

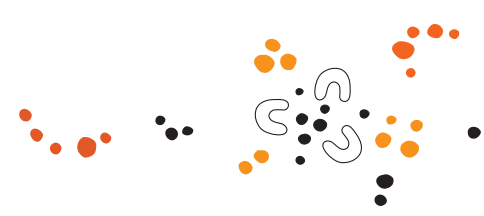
**STRONGER  
ACCOS,  
STRONGER  
FAMILIES**  
FINAL REPORT



**SNAICC**  
National Voice for our Children

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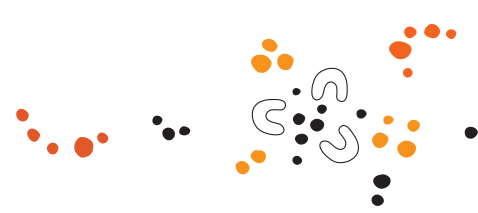
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## ACRONYMS

<b>ACCO</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation
<b>ACCHO</b>	Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisation
<b>ACCCHS</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Health Service
<b>DSS</b>	Department of Social Services
<b>CaFIS</b>	Children and Family Intensive Support
<b>CAPS</b>	Children and Parenting Support
<b>CfC FP</b>	Communities for Children Facilitating Partners
<b>FaC</b>	Families and Children Activity
<b>HIPPY</b>	Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters
<b>IAS</b>	Indigenous Advancement Strategy
<b>NGO</b>	non-government organisation
<b>NIAA</b>	National Indigenous Australians Agency



## A NOTE ON DEFINING ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY-CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS

Throughout this report we refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) as these organisations are defined under clause 44 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (see appendix A).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SNAICC thanks and acknowledges the organisations and individuals, in particular, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and community-controlled organisations from across many Nations who provided input to this report.

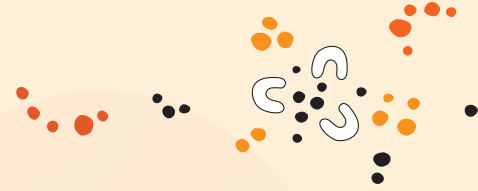
We also acknowledge the Australian Department of Social Services who provided input and funded this work. The views in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the Department.

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# ABOUT SNAICC





**SNAICC is the national non-government 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 well-being.**

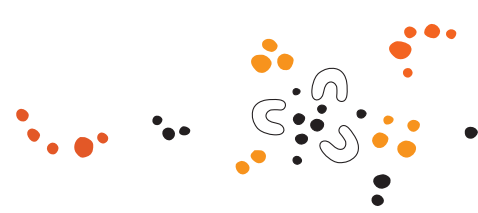
SNAICC has a dynamic membership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-based child care agencies, Multi-functional Aboriginal Children's Services, crèches, long day care child care services, pre-schools, early childhood education services, early childhood support organisations, family support services, foster care agencies, family reunification services, family group homes, services for young people at risk, community groups and voluntary associations, government agencies and individual supporters.

Since 1981, SNAICC has been a passionate national voice representing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. SNAICC champions the principles of community control and self-determination as the means for sustained improvements for children and families has been at the heart of SNAICC's work — whether on child protection and wellbeing or early childhood education and development. Today, SNAICC is the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and the sector supporting these children. Our work comprises policy, advocacy, and sector development.

We also work with non-Indigenous services alongside Commonwealth and State Governments to improve how agencies design and deliver supports and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.



**SNAICC**  
National Voice for our Children



# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system is a significant and ongoing human rights challenge in Australia, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children being 10 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children [1]. The ongoing impacts of colonisation and racism, including intergenerational trauma experienced by members of the Stolen Generations, drive the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children across all stages of the child protection system. Colonisation and racism have caused large socio-economic inequities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians, including disparities in employment, education, housing, health, and justice. These inequities in socio-economic outcomes contribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families being more likely to have contact with child protection systems. All Australian Governments have committed to addressing these gaps in life outcomes through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement). The National Agreement includes 17 outcomes and associated targets for improving life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Target 12 is to reduce the rate of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031 [2]. Achieving Target 12 will require a significant investment in the services that support family and child wellbeing.

Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are best placed to provide community led and culturally safe child and family services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Despite this, ACCOs continue to receive far less funding for these services nationally than non-Indigenous organisations. Under the National Agreement, all Australian governments have acknowledged and committed to the need for ACCOs to be at the forefront of service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Commonwealth Department of Social Services (DSS) provide funding across a range of children and family early support programs. To ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families have access to culturally safe early intervention services delivered by ACCOs, DSS play a key role as a funding body for ACCOs and early intervention programs.

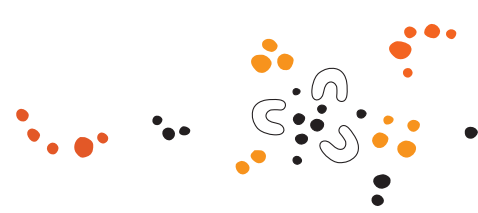
The Closing the Gap Measure 3 *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families*, initiative is being led by DSS and aims to increase ACCO involvement in delivering DSS-funded Family and Children Activity programs. SNAICC– National Voice for our Children (SNAICC), the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, was engaged by DSS in 2022 to conduct stage one of *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families*. The first stage of *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families* was to identify existing knowledge and consult with ACCOs on their strengths, needs, barriers and opportunities for accessing DSS funding and delivering Family And Children Activity (FaC) Activity programs. Throughout May-June 2022 SNAICC engaged with ACCOs via an online survey and community consultation forums. Of 304 survey respondents, 35.53% were currently employed by an ACCO, with 61.68% of the ACCOs they worked for currently receiving DSS funding. This report brings together findings from both the existing literature, and perspectives from ACCOs collected by SNAICC and engagement with the sector, before recommending actions for DSS to increase and strengthen the involvement of ACCOs in the delivery of FaC Activity programs.

This report identifies significant systemic barriers that ACCOs face in accessing funding for FaC Activity programs and children and family services more broadly. Barriers include competitive grant processes that advantage larger non-Indigenous organisations, reporting and administrative burdens that are not supported by core functions funding and the fundamental misalignment between how services are funded, and the services communities need. ACCOs identified that dedicated, sustainable, flexible, and sufficient funding would enable them to build on the existing strengths of the sector to deliver culturally responsive and holistic services. By addressing these barriers to access funding, a greater number of ACCOs will be able to provide services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

ACCOs deliver services using a holistic model of care resulting in better health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. They are accountable to their communities and thus deliver high quality, responsive, and culturally safe services, and their position as a preferred provider in their communities ensures higher levels of engagement with service users. Current approaches to funding do not support ACCOs to provide services in this







way. Without appropriate funding, ACCOs are limited in their ability to meet the objectives of the National Agreement in achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families, and communities. Commonwealth Government determining the way programs and services are delivered diminishes self-determination for ACCOs, and often does not align with community needs and aspirations.

The use of competitive funding processes raises concerns for ACCOs as they are often positioned to compete with one another undermining their opportunities for partnership, advantages non-Indigenous organisations, creates significant administrative and cost burdens, is inconsistent with place-based approaches, and lacks transparency. ACCOs raised strong concerns that the largest proportion of government funding is directed to non-Indigenous organisations. This was seen by many stakeholders to be driven by a preference for mainstream organisations as providers and not valuing culturally responsive services provided by ACCOs.

The burden of investing resources into submitting proposals disadvantages smaller ACCOs, with many reporting that the complex and time-consuming nature of funding processes was a barrier for identifying and applying for new funding. The current deficit-based funding model does not recognise the significance of cultural connection and community relationships, and ACCOs reported that the immense and burdensome reporting requirements were still unable to comprehensively capture the services they provide and the outcomes they achieve, inhibiting their ability to meet Key Performance Indicators set by the government. The short-term nature of funding (i.e., 12–24-month agreements) creates challenges for ACCOs because uncertainty about the continuation of funding results in ACCOs being unable to long term plan for workforce and organisational development.

Underpinning all the key consultation findings was the need for self-determination and community control to be at the centre of funding and service design. The challenges and needs of the ACCO sector can only be addressed through community led solutions, and it is through the ACCO sector that the best outcomes can be achieved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. SNAICC makes six recommendations and 14 sub-recommendations in this report, the six overarching recommendations are:

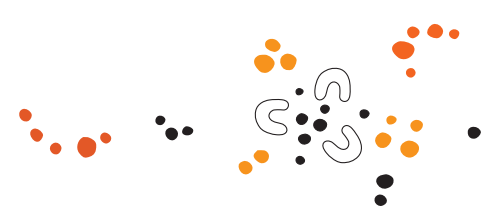
- Recommended Action 1: Embed community-led decision-making at every stage of funding development and allocation
- Recommended Action 2: Prioritise ACCOs as providers of children and family services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families
- Recommended Action 3: Invest in the growth, development, and sustainability of ACCOs through core-functions funding
- Recommended Action 4: Reduce administrative burdens across the system
- Recommended Action 5: Increase investment in and support for ACCO-led research and evaluation
- Recommended Action 6: Build government capacity to work better with ACCOs.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The 2021 Family Matters Report found that one in every 15.6 Aboriginal and Torres Strait children were living in out of home care, with 79% of those children permanently living away from their birth parents [1]. This makes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children over 10 times more likely than non-Indigenous children to be in out-of-home care [1]. These alarming statistics represent the pain and trauma of 21,523 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who have been removed from their families [1]. Addressing the crisis of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care requires investment in community-led solutions and decision-making to drive reform across whole of government and the service sector.

An important lever to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system is through the provision of prevention and early intervention services that support and strengthen families to care for children [1]. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) are best placed to deliver these services in culturally safe and responsive ways [3]. Having a strong ACCO sector for child and family services is vital to addressing overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.





SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (SNAICC) is the national peak voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and advocates for their safety and wellbeing. SNAICC continues to push for greater funding and control for ACCOs in the delivery of children and family services and welcomes the new commitment from all Australian governments to strengthening the community-controlled sector through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement). The National Agreement is an agreement between all Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations to overcome the inequity in life outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It was designed to fundamentally change the way governments work with organisations and communities. Governments have made a substantial commitment to reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% by 2031 (Closing the Gap Target 12) [2].

As part of its Implementation Plan for Closing the Gap, the Commonwealth has committed to a measure under Priority Reform Two and Target 12, *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families*, to assess the needs and increase the involvement of ACCOs in the child and family sector.

*Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families* comprises two parts:

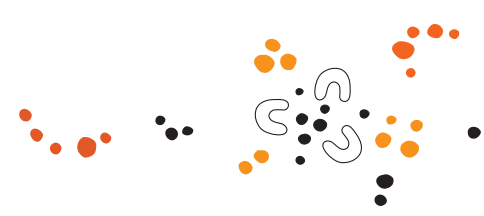
1. A research project, into identifying the strengths, needs, barriers and opportunities, of ACCOs who are currently delivering or who have the potential to deliver relevant Department of Social Services (DSS) programs to children and families, including Families and Children (FaC) Activity programs. Part 1 also identifies ACCOs who have the potential to and are interested in delivering programs under the FaC Activity across Australia, what they need to successfully deliver the programs and how the department can better support them to do so.

2. A trial to build on the strengths of ACCOs and strengthen genuine relationships between ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations funded under two grant programs administered by the DSS: Communities for Children Facilitating Partners (CfC FP) and Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPPY). The trial aims to increase the number of partnerships between ACCOs and grant recipients under CfC FP and HIPPPY. It will contribute to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap by supporting ACCOs and mainstream organisations to work together in genuine partnerships, addressing service delivery barriers faced by ACCOs, identifying best practices and supporting the capacity and growth of ACCOs in the child and family sector. This work is in turn expected to more broadly inform the design of future grant programs dedicated to the provision of child and family services dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

This is the final report of part one of *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families*, conducted by SNAICC and funded by DSS. SNAICC's approach included a review of the grey and academic literature, and national consultation with ACCOs to develop recommendations for DSS and the Commonwealth Government more broadly to increase the amount of funding to ACCOs to deliver children and family services by examining four key focus areas/ research questions:

- **Strengths:** What are the strengths of ACCOs in delivering children and family services and why it is important to increase funding to ACCOs?
- **Needs:** What are the unmet needs of ACCOs for accessing funding and delivering children and family services?
- **Barriers:** What are the barriers that ACCOs face to accessing commonwealth funding for and delivering children and family services?
- **Opportunities:** What are the opportunities for the Commonwealth Government to meet the needs of ACCOs and address barriers?





This report is organised into three components.

In **part one** we establish the policy context for this work, including the significant changes in the policy landscape since the finalisation of the new National Agreement and its Implementation Plan that will support outcomes from this work. Following this, we summarise previous audit, review, and evaluation literature in relation to Commonwealth funding of children and family services broadly and the FaC Activity specifically.

In **part two**, we discuss the methodology employed to conduct consultations with ACCOs and strengths and limitations of the approach and the data sets. A summary of key themes emerging from both the consultation discussions and the survey lays the groundwork for part three.

In **part three**, SNAICC provides six recommendations and 14 sub-recommendations for increasing ACCO involvement in children and family services and building Commonwealth Government capacity to engage with and support the community-controlled sector.

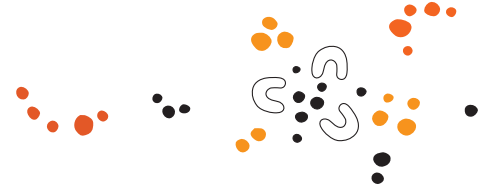
### 3. POLICY CONTEXT

#### NATIONAL AGREEMENT ON CLOSING THE GAP

This project is set against the backdrop of a rapidly changing policy landscape for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's health and wellbeing. The National Agreement sets out 17 targets across education, employment, health and wellbeing, justice, safety, housing, land and waters, and languages [2]. Closing the Gap Target 12 addresses the continuing overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out-of-home care and child protection systems. Target 12 is to reduce the rate of overrepresentation by 45% by 2031 [2]. Implementation of the recommendations made in this report will contribute directly to Target 12 by increasing access to children and family services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. Efforts to improve and increase funding to ACCOs will contribute to all 17 Targets, and especially to those aimed at improving child and family wellbeing, including:

- **Target 2:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91 per cent.
- **Target 3:** By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95 per cent.
- **Target 4:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55 per cent.
- **Target 11:** By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by 30 per cent.
- **Target 12:** By 2031, reduce the rate of over representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent.
- **Target 13:** By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero.





The National Agreement states there must be fundamental change to how governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve these targets. Four Priority Reform areas have been identified to change the way governments work. The four priority reforms are:

1. Formal partnerships and shared decision-making;
2. Building the community-controlled sector;
3. Transforming government organisations; and
4. Shared access to data and information at a regional level. [2]

In addition to contributing to the achievement of the targets, *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families* looks at Government systems and approaches to funding services that can contribute to the Priority Reform Areas.

Priority Reform Two focuses on building a strong community-controlled sector. The National Agreement acknowledges that a strong community-controlled sector requires sustained capacity building and investment, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforces, strong peak representative bodies, and dedicated, reliable and consistent funding model that meets community needs [2]. Clause 55 of the National Agreement commits all governments to measures to increase and prioritise funding of and the proportion of services delivered by ACCOs (see appendix A) [2]. Each state and territory and the Commonwealth government will have their own implementation plan [4]. The first Commonwealth Implementation Plan (Implementation Plan) sets out existing and new actions the Commonwealth Government is taking to support the National Agreement [4]. Importantly, the Implementation Plan includes how the Priority Reforms will be embedded across the whole of the Commonwealth Government [4]. *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families* is part of the government’s commitments in the Implementation Plan under Priority Reform Two.

## COMPLEMENTARY NATIONAL STRATEGIES AND FRAMEWORKS

*Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021-2031*

*Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021-2031* (Safe and

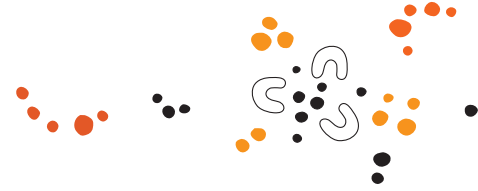
Supported) succeeds the 2009-2020 framework [5]. *Safe and Supported* is intended to support Target 12 and was informed via consultation with SNAICC [5]. *Safe and Supported* covers a 10-year timeframe supported by two, five-year action plans specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. At the time of writing, these action plans have not been published. SNAICC facilitated national consultations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations in March and April 2021, findings from this report included comments on current funding arrangements, discussed further below [6]. Focus Area 2 in *Safe and Supported* addresses the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection systems, including specific priorities for building the ACCO sector [5].

