

25 February 2025

## **UNICEF Australia submission to the Senate Committee on Measuring Outcomes for First Nations Communities**

UNICEF Australia appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to Senate Committee on Measuring Outcomes for First Nations Communities. UNICEF is the world's leading organisation working to protect and improve the lives of every child in over 190 countries. For over 75 years, UNICEF has advocated for children's rights, as mandated by the UN General Assembly and anchored by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Australia, we amplify children's voices, defend their rights, and help them fulfill their potential, from early childhood through adolescence.

In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children experience consistently poorer outcomes across every thematic area of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The current regression on the Closing the Gap targets, particularly rates of suicide, the number of children in out-of-home care and the number of children commencing school who are developmentally on track demands a change in approach, as informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

To improve progress and addressing the regression of Closing the Gap targets and outcomes, UNICEF Australia supports the following recommendations made by the National Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, SNAICC, for the Commonwealth Government to:

1. Fully fund the Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan, to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families have access to the supports they need.
2. Commit to transition an appropriate portion of funding for child and family services programs to ACCOs to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to access services that meet their needs and prevent involvement with the child protection system (Target 12).
3. Support children to thrive in their early years (Target 4) through improving the accessibility of high quality and culturally responsive integrated health, disability, education and care services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
4. Reform measurement and evaluation of the socio-economic targets to improve the accuracy of insights and shift focus from deficits-based administrative data to holistic and strengths-based measures of wellbeing.
5. Build a better understanding of how policy and funding decisions are driving the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care, and opportunities for governments to address this.
6. Build their capacity to work in genuine partnership and prioritise transformation of government agencies in alignment with the findings and recommendations of the Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

For further information, please contact:

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