

CLOSE THE GAP

Funding quarantined but uncertainty remains

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The Close the Gap Campaign has welcomed the quarantining of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programmes from further cuts in the 2015–16 Budget but says the pain and uncertainty around last year’s Budget cuts still linger.

Campaign Co-Chairs Kirstie Parker and Mick Gooda said they were disappointed that the Australian Government has not restored the last year’s cuts of \$534.4 million over five years from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives.

The Co-Chairs said last year’s Budget cuts and the subsequent Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) open tender process had caused widespread distress, anxiety and uncertainty in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-controlled organisations.

“Questions remain regarding the IAS and the impact of the Budget cuts. The Campaign calls on the Government to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representatives to address the concerns with the IAS,” said Ms Parker, who is also the Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples.

“The nation wants continued focus and action to close the unacceptable health and life expectancy gap. We need bold policy initiatives supported by long-term investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.”

Mr Gooda, who is also the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner said the Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan to be released in 2015 has the potential to achieve the best possible outcomes from investment in health and related services.

“The continued investment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS), ACCHS representatives bodies at the national and state level and national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce, research and healing and wellbeing organisations is a critical for improving health outcomes,” Mr Gooda said.

The Campaign also welcomed the commitment to implement a revised Tackling Indigenous Smoking Programme and the reinstatement of funding for Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services that was cut in last year's Budget.

The Close the Gap Campaign's position paper on the Budget is available [here](#).

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