### *Sector Strengthening Plan: Early Childhood Care and Development*

Under the National Agreement clause 49, the Joint Council on Closing the Gap (Joint Council) have committed to developing Sector Strengthening Plans that set out actions to strengthen workforce, capital infrastructure, service provision, governance and accountability in priority sectors [4]. With a commitment of \$46.5 million over four years from the Commonwealth government, the Sector Strengthening Plans will align with the elements of strong sectors outlined in the National Agreement [4, 7]. Clause 45.d of the National Agreement on the elements of strong sectors includes a dedicated, reliable, and consistent funding model that suits the types of services ACCOs provide and is responsive to the needs of communities.

The Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan (the Sector Strengthening Plan) defines the early childhood care and development sector as including early childhood education and care, child health services, family support services, child protection services and early childhood early intervention. Key Action Area E under the Sector Strengthening Plan has significant intersections with this report as it relates to having a consistent funding model for ACCOs. The goal of this Key Action Area is as follows: “Across the early childhood care and development sector, funding for organisations is available/predictable and supports organisations to be responsive to the needs of those receiving the services.”[p.34] [7].





### *Strategic Plan for Funding the Development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Sector*

The Strategic Plan for Funding the Development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Sector (the Strategic Plan) has been developed by the Coalition of Peaks and agreed by the Joint Council [8]. The Strategic Plan supports the delivery of the National Agreement and provides a "...high level overview of how governments, working in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks, determine investment priorities for each of the priority service sectors..." [p.1] [8]. The Strategic Plan is an essential document for governments to ensure nationally consistent funding decisions across sectors and jurisdictions.

Under Schedule A of the Strategic Plan, the Joint Council identified the following priorities for funding for the early childhood care and development sector:

- Developing a dedicated and identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood development, protection and care workforce
- Strengthening peak bodies to support and build the capability of organisations in the sector to deliver services and to support shared decision-making with governments. [p.7][8]

### *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy*

Launched in December 2021, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy (Early Childhood Strategy) has five goals that cut across early learning, health, housing, disability, safety, wellbeing, care and development [9]. The Early Childhood Strategy includes strong opportunities for improvements in maternal health and early childhood wellbeing [9]. Although Governments have not made any dedicated commitments for implementing the Early Childhood Strategy at the time of writing, there is significant alignment with commitments in the National Agreement, Commonwealth Implementation Plan and the Sector Strengthening Plan [9]. Of particular importance for this work is that the Early Childhood Strategy builds on existing Commonwealth Commitments to expand and support the ACCO sector [9]. Opportunities identified under Goal 4 and 5 of the Early Childhood Strategy include building the role of the ACCO sector, and increasing support to ACCOs to lead monitoring and evaluation work [9].

## 4. FUNDING CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Despite the well evidenced benefits of investing in prevention and early intervention programs, 84.1% of national expenditure on the child protection system is directed at the tertiary end of the system, including intervention and out of home care services [1]. 15.9% of funding is directed towards prevention and early intervention and spending decreased between 2016 and 2020 from 17.1 to 15.9% [1]. The Commonwealth Government can play a key role in reorienting investment towards early support and prevention, this early support for families is a key part of the role that ACCOs play in their communities. While the majority of funding for child and family services provided to ACCOs is administered through state and territory governments, the Commonwealth Government provides funding through DSS and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) [7, 10]. The NIAA administers the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) which provides funding for children and family services including through the Children and Schooling program and the Safety and Wellbeing program [1].

A focus for this review is the FaC Activity programs, funded through DSS' Families and Communities Program. The FaC Activity provides national funding to services that support prevention and early intervention to improve wellbeing, functioning and economic engagement of families and to strengthen communities. This funding is delivered to urban, regional remote locations. The current FaC Activity programs are:

- Communities for Children Facilitating Partners (CfC FP)
  - A place-based service delivery model of investment, which takes an early intervention approach that supports children and families in 52 disadvantaged communities across Australia, to improve the way they relate to each other; improve parenting skills; and to ensure the health and wellbeing of children. CfC FP facilitates a whole-of-community approach to support early childhood development and wellbeing with a focus on children from before birth through to 12 years and can include children up to 18 years and their families.

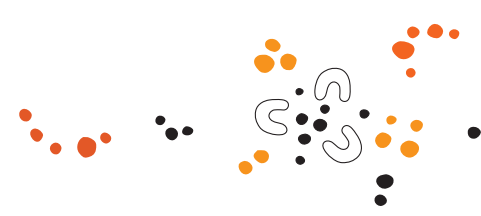




- Lead organisations are known as 'Facilitating Partners, responsible for overall facilitation and management of the CFC FP initiative including building capability in local service systems and fund other organisations known as 'Community Partners' to deliver services targeted to their community as identified by a local committee[11].
- Family and Relationship Services
  - These services provide early intervention and prevention services and focus on at-risk families including families at risk of breakdown, families with children at risk of abuse or neglect, and families experiencing disadvantage or vulnerability [12].<sup>1</sup>
- Children and Parenting Support (CaPS) Services
  - Provides early intervention and prevention services to support children and their families. Services are primarily targeted to children aged 0 to 12 years (but can include young people up to 18 years) and are accessible to all parents and carers of children.
  - CaPS services build the capacity of parents, carers and children through activities such as community playgroups, supported playgroups, parenting courses, home visiting, peer support groups, school readiness programs and web-based services or resources.
- Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)
  - HIPPY is a two-year home-based parenting and early childhood program that helps parents and carers to be their child's first teacher.
  - HIPPY is an internationally recognised early childhood education program and is delivered across Israel, the United States, Canada, and New Zealand.
  - HIPPY is delivered in 100 communities across Australia, including 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused sites, targeting approximately 4,500 children each year across both age groups.
- Children and Family Intensive Support (CaFIS)
  - CaFIS provides early intervention and prevention support to children or young people aged 0-18 years and their families in selected communities in the Northern Territory (NT) and Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia. This service aims to support families with multiple and complex needs to enhance children and young people's health, safety and wellbeing. CaFIS make a concerted effort to be child-centred, strengths-based, trauma-informed and culturally appropriate to ensure services are tailored to the needs of families.
  - CaFIS is delivered by 12 organisations (11 ACCOs and one mainstream organisation in a consortium with an ACCO) in over 30 locations across the NT and APY Lands of South Australia.
- Budget Based Funded services (BBF) [13].
  - BBF program funds 25 organisations providing Australian families with flexible, affordable and accessible adjunct care and early learning services.
- Reconnect
  - The Reconnect Program is a community based early intervention and prevention program for young people aged 12 to 18 years (or 12 to 21 years in the case of newly arrived youth) who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, and their families [14].
- Adult specialist support (Find and Connect, Forced Adoption Support Services)
  - Find and Connect: Specialist trauma-informed counselling and referral services, records and family tracing, peer support, education and social support programs for Forgotten Australians and Former Child Migrants [15].
  - Forced Adoption Support Services: Peer support, counselling and records and family tracing for those affected by forced adoptions. Seven organisations are funded to deliver this program, none of whom are ACCOs [15].
- Family Mental Health Support Services (FMHSS)
  - FMHSS provides early intervention and non-clinical community mental health support for children and young people up to 18 years of age who are risk of developing mental illness [16].

1. Under the National Plan to Reduce Violence against women and their Children 2012-2022 four ACCOs are trialing the delivery of culturally appropriate Specialised Family Violence Services in the Northern Territory Source: <https://www.dss.gov.au/families-and-children-programs-services-parenting-families-and-children-activity/family-and-relationship-services>





As part of the 2021 Family Matters Report, DSS provided data to SNAICC breaking down the allocation of total funding in each program stream by ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations. Overall, \$290m of funding was delivered through the FaC Activity [1]. Using this data, Table 1 shows the proportion of FaC Activity programs funding that is going to ACCOs.

Table 1 shows that the three activities with the largest funding pools have the lowest numbers of ACCO providers, illustrating the need for DSS and all Australian governments to commit to increasing the number of ACCOs involved in service delivery, the three activities with the largest funding pools have the lowest numbers of ACCO providers. CaFIS is a clear exception, with 92% of providers being ACCOs, due to the targeted service locations in the NT and APY Lands.

The low number of ACCOs receiving FaC Activity programs funding was a particular concern in 2021 when 234 funding contracts were extended without consideration of and response to the underrepresentation of ACCOs among providers.<sup>2</sup> Two-year extensions were offered for Children and Parenting Support and Budget-Based Funded services and five-year grant extensions were offered for:

- Communities for Children Facilitating Partners,
- Family and Relationship Services, including Specialised Family Violence Services but not including those who received ad hoc funding for the first time in 2019 or 2020 under the Fourth Action Plan,
- Family Mental Health Support Services, and
- Five (5) national Children and Parenting Support providers.<sup>3</sup>

Part 2 of *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families* is a trial to build on the strengths of ACCOs and strengthen genuine relationships between ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations funded under CfC FP and HIPPY. The Brotherhood of St Laurence (BSL) has the exclusive license to administer HIPPY in Australia, so the only way ACCOs and other organisations can deliver HIPPY is through a subcontracting arrangement with BSL. BSL entered into a new 5-year grant agreement with DSS to deliver HIPPY, from July 2022 to June 2027. Under this agreement, BSL will undertake a project in agreed timeframes to build the capacity of existing sub-contracted ACCOs and engage further ACCOs in the delivery of the HIPPY program. This project will be a continuation of Part 2 of the *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families* measure.

**Table 1:** Proportion of funding by ACCO and non-Indigenous organisations

FAMILIES AND CHILDREN ACTIVITY / SUB ACTIVITY	TOTAL EXPENDITURE (\$)	NUMBER OF DELIVERY ORGANISATIONS REGISTERED AS ACCOS	PER CENT OF TOTAL DELIVERY ORGANISATIONS
Family and Relationship Services	75,505,000	1 / 83	1%
Specialised Family Violence Services	5,193,000	4 / 35	11%
Communities for Children - Facilitating Partners (CfC FP)	54,474,000	28** / 365 ^	8%
Children and Parenting Support (CaPS)	54,817,000	12 / 135	9%
Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)	32,635,000	15 / 65**	23%
Children and Family Intensive Support (CaFIS)	9,200,000	11 / 12	92%

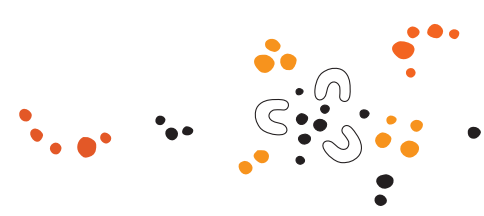
Source: Data provided by DSS as of August 2020 to SNAICC for the purposes of the Family Matters Report 2020.

\*\* CfC FP and HIPPY operate through sub-contracting program models and the lead provider is responsible for management of the sub-contracting arrangements or community partners. DSS is not responsible for oversight of the organisations being sub contracted. The data on service delivery is supplied by the lead organisation or estimated based on program reporting provided to the department

2. Correspondence provided to SNAICC from the Family Policy Section of the Department of Social Services, 25 November 2020

3. Ibid.





This includes increasing the number of ACCOs subcontracted to deliver the program and/or increasing partnerships with non- Indigenous organisations. Under the program reform work, BSL will also need to look at providing intensive support services for local coordinators and tutors to implement culturally appropriate and accepted recruitment and retention strategies and program delivery across the HIPPY communities<sup>4</sup>. While these positive steps to reform HIPPY and expand CfC FP are welcome, these types of subcontracting arrangements for programs must not be the primary or preferred way of funding ACCOs to deliver services because they are not consistent with principles of community-control or self-determination. Expanding and strengthening the community-controlled sector requires a dedicated funding model to these services that is not dependent on the involvement on large non-Indigenous non-government organisations (NGOs). Key findings from this report demonstrate the significant limitations of the subcontracting approaches used in HIPPY and CfC FP and are discussed further in part 2.

## 5. DESKTOP REVIEW KEY FINDINGS

In March-April 2022, SNAICC undertook a desktop review of the existing grey and academic literature on the strengths, needs, barriers and opportunities to increasing Commonwealth funding to ACCOs. A search of key databases yielded nine academic articles and 13 grey literature reports that met the inclusion criteria. Findings from the desktop review have been summarised under previous FaC Activity evaluation and the core focus areas of strengths, needs, barriers and opportunities. This section provides a summary of the key findings from the existing literature.

## FAMILIES AND CHILDREN (FAC) ACTIVITY PROGRAMS EVALUATION LITERATURE

The FaC Activity has been subject to previous evaluations, including a post implementation review following reforms made to CfC FP conducted by ACIL Allen Consulting in 2016 and an evaluation of Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS) conducted by Social Compass for DSS from 2018 to 2020. In 2020, the Productivity Commission (the Commission) undertook a study looking at funding issues for child and family services in the Northern Territory [10]. Although the Northern Territory is a unique case due to the Commonwealth's expanded remit in this jurisdiction, there are valuable lessons for how Commonwealth and state/territory governments can work together in this space. This section summarises the evaluation literature on the FaC Activity programs.

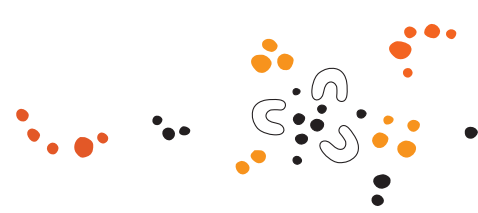
The Commission acknowledged some positive features of service funding in the Northern Territory, such as the DSS facilitating partner models and some examples of placed-based and local decision-making approaches, but noted these were not always sufficiently funded, especially where providers were servicing large geographical areas like the Katherine region [10]. Findings included that the lack of a coordinated approach to funding child and family services in the Northern Territory resulted in duplication, gaps and inefficient allocation of resources [10]. Consistent with findings of this report, the Commission highlights several systemic barriers to accessing funding for providers, including ACCOs, including:

- funding allocation is driven by the capacity of providers to apply for funding, not by community needs;
- there is insufficient engagement with communities, resulting in top-down service provision;
- short-term funding prevents providers from building capacity, developing trust with communities, and designing and delivering culturally appropriate programs;
- current funding is output instead of outcome focused; and
- programs are rigid and not tailored to the local context. [10]

4. Input provided by DSS Family Policy Office







The Commission's recommendations for addressing these barriers include the need for:

- transparency and collaboration between government providers and communities;
- formal processes between Commonwealth and jurisdictional governments that clearly say which government is funding which program and which programs require joint funding;
- regional plans and approaches to service provision, supported by better data and more effective government coordination;
- funding provided on a seven-year minimum term; and
- supporting and strengthening the role of regional staff to lead the development of regional plans and to support relational contracting. [10]

## COMMUNITIES FOR CHILDREN FACILITATING PARTNERS

The Communities for Children Facilitating Partners program (CfC FP) model funds organisations as 'Facilitating Partners' to develop local networks for service planning and design. The CfC FP model subcontracts service delivery to 'Community Partners' to provide services that support child wellbeing (such as parenting support, peer support groups and home visits). Several reforms were made to the program in 2014 and in 2016 the implementation of these reforms was reviewed by ACIL Allen.

The review raised issues, especially in remote and very remote areas, about the evidence-based requirements, where by in 2017, 50% of funding needed to be directed at evidence-based funding [17]. Concerns included the narrow definitions of evidence-based, which disadvantaged ACCOs where programs may not have been formally evaluated, despite being effective. This was also highlighted as an issue by the Productivity Commission for the same reason [10]. The review cited the potential impact that this requirement would have on co-design which was the original intention of the program, prescriptive program requirements could impede genuine place-based co-design [17]. This review does not provide extensive insight into the experiences or barriers for ACCOs engaging in the CfC program but does highlight issues with narrow program planning and top-down approaches that are not suited for communities.

