

Closing the Gap

Kevin Rudd **and Labor**

Authorised by G. Wright, Australian Labor, 5/9 Sydney Avenue, Barton ACT

A New Way



CLOSING THE GAP

Jenny Macklin

Minister for Indigenous Affairs

In 2008, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, in particular the Stolen Generations.

Those words, that Aboriginal people had waited so long to hear, were followed by our commitment to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

Our Closing the Gap framework has provided, for the first time in our nation's history, a clear, properly funded framework that holds all of us accountable to making progress.

Since 2008, we have made an unprecedented investment of more than \$5.5 billion through our Closing the Gap framework in vital areas such as improving health, education, housing and essential services, welfare reform, recognition and advocacy and Indigenous languages and art.

We have made great progress, and this year, we will meet our first Closing the Gap target.

But there is much more to be done.

Labor is committed to continuing our record investments to ensure we meet all the Closing the Gap targets.

INVESTING IN CLOSING THE GAP

A better start for young children

This year we will meet our first Closing the Gap target of ensuring access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities.

Our historic levels of investment under the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education means there are now more children than ever before participating in preschool or early education programs.

Because there is no more important start for children than getting early learning and preparing for the schooling to come.

All the evidence tells us that participating in pre-school means children are more likely to be successful at school, stay in school longer, continue on to further education and training and fully participate in employment and community life as adults.

This year, Labor committed to a new Closing the Gap target to ensure more Indigenous children are attending preschool or kindergarten.

The new target will drive efforts to ensure 90 per cent of enrolled Indigenous children across Australia attend a quality early childhood education program in the year before they start full-time school.

Better education

At the other end of children's schooling, we are ahead of schedule towards meeting our target to halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 (or equivalent) attainment rates by 2020.

Labor knows how important this achievement is for the future of young Indigenous people. And we know how important supporting Indigenous people into higher education is.

Proportionally, Indigenous enrolments in the tertiary and further education systems are well below that of non-Indigenous Australians.

Labor is committed to developing a new Closing the Gap Target aimed at increasing Indigenous participation in higher and further education, ensuring greater opportunity for Indigenous Australians to continue their learning in the fields of their choice.

Labor is working to ensure all Indigenous students, no matter where they live, get a great education.

We have invested in better teachers and schools and in specific programs to help Indigenous children get ahead.

Labor is also continuing to invest in initiatives to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parental and community engagement in education, provide better access to education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and increase school engagement and attendance.

Under Labor's Better Schools Plan, every one of the 170,000 Indigenous students in Australian schools will receive more funding, with an extra loading that will help schools carry out the programs we know can help Indigenous students.

The loading has a sliding scale where the amount of funding increases as the proportion of Indigenous students in that school increases.

The loading starts at 20 per cent of the per student amount for the first Indigenous student in a school, increasing to 120 per cent per student for schools with 100 per cent Indigenous students.

Better Health

Labor is continuing our record investment in improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, providing \$777 million over the next three years to continue the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes.

Labor recently released the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan, the first plan of its kind to be developed in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the health sector and experts in the field.

The Health Plan provides a 10 year pathway for future policy and investment from all levels of Government to continue the efforts towards achieving Labor's commitment to Closing the Gap in life expectancy in 2031.

It is estimated the Australian Government expenditure on targeted Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health programs will be nearly \$12 billion dollars over the next decade.

Labor's chronic disease package has focused on reducing key risk factors for chronic disease such as smoking, improved early detection of chronic disease and chronic disease management, and increasing the capacity of the primary care workforce to deliver effective care to Indigenous people with chronic diseases.

Chronic disease is estimated to contribute around 70 per cent of the gap in Indigenous health outcomes and will continue to be a focus of our efforts.

Labor's investments in health are also making a difference to the health of young children, and we are on track to meet our target to halve the mortality gap for children under five by 2018.

Labor is committed to supporting Aboriginal controlled health services and workers, so that health services are delivered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in a way that is appropriate for them.

