

UNITED NATIONS PERMANENT FORUM ON INDIGENOUS ISSUES
EIGHTEEN SESSION - NEW YORK
25 April 2019

Agenda Item 12: Follow up to the Outcome Document of the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples

Intervention delivered by Cathryn Eatock on behalf of the Indigenous Peoples Organisation of Australia.

Thank-you Madam Chair, and distinguished Members Brothers and Sisters. I am Cathryn Eatock, a Gayiri and Badtjala women, from central Queensland in Australia, and I speak as Chair of the Indigenous Peoples Organisation of Australia, representing more than 250 Aboriginal and TSI organisations and peoples.

The IPO acknowledges Australia's commitment to develop a National Action Plan, to implement the Declaration, in follow up to the World Conference on Indigenous Peoples.

However, the recent Closing the Gap report, documented the abject failure of the government to meet five of seven critical targets, including halving child mortality and the 15-year-gap in life expectancy.

The Prime Minister Scott Morrison, acknowledged the system was 'set up to fail' through the lack of true partnership with Aboriginal people. However, moving beyond rhetoric has been more challenging.

In 2018, the Federal Minister for Aboriginal affairs, the Hon Nigel Scullion allocated \$490 thousand dollars dedicated address Aboriginal disadvantage, to the non-aboriginal fishing industry groups and the Cattleman's Association, to challenge the Native Title claims of Aboriginal people¹.

In 2014 the Australian federal government cut operational funding from the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. It cut \$355 million from Aboriginal services and introduced the Indigenous Advancement Strategy which directed 55% of Aboriginal funding to mainstream services, sports groups, government departments and church bodies².

The government also cut funding for the IPO to fund Indigenous representatives to attend United Nations forums. Instead of a merit selection process, the Minister for Aboriginal affairs now selects who will speak on human rights concerns for our people.

¹ Allam, Lorena, *Indigenous Advancement Funding Redirected to Cattlemen and Fishing Groups*, Guardian Australia 31 Oct 2018

² Henderson, Anna (1 May 2015) *Majority of Grants from Indigenous Advancement Strategy First Round Given to Non Aboriginal Groups*.

Rather than supporting self-determination, the federal government has committed to extend the cashless debit card, targeting Aboriginal communities, removing rights to cash welfare payments and is reminiscent of the days of food rations, stigmatising our people, exacerbating financial hardship and entrenching disempowerment. Rather, the \$128.8 Million spent on the welfare card, would be better used to invest in housing, health and services.

The WA state Coroner, considering the high rate of Indigenous youth suicides made 42 recommendations, which emphasised the need for the self-determination and empowerment of Aboriginal communities³. Yet the Australian government continues to undermine the principle of self-determination as outlined in the Declaration.

Recommendation:

The UNPFII provide an annual report on State efforts to implement their National Action Plans and the effectiveness of those strategies.

Thank you Madam Chair

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) is critical of the lack of funding to address critical health issues impacting Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal communities suffer disproportionately higher rates of suicide, cancer, kidney disease, diabetes, otitis media and

³ Young, Emma, (1 March 2019) *Despite DIY Rhetoric, Federal Health Grant Goes to non-Indigenous WA Service*, Sydney Morning Herald.

congenital heart failure, with a high infant mortality⁴. Yet the federal Governments has recently allocated \$1.7 million of health funding to a non-Aboriginal organisation, with a coalition State parliamentary member among its staff. Senate estimates confirm thee was no tender process and the organisation Redimed had never previously listed Aboriginal health among its focus areas⁵.

According to the Productivity Commission, only 5.6 billion of 30 Billion, or 18.5%, spent on Aboriginal people in 2012/13 goes specifically to Aboriginal services, this represents an actual decrease from 2008-9⁶.

Recommendations:

⁴ NACCHO (3 April 2019) *Funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Absent From Federal Budget*

⁵ Young, Emma, (1 March 2019) *Despite DIY Rhetoric, Federal Health Grant Goes to non-Indigenous WA Service*, Sydney Morning Herald.

⁶ Biddle, Nicholas, (August 29 2015) *Fact Check is 30 Billion Spent Every Year on 500,000 Indigenous People in Australia*, The Conversation