## INTENSIVE FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICE / CHILD AND FAMILY INTENSIVE SUPPORT

Established in 2010, the Intensive Family Support Services (IFSS), at the time of the Social Compass review, was delivered by eight providers (five ACCOs) across 26 locations in the Northern Territory and the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara [18]. The IFSS program was intended to provide parenting education and support for families where children have been identified as experiencing or being at high risk of neglect [18]. The evaluation provided 17 key findings that are summarised below.

As a result of the findings from the Social Compass IFSS evaluation and the Productivity Commission's report *Expenditure on Children in the NT*, IFSS was redesigned into Children and Family Intensive Support (CaFIS)(IFSS ceased on 31 October 2021). CaFIS is now in establishing/implementation phase and commenced in November 2021, 11 out of 12 CaFIS providers are ACCOs.<sup>5</sup> The findings of the IFSS Evaluation are useful more broadly across families and children programs, but SNAICC acknowledges that the evaluation findings were a key consideration in the re-design of IFSS to CaFIS.

### *Community engagement and cultural appropriateness*

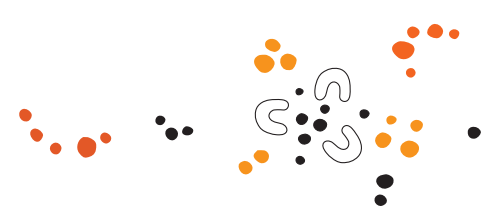
The review found a lack of engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities resulted in the IFSS practice model being inappropriate and requiring significant modification or tailoring by some providers [18]. The absence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community inclusion in the design of the IFSS-led to program materials and assessment tools needing to be adapted to local context [18].

### *Reporting and outcomes*

The lack of culturally appropriate outcome tools resulted in no formal data being available to measure the effectiveness of the IFSS [18]. However, providers had developed ways of measuring changes that-led to the development of a family-focused 'Story of Change' and common criteria for ongoing measurement and evaluation of the IFSS. [18] The Child Neglect Index was intended to be used as the outcome reporting tool, some providers found this inappropriate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and have not used it [18].

5. Correspondence provided to SNAICC from Department of Social Services Family Policy Branch, 30 March 2022





### Workforce

The evaluation found that a sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and bi-cultural teams were essential for effective delivery of the IFSS [18]. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff were able to build relationships and trust with families and provide both clinical and cultural knowledge to service delivery and could be supported by non-Indigenous staff in circumstances where there were cultural reasons why Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff could not work with a family [18]. Staff turnover was a workforce challenge, especially in remote communities [18].

### Partnerships

IFSS providers need to work closely with child protection authorities. This can be difficult due to the historical and continuing removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that creates distrust of these authorities. It was identified that this was not helped by lack of role clarity between IFSS and child protection services and a lack of collaboration and reciprocal information sharing [18].

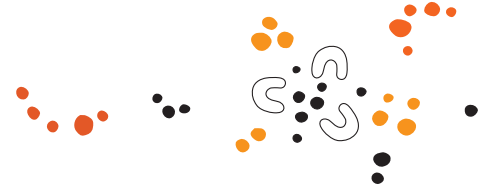
## STRENGTHS

It has long been acknowledged by academics, governments, the sector and most importantly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, that ACCOs are best placed to deliver health and social services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people [3]. Since the early 1970s, ACCOs have been providing culturally appropriate and holistic children and family services and continue to respond to the impacts of Stolen Generations and preventing ongoing child protection intervention [3, 7]. ACCOs not only deliver services but also play an essential role in advocacy, as employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and are an important mechanism for self-determination through community-control of services and service delivery [3, 19, 20]. Most of the current literature is based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) and the delivery of primary health services. An evidence review conducted in 2018 by Campbell et al. reviewed 42 Australian and international peer-reviewed articles and 11 grey literature publications on the benefits of ACCHOs [20]. Key relevant findings from this review on the strengths of ACCHOs included:

- ACCHOs provide integrated and holistic services that result in better outcomes for service users. This is a unique offering in the Australian service landscape where this type of comprehensive care is not typical. ACCHOs offer a wide range of integrated services that include primary health, social and emotional wellbeing, housing, aged care, disability, outreach and children and family services.
- The evidence review included Canadian studies that demonstrated reductions in both hospitalisations and suicide rates among Indigenous people when health services were transferred to community-controlled, compared to populations in areas where services remained in government control. An Australian study of the self-perceived determinants of health found that ACCHOs were empowering and contributed to better health outcomes through culturally safe care and the use of Aboriginal understandings of health. Participants also reported increased health care seeking behaviours and health improvements at both an individual and community level.
- ACCHOs contribute to making the whole service system more culturally safe and accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- ACCHOs are key to leading and developing research on both the burden of disease and the development of evidence-based practices for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- ACCHOs are also advocates for their communities and perform essential functions in pushing for policy reform.
- ACCHOs are also large employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, this has two benefits, the first is that having majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce increases the cultural safety of services making them more accessible for communities and contributing to the health and wellbeing of communities through employment opportunities [20].

While the specific focus on ACCHOs may limit the transferability of findings related to specific programmatic strengths of ACCOs in delivering children and family services, ACCHOs are also key providers of these services. In addition, the strengths of ACCHOs are connected to cultural safety and knowledge, governance, and community connection, these are characteristics of all ACCOs, regardless of their service profiles [20]. The findings





of this report go some way to addressing this gap, however this topic would benefit from further investment to build the evidence base and promote the strengths of and benefit of investing in ACCOs.

What is clear from both the existing literature and decades of advocacy from ACCOs, and communities is that ACCOs are uniquely placed to understand and meet the needs of the communities they serve. This comes from their inherent connection that ACCOs have to community and their use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of being, doing and knowing that enable them to provide culturally safe services that families want to engage with.

## NEEDS

The current funding system has both failed to meet the needs and created additional unmet needs for ACCOs delivering children and family services. For ACCOs to continue to grow their service offerings and ultimately improve outcomes for children and families, the funding environment needs to support organisational stability. This is difficult with current funding models that utilise competitive, short-term grant funding mechanisms for specific and sometimes restrictive programs, keeping ACCOs in what Moran et al. describe as “a perpetual cycle of applying for, and reporting against, grants that have often been provided for very specific purposes with limited or no allowance made to cover the accompanying administration requirements” [p.361] [21].

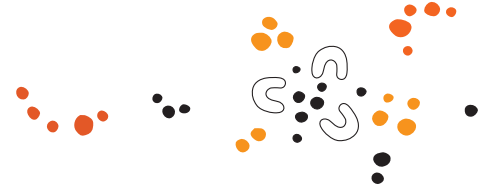
The short-term nature of funding was a consistent theme across the literature. The Productivity Commission found that funding contracts are typically 2-4 years in duration and recommended a change to seven year minimum term funding, which has not yet been taken up by government [10]. These short-term contracts limit ACCOs’ ability to build workforce and organisational capacity, as without long-term funding ACCOs cannot offer permanent contracts to staff, increasing the risk of turnover [8]. This is particularly a problem for ACCOs located in remote areas and other places with thin labour markets [10]. Short term funding can also damage relationships with community, with funding often disappearing by the time that a program has been established and is being of benefit to community. ACCOs need time to build relationships, understand community needs and then design and establish programs. This lead time for essential foundational

work should be considered as core to funding arrangements.

Access to usable data for organisational planning and development as well as program evaluation was a consistent theme across the literature as an unmet need for ACCOs. Linked to the limitations of current reporting requirements measuring outputs instead of meaningful outcomes, this is both a need and barrier to service delivery for ACCOs. The time ACCOs spend meeting reporting requirements for the multiple funding streams from Commonwealth and state/territory governments has an adverse impact on them and service users [22] [9]. In 2020, the Productivity Commission developed the Indigenous Evaluation Strategy through a report looking at current evaluation approaches and developing new ways forward [23]. The report contains concerns about current approaches to monitoring and evaluation being more focused on accountability than outcomes and that these approaches rarely, if ever, include engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people [23]. ACCOs have not been included in decision-making about which programs are evaluated or how that evaluation is done [23]. This of course, becomes an enormous issue for ACCOs applying for funding with evidence-based requirements, if Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are invisible in the evaluation literature, ACCOs will face barriers to meeting evidence-based requirements.

Current approaches emphasise accountability of service providers to government for the use of public funds, which has pushed the burden of administration, and risk on to ACCOs at the cost of wrap-around family-centred service delivery [22]. A new approach that recognises the impact of cumbersome vertical accountability on limiting self-determination and service delivery and the need for relational accountability between governments, ACCOs and communities is needed to achieve Target 12 and Priority Reform Two. A reciprocal approach to sharing data and reporting would support ACCOs to conduct meaningful evaluation of programs and services and would support the Sector Strengthening Plan Key Performance Indicator to support ACCOs in monitoring and evaluation [7]. How monitoring and evaluation can best be community-led, outcomes-focused and embedded in program design and delivery was explored with ACCOs during consultations.





## BARRIERS

Current funding approaches do not support self-determination or appropriately value and prioritise the capabilities of ACCOs. Traditional approaches to grant funding have resulted in ACCOs being accountable to government funding bodies with no mechanism to hold those same bodies accountable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing outcomes [24]. Dwyer et al. (2009) recommend moving away from traditional contracting, defined by competition, rigidity and auditing for control, and toward relational contracting defined by negotiation, collaboration, flexibility, long-term contracts, shared risk, trust and auditing for planning [25].

Current funding processes for children and family services utilise grant and competitive tender processes, involving service providers submitting grant proposals or tender for contracts to deliver services. Reviews of these funding processes by ACCOs as well as independent reviews have raised concerns about competitive processes. ACCOs are put in a position where they compete with each other, which undermines ACCOs' ability to build partnerships, advantages non-Indigenous organisations, creates significant cost and administrative burdens, are not consistent with place-based approaches and lack transparency from government about how much funding is being allocated and to whom [6, 10, 21, 26, 27]. Key findings from SNAICC's consultations with ACCOs on the development of *Safe and Supported* were that current resourcing for the sector is inadequate, in part due to a large proportion of available funds being held by mainstream organisations [6]. Across the literature, the driver of this imbalance of funding was inappropriate funding processes that disadvantage ACCOs, including by valuing low cost of services non-Indigenous organisations might provide over other benefits like cultural capability ACCOs provide [10].

Identifying, applying for and reporting against multiple funding opportunities are currently an enormous time and administration burden on ACCOs [21]. Established in 2014 and administered by the NIAA, the IAS is one of the primary Commonwealth funding mechanisms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and family services, the IAS funds these and related services through programs 1.2 Children and Schooling and 1.3 Safety and Wellbeing [28, 29]. The implementation of the IAS has been subject to

critique including findings from the Senate Inquiry into the Commonwealth IAS Tendering Processes (Senate Inquiry) in 2015 and the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) in both 2017 and 2020 [29-31]. The use of competitive tenders was raised as a problem in several submissions from ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations because these processes disadvantaged smaller organisations who could not invest as many resources into preparing proposals [27, 32]. The Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA) estimated the cost of preparing submissions for the IAS to total \$30,000 [27].

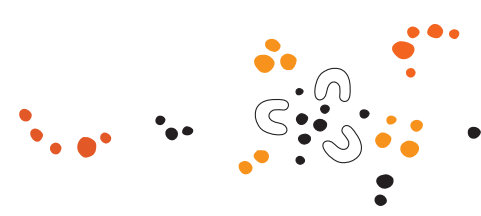
The administrative costs of current funding are exacerbated when ACCOs are dealing with multiple levels of government and departments, all with separate requirements for securing and administering funding [10, 21]. In their study of ACCOs, Dwyer et al. (2009) examined the funding arrangements of a sample of 21 ACCOs across Australia and found that on average, each organisation had 22 funding agreements (range of 6-51) and 60% of the funding agreements were for amounts of less than \$100,000 [25]. The lack of consistency in whole of government approaches and government internal silos result in duplication, gaps and inefficiencies in funding [10, 21]. ACCOs are disadvantaged and overburdened in processes that cost them time and money as they manage application and reporting requirements across multiple programs and levels of government.

Non-competitive procurement processes used to continue funding existing providers are also a barrier for ACCOs. In 2020, ANAO conducted a performance audit on the Children and Schooling and Safety and Wellbeing programs. An important finding from this audit was the allocation of most of the funding (95% of the safety and wellbeing program and 90% of the children and schooling program) being allocated on a non-competitive basis [29]. This included that 80% and 87% respectively of funding for the child and schooling program and the safety and wellbeing program was reallocated to the same providers [29]. It is unclear what proportion of reallocated funding went to ACCOs or non-Indigenous organisations. ACCOs are unable to engage in delivering services if larger non-Indigenous organisations are already receiving funding that is being rolled over, as in the case of the FaC Activity extensions, discussed above.<sup>6</sup>

Competitive and non-competitive processes will continue to be a barrier for ACCOs if there

6. Correspondence provided to SNAICC from the Family Policy Section of the Department of Social Services, 25 November 2020





are no mechanisms in both circumstances to preference ACCOs as service providers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and improve transparency in funding decisions. ANAO recommended in 2020 that the NIAA improve transparency about the amount of available funding to be consistent with the Department of Finance guidance [29]. Danila Dilba Health Service raised significant concerns about the lack of transparency in the IAS tender process, including no information about who was on assessment panels and what proportion of available funding was allocated to ACCOs [33]. The opacity of decision-making in both competitive and non-competitive procurement processes further entrenches vertical accountability between ACCOs and government [6, 26]. ACCOs require increased transparency about funding allocation, renewal and discontinuation for ACCOs to plan services and enable relational accountability with governments [6, 26].

Throughout the literature, the lack of needs assessment and co-design processes with ACCOs and communities has often created a barrier for ACCOs to accessing funding consistent with holistic models of care. This is appropriately summarised by this quote from the Coalition of Peaks consultation report:

“It would be better if Aboriginal people were driving the decisions about which programs to fund: we know what factors are important to disburse the funding rather than a per capita basis.

[Broome, WA]” [p.48] [26]

For funding to be accessible to ACCOs, funding guidelines must accommodate the ways ACCOs deliver services. This includes funding being able to be used to provide cultural support (e.g., going on to country, cultural healing practices) and wrap around, holistic services (e.g., supporting a family to navigate a service system or meet other needs like assisting with getting a birth certificate). The most effective way to achieve this is through ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and ACCOs are leading the development of place-based program and funding design. A clear requirement for funding to work for ACCOs is for it to be flexible in allowing ACCOs to be innovative and responsive to the needs of their communities. Current rigid approaches not only inhibit current best practice for

ACCOs but also their ability to innovate and develop new promising practices.

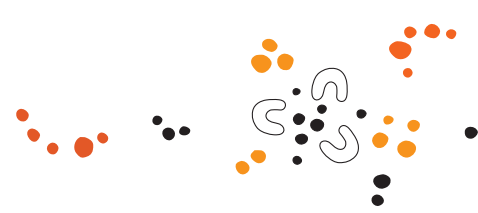
The example of the IFSS is useful to illustrate how top-down program approaches often do not suit the needs of communities, but with flexibility in the funding ACCOs were able to adapt the program to produce good outcomes [18]. In reviewing the IFSS program, Social Compass found that no needs-analysis was conducted in local areas for the IFSS [18]. This made it difficult for service providers to plan, design and deliver effective services [18]. Families engaging with IFSS were often facing housing and food insecurity that impact their ability to engage with services. One of the criticisms of the IFSS was that the program did not enable providers to provide wrap-around support across the social determinants of health and wellbeing through collaborative cross-sector solutions [18]. Similarly, findings from the ANAO report in 2017 on the IAS found that the five programs the IAS used to categorise programs into funding streams were not suitable for ACCOs and it was difficult to classify their programs within the funding programs [30].

Beyond program classifications matching ACCOs best-practice service delivery, other features like prescriptive program manuals offering providers a limited selection of practice approaches to select from and evidence-based requirements can act as barriers to funding for ACCOs.

Through its evaluation of CfC FP, the Productivity Commission found that requirements for 50% of funding directed at evidenced-based activities can disadvantage ACCOs delivering services that are best practice for their communities but may not have yet been extensively formally evaluated [10]. This is a significant problem because ACCOs are often excluded from evaluation design and implementation [23]. These types of requirements for the type of services that can be delivered also limit ACCOs’ ability to be agile in responding to community needs and innovate new solutions [10].

