



The Coalition's plan for real action for  
**Indigenous Australians**

**Stand up for Australia.  
Stand up for real action.**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Coalition understands that education and employment are the pathways to prosperity and well-being for all Australians. Indigenous Australians face particular challenges when seeking to access these basic building blocks which lead to happy and productive lives. Community remoteness, high levels of poverty and disadvantage, poor housing and health all play a part in denying Indigenous Australians the opportunities that most Australians take for granted.

It is time that these challenges were addressed. Providing opportunities for Indigenous Australians requires pragmatic, 'on the ground' solutions – not the spin and empty rhetoric of Labor.

The Coalition is committed to helping Indigenous Australians in a way which is respectful and recognises diversity in culture and governance. This will require us to build trust, empower and respect indigenous leaders, and focus on building sustainable communities to ensure that we can make a lasting difference – and not just make yet another government announcement.

Good intentions will never be enough if they don't deliver real, lasting results on the ground. Real jobs, local control and respectful accountability are central tenets to improving the lives of those in Indigenous communities.

The Coalition has a real action plan to provide direct support for Indigenous Australians.

Education and jobs brings greater prosperity and well being for individuals, their families and the communities in which they live.

The Coalition will:

- 1. Establish a Director-General of Indigenous Policy Implementation in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.**
- 2. Provide national leadership on Indigenous remote services delivery**
- 3. Support a referendum to recognise Indigenous Australians in the Constitution**
- 4. Support ongoing improvements in Indigenous dental health**
- 5. Support better Indigenous education**
- 6. Support growing Indigenous employment**
- 7. Support the Australian Employment Covenant**
- 8. Support the growth of tourism and economic development**
- 9. Preserving Indigenous ownership of their own economic future**

# HOW LABOR HAS FAILED

After three years of Labor, Australia is heading down the wrong track.

Reckless spending, nearly \$90 billion of debt, a \$57 billion deficit and Labor Government borrowings of more than \$100 million every day have put the Australian economy in a highly vulnerable position.

Labor's inability to manage money has led to billions of dollars of waste.

Labor's 'roof batts' and 'school halls' programmes are just two high-profile examples of Labor's failure to properly plan and implement policies. The billions of dollars that have been wasted on these failures could have delivered significant improvements in government services delivery, particularly for Indigenous Australians.

In Indigenous affairs, Labor is all talk and no action.

After delivering the historic apology to Indigenous Australians, many hoped that Labor would honour promises to build houses, reduce unemployment and address the chronic health conditions suffered by so many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

Labor has failed at reducing Indigenous disadvantage.

The 2009 Productivity Commission report '*Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage*' provided evidence of worsening social indicators and trends for Indigenous Australians.<sup>1</sup>

Labor promised to build 750 new houses, and rebuild or renovate 2,730 more - but took nearly two years to build the first house.<sup>2</sup>

Labor's failures mean another generation of Indigenous Australians is likely to live without decent education, employment, housing or personal security.

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1. Productivity Commission *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage*, 2009, <http://www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/indigenous>

2. <http://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/land/indigenous-aboriginal-housing.html>

# THE COALITION'S PLAN FOR REAL ACTION FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

The Coalition believes in real action to deliver outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

## The Coalition will:

### **1. Establish a Director-General of Indigenous Policy Implementation in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.**

The Coalition is serious about making a difference to Indigenous communities. The only way to make sure this happens is to have a direct channel to the highest office.

Therefore, the Coalition will ensure the person charged with delivering Indigenous policy outcomes reports directly to the Prime Minister.

The Director General of Indigenous Policy Implementation will have the authority to work across government departments and agencies to monitor and fast track Indigenous policy initiatives.

The position will be independent of agencies responsible for program delivery. It will also have the authority to monitor and intervene when programs are failing to achieve the desired outcomes.

The Director-General will ensure that the job gets done.

### **2. Provide national leadership on Indigenous remote services delivery**

National leadership is needed to overcome Labor's poorly co-ordinated Indigenous services delivery and general lack of progress.

The Coalition will take an active role, including through COAG, to provide leadership to improve co-ordination of Indigenous services delivery, improve transparency, and ensure that funds invested deliver effective outcomes.

### **3. Support a referendum to recognise Indigenous Australians in the Constitution**

Before the last election, the Coalition made a commitment to hold a referendum to recognise Indigenous Australians in the preamble of the Constitution. Labor refused to match this commitment until recently.

The recognition of Indigenous Australians in the Constitution makes sense, and is overdue. The Coalition will encourage public discussion and debate about the proposed change and seek bipartisan support for a referendum to be put to the Australian people at the 2013 election.

#### **4. Support ongoing improvements in Indigenous dental health**

The Coalition will commit \$22 million to establish the Indigenous Dental Programme to provide a dental hygienist to any remote Indigenous school or Aboriginal Medical Service, upon request, for an agreed period.

A new Indigenous Dental Partnership will provide a team of dental professionals to provide better access to dental treatment, and an Indigenous Dental Services Volunteer Group will bring together a willing volunteer group of dentists and dental hygienists to deliver services to remote locations where services are currently difficult to provide.

