

## Press Release



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# Indigenous Affairs forgotten in the Budget

National advocacy organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights ANTaR has today expressed deep concern at the lack of funding and focus in the budget for Indigenous Affairs.

National Director of ANTaR Andrew Meehan said that no budget could be fair that didn't place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage at the heart of it, and this Budget had failed to do that.

Mr Meehan said "This Budget has forgotten about its commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, it has failed the most fundamental of all fairness tests," he said.

"The Budget has not overturned the horrendous budget cuts of the past two budgets and the Government has failed to listen to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about what needs to be done to address disadvantage," he said.

Mr Meehan noted that the Prime Minister had earlier this year said that the government's role was 'to provide an environment that enables Indigenous leaders to develop local solutions', but had not reinstated the funding it stripped away from the national representative body the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples.

Mr Meehan said that the budget had not done anything for the following key areas of concern:

\$534m cut from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services in the 2014 Budget

The cuts to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Aboriginal Child Care Services, and the continued underfunding of Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention Legal Services  
The defunding of the national representative body, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples.

\$200m recommended by the Productivity Commission as need to ensure access to basic legal services and representation

"The patent unfairness of this budget in relation to Indigenous Affairs should be a concern for all Australians," he said.

He emphasised that these areas of funding relate to basic rights to health, legal representation, to live free from violence, and decent childcare for those most in need, rather than tax breaks to business.

Mr Meehan said that the budget had assigned fairness for those most disadvantaged - the First Peoples of the country - to further uncertainty, grossly inadequate funding for services, continued inequality, and disadvantage.

He called on the government to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representatives to address these fundamental investment shortfalls.

ANTaR as a member of the Change the Record campaign and the Close the Gap Campaign and 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.