Labor is committed to a new Closing the Gap target to improve access to services for Indigenous people with disability. The new target will drive work to ensure 90 per cent of eligible Indigenous Australians will be receiving funded support from DisabilityCare Australia by 2020.

DisabilityCare Australia, the national disability insurance scheme will increase support and services for Indigenous people with disability and our new target will drive these efforts.

More jobs and economic opportunities

Labor is working to boost the number of Aboriginal people with jobs in the real economy, and to create links with business and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to run their own economic enterprises.

Our \$1.5 billion Remote Jobs and Communities Program is providing jobseekers in remote communities with local support to ensure they have the skills they need to get into the workforce.

This builds on our commitments under the Indigenous Economic Development Strategy and the record investment of over \$555m in the Indigenous Employment Program.

Our Indigenous Rangers Network program has grown from around 100 rangers when we came to office, to around 680 rangers.

Labor has set jobs targets for Aboriginal employment as part of our record investment in building and refurbishing housing in remote communities, and we are exceeding those targets in every state and territory.

Labor is also working to help ensure that that native title and other land payments provide real benefit to native title holders and land owners now and into the future. The focus is on encouraging good governance and sustainable social, cultural and economic development.

Our commitment to begin developing an Indigenous Community Development Corporation, a tax-exempt entity that will receive and manage native title payments, will help ensure the benefits of native title are harnessed for current and future generations.

More houses and better infrastructure

Labor knows that decent housing is crucial to ensuring we are making real improvements to the lives of Indigenous people in remote communities, and helping to ensure children can grow up safe and healthy.

For too long, investment in Indigenous housing was chronically underfunded and housing has been overcrowded and unsafe.

As a result of Labor's \$5.5 billion National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing, more than 2000 new houses have been built and more than 5,800 have been refurbished meaning more Indigenous Australians have a place to call home and a secure roof over their heads.

Our property and tenancy management reforms are helping to ensure Indigenous people living in remote communities have the same rights and responsibilities as any other public housing tenant.

Labor is committed to building a further 2,500 houses by 2018 and refurbish 6,696 houses by 2014.

Labor is also supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to own their own homes.

Labor will assist 2,200 Aboriginal people to buy their own homes over four years from July 2013 through our Indigenous Home Loan program.

Labor is also driving reforms to land tenure across the country to open up more opportunities for home ownership on Aboriginal land and has now ensured that secure tenure underpins all investments on Aboriginal Land. These reforms have maximised opportunities for economic development and home ownership on Aboriginal land by Aboriginal people.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory

Stronger Futures is Labor's \$3.4 billion commitment over ten years to work with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to tackle the unacceptable levels of disadvantage too many people still experience.

Stronger Futures is focused on the issues Aboriginal people have identified as the most important to them – tackling alcohol abuse, making sure children are going to school and providing more jobs and economic opportunities.

Through Stronger Futures, Labor is delivering support for young people and families, support to help keep people safe with police and night patrols, extra jobs in communities where people need them and investments in health services and schools.

Stronger Futures is funded over ten years so that Aboriginal people can have certainty these vital services will continue. Through this long term funding, Labor is also providing the opportunity for local Aboriginal services to build their capacity over take on additional service delivery roles and deliver them more effectively.

Labor is ensuring that Stronger Futures has a strong focus on using local Aboriginal organisations to deliver services, and is setting Aboriginal employment targets to ensure local people get jobs.

SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Labor believes that Closing the Gap is a project that involves us all, not just governments.

We have been working with Aboriginal people to support them to realise their expectation that welfare should not be a way of life and to enable people to take up jobs and local opportunities.

In Queensland, we have invested more than \$100 million since 2008 to support the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial.

Since the trial began in July 2008 the Cape York communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge have seen improved school attendance, care and protection of children and community safety.

In the Northern Territory, our new School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) is operating in more than 15 communities.

