

Thursday 9 June 2016

## ACTU releases Our Voice, our Future report

The Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) launches Our Voice, Our Future today (Thursday 9 June 2016), a set of key priorities to support Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander workers in their communities and workplace. The five key priorities are detailed in Our Voice, Our Future are:

**1. Community Development Program (CDP)** – A new government must announce a comprehensive overhaul of the current CDP. This process should replace the current punitive and discriminatory program with an Initiative that will build skills, community capacity and foster sustainable, stable, paid employment.

**2. Consultation** - An incoming government must immediately announce an intention to establish a representative and effective mechanism to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the arbiters of their place in Australia and are equal partners in the development and implementation of policies that affect their way of life and livelihoods.

**3. Retirement** - The projected life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is ten years lower than non-Indigenous people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men on average are dying at 55.4 years of age; women at 61.5. As such, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people currently in the workforce are more likely to die than retire. Steps must be taken by the next government to address this tragic reality of Indigenous life, and amend rules governing access to Super until the life expectancy gap can be closed.

**4. Indigenous Advancement Strategy (ISA)** - The 2014/2015 Federal Budget and subsequent ISA had severe and detrimental effects on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community-led organisations. The loss of funding not only had an impact on locally provided front line services, but cost workers their jobs. A new federal government must restore the half a billion lost in the 2014/2015 Budget to Indigenous Affairs and ensure community controlled organisations have preference over large non-Indigenous organisations.

**5. Cost of living and Subsidies** - The cost of buying fresh food and other groceries in regional and remote communities can be up to 60% more than in our urban centres. The health outcomes associated with poor diet due to increased costs of fresh food means that: one in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults have Type 2 diabetes and three in ten have chronic kidney disease. The next government must take strong action to address price gouging and the impact this has on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

### Quotes attributable to ACTU Indigenous Officer Kara Keys:

“We have five practical and achievable goals that will promote equality for Indigenous people. What’s on offer now for too many communities is a CDP that forces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers into 25 hours a week of work for no pay, and without the protection of federal workers comp or OHS standards. Sadly, it is typical of programs that have not been subject to consultation, and do nothing to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers.”

“Key issues like retirement options, GST and basic subsidies seriously disadvantage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers. With Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders more likely than not to die before retirement, it is critically important to solve these damaging issues. “

### Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

“The Australian Union movement has a proud history of supporting the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workplace. The next federal government must not shy away from these issues, but address them in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.”

**ENDS**

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