



**The Hon. Scott Morrison MP**  
Prime Minister

**TRANSCRIPT**  
**REMARKS, INDIGENOUS PEAK BODIES ROUNDTABLE**  
**AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT HOUSE, ACT**  
**THURSDAY 23 JANUARY 2020**

EO&E...

**PRIME MINISTER:** Welcome everyone. We're just still waiting on Anne, I think Anne might have been delayed this morning, I know she's been very active in dealing with matters particularly out in the Adelaide Hills and on Kangaroo Island and I hope we will see her shortly.

But to you, Pat, and to everyone, thank you for co-chairing this today, Pat, and the Ministers and my team who are here today. It's wonderful to be having the opportunity to do that, this get together this week. I will say a bit more about that in a second, as I know you will, Pat. But first of all, can I ask Cindy and Katrina to provide the acknowledgement of country.

**CINDY BERWICK, PRESIDENT OF THE NSW ABORIGINAL EDUCATION CONSULTATION GROUP:** Thank you. Prime Minister. I'd like to acknowledge that we are on the land of the Ngunnawal people, seven clans made up the Ngunnawal nation and I'd like to acknowledge my ancestral homelands of the Woolbaloah clan in the Yass area just over the border. My father was born on the Pudman Creek Aboriginal Reserve and my great grandmother is buried over there in the Yass cemetery.

So I'd like to say, Yirradhu marang. Yuwin-dhu Cindy Berwick Ngunnawal yinaa ngay yuranha mulunma Sydney. Dhalang yarra Wiradjuri gulbarra miyagan-dhi. Ngunnawal mayiny -ngan.gu ngurambang-ga nginha ngan.girra dhurinya gayi yindyamarra.

*[Translation: Good morning. Name I Cindy Berwick Ngunnawal woman but grew up in the inner city of Sydney. Today I speak Wiradjuri acknowledging my kinship ties. I'd like to acknowledge the Ngunnawal people and pay my respects.]*

**KATRINA FANNING, CHAIRPERSON OF THE ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ELECTED BODY:** I too would like to pass on my respects to the Ngunnawal people on whose land we gather today. It's important for us to acknowledge that this place has always been a gathering place for the meeting of clans and discussing significant business. So it's important that we take the time this morning to continue that protocol on such a significant gathering of people.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well, thank you very much. I also acknowledge the Ngunnawal people, elders past and present and of course, emerging and in the future. Because so much of what we're discussing today is the future that we all, I know, are committed to and share a vision for.

I have a very simple goal and I suspect we all share it. And that I want Indigenous boys and girls to grow up with the same opportunities in life as every other Australian. At least. At least. And we have such a huge job, which has been the task of governments for many years, and I think today is another step in that process. Pat, I want to thank you for your partnership in all of this. It was over a year ago when we met and closing the gap is so important. But we also, I think, need to look at this task, as Ken has often reminded me, about the progress we are making as well. It's not about addressing a negative as much as it is about gaining a positive into the future. It's a process of hope that we're seeking to address here and I want to thank Ken for the way he has led us within the Government about our thinking about these issues and the unique perspective that he's brought to our Cabinet in his historical appointment. He's shown enormous insight to all of us in helping us to understand the challenges that we face.

So as we go forward today, it is about partnerships and there are many partnerships with Indigenous communities all around the country. Those partnerships, probably more important than anything, exist at that local level on the ground, with people working together on the ground in communities for the future of their communities and everything builds from that. And those who have gathered around here, at the table today, come from those Indigenous communities, are involved in local communities as well as national responsibilities. And our approach as a Government really is to build that partnership from the ground up with Indigenous Australians all around the country. And of course, the national peaks represent an important partner as well in being a partner especially in service delivery in so many important areas and the big shift that has taken place in the last year or so is we've also taken through the COAG process - and Pat, you've been such a champion, I appreciate your support in this - is to turn this issue around. Closing the gap isn't about what the government says it's going to tell the country to do, from the top down, and tell people what the gap is. Now, this is a gap that we all acknowledge and that we all define together and Indigenous communities define and Indigenous communities define the priorities. And then we work together to close the gap in where you see it, not from where we see it, as a government. So understanding what that gap is from Indigenous communities is terribly important to my government and today is a really important opportunity to work it out, that process through more thoroughly and how in the partnerships we have with the peak organisations which are service deliveries. But there are many others, there are PHNs and other service providers that exist in different places which also have an enormous role to play, which I know you understand, Pat, and you support. But our partnership with the peaks is also very important in driving this process.

So I want to thank you for coming together today. But more importantly, in the spirit of which it's done and I look forward to what I believe will be some very useful discussions today in how we are taking this forward.

**PAT TURNER, CEO OF THE NATIONAL ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY CONTROLLED HEALTH ORGANISATION:** Thank you, Prime Minister. Thank you Katrina and Cindy for your acknowledgements of country. Thank you, Prime Minister, for your welcome and for the invitation to meet today. It is an historic day. Never have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies from across the country come together in this way, to bring their collective expertise, experiences, and deep understanding of the needs of our people to the task of closing the gap. And never have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, through their elected community representatives, had a formal agreement with governments on how we can work together to close the gap.

We have an unprecedented opportunity to change the lived experience of too many of our people who are doing it tough. We know that over many years, our people have lost faith in the closing the gap policy. It wasn't delivering the changes needed and year after year, failure was reported and people disengaged. Governments too lost faith, seemingly contented with the reported failures.

There was no longer any ownership for closing the gap. The coalition of peaks are rising to the challenge. We acknowledge the Prime Minister's leadership in bringing the Council of Australian Governments to the collective task. Since September last year, with formal engagements led by the coalition of peaks, nearly 4,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have now had their say on what is needed to close the gap. Today, the coalition of peaks brings those voices to the Cabinet table.

Thank you again, Prime Minister.

**PRIME MINISTER:** Well thank you Pat, as I ask the media [inaudible], and Pat and all the peaks in working to the task in responding to the national bushfire crisis that we've had. We sat in this very room last week together, and I thought that the piece you had out there today, Ken, spoke volumes about the fire service, the Indigenous female fire service, in Victoria. It was a beautiful story about just the effort that is being required across the nation in response to the bushfire crisis and how Indigenous Australians, like all Australians, have been at one in responding to this terrible challenge. And we know, as you reminded us last week, Pat, the quite specific impact on Indigenous communities, particularly in remote parts of especially New South Wales and Victoria, who have been impacted by this crisis. And we thank you for the great work you're doing with us and with the state governments in particular to progress their needs.

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**Contacts: Press Office, (02) 6277 7744  
The Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Sydney**

Press Office of the Hon. Scott Morrison MP, Prime Minister, Canberra