

MEDIA RELEASE



12pm, 9 February 2011

ANTaR welcomes ongoing commitment to deliver on Closing the Gap targets

ANTaR has welcomed the Prime Minister's release today of the third annual Closing the Gap report. Acknowledging its commitment to stay the course to close the gap in Indigenous life expectancy, ANTaR said that progress to date shows how essential it is for governments to sustain investment towards achieving these goals.

"The annual Closing the Gap report provides an important opportunity for the nation to stop and reflect on its progress towards addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander inequality," said Jacqueline Phillips, National Director.

"This year's report shows encouraging progress towards some targets but highlights the challenge involved in achieving others, including the life expectancy target."

"ANTaR is concerned to ensure that improvements that have been achieved are sustained and that renewed efforts are directed to meeting the most challenging targets. This will require ongoing and sustained investment, and a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health action plan. We welcome Minister Snowdon and Roxon's agreement today to develop such a plan."

"We must act together to ensure that the gains that have been made are not lost by maintaining funding increases and ensuring funds are targeted to Aboriginal community controlled health and wellbeing agencies."

"ANTaR's pre-Budget submission to the government detailed a number of areas where extra spending is needed to better support Aboriginal controlled community health organisations, generate economic opportunities and address major shortfalls in adequate housing."

"ANTaR believes that the outrageous over-representation of Indigenous Australians in our prisons must also be addressed through the Closing the Gap strategy. Over-imprisonment links directly to reduced opportunities in employment, health and education in communities and amongst families."

"ANTaR welcomes the Prime Minister's recognition of the importance of building respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and the role of the proposed referendum to recognise the unique place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our nation's history."

"The only way we can close the gap in our relationship is by resetting that relationship on a firm foundation through constitutional recognition and respect for self-determination. The call for Aboriginal people to take responsibility requires respect for the right to self-determination."

More than 140,000 people have pledged their support for the Close the Gap campaign. These Australians, and many others, will be watching to ensure the Government meets its ambitious but achievable targets.

The ANTaR Budget submission can be accessed at:

<http://www.antar.org.au/sites/default/files/Submission%20to%20Federal%20Budget%202011-12%20FINAL.pdf>

ANTaR is a national advocacy organisation dedicated specifically to the rights - and overcoming the disadvantage - of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

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ANTaR relies on the support of generous donations to continue its work supporting the rights and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. To support our work, please donate at: <http://www.antar.org.au/donate>