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Indigenous unionists Build a Better Future in Cairns

The power of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to determine the outcome of the next Federal election should not be underestimated, say Australian Unions.

The Abbott Government will face a strong fight from unions after its attacks on living standards and paternalistic approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver said in a keynote address to the ACTU Indigenous Leadership Conference in Cairns today.

Over 50 Indigenous union delegates from around the country are attending the conference to strengthen their campaigning skills over three days as part of Australian Unions' Build a Better Future campaign.

The aim is to empower delegates to grass-roots campaign in their communities on issues such as the Abbott Government's on-going attacks to Indigenous communities, including the forcible closures of WA communities, cuts to Indigenous Affairs funding and the *White Paper on Developing Northern Australia* which will allow businesses to exploit free Indigenous labour.

The Build a Better campaign is built around six key issues – workers' rights, universal healthcare, the highest quality education, public services owned by everyone for the benefit of everyone, a secure retirement and a fair go for all that requires everyone to pay their fair share of tax.

Australian Unions have supported the long struggle of Indigenous peoples for recognition of their civil rights and are strongly committed to promoting equality in the workplace and within broader society for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Dave Oliver:

"The Australian union movement has a proud history of standing alongside with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through some of the most significant civil rights campaigns in this country."

"Communities will need to unite to fight off the Abbot Government's threats to our living standards - a fight that will need to be won in electorates around the country, including electorates with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities."

"The self-declared Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs has left a litany of broken promises and attacks on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities."

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