The state and territories have primary responsibility for both the family support and child protection sectors [7]. This results in significant differences in the makeup and funding of the sector across jurisdictions [7]. While not the primary focus of this review, it is worth noting the challenges and additional complexity that can arise for ACCOs funded by state/territory and federal programs. Importantly, differing jurisdictional approaches





mean that Commonwealth funding arrangements must be flexible and responsive to the needs of ACCOs in each state and territory. The Strategic Plan for Funding the Development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector requires that jurisdictional funding allocations should be consistent with the investment priorities of the Joint Council and will be nationally consistent and coherent [8]. The Productivity Commission identified that across Commonwealth and territory funded programs in the NT, there is duplication in some areas and gaps in others [10]. These types of inefficiencies create challenges for ACCOs. This is in part because ACCOs are navigating state and territory funding barriers as well as Commonwealth ones.

Social compass conducted a review of funding to ACCOs in Victoria and found the following primary challenges:

- a lack of understanding of the unique and culturally responsive services delivered by ACCOs, including the cost of delivering Aboriginal-specific services;
- multiple (and different) funding arrangements, represented by various funding arrangements by Victorian Departments to ACCOs;
- lack of flexibility for ACCOs to change how funding is used;
- lack of long-term funding. Current funding is for short-term projects and support the attainment of outputs rather than desired outcomes;
- difficult procurement processes. Compressed timelines for tender response and competition against not-for-profits;
- onerous governance and reporting, including ineffective data collection due to poor ICT infrastructure; and
- inadequate funding to meet the needs of Aboriginal communities, limiting the ability for ACCOs to attract and retain staff, and activate core governance functions. [p.9] [34]

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are rarely involved in processes for allocating funding, with government processes and legislative requirements often excluding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations from these decisions [34]. The duration and structure of funding arrangements were found to be driven by bureaucratic and political processes instead of community need [34]. Aboriginal leaders in Victoria have called for long-term models of pooled funding so ACCOs can undertake long-term planning and exercise self-determination [34].

Barriers to state and territory funding for ACCOs mirror those seen at a Commonwealth level. There are clear and consistent concerns about tender and grants as funding modalities, short-term and inadequate funding, burdensome reporting requirements that are not useful for true program and service delivery evaluation and top-down approaches where funding is driven by government requirements instead of community needs. ACCOs are navigating complicated funding environments for children and family services at all jurisdictional levels.

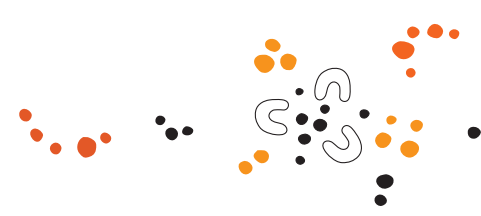
## OPPORTUNITIES

It is clear from the overarching policy frameworks that government and ACCOs have the same goal of improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. Priority Reform Three reflects what Silburn et al. appropriately summarise as “transformation of the nature of the relationship between government and ACCOs is required to ensure available resources are used to maximise the delivery of innovative, comprehensive, holistic services and are not expended on wasteful, over-burdensome reporting and compliance obligations” [p.4][22].

Funding for ACCOs requires significant change to address the challenges created by short term, competitive, and fragmented government approaches. Current funding is often described by ACCOs as inadequate, burdensome and lacking in community control or even consultation in design and delivery. ACCOs must be equal partners with government where funding models and agreements are negotiated collaboratively to create flexible, long-term, and comprehensive funding arrangements. Such an approach would support ACCOs to deliver culturally safe services, build their organisational and workforce capacity and innovate promising practice based on community needs. This was an explicit recommendation from the Productivity Commission who stated that default funding terms should be seven years and move to a relational approach to managing contracts where the focus is on outcomes and building capacity of Aboriginal organisations to deliver services [10].

Prioritising ACCOs as providers of children and family services was also a strong theme in the literature and in existing policy frameworks. Preferred provider policies have been shown to be effective within the IAS where funding to ACCOs has increased from 35% to 60% from 2014 to 2021 [4]. Prioritisation policies are not sufficient on their





own if ACCOs are not able to compete with non-Indigenous organisations on criteria such as capital infrastructure (which ACCOs have been historically locked out of) and cost of services. The cultural knowledge, community relationships and other advantages that ACCOs bring to service delivery must be more heavily weighted in decision-making for services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The historical exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from property ownership and other forms of assets has created an imbalance between ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations. Not having permanent buildings or locations can be a barrier to service delivery [35]. Opportunities to address this issue include government investment in capital works for ACCOs with dedicated funding to enable ACCOs to secure, maintain and expand physical or technological infrastructure and the transfer of infrastructure assets from non-Indigenous organisations and governments to ACCOs. In line with the Strategic Plan on Funding for ACCOs, funding should support the development and sustainability of ACCOs [8]. To be sustainable, ACCOs must have funding for core operational functions, including program design and evaluation. Current funding is not inclusive of the full running costs for ACCOs, limiting their ability to access further funding and to deliver services.

Partnerships can be a useful tool for creating opportunities for ACCOs to deliver children and family services. However, if not approached respectfully, partnership or sub-contracting arrangements can reinforce power differentials and further disadvantage ACCOs. FaC Activity programs utilises partnerships models in the CfC FP program, with the feedback of this model being mixed. There are, however, opportunities to improve partnership approaches and ensure that they are achieving intended outcomes.

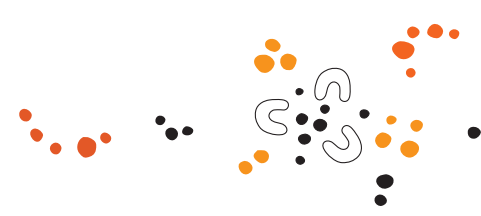
During SNIACC's consultations for the development of *Safe and Supported* and the Sector Strengthening Plan, participants raised concerns about the power imbalance in funding allocation processes, not only between governments and ACCOs, but also between ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations, with much of the Commonwealth funding going to non-Indigenous organisations [6]. The nature of this power imbalance was further explored when participants were asked about the role of non-Indigenous organisations in the sector. Approaches to increasing community control often resulted in governments and non-Indigenous organisations not recognising the capabilities and strengths of ACCOs

and instead focusing only on capacity building in a way that was patronising for established ACCOs [6]. The impact of poor partnerships between Facilitating Partner (non-Indigenous) organisations and Community Partner (ACCHOs) was seen in the implementation review of the 2014 reforms to CfC FP [17]. The Review found Facilitating Partner organisations were given small, short-term contracts and there was limited transparency about decision-making and excessive management of small contracts on Community Partners was imposed [17]. A successful partnership model should involve larger non-Indigenous organisations supporting ACCOs to be the lead partner before stepping away [6].

Partnerships are also impacted by the timeframe for funding applications. In the case of the IAS, ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations provided feedback that the timeline for grant submissions was too short for organisations to develop partnerships, form consortia or engage properly with service users [27, 32]. Danila Dilba Health Service also commented on the incompatibility of such short time frames with ACCOs' governance structures, where board members are required to endorse new partnerships [33]. ACCO board members typically have senior positions in other organisations and are overburdened and geographically dispersed, which makes calling out-of-session meetings with short notice virtually impossible for most organisations [33].

There are existing resources to support ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations form successful partnerships. In partnership with the Australian Institute of Family Studies and DSS, SNAICC published a resource for ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations for establishing partnerships for service delivery and funding applications [36]. In partnership with both community-controlled and non-Indigenous peak bodies, Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory, developed the Partnership Principles for Working with Aboriginal Organisations and Communities in the Northern Territory [37]. Partnership arrangements must be based on non-Indigenous organisations transferring resources to ACCOs with clearly defined ways of working and clear timelines [6]. The role of governments in ensuring this is to provide ACCOs with resources to lead partnerships and by linking features of successful partnerships to funding contracts [6].





## SUMMARY

Inappropriate and inadequate funding of programs limit ACCOs' ability to deliver holistic and culturally safe services. Without these services, the aspirations of the National Agreement in achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities will not be realised. Despite these barriers, ACCOs continue to deliver best-practice services and improve outcomes for children and families. At the heart of the National Agreement is a commitment from government to transform its ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations (Priority Reform Three) to grow and build on existing strengths and building the Aboriginal community-controlled sector (Priority Reform Two). Commitments from all levels of government have created an opportunity for new and innovative approaches to funding that are community-led and co-designed with ACCOs to suit their needs.

## 6. METHODOLOGY

SNAICC utilised a mixed consultation methodology to capture the perspectives of as many ACCOs as possible. An online survey supported by in-depth semi-structured ACCO consultation forums were selected as the most appropriate engagement methods to accommodate the breadth in the type, location, size, and capacity of ACCOs and their wisdom and knowledge of barriers, needs and opportunities. Community consultation forums and an online survey were conducted simultaneously throughout May-June 2022.

The online survey was designed to collect categorical data on the needs, barriers, and opportunities. The survey included 29 questions, that were a combination of multiple-choice questions and short answer responses (see appendix D). Initial questions collected key demographic data, including:

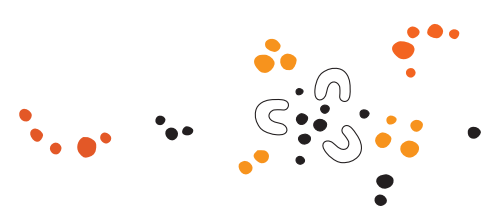
- If the respondent worked for an ACCO or non-Indigenous organisation;
- In what jurisdiction their organisation provides services;
- geographic regions of service delivery (i.e., urban, regional, rural, remote); and
- sources of organisational funding (i.e., DSS, NIAA and state/territory funding)

While primarily designed to collect responses from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently employed by ACCOs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people not currently employed by an ACCO were able to respond and contribute based on previous experience.

ACCO consultation forums were designed to collect in-depth qualitative data through six questions (see Appendix C). Key stakeholder interviews were offered for ACCOs who were unable to attend one of the five consultation sessions. An additional consultation session with the SNAICC Council, made up of elected representatives of the ACCO sector in each state and territory was conducted, with the Council reviewing the final report and recommendations.







## SURVEY PARTICIPATION

The survey received 304 total responses. Of the 304 respondents, 135 were Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people and 107 (35.53%) were currently employed by an ACCO. Of the 107 ACCO respondents, 66 (61.68%) of respondents were currently receiving DSS funding.

A strength of this survey is the representation across jurisdictions and geographic regions. Tables 2 and 3 present ACCO respondents currently receiving Commonwealth funding by jurisdiction and service region.

**Table 2:** ACCO respondents by jurisdiction receiving Commonwealth funding

JURISDICTION	% OF ACCO RESPONDENTS RECEIVING COMMONWEALTH FUNDING	
Australian Capital Territory	1.52%	4
New South Wales	13.64%	21
Northern Territory	16.67%	16
Queensland	21.21%	22
South Australia	16.67%	16
Tasmania	1.52%	3
Victoria	13.64%	16
Western Australia	18.18%	19
<b>Answered: 66</b>		
<b>Skipped: 0</b>		

**Table 3:** ACCO respondents by service delivery region receiving Commonwealth funding

SERVICE DELIVERY REGION	% OF ACCO RESPONDENTS RECEIVING COMMONWEALTH FUNDING	
Metro	42.42%	28
Regional	50.00%	33
Rural	25.76%	17
Remote	31.82%	21
Very Remote	16.67%	11
<b>Answered: 66</b>		
<b>Skipped: 0</b>		

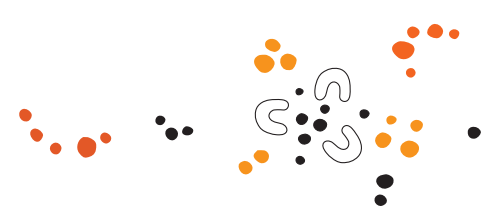
## CONSULTATION / KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW PARTICIPATION

Five semi-structured focus group discussions were held with ACCOs from across the country throughout May 2022. Invitations were circulated throughout SNAICC's membership and broader network. ACCOs that could not attend consultation forums were offered key stakeholder interviews, with three (3) ACCOs taking up this offer. Two additional targeted consultation sessions were held with the with SNAICC council members and with peak bodies and state and territory children's commissioners. Table 4 presents consultation forum participants by jurisdiction and service type.

**Table 4:** ACCO consultation forum participation by jurisdiction and service type

JURISDICTION	EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES	CHILDREN AND FAMILY SUPPORT / HEALTH SERVICES	PEAK / COMMISSIONER
NSW	8	2	
TAS		2	
SA		2	
NT		3	1
QLD		3	1
VIC	1	2	
WA		6	
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>2</b>





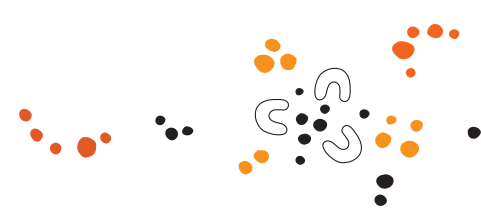
## 7. FINDINGS

The survey and consultation forums aimed to answer four questions (listed on page 27) across four domains of Commonwealth funding to ACCOs for children and family services. Table 5 presents a summary of the key findings under each of the domains.

**Table 5:** Findings summary table

STRENGTHS	
<b>A. ACCOs are inextricably connected to the communities they serve</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ACCOs know their communities, and this results in more targeted and responsive service delivery</li> <li>- ACCOs are accountable to their communities, and this drives high quality service delivery</li> </ul>
<b>B. ACCOs use a holistic model of care to deliver integrated and culturally safe services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ACCOs are culturally safe and have existing relationships, and this results in better access to services for families</li> <li>- ACCOs use models of care that result in better health and wellbeing outcomes by being 'one stop shops' for families</li> </ul>
BARRIERS	
<b>C. Lack of community control in program design and funding allocation processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Current top-down approaches to funding do not support self-determination</li> <li>- The funding priorities being set by government do not always line up with community needs or aspirations</li> <li>- Programs and services designed by government without community-led decision-making processes do not work for ACCOs or communities</li> <li>- Criteria for assessing the merit of grant opportunities do not appropriately weight the cultural strengths of ACCOs and advantage larger non-Indigenous NGOs</li> </ul>
<b>D. Funding processes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Funding processes are time consuming for already under resourced organisations</li> <li>- Funding processes and criteria for assessing the merit of grant opportunities advantage larger non-Indigenous NGOs</li> <li>- Processes need to be simplified and navigation must be improved to reduce the burden of identifying and applying for funding</li> </ul>
<b>E. Funding doesn't match the model of care</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Program guidelines do not match ACCOs' model of holistic and integrated care</li> <li>- Funding is siloed and deficits based</li> <li>- Funding models do not account for the cultural care that ACCOs need to be able to provide to communities</li> <li>- Funding is insufficient to cover the true costs of service delivery</li> </ul>
<b>F. Poor partnerships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Partnerships were not a preferred mode of funding services for ACCOs</li> <li>- Non-Indigenous organisations benefit from both receiving funding and then relying on ACCOs to facilitate programs</li> <li>- ACCOs feel taken advantage of in poor partnerships</li> <li>- The capabilities of ACCOs are not respected in current partnership models</li> </ul>
<b>G. Reporting burdens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reporting requirements are time consuming and take time away from service delivery</li> </ul>





## NEEDS

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>H. Resources for core operational functions and infrastructure</b> | - ACCOs need core operational funding and infrastructure to develop and grow   |
| <b>I. Data, evaluation, and research</b>                              | - ACCOs need access to data, evaluation and research that is community led     |
| <b>J. Stability in funding agreements</b>                             | - Long term funding is needed for growth, development, and workforce stability |

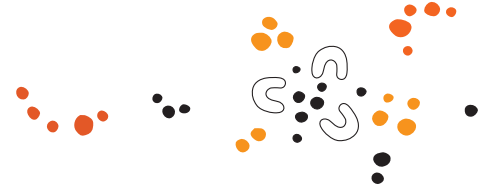
## OPPORTUNITIES

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>K. Improving navigation and support resources</b>  | - Implementing a centralised ACCO specific grant portal   |
| <b>L. Building government capacity to support ACCOs and undertake funding reform including:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Understanding how ACCOs deliver services and the role ACCOs play in community</li> <li>- Using community-led decision-making processes</li> <li>- Utilising existing and strengthening accountability mechanisms to ACCOs and communities</li> <li>- Addressing racism and increasing cultural appropriateness in procurement processes</li> <li>- Overcoming siloed approaches to funding and supporting integrated service delivery</li> </ul> |

## Domain questions

<b>Strengths</b>	What are the strengths of ACCOs in delivering children and family services and why it is important to increase funding to ACCOs?
<b>Needs</b>	What are the unmet needs of ACCOs for accessing funding and delivering children and family services?
<b>Barriers</b>	What are the barriers that ACCOs face to accessing Commonwealth funding for and delivering children and family services?
<b>Opportunities</b>	What are the opportunities for the Commonwealth Government to meet the needs of ACCOs and address the barriers?





