

Council For The National Interest

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13 November 2023



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The Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP
Attorney General
PO Box 6022
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Dreyfus

The recent Referendum on the 'Voice' was claimed to be all about *closing the gap and reconciliation* with Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders with other Australians.

It is reasonable, in our view, to argue that the extraordinary No vote of around 60% and the 6 to nil States No vote indicates that Australians do want to close the gap and work towards reconciliation but they want to be satisfied the cost of doing so is properly accounted for and publicised.

Despite detailed and comprehensive research, we have not been able to establish with any degree of certainty, the amount of taxpayer funds, spent year by year, by the huge range of Indigenous organizations. We say 'huge range' because the Corporations, Native Title bodies, Land Councils, Regional Councils, Aboriginal Agencies, Advisory Bodies, Health Organizations etc total more than 3,800.

Our research suggests that between \$30billion and \$40billion is spent on Indigenous programmes each year. This has doubled in the past fifteen years but outcomes have not improved at a corresponding rate. Despite this expenditure, the gap still exists. One example is the Northern Territory education system where the attendance rate in remote schools is 18.7%. To close the gap it is essential to get aboriginal children to go to school, to improve the economic achievement of aboriginal communities and stop child abuse which is known to exist in some of these communities.

We urge you to carry out a wide ranging, ongoing audit of the spending on all of these Indigenous organizations which will surely expose inefficiency and waste and even graft and corruption. This will be a giant first step to closing the gap.

We look forward to your favourable response.

Sincerely
Denis Whitely

Denis J Whitely – CNI Executive Committee