

CLOSETHEGAP

NSW Premier commits to closing the gap in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equality

The Close the Gap campaign today welcomed the commitment by both the NSW Government and Opposition to end Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health inequality in the state within a generation.

NSW Premier Kristina Keneally and Opposition Leader, Barry O'Farrell today signed a 'Statement of Intent' at a ceremony in the parliamentary chamber, committing the current and future governments to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people.

NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council CEO Sandra Bailey, her Chairperson Christine Corby, Health Minister, Carmel Tebbutt and Shadow Health Minister Jillian Skinner, also signed the nine-point Statement of Intent to improve the lives of Aboriginal people in NSW.

The Statement of Intent, also signed by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and then Opposition Leader Brendan Nelson in March 2008, is a commitment between the NSW Government and Aboriginal people to work together to achieve equality in health status and life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and other Australians by 2030. It commits all parties to a plan that includes:

- Developing a comprehensive long-term plan of action to achieve equality of health and life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians by 2030;
- Ensuring full participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in addressing their health needs;
- Working together to address the social determinants that impact on health equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and
- Supporting and developing Aboriginal Community Controlled Health services.

NSW is the first government to sign the Statement in the parliamentary chamber, ensuring that its commitments are recorded in Hansard.

Ms Bailey welcomed the commitment by the Government and Opposition to ending the Aboriginal health gap in NSW.

"The commitments by the Premier and Opposition Leader are particularly important, because NSW has the largest population of Aboriginal people in Australia," Ms Bailey said.

"The signing of the Statement of Intent is relatively easy; it's the work that needs to be done to close the gap in Aboriginal health that will need to stand the test of time, and we look forward to working with all sides of politics in NSW to achieve the best outcomes possible for our people."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Mick Gooda said real commitment from governments at all levels to partner with Indigenous peoples was essential if the gap were to be closed.

"Today's formal commitment between the NSW Government and local Aboriginal people enables us to build on the significant progress we've already made, as governments around the country have come to realise that true partnership is the only way to Close the Gap," Mr Gooda said.

"Developing and implementing a national action plan is the next step in bringing about true health equality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians."

The ACT, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australian governments have already signed the Statement of Intent.

Close the Gap is a coalition of Australia's leading health, human rights and Aboriginal organisations. The campaign was launched in April 2007.

For interviews with Sandra Bailey, please contact Laurelle Keough at Oxfam Australia on 0409 960 100 or laurellek@oxfam.org.au

For interviews with Mick Gooda, please contact Louise McDermott at the Human Rights Commission on 0419 258 597 or louise.mcdermott@humanrights.gov.au