

Priority Reform Two: Building the community-controlled sector

2023 Sector Strengthening Plan Action Updates

Background:

Parties to the National Agreement have committed to joint national strengthening effort through Sector Strengthening Plans which identify actions to build strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sectors and organisations in line with the strong sector elements (sustained investment, dedicated workforce, supported by a Peak Body, with a dedicated reliable and consistent funding model).

Sector Strengthening Plans for Health, Early Childhood Care and Development, Disability and Housing are published at <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/resources>.

Clause 47 of the National Agreement states that 'Government Parties will include in their Jurisdictional annual reports information on action taken to strengthen the community-controlled sector based on the elements of a strong sector, as outlined in Clauses 118 and 119'.

Sector Strengthening Plan actions, have been written by Commonwealth agencies in partnership, to reflect the views of the Coalition of Peaks members and community-controlled organisations.

Early Childhood Care and Development

[Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan](#)

No.	Stream	Action	Responsibilities	Initial Resource Commitment	2023 Annual Report Update
A1	Workforce	Examine 2021 National ECEC Workforce Census data to develop an accurate picture of the current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC workforce across Australia, and the workforce for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC services	Australian Government In collaboration with state and territory governments and sector representatives	Existing or to be determined by the parties	The 5th ECEC National Workforce Census will be conducted in April 2024. The Department of Education has engaged with stakeholders, including SNAICC - National Voice for Our Children, to inform the design of the 2024 questionnaire with particular regard to references to the community controlled sector. The department continues to conduct internal analysis of census data and will examine options for dedicated analysis of 2024 data with respect to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.
A2	Workforce	Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander career development through secondary school career engagement, preparation of the workforce, on the job staff development, mentoring, career development and progression	All governments and sector representatives	Existing or to be determined by the parties	<p>The Implementation and Evaluation Plan for the National Children’s Education and Care Workforce Strategy was released on 5 September 2022 after significant stakeholder engagement, including with SNAICC - National Voice for Our Children (SNAICC). The Plan commits all governments and the sector to implementing the Strategy’s actions as a priority to achieve long-term change for the sector’s workforce.</p> <p>Action FA2-1 in the Strategy involves the review and development of targeted programs to support studies and placements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the regional and remote workforce. SNAICC has been engaged as a supplier to undertake culturally appropriate consultation for this project and deliver a report to the Department of Education with recommendations to inform future policy development. This project is due to be finalised before the end of 2024.</p> <p>From 1 July 2023, the Australian Government has also implemented three budget measures (representing a total investment of \$72.4 million) to greater support the skills and training of the ECEC workforce. This includes</p>



