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First Peoples call for urgent action to tackle home-grown poverty

This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the Redfern Speech by Prime Minister Paul Keating, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from peak representative organisations are calling on Australian governments at all levels to redouble their efforts to address the unacceptable poverty and disadvantage experienced by Australia's First Peoples.

One year ago today, Aboriginal leaders marked the Redfern Speech by launching the Redfern Statement, which asked governments to re-engage with Australia's first peoples in a meaningful and constructive way to deal with the appalling health and social conditions experienced by far too many of Australia's First Peoples.

The co-chairs of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, Dr Jackie Huggins and Mr Rod Little, said mounting evidence suggests that Australia is failing to meet the 'Close the Gap' targets. Despite this, governments are still unwilling to make the necessary commitments to bring about positive change.

"We are after an improved relationship with Federal, State and Territory Governments. We acknowledge the work that has been done to date however we can no longer afford to wait a generation for the change that is necessary now for our people".

"Far too many First Peoples attend funerals of young and middle-aged people. This is because the Government's *Closing the Gap* targets are failing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as shown by the latest 2017 report," the co-chairs said.

"We are seeking a new relationship with the Federal, State and Territory Governments through COAG, to bring about a paradigm shift that stops the policy drift and amnesia which has impacted negatively on Australia's First People."

"We want to engage with Federal, State and Territory Governments in a positive way to develop an enduring framework which would feed into the 2018 Federal Budget and the COAG Closing the Gap Policy".

The Redfern Statement outlined how the many reports released since 1992 called for real reconciliation based on facing the truths of the past and creating a just and mature relationship between the non-Indigenous Australian community and the First Peoples. But today, First Peoples face the same struggles as they did in 1992.

"When we drafted the Redfern Statement we wanted to remind the nation of Prime Minister Keating's historic Redfern Speech in 1992, which spoke so many truths about our history and the reality we face today," the co-chairs said.

"The Redfern Statement was initially created as an election manifesto but our determination now is for it to become a roadmap for positive and effective engagement between Aboriginal peoples and Governments."

"The Federal Government and each of the State and Territory Governments, share responsibility to right this nation's past injustices. The current Government has an unprecedented nation-building opportunity to meaningfully address Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage. They have the mandate to act"

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