

Press Release

EMBARGOED UNTIL
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Huge election year people power pushes the need to close the gap

Nearly 1600 hundred community and corporate events across the country will today signal the need for a recommitment to health equality this election year.

National advocacy organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights, ANTaR, today welcomed the groundswell of support and called on the government to recommit to closing the health equality gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians.

ANTaR National Director Andrew Meehan said that health equality must be front and centre in all parties' election platforms to ensure that focus remains on this as a national priority.

“Over 190,000 Australians are gathering in community and corporate events as a clear demonstration that government must not drift away from closing the gap,”

Mr Meehan said. “This is a national priority for everyday Australians and must remain so for our politicians. It is simply unacceptable that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a life expectancy more than 10 years shorter than other Australians,” he said.

Mr Meehan said that this generation can be the generation to close the gap but cautioned that making fine speeches and commitments without firm action would not get us there.

“Government must demonstrate commitment by funding the Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan; introducing targets to reduce imprisonment rates and rates of violence; addressing racism in the health system; and focussing more on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a disability.”

“Government should also undertake serious reform of its Indigenous Advancement Strategy, considering the issues raised in the recent Senate Inquiry,” he said.

Mr Meehan said that Australians were looking for real follow through on high level commitments from government to close the health equality gap. And they were looking for government to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representatives.

“The huge people power turn out today is unambiguously telling government to get serious about closing the gap so that we meet the goal that the nation has set itself – closing the appalling 10 year health equality gap by 2030,” Mr Meehan said.

ANTaR is the only incorporated non-Indigenous organisation 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