

MIRANDA BROWN, DPR

Human Rights Council – 12th Session

General debate – Indigenous rights – 28 September 2009

Australian statement

The Australian Government is committed to resetting the relationship with Indigenous Australians.

On 13 February 2008 the Prime Minister, the Hon Kevin Rudd MP, offered the motion of *Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples*, acknowledging the past mistreatment of all Australian Indigenous peoples, and particularly the profound grief, suffering and loss inflicted on the Stolen Generations.

On the first anniversary of this motion, the Government announced that an Indigenous Healing Foundation would be established to address trauma and healing in Indigenous communities, with a strong focus on the particular needs of Stolen Generations.

Australia announced support for the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* on 3 April 2009, affirming the aspirations of all Indigenous people.

The significance of the announcement was noted in a joint statement by the Australian Government, the Australian Human Rights Commission and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations at the 8th session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. This was the first time the three parties had collaborated on a report to the Permanent Forum, and it is indicative of a new era of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Australian Government is committed to Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in key areas of health, education and employment. Together with the States and Territories through the Council of Australian Governments it has committed to six high level targets for action and allocated significant resources for major new investments in areas of disadvantage. These include remote Indigenous housing, health, early childhood development and remote service delivery.

The Australian Government recognises that we will only succeed in Closing the Gap if it is done in partnership with Indigenous people. Reflecting the principles of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, we are committed to supporting the establishment of a National Indigenous Representative Body. On 27 August 2009 the Australian Government welcomed the release of the Indigenous Steering Committee's report on a national representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The proposed model has been developed through a detailed consultation process independently led and driven by Indigenous people. The proposed model sets a high benchmark for strategic leadership, gender equality and youth representation. The Government would like to see the establishment of this body this year.

The Australian Government has also reinstated the Indigenous Electoral Education Program, and boosted funding to Native Title Representative Bodies.

These commitments and initiatives reflect the Australian Government's determination that relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians be based on equality, partnership, good faith and mutual respect.