Under SEAM, if children fall below the set attendance benchmark, schools and Centrelink work with families to develop attendance plans and put in place support to get kids to school. If children still do not attend school, income support payments are suspended, and reinstated once parents give clear signals they are complying with their responsibilities and re-engages with the school.

In Western Australia, we are supporting the Wunan Foundation to develop a welfare reform model for the East Kimberley region. By encouraging community members to take personal responsibility, and providing opportunities to those who participate, Wunan is helping to drive cultural, economic and social renewal, and encouraging and rewarding aspiration and self-responsibility.

And in places such as Wadeye and Groote Eylandt, Labor is supporting community led initiatives to strengthen community and personal responsibility.

To continue these reforms, Labor will provide an additional \$5 million over four years to support other interested Indigenous communities across the country to develop community-led approaches to strengthen individual and community social norms.

Labor is committed to continuing to work with Indigenous leaders who have been driving change in their communities to progress future models for reform, and to ensure that communities have the resources to learn from each other's experiences.

These reforms ensure that Indigenous people are leading the process for change in their own communities, and government continues to work in partnership with Indigenous communities to put Indigenous voices at the centre of decision making about priorities for their communities.

Labor will also develop a new Closing the Gap target aimed at tackling the high rates of engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system, particularly young people.

This builds on our commitments since 2007 to build safer Indigenous communities, through increased investment in police, police stations and night patrols and also initiatives like the Breaking the Cycle initiative, which assists communities to tackle alcohol and drug abuse.

In the Northern Territory, we have introduced stringent minimum standards for alcohol management plans, to ensure communities are supported to reduce alcohol-related harm and keep women, children and families safe.

Labor will provide an additional \$15 million over four years to support other interested communities across Australia to develop alcohol management plans and community driven solutions to alcohol abuse that put the protection of women and children and harm minimisation first.

BUILDING STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS

Labor is committed to building a reconciled Australia, based on relationships of mutual trust and respect.

We understand we cannot move forward together if we are not actively addressing the past.

Labor began this work with the National Apology, and has continued to support members of the Stolen Generations through our investment of \$53 million in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation.

We have continued it with our commitment to a successful referendum to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our constitution.

Labor is committed to meaningful constitutional change, which reflects the hopes and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and which unites the nation.

Labor believes that the Constitution should be changed to:

- include a statement of recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their unique history, culture and connection to this land;
- remove references to race, reflecting the nation's fundamental belief in the importance of equality and non-discrimination; and
- acknowledge that additional effort is needed to help close the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples disadvantage.

That is why we set up the Expert Panel to provide options on how best to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution.

It is why we have supported the RECOGNISE campaign for change with \$10 million. This will help us to continue to build the momentum for a successful referendum to be held within two years.

Labor is also committed to supporting Indigenous arts, culture and language through our Creative Australia Policy and as part of our efforts to close the gap.

Labor is also supporting Indigenous governance and representation, both at the national level through the National Congress of Australia's first peoples, and at the local level, through a series of Regional Partnership Agreements across the country which bring together the Australian Government, state and territory governments and Indigenous community organisations to improve governance and service provision.

LABOR'S ONGOING COMMITMENT TO CLOSING THE GAP

Labor will continue our commitment to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and to build a reconciled nation, based on relationships of mutual trust and respect.

We have made a lot of progress. But there is still more to do.

To continue Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage, Labor is committed to:

- ***A new Closing the Gap target to ensure 90 per cent of enrolled Indigenous children across Australia attend a quality early childhood education program in the year before they start full-time school.***
- ***A new Closing the Gap target to improve access to services for Indigenous people with disability by ensuring 90 per cent of eligible Indigenous people have access to DisabilityCare.***
- ***Under Labor's Better Schools Plan, every one of the 170,000 Indigenous students in Australian schools will receive more support, with an extra loading that will help schools carry out the programs we know can help Indigenous students.***
- ***Developing a new Closing the Gap target aimed at reducing the high rates of engagement of Indigenous people, particularly young people, with the criminal justice system.***
- ***Developing a new Closing the Gap target aimed at increasing Indigenous participation in higher and further education, ensuring greater opportunity for Indigenous Australians to continue their learning in the fields of their choice.***
- ***Continuing to Close the Gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, providing \$777 million over three years to continue the National Partnership Agreement.***
- ***Implementing the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan, to provide a 10 year pathway to achieve Labor's Closing the Gap targets, with an estimated value of \$12 billion.***
- ***An additional \$5 million over four years for communities across the country to develop community-led approaches to strengthening individual and community social norms.***
- ***An additional \$15 million over four years to support other interested communities across Australia to develop alcohol management plans and community led solutions to alcohol abuse that put the protection of women and children and harm minimisation first.***
- ***A commitment to continue to work with Indigenous leaders who have been driving change in their communities to progress future models for change, and to ensure that communities have the resources to learn from each other's experiences.***

- ***Supporting the RECOGNISE campaign for Constitutional change with \$10 million. This will help us to continue to build the momentum for a successful referendum to be held within two years.***
- ***Our \$3.4 billion ten years Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package, supporting crucial investments in communities, health, education and safety.***
- ***Our \$1.5 billion providing jobseekers in remote communities with local support to ensure they have the skills they need to get into the workforce.***
- ***Our commitment to begin developing an Indigenous Community Development Corporation, a tax-exempt entity that will receive and manage native title payments, will help ensure the benefits of native title are harnessed for current and future generations.***
- ***Building a further 2500 houses by 2018 and refurbish 6696 houses by 2014 as part of our 5.5 billion National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing.***
- ***Supporting communities in regional and remote Australia to strengthen the future of Indigenous arts and culture with more than \$48 million in funding over three years.***
- ***Funding for all of these commitments is already included in the Budget.***

LABOR HAS DELIVERED FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

The Labor Government's commitment to Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage has been matched by record investment in new services, programs and infrastructure that will improve the lives of Indigenous people across Australia.

Early Childhood Development

- 85 new mother and babies services across the country
- 102 Indigenous-focussed child care services
- 18 new Intensive Family Support Service locations across the Northern Territory (NT) and the APY Lands
- 95 Communities for Children Indigenous Parenting Support providers currently operating in 299 outlets across Australia
- Expansion of the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters into 25 Indigenous communities from 2013
- 52 Communities for Children sites operating in 910 outlets around Australia to address the risk factors for child abuse and neglect
- Nine new crèches in the communities of Milikapiti, Timber Creek, Peppimenarti, Robinson River, Areyonga, Docker River, Papunya, Lajamanu and Yarralin

Schooling

- School upgrade projects in all of the 29 Remote Service Delivery sites under the Building the Education Revolution
- Of those 29 schools, 18 now have approved Trade Training Centres funding
- Provision of nutritious meals to around 5000 students every day in remote schools across the NT
- 33 Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Programs, engaging more than 20,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in more than 670 schools and communities
- 583 Parent and Community Engagement projects assisting approximately 53,000 parents and carers and a further 28,000 community members to engage with schools and other educational institutions
- Approximately 13,300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student places in the Sporting Chance Program in 2013
- 12 Indigenous Ranger Cadetships
- 1,296 secondary and 301 tertiary students have been supported by the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program
- 2000 scholarships through the Australian Indigenous Education foundation
- 28 Indigenous Student Teacher Scholarships
- 16,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and 13,000 non-Indigenous students involved in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language program
- Commitment to deliver 6,400 school based traineeships to Indigenous students through the Indigenous Youth Careers Pathways Program

