

MEDIA RELEASE



Wednesday 15 May 2013

Federal Budget: Aboriginal Health funding welcomed but Closing the Gap still under threat

Last night's budget maintained the Federal Government's commitment to close the 10-17 year life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

Welcoming the budget, ANTaR National Director, Gary Highland said the focus must now shift to the states and territories to ensure the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap is continued.

The National Partnership Agreement was agreed to at COAG in 2008. It is set to expire on June 30 this year with so far only the Federal and Victorian Governments agreeing to provide funds to ensure its continuation.

Mr Highland said the Federal Government's Closing the Gap funding should be seen in the context of an austere budget.

"It's a testament to the Government's priorities that support for the most disadvantaged Australians was quarantined from spending cuts in the budget. For this, the Gillard Government deserves the gratitude of all Australians committed to equality and justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."

Mr Highland said it was vital that adequate funding was found out of the \$777 million Aboriginal health budget to support and grow Aboriginal Community Controlled Health services.

He also welcomed the continued funding for the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and Reconciliation Australia.

"Both of these organisations are doing important work in the areas of Close the Gap and Constitutional Recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The funding they have received will allow this work to continue."

Mr Highland said ANTaR is asking its supporters to write to Premiers and Chief Ministers urging them to join the Federal Government and sign up to a new Closing the Gap National Partnership Agreement.

People can send letters to State and Territory leaders via the ANTaR website at <http://antar.org.au/campaigns/health-0>

Media contact: National Director, Gary Highland – 0418 476 940