



## Investing for Australia's Children – SNAICC

### ***The issue***

Compared to all Australian children, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are significantly more likely to be developmentally vulnerable when they start school and 10.4 times more likely to be in out-of-home care. The 2021 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) noted a reversal in the trend towards improvement in the developmental domains of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Evidence shows that the quality of early childhood education and care can have a profound impact on a child's development and lifelong learning journey. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, community-led and owned services have been shown to increase both access and participation and improve developmental outcomes.

Yet a range of access barriers has for decades meant that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, particularly in remote areas, don't receive early learning opportunities at the same rate as non-Indigenous children or access to culturally appropriate services.

### ***SNAICC – the National Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children***

SNAICC was established in 1981, inspired by the need to support Aboriginal and Islander Child Care Agencies (AICCAs) across the country to address a significant issue: the high rates of removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families and into child protection systems. Using a strengths-based approach, SNAICC works across the continuum of child development and wellbeing to ensure every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child has the best start in life.

The organisation's goal is to see strong, safe, healthy, self-determining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children connected to family and culture. As the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, SNAICC's services, advocacy and research programs are leading measurable advances in priority reforms and target areas under the Closing the Gap initiative.

SNAICC seeks to harness the potential of communities to drive genuine and substantial improvements in the human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families. Their work cuts across multiple sectors that impact children, including health, education, family and community services, child protection, disability, justice, and housing. They currently represent 240+ member services across the country and work with several strategic partners from across the sector in research, policy, and practice.

### ***Current Impact***

In 2022, SNAICC was appointed community partner of Connected Beginnings, a key contributor to the Closing the Gap early childhood education targets, which builds partnerships with First Nations communities by supporting community-led decision-making under the National Agreement. Together with the Commonwealth Government, SNAICC also leads [The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership](#) (ECPP), among other roles.

SNAICC's pilot [Early Years Support program](#) has further strengthened and represented Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early years services (ACCOs) to deliver high quality, accessible, and culturally strong supports for children, families, and communities in a coordinated way, growing the ACCO sector across Australia.

In the last 18 months, SNAICC Early Years Support has worked with 36 early years services across NSW, WA, and Victoria. Most recently, SNAICC was appointed the Sector Strengthening Partner by NSW Department of Education to work with government funded ACCO pre-schools.

"ACCOs understand the needs of children and families in our communities and provide them with access to the early education, health and wrap around family service supports they need," says Catherine Liddle, CEO of SNAICC.

"We know that our services are best placed to transition our children to school as ready and confident learners, proud in their identity and cultural connection. Yet, the 108 ACCOs across Australia struggle with structural, service and community challenges – leading to a significant gap between how they want to respond to the needs of children, and the reality of what funding and educational programs are set up to provide.

"SNAICC is building a collective voice for our services and supporting them with advocacy and the strategies needed to build early years supports that give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and communities opportunities to thrive."

### ***Potential Impact through the Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children***

The Investment Dialogue for Australia's Children will enable philanthropic foundations and government to better plan and deliver coordinated and targeted investment, supporting community organisations and intermediaries like SNAICC to strengthen the backbone of the early childhood sector and achieve more for Australian children in the critical early years.

In recognition of its important contribution, SNAICC currently receives support from government and philanthropy, with a cumulative \$9.87m in recent funding from Investment Dialogue philanthropic partners.

The Investment Dialogue brings together government, philanthropic partners, and community leaders to reduce overlap and better align investment, building on existing strengths and coordinating efforts to make a more meaningful difference.

For instance, the relative agility and independence of philanthropic funding has offered SNAICC core funding, not tied to specific programs but bolstering SNAICC's organisational capabilities and capacity, enabling them to expand their advocacy and reach. In comparison, working with government has enabled SNAICC to strengthen their sector contribution and systemic impact, to drive real and lasting change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

"SNAICC is central to the child and family ecosystem in Australia and plays a unique and critical role in supporting First Nation children and young people and the services that support them", says Kristy Muir, Chair of the Investment Dialogue's philanthropic members.

"Growing an expanded, strong, and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years sector is a priority for government and philanthropy given the multi-faceted and integral benefits these services provide."

"The collaborative support enabled through the Investment Dialogue will ensure SNAICC has the core capability to advocate for the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in policies, programs and services that affect them and drive improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families."

The Investment Dialogue will embrace opportunities to learn from and work in genuine partnership First Nations people, families, and organisations.

**Learn more about Aboriginal Community Controlled Education and Care Centres:**

[Yappera's Story](#)

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