



NACCHO

National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

Media Release

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Peace Prize winner's lessons for Closing the Gap

Dr Mick Adams, chair of NACCHO, the national peak body of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services and the instigator of the Close the Gap campaign has congratulated Professor Patrick Dodson as this year's winner of the Sydney Peace Prize* in recognition of his long commitment to and advocacy of the human rights of Aboriginal people.

"Prime Minister Kevin Rudd should heed last night's speech by Professor Dodson highlighting the need for Aboriginal people to be driving solutions, not the unwilling participants in them" Dr Adams said.

Dr Adams supported Professor Dodson's description of the NT Intervention as "crude, racist and poorly considered policy".

"The Intervention Review Board's comment that, *'The Intervention diminished its own effectiveness through its failure to engage constructively with the Aboriginal people it was intended to help'*, also showed the intervention's basic flaw" Dr Adams said.

"It is a flaw that I hope the new federal government will not repeat in its response to our Close the Gap campaign that the government has made an essential part of its public commitments.

"We welcomed the apology to the Stolen Generations and the Prime Minister and Health Minister signing the Close the Gap Statement of Intent** in March backing Aboriginal community controlled health services and committing to resourcing our primary health care services to a level where we can for the first time match our community's level of need by 2018.

"We look forward to being part of any government action on these commitments and to any feedback from the promised reforms in Aboriginal health which are still caught up in reviews by the Council of Australian Governments and the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission.

"We largely know how to address the major challenge of achieving Aboriginal health equality and it requires working with Aboriginal people and our organisations, all levels of government, the major players in the health system and the wider Australian community" Dr Adams said.

"Prof. Dodson last night spoke of the debilitating effect the imposition of the Intervention had on NT Aboriginal people, compounding the effect of generations of poor access to adequate health services, housing, education, employment and a lack of control or empowerment.

"These are the social determinates of health that we need address to be able to 'Close the Gap'" Dr Adams said.

"I also welcome the Intervention Review's important recommendation to reinstate the Racial Discrimination Act's application to the Intervention as part of basic human rights we are entitled to and I hope the Minister for Indigenous Affairs will seriously consider it" Dr Adams said.

*<http://www.sydneypeacefoundation.org.au/prize.shtml>

**http://www.naccho.org.au/Files/Documents/statement_intent%20signed%20copy%2020-3-8.pdf

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