## STRENGTHS

**What are the strengths of ACCOs in delivering children and family services and why it is important to increase funding to ACCOs?**

### A. ACCOS ARE INEXTRICABLY CONNECTED TO THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE

When asked about the strengths of ACCOs and why it is important to have ACCOs involved in the delivery of children and family services, participants universally commented on the connection that ACCOs have to the communities they serve. ACCOs described their relationships with community as one of accountability and care. Participants described how being an ACCO and having staff and leadership teams that are a part of the community means that every part of the organisation is a part of and accountable to community. This sense of deep accountability to community informs service delivery and operational decision making for ACCOs. Many participants described the unpaid labor that ACCOs and their staff do to meet the needs of community in the limited funding environment.

“The community comes first in our eyes we do what we need to do to help our communities.”

Consultation participant SA

The connection and accountability that ACCOs have to community makes them uniquely placed to identify the services and supports that are most needed or wanted on a local level. Participants commented on the establishment of their organisations through grassroots organising and the recognition of an unmet need in community. There was significant frustration that the current funding model does not allow ACCOs to fully utilise this specialised knowledge due to funding priorities not being set by communities and ACCOs.

“We started because we saw a huge need - there was no support for women that needed significant support”

Consultation participant, WA

“We saw a gap in early intervention and prevention for our families that we needed to fill”

Key stakeholder interview, NSW

The knowledge and connections that ACCOs have to their community is also a significant strength in engaging people with and delivering services. Participants provided numerous examples of how the trusted position of ACCOs in community is key to high quality service delivery. This was seen to be especially important in the context of children and family support services, because of the fear many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families feel about accessing services delivered by non-Indigenous organisations. The existing trust and relationships ACCOs have with communities support better engagement in services.

“ACCOs have cultural sensitivity and connection to community, we are respected in community and that helps us deliver services.”

Consultation participant, NSW

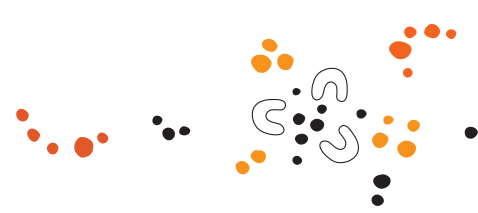
“Our relationships with community places us in a position to provide culturally safe and appropriate services, we have trusted relationships across generations of families, this helps us engage people across other programs.”

Consultation participant, TAS

### B. ACCOS USE A HOLISTIC MODEL OF CARE TO DELIVER INTEGRATED, WRAPAROUND, AND CULTURALLY SAFE SERVICES

ACCOs are ‘one-stop-shops’ and the services they provide are driven by what communities want and need. This was described as being at odds with the funding silos that government create to categorise services. When a need in the community is identified, ACCOs respond to meet the need by connecting services together to provide wraparound support that includes cultural care and connection. This is different from non-Indigenous services and from statutory agency workers who consultation participants saw as undervaluing relational and cultural elements of service delivery. Participants described how ACCOs’ inherent connection to community enabled them to identify needs and





gaps between services across the life course. Participants consistently reported that ACCOs deliver services using a holistic and integrated model of care and current funding modalities are incompatible with this kind of service delivery. It is the wraparound support services that provide better outcomes for communities. The type of integrated services ACCOs provide include health, healing, social and emotional wellbeing and children and family services. This model of holistic service provision was seen by participants as one of the key strengths of ACCOs that is not currently supported by the funding models used by any level of government.

“We are not judgemental, we understand the strengths and challenges, and we stand on the same ground, people can just come and go as they need to”

Consultation participant, NSW

“We are grounded in our culture. It is about our model of care, culture is the foundation of our service, we use a strengths-based approach and the community trust us, and we have a high proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers. That is what makes us unique”

Consultation participant, NSW

In the consultation forums along with the benefits of accessible, culturally safe, integrated, and holistic services for service users, ACCOs also talked extensively about the role that ACCOs play as employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Multiple ACCOs told us that having a local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce was a key strength of both the organisation and specific programs.

“We are proud that we are an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation, we have a strong board and governance, and we have good representation in the community, and we have local staff with strong standing and reputations in the community”

Consultation participant, NT

## BARRIERS

**What are the barriers that ACCOs face to accessing commonwealth funding for and delivering children and family services?**

### C. LACK OF COMMUNITY-CONTROL IN PROGRAM DESIGN AND FUNDING ALLOCATION PROCESSES

Underpinning all the key themes in the consultations was the need for principles of self-determination and community-control to inform every part of the funding model for ACCOs. When discussing barriers to accessing funding, participants described the absence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations involved in every stage of program design and funding allocation as being a driver of the process barriers. This was seen to be an overarching barrier to accessing funding and service delivery, as one participant described:

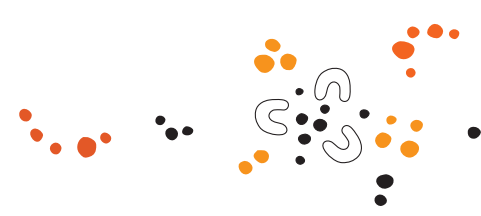
“It is less about the particular mechanisms ACCOs have to go through to get funding, the barriers are values, the principles each party holds to when working in these spaces. There is a real gap in self-determination, funding is driven by Governments, ACCOs need to be driving the agenda on what needs to be funded”

Consultation participant, QLD

#### *Assessing needs and setting priorities*

Participants shared the challenges of funding priorities being driven by government agendas from the top down. This was seen to reinforce the strengths of ACCOs being undervalued, including their localised knowledge about the needs of their communities and how funding can be directed towards solutions that work best. Of survey respondents currently working in ACCOs, when asked about what made it harder for ACCOs to access funding, 56.79% (n=46) indicated funding programs match community needs or priorities. When asked what would make it easier for ACCOs to access funding, 76.54% (n=62) identified allocation





of funding based on community need. The lack of alignment between funding programs and community needs was also a barrier to service delivery. When asked what makes service delivery difficult for ACCOs, 62.82% (n=49) identified the same issue of funding programs not matching community needs.

“Our mob are forever having to respond to the funding rather than ACCOs and community being able to drive the priorities”  
Consultation participant, QLD

“Being really strong in the community and being that ACCO, we have a good understanding of what our communities need and that isn’t valued by funders. By the time funding gets to an ACCO the decisions have already been made, we have good governance structures, strong leadership team and staff and we see the needs of our community.”  
Consultation participant, NSW

“Community needs don’t necessarily match up with Government Funding opportunities and we’re always competing against other agencies who have greater resources available to them. ACCHO’s should always be given the opportunity to access Social Services Funding in relation to vulnerable children because ACCHO’s have resources to support families staying together.”  
ACCO survey respondent

When asked about what would help address this issue, 76.92% (n=60) of ACCO respondents said funding programs needed to be flexible which includes giving ACCOs the ability to pool funding programs so they can use funding in line with community needs. Consultation participants were clear that DSS and all of government needed to engage in community--led decision-making to enable self-determination and acknowledge the expertise of ACCOs and communities to identify their own priorities and the way services are delivered.

### *Program design*

The lack of community--led decision-making in the design of operational guidelines, was a frustration and barrier for ACCOs. Operational guidelines are driven by top-down approaches to problem identification, with design of solutions not inclusive

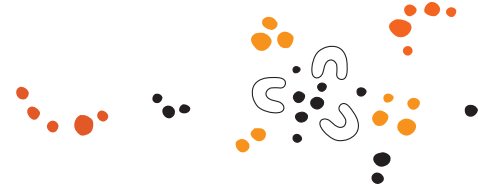
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander approaches and knowledge about health and wellbeing. Of ACCO survey respondents, 61.73% (n=50) identified a lack of community engagement in the design of programs/services as a barrier to accessing funding.

When asked what changes would make it easier for ACCOs to successfully apply for government funding, 70.37% (n=57) of ACCO respondents identified negotiated funding agreements between ACCOs and funders. When survey respondents were asked if they wanted to provide any additional information about funding barriers (see appendix D), ACCO and community-led program design and decision-making was a key theme in the short answer responses. This was reinforced by consultation participants, many of whom raised the need for community-led decision-making in program design. It was also identified that adequately funding programs would make funding more accessible by making it easier for ACCOs to identify sustainable funding opportunities that align with holistic ACCO service delivery modes, such as the deliver services in culturally safe and responsive ways in line with community needs.

“The funding is impacted by what the government see as important or what they think you should be doing. Our view of primary health care is holistic, it is a circle with everything being connected including trauma and healing, early years, everything. Government has a very narrow view of health and wellbeing, and we have to try and work within that. We need more funding to work with families to keep them together, there is no evidence that removing children is good or works better than supporting families with the services they need, we need to be able to provide things like mental health and drug and alcohol supports that would help keep families together, but we take this to government, and it falls on deaf ears. ACCOs are in the perfect position to lead the design of programs, if government do it we will get some watered down version that we will have to fix or try and work around, we need to be really involved in the design of any programs to support families, they [government] put these things together without knowing what is happening on the ground.”

Consultation participant, SA





“First Nations people need to be at the heart of decision making and employed to engage with stakeholders”

ACCO survey respondent

“Delivery of programs to be inclusive of community need, and delivered culturally safe to families, to support healing and better outcomes for families. Funding should not be dictated by departmental need for KPI outcomes. Community and families need to show self-determination in program delivery and how the programs are developed and delivered to meet the needs for the families.”

ACCO survey respondent

### *Allocation of funding*

Participants also spoke about the important role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the process of creating selection criteria for funding agreements and deciding on funding allocation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people bring a unique understanding of whether a service is culturally safe and appropriate to address the needs of their families and communities but are excluded from decisions about who receives funding and what standards they must meet. Throughout the consultations, ACCOs shared how this is connected to the undervaluing of the strengths of ACCOs. The absence of community-led decision-making or community priorities in the criteria for assessing grant applications demonstrates the lack of understanding from Government about what is required to deliver high quality, culturally safe services. Participants felt strongly that both the criteria and procedures for assessing funding applications need to be reformed to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be on the panels when deciding who should be funded, especially if the funds are specifically to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

ACCO survey respondent

“Delivery of funding is strengthened when first nations people are the decision making and leadership teams”

ACCO survey respondent

“The criteria established by the government departments are established (the majority of times) by non-Indigenous people or department staff. This is the problem that sets up a snowball effect which locks mob out from engaging in the funding process. If the funds are quarantined for Indigenous people, then why the need for all the criteria that locks out access! Who assesses these funding applications? I can guarantee they are not Indigenous.”

ACCO survey respondent

“The funding criteria should be written by Indigenous people who understand community...”

ACCO survey respondent

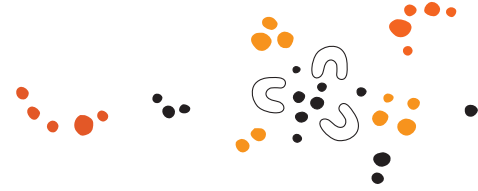
## D. FUNDING PROCESSES

Competitive grant and tender processes were consistently raised by ACCOs as a barrier to accessing funding. There were both challenges in the processes for applying for and managing funding agreements and principle-driven issues in how the current funding environment does not support self-determination. Process-driven challenges included time and expertise required to identify, apply for and secure new funding. When asked in the survey how easy processes are for applying for government funding generally, 53.09% (n=43) of respondents selected ‘difficult’ and 19.75% (n=16) selected ‘very difficult’.

Funding processes were also a common response when asked what factors make it difficult for ACCOs to access funding, 56.79% (n=46) of survey respondents said that competitive grant/tender processes are a barrier to accessing funding. 69.14% (n=56) of survey respondents said that applying for funding is time consuming and 43.21% (n=35) said that application processes are complicated.

When asked what would improve procurement and grant processes to make funding easier for ACCOs to access, survey respondents and consultation participants commented on the accessibility of information about funding and the need for transparency and simplified processes. The need for funding processes to be designed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations was also emphasised.





“What about for community organisations where English is not a first language. What kind of barriers are in the way? Forcing an organisation to have to employ someone from outside to write for whitefellas way to get funding. We need to be able to exercise our right to self-determination.”

ACCO survey respondent

“There is a bias in the application process whereby it appears that non-indigenous orgs are considered more capable to deliver services to Indigenous peoples where this is actually not true as these organisations approach ACCOS to assist with service delivery and offer no funds. This is pitched as partnerships.”

ACCO survey respondent

ACCOs reported significant challenges with identifying all the available funding opportunities before even reaching the point of applying for funding. Participants pointed out considerable time is required to identify and sort through all possible funding available and managing this requires almost an entire full-time role. In the meantime, they would miss out on opportunities to secure new funding.

Participants described the challenge of putting forward competitive business cases for funding when competing against large organisations with significant economies of scale that allow them to put forward stronger business cases in terms of cost effectiveness. They point out that in current procurement processes, this cost benefit is valued more highly than the cultural safety, skills, and relationships that ACCOs provide.

“Knowledge is key - unless you have previously received commonwealth funding people may not be notified that funding is available - unfortunately many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations find out about funds available when they are contacted by non-Indigenous organisations that want to partner with them to strengthen their own application.”

ACCO survey respondent

“Larger organisations have economies of scale so they can absorb overheads and administration costs that ACCOs just can't. Big organisations might be cheaper but ACCOs provide value that non-Indigenous organisations just can't.”

Consultation participant, NT

“Being aware of what range of funding sources there are for the type of activities our ACCO carries out for our community. We have a tender search process that does not capture as much as we would like, and we are also aware of extraordinary funding from time to time that seems to go to non-ACCO organisations.”

ACCO survey respondent

The use of competitive tendering processes was also identified as a barrier to fostering collaboration across the sector. Participants voiced significant frustration with having to compete with non-Indigenous organisations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific programs, and upon losing to those organisations being approached by them for assistance with community engagement or cultural knowledge.

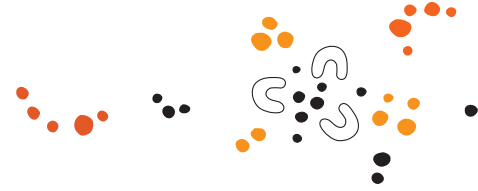
ACCOs who participated in consultations and the survey reported that there was a bias and preference for non-Indigenous organisations in the procurement processes. ACCOs provided many examples where funding for Aboriginal programs was being directed to non-Indigenous organisations despite these organisations not delivering culturally safe services.

“ACCOs have to compete with organisations (both NGOs and other ACCOs) makes everything competitive rather than collaborative.”

ACCO survey respondent







"I have worked in the ACCO sector for past 15 years and when funding is released the big money goes to organisations like Anglicare, Mission Australia, Catholicare and the Salvation Army, they get the multi-million-dollar funding and ACCO's get what's left. If we are lucky, we get a couple hundred thousand to run programs for 6 months to 1 year which makes it hard for ACCOs to find and keep good staff as we can't give them job security. Funny thing is once these big organisations get the millions, they then come to small organisations like us asking how we run our programs. I tell them no, we are not meeting with you, you got the big funding over us so obviously you know what you are doing better than us, that's why you got the funding!"

