

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

12 February 2020

NATSILS MEDIA RELEASE: Response to Prime Minister Scott Morrison’s Closing the Gap Report

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) calls for the Federal Government to learn from the previous failures to meet the Closing the Gap targets, and urges them to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to control and deliver the programs and services our communities need.

“Today is another day we reflect on the Federal Government's inability to meet the Closing the Gap targets. This report clearly shows that the gap will continue to widen if reforms aren’t translated into tangible, fully funded actions that deliver real benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout the country,” said Cheryl Axleby, Co-Chair of NATSILS.

“The report reveals that progress against the majority of Closing the Gap targets is still not on track. The gap in mortality rates between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous Australians increased last year and there are very worrying signs on infant mortality.”

“The Federal Government needs to commit to funding solutions to end over-imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and they must be implemented alongside other areas of disadvantage in the Closing the Gap strategy - health, education, family violence, employment, housing - in order to create real change for future generations.”

“We are deeply concerned about the Federal Government’s decision to not continue funding for remote Indigenous housing. Access to safe and affordable housing is essential to Closing the Gap,” said Nerita Waight, Co-Chair of NATSILS.

“There has only been some progress in the targets for early childhood education and year 12 equivalent, but only in some states.”

NATSILS have continued to call for national justice, family violence, child protection, disability and housing targets to be added to the Closing the Gap framework.

“The Coalition of Peaks have proposed a set of structural Priority Reforms to be included in a new National Agreement on Closing the Gap to change the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”

"The proposed reforms supported by a Coalition of almost 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies must be taken seriously. We must be the architects of policies that affect our lives and the Governments must recognise our right to self determine," said Cheryl Axleby, Co-Chair of NATSILS.

"There must be a commitment in place to creating and strengthening the full involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in shared decision-making at national, state, local and regional levels", said Nerita Waight, co-chair of NATSILS.

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