

Monday 3 September 2014

ANTaR backs calls for PM to fix Indigenous affairs policy and funding chaos

ANTaR today supported calls made by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders yesterday for the PM to fix the Indigenous affairs policy and funding chaos.

ANTaR National Director Andrew Meehan said that it was time for the PM to meet with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative organisations and listen to the serious concerns they have with the Budget and work in partnership to resolve them.

“We know that as a result of the Federal Budget, vital Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services are shutting their doors, and staff are leaving - there’s enormous uncertainty and concern,” Mr Meehan said.

“ANTaR has previously asked for a rethink of the widespread cuts to specific Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (\$13.4 million), Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (\$3.6 million), and cuts to 38 Aboriginal Children and Family Centres (\$78 million). We’ve also opposed the cutting of funding to the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples,” he said.

Mr Meehan said that 12 months into government, the PM should listen to the organisations that have decades of experience working in the field and vast membership of frontline services and community members. He said that it would signal that the PM is serious about his commitment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to be at the heart of a new government in word and deed.

He said that ANTaR fully supports the calls by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative organisations for:

- Emergency talks between the Prime Minister and national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leaders beyond the Indigenous Advisory Council and other individual advisors.
- An immediate extension of transitional funding arrangements under the Government’s new Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) from six months and a year to a minimum of 18 months and two years.
- The deferral of the IAS open grant and tender process due to commence on 8 September while the Government urgently clarifies eligibility criteria and other areas of concern.
- Government assurance that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, service providers and advocacy bodies will be respected and supported to undertake community development and service delivery to their constituents.
- A Parliamentary Inquiry into the recommendations of the Forrest Review into Indigenous employment and economic development.

ANTaR is dedicated solely to supporting the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and working to educate the wider community, shape public opinion, and speak up for justice, rights and respect for Australia’s First Peoples.