ACCO survey respondent

When asked what changes should be made to increase the amount of funding to ACCOs for children and family services, participants supported the use of preferred provider or right-of-first-refusal principles in procurement processes. Of survey respondents currently working at an ACCO, 85.19% (n=69) of respondents said that ACCOs being made the preferred provider for services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people would assist ACCOs in being more successful in securing funding. In the consultation forums there was consensus among participants that the most effective way to overcome the disproportionately low level of funding currently being directed to ACCOs was to quarantine a proportion for only ACCOs. There was a lack of trust that non-enforceable commitments from government or non-Indigenous organisations to increase or transition funding to ACCOs would be enough. Across all forums participants recommended that there be dedicated protected funding for ACCOs. This would ensure government could not direct funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services to non-Indigenous organisations and would prevent non-Indigenous organisations competing with ACCOs for funding.

"Equal distribution of funding needs to be first and foremost. We always hear that faith-based organisations are always given first preference for funding. This has always been a problem."

ACCO survey respondent

"The government needs to make active efforts to overcome bias in the allocation of funding."

ACCO survey respondent

"Ensure that Aboriginal outcome funding is limited only to Aboriginal Community-Controlled organisations to deliver the service."

ACCO survey respondent

## E. FUNDING DOESN'T MATCH THE MODEL OF CARE

When asked about barriers to delivering FaC Activity programs and other children and family services, participants described the difficulties of program guidelines not being aligned with the holistic and culturally responsive way that ACCOs deliver services. Among ACCO survey respondents, 73.08% (n=57) said that funding is not flexible enough to support service delivery.

"...Mob see and view our world through a holistic prism. Government still wants to segment and compartmentalise funding based on their criteria..."

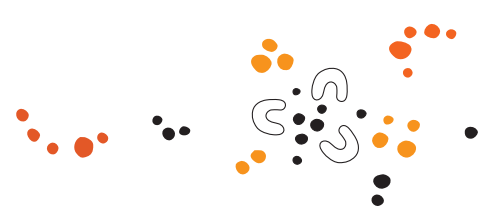
ACCO survey respondent

Participants described how funding is designed around deficits or problems and how governments see the solutions. This narrow view misses the importance of cultural connection, engagement and relationship work that ACCOs provide.

"Community needs don't necessarily match up with Government Funding opportunities and we're always competing against other agencies who have greater resources available to them. ACCOs should always be given the opportunity to access Social Services funding in relation to vulnerable children because ACCOs have resources to support families staying together."

ACCO survey respondent





Participants also reported that the amount of funding provided was insufficient to cover the true costs of running programs. This included that funding was not inclusive of lead-time for establishing programs.

“It takes time to set up a program, you have to get staff and set up processes and bring the community on board, these things take time, and they don’t understand that.”

Consultation participant, VIC

The silos of funding programs were often raised by both consultation and survey participants as being the driver of the incompatibility between funding and ACCO service delivery.

“Yes, can we not segment the funding anymore. Can we start to fund and think holistically about how we mobilise funding and people (our mob) to bring about sustained change for us, our families, and our communities.”

ACCO survey respondent

## F. INADEQUATE PARTNERSHIPS AND SUB-CONTRACTING ARRANGEMENTS

Participants were asked about the use of partnership models in the delivery of children and family services in both the consultation discussions and the survey. In the survey, 28.21% (n=22) of ACCO respondents identified poor partnerships with non-Indigenous organisations as a barrier to service delivery. Of ACCO respondents, 43.06% (n=31) felt partnerships could be a useful way of increasing the number of ACCOs delivering children and family services, 22.22% (n=16) did not think partnerships were a good method for this and 34.72% (n=25) were not sure. These results are most likely due to the varied experiences of ACCOs with partnership models. Participants had a wide range of experiences of receiving funding in partnership / sub-contracting models that depended on several factors.

“For a partnership approach to be successful it needs to be meaningful, non-tokenistic, with a reasonable amount of trust developed between both parties prior to it being recognised as a ‘genuine’ partnership.

Our experiences have been the opposite of this with non-Indigenous agencies using a partnership with us as an ACCHO to either gain funding of their own (i.e., tokenistic) or partnering with the ACCHO to carry out all the work they are funded for. The reliance on the ACCHO to do the work is a frequent experience, where Indigenous funding sits within a non-Indigenous agency and there are no established trust or community connections and the model is not culturally responsive, the community does not engage (unless facilitated by the ACCHO).”

ACCO survey respondent

Participants also repeatedly raised issues with the amount of funding reaching ACCOs and the reduced autonomy in using that funding through partnership arrangements.

“I am so disappointed when the funding comes through a non-Indigenous organisation, by the time the funding gets to us we are being told how to use it and we try to run the programs their way, but it doesn’t work for our communities and then we don’t get the program numbers because people don’t want to come.”

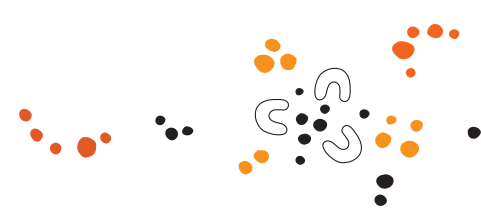
Consultation participant, WA

“Partnerships models are so frustrating, I feel almost deflated, we have been saying these same things for 30 years, and when are we going to be listened to? When is funding going to stop being wasted, the funding gets reduced, with organisations like the Salvos taking their cut, barely any of the funding makes it to the community and it is so frustrating.”

Consultation participant, TAS

Partnership models were generally approached with trepidation by participants. Features of good partnerships were agreed to be ones based on trust and respect for the cultural knowledge that ACCOs bring to partnerships and service delivery. Many participants felt frustrated at non-Indigenous organisations taking cultural intellectual property and not appropriately compensating the ACCOs for their time or expertise.





“It annoys me when we partner with non-Indigenous organisations, we give them a huge amount of cultural intellectual property and we should be funded for that. If we are giving cultural advice, why aren’t we funded for that? It is about how they fund mainstream organisations, they don’t fund them to pay ACCOs for their knowledge and that is such a clear message, if you value something you fund it and because it is not funded it is not seen as valid.”

Consultation participant, VIC

Survey respondents were asked if they currently deliver HIPPY and/or Community for Children for Facilitating Partners (CfC FP), only 6.94% (n=5) of respondents said they delivered either HIPPY or CfC FP and 7.78% (n=2) reported delivering both. A limitation of the data set is that it is not possible to determine for sure if multiple responses have come from one ACCO, but from using collected demographic data (jurisdiction and region) it appears that these responses have not come from the same ACCO. ACCOs who identified as delivering these programs identified small funding amounts as a challenge and stated that funding going directly to ACCOs would be preferable.

The importance of genuine partnership and the risks of funding models that seek for mainstream organisations to simply partner with ACCOs were raised by respondents and should be carefully considered in part two. For example, one respondent described their partnering experience with a CfC FP as “horrendous” due to the controlling nature of the non-Indigenous organisations (facilitating partner) over the ACCO (community partner). This is worrying in the context of part two of the Stronger ACCO, Stronger Families initiative, where the HIPPY and CfC FP programs are the focus for a trial involving an ACCO or Indigenous Organisation building the capability of and relationships between ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations.

## G. REPORTING BURDENS

All consultation participants agreed that current reporting requirements for funding were burdensome and detracted from service delivery time. ACCOs were clear they understand the importance of ensuring accountability for the use of funding and that this could be a valuable resource for their organisational planning and program evaluation. It was the number of different reporting requirements, the duplication and output driven priorities that created frustration for ACCOs. Smaller organisations reported losing days of staff time to meeting reporting requirements.

“We need to be able to concentrate on who we need to help, we need to go back to budget based funding, surely there is a bottom line of some common sense – we are spending all of our time servicing the system instead of families.”

Consultation participant, NSW

“Management of funds also takes a huge amount of admin time, and not usually factored into funding applications. I have got to the stage where I need to find a balance and often do not apply for all the above reasons.”

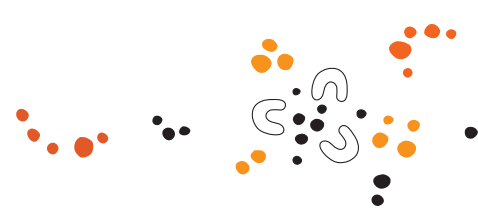
ACCO survey respondent

“Too much time wasted on reporting requirements that offer very little in terms of meaningfully recording what we are doing and what the real outcomes are.”

ACCO survey respondent

In addition to the time spent on reporting requirements, participants also felt frustrated by the limited usefulness of the reporting criteria and requirements, which do not accurately reflect the complete picture of the services ACCOs provide or outcomes they achieve.





“There is often a mismatch between what creative community service deliver looks like versus the mandates of reporting. Cumulative benefits and whole of family supports are expected to be reported against in finite cause and effect protocols. Longitudinal benefits of building connection, increased yarning space and themes of trust and wellbeing and not valued or collated and undermine rich successes in serving community.”

ACCO survey respondent

“Every quarter, we have over 40 reports with different systems to provide and these are completely built to meet the needs of funders not us. And we can’t use this for our own purposes, because we are not a part of building the system.”

Consultation participant, NSW

The burden of fulfilling reporting requirements is compounded by the duplication of data between states and territories and the Commonwealth. Participants felt strongly that the Commonwealth and states and territories needed to work together to streamline data collection systems and ensure that ACCOs have useable data for their own planning and development.

“To start with we must get the states and the Commonwealth talking to each other, ACCOs are having to duplicate the same information over and over again for funding applications and reporting requirements. Surely, they can get together and share the data, they have the resources, why are we sending the same information to them separately?”

Consultation participant, NSW

Participants also raised the lack of acknowledgement from Government of the complex needs of ACCOs’ clients and how this can impact their ability to meet Key Performance Indicators. There was a feeling that reporting requirements did not accurately reflect the work and outcomes achieved by ACCOs and often penalised them while not holding non-Indigenous organisations accountable for their engagement or outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres children and families.

“If we don’t meet our targets, we are held accountable. But if mainstream don’t meet their targets for engaging with Aboriginal families there are no consequences.”

Consultation participant, VIC

## NEEDS

**What are the unmet needs of ACCOs for accessing funding and delivering children and family services?**

### H. RESOURCES FOR CORE OPERATIONAL FUNCTIONS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Participants repeatedly raised that ACCOs have a significant unmet need for resourcing their core operational function, which is not covered in program funding. A key strength of ACCOs is that they are local organisations founded in local cultural knowledge, understanding and relationships. But this local and cultural capability is undermined where government funding processes prioritise larger, mainstream, ‘generic’ organisations that draw core resourcing through economies of scale but cannot effectively engage and support families.

“There is a lack of understanding that to stand up a program you need a significant proportion of funding going to corporate, HR and IT, especially small organisations.”

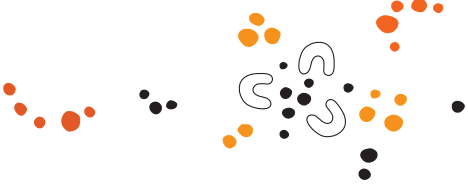
Consultation participant, VIC

“Give us funding for policy and grant writing staff, we need core funding for administration. We have been asked to reduce the admin in fee in our funding, how are you supposed to run anything if you can’t have that admin funding? There is no acknowledgement of research burden and no funding for that, no funding or acknowledgement of the time it takes to develop a culturally safe non-Indigenous workforce. There is all this focus on partnerships, but Aboriginal money should come to us not come through non-Indigenous organisations.”

Consultation participant, VIC

Survey participants were asked about their infrastructure needs, 75.34% (n=55) of question respondents said that their organisation had an unmet need for infrastructure. Respondents raised housing for staff, permanent service delivery premises, expanding sites as services grow,





and outreach sites as being key unmet needs that impact service delivery. Consultation participants also raised unmet needs for infrastructure investment.

“We need capital funding, we are bursting at the seams and that is not uncommon for ACCOs, it is not just corporate space but also outside space for cultural engagement programs, we need purpose-built spaces that meet accessibility requirements.”

Consultation participant, WA

“Not having permanent premises makes it difficult to have stability and security. We have to rely on other people/ organisations to use their facilities/venues which again makes things difficult.”

ACCO survey respondent

## I. DATA, EVALUATION, AND RESEARCH

Connected to both the challenge of current reporting requirements and insufficient funding to support ACCO development were concerns regarding data, evaluation, and research. Participants noted that current approaches to data, evaluation and research can be exploitative and extractive. With data only being shared in one direction, that being up to government or research institutions instead of aligning with principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and ensuring that data is useful and beneficial for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This is important because of all government’s existing commitment to share regional level data with ACCOs under the National Agreement - Priority Reform Four. Participants also shared frustration with not being funded to undertake program evaluations or utilise data effectively to support business cases for funding or meet evidence-based program requirements.

“Investment into community-based research to strengthen Aboriginal evidence and ethical research practices for and by Aboriginal communities. This is an opportunity to build local Aboriginal data sovereignty principles and practicing self-determination.”

ACCO survey respondent

“We need data to help us plan where to prioritise funds and where to target programs and funding applications based on need; we need to be able to influence other areas families need support in such as housing and education, as we can't help with areas that are not resourced adequately (can't get a family safe housing if nothing available).”

ACCO survey respondent

## J. STABILITY IN FUNDING AGREEMENTS

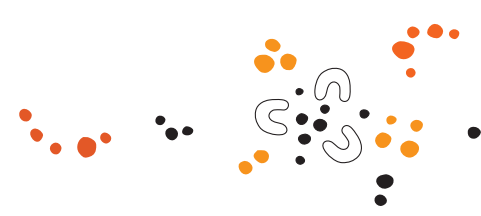
Participants across all consultation forums expressed frustrations with the short-term nature of current funding and the instability that this creates for ACCOs for their organisation planning. This was articulated as creating a challenge for recruiting and retaining an appropriately skilled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce.

“We need longer term funding, early intervention takes time, contract timeframes really impact our ability to retain staff, we have constant movement of staff.”

Consultation participant, QLD

The instability in funding arrangements causes enormous problems in workforce management for ACCOs. Throughout the consultations, ACCOs named workforce as a key barrier to the delivery of children and family services. This was supported by the survey results where 70% (n=55) of respondents identified that support for workforce recruitment, retention, and development would alleviate service delivery challenges and lead to better outcomes and organisational capacity. When asked about the key challenges in workforce, 84% (n=61) of survey respondents identified that short term funding arrangements are a key barrier to recruitment and retention of staff. This was the most commonly identified barrier followed by 74% (n=54) of respondents naming insufficient funding to cover required staff, pay parity between the community-controlled sector and mainstream/government and recruiting staff with the required qualifications.





“We need money for more positions, our workers are overworked and have high caseloads. We have hired a mental health worker that we really needed but we are having to fund that role ourselves, we can’t get funding anywhere for mental health workers.”

Consultation participant WA

“I spend most nights working, we only have five part-time staff and run primarily off of volunteers.”

Key stakeholder interview, NSW

“As a primary health service, we see the gaps in early intervention, from talking to our nurses there are so many delays in being able to access early intervention services. We have just brought in roles that we don’t have funding for to fill gaps, we want to deliver holistic services but there are so many gaps, funders drip feed the funding to us, and then it is so hard to make it work.”

Consultation participant, NSW

When asked about solutions to workforce challenges all provided options received over 60% agreement from respondents, 82.19% (n=60) of respondents identified funding for workforce development; 79.45% (n=58) identified mentoring and support for workers; 79.45% (n=58) long term funding; 75.34% (n=55) A national approach to expanding and building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and family services workforce; 71.23% (n=52) funded places in relevant qualifications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; 64.38% (n=47) retention bonuses; rural and remote workforce subsidies 61.64% (n=45). Other suggestions included a dedicated proportion of program funding being directed to workforce development.

Consistent with the findings from the existing literature, ACCOs have raised the importance of workforce development, primarily, increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across all roles and levels (from direct practitioners through to senior management) in the children and family services workforce [6].

## OPPORTUNITIES

**What are the opportunities for the Commonwealth Government to meet the needs of ACCOs and addressing barriers?**

### K. IMPROVING NAVIGATION AND SUPPORT RESOURCES

Based on the barriers and needs that were identified throughout the consultation forums, participants were asked to identify opportunities for increasing the capacity of ACCOs to access funding. Participants made a range of recommendations around improving the navigation of Commonwealth Government funding opportunities that included centralised sources of information. Acknowledging the existence of DSS’ Community Grants Hub, this was either not sufficiently promoted or is not meeting the needs of ACCOs.

