



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

Government's own evaluation proves First Nations-led approach works. Now it must fund it.

First Nations children have the right to learn, grow and thrive through their own language, culture and Country. An independent evaluation commissioned by the Australian Government confirmed the Children's Ground Approach works and recommended full seven-year funding. It has not acted on this.

Australians are being asked to sign an online petition calling on the Australian Government to act on the recommendations of the Allen + Clarke evaluation, it commissioned to inform future funding decisions for Children's Ground. As a secondary ask, petition signers are being asked to send an email to their MP stating their support for the funding recommendations.

Children's Ground will then take that petition to Canberra as part of their meetings with government in October.

In 2024, the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing engaged Allen + Clarke Consulting to independently evaluate the Children's Ground Approach and make recommendations to inform the Government's consideration of future funding.

Allen + Clarke found that Children's Ground directly contributes to First Nations children engaging in early years, cultural and on-Country learning, and confirmed strong evidence the Approach is achieving its shorter-term access and engagement outcomes. The evaluation found significant progress across all service areas and concluded the Approach is an effective mechanism for service provision, effective because activities respond directly to the needs and circumstances of the communities Children's Ground works with.

However, the evaluation identified inadequate funding as a key barrier to implementing the full Approach. For First Nations children and families, a fragmented approach means the Approach cannot be delivered as designed and the outcomes already being achieved cannot be sustained.

To realise this potential fully, the evaluation recommended coordinated, multi-departmental government funding of Children's Ground for an initial seven-year period. It also

recommended establishing an inter-agency governance group to oversee the implementation and coordination of funding.

Children's Ground currently relies on a combination of philanthropy and fragmented government funding, requiring the organisation and communities to repeatedly seek funding across individual programs and short funding cycles.

Coordinated long-term government funding would allow the Approach to operate as designed and provide communities with greater certainty to plan for children's futures beyond individual grants and government funding cycles.

Quote attributable to Christian Lugnan, Children's Ground Deputy CEO, Garramilla/Darwin

"It's their evaluation report. It's good practice and good resource management by government to follow up on the recommendations, particularly around the Closing the Gap targets and the extent the Children's Ground Approach is meeting and/or exceeding many of those targets."

"Full funding means we can allocate our scarce resources elsewhere instead of having to ongoingly manage a dozen funding agreements for different government departments. On that alone, that'd be fantastic."

"Currently, in the best community we're in, we would probably be at about 75% of the full Children's Ground Approach being delivered in that community. We want to get to 100% in every community."

Sign the petition: action.childrenground.org.au

Background:

The independent evaluation found that activities delivered through the Children's Ground Approach aligned with:

- 10 Closing the Gap outcomes, with a further seven indirectly aligned
- 10 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan priorities, with a further two indirectly aligned
- all eight Early Years Strategy outcomes
- all five Early Childhood Strategy goals
- all four National Justice Reinvestment Program principles

END
