



Select Committee on the Early Childhood Education and Care Sector in Victoria

Hearing Date: 25 February 2026

Question[s] taken on notice

Directed to: Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance

Received date: 18 March 2026

1. **The CHAIR, p. 30**

Question Asked:

Is any of this publicly available? Do they publish the report?

Jason KANOA: We have a communiqué that goes out after the ACFs. So there will be some form of –

The CHAIR: Is there anything that you can provide to the committee?

Jason KANOA: Yes, certainly. We have got our hands on the communiqué, so yes.

The CHAIR: That would be great, if you could take that on notice

Response: *See response as attached below*

Additional questions on notice

2. **Melina BATH, pp. 34-35**

Question Asked:

Could that be replicated? My time is nearly up, so I am jumping in with my last –

Karen HEAP: Yes, easily.

Melina BATH: Would you mind thinking about advising us how that could be replicated as recommendations for government? How could we roll that out in different locations? It has got to be bespoke for each location, because that is the very nature of ACCO community-led services.

Karen HEAP: Yes, that is right. We can give you some more information on that. We self-funded it, so it is generating funding through fees and such. So we self-fund that, and we lease the building. So it is sort of a business, but it is a not-for-profit business; money just goes straight back into the service.:

Response:

In response to the question about how BADAC's approach could be replicated as a recommendation, our advice is that the committee could recommend that government work with ACCOs across Victoria to understand their individual self-determined aspirations for early childhood education and care, and work with them to support those aspirations as

part of integrated child and family service models for early intervention and prevention.

3. **Georgie CROZIER, pp. 37-38**

Question Asked:

It is a very long submission and it is a very detailed submission, and you have made a lot of recommendations in your submission to the committee. What is the number one recommendation that is the priority, out of the recommendations?

Jason KANOA: I think the first priority was the funding.

Georgie CROZIER: Funding.

Jason KANOA: Yes.

Georgie CROZIER: How much do you need?

Jason KANOA: We can get that figure to you, if you –

Georgie CROZIER: I think it is important because we have had a number of witnesses that have highlighted that funding is an issue.

Response:

Each ACCO's needs are unique and while it isn't possible to prepare an overall figure for ECEC funding need amongst our Members in the time available, we refer the Committee to SNAICC's previously published work on the funding model options for ACCO integrated early years services ([240507-ACCO-Funding-Report.pdf](#)), which estimates the investment required to make ACCO-led integrated early years services available nationally and outlines funding models and examples based on different factors that might apply to different ACCOs. If the Committee were minded to make a recommendation on the issue of funding, we would encourage the Committee to consider a recommendation that focuses on the Government understanding the local needs and aspirations of Aboriginal communities and working with ACCOs to cost proposals that reflect their unique circumstances, as each ACCO will have different infrastructure, start-up and service delivery needs based on their region, community and existing profile. A one-size-fits all approach to funding fails to recognise that ACCOs are inherently local in their nature and face different cost, supply, workforce and infrastructure environments depending on their region.

Aboriginal Children's Forum

October 2025

Communique

OFFICIAL

The 33rd Aboriginal Children's Forum (ACF) was a milestone event with three Secretaries from the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Department of Education and the Department of Health, and the Minister for Children, Lizzie Blandthorn MP, in attendance. All gave their full commitment to strengthening cross-portfolio work and to continue to share data and work with ACCOs to improve the health, wellbeing and education outcomes for their communities.

Participants were warmly welcomed by Stacie Piper, a proud Wurundjeri, Dja Dja Wurrung, and Ngurai Illum-Wurrung woman. As a member of the Djirri Djirri Wurundjeri women's dance group, she actively works to revive and pass on her culture through language, song, and dance.

The focus of this ACF was Wungurilwil Gagapduir Priority One: *Equitable local access to Aboriginal models of prevention and early intervention services*. As the ACF and its portfolio partners continue to work towards their aspirations and securing further investment, especially for prevention and early intervention, more can be achieved through improved relationships and partnering. Each of the departmental Secretaries made it clear they were there to listen, share and commit to working more closely with ACCOs on proven local initiatives that could be scaled for impact.

The ACF heard that ACCOs have the know-how to implement practical, workable solutions matched to local circumstances. A cross-portfolio focus on prevention and early intervention is essential to Closing the Gap – without it, the gap will continue to widen, and more children will be removed from their families, disengage from education and have poor health outcomes.

The Secretaries of the Department of Health and Education expressed their commitment to joining up work across government, including transparent sharing of data and accountability for policies that disproportionately affect First Nations children. To drive earlier intervention and prevention opportunities, the Department of Education committed to work with schools on shifting reporter behaviours towards ACCO referrals and support, while the Department of Health committed to better understand unborn reporting data with their hospital networks.

The October 2025 ACF displayed the impactful work ACCOs are doing, and that ACCOs are ready to do more. ACCOs demonstrated that they are ready to accept referrals from health and education settings and reiterated that they have the knowledge, solutions, and cultural authority, but need sustained, flexible investment and genuine partnerships.

The ACF discussed that New South Wales has completed a cost-benefit analysis on the impact of culture. This Treasury-led initiative is being used as a framework to measure outcomes and evaluate culture, and the ACF emphasised Victoria's need to build on this to understand how culture strengthens outcomes for Aboriginal children and families.

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing held the ACF on the Wurundjeri lands of the Kulin Nation. Originally, Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation was to host the event on Gunditjmara Mirring Country;

however, a significant weather event necessitated relocating the ACF. The two-day program was condensed to one, and online options were made available to enable those in rural and regional Victoria who were unable to travel for safety reasons, to participate.

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Aboriginal.Childrens.Forum@dfh.vic.gov.au

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