



CLOSE THE GAP

MEDIA STATEMENT

STANDING STILL IS INTOLERABLE

Wednesday, 12 February 2020

The Close the Gap Campaign has warned that the ongoing gap in life expectancy, health outcomes and child mortality rates for Indigenous Australians is absolutely intolerable.

The *Closing the Gap* report, released today, reveals the same familiar disappointing story as previous reports. Only two of the original seven *Closing the Gap* targets are on track to be met within their timeframes – the same two targets as last year.

Close the Gap Campaign co-Chairs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar AO and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA) CEO Karl Briscoe, have called on the government to invest urgently in health equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

“Every year for the last 12 years we have listened to a disappointing litany of failure – it’s not good enough, Indigenous Australians deserve better,” said Close the Gap co-Chairs June Oscar and Karl Briscoe.

“We are heartened by the developments last year with COAG and the Prime Minister agreeing to a formal partnership with the Coalition of Peaks on the *Closing the Gap* strategy. Indigenous involvement and participation is vital - when our peoples are included in the design and delivery of services that impact their lives, the outcomes are far better.

“However, now that partnership is in place, Australian governments must commit to urgent funding of Indigenous healthcare and systemic reform.

“Preventable diseases continue to take young lives while unrelenting deaths in custody and suicide rates twice that of other Australians continue to shame us all. As governments reshape the *Closing the Gap* strategy, we cannot afford for the mistakes of the past to be repeated. “

The Close the Gap (CTG) Campaign was launched in 2006 to address the unacceptable gap in life expectancy and other health indicators between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians. The Campaign includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and non-Indigenous health and advocacy organisations. More than 200,000 Australians have signed a pledge supporting the Campaign.

“Equal health and education are human rights and the Close the Gap campaign will continue to hold governments to account on these issues,” said June Oscar and Karl Briscoe.

National Close the Gap Day is on 19 March 2020, and the Campaign will release its own report on that date. You can read more about the Close the Gap Campaign on the ANTaR website at <https://antar.org.au/close-gap>

Media contact: Liz Stephens 0430 366 529 – liz.stephens@humanrights.gov.au

Note for editors:

Closing the Gap is a government strategy. Close the Gap is an independent, Indigenous-led campaign that calls on political leaders from all levels of government to take action on health and education equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.