

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues
Fifteenth Session - New York
9-20 May 2016

Agenda Item 4: Implementation of the six mandated areas of the Permanent Forum with reference to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples – *Health and Education*

JOINT INTERVENTION DELIVERED BY MR JUSTIN FILES ON BEHALF OF:

1. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium (NATSIHEC) Aboriginal Corporation *Australia*
2. Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation *Australia*

Thank you Mr Chair,

We pay our respects to the traditional owners of the lands and waters upon which this meeting takes place and thank them for their welcome. We acknowledge their Elders past, present and emerging and pay our respects to the delegates to this 15th session of the permanent forum.

We make this statement in reference to the rights to education and wellbeing as affirmed by the rights and principles in the UNDRIP and the commitment articulated in para 15 of the WCIP Outcomes Document. We acknowledge the synergy between education and health and re-iterate The Wharerata Declaration (2009) and its Australian companion declaration. The Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) of 2015. The Gayaa Dhuwi contains 9 guiding principles and establishes a framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing.

Education and Health can drive current and future self-determination by facilitating access to decision making in public and private sectors leading to Indigenous empowerment. As Indigenous Peoples, our agency for enacting, protecting and promoting our self-determination increases in direct proportion with our educational and health participation and success.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Strategy was endorsed by all education ministers in September 2015 and includes an initial set of national priorities spanning the period from birth through schooling and higher education and into the workforce. This includes early childhood education and care; early childhood transitions; transition points through the school years, including pathways to post-school options; attendance and engagement; assessment of cultural and professional competencies of graduate teachers and improving accessibility within the national Australian curriculum.

The majority of our communities are young people. This has important implications for understanding both educational and health impacts on families and the available community response capacity in terms of access and outcomes to supports and services for treatment and prevention.

Education and Health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has in recent years been influenced and shaped by a whole of government department, institution or sector approach. Whilst seeking shared responsibility, this model is challenged where Indigenous peoples are sidelined in favour of mainstreaming.

We like many Indigenous peoples across the world are facing crisis levels of suicide in our communities. The high rates of our Indigenous young peoples, not engaging or dis-engaging with the education system and living with a suicide 2.6 times the rate for non-Indigenous Australians. It is imperative states support Indigenous led solutions.

The UN development of a system wide plan to implement the UNDRIP needs to be copied at all the level of states. This would ensure Indigenous peoples participation and success is underpinned by those rights contained therein.

NATSIHEC and Maari Ma Health ask members of the Permanent Forum to:

1. Urge nation states to implement their commitment to the principles of Indigenous sovereignty and social justice by ensuring Indigenous peoples are able to exercise their right to education and health guaranteed by the Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
2. Having regard to paragraphs 11, 14, 15, 17 and 26 of the WCIP outcome document, the permanent forum reiterate its challenge to nation states to progress their ongoing commitment via national action plans developed through effectively engaging with IPOs and Indigenous Peoples aligned to the principles of free, prior and informed consent.