

CLOSETHEGAP

Embargoed until 12:00 am Wednesday 28 August 2013

Call for incoming government to commit to Close the Gap

A renewed COAG National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap and action on the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan should be key priorities for the next government, according to an incoming government brief prepared by the Close the Gap Steering Committee.

The briefing paper, to be released today, outlines the key steps needed in the next parliament to ensure progress on closing the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Australians.

The paper says that within its first hundred days, a new government should:

- Reaffirm the commitment for the Prime Minister to annually report at the beginning of Parliament on progress towards closing the gap;
- Secure a new COAG National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes, with a minimum Commonwealth investment of \$777 million over the next three years; and
- Begin the implementation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representatives.

Campaign spokesperson and Chair of National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, Justin Mohamed said that closing the gap is literally a life or death issue for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

“We’re only at the beginning of the journey to close the gap in life expectancy by 2030. We can’t turn back now because closing the gap needs long-term commitment and policy continuity. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in our hands is having an impact and we must keep supporting our people to deliver their own health outcomes,” Mr Mohamed said.

AMA President, Dr Steve Hambleton said that both Kevin Rudd and Tony Abbott have been strong supporters of Close the Gap.

He said that Tony Abbott gave the campaign strong encouragement in its early days when he was Health Minister and Kevin Rudd committed to the targets and deadlines we proposed and secured the first National Partnership Agreement through COAG.

“It’s important that momentum towards closing the gap is maintained regardless of who wins the election. Closing the gap is a generational effort and we are beginning to see signs of progress,” Dr Hambleton said.

CLOSE THE GAP

Lowitja Institute Chair, Pat Anderson said the Close the Gap Steering Committee welcomed the attention given to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and employment in the election campaign.

“Along with racism, education and employment are key social determinants of health. But action on these needs to proceed at the same time as action on health because kids can’t study and parents can’t hold down a job if they have poor health,” Ms Anderson said.

The Close the Gap Campaign was launched by Olympians Catherine Freeman and Ian Thorpe in April 2007. Since then almost 200,000 Australians have signed up to the campaign, which has also received multi party support by all Federal, State and Territory Governments.

Building on the Close the Gap platform can be downloaded from:

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/close-gap-indigenous-health-campaign>

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