

SBS NITV The Point Interview Transcript – 10 May 2022

A new report out today highlights some of the continuing obstacles to improving the health and life expectancy of our mob.

Now, it's found an underspend of more than \$4 billion on Indigenous health.

Let's find out more. And we're joined now by Pat Turner, the CEO of the National Aboriginal community controlled Health Organization, NACCHO.

Welcome it to the point Aunty Pat now \$4.4 billion. That's a lot of money. How are you breaking that down?

Well, overall, it's 4.4 billion. So 2.6 billion of that is Commonwealth shortfall in funding. And the Commonwealth of course has key responsibility for the provision of primary health care to all Australians. And that includes us so 1.8 of that is state billion is state and territory contributions that needs to be put into the pool and 2.6 billion shortfall from the Commonwealth. Now this is to deal with issues like the fact that our life expectancy is eight to nine years less than other Australians. Our youth are 55 times more likely to die from rheumatic heart disease 55 times more likely to die from rheumatic heart disease.

So is it about spending this money closing the gaps?

Absolutely. You have to have the extra funds to provide the range of healthcare services based on need, that our people require. So we've never been funded on a needs basis. And if we were we would have that \$4.4 billion extra in our coffers.

Now, Pat, you're also the co-chair of the closing the gap agreement, and you work closely with federal and state governments. What are you telling them about Indigenous Health given the report today? What are you gonna tell them and do you think that they're listening?

Well, they'll have to listen because this is a critical piece of more evidence that we have to put on the table in our arguments about the underfunding of our sector. But Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organizations and communities have always been underfunded. And it's like a patronizing paternalistic regime that thinks oh well that's enough for them and they can get on with it. Well, we do get on with it, but we can't continue to unless we want to see the health gap widens, widened even more. It's the same with housing and so on. So what we will be telling all of the jurisdictions is stand up and be counted in terms of fulfilling your responsibilities, evidence

In terms of standing up and be counted. We're now in week five of the Federal Election Campaign that you've been closely watching. Are you satisfied with the attention that is being paid to First Nations issues during this election campaign?

Absolutely not. I think it's a national shame that the two major parties have barely said anything useful. What Labour has said is that it committed is committed to implementing to the Uluru Statement from the Heart which is fine, and held a referendum. And I think Mr. Albanese committed today to doing that in the first term of his government if he's elected on a voice to Parliament. Now apparently the polls are saying that a majority of Australians support a voice to Parliament. But getting that through a successful referendum is another story. And I think it will require both Houses of Parliament supporting a yes vote on that matter. And I hope that that have met by the major parties. And of course, who knows what's going to happen with the number of independents and whether in fact we'll have a hung parliament, with the independents making up a majority government

Aunty Pat how does it make you feel when Scott Morrison saying things like you know, when he's asked about the Uluru statement and the enshrined voice when he even say things like, what's the point?

Yeah, well, you know, very disheartening, of course, it's very disheartening. The point is that it gives Aboriginal people the right to exercise our self-determination within the Australian rule of law, and to provide firsthand advice to Parliament about what needs to be done to improve the life outcomes for our people. And that's across the board. I mean, the story before was about the impact of climate change and the knowledge, the vast knowledge that First Nations groups have in dealing with the environment well housing for example, now needs to take account of how, of climate change you can't have people living in houses without air conditioning and heating in extreme weather events. All of our housing is overcrowded and I haven't heard well, why shouldn't you? Yeah. So well, whatever he said, And let me remind the viewers that it was the coalition of peaks that developed the national agreement and sought the partnership with governments to share decision making to close the gap. It was not an initiative of any government. It was the initiative of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Pat Turner, thanks for joining us on The Point and we look forward to checking in ahead of the federal election and post the federal