



Media Release

for immediate release



News item from MacDonnell Regional Council released on 9 March 2015 page 1 of 2

For further information please contact MacDonnell Regional Council, Communications Officer Darren Pfitzner by phone 08 8958 9608 or email media@macdonnell.nt.gov.au



‘Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs’ directly attacks remote Aboriginal wellbeing



Tony Abbott’s motherhood statement of being the ‘Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs’ has proved to be worth nothing more than another broken promise.



Tony Abbott’s foray into Indigenous Affairs proposes that MacDonnell Regional Council should expand its Youth Development services from 9 to 12 remote Indigenous communities for only 8% of its current budget.



“If Tony Abbott’s says he wants to help Aboriginal people why has he just cut 51 Indigenous jobs from our communities?” MacDonnell Regional Council President, Sid Anderson said of the Abbott government’s IAS funding proposal.



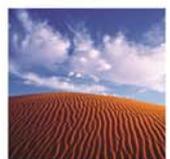
Following the Abbott government’s election 18 months ago, Mr Abbott immediately drafted the Indigenous Affairs portfolio into the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and under his control. Since then frontline organisations have been kept guessing during a bungled process of delays and uncertainty throughout the sector, while his department concocted the new Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) funding and application process.



Today those frontline services are finding out that the IAS amounts to nothing more than a bureaucratically laden process masking another typically mean and tricky agenda.



MacDonnell Regional Council’s successful Community Services program delivers frontline services across its 13 remote Indigenous communities in Central Australia, assisting some of the countries most disadvantaged citizens to gain employment, prepare their children for school and keep their communities safe.



Despite this, the highly acclaimed Council recently learned that the Prime Minister’s dream for Aboriginal disadvantage is to significantly add to it, rather than apply his partisan statements about *Closing the Gap*.



“The Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs cares more about Phil the Greek than he does for Aboriginal people” MacDonnell Regional Council President, Sid Anderson said.





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In reality the government does not put its money where its mouth is. As a key to achieving its *Closing the Gap* targets, it offers 5 main pillars, the key 3 pillars being: getting adults to work, getting children to school and making communities safe.



Getting adults to work Pillar 1

MacDonnell Regional Council knows the reality of creating meaningful Indigenous employment. The most prolific Indigenous employer on each of its 13 remote communities, over the years MacDonnell Regional Council has averaged 80% Indigenous employment across all its services. After years of investing in work-readiness among its residents, this latest government initiative severely threatens the livelihood and directly attacks the wellbeing of Australia's most disadvantaged – taking 51 community people out of paid employment and putting them back on the dole.



Getting children to school Pillar 2

Federally funded Early Childhood programs are currently delivered by MacDonnell Regional Council in 3 remote communities. Mr Abbott now expects MacDonnell Regional Council to expand their Early Childhood program to include 4 communities but will only back-it-in for 85% of the projected costs – thus reducing the employment opportunities for remote Indigenous people in those communities by 8 positions.

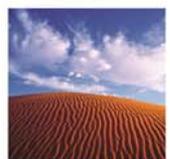


Making communities safe Pillar 3

Community Night Patrol services provided by MacDonnell Regional Council have a current Indigenous employment rate of 95%. While the Council looked to expand its community safety initiatives and create more Indigenous identified employment on communities, the Abbott government has slashed 23% from the projected budget and 8 jobs from MacDonnell Regional Council for the expanded service.



MacDonnell Regional Council has been notified that through the IAS it will receive less than 66% of its previous budget to deliver expanded frontline services in additional remote communities. Once again the government is asking the most disadvantaged Australians to do the heavy lifting for the big end of town.



“I call on Tony Abbott to halt this toxic process and start engaging with Aboriginal people if he is serious about being the 'Prime Minister for Indigenous Affairs” MacDonnell Regional Council President, Sid Anderson said.



MacDonnell Regional Council

many voices, one dream, building a quality desert lifestyle