The Coalition will also establish the Indigenous Dental Intervention Review to examine the results of the NT intervention and recommend what further follow up action needs to be taken to ensure that adequate dental services are provided in remote locations.

#### **5. Support better Indigenous education**

The first step in improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students is to simply make sure they go to school.

The Noel Pearson inspired Cape York Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) has helped to address this problem by working with community elders to address problems like school truancy.

FRC hearings have the flavour of a counselling session as much as a courtroom, and deliver meaningful and sustainable results by encouraging schools, parents and students to sit down and talk. Where truancy continues, Centrelink family payments may be withheld.

Expanding the role and scope of the FRC will seek to improve levels of Indigenous education. It will make sure that Indigenous children and young people go to school, and do so in way which balances respect for community circumstances with the need to give Indigenous students the best possible education.

The Coalition will commit \$16 million over four years towards this programme.

#### **6. Fast-track boarding facilities**

In 2007, Labor promised school boarding facilities for several locations in the Northern Territory. Funds to build these important centres were allocated in the 2008-09 Budget, but have failed to materialise in yet another example of Labor's 'all talk – no action' approach to Indigenous policy.

The Coalition will fast-track the construction of these boarding facilities to provide Indigenous students with essential accommodation while they are away from their communities to study.

## **7. Support Indigenous employment**

The Coalition will ensure that all Australians who want work can find work.

Having long term stable employment is an essential building block for the wellbeing of families. This is particularly important for Indigenous communities and those living in remote areas, where ongoing work opportunities can form a basis from which individuals can break free from disadvantage and welfare.

Being wholly Indigenous, the Aboriginal Employment Strategy has the right skills, knowledge and experience to help Indigenous Australians find jobs. Their approach works and should be expanded.

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy has a track record of providing meaningful assistance and getting Indigenous people in to jobs. Indigenous Australians all around the country benefit from job search assistance that is targeted and specialised.

The Coalition will dramatically expand the capacity of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy so that it can expand its scope and outcomes.

The Coalition will commit \$8 million over four years towards this programme.

## **8. Support the Australian Employment Covenant**

The establishment of the Australian Employment Covenant in conjunction with Andrew Forrest and various other private sector partners received bi-partisan support from the Coalition.

There are now more jobs than ever that can be potentially filled by Indigenous Australians under the right circumstances and we are committed to helping ensure these opportunities are taken.

The Coalition will maintain our support for this initiative, and will re-invigorate it by providing additional Commonwealth assistance and funding of \$8 million over four years.

The Coalition will continue to work with Indigenous leaders to ensure that more young Indigenous people take up these opportunities.

## **9. Support the growth of tourism and economic development**

The Coalition believes that there is enormous potential for expanding tourism to Indigenous communities. Tourism benefits both tourists and Indigenous communities economically and socially.

The Coalition in government will maintain our position to abolish the access permit system to the extent that permits will not be required to travel on roads into communities or to access community land or facilities in the Northern Territory.

The permit system will be retained for accessing all other Aboriginal lands.

The more contact there is between Indigenous and other Australians and visitors, the greater opportunity there is for enhanced awareness and respect to develop and the greater the opportunity for economic developments to prosper.

The Coalition believes that establishing strong relationships and building mutual respect with Indigenous Australians must be at the heart of all its policies and actions. The Coalition commits itself to this task.

#### **10. Preserving Indigenous ownership of their own economic future**

The Coalition will continue to take a stand with Cape York Indigenous leaders in fighting for their economic future. Tony Abbott and the Coalition opposed Labor and the Green's 'Wild Rivers' theft of enterprise and jobs. The Coalition took action to overturn Labor's attempt to alienate the Cape York rivers from their rightful owners and the legislation passed the Senate with the support of Senator Nick Xenophon and Family First leader, Senator Steve Fielding.

Queensland Labor and the Greens have colluded to take away from Indigenous Australians in Cape York their access to and any economic advantage that may accrue from the 'wild' river system in the Cape.

In conjunction with Indigenous leaders in Cape York, the Coalition believes that individuals should be allowed to get on with their lives and business without arbitrary intervention from Labor.

The Coalition does not believe in taking away from individuals their capacity to make a living and support their families. The Coalition supports the efforts of Cape York leaders to retain control of the 'Wild Rivers' and to use them for economic benefit and cultural fulfilment. The Coalition is committed to stopping Labor and the Greens' cruel collusion to rob the people of Cape York of their economic future. An incoming Coalition government will legislate to overturn the Wild Rivers Act at least as so far as it applies to Cape York.

# COSTINGS

The Coalition will commit \$54 million over the forward estimates towards these further initiatives to support Indigenous Australians.

This funding will be provided from more than \$28 billion in recurrent savings that have been identified by the Coalition over the forward estimates.

These savings are a result of cutting Labor's waste and mismanagement and redirecting funding from inefficient and poor performing Labor Government programmes.

	2010-11 \$M	2011-12 \$M	2012-13 \$M	2013-14 \$M	TOTAL \$M
Improve Indigenous dental health	2.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	<b>22</b>
Better Indigenous education	1	5	5	5	<b>16</b>
Building Indigenous employment	2	2	2	2	<b>8</b>
Australian Employment Covenant	2	2	2	2	<b>8</b>

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