“A portal for ACCHO’s should contain relevant funding available and ACCHO’s should be registered to access this portal.”

ACCO survey respondent

“A central point listing all available government funding opportunities would be useful.”

Survey respondent

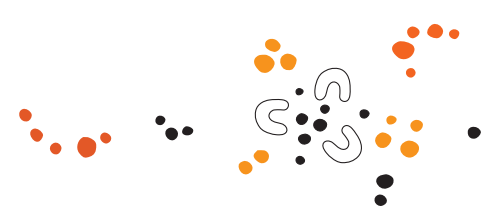
“We need to have dedicated Gov staff who engage with community organisations to work with us BEFORE funds are available, to assist with information to organisations, to provide understanding of how to apply and to provide application support along the way, point us in the direction of other sources of funding, or innovative ways to manage funds and deliver programs.”

ACCO survey respondent

“Having support with applications is much appreciated, making access easier due to time constraints on already over worked staff.”

ACCO survey respondent





Existing resources that aim to support ACCOs successfully navigate the funding environment do not appear to be sufficient. ACCOs were asked about their use of the capacity building supports from the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC). Of ACCO question respondents 13.89% (n=10) said they had accessed ORIC's supports previously, 62.50% (n=45) said that they had not and 23.61% (n=17) said that they would prefer not to say. Of respondents who had accessed ORIC's support, 60% (n=6) described the supports as somewhat useful. This is only a very small sample of ACCOs, any insights from these results are limited by the small number of respondents. The usefulness of ORIC's services and increasing their engagement with ACCOs may be an area of interest for future investigation by government.

## L. BUILDING GOVERNMENT CAPACITY TO SUPPORT ACCOS

ACCOs consistently reported that fundamentally, a new approach to funding ACCOs for service was required to meet the ambitions of the Closing the Gap Targets and that this required governments to have the appetite for significant reform. There was concern that Governments have not invested in building their own capacity to work better with ACCOs. All governments have committed to building their capacity under the National Agreement-Priority Reform 3. Participants repeatedly expressed disappointment and exhaustion about coming up against funders who did not understand how services needed to be delivered on the ground and that this lack of understanding resulted in significant misalignment between how funding is administered and the reality of service delivery. All Australian governments have an obligation as signatories of the National agreement, to transform the way it does business (Priority Reform Three), including by building the community-controlled sector (Priority Reform Two).

ACCOs identified the barriers they face in accessing funding and delivering services stem from governments' lack of understanding of the strengths and expertise of ACCOs. This includes limited or no understanding of the practical realities of service delivery (i.e., funding only one position for large geographic regions, not funding core operations), the administrative burden of reporting the

challenges associated with navigating bureaucratic systems, and limited recognition of the value of cultural care and knowledge and relationships between organisations. ACCOs felt strongly that the solution to developing a better funding model and ultimately stronger community-controlled sector was for governments to be able to devolve decision-making to community--led processes and work in genuine partnership to build government knowledge and understanding of the importance of ACCOs and support ACCO growth and development.

"When ACCOs want to be innovative or flexible governments get scared, they can't understand. They see cultural activities that are critical to healing and connection as "fun activities", we bring children in to dance or take them on Country and these are not "fun extra activities" they are connection to culture. We can all do widgets, we can all put bums on seats, but we can do so much more."

Consultation participant, QLD

"Delivery of programs to be inclusive of community need, and delivered culturally safe to families, to support healing and better outcomes for families. Funding should not be dictated by departmental need for KPI outcomes. Community and families need to show self-determination in program delivery and how the programs are developed and delivered to meet the needs of families."

ACCO survey respondent



# RECOMMENDATIONS





## 8. RECOMMENDATIONS

SNAICC's findings in this report make it clear that fundamental changes to the approach DSS take to funding children and families services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are required. The six recommended actions are advice to DSS, informed by consultation with ACCOs, for changes to increase funding and involvement of ACCOs in the child and family sector. Actions have significant application for all levels of government and government departments. SNAICC acknowledges the complexity and difficulties the Government faces when considering such significant reform and that full implementation of the recommendations will require cross-government and cross-departmental collaboration.

### RECOMMENDED ACTION 1 EMBED COMMUNITY-LED DECISION-MAKING AT EVERY STAGE OF FUNDING DEVELOPMENT AND ALLOCATION

Funding programs and priorities driven by government priorities do not match community needs or aspirations and do not support culturally safe holistic models of care. This can only be addressed by Government partnering with community- and implementing community-led decision-making at every stage of the funding process. The Department of Education Connected Beginnings program is an emerging example of how the Australian Government can engage in good practice community-led decision-making processes (see Appendix B for case study).

**1.1 DSS should establish partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and implement community-led decision-making processes for identifying funding priorities at the national, jurisdictional, and local levels. This includes:**

- a) ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and family peak bodies are working in partnership with DSS to identify funding priorities nationally and where they exist at state and territory and regional levels.

- b) ensuring as per clause 32(c)(vi) that, via shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the National Agreement, funding for programs and services align with jointly agreed community priorities, with governments retaining responsibility for funding decisions.

**1.2 DSS should review all children and families program grant guidelines, operational guidelines, grant application templates, outcomes and reporting templates, and activity work plan templates and requirements to:**

- a. work towards alignment with the findings of this review (presented in Table 5); and
- b. incorporate the knowledge and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the review of key program documentation affecting ACCO access to funding opportunities.

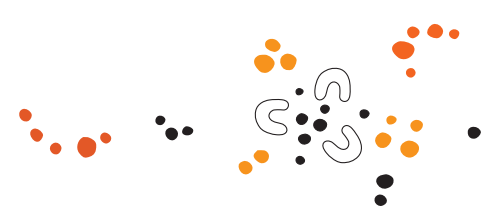
**1.3 DSS should ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in the design of grant guidelines, operational guidelines, grant application templates, outcomes and reporting templates, and activity work plan templates for all future programs targeted for or significantly impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.**

**1.4 DSS should review assessment criteria for all programs targeting or significantly impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, to:**

- a) include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural knowledge, lived experience, expertise and relationships into provider selection processes and ensure that these are given a high weighting.

**1.5 DSS should review its grant rules and guidelines to establish clear and consistent processes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership and participation in grant assessment processes within the relevant legislative requirements of the Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013 and the Commonwealth Grants Rules and Guidelines, including:**

- a. representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peaks, organisations, and experts on grant selection panels; and
- b. requiring detailed and constructive feedback to be provided to ACCOs that are unsuccessful in grant applications.



## RECOMMENDED ACTION 2

### PRIORITISE ACCOS AS PROVIDERS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

To address the barriers that ACCOs face in competing with non-Indigenous organisations and to overcome structural and institutional racism and bias, ACCOs must be made the preferred providers for children and family services and quarantined funding is to be allocated based upon the need and target population. Preferred provider policies have been demonstrated to be effective in the context of Commonwealth funding under the IAS where preferred provider policies have increased funding to ACCOs from 35% in 2014 to 60% in 2021 [4]. The South Australian Government direct 30% of its non-government organisation funding for intensive family support to ACCOs [7]. Similar examples of dedicated funding for ACCOs include kinship care placement services in the Northern Territory and South Australia, Family Wellbeing and Family Participation Program Services in Queensland, case management services in New South Wales, Victoria, and Western Australia, and the delegation of authority in Victoria and Queensland [7]. The New South Wales Government has an existing commitment to invest 30% of targeted early intervention funding to ACCOs [1].

#### 2.1 DSS should provide dedicated funding for ACCOs by making a proportion of children and family service funding only available for ACCOs:

- a) where a program is targeted for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families (through either target population or service areas with predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations) 90-100% of funding will be made available only to ACCOs;
- b) where a program is targeted at vulnerable children and families 30- 40% of funding will only be available for ACCOs<sup>7</sup>; and
- c) where a program is targeted for the general population of children and families at least 10% of funding is only available for ACCOs.

#### 2.2 DSS should establish policies and procedures for the allocation of quarantined funding that require:

- a) ACCO providers to have the right-of-first refusal for quarantined funds;
- b) partnership or sub-contracting models with non-Indigenous providers should be considered only where:
  - i. the partnership is ACCO-led and consistent with genuine partnerships principles;<sup>8</sup> and
  - ii. transition planning to the ACCO is included in the funding agreements with clear timeframes;
- c) where ACCOs do not fully meet funding requirements but are otherwise assessed as merit worthy (for example they provide significant expertise in the ways described in Action 1.4a), DSS and other government agencies should consider options that would allow for the funding allocation to be made with the provision of additional resources and scaffolding required for ACCOs to work towards meeting requirements within a reasonable timeframe; and
- d) if the above approaches are not possible following all reasonable efforts to prioritise ACCO funding, quarantined funding can be directed to a non-Indigenous organisation.

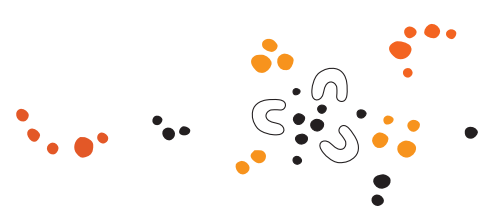
## RECOMMENDED ACTION 3

### INVEST IN THE GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT, AND SUSTAINABILITY OF ACCOS THROUGH CORE-FUNCTIONS FUNDING

For ACCOs to be competitive in procurement processes, they need well-resourced core functions that are required to run high functioning services and present strong business cases for funding. Decades of underfunding and historical exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations from access to assets have created significant disadvantage for ACCOs in competitive funding processes. To address this and

<sup>7</sup> The proportion of funding dedicated to ACCOs needs to reflect quantifiable need. A strong proxy indicator of need is the level over representation of Aboriginal people in child protections systems. Currently, 39% of children in out-of-home care are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.





support the growth and development of ACCOs, DSS should provide core operational funding to ACCOs delivering children and family services. This is consistent with the requirements of the Early Childhood, Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan and should be implemented alongside the key actions.

**3.1 DSS should develop and implement funding models for ACCOs, that recognise the historical exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations from access to assets, and adequately allocate a proportion of total funding that can be used to support the core operational needs of ACCOs, including:**

- a. governance
- b. human resources and administration functions
- c. information technology systems and equipment
- d. data management and program evaluation
- e. infrastructure
- f. workforce development and growth
- g. overhead costs (i.e., maintenance, vehicles)
- h. legal requirements/accreditation
- i. business plans/grant writing
- j. cultural expertise
- k. community engagement
- l. outreach

**3.2 DSS should share its learnings with other Commonwealth agencies to broadly influence funding models that recognise and support the core operational needs of ACCOs.**

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## **RECOMMENDED ACTION 4**

### **REDUCE ADMINISTRATIVE BURDENS ACROSS THE SYSTEM**

ACCOs are overburdened by administrative requirements for both accessing and managing the multiple funding streams that are required to deliver the range of holistic services needed to support children and families. DSS can alleviate and improve this by both improving and streamlining processes and requirements but also by resourcing ACCOs to grow their capacity to navigate and meet administrative requirements.

**4.1 DSS should centralise access to information and resources about children and families grant opportunities by developing an ACCO specific Community Grants Hub Portal, including:**

- a) ensuring all children and families grant opportunities are advertised on the hub across all relevant Commonwealth, state and territory government agencies; and
- b) ensuring ACCO-led design of a hub that meets the needs of ACCOs in accessing grant opportunities.

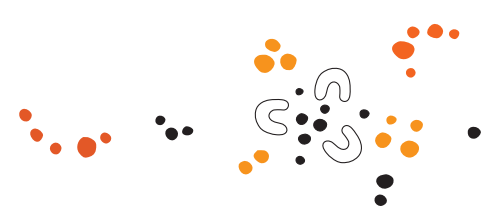
**4.2 DSS should review reporting requirements across children and family services, including collaborating with other Commonwealth, state and territory agencies administering children and family programs to:**

- a) streamline and reduce duplication of data collection;
- b) streamline reporting requirements and processes;
- c) partner with ACCOs in the design of reporting requirements; and
- d) partner with ACCOs to improve the usefulness and usability of the DSS Data Exchange.

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8 <https://www.snaicc.org.au/policy-and-research/genuine-partnerships/>





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## RECOMMENDED ACTION 5

### INCREASE INVESTMENT IN AND SUPPORT FOR ACCO-LED RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

ACCOs are disadvantaged in procurement processes by the lack of available research and evaluation available to demonstrate the effectiveness of ACCO designed and-led programs. This is a particular challenge for funding activities that include evidence-based practice requirements.

**5.1 DSS should invest in ACCO-led program evaluation by working with peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations on the design and implementation of ACCO service and program evaluations.**

**5.2 DSS should support ACCO-led research through investment in ACCOs to develop their own data capabilities and evidence base.**

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## RECOMMENDED ACTION 6

### BUILD GOVERNMENT CAPACITY TO WORK BETTER WITH ACCOS

Through the consultative process, there was strong suggestion that Australian Governments needed to assess their own barriers to increasing funding to ACCOs. Consultation participants repeatedly said that they had raised the same issues and concerns in previous consultations and directly with governments but nothing had changed. Increasing funding to ACCOs needs to be driven from within all departments and all levels of government through a concerted and sustained effort to identify and remove institutional and systemic barriers. Recommended Action 6.1 should take place in parallel to implementing other recommendations feasible to action in the short-term.

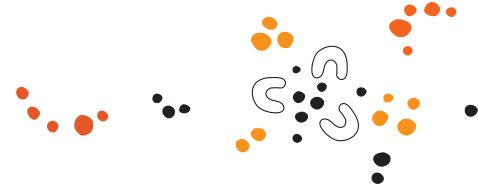
**6.1 DSS should commission a capacity assessment in the same focus domains of strengths, opportunities, needs and barriers of DSS to increase the funding to ACCOs for children and family services. This should include but not be limited to DSS:**

- a) understanding how ACCOs deliver services and the role ACCOs play in community;
- b) using community-led decision-making processes as described under Recommended Action 1;
- c) engaging with existing and emerging mechanisms for partnership and shared decision making (i.e., *Safe and Supported*, Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, Coalition of Peaks);
- d) using and strengthening existing accountability mechanisms to ACCOs and communities;
- e) addressing racism and increasing cultural awareness and appropriateness in procurement processes; and
- f) overcoming siloed approaches to funding and supporting integrated service delivery.



