

30 April 2018

Council of Australian Governments

Closing the Gap Refresh



Dear Madam/Sir

The NSW Council of Social Service (ncoss) works with and for people experiencing poverty and disadvantage to see positive change in our communities and alleviate poverty in NSW.

As the peak body organisation representing the community sector in NSW, we hear from community about the root causes of poverty, and the importance of getting it right from the start to better support vulnerable families and communities, to ensure no child grows up in poverty. We know that Aboriginal communities and leaders know what their communities need, and they need to be supported to self-determine at all levels of decision making.

In accordance with Article 3 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which stipulates Indigenous peoples right to self-determination, ncoss is pleased to endorse the key issues and recommendations raised in the NSW Aboriginal Land Council's submission on the Closing the Gap Refresh. Specifically, ncoss would like to reinforce:

- Government adopt genuine consultation processes that align with the principles of free, prior and informed consent in the UNDRIP and which recognise Aboriginal peoples' rights as First Nations peoples.
- Both the NSW and Federal Governments commit to a process whereby treaties that recognise and give practical effect to the inherent sovereignty of Aboriginal peoples are entered into.
- Businesses use the UNDRIP as a framework to ensure business practices uphold and maintain the rights of Aboriginal peoples.
- Close the Gap indicators reflect Aboriginal people's worldviews and how they measure and define success, reflecting the importance of culture, family and community.
- Economic independence and prosperity to Aboriginal communities is essential to their survival as a distinct, culturally rich, self-determining people.
- Structural impediments to 'prosperity', such as systemic and institutional racism must be accounted for and addressed, for instance by a commitment to formally implement the UNDRIP.

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