



**HON ANTHONY ALBANESE MP  
LEADER OF THE AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY  
MEMBER FOR GRAYNDLER**

**HON LINDA BURNEY MP  
SHADOW MINISTER FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS  
MEMBER FOR BARTON**

**HON WARREN SNOWDON MP  
SHADOW ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS  
MEMBER FOR LINGIARI**

**SENATOR PATRICK DODSON  
SHADOW ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR RECONCILIATION  
SHADOW ASSISTANT MINISTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RECOGNITION OF  
INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS  
SENATOR FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**SENATOR MALARNDIRRI MCCARTHY  
SENATOR FOR THE NORTHERN TERRITORY  
CHAIR OF LABOR FIRST NATIONS CAUCUS COMMITTEE  
SENATOR FOR THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**

**CLOSING THE GAP: CHANGE BEGINS WITH LISTENING**

It has been 12 years since we commenced this national effort to close the gap in quality of life outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

While we have made some progress, these latest results are unacceptable.

### ***Snapshot***

#### ***On health***

The Indigenous child mortality rate is still more than twice that of non-Indigenous children.

Indigenous Australians live around 8 years less than other Australians (8.6 years for men and 7.8 years for women). And this gap is even wider in remote and regional areas.

Alarming, Indigenous cancer mortality rates are worsening. Indigenous cancer survival is actually going backwards in absolute terms, not just in comparison to non-Indigenous Australians.

#### ***On education***

Reading, writing, and maths results and school attendance are still nowhere near good enough.

One in four Indigenous children are performing below minimum standards for reading, and one in five below the minimum standards for numeracy.

These children are being denied a lifetime of opportunity.

#### ***On early childhood***

While enrolment for early childhood education is on track we are concerned about the significant variation between jurisdictions, in particular Queensland, Northern Territory and New South Wales.

While attendance rates in early education remain favourable, we are particularly concerned that the Northern Territory rate is almost 20 percentage points behind (73.1 per cent).

This disparity is more pronounced in remote and very remote areas.

These are not just statistics. These are people – sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, aunties and uncles.

If we want to see real progress on Closing the gap, we must properly understand how the consequences of dispossession; the removal from country and culture; the misguided policies - no matter how well-intentioned - have transcended generations and can still be seen and felt

today.

We cannot understand the challenges of today, if we do not understand that their causes remain rooted in the past.

We must stop repeating the mistakes of the past. We must genuinely listen to First Nations Australians.

We welcome the partnership between the Coalition of Peaks and Government.

And Labor looks forward to supporting new and ambitious targets and structural changes to close the gap, including in the important areas of child removal and incarceration.

A direct and secure voice to decision makers will build on the work of the Peaks, and ensure that the issues and perspectives of First Nations people are not left to languish on the fringes.

And genuine commitment means that local and regional services and programs are adequately resourced and properly funded. It is difficult to accept a commitment as genuine when half a billion dollars was cut from the Indigenous affairs budget by this Government.

We are all challenged to do better with more diligence and speed.

**WEDNESDAY, 12 FEBRUARY 2020**

**MEDIA CONTACT: LEADER'S PRESS OFFICE 02 6277 4053**