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					supporting ECEC educators, teachers and centre managers to undertake professional development training and supporting teachers to undertake paid practicum placements or participate in a practicum exchange program. In 2023-24, the Professional Development and Paid Practicum subsidies prioritise regional and remote services and First Nations employers and services.
A3	Workforce	Support for tertiary qualification pathway programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early educators in line with promising practice	All governments and sector representatives	Existing or to be determined by the parties	As above, Action FA2-1 in the National Children’s Education and Care Workforce Strategy involves the review and development of targeted programs to support studies and placements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the regional and remote workforce. This action acknowledges that there are barriers that may prevent certain groups from pursuing a career in education and care and these must be addressed to create a more inclusive and diverse workforce that reflects the communities it serves. This project will involve a review of past and current and targeted programs, consulting with a range of stakeholders to identify programs both in the early childhood education and care sector and in related fields which support key cohorts to access and complete training. It will also seek reflections on key learnings, success factors and best practice principles. SNAICC has been engaged as a supplier to undertake culturally appropriate consultation for this project and deliver a report to the Department of Education with recommendations to inform future policy development. This project is due to be finalised before the end of 2024.
A4	Workforce	Development of long-term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development plan that identifies priorities and actions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development, in conjunction with the implementation of the National Children’s Education and Care Workforce Strategy.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>On 28 April 2023, National Cabinet agreed to three priority projects related to the National Strategy for the Care and Support Economy, one of which is growing the First Nations care and support economy workforce. A working group made up of Commonwealth agencies and state and territory representatives has been established to progress this work with an update to be provided to National Cabinet in early 2024. This project is complementary to actions in the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy.</p> <p>This action may also be further considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, which was established in August 2022 and will bring together representatives from all governments and Peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members to ensure a joined-up approach to early childhood care and development. The Policy Partnership will have oversight and drive development of policy reforms proposed as part of this Sector Strengthening Plan.</p>
A5	Workforce	Support, develop and resource community-based workforce development initiatives led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care services	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	This action may be further considered by all governments, including through the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, which was established in 2022, and brings together representatives from all governments and Peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members to ensure a joined-up approach to early childhood care and development. The National Indigenous Australians Agency and Department of Education are continuing to support the SNAICC Early Years Support Program (previously THRYVE – Intermediary Support Services Pilot). The program contributes to building the community-controlled sector by significantly increasing First Nations children's access to high quality, responsive, and culturally safe early learning services so they can thrive and be ready to start school on par with their peers. The Program is being piloted through Commonwealth investment across New South Wales, Western Australia and Victoria. It is being led by SNAICC, who facilitate a co-design process with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled early years services to establish a model for tailored on the ground support that reflects local needs and priorities.
A6	Workforce	Scope current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and community-controlled child protection and family support workforce and projected workforce development needs in line with sector growth under Priority Reform 2 of the Closing the Gap Agreement	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>The Improving Multidisciplinary Responses (IMR) program is a priority action under Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021-2031 (Safe and Supported) and will contribute to achieving Target 12 in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.</p> <p>Through the IMR targeted competitive grant opportunity, 15 First Nations organisations shared in up to \$44.5 million (from 2023-24 to 2026-27) to support the design, implementation and evaluation of their projects. In addition to the funding, grant recipients will receive support through a Design and Implementation Subject Matter Expert and an Evaluation Subject Matter Expert throughout the life of their grant agreement. This aims to strengthen their capacity and capability in line with the Closing the Gap Priority Reform 2: Building the community controlled sector and Priority Reform 4: Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level.</p>



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A7	Workforce	Develop and implement strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and community-controlled sector workforce development	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>Work to build the capacity of the child and family Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector and workforce has commenced under the <i>Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026</i> (Action Plan). Development of the National Child and Family Investment Strategy is underway and is due to be finalised by June 2024. Work has also commenced to progress a workforce scoping study, including agreeing its objectives ahead of engaging a supplier to undertake the study.</p> <p>In October 2024 the Improving Multidisciplinary Responses (IMR) program funded 15 First Nations organisations (from 2023-24 to 2026-27) to design service delivery models to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with multiple and complex needs. In addition to the funding, grant recipients will receive support through a Design and Implementation Subject Matter Expert and an Evaluation Subject Matter Expert throughout the life of their grant agreement. This aims to strengthen their capacity and capability in line with the Closing the Gap Priority Reform 2: Building the community controlled sector and Priority Reform 4: Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level.</p> <p>The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership is further overseeing progress to implement the outcomes and recommendations of the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families review, as one of its agreed Year 1 priorities.</p>
A8	Workforce	Develop the cultural competency and trauma responsiveness of the child and family sector workforce engaged through DSS grant funding	Australian Government In collaboration with state and territory governments and sector representatives	\$7.7 million over 3 years	<p>In May 2023 SNAICC– National Voice for our Children was awarded \$6.2 million (from May 2023 - June 2025) to develop and deliver cultural awareness and trauma responsive training.</p> <p>The training aims to ensure organisations and workers in the child and family sector are better able to deliver prevention and early intervention services that are culturally aware, and trauma and healing-informed.</p>
A9	Workforce	Assess the needs of and increase the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in the child and family sector (specific initiative led by DSS)	Australian Government In collaboration with state and territory governments and sector representatives	\$3.2 million over two years	<p>Part one of the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families measure has now been completed and is available at: https://www.snaicc.org.au/resources/stronger-accos-stronger-families-report/</p> <p>In 2023, Wunan Foundation has undertaken the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families Part 2 program in 5 sites across Australia. This has involved working with 5 mainstream providers and 6 ACCOs. In all sites there has been progress in building long lasting partnerships and undertaking work to improve the cultural responsiveness of services and organisations. There has been some important learnings established which will be finalised when the independent evaluation is complete in June 2024.</p>
A10	Workforce	Priorities for action under <i>Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031</i> to be developed	Community Services Ministers	To be determined by the parties	<p>In January 2023, the first dedicated <i>Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026</i> (Action Plan) was launched by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group (Leadership Group) and Commonwealth, state and territory governments.</p> <p>Through Safe and Supported shared decision-making arrangements, work has commenced to progress activities under the Action Plan. This includes work to progress Action 7 under Safe and Supported: Establish and strengthen advocacy through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner. ECPP and Safe and Supported representatives came together to build a shared understanding of the need for and value of, a potential national commissioner role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and explored potential options for establishing the role.</p> <p>ECPP and Safe and Supported representatives are working together in other areas that relate to Action 3.d: Build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infrastructure for sovereignty of data and improve the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base.</p>
B1	Capital Infrastructure	Identify capital infrastructure gaps for community-controlled ECEC services and support capital infrastructure	All governments, in consultation with sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>The Government is continuing has continued to expand the Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR) Expansion grant, a Closing the Gap measure, to establish new, high quality and where possible, community controlled ECEC services, in mainly remote and very remote areas to support First Nations children and families. As at November 2023, eight organisations are receiving grant funding, including a capital investment component. The first year of the expansion funding will include an establishment phase where services will be</p>



