

9 June 2016

**ELECTION 2016: NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT  
ISLANDER LEADERS UNITE**

**LAUNCH OF THE REDFERN STATEMENT 2016**

**The Redfern Statement at a glance**

The Statement calls on the next Federal Government to:

- Restore the \$534m cut from the Indigenous Affairs Portfolio by the 2014 Budget.
- Commit to better and ongoing engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through their representative national peaks.
- Recommit to Closing the Gap by:
  - i. setting targets to reduce rates of family violence, incarceration and out-of-home care and increase access to disability support services; and
  - ii. secure national funding agreements to drive the implementation of national strategies.
- Commit to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders to establish a Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs in the future.
- Commit to address the unfinished business of reconciliation.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership organisations come together today to call on all parties to tackle inequality and disadvantage facing Australia's First People as a federal election priority.

“Today we launch the Redfern Statement 2016. This is the first time national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership organisations have put this kind of united call to an incoming government,” said Dr Jackie Huggins, co-chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples.

Supported by mainstream non-government- organisations, the alliance is calling for an immediate restoration of the \$534 million funding cut from the Indigenous Affairs Portfolio, to be invested into meaningful engagement, health, justice, preventing violence, early childhood and disability.

“We have barely seen a mention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy or issues this election campaign. That changes today. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups have come together to demand urgent action. It is time that

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Suite 8, Level 1, 252 – 260 St. Georges Rd. North Fitzroy VIC 3068

PO Box 1445, North Fitzroy VIC 3068

Ph: 03 9489 8099 Fax: 03 9489 8044 info@snaicc.org.au www.snaicc.org.au

ABN 42 513 562 148

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are heard and respected. It is time for action.”

“The regular upheaval of major policy changes, significant budget cuts and changing governments in the short election cycles at all levels, are major impediments to improving life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This policy instability must stop and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs must be brought in from the margins of national debate to the mainstream centre in order to end the unacceptable disadvantage experienced by First Peoples. This is the task at hand for the next Federal Government.”

The alliance’s plan for urgent government action calls for the following reforms:

To achieve meaningful engagement with government, industry and the non-government sector, it is critical that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are properly represented at the national level. The National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples (Congress) has fulfilled this role since 2010 and funding cuts to it should be reversed.

In the area of health, the alliance calls on all parties to recommit to Closing the Gap in order to achieve health equality in this generation. The alliance views funding the Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan (2013–2023), a policy developed through best-practice community consultation, as a priority. The alliance also recommends making Aboriginal Community Controlled Services (ACCHS) the preferred providers for health services, a measure which would promote the self-determination essential to closing the gap in life outcomes for First Peoples.

The state of access to justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their over-representation in the criminal justice system is a national crisis, as is violence against Indigenous women and children. To make headway in justice and violence prevention, the alliance calls on the next Federal Government to adopt justice targets as part of the Closing the Gap framework, to overturn funding cuts to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and to reinstate the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Program.

The alliance also champions the addition of disability access targets to the Closing the Gap framework to improve outcomes for the approximately 45 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identifying as having some form of disability.

Research demonstrates that early childhood services have the greatest impacts for vulnerable families, providing long-term wellbeing, productivity and cost benefits for society. However, the fact remains that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are half as likely to access early learning as non-Indigenous children. To rectify this

inequality in early childhood education, the alliance urges the next Federal government to subsidise access to early childhood education and care for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. The over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care, currently one in every three children, must be remedied. The alliance requests the development of a national strategy and target to reduce this over-representation.

“If the next Federal Government heeds the advice put forward in *The Redfern Statement* today, it will have an unprecedented nation-building opportunity and a chance to meaningfully address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage. Improving the life outcomes of First Peoples is also fundamental to progressing the unfinished business of reconciliation,” said Dr Huggins.

“We have laid out a clear roadmap today. We invite all those seeking election on July 2 to respond,” said Dr Jackie Huggins.

*The Redfern Statement (The Statement) has been developed by national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak and representative bodies including: National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples, First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN), National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS), National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO), National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS), Secretariat for National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC), The Healing Foundation, and The National Health Leadership Forum (NHLF). The Statement also has the overarching support of The Change the Record Coalition, Close the Gap Steering Committee, and Family Matters campaigns. The Statement also has been endorsed by Reconciliation Australia and over 20 mainstream organisations, including the Australian Medical Association and Law Council.*

*The Redfern Statement* will be launched at 10am, Thursday 9th June, at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence. Media are welcome to attend and conduct interviews with key spokespeople upon request.

**/ENDS**

Please direct interview requests to:

Tamara Giles, National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples  
0457 877 408 / [tamara.giles@nationalcongress.com.au](mailto:tamara.giles@nationalcongress.com.au)