



SNAICC – MEDIA RELEASE

Government should retain elected national Indigenous body

(for immediate release Friday April 16th)

Australia's Indigenous non-government peak body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, SNAICC, believes the Australian Government has missed an opportunity to reform the elected national Indigenous body ATSIC.

Muriel Cadd, the SNAICC Chairperson said today that, "Whilst ATSIC has clearly had problems it is not alone when it comes to under performing in Indigenous affairs. The sad truth is that no government agency, department or authority at the Commonwealth, State or Territory level is without sin when it comes to failing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. She said every organisation with some responsibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy and programs, including SNAICC, has to continually examine and improve its performance. ATSIC and the Government had in recent times become focused on blaming each other rather than finding solutions. If the Government succeeds in abolishing ATSIC it will then have no one else to blame for the shameful standards of health and well being which continue to harm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children."

She said, "a national Indigenous organisation which is elected by and from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be retained through reforms to ATSIC based on the independent ATSIC review the government established."

She added that, " both the Federal ALP and the Federal Government are guilty of moving to abolish ATSIC without having developed a viable alternative through talks with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. ATSIC's effectiveness, she said, had been limited by flaws in the structure of ATSIC, funding cuts imposed in 1996, a lack of performance in service delivery by mainstream government agencies and the inability of the current ATSIC Board to lead, inspire and communicate a vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples."

Ms Cadd concluded, " SNAICC will continue to work with the government in relation to children's issues and seek policy commitments from all the major political parties for the forthcoming election. This would include retaining a national body that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people could aspire to vote for, participate in and one day be elected to – rather than a distant, remote and unaccountable national body appointed by government."

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