

Indigenous childcare faces funding crisis

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ABORIGINAL and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled childcare centres are fighting to keep and expand their funding, pleading with the Abbott government and members of the new indigenous council to boost their reach to help vulnerable indigenous children.

The Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care held a breakfast in Parliament House yesterday with members of Tony Abbott's indigenous council and argued that they had been grossly underfunded, with many already forced to cut back services or turn away children in need.

The services face an uncertain funding future beyond June, with funding under the Council of Australian Governments agreement that supports 38 of these services ending this financial year.

The previous government's plan was that the services come within the user-pays mainstream funding program. SNAICC has calculated that there are 189 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services (excluding outside school hours care), for a population of 146,714 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged up to 8 across Australia.

It says community-controlled services are nurturing children and getting them school-ready.

The peak group, SNAICC has presented to government a new early-years program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services.

The program looks to rework allocations to provide the same funding levels to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children - generally the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children - as are given to other Australian children.

SNAICC's proposal aims to secure appropriate and sustainable levels of funding for evidence-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services for the next 10 years.

The proposal also calls for the creation of 40 new community-controlled services across Australia every three years.