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		development through relevant programs to address gaps			able to access the Community Partner function noted above for foundational supports to assist them with becoming operational in the second year. Grant negotiations are underway with organisations in another four sites. The Department of Education has engaged SNAICC as the Community Partner organisation to provide services with practical guidance on complying with requirements and meeting obligations under the CCCFR grant agreement.
B2	Capital Infrastructure	Scope service gaps to inform roll out of future community-controlled integrated early years' services in locations of high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and high child vulnerability	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>The Government is continuing to expand the Community Child The Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR) Expansion grant, a Closing the Gap measure, to establish new, high quality and where possible, community controlled ECEC services, in mainly remote and very remote areas to support First Nations children and families. On 4 April 2023, the Government announced the first four new CCCFR expansion grants to predominantly First Nations led organisations, in Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland. These four sites are still in the establishment phase and are not yet operational as an ECEC service. Grant negotiations are underway with organisations in another eight sites. The Department of Education has engaged SNAICC as the Community Partner organisation to provide services with practical guidance on complying with requirements and meeting obligations under the CCCFR grant agreement. Connected Beginnings currently funds 40 projects across Australia, supporting 16,500 First Nations children aged zero to five to achieve the learning and development milestones necessary to achieve for a positive transition to school. The program is on track to reach the expansion milestone of 50 sites by 2025, with a strong focus on ACCOs leading the program. The program supports communities to build their confidence, capacity, and skills in the ECEC sector and encourages Government to work differently in delivering these services.</p> <p>An evaluation of the program's expansion was finalised in July 2023. In most communities, the program has been a positive force in enabling communities and service providers to work collectively, shifting service delivery patterns from being siloed and reactive to collaborative in their approach, and ensuring families are feeling heard, better supported and connected. The flexibility of the program's design, utilising a Collective Impact and place-based approach, allows for the program to be led by the community to ensure that it appropriately suits their needs.</p> <p>This action a may also be further considered by all governments, including through the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, which was established in August 2022 and bring together representatives from all governments and Peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members to ensure a joined-up approach to early childhood care and development. The Policy Partnership will have oversight and drive development of policy reforms proposed as part of this Sector Strengthening Plan.</p>
B3	Capital Infrastructure	Identify and plan for opportunities to transfer land and building ownership to community-controlled early years services to support their long-term sustainability and security	State and territory governments	To be determined by the parties	Nil update.
B5	Capital Infrastructure	Map and review existing infrastructure for multi-functional community hubs that can address the multiple psychosocial needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children delivered through community-controlled organisations. Consider opportunities to address infrastructure gaps and needs.	To be determined	To be determined by the parties	Nil update.



