



SNAICC – National Voice for our Children
(Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation)
Level 7, Melbourne Polytechnic (Collingwood)
20 Otter Street

MEDIA RELEASE
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ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT CALLS ON GOVERNMENTS TO PRIORITISE SUPPORTING FAMILIES TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF OUR CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE

One year after all Australian governments and the Coalition of Peaks signed the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, the Productivity Commission has released the first *Annual Data Compilation Report*.

“As a national member of the Peaks, we welcome the report. It will monitor the progress on key outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children,” SNAICC CEO Catherine Liddle said.

“Our families need urgent support – and the report highlights that systemic transformation is what is required. It calls for governments to change the way they do business with our people to close the gap.

“This includes continuing to work with our sectors to ensure they are prioritised as the experts in delivering culturally and locally appropriate services to our families.

“Importantly, this first report also sets baselines to track progress of the Closing the Gap targets and provides building blocks for accountability to the actions that governments make,” Ms Liddle said.

Nationally, Target 12 of the Agreement to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care to 45% by 2031 is not on track to be met.

“Governments agreed to ambitious targets in supporting our children’s safety and wellbeing, and we acknowledge that the Agreement has not yet had the time to influence tangible change,” Ms Liddle continued.

There are 56.3 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care – up from the baseline of 54.2 per 1,000 children in 2019. This figure is greater at 64.3 per 1,000 if children on permanent care orders are included, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

“Our people have said it for a long time; change can only happen through shared decision-making and genuine partnership with our communities. Without change, these figures are set to double by 2029.

“Targets alone will not drive change; it is the four Priority Reforms that the National Agreement was built around being effectively resourced and implemented that will generate notable outcomes for our families,” Ms Liddle said.

Only 16% of the \$6.9 billion investment in child protection systems is spent on supporting families, the Report on Government Services revealed earlier this year.

“Clearly, greater investment must be provided in supporting our families, and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations have proven that they are best placed to deliver these supports through culturally-safe child- and family-centred programs.

“We are working tirelessly with community leaders and all governments in ensuring the next national child protection framework will prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in all jurisdictions.”

SNAICC is also working with the National Indigenous Australians Agency on a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Years Strategy, which aims to drive a whole-of-government approach to ensuring the health and wellbeing of our children.

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in a preschool program before fulltime schooling is currently 93.1%, above the rate of non-Indigenous children at 84.2% – in line to meet the target of 95% enrolment is positive.

Enrolment does not necessarily translate to attendance and engagement. National data indicates that despite high enrolment rates, Aboriginal and Torres Strait children attend 600 hours of preschool at a rate of approximately 12.4% lower than non-Indigenous children.

“It is encouraging that our children are enrolling in preschool education at an essential time in their lives. However, it is crucial for our kids to have access to early years education and care from 0 to 4 years for that target to reflect genuine progress,” Ms Liddle said.

Working in partnership with all governments and as a national member of the Coalition of Peaks, SNAICC is involved in ensuring that the full implementation of the commitments in the National Agreement are upheld in all key areas.

“We look forward to genuine commitment of governments through the Implementation Plan to acknowledge the opportunities presented to them, such as the next national child protection framework – where together we can strengthen Aboriginal-led decision-making and service delivery.

“We are confident that with genuine commitment to the Priority Reforms for systemic change, we can work together to ensure our kids have the opportunity to thrive, strong in their culture, with their family, community and kin.”

– Catherine Liddle, SNAICC CEO

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For more information or interviews contact:

Jo Cackett, Communications – media@snaicc.org.au; 0474 727506

About SNAICC – National Voice for our Children:

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children is the national non-governmental peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. We work for the fulfilment of the rights of our children, in particular to ensure their safety, development and wellbeing.

Founded in 1981, SNAICC was established to engage in activities that promote and accommodate a strong voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. Over the past 40 years SNAICC’s efforts has resulted in many key milestones and achievements both in policy developments at state, territory and federal levels and in developing innovative and useful resources for the sector.

SNAICC is governed by an influential Board of Directors made up of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled children and family services.

For more information, please visit www.snaicc.org.au and www.familymatters.org.au