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Reconciliation Australia calls for renewed commitment to Close the Gap framework

Reconciliation Australia welcomes today's release of the Progress and Priorities Report 2016 by the Close the Gap Campaign and the Federal Government's eighth annual Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage report.

While encouraged by achievements in key areas, Reconciliation Australia renews its calls for policy-makers and all sectors of the community to recommit to the Closing the Gap framework.

Reconciliation Australia CEO Justin Mohamed said "we believe we must redouble our efforts rather than change course if we are to meet these targets.

"If we are to make Closing the Gap a reality, these efforts must be led and guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people."

The State of Reconciliation in Australia, a landmark report launched by Reconciliation Australia yesterday, also explicitly called for renewed commitment from all Australian governments to Closing the Gap.

Reconciliation Australia is encouraged by some gains in key areas. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students completing high school (year 12 attainment) is up to 58.5 per cent, from 45 per cent in 2008. Along with reductions in infant mortality rates, these are early positive signs of progress.

"It remains a national travesty that despite ongoing efforts to Close the Gap, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians die on average some 10 years earlier than non-Indigenous Australians – often from chronic and preventable diseases.

Targeted and concerted efforts are necessary to improve employment—an area in which little progress has been made against the target since 2008."

Numeracy and literacy in schools are also in need of focused attention as they remain well below the national average, as do school attendance levels.

Further improvements in health, education and employment outcomes will only be achieved in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, with policies undertaken in a spirit of mutual trust and respect.

Reconciliation Australia joins with its Close the Gap coalition partners in reaffirming the importance of evidence-led, consistent policy positions from government.

"We wholeheartedly support to the Prime Minister's statements that these partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians must be based on mutual trust and respect," Mr Mohamed said.

"We also welcome the Prime Minister's comments today that acknowledge the importance of constitutional recognition as an important step towards Closing the Gap and broader efforts to bring about a just, reconciled Australia."

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