

2019 FEDERAL ELECTION

SCORECARD

MAY
2019

In this 2019 Federal Election Scorecard, ANTaR has provided a guide to the policies of the Liberal-National Coalition, the Australian Labor Party, and The Australian Greens, in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs.

In early April 2019, ANTaR wrote to the Prime Minister, Minister of Indigenous Affairs, and the Minister for Indigenous Health; the Labor Opposition Leader and shadow Minister for Indigenous Affairs; and the Leader of The Greens, seeking their parties' policies and election commitments relating to:

1. CLOSING THE GAP IN HEALTH

Closing the Gap in health outcomes and life-expectancy, and addressing the social determinants of health such as housing and systemic racism;

2. ADDRESSING INJUSTICE AND INCARCERATION

Addressing the injustice of shameful, heavily disproportionate incarceration rates;

3. CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Constitutional Reform – including the implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

To date, only Labor and the Greens have responded to ANTaR's request, and these responses are available on our website in full at antar.org.au In producing this scorecard we have also drawn upon the existing election platforms and public statements to inform your vote. This scorecard is based on forward looking, stated election commitments and we are not including standard programs and services (unless they are contentious). We have only highlighted the major policy commitments.

ANTaR recommends close consideration of the policies of the major parties contesting the Federal Election – and particularly the policies relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We believe that justice, rights and respect for Australia's First Peoples should be a top order priority for the next Federal Government and the 46th Parliament of Australia.



DON'T FORGET TO VOTE

1. CLOSING THE GAP

Over a decade after the formation of the Closing the Gap Strategy by Parliament, and despite bipartisan support, only 2 of the 7 Strategy Targets were reported to be on track.¹

The recent formalisation of a 'Joint Partnership' between Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak organisations² is a welcome development that should have been put in place at the very beginning of Closing the Gap.

ANTaR asked what each party would do, in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, to address the continuing and unacceptable disparities in health and life expectancy outcomes faced by First Peoples.³

Specifically, we asked each party for their policies and election commitments concerning the:

- Supply and maintenance of adequate housing;
- Support for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services;
- Tackling racism in the mainstream health system;
- A national response to protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children;
- Horrific rates of Indigenous Youth suicide; and
- Future of the controversial Cashless Debit Card program.

		
<p>The Coalition support Closing the Gap Refresh, shared ownership of and responsibility for agreed targets and ongoing monitoring of a refreshed Closing the Gap Strategy.</p> <p>\$1.2m for Red Dust to support young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with mental health issues in the NT.</p> <p>\$34m specifically for Indigenous suicide prevention and mental health initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$19.6m directed to Youth Suicides in the Kimberley; • \$4.5m to empower Indigenous leadership in suicide prevention.⁴ <p>\$22.5m research grants in mental health — specific to youth and Indigenous health research projects.</p> <p>\$550m over 5 years for more support for remote housing.</p> <p>Barkley Regional Deal (Tennant Creek and surrounds) includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$15.9m to increase housing supply; • \$10.1m for economic development, business hub, local infrastructure; 	<p>Labor will co-design health policy and work collaboratively with First Nations peak organisations on a revitalised Closing the Gap framework and increasing the appointment of Indigenous staff.</p> <p>Reinstate the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equality Council (NATSIHEC).</p> <p>Labor will provide \$33m to address rheumatic heart disease — a preventable condition killing up to 100 Indigenous children annually.</p> <p>\$16.5m for the Queensland-based Deadly Choices health campaign to expand nationally.</p> <p>\$20 million for sexual health promotion activities, including targeting a syphilis outbreak in northern Australia.</p> <p>\$13m to stop vision loss.⁶</p> <p>\$29.6m to reduce Indigenous youth suicide.</p> <p>Labor will abolish the Community Development Program (CDP) work for the dole scheme.</p>	<p>The Greens are committed to Closing the Gap and adequately funding Aboriginal controlled health services for First Nations peoples. Will restore \$500m (including \$169m from health programs) cut after the introduction of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.</p> <p>In restoring funding they aim to address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with communities and health professionals to design targets and interventions for diseases, such as rheumatic heart disease, trachoma and chronic otitis media; • Introduce a new independent preventive health commission to address nutrition and fitness challenges in First Nations communities; • \$15 million per year to close the gap in the rates of new HIV diagnoses between Australian-born non-Indigenous peoples and First Nations peoples; • Doubling Commonwealth AOD (Alcohol and other drugs) treatment funding to \$800 million over three years to improve treatment outcomes.

