

CCHQ 2022

STRONG ECONOMY. STRONGER FUTURE.

18 April 2022

Mr Paul Wright
ANTaR National Director
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Email: Paul@antar.org.au

Dear Mr Wright

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the views of the Coalition on important issues facing your members. A response to your questions is attached.

The last two years have been tough for our country.

Despite the setbacks, Australia's economic recovery is leading the world.

Unemployment is at 4%, the equal lowest in 48 years. And the recent Budget included the biggest turnaround in our finances in over 70 years.

There's much more to be done. To build a stronger future, our plan will:

1. Deliver more jobs and working towards unemployment below 4%.
2. Deliver tax relief for workers and small businesses.
3. Invest in roads, rail, water infrastructure and renewable energy technology.
4. Make record investments in health and other essential services.
5. Invest in stronger defence, security and borders.

This election provides a clear choice, with real consequences for Australia.

The alternative at this election is Anthony Albanese and Labor. Labor would weaken our economy and put Australia's recovery at risk. Now is not the time to change course.

Thank you for communicating our response to your members.

Yours sincerely,



Andrew Hirst
Federal Director

MORRISON GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO ANTAR

1. The Federal obligations under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The Morrison Government has a proven record of accomplishment in advancing the interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and to close the gap.

The Morrison Government shifted course with the release of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The Government committed to working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in particular through the Coalition of Peaks. We made a new partnership - a genuine partnership to drive change. This shared partnership works not only to address the very real actions and responsibilities of the Commonwealth Government, but also those of state and territory and local governments. Since the release of the National Agreement, the Morrison Government has worked in partnership to embed the four Priority Reforms, set 17 new targets and established mechanisms for shared responsibility and shared accountability.

This included a new approach to reporting, including a publicly available implementation plan, and making data accessible, with \$10.1 million for the Productivity Commission to monitor progress. To drive the required action and momentum, in 2021, the Prime Minister announced the Commonwealth's Implementation Plan with more than \$1 billion of funding to support new investments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, including measures that support mental health, jobs, skills and education. To track our ongoing advancement, the Government will table a Closing the Gap Annual Report by September 2022 to highlight progress and achievements in 2021-22 and reprioritisation of effort and investment in 2022-23.

In addition to new funding announced under the Commonwealth's Implementation Plan in 2021, the Morrison Government has also delivered a raft of Indigenous portfolio measures in the 2020-21 Budget to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people economically, from creating more jobs and wealth-building programs, to elevating Indigenous voices across Australia. This means the commitment to Closing the Gap is complimented by a range of new initiatives on top of an expended Indigenous Advancement Strategy, which now sits at \$6.7 billion over the forward estimates.

2. Addressing the injustice of disproportionately high incarceration rates

The Morrison Government has invested \$274.5 million from 2021-22 to fund initiatives to improve justice and community safety outcomes for Indigenous Australians. These initiatives include, through-care, which provides intensive case management services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in youth detention or prison to transition successfully back into their communities and avoid reoffending; Community Night Patrols, which employ Indigenous people to patrol their local communities and offer culturally sensitive

assistance and transportation to a safe place for those at risk of harm; and Custody Notification Services, which ensure that every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person who is taken into police custody receives a culturally appropriate health and wellbeing check and basic legal information.

In line with the Morrison Government's commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, we have partnered with states and territories, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations on actions to reduce Indigenous incarceration, youth detention and deaths in custody.

Under Priority Reform One of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (formal partnerships and shared-decision-making), the Morrison Government has brought all states and territories, the Coalition of the Peaks and Indigenous representatives together, to form the Justice Policy Partnership. The Morrison Government has committed \$7.6 million to establish the partnership which met for the third time on 28 March 2022. The Justice Policy Partnership will identify opportunities for all governments and organisations to work more effectively to develop evidence-backed actions to reduce the rates of Indigenous incarceration and youth detention.

3. Constitutional reform, and the Implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart

The Morrison Government remains committed to holding a referendum to recognise Indigenous Australians in the Constitution, once there is consensus on the way forward and at a time it has the best chance of success. To successfully bring about constitutional change, a majority of Australians and a majority of states must support the proposed amendments. Only eight out of 44 past referenda have been successful – we must learn from this and agree to a set of words that are acceptable to the majority of Australians.

The Morrison Government has made progress on an Indigenous Voice. On 17 December 2021, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP announced the establishment of Local & Regional Voices. This fulfilled our commitment to ensuring that Indigenous Australians have a say on the laws, policies and services that impact them, their communities and their lives. The Morrison Government has appointed Professor Marcia Langton AO and Professor Tom Calma AO to lead the establishment group and has now commenced discussions with states, territories and local governments to encourage their participation in the 35 Local & Regional Voices to be established nationally. As we know, we will need their support to get this right.

4. Ensuring the adequate protection of First Nations cultural heritage

The Morrison Government understands that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are at the heart of strengthening cultural heritage protection. On 29 November 2021, the Commonwealth signed a Partnership Agreement with the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance to implement a national engagement process to consult with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on Indigenous heritage reforms at the Commonwealth level. The Government is also committed to modernising Indigenous cultural heritage protection regimes across Australia, including through engagement with state and territories.

In the 2022-23 Budget, the Morrison Government announced an investment of \$11 million over two years to drive forward Indigenous cultural heritage reforms. As part of these reforms, \$5 million will support the partnership to undertake a program of comprehensive formal consultations in the next phase of the reform process. While the reform process is underway, \$6 million will be invested to facilitate timely decision making under the existing *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984*.

On 5 January 2022, the Morrison Government announced the establishment of Ngurra, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural precinct, in the Parliamentary Triangle, on Ngunnawal country (Canberra). Ngurra will include a learning and knowledge centre, a national resting place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestral remains and a new home for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Ngurra reaffirms our commitment to truth-telling and our shared journey towards reconciliation.