



Senate Select Committee on Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities
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Inquiry into Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities

Community Child Care (CCC) as the peak body for community based not-for-profit children's services in Victoria welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Senate Inquiry into Regional and Remote Indigenous Communities. In the first instance however we would like to emphasize the importance of consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in order to collate a meaningful response to the Terms of Reference.

CCC believes that there should be a universal shift toward the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' instead of 'Indigenous'. This will allow for specific recognition of Aboriginal Australians as distinct from other peoples who are indigenous to other lands. We understand that this is consistent with the desire of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and peak groups representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities such as Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC).

CCC would like to comment in response to parts D and E of the Terms of Reference and emphasise the importance of regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities having greater access to Multifunctional Aboriginal Children's Services (MACS) - an integrated community owned model responsive to community needs offering the essential service of early childhood education and care.

Terms of Reference d) The health, welfare, education and security of children in regional and remote Indigenous communities

MACS have a proven track record of supporting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, especially the health, welfare, education and security of children.

The self governance and engagement of families intrinsic to the operation of MACS are a positive step forward from the Interventionist regimes of the past. Successful MACS across

Australia are flexible and responsive to the needs of their communities and the programs reflect local need and offer children and families access to services and professionals in a culturally safe, non-threatening way.

MACS have the potential to strengthen communities and offer true **access to self-determination** - local people are rightfully in charge of the decisions that will directly affect the lives of people in that community. It is the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be directly involved in the running of children's services and the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to have access to high quality, culturally relevant programs. Investing in the future of MACS will inevitably contribute to the wellbeing of children and communities in physical and emotional health.

Current funding models for MACS need to be strengthened to ensure viability in remote communities with small populations.

Terms of Reference e) The employment and enterprise opportunities in regional and remote Indigenous communities

MACS operate as social enterprises employing local people. They offer employment and training opportunities as well as opportunities for skill development through local participation in governance.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara Romeril', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Barbara Romeril
Executive Director