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C1	Service Delivery	Undertake an assessment of the supporting materials and resources, and Authorised Officer training under the NQF and NQS to address gaps and ensure they provide quality, culturally appropriate and accessible supports to Authorised Officers and services for the regulation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector	All governments and sector representatives. ACECQA, in collaboration with all governments and sector representatives, for elements of the action within their areas of responsibility.	To be determined by the parties	DoE, in partnership with ACECQA and SNAICC, engaged several First Nations expert panellists to assess the Authorised Officer (AO) training materials and other supporting materials under the NQF and NQS for cultural competency and appropriateness, and to make recommendations in a Final Report for ways to strengthen these materials in terms of their ability to support cultural competency in AOs and other sector users. In 2023, the project has undertaken two project workshops and a number of project panel meetings in which SNAICC-appointed sector experts have reviewed and assessed NQF and NQS training and support materials. The findings of the expert panellists' review of these materials will be presented to the department in a Final Report currently due to be delivered in December 2023, which will include recommendations for changes and reforms to the existing suite of Authorised Officer training and support materials to ensure cultural competency is embedded. The Final report will also be tabled at Regulatory Practice Committee (RPC) at a future meeting early in early 2024 for their consideration.
C2	Service Delivery	Provide support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to operate within the scope of the NQF, where appropriate, and to meet and exceed standards against the NQS	All governments and sector representatives, in collaboration with ACECQA	Australian Government funding of \$1.5 million for the Quality and Safety Training Package Stage 1 and funding of \$1.9 million for Stage 2. A further \$1.05 million thousand for the SA and NT regulation projects.	Stage 1 of the Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR) ACECQA Quality and Safety Training project was successful, and as result DoE engaged ACECQA for Stage 2 of the project. This builds on Stage 1 and includes a new 18-month professional development program focused on further building quality improvement and capability in key areas of safety and supervision. This training project is currently underway and will conclude in June 2024. DoE continues to work with the South Australian Education Standards Board and the Northern Territory Department of Education to monitor and report to the department on the quality and safety performance of 50 identified CCCFR funded services across the two jurisdiction. Expenditure for the projects is for approximately \$1.05 million. The SA project will run until early 2025, and the NT project will conclude at the end of 2023, and Stage 2 of this project is currently being negotiated. The projects will provide baseline data to inform next steps in the journey towards regulation under the NQF, where appropriate and possible, and to meet and exceed standards against the NQS.
C3	Service Delivery	Support for the Aboriginal community-controlled ECEC sector through expansion of existing programs and services (Note: Action overlaps significantly with E3 below)	All governments in consultation with sector representatives	Connected Beginnings \$81.8 million CCCFR \$29.9 million State and territory support to be determined	Connected Beginnings supports communities to build their capacity and skills in the ECEC sector and encourages government to work differently in delivering these services. In most communities, the program has been a positive force in enabling communities and service providers to work collectively, shifting service delivery patterns from being siloed and reactive to collaborative in their approach, and ensuring families are feeling heard, better supported and connected. The ACCO Leadership Transition Framework (Framework), developed by SNAICC and co-designed by the Department of Education, informs, and guides the transition of the Connected Beginnings backbone role from non-Indigenous organisations to ACCOs where there is agreement and support from the respective communities. It intends to provide the principles and scope of responsibilities for ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations in facilitating the transition of the backbone function. As an example of the demonstrable usability, the Framework has been implemented in Port Augusta to finalise the transition process. As a practical resource to be used in communities, the Framework supported the Department and SNAICC to identify, navigate and address political and cultural sensitivities (including lateral violence) to ensure the voice of community was enshrined without bias. Following the application of the Framework through extensive community consultations, a trusted ACCO has since been funded. The Department and SNAICC are working with other non-Indigenous organisations to consolidate legacy learnings, context and resources to ensure more ACCOs are given the opportunity to own and lead the program. The Government has continued to expand the Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR) Expansion grant, a Closing the Gap measure, to establish new, high quality and where possible, community controlled ECEC services, in mainly remote and very remote areas to support First Nations children and families. As at November 2023, eight organisations are receiving grant funding. The first year of the expansion funding will include an establishment phase where services will be able to access the Community Partner function noted