1. CLOSING THE GAP CONT.

		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$3.9m to support local community leadership, sporting leagues, mediation services, and community projects in remote areas and homelands. <p>\$200m for an Indigenous Youth education package.</p> <p>\$7.3m to increase involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in development of policies and delivery services that benefit First Nations communities.</p> <p>\$328m over three years for family violence services, to support the <i>Fourth Action Plan of the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children</i>.</p> <p>Committed to continuing the Community Development Program (CDP) work for the dole scheme.</p> <p>Committed to the \$129m expansion of the Cashless Debit Card trial. ⁵</p> <p>\$62.4m to expand second chance learning in language, literacy, numeracy and digital skills to up-skill at-risk workers.</p>	<p>\$3m to provide Health Justice Partnerships for at-risk communities to achieve better health and justice outcomes for vulnerable communities.</p> <p>\$1.5 billion investment in housing to address overcrowding and create jobs in remote Indigenous communities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> \$550m over 5 years from 2023 for the Northern Territory; \$251m for Queensland, Western Australia South Australia 2019-20. 	<p>\$500m for community based assertive outreach programs for suicide prevention and mental health dedicated for First peoples; in particular ensure funding recognises need of regional and remote communities in WA and NT.</p> <p>Allocating a proportion of our \$200 million Survivor Grant fund to First Nations community-controlled specialist frontline services working with family violence survivor.</p> <p>Ensure support services are developed, led and provided by First Nations peoples.</p> <p>Commit to a national response to protecting First Nations children; providing \$50m over four years for First Nations out of home care projects including funding First Nations family support workers.</p> <p>Advocate for First Nations Child Protection bodies in all states and territories as being an essential part of the response to the crisis of the numbers of children in out of home care.</p> <p>Adopting a housing first policy by setting aside \$500 million per year to fund transitional housing and crisis services.</p> <p>Commit to abolishing racist and punitive measures including the Cashless Debit Card and compulsory income management. ⁷</p>
<p> MIXED The partnership with the Coalition of Peak Bodies offers a fresh start.</p>	<p> MIXED The partnership with the Coalition of Peak Bodies offers a fresh start.</p>	<p> THUMBS UP</p>

2. ADDRESSING INJUSTICE + INCARCERATION

The over-incarceration rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is one of our nation's most significant human rights concerns. First Nations people are 'the most incarcerated people on the planet'.⁸ First Nations people constitute around 3 per cent of the total Australian population but 28 per cent of the adult prison population. Even more distressingly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth constitute 7 per cent of the total youth population but represent 54 per cent of those in youth detention across the country.⁹

The Australian Law Reform Commission Report (Pathways to Justice)¹⁰, which remains unaddressed by the Government, has two key recommendations involving investments in a national Justice Reinvestment strategy.

We asked the parties to inform us how they would address:

- **Over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison;**
- **Funding for alternative models, particularly for Justice Reinvestment projects across the nation; and**
- **Strategies to address the incidence of family violence.**

		
<p>The Coalition will abolish the Indigenous Legal Assistance Program (ILAP) despite its own review recommending retaining and merging funding with mainstream legal services.¹¹</p> <p>\$42m on mental health initiatives for young and Indigenous Australians.</p> <p>\$1.5m contribution to Maranguka Justice Reinvestment in Bourke, NSW.¹²</p> <p>\$35m to address the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by family violence.¹³</p>	<p>Labor will provide \$107m to battle Indigenous disadvantage in the justice system, including:¹⁴</p> <p>\$21.75m for justice reinvestment programs to extend the NSW Bourke program in WA, QLD and the NT.</p> <p>\$40m over four years for legal aid and \$4m for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILs).</p> <p>Adopt principle of imprisonment as a last resort.</p> <p>Adopt targets in the Closing the Gap Strategy.</p> <p>Invest in Aboriginal controlled frontline services including \$20m for refuges.</p> <p>\$21.5m for family violence prevention legal services.</p> <p>Reinstate Indigenous Legal Assistance Program.</p> <p>Work with states and territories to grow and sustain alternative sentencing mechanisms such as Koori Courts.</p> <p>\$60m to provide a dedicated First Nations stream from the Community Prevention and Frontline Services Grants.</p>	<p>The Greens will adopt national targets to close the gap in rates of imprisonment by 2031 and rates of violence against First Nations people, with priority for women and children and reduce rates of children in out of home care.</p> <p>Establish interdepartmental taskforce to develop national strategy to address incarceration rates.</p> <p>Establish National Centre for Justice Reinvestment and provide \$50m over four years for Justice reinvestment programs to support local projects.</p> <p>Reinstate Indigenous Legal Assistance Program and provide \$4.8m earmarked for peak body for the legal services, National Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS).</p>
 THUMBS DOWN	 THUMBS UP	 THUMBS UP

3. CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

Makarrata Commission and agreement making

In May 2017, the Uluru Statement from the Heart was delivered to the Australian people in a gathering at Uluru, the symbolic heart of Aboriginal Australia. The Statement represents a consensus of First Nations Peoples across Australia and is a direct and powerful statement on their aspirations for true recognition in Australia's Constitution.

