



CLOSE THE GAP

MEDIA RELEASE

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Our Health, Our Voice, Our Choice

The Close the Gap Campaign has welcomed the Prime Minister's commitment to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to address the inequality that continues to exist in life expectancy and other outcomes.

The Prime Minister Scott Morrison has tabled the Government's *Closing the Gap* Report and restated the government's commitment to work collaboratively in a formal partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Co-Chairs of the Close the Gap Campaign, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar AO and the Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples Rod Little, say that commitment must be followed by action.

"We have had so many promises and so many disappointments. It's well and truly time to match the rhetoric. We cannot continue to return to parliament every year and hear the appalling statistics," the Co-Chairs said.

The Government's *Closing the Gap* report has found there has been little progress with just two of the seven targets on track, for getting more Indigenous children into early childhood education and for halving the year 12 attainment gap.

"In terms of Closing the Gap in life expectancy, a lot more needs to be done before children reach school age. Children have to be in the best possible health before they begin their life journey.

"Last December, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), led by the Prime Minister, agreed to a formal partnership with peak Indigenous organisations on Closing the Gap.

"We strongly support the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak bodies that has formed to be signatories to the partnership agreement with COAG, and for them to share as equal partners in the design, implementation and monitoring of Closing the Gap programs, policies and targets.

"This partnership really does have the potential to be a game changer. It means active participation in decisions about matters that affect us. It will allow the voices of Indigenous Australians at community, local and national levels to be heard.

"We also commend the Opposition Leader Bill Shorten for his strong response and commitment to Indigenous Australians. This important strategy needs bi-partisan support.

“Indigenous involvement and participation in this important national strategy is vital. It really is the only way forward, because we know that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are included in the design and delivery of services that impact their lives, the outcomes are far better.

“It’s critical we get the next phase of the Government’s Refreshed *Closing the Gap* Strategy right. Our people deserve to live a full and healthy lives, like all other Australians,” the co-Chairs said.

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The Close the Gap (CTG) Campaign was launched in 2006 to address the unacceptable gap in life expectancy and other health indicators between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. The Campaign includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and non-Indigenous health and advocacy organisations. More than 250,000 Australians have signed a pledge supporting the Campaign.