

ANTAR response to Productivity Commission Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

7 February, 2024

ANTAR fully supports the response of the Coalition of Peaks to the Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the call for a new significant funding commitment.

We welcome the recommendations of the Review and hope that governments will now act on them and turn the words of the partnership agreement into meaningful change for First Nations communities.

We note that the fundamental change required is to shift the power balance from governments and their bureaucracies to First Nations peoples and their community-controlled organisations. The old 'mission manager' approach based on the faulty logic that 'Government knows best' is failing and will always fail.

First Nations peoples have the solutions and the most fundamental solution is respecting and resourcing their agency and self-determination.

Since last year's referendum, Coalition oppositions Federally and in most states and territories have sought to pit closing the gap progress against truth-telling and treaty-making processes. The positive highlighting of the Victorian treaty process should certainly give the LNP in Victoria pause.

The Productivity Commission's Review makes absolutely clear that real partnership approaches, such as treaty processes, which rebalance power between First Nations

communities and governments, is essential to avoid 'business as usual' and the same failures to close the gap.

This power shift, coupled with supporting First Nations organisations through long term capacity building and sustainable funding, can create the necessary foundation for the changes required to see First Nations peoples achieve better health, wellbeing and safety.

ANTAR President Dr Peter Lewis said today:

“Respecting and resourcing culture, self-determination and agency are the ingredients necessary to closing the gap – this is the Productivity Commission saying this, not some radical think tank.”

“We hope Opposition leaders such as Mr Dutton, Mr Pesutto, Mr Speakman and Mr Crisafulli will take the time to read the Productivity Commission’s Review.”

“It’s time politicians stop throwing First Nations peoples under a bus in their pursuit of the disingenuous ‘anti-woke’ vote.”

“We need as a nation to abandon the politics of the ‘culture wars’ and work respectfully with First Nations leaders and communities to not only close the gap in outcomes, but also the gap between our peoples.”

Media Contact:

Phaedra Engel-Harrison – ANTAR

phaedra@antar.org.au

ANTAR is a national advocacy organisation working for Justice, Rights and Respect for Australia’s First Peoples. We do this primarily through campaigns, advocacy, and lobbying.