

2020 Summit in Canberra April 2008

The Prime Minister of Australia Kevin Rudd convened an *Australia 2020 Summit* on 19-20 April at Parliament House to help shape a long term strategy for the nation's future.

The Summit brought together people from across the country to tackle the long term challenges confronting Australia's future. The aim was to debate and develop long-term options for the nation across 10 critical areas including *Options for the future of indigenous Australia*.

In addition to those participating in the Summit, an invitation was extended for all Australians to make submissions to the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Youth Summit

The 2020 Youth Summit was held in the lead up to the Australia 2020 Summit. The following proposal was put forward from that summit.

Indigenous Australia - options for the future of Indigenous Australia

Our vision is to create meaningful and lasting change in Indigenous Australia by committing ourselves, as all Australians, to reframe the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australia. There is a sense of urgency in creating solutions for Indigenous Australia, but we will not panic. As a nation, we will reconceptualise our national identity and embrace the Indigenous spirit and culture as a central part of the Australian story. The negotiation of a treaty or similar document and the protection of Indigenous rights will provide the principles on which we create effective policies and programs. We will use these changes as a foundation for building practical policies and programs, particularly in education, health and housing, in negotiation with Indigenous people, particularly the young that make up a majority of that community.

Australia 2020 Summit - Initial Report

The Initial Report from the 2020 Summit to the Prime Minister sets out the key results of discussion by 1000 Australians over the weekend of 19 and 20 April in Canberra. A further more detailed report will be prepared and Mr Rudd will announce the policy platform during the year.

[Australia 2020 Summit - Initial Report - WORD 2.6MB](#) | [PDF 1MB](#)

Options for the Future of Indigenous Australia

Ambitions

Ambitions for Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are that they will be able, productive, confident, proud and independent contributing members of society. They will experience parity with other Australians across the full spectrum of measures, but most importantly in the strength of their families and youth. Following the historic and significant apology, a new national dialogue is required. This new form of engagement will shape Australia's global identity, securing a place for Aboriginal culture and identity in the Australian story.

Priority themes

Increased formal recognition of Australia's Indigenous peoples was a strong theme. New accountability structures for governments and service delivery arrangements in Indigenous affairs are necessary. There was a call for renewed focus on Indigenous children and their families.

The overwhelming desire to "close the gap" in all areas was a priority theme. Such outcomes would likely be underpinned by accelerated economic development, redistribution of resources and

property rights and expanded corporate partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander entrepreneurs. Cultural identity and racism were two final themes that were emphasised.

There must be a major focus on early childhood development and the continued well-being of children to develop to their full potential.

Top ideas

A continuation of the bipartisan commitment shown through the National Apology to inform our national dialogue in order to change the ethos through which Aboriginal affairs and interests over the past 200 years have been constructed was considered critical. This should be supported by a national public education campaign. Bipartisan support will be essential.

The establishment of a new philosophical framework through which we negotiate a new definition of our relationship and how we might define it in the Constitution or Treaty or settlement is necessary.

There was wide support for new, independent mechanisms with teeth and sanctions to monitor accountability of governments, involving significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation.

Private philanthropic flows to Indigenous organisations in Australia are limited. In addition, improvements in business partnership arrangements between Indigenous enterprises and Australian corporates could significantly enhance the economic development of Indigenous communities, particularly those in remote areas.

Greater corporate participation and partnerships with Indigenous business is necessary. Increased levels of private enterprise could be encouraged in Indigenous communities through incentives such as tax concessions.

Develop a new education framework to give real choice for Indigenous children to get high quality education, including to attend boarding schools or hostels, enabled by a combination of ABSTUDY, private school scholarships and government funding.

We could encourage high-performing young professionals to work as teachers alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators.

Establish a future fund for investment to heal and build children's, families' and communities' capacity to participate and function, fund housing and major capital works, and invest in innovation.

Make it mandatory for education and health authorities to implement individual health and education compacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their families to engage parents and governments with their children's futures.

Recognising that a comprehensive health strategy is required, trachoma, a contagious blindness-causing eye disease, could be eradicated from Indigenous children within five years at a cost of less than \$25m.

A national Indigenous Knowledge Centre network should be established to provide support to regional knowledge centres. Regional centres reflect that each Indigenous group is different and has different knowledge to preserve and to develop.

These need to be linked to the development of community hubs, and would utilise existing facilities.

Some low-cost ideas flagged included signalling Australia's support for the UN Declaration of Rights of Indigenous Peoples, establishing "sister school" relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous schools, and adding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander symbols to commemorative occasions, national symbols and place names.

Summary of submissions to 2020 Summit Secretariat

Indigenous governance remains a delicate topic. Submissions suggested a treaty or compact of recognition and understanding between the Australian government and Indigenous Australians, similar to those seen in the USA, Canada and New Zealand. There were proposals for regional governance structures run by Indigenous leaders in parallel with mainstream authorities, and there was considerable appetite for a national registry of all government funding provided to Indigenous organisations and initiatives.

Universal economic independence remains a central aspiration for Indigenous Australia. Ideas for achieving this goal included the broadening of incentive programs encouraging private investment in Indigenous communities, such as tax concessions and "fast-track" assistance for ideas proven to be viable. There was a strong sense that Indigenous culture represents a real economic opportunity, and among the suggestions was a formalised structure for promoting Indigenous cultural and intellectual property rights and developing standards for appropriate use, attribution and royalties for such works.

School attendance, and subsequently improved educational outcomes, were seen by many as critical enablers in turning around Indigenous outcomes. Mandatory individual learning plans and progress reporting for every Indigenous student was proposed, along with the suggestion of increased school funding tied to the performance of Indigenous students in the school.

Remote education outcomes were identified as being the most severely deficient, which could potentially be addressed by providing increased incentives for Australia's best teachers to relocate and work in remote schools. Several other specific social programs were also proposed, including the posting of an experienced doctor to each remote community. Concerns around the safety of vulnerable women and children could be addressed through voluntary relocation programs to hostel-style accommodation in regional centres, allowing such people to decisively change their circumstances. Such accommodation could also be available as a base for Indigenous people undergoing training or employed in certain industries or sectors.