpluses	15,843,344
Total Members Equity	**15,843,344**

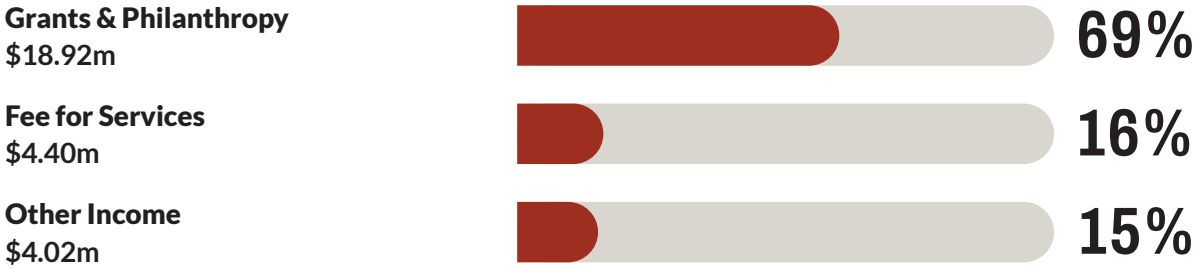
Revenue and Expenses

The following visuals provide a snapshot of SNAICC's revenue and expenses for 2025–26.

Revenue 2025–2026

$27.34m

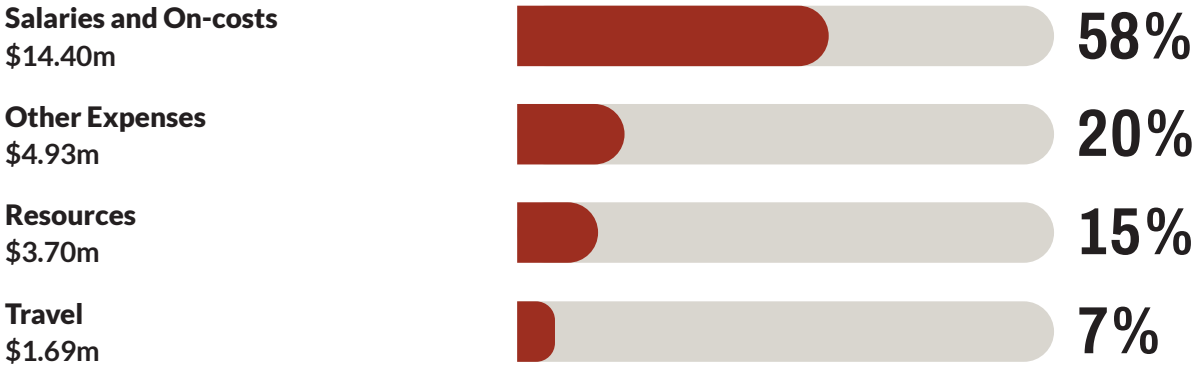
Our revenue is primarily from grants and philanthropy, supporting our mission and enabling greater impact in our communities.



Expenses 2025–2026

$24.71m

Our largest investment is in our people, with the majority of expenses directed to salaries and on-costs, ensuring we have the capability to deliver our work.



Thank You to our Partners

SNAICC extends its gratitude for the generosity and support of the following organisations and individuals that funded and supported SNAICC's work in 2025–26.

Philanthropic Supporters
Brian M. Davis Charitable Foundation
CAGES Foundation
Coaxial Foundation
Helen MacPherson Smith Trust
Kamener Foundation
Minderoo Foundation
Nicolas R Taylor Fund, a sub-fund of the Australian Communities Foundation
Paul Ramsay Foundation
The Antipodean Family Foundation
The Ian Potter Foundation
The Ross Trust
The William Buckland Foundation

Partners
AbSec
Allies for Children
Australian Centre for Child Protection, Adelaide University
Brotherhood of St. Laurence
Coalition of Peaks
Deloitte Australia
Early Childhood Australia
Essential Media
Families Australia
First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence (FNAAFV)
First People's Disability Network Australia (FPDN)
Frameworks Institute
Institute for Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University
Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, University of Technology Sydney
Mallesons (formerly King & Wood Mallesons)
National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People
KWY Aboriginal Corporation
Life Without Barriers
Lumenia
Murdoch Children's Research Institute
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS)
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)
National Office for Child Safety, Australian Government

Nous Group
Onemda Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing, University of Melbourne
Our Ways Strong Together – National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Peak
Parkville Institute
Productivity Commission, Australian Government
Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak (QATSICPP)
School of Indigenous Studies, University of Western Australia
Shape Agency
Social Ventures Australia
STRONG Kids, STRONG Future, University of Melbourne
The University of Queensland Poche Centre for Indigenous Health
Thrive by Five
University of Wollongong
Victorian Aboriginal Childcare Agency (VACCA)
Yardhura Walani, Australian National University
TAFE NSW
The University of Melbourne

Government Funders
ACT Government
Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)
Department of Communities, West Australian Government
Department of Education, Australian Government
Department of Education, NSW Government
Department of Education, Victorian Government
Department of Social Services, Australian Government
Department of Territory Families, NT Government
National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), Australian Government
Office for Early Childhood Development, South Australian Government

Donors
Liberty Financial

Notes

Notes

Authors and Contributors

The SNAICC Annual Report 2025–26 details the collective knowledge, commitment and strength of the many people who contribute to SNAICC's work in advancing the rights, wellbeing, culture and self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families and communities.

SNAICC acknowledges the dedication and expertise of staff across our four organisational units – the Office of the CEO, Social Policy and Research, Programs and Childhood Development – whose work has collectively shaped the achievements, initiatives, partnerships and advocacy captured throughout this report.

We acknowledge the Executive leadership and all staff across SNAICC who have contributed their expertise, knowledge and commitment through advocacy, policy and research, program delivery, communications, engagement, operations, corporate services and organisational support. Together, their work strengthens SNAICC's ability to support communities, influence systems and advance the rights and self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

Above all, SNAICC extends its deepest acknowledgement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people, families, communities, Elders, leaders and community-controlled organisations whose voices, knowledge, experiences, cultural authority and aspirations guide and inform our work. Their strength, leadership and self-determination remain at the centre of everything we do.

SNAICC thanks all contributors for their collaboration, commitment and shared dedication to strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities through culture, connection, community control, self-determination and collective action.

SNAICC

National Voice for our Children

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