Health

- 17,302 dental services delivered to 9,430 children across the NT
- 10,892 audiology checks delivered to 6,442 children across the NT
- 3,822 ear, nose and throat services delivered to 2,673 children across the NT
- 12 new health clinics, 3 clinic upgrades and 18 communities with new staff accommodation in remote communities
- 143 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach Workers, 31 Practice Managers, 22 health professionals and 94 Indigenous Health Project Officers in locations across the country
- expansion of 21 primary care facilities for Indigenous people in places such as APY Lands, Halls Creek and Cape York
- 17 renal dialysis chairs in Western Australia enabling renal services to be accessed closer to home
- 145,000 additional medical, nursing and allied health service events have been delivered annually by the primary health care service positions
- Placement of 598 health professionals from across Australia to work on short term placements in remote Aboriginal communities in the NT in 2011–12
- Trachoma control activities to Indigenous children in 195 communities in 2013
- 260 eye procedures during eye surgery ‘blitzes’ in Alice Springs, Derby, Bourke, Kununurra and Karratha
- 820 pieces of ear health testing and treatment equipment for distribution to 164 community controlled health services nationally
- Training of more than 265 Aboriginal Health Workers in the use of ear equipment;

- Low aromatic fuel in 130 sites in regional and remote Australia
- 675 places in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care program
- Youth in Communities Program operating in 60 communities and supporting more than 12,600 young people in early intervention, prevention or diversion activities helping to tackle issues of substance abuse, suicide and self-harm

Economic Participation

- Under the Indigenous Employment Program, from 1 July 2009 to 31 May 2013 there were 110,484 commencements into employment and training for Indigenous people
- 1,235 real jobs in Indigenous communities by converting jobs previously subsidised by the Community Development Employment Program into real jobs with proper wages and conditions
- Almost 600 ranger jobs under the Working for Country program
- Return of over 42,000 square kilometres of land to Indigenous people in the NT under the Aboriginal Land Rights Act – more than 12 times the area of land handed back in the five years prior - so that Indigenous Australians can realise the economic opportunity that arises from land ownership
- Provided an additional \$62m over four years from 2009/10 to assist Native Title Representative Bodies with their workload
- Improved the native title process to ensure the swift determination of claims. As a result, since 2009 the rate of consent determinations has increased almost fourfold – rising from just 9 in 2009-10 to 34 in 2011-12
- Since 2009 a total of 1121 Indigenous young people have undertaken vocational education and training and tertiary study through support from the Indigenous Youth Mobility Program
- The Skills for Education and Employment program has provided contextualised language, literacy and numeracy support to 6,120 Indigenous Australians since 1 July 2009

Delivering Better Housing and Safer Communities

- 2000 new homes in remote Indigenous communities and 5,800 refurbished homes in remote Indigenous communities under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing as at 31 May 2013. In their last year in Government, the Liberals built just 64 houses in the NT
- 15,000 home loans approved to assist Indigenous people own their own homes
- Funding for 200 new houses for teachers in the NT
- 83 houses and 5 units with an estimated 277 bedrooms, 4 hostels with 54 beds and 4 family units, and 1 Indigenous police officer training facility with 30 beds under the Employment Related Accommodation Program
- More than 500 additional beds in Alice Springs Town Camps through the construction of 86 new houses and the construction and upgrading of four short-term accommodation facilities
- Commitment of \$206 million for the provision of basic services such as power, water, sewerage, rubbish collection and waste to the over 400 homelands in the NT
- Together with traditional owners and Land Councils negotiated three township leases over six communities in the NT and negotiation continues on a voluntary basis in three more
- Long term leases have been secured in 18 of the Alice Springs Town Camps, including the grant of freehold land to the residents of Ilpeye-Ilpeye.

- Major investment for upgrades in Utopia and across the Lhanupuy and Mangarr homelands
- 240 solar systems in approximately 200 communities
- New police in 23 of the 29 Remote Service Delivery locations
- Night patrols in 80 communities across the Northern Territory
- New safe houses in 18 communities across the Northern Territory

Governance and Leadership

- Since 2004, over 8000 Indigenous Australians have participated in supported leadership development activities
- 64 organisations have been funded under the Indigenous Women's Program in 2012-13
- Continued funding of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, taking its total funding to over \$44 million
- Continued Funding for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation, which has now received \$53 million since it was established in 2009
- Local Reference Groups established in 29 Remote Service Delivery locations to drive reform and prioritise investment