

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Policy

Introduction

1. Congress will work towards creating a society that promotes the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations Peoples of Australia.
2. Previous Congress policy has dealt with many aspects of this principle. The aim of the present policy is to reaffirm the commitment of Congress to this principle, to recommit to existing policies that help achieve this principle, and to outline new policies that help further the advancement of this principle.
3. In making this policy the ACTU and its affiliates are making a clear statement and commitment to campaign to achieve this principle and that this will be a priority of unions.
4. The ACTU reaffirms their commitment to working with unions to develop and implement effective recruitment, retention and activism strategies specifically targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the union movement.

Employment

5. Sustainable, secure, real employment is one of the corner stones in bridging the gaps between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
6. Congress applauds the signing by unions of tripartite-community agreements as an important strategy to improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers.
7. Congress calls on the ACTU and unions to continue their commitment to being proactive in promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in major industry agreements and working with employers, industry, community and other stakeholders to achieve employment outcomes.

8. Congress congratulates the government and industry sectors for recent increased engagement with, and resources dedicated to, increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment. Congress calls on all levels of government, industry, employers, unions and communities to continue engagement and the commitment of resources to programs which support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers to engage in economic activity.

Northern Territory Emergency Response & Stronger Futures

9. Congress welcomes the Commonwealth government's proposed repeal of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) Legislation and the reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act (Cth) 1975.
10. Under the proposed repeal of the NTER legislation, Congress welcomes the cessation of the compulsory acquisition of Aboriginal land.
11. However, Congress rejects many aspects of the Stronger Futures legislation package, which are an extension of the discriminatory policies of the NTER.
12. Congress opposes the discriminatory elements of the Stronger Futures legislative package and supports the campaign of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples to remove these elements.

Welfare Reform

13. Congress acknowledges the Commonwealth government's move to make income management voluntary. However, Congress continues its objection to the punitive strategies which manage or suspend income in a top-down, autocratic manner.
14. Congress believes that punitive strategies are not an effective instrument in empowering individuals and promoting long-term behaviour change.
15. Congress continues its call on government to work with communities to develop and agree to appropriate programs which support communities in all aspects of social life and responsibilities.
16. Congress continues to have grave concerns about the implications and consequences of the School Enrolment and Attendance through Welfare Reform Measure (SEAM). This concern covers the impacts on parents/carers, workers tasked with administering the system, schools, teachers, Aboriginal Education Workers and leaders and all other stakeholders.
17. The ACTU and relevant affiliates reaffirm their commitment to continuous engagement with all stakeholders in this policy and legislative area.

Cultural Heritage

18. Congress acknowledges the importance of culture in sustaining community and preserving cultural heritage.
19. Congress calls on all levels of government and employers to provide cultural competency training in workplaces throughout Australia.
20. Congress call upon all levels of government and employers to affirm and commit to recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples moral and intellectual property rights.

Self Determination, Consultation and Land Use

21. The ACTU will continue and strengthen its commitment to supporting the native title, land tenure and land rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
22. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the First Nations Peoples of Australia, and as such have a distinct and inalienable set of rights – the right to self-determination and decision making over the use of traditional land is paramount in these.
23. Pursuant to standing ACTU policy Congress:
 - Acknowledges that the Commonwealth Radioactive Waste Management Act (CRWMA) has been repealed, but expresses disappointment that the highly contested Muckaty Land Trust site will continue to be pursued under the National Radioactive Waste Management Act.
 - Stands in solidarity with Traditional Owners and communities resisting Federal government plans for a radioactive waste dump and commits to supporting trade unions refusing to cooperate with implementation of the policy.
 - Rejects any legislation which would continue to target a site on the Muckaty Land Trust or any other site in Australia, for a nuclear waste dump that is not based on recognised science and international best practices.
 - Notes the recent application by ANSTO for reprocessed spent fuel waste to return to the Lucas Heights facility in Sydney and acknowledges this as an opportunity to review radioactive waste management in Australia by conducting an independent and comprehensive public commission into all aspects of radioactive waste transport, storage and management in Australia.