

# Press Release

EMBARGOED UNTIL August 30, 2016 08:00 AM

## PM must engage with and listen to First Peoples

ANTaR, national advocacy organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights today called for the Prime Minister and his government to reset the relationship with First Peoples.

ANTaR National Director Andrew Meehan said the Prime Minister must meet with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, and establish respectful engagement from the start of the parliamentary term.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs has been in crisis for a number of years, and it’s time for the Prime Minister to ‘work with’ rather than ‘do to’ First Peoples. The Prime Minister committed to doing this in February but hasn’t followed through,” Mr Meehan said.

Mr Meehan noted that unilateral decisions like the Indigenous Advancement Strategy – the largest overhaul of Indigenous Affairs in years, continue to be made with no input from First Peoples representatives.

“The disastrous Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the lack of Federal leadership in reducing incarceration, and budget cuts of more than \$500 million have left a trail of destruction in Indigenous Affairs.”

“If government was engaging properly and listening, these decisions wouldn’t be made. It’s time for a rethink of the way government approaches the relationship,” he said.

Mr Meehan said that MPs will be greeted this morning with the Sea of Hands displaying a clear message on the lawns in front of Parliament House: PM, Meet with First Peoples.

“A meeting with the Prime Minister is the first step in establishing a relationship,” he said.

He noted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from representative organisations will be holding a press conference in front of the Sea of Hands calling for government to work with them on the clear platform outlined in the Redfern Statement.

“The historic Redfern Statement is the starting point for government to work with First Peoples. It’s a circuit breaker to the upheaval of the last few years, and a platform based on decades of experience and expertise,” he said.

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.