It asks all Australians to support them in having a constitutionally enshrined Voice to the Australian Parliament in all matters that concern their wellbeing in the community. The Statement also seeks 'a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.'¹⁵

We asked the parties to tell us their policies relating to the Constitutional reforms and Makarrata Commission proposed by the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

		
<p>The Coalition has allocated \$7.9m to a "co-design of options" for a Voice to Parliament.</p> <p>There is also reference in the 2019 Budget to \$160m for a referendum on the Voice to be constitutionally enshrined. (This is money carried over from previous budgets).</p>	<p>Labor supports the Voice and enshrining it in the Constitution.</p> <p>It is Labor's stated first priority for Constitutional change.</p> <p>Will move quickly following the election to agree on a process with First Nations people – including a clear pathway to a referendum.</p> <p>Will also work with First Peoples peak bodies to establish a Makarrata Commission for agreement-making and truth-telling.</p> <p>Will examine options for ensuring local, regional and national representation so that First Nations communities have a genuine say.¹⁶</p>	<p>The Greens have committed to addressing unfinished business through treaties, truth, justice and healing.</p> <p>Support First Nations to implement Uluru Statement from the Heart with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$50M to First Nations organisations to support pathway to treaties; • \$50M to establish body to enable Makarrata, facilitate justice and truth telling; • Following implementation of above to provide funding for consultation and referendum process for Voice to Parliament.
 <p>Not sure what to think. After initially rejecting the Uluru Statement out of hand, the two budget measures indicated there is some willingness to support the Voice. Any response must take its lead from the First Nations peoples of Australia.</p>	 <p>THUMBS UP</p>	 <p>THUMBS UP</p>

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ANTaR is a national advocacy organisation working for Justice, Rights and Respect for Australia's First Peoples. We do this primarily through campaigns, advocacy and lobbying.

Our current national campaigns include:



Constitutional Recognition and Equality – for Constitutional change to recognise Australia's First Peoples and remove discriminatory elements from our founding document; and



Justice – for action to reduce imprisonment rates and end deaths in custody.

We also engage in national advocacy across a range of policy and social justice issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including native title, languages and cultures, economic and community development, remote communities services and infrastructure, health and human rights.

ANTaR is a foundational member of the Close the Gap Campaign Steering Committee, the Change the Record Campaign Steering Committee and the Redfern Statement Alliance.

ANTaR has been working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and leaders on rights and reconciliation issues since 1997.

ANTaR is a non-government, not-for-profit, community-based organisation.

ENDNOTES

CLOSING THE GAP

- ¹ 2019 Close the Gap Report - <https://ctgreport.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/ctg-report-2019.pdf?a=1>
- ² Coalition of Peaks - <https://www.naccho.org.au/programmes/coalition-of-peaks/>
- ³ Coalition of Peaks - <https://www.naccho.org.au/programmes/coalition-of-peaks/>
- ⁴ Family Matters 2018 Report - <http://www.familymatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Family-Matters-Report-2018.pdf>
- ⁵ 'The Guardian' 'Unfinished Business: What the parties offer Indigenous voters' <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/apr/20/unfinished-business-what-the-parties-offer-indigenous-voters-in-the-2019-election>
- ⁶ The Guardian 'Cashless welfare card trials extended despite 'no evidence' they reduce harm' - <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2018/dec/14/cashless-welfare-card-trials-extended-despite-no-evidence-they-reduce-harm>
- ⁷ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-04-18/labor-federal-election-indigenous-health-policy/11027234>
- ⁸ The Greens – Working to Close the Gap (2019) https://greens.org.au/sites/default/files/2018-06/20160608_ATSI%20Health.pdf

ADDRESSING INJUSTICE + INCARCERATION

- ⁹ As Indigenous incarceration rates keep rising, justice reinvestment offers a solution. <https://theconversation.com/as-indigenous-incarceration-rates-keep-rising-justice-reinvestment-offers-a-solution-107610>
- ¹⁰ Ibid
- ¹¹ Pathways to Justice–Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (ALRC Report 133) | ALRC. <https://www.alrc.gov.au/publications/indigenous-incarceration-report133>. March 2018
- ¹² Indigenous Legal Assistance Program Review (2019) – Cox Inall Ridgeway - <https://www.ag.gov.au/LegalSystem/Legalaidprogrammes/Documents/Review-of-the-ILAP.PDF>
- ¹³ <https://www.markcoulton.com.au/1-8-million-for-maranguka-justice-reinvestment-project-in-bourke/>
- ¹⁴ <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/apr/25/labor-pledges-107m-to-battle-indigenous-disadvantage-in-justice-system>

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

- ¹⁵ The Uluru Statement from the Heart - <https://www.clc.org.au/files/pdf/Uluru-Statement-3.pdf>
- ¹⁶ <https://alp.org.au/policies/a-voice-for-first-nations-people/>