

Dear Coordinators,

We're contacting you to inform you of HIPPY Australia's role in a national, sector-wide initiative to support better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families at First Nations-focused HIPPY sites.

Background

Back in 2020, the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) was signed, acknowledging that the Gap was not narrowing for First Nations people. There are many elements to the Agreement however, in general terms, it aims to ensure that First Nations people direct and control the funds and services they need - exercising self-determination and achieving outcomes for their children and families.

Supporting this move, research was initiated to quantify the benefits of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations (ACCOS) delivering programs to First Nations communities. This research conducted by SNAICC, *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families* (which you may remember was the subject of a webinar we held on back in December 2023), shows that there are higher rates of service engagement and better outcomes for First Nations service users when programs are delivered by an ACCO.

HIPPY Australia, as part of The Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL), supports self-determination and working towards a future where First Nations families are best set up to thrive.

Seeing the clear benefits of self-determination, and program delivery by ACCOs for First Nations families, HIPPY Australia has committed, in the most recent grant agreement with the Australian government, to support the transition of **First Nations-focused sites from mainstream organisations** to ACCO providers or ACCO-led partnerships, **where determined appropriate** by the community and ACCOs. First Nations-focused sites were set up with a focus on recruiting and delivering HIPPY to First Nations families, so it is appropriate that those communities have a key say in how the service is delivered, while also acknowledging that HIPPY is also a program that continues to welcome families from all backgrounds.

Which sites are affected?

This process is occurring in First Nations-focused HIPPY sites, which do not currently have an ACCO as a HIPPY provider.

Community consultation

In keeping with the principle of self-determination, HIPPY Australia is holding community consultations to identify whether local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations or ACCO-led partnerships would be appropriate HIPPY providers at First Nations-focused sites (if not already).

These community consultations in identified sites are run by an independent facilitator – an independent First Nations organisation contracted by the BSL – which will speak with members of the local community, including affected Coordinators, Tutors and HIPPY families as well as Elders, First Nations community leaders and Traditional Custodians. HIPPY Australia believes this is an important opportunity for the local community to have its say.

On completing the local consultation, the independent facilitator will capture community voice and report the community's preferred pathway as ACCOs or ACCO-led partnerships formally apply to become HIPPY provider. If an ACCO or ACCO-led partnership is successful, the current provider organisation will work with them and BSL to support families and staff (where applicable) to transfer with as little disruption as possible.

In the interim

The continuation of quality, uninterrupted delivery for families remains a focus throughout this process – all families enrolled in the program will be supported to complete their two-year HIPPY journeys and families from all backgrounds will remain welcome to the program. In addition, HIPPY Australia supports all existing Tutors to complete their two-year employment with HIPPY and continue supporting their HIPPY families.

We deeply acknowledge and appreciate each mainstream organisation and HIPPY staff's work in delivering and championing HIPPY over the years and, the expertise, reputation, relationships, and insights they have built in their communities. Their knowledge, expertise, and involvement of HIPPY Coordinators, Tutors and the mainstream organisation is essential to supporting families and the program.

If you have any questions about this initiative, please don't hesitate to get in touch via hippyaustralia@bsl.org.au where will forward your questions to the most appropriate person.

Best regards,

Clare

Clare Seddon

Head of HIPPY