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					above for foundational supports to assist them with becoming operational in the second year. Grant negotiations are underway with organisations in another four sites. The Department of Education has engaged SNAICC as the Community Partner organisation to provide services with practical guidance on complying with requirements and meeting obligations under the CCCFR grant agreement.
C4	Service Delivery	Develop and implement strategies to build community-controlled sectors to respond to child and family needs at levels aligned to engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with child protection systems	State and territory governments	To be determined by the parties	Nil update. Responsibility sits with state and territory governments.
C5	Service Delivery	Identify opportunities to progressively transfer authority in child protection to community-controlled organisations	State and territory departments with responsibility for child protection and family support	To be determined by the parties	<p>Following the Safe and Supported System Leadership Working Group Meeting on 1 December 2023, SNAICC has taken the lead on the majority of meeting outcomes/actions.</p> <p>DSS has engaged Families Australia until June 2024 to develop a comprehensive report that highlights the major organisational, operational and sustainability challenges that may be faced by mainstream NGOs from the proportionate transfer of funding to the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). This includes considering the readiness of organisations to transition and the different stages of transitions that may occur based on different operating environments. The report will outline where support may be required to address potential risks to the sector, such as potential disruptions to workforce, service delivery and/or organisational financial viability.</p>
C6	Service Delivery	Improve multidisciplinary responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with multiple and complex needs	Commonwealth Department of Social Services and state and territory governments and sector	\$49 million	<p>The Improving Multidisciplinary Responses (IMR) program is a priority action under <i>Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031</i> (Safe and Supported) and will contribute to achieving Target 12 in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. IMR aims to enhance and support holistic responses to First Nations families with multiple and complex needs. This includes a focus on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) and its 5 elements of prevention, placement, participation, partnership and connection.</p> <p>The program works collaboratively with jurisdictions ensuring the focus of effort is aligned with current and emerging jurisdictional priorities, in accordance with the National Agreement. The program will embed partnership and self-determination principles and will align with cross cutting frameworks including disability, housing and domestic and family violence.</p> <p>IMR has funded 15 First Nations community-led projects in regional, remote and metropolitan areas across Australia reflecting different community aspirations, operating environments and local priorities that will contribute to reducing the number of First Nations children in out-of-home care. In addition to the funding, grant recipients will receive support through a Design and Implementation Subject Matter Expert and an Evaluation Subject Matter Expert throughout the life of their grant agreement. This aims to strengthen their capacity and capability in line with the Closing the Gap Priority Reform 2: Building the community controlled sector and Priority Reform 4: Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level.</p> <p>Activities commenced in October 2023 and will continue until June 2027.</p>
D1	Governance	Investigate mechanisms to consolidate and streamline reporting and compliance requirements for community-controlled	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	The National Indigenous Australians Agency and Department of Education are continuing to support the SNAICC Early Years Support Program (previously THRYVE – Intermediary Support Services Pilot). Deloitte Access Economics evaluated the Program's impact over its first year, and found that the Program is able to respond to early years services' needs and facilitate service-led decision-making, having a positive impact for less established early childhood services and meeting immediate objectives. As the program continues to



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		integrated early years services			operate until the end of 2024, governments will work with SNAICC to evaluate successes and opportunities to expand the program and apply learnings, where possible.
D2	Governance	National, state and territory community-controlled peak organisations provide direct supports for quality governance development, with government resources and support	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	The National Indigenous Australians Agency and Department of Education are continuing to support the SNAICC Early Years Support Program (previously THRYVE – Intermediary Support Services Pilot). Deloitte Access Economics evaluated the Program’s impact over its first year, and found that the Program is able to respond to early years services’ needs and facilitate service-led decision-making, having a positive impact for less established early childhood services and meeting immediate objectives. As the program continues to operate until the end of 2024, governments will work with SNAICC to evaluate successes and opportunities to expand the program and apply learnings, where possible.
D3	Governance	Governance measures under <i>Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021-2031</i>	Community Services Ministers	To be determined by the parties	<p>In 2023, the first dedicated <i>Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026</i> was launched by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group (Leadership Group) and the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. The Action Plan was developed under a shared decision-making approach reflecting Priority Reform One, and focuses on achieving safety and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.</p> <p>Following this, work was undertaken to ensure the right governance arrangements were in place to enable genuine shared decision-making in the implementation phase.</p> <p>At their July 2023 meeting, the Leadership Group and all Community Services Ministers agreed to come together in a new forum, the Safe and Supported Shared Decision-Making Committee, that is jointly chaired and upholds equal representation and authority to focus on making decisions to implement, monitor and evaluate the Safe and Supported action plans.</p>
D4	Governance	Investigate mechanisms to consolidate and streamline reporting and compliance requirements for community-controlled child protection and family support services	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	Nil update.
D5	Governance	Investigate the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led standards for the community-controlled sector in each state and territory	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	Nil update.
E1	Consistent Funding Model	Review early childhood education and care program and funding arrangements, including in Implementation Plans, to determine and implement changes needed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled ECEC services	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	The Sector Strengthening Plan will continue to guide the work of the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCD Policy Partnership), as detailed in the Partnership’s Year 1 Work plan. The Partnership has commissioned SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children (SNAICC) to undertake a research project to develop options for funding model arrangements for ACCOs delivering ECEC, including integrated early years services. This project supports implementation of Action E1 of the Sector Strengthening Plan, which focuses on reviewing ECEC program and funding arrangements to implement changes needed to support ACCO ECEC services.
E2	Consistent Funding Model	Increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled service delivery	All governments and sector representatives	Connected Beginnings \$81.8 million CCCFR \$29.9 million	<p>The Australian Government is on track in the expansion of the Connected Beginnings program to 50 sites by 2024-25.</p> <p>SNAICC and NACCHO, the Department of Education (Education) and the Department of Health and Aged Care's (Health) respective Community Partners, co-developed the Site Selection Methodology (SSM) to further</p>



