

CLOSE THE GAP

Demand Indigenous health equality



Dear Prime Minister,

I'm writing today to remind you that the effort to achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality within a generation is a national priority. At over 1,500 National Close the Gap Day events hundreds of thousands of Australians have come together in the shared ambition to close the gap.

This widespread public support demonstrates that Australians want continued effort from your Government to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to close the gap.

I am deeply concerned by the failure of the Federal and Western Australian Governments' to come to an agreement to fund essential services in remote communities in Western Australia, and was shocked by your recent comments in relation to this issue. Evidence demonstrates that connection to traditional land and culture fosters improved health and wellbeing outcomes. I am also very concerned at the continued uncertainty faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers as a result of the Indigenous Advancement Strategy.

These two factors are undermining goodwill and trust in the Government's efforts to close the gap. I therefore ask that your Government seek to re-engage and work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Close the Gap: Progress and Priorities Report 2015 demonstrated that a high level of undetected chronic conditions in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the significant impact chronic conditions such as diabetes have on life expectancy. Ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to services to treat and manage chronic conditions is essential.

Without an injection of new resources and a renewed commitment from your government, efforts to Close the Gap will fall short of achieving health equality for all Australians by 2030.

The Close the Gap Coalition made clear in its report what is required, this includes the:

- prioritisation of increased spending on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health in this year's Budget, with a focus on resourcing Indigenous health and wellbeing services and peak policy organisations;
- reinstatement of the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee;
- retention (and increased resourcing) of the Tackling Indigenous Smoking Programme;
- introduction of closing the gap targets to reduce incarceration and violence rates and develop justice reinvestment measures and activities;
- maintaining funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services to ensure that policies to address incarceration are informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- implementation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan in a genuinely consultative way, and with the full participation and involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their representative organisations;
- alignment of the Indigenous Affairs strategy with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan and national Closing the Gap strategy; and
- no changes to resourcing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities until the health and well being impacts are clearly understood.

Acting on each of these will demonstrate your commitment to closing the unacceptable health equality gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

I look forward to hearing from you in relation to the concerns raised in this letter and the blueprint for action to close the gap outlined above, and in the Close the Gap Campaign report.

Yours sincerely,

Name: _____

Email: _____

Postcode: __ __ __ __

Signature: _____