

Press Release

March 1, 2016

PM failing his own test while not meeting with national representative body for First Peoples

National advocacy organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights – ANTaR, today called on the Prime Minister to meet with the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples as a matter of urgency or risk failing his own test.

National Director Andrew Meehan said that he was shocked that six months after becoming the Prime Minister, Mr Turnbull has still not met with the national representative body for First Peoples.

"It's just not acceptable that in March, with a Federal Election just around the corner, the Prime Minister is leaving the national voice of First Peoples high and dry," said Mr Meehan.

"How can the Prime Minister meet his commitment made in the Closing the Gap Speech of 'working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and their communities' when he's yet to meet the national representative body?" he said.

Mr Meehan cautioned that the Prime Minister will have seriously undermined his credibility if he heads into a Federal Election without meeting with the national representative body and other peak national Aboriginal organisations.

"Developing policy without engaging with the elected representatives of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, as well as other national peak Aboriginal organisations, is not partnership, nor does it engender trust – two centrepieces of the Prime Minister's Closing the Gap speech."

Mr Meehan noted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have heard noble rhetoric before from Prime Ministers only to be let down by a disjuncture between words and action.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda rightly pointed out that First Peoples were 'entitled to be a little cynical' in hearing the sentiments in the Prime Minister's speech."

It's now up to the Prime Minister to demonstrate through actions that he is serious about partnership with First Peoples by meeting with the national representative body as the first step towards developing mutual trust and working in partnership," 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

Contact Details

Media Contact - Andrew Meehan - 0434 920 906