# APPENDICES





## APPENDIX A NATIONAL AGREEMENT CLAUSES

**Clause 44.** *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control is an act of self-determination. Under this Agreement, an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation delivers services, including land and resource management, that builds the strength and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people and is:*

*incorporated under relevant legislation and not-for-profit*

*controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people*

*connected to the community, or communities, in which they deliver the services*

*governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body.*

**Clause 55.** *Government Parties agree to implement measures to increase the proportion of services delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly community-controlled organisations, including by:*

*implementing funding prioritisation policies across all Closing the Gap outcomes that require decisions about the provision of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to preference Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations*

*where new funding initiatives are decided by governments which are intended to service the broader population across socio-economic outcome areas of the Agreement, that a meaningful proportion is allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations with relevant expertise, particularly community-controlled organisations. A meaningful proportion is an amount which takes into account the number and capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly the existing community-controlled sectors and the service demands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peaks organisations in the relevant jurisdiction.*

## APPENDIX B CONNECTED BEGINNINGS CASE STUDY

*Connected Beginnings aims to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged zero to five to be school ready through integration of early childhood education, health and family support services and programs in each community. In 2021, the Commonwealth committed an additional \$81.8 million to support the expansion of the program from the current footprint to 50 sites nationally by 2025. \$44.8 million will be delivered through the Department of Education and \$37.0 million through the Department of Health.*

*The Commonwealth is committed to supporting a strong community-controlled sector through capacity building and investment. The Department of Education supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOS) to lead and manage Connected Beginnings projects wherever possible. The Department of Health primarily funds Aboriginal Community-controlled Health Services to deliver the health component of the program.*

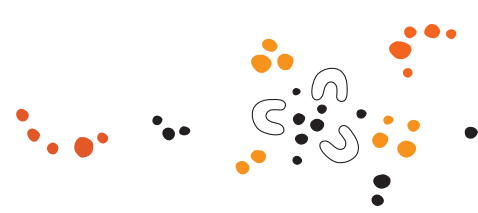
*For 2021-22 the Department of Education has established seven new Connected Beginnings sites with five of these led by ACCOs. The ACCOs have been recommended by their community to lead the collective vision on how to improve connection across services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. This recognises the trust these organisations hold within the community and the expertise they bring across early years, cultural safety, and collaboration. Connected Beginnings partnership with ACCOs is a significant contribution to Priority Reform Two.*

*Increased investment in ACCOs has also led to additional benefits such as increased employment opportunities and pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into the workforce.*

*The Department's focus is to support community-led decision-making from the outset to ensure projects delivered are co-designed to be culturally safe and effective – based on community need.*

*We have seen greater engagement by community as a result of more time and more flexibility for community members - and the ACCO and mainstream services - to agree their priorities, strengths and aspirations for their children to guide a new way of working. We have harnessed the community's commitment to create their vision of a service environment that puts their children and families at the centre.*





*Deep listening and community consultations ensure Elders, Traditional Owners and community members have a culturally safe space to explore a potential Connected Beginnings project. The department is guided by how and at what pace the community wants to engage in the process. For example, the department has worked with some communities who are ready to mobilise and know where they want to go, whereas, in other communities, more time is needed.*

*The feedback loops between the department, communities and ACCOs has been strengthened and are based on transparency and two-way learning. This is fundamental to the Connected Beginnings approach, as the community make a recommendation to the Department on which organisation/s they want to lead the project.*

*Where a project is not-led by an ACCO, Connected Beginnings supports auspicing arrangements to ACCOs and sub-granting staffing to ACCOs to facilitate strong engagement, and resourcing ACCOs appropriately for their expertise. The Department will work with SNAICC on an ACCO Leadership Framework to increase ACCO leadership across Connected Beginnings in a culturally informed way.*

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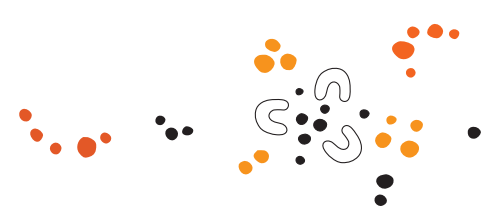
## APPENDIX C

### CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Forum consultation questions:

1. Does your organisation receive funding from the Commonwealth Government for children and family services and why is it important to have ACCOs delivering these services?
2. What are the barriers for ACCOs to accessing Commonwealth Government funding and how do funding approaches impact ACCOs?
  - a. What was your experience of the reporting requirements? How about your relationship with the funding arrangement manager?
  - b. Are there any limitations to your current funding arrangements that inhibit your capacity to support Aboriginal children and their families?
  - c. To what extent do Commonwealth funding programs enable you to develop and deliver services that are community designed and controlled?
  - d. Have you partnered with non-Indigenous organisations to deliver Commonwealth-funded services? If so, what have been the strengths and limitations of doing so?
3. What should be done to remove these barriers and/or make sure that ACCOs are able to access funding?
  - a. How can the Commonwealth Government better support ACCOs to access funding to deliver child and family services?
4. Would your organisation be interested in delivering more or different services that are funded through the DSS Families and Children Activity?





## APPENDIX D SURVEY QUESTIONS

The survey results below are the summary data for all respondents

### 1. Are you an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	44.41%	135
No	55.59%	169
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>304</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>

### \* 2. Do you work for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO)?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	35.53%	108
No	64.47%	196
What is the name of your organisation? (optional)	0.00%	0
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>304</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>0</b>

### \* 3. This survey has primarily been designed for ACCOs to ask about their experience of Commonwealth funding. You may choose to exit the survey now or if you would like to contribute your perspective based on previous or other experience you can continue. Would you like to continue?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	75.00%	123
No	25.00%	41
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>164</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>140</b>

### \* 4. Which state/territory does your organisation deliver services in?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Australian Capital Territory	5.71%	12
New South Wales	25.71%	54
Northern Territory	14.76%	31
Queensland	20.95%	44
South Australia	22.86%	48
Tasmania	6.67%	14
Victoria	17.62%	37
Western Australia	17.62%	37
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>210</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>94</b>

### \* 5. Where are your service delivery locations? (Select any/all that apply)

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Metro	51.43%	108
Regional	55.71%	117
Rural	33.33%	70
Remote	31.43%	66
Very remote	17.14%	36
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>210</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>94</b>

### \* 6. Does your organisation receive Commonwealth funding to deliver children and family services?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	59.05%	124
No	26.19%	55
Not sure	14.76%	31
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>210</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>94</b>





**\*7. Which Commonwealth department/s does your organisation receive funding from? (Select any/all that apply)**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Department of Social Services	33.33%	35
Department of Education, Skills and Employment	28.57%	30
National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)	33.33%	35
Department of Health	29.52%	31
Attorney-General's Department	5.71%	6
None	1.90%	2
Other (please specify)	14.29%	15
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>105</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>199</b>

**\*8. Does your organisation receive funding to deliver any of these Department of Social Services Family and Children (FaC) Activity programs? (Select any/all that apply)**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	32.38%	34
Communities for Children Facilitating Partners	11.43%	12
Family and Relationship Services	10.48%	11
Children and Family Intensive Support	23.81%	25
Children and Parenting Support	29.52%	31
Home Interaction program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)	7.62%	8
Budget Based Funding	9.52%	10
Family Mental Health Support Services (FMHSS)	8.57%	9
Reconnect	8.57%	9
Find and Connect	0.00%	0
Forced Adoption Support Services	0.00%	0
Specialised Family Violence Services	13.33%	14
Other (please specify)	19.05%	20
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>105</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>199</b>

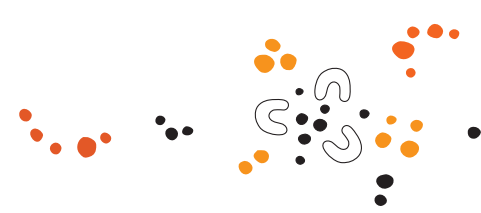
**\*9. Generally, how easy are the processes for applying for government funding?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very easy	1.41%	2
Easy	2.82%	4
Neither easy nor difficult	26.76%	38
Difficult	48.59%	69
Very difficult	20.42%	29
Is there anything you would like to say about why you gave this answer?		67
Other (please specify)	14.29%	15
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>142</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>162</b>

Is there anything you would like to say about why you gave this answer? [open text]

**\*10. Do any of the following make it harder for ACCOs to successfully access government funding to deliver children and family services? (Select any/all that apply)**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Non-Indigenous organisations applying for the same funding	57.75%	82
Competitive tendering / grant processes	52.11%	74
A lack of resources/ staff for grant writing	73.94%	105
Applying for funding is time consuming	66.20%	94
Applying for funding is expensive	26.06%	37
Funding programs do not match community needs or priorities	54.23%	77
Programs that are funded do not match the way ACCOs deliver services	57.75%	82
A lack of community engagement in the design of programs / services	57.04%	81
Application processes are complicated	45.07%	64
Other (please specify)	22.54%	32
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>142</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>162</b>



**\*11. Would any of the following changes to processes / supports make it easier for ACCOs to successfully access government funding? (select any/all that apply)**

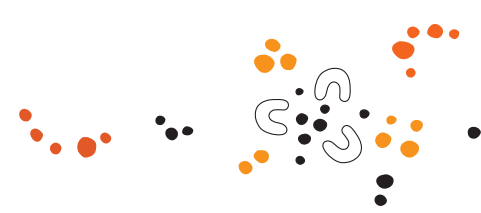
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	1.41%	2
ACCOs being made the preferred provider for funding	69.01%	98
Longer term funding agreements	77.46%	110
Simplified funding application processes	68.31%	97
Negotiated funding agreements between services and funders (i.e. amount, duration, reporting requirements)	61.97%	88
Allocation of funding based on community need	71.83%	102
Longer timeframes for applications to be submitted	40.85%	58
Changes to reporting requirements	42.25%	60
Support for grant / application writing	61.27%	87
Support for data collection/ reporting	52.11%	74
Other (please specify)	16.90%	24
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>142</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>162</b>

**\*13. Would any of the following changes to processes / supports make it easier for ACCOs to successfully access government funding? (select any/all that apply)**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	3.70%	5
Funding is not flexible enough	64.44%	87
Funding is short term	65.93%	89
Funding reporting and administration requirements take too much time away from service delivery	54.81%	74
Funding programs do not match the services communities want and need	58.52%	79
Recruiting and retaining workforce	68.15%	92
Infrastructure (i.e. having spaces to deliver programs)	46.67%	63
Evidenced-based program requirements are restrictive	40.00%	54
Poor partnerships with non-Indigenous organisations	34.81%	47
Other (please specify)	13.33%	18
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>135</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>169</b>

**12. Is there anything else you would like to say about accessing government funding?**  
[open text]





**\*14. Would any of the following changes make it easier for ACCOs to deliver government funded children and family services? (Select any/all that apply)**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	2.96%	4
Long term funding agreements	81.48%	110
Flexibility so funding can be pooled allocated by ACCOs based on community needs	71.85%	97
Reduced reporting requirements	34.07%	46
Reporting/ evaluation designed by ACCOs and community	61.48%	83
Requirements for non-Indigenous organisations to improve partnerships with ACCOs	57.04%	77
Support for infrastructure development	60.74%	82
Support for workforce recruitment, retention and development	62.22%	84
Support for organisational development	57.04%	77
Other (please specify)	18.52%	25
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>135</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>169</b>

**15. Is there anything else you would like to say about delivering government funded children and family services?**  
[open text]

**\*16. How useful are contract data collection and/or reporting requirements for your organisational planning and evaluation?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely useful	17.60%	22
Very useful	23.20%	29
Somewhat useful	36.80%	46
Not so useful	16.80%	21
Not at all useful	5.60%	7
Is there anything you would like to say about why you gave this answer?		36
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>125</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>179</b>

Is there anything you would like to say about why you gave this answer? [open text]

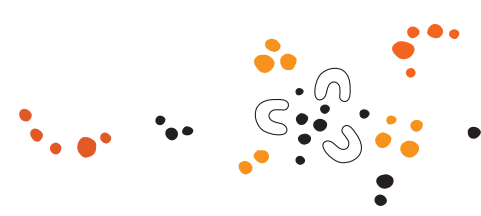
**\*17. How long should funding contracts be for to get the best outcomes for communities and ACCOs?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
1-2 years	4.80%	6
3-4 years	23.20%	29
5-6 years	38.40%	48
7 years +	28.80%	36
Not sure	4.80%	6
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>125</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>179</b>

**\*18. Do any of the following make it difficult to recruit and retain your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce? (Select any/all that apply)**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
None of the above	3.20%	4
There is not enough funding to support all the required staff	69.60%	87
Funding level prevents pay parity with non-Indigenous organisations and government	64.00%	80
Short term funding means staff contracts are short and fixed term	74.40%	93
Recruiting staff with required qualifications	70.40%	88
Supporting infrastructure (i.e. housing and transport for staff) is limited	48.00%	60
Worker safety screening requirements	20.80%	26
Other (please specify)	12.80%	16
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>125</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>179</b>





**\*19. Would any of the following measures support the recruitment and retention of workforce for ACCOs? (Select any/all that apply)**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
A national approach to expanding and building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and family services workforce	68.80%	86
Funded places in relevant qualifications for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students	68.80%	86
Rural and remote workforce subsidies	63.20%	79
Retention bonuses	56.80%	71
Mentoring and support for workers	72.80%	91
Longer term funding	68.80%	86
Funding for workforce development	70.40%	88
Other (please specify)	12.80%	16
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>125</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>179</b>

**20. Does your organisation have any unmet needs for infrastructure (e.g. permanent premises, outreach facilities, accommodation/ housing for workforce)?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	57.60%	72
No	18.40%	23
Not sure	24.00%	30
Is there anything you would like to say about organisational infrastructure needs?		41
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>125</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>179</b>

Is there anything you would like to say about organisational infrastructure needs? [open text]

**21. Have you previously accessed ORIC's capacity building and/or support resources?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	9.92%	12
No	62.81%	76
Prefer not say	27.27%	33
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>121</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>183</b>

**22. How useful are the supports offered by ORIC?**

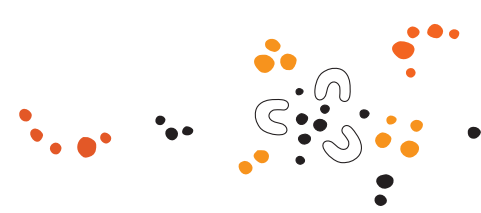
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Extremely useful	2.67%	2
Very useful	6.67%	5
Somewhat useful	54.67%	41
Not so useful	22.67%	17
Not at all useful	13.33%	10
Is there anything you would like to say about why you gave this answer?		25
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>75</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>229</b>

Is there anything you would like to say about why you gave this answer? [open text]

**23. Do you currently deliver any children and family services in partnership or under sub-contracting arrangements with non-Indigenous organisations?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes, HIPPY	6.67%	8
Yes, Communities for Children for Facilitating Partners	6.67%	8
Yes, both HIPPY and Communities for Children for Facilitating Partners	5.00%	6
No	60.83%	73
Not sure	20.83%	25
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>120</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>184</b>





**24. What are the opportunities for improvement and/or strengths of HIPPY or Communities for Children Facilitating Partners programs?**  
[open text]

**25. Do you think that partnership models are a useful way of increasing the number of ACCOs delivering children and family services?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	51.26%	61
No	17.65%	21
Not sure	31.09%	37
Is there anything you would like to say about why you gave this answer?		47
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>119</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>185</b>

Is there anything you would like to say about why you gave this answer? [open text]

**26. Are there services or initiatives that are well suited (or not) to be delivered in partnership with non-Indigenous organisations?** [open text]

**27. Is there anything else you would like to say about ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations working in partnership to deliver services?** [open text]

The Department of Social Services is implementing a range of measures under the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap and would like to know which ACCOs are interested in delivering FaC Activity programs in the future. There are two questions below where you can indicate your interest in general FaC Activity service delivery and in a specific trial for HIPPY and Communities for Children Facilitating Partners (CfC FP). These questions are optional and providing your organisational details will not make your previous survey responses identifiable.

**\*28. Please select any/all of the DSS funded Families and Children Activity programs below that your organisation would be interested in delivering:**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Communities for Children Facilitating Partners	42.62%	26
Family and Relationship Services	52.46%	32
Children and Family Intensive Support	63.93%	39
Children and Parenting Support	57.38%	35
Home Interaction program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)	45.90%	28
Budget Based Funding	26.23%	16
Family Mental Health Support Services (FMHSS)	49.18%	30
Reconnect	34.43%	21
Find and Connect	18.03%	11
Forced Adoption Support Services	8.20%	5
Specialised Family Violence Services	37.70%	23
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>61</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>243</b>

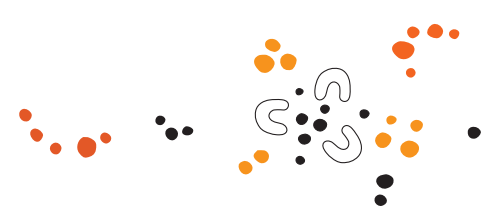
If you agree to possibly being contacted by DSS about this trial, please provide your organisation's name and service delivery location below: [open text]

**29. DSS will be conducting trials to identify how ACCOs and non-Indigenous organisations can engage in effective partnerships in delivering HIPPY and CfC FP. Should the trials be conducted in your location, would your organisation be interested in engaging in the trial?**

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	59.42%	41
No	40.58%	28
If you agree to possibly being contacted by DSS about this trial, please provide your organisation's name and service delivery location below:		38
	<b>Answered</b>	<b>69</b>
	<b>Skipped</b>	<b>235</b>

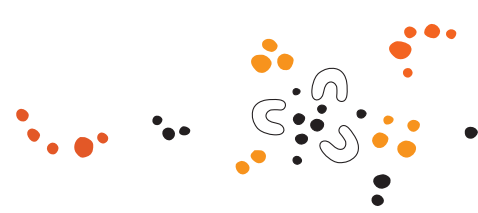


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