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TURNBULL BUDGET FAILS INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

The 2017 Budget fails to deliver for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Malcolm Turnbull is spending \$50 billion on a tax handout for big business, but he refuses to reverse the \$500 million in cuts the Government has made to the Indigenous Affairs portfolio. It's clear what his priorities are – and it's clear he is out of touch.

The Government is persisting with its discredited and disastrous Indigenous Advancement Strategy, even though it has been shambolic and led to widespread confusion amongst local organisations.

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy has been evaluated – and it's been judged a failure. It should be ripped up and replaced with something that respects local voices, gives more control to communities and Indigenous controlled organisations, and prioritises evidence-based outcomes

While the Budget includes piecemeal proposals for better employment and health outcomes, there is no comprehensive strategy to make progress on the stalled Closing

the Gap targets, or to address other longstanding issues such as the incarceration crisis.

The Budget also fails to secure the future of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples with proper funding. Congress is our independent, elected, national Indigenous representative body – it must be respected and resourced.

Of course, the Government's savage cuts to Medicare and schools will hurt millions of Australians – and Indigenous Australians will be disproportionately affected.

The Government's entire approach to Indigenous Affairs is defined by savage cuts to services, a loss of local control, a failure to listen to Indigenous voices, and policy-making which is paternalistic and overly bureaucratic.

It's time for Malcolm Turnbull to listen and lead.

He should start listening to the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about what is working and what isn't. He must start leading by finally addressing his government's failures, and changing his approach.

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