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				State and territory led efforts to be identified	<p>enhance commitment to Priority Reform 1. The SSM provides an overarching set of principles that ensures future Connected Beginnings (CB) site selection considers not only quantitative data but also cultural authority, knowledge, and experience. Following this, Education led the development of the Site Identification Methodology (SIM) which operationalises the SSM. The SIM draws on data, community voice, sector expertise, and local context to form a robust and comprehensive site identification process. The SIM preferences ACCOs and ACCHOs, strengthening the Program's enactment of Priority Reform 2.</p> <p>The ACCO Leadership Transition Framework (Framework), developed by SNAICC and co-designed by Education, informs, and guides the transition of the Connected Beginnings backbone role from non-Indigenous organisations to ACCOs where there is agreement and support from the respective communities. It intends to provide the principles and scope of responsibilities for ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations in facilitating the transition of the backbone function.</p> <p>As an example of the demonstrable usability, the Framework has been implemented in Port Augusta to finalise the transition process. As a practical resource to be used in communities, the Framework supported the Department and SNAICC to identify, navigate and address political and cultural sensitivities (including lateral violence) to ensure the voice of community was enshrined without bias.</p> <p>Since SNAICC has been brought on as Community Partner in June 2022, the number of ACCO led Connecting Beginnings sites has risen from 2 to 21.</p> <p>The Government is continuing has continued to expand the Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR) grant, a Closing the Gap measure, to establish new, high quality and where possible, community controlled ECEC services, in mainly remote and very remote areas to support First Nations children and families. As at November 2023, eight organisations are receiving grant funding, including a capital investment component. The first year of the expansion funding will include an establishment phase where services will be able to access the Community Partner function noted above for foundational supports to assist them with becoming operational in the second year. Grant negotiations are underway with organisations in another four sites. The Department of Education has engaged SNAICC as the Community Partner organisation to provide services with practical guidance on complying with requirements and meeting obligations under the CCCFR grant agreement.</p>
E3	Consistent Funding Model	Develop an agreed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early childhood education and care sector definition and scope to inform efforts to build and strengthen the sector	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>Developing an agreed definition for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early childhood education and care sector is an ongoing priority for consideration by all governments and SNAICC, as the lead representative for the early childhood Aboriginal community-controlled sector.</p> <p>This action may be considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, which was established in August 2022 and brings together representatives from all governments and Peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members to ensure a joined-up approach to early childhood care and development. The Policy Partnership will have oversight and drive development of policy reforms proposed as part of this Sector Strengthening Plan.</p>
E4	Consistent Funding Model	Reduce service gaps and establish new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled integrated early years' services in locations of high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and high child vulnerability	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>The Connected Beginnings expansion and enhanced community consultation process prioritises the funding of ACCOs wherever possible, and where they are assessed through community consultation and assessment processes as the most appropriate and suitable organisation. Similarly, the Community Child Care Fund (Restricted) program expansion will establish new and mostly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-run child care services over four years to 2024-25.</p> <p>This action may also be further considered by all governments, including through the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, which was established in August 2022 and brings together representatives from all governments and Peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members to ensure a joined-up approach to early childhood care and development.</p>
E5	Consistent Funding Model	Develop jurisdictional plans for developing and resourcing community-	State and territory child protection departments	Nil	<p>Work to progress Safe and Supported Action 5: Implement the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle to the standard of active efforts is underway. This includes compiling existing efforts in this space to support drafting a set of national minimum standards for active efforts.</p>



