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## **JOINT MEDIA STATEMENT**

**27 October 2026**

# **Education Ministers must act on Monday for a strong commission now**

Three Four Corners investigations over 19 months have exposed that Australia's early learning system still cannot guarantee children's safety. That is why the nation's leading early childhood advocates, including The Parenthood, The Front Project, SNAICC and Minderoo Foundation, are calling on Education Ministers to respond swiftly and strongly by committing to an independent National Early Education and Care Commission when they meet on Monday.

Last night's episode, *'Monstrous'*, aired allegations of abuse and neglect at childcare services. Our thoughts are with the children and families affected, and with the parents left wondering this morning what this means for their own child's early learning centre.

After Four Corners' *'Betrayal of Trust'* in March 2025 and *'Hunting Ground'* last October, governments promised change and have made incremental progress. But the latest episode shows incremental change is not enough.

A year later, children still fall through the same gaps. Parents shouldn't have to wait for the next investigation to find out what went wrong.

On Monday, every Education Minister in Australia will meet. Together, they represent the patchwork of Australia's childcare system, creating a powerful, timely opportunity to take strong action.

One week from now, Ministers could break the bureaucratic stranglehold that creates gaps, compromises quality, and enables safety issues and poor workforce and centre planning. The next meeting of these Ministers is not until 2027. There has never been a better opportunity to take swift, strong action.



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Right now, no single body is accountable for the early childhood system's overall performance and standards. Responsibility is split across governments, regulators and providers. Safety, quality, workforce, affordability, supply and inclusion are managed in silos, but, in reality, they are connected. Where information isn't shared, and no one is watching the whole picture, poor practice goes undetected, and children are put at risk.

A strong, independent National Commission could start with an unequivocal response to safety concerns, national intelligence, and public accountability, designing a whole-of-system strategy that meets the needs of children, families, and communities.

Now is the opportunity to establish enduring structural safeguards, designed with families, communities, the sector and governments, that build a safer, fairer and more accessible system for children now and into the future.

**Georgie Dent, CEO, The Parenthood:**

"Parents shouldn't need a Four Corners episode to find out whether their child is safe. This is the third investigation. We don't have an evidence problem, we have an action problem."

"Every parent who drops their child off tomorrow morning is trusting the system to have their back. When Education Ministers meet on Monday, that's the moment to appoint an interim CEO who is tasked to urgently get to work on safety and quality, and rebuilding trust with Australian families."

**Dr Caroline Croser-Barlow, CEO, The Front Project:**

"A Commission gives Ministers something they can't give themselves - a perspective of the whole system, that says what is best from the child's point of view, not from the perspective of the regulator or the funder. Ministers have found plenty of common ground on reform so far, but to fix something built on shaky foundations, we need Ministers to be brave enough to move to uncommon ground."

**Muriel Bamblett, Chair, SNAICC:**

SNAICC's first concern is for the children that were assaulted and abused by Edwina Ling at Injinoo Childcare Centre, and their families. It is unacceptable that any child is abused in early childhood education and care and it should have never happened.



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SNAICC welcomes the discussion about the application of the National Quality Framework as part of how children in early learning are kept safe. We have long advocated for nationally consistent standards of care that reflect the importance of culture.

The overwhelming majority of Aboriginal community-controlled early childhood services are high quality. These services operate with the needs of children as their first priority, with strong and clear child-safe policies and procedures in place.

SNAICC has argued for many years that the current subsidy-based funding models are a safety issue, not just an administrative one. When funding can't be counted on, neither can the continuity of care children and families depend on. Reliability of funding is reliability of safety.

**Penny Dakin, Executive Director, Communities, Minderoo Foundation:**

“Eight states and territories can't keep acting alone. Every separate fix leaves another crack, and every crack is a place for lower quality and safety standards to slip through. On Monday, Ministers have the chance to act in lockstep and show parents they have children's best interests at heart.”

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