



Tuesday 11th July 2016

New Government must ensure addressing First Peoples' disadvantage is a national priority

National advocacy organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights - ANTaR, today congratulated the Coalition on its election win and called for it to ensure addressing First Peoples' disadvantage is a national priority for this term of government.

ANTaR National Director, Andrew Meehan said that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people fare the worst across almost every social and economic indicator.

“There are significant gaps between First Peoples and the broader community in health, education, employment, housing, incarceration and experiences of violence (among others), and addressing these in genuine partnership with First Peoples should be a national priority for the new government.”

Mr Meehan said that he believed most Australians think that the absence of equality for First Peoples is unacceptable and don't understand why consecutive governments have failed in this regard.

“The disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is well understood, but governments have continuously failed to engage with those best placed to solve these issues - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

As a first order of business, ANTaR is calling on the Prime Minister to:

- Meet with the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and a coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and organisations within the first 30 days of government to start the relationship on a solid foundation
- Join and support a National First Peoples' Summit to work through the historic Redfern Statement within the first 100 days of government
- Ensure that the Indigenous Affairs portfolio remains in Cabinet

Mr Meehan noted that in the Redfern Statement (https://antar.org.au/redfern_statement), the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and 16 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak representative bodies, supported by 50 organisations, including ANTaR, had developed clear policy proposals across a range of areas.

“The Redfern Statement is a landmark document which shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are united in their approach to working with government.”

“It should be taken seriously by the new government and form the basis for moving forward on a stronger footing with First Peoples,” he said.

Mr Meehan said that the last three years had been a period of upheaval and uncertainty for First Peoples, and the formation of a new government was an opportunity to reinvigorate the relationship with them.

About: 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.