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Symbolic and practical actions must go hand in hand

ANTaR has today welcomed the Prime Minister's recognition that practical and symbolic actions to advance reconciliation are "inextricably linked" and welcomes the announcement of funding to continue building community support for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

"The Prime Minister's recognition of the importance of both symbolic and practical actions signals a renewed commitment to advance a meaningful reconciliation process," said Jacqueline Phillips, National Director.

"For too long, politicians and the media have portrayed these actions as mutually exclusive, rather than inextricably linked."

Constitutional recognition is the next step in our reconciliation journey, with the Expert Panel outlining a blueprint for change which all political leaders must unite behind.

"The changes proposed by the Expert Panel would have powerful symbolic and important practical effects."

The Prime Minister recognised today that 'the movement for constitutional recognition is strong and growing.'

"Nonetheless, the challenge of raising community awareness and building support is significant. This challenge must be embraced and supported by both major parties and all Australians committed to recognition, respect and equality."

Resources for community education are an essential part of the process. Today's announcement of \$10 million to fund community education is an important next step.

"Funding for community groups to engage all Australians in this national conversation is vital to maintaining the momentum for change."

ANTaR welcomes the announcement that Reconciliation Australia will lead this work.

“Reconciliation Australia is uniquely placed to lead this process, in partnership with the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples and other national partner organisations.”

Constitutional recognition and efforts to close the gap represent complementary aspects of a meaningful reconciliation process.

“We have strongly welcomed the Government’s commitment to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders in health equality planning. This must ensure participation in important decision-making processes and a central role for community-controlled health organisations.”

“We are also pleased to note that gradual gains are being made to close the gap in health equality with reported improvements to infant mortality, overall mortality rates and literacy and numeracy.”

“However, we are all too aware how far we have to go before health equality is achieved. All major parties must commit to the long-haul. A bipartisan commitment must be made to maintain Closing the Gap health funding beyond 2013.”

“Urgent efforts must also be made to improve data collection so progress can be measured accurately, efforts intensified where necessary and governments held to account.”

Media contact: National Director, Jacqueline Phillips - 0423 773 395