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		controlled organisation functions aligned to the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle			
E6	Consistent Funding Model	Assess the needs of and increase involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in delivery in Commonwealth child and family sector programs (specific initiative led by DSS)	Australian Government Department of Social Services	\$3.2 million over two-years	<p>Part one of the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families measure has now been completed and is available at: https://www.snaicc.org.au/resources/stronger-accos-stronger-families-report/</p> <p>In 2023, Wunan Foundation has undertaken the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families Part 2 program in 5 sites across Australia. This has involved working with 5 mainstream providers and 6 ACCOs. In all sites there has been progress in building long lasting partnerships and undertaking work to improve the cultural responsiveness of services and organisations. There has been some important learnings established which will be finalised when the independent evaluation is complete in June 2024.</p>
E7	Consistent Funding Model	In line with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, increase the proportion services delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations	All governments	Nil	<p>The Connected Beginnings expansion and enhanced community consultation process prioritises the funding of ACCOs wherever possible, and where they are assessed through community consultation and assessment processes as the most appropriate and suitable organisation. Similarly, the Community Child Care Fund (Restricted) program expansion will establish up to 20 additional and mostly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-run child care services over four years to 2024-25.</p> <p>This action may also be further considered by all governments, including through the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, which was established in August 2022 and brings together representatives from all governments and Peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members to ensure a joined-up approach to early childhood care and development. Work to progress Safe and Supported Action 2: <i>Shift towards adequate and coordinated funding of early, targeted and culturally safe supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families</i> is underway. This includes reporting on the challenges mainstream non-government organisations may experience from funding transferring to ACCOs in the context of child and family services.</p>
F1	Peak Body	Develop a national and state/territory intermediary model to strengthen and represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC community-controlled services	Sector-led action in collaboration with: National Indigenous Australians Agency Commonwealth Department of Education, Skills and Employment State and Territory Governments	<p>Sector Strengthening Joint Funding Pool (pilot establishment and evaluation) to be supplemented by additional investment by other relevant portfolios and philanthropy</p> <p>Australian Government, state and territory Departments of Education</p>	The National Indigenous Australians Agency and Department of Education are continuing to support the SNAICC Early Years Support Program (previously THRYVE – Intermediary Support Services Pilot). Deloitte Access Economics evaluated the Program’s impact over its first year, and found that the Program is able to respond to early years services’ needs and facilitate service-led decision-making, having a positive impact for less established early childhood services and meeting immediate objectives. As the program continues to operate until the end of 2024, government will work with SNAICC to evaluate successes and opportunities to expand the program and apply learnings to other programs, where possible.
F2	Peak Body	Develop a plan to support and enable community-led development of a peak body in each state and territory	State and Territory Governments where peaks are not yet established or in development (Western Australia, Northern Territory, Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations	To be determined by the parties	Nil update.



No.	Stream	Action	Responsibilities	Initial Resource Commitment	2023 Annual Report Update
F3	Peak Body	Support adequate and sustainable funding for existing peak bodies	All governments in consultation with sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>In line with Priority Reform One and the strong partnership principles outlined in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the Australian Government has committed funding to enable SNAICC, as the lead Coalition of Peaks representative for the early childhood Aboriginal community-controlled sector, to Co-Chair and lead the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership. This is in addition to funding to support the participation of the independent First Nations members of the Partnership.</p> <p>Core funding to support adequate and sustainable operations for existing peak bodies is an ongoing priority for further consideration by all governments. In 2024, the Department of Education will look to develop a formal partnership agreement with SNAICC to support its ongoing work in shared decision making.</p>
F4	Peak Body	Develop a strong evidence base for best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled service delivery through peak bodies	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>The Australian Government has committed \$1.7 million in seed funding to the newly incorporated (in August 2023) National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation (NATSIEC). Further, NATSIEC has been formally accepted as a member of the Coalition of Peaks (10 November). NATSIEC provides national collective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education engagement, cultural and pedagogical expertise and strategic advice in order to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' educational aspirations are heard and acted upon. Priorities for action are informed by NATSIEC members, the communities they serve, current education policy directions and robust evidence.</p>

