

## We pledge to LISTEN Up! to Aboriginal and Islander Voice and support the principles of:

**Land** and how Aboriginal and Islander rights and connection to land is fundamental to achieving better social, health, wellbeing and economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Islander people.

**Investments** in Aboriginal and Islander culturally-based solutions and community-controlled services and programs to tackle issues of Aboriginal and Islander disadvantage.

**Self-determination** as the foundational principle for engagement with Aboriginal and Islander communities and as the basis of policy formation and service delivery.

**Treaties** and agreements as the way forward to restore the rightful place of Aboriginal and Islander communities.

**Evidence-based solutions** to the issues of historic and current day dispossession and disadvantage.

**National representation** to restore Aboriginal and Islander voice to provide policy and program advice to the Federal Government in a form determined after consultation with Aboriginal and Islander communities.

## The Actions to support the Principles:

- Repeal of the Northern Territory Emergency Intervention Bills.
- High level consultations between governments and key Aboriginal and Islander organisations to develop both a short and a long term national response to issues of child abuse in Aboriginal and Islander communities.
- Establishment of a nationally representative Aboriginal and Islander body.
- Governments to make long-term strategic investment in community controlled Aboriginal and Islander services to address the housing, healthcare, welfare, education and training needs of Aboriginal and Islander people.

**We pledge to work in solidarity with the Aboriginal and Islander peoples of Australia to achieve the LISTEN Up! principles and actions.**

**Sign the pledge online now at [www.listenupaustralia.org](http://www.listenupaustralia.org)**



## ***Why we should LISTEN Up to Aboriginal and Islander Voice to protect the future of Aboriginal and Islander children***

The passing of the Howard Government's Northern Territory Emergency Intervention Bills demonstrates that there is a crisis in Aboriginal and Islander policy formation and implementation. The bills roll back Aboriginal and Islander self-determination, land rights and the Racial Discrimination Act. They enact a national policy framework that works against Aboriginal and Islander children, families and communities. There is no evidence base for these actions.

LISTEN Up! is a coalition of concerned organisations and individuals seeking a better response to Aboriginal and Islander disadvantage; a response based on listening to Aboriginal and Islander voices, communities and services.

LISTEN Up! looks to the future for both Aboriginal and Islander communities and the nation as a whole. It is clear that there is a need for commitment from politicians and policy makers to key principles which recognise Aboriginal and Islander voice, Aboriginal and Islander rights and Aboriginal and Islander led services and programs. We are therefore calling on organisations, political parties and candidates to make a pledge to the LISTEN Up! principles and actions for the advancement of Aboriginal and Islander people.

There is a clear need for *an immediate response* and a *long-term development plan* to address issues of Aboriginal and Islander disadvantage which lead to poor health, suicide and child abuse. The LISTEN Up! actions seek a return to respectful and decent approaches to both immediate and long term needs.

We believe that only a framework which is based on Aboriginal and Islander self-determination, connection to land and culture will be successful. Numerous expert reports, including the *Little Children are Sacred Report*, and overseas evidence suggests that properly resourced Aboriginal and Islander community-controlled processes and services create the right environment to address issues that are caused by historic and current day processes of marginalisation. It is also clear that self-determination requires respectful partnerships and capacity building processes. Investments in Aboriginal and Islander-led solutions must be made so that the community capacity can be restored. Response must be informed and led by local Aboriginal communities. It is only by strengthening the capacity of families and communities to protect and nurture children that the problems will be resolved. Aboriginal ownership and control of land and access to communities are critical to success.

The current Federal Government approach has no evidence base, ignores numerous expert reports, including the *Little Children are Sacred Report*, and represents a return to the disastrous assimilation policies of the past. It will not work and, even worse, will cause further trauma by removing control, rights and responsibility away from Aboriginal and Islander people.

Taking land away from Aboriginal and Islander communities will not protect children. Measures that contravene the Racial Discrimination Act will not protect children. The new laws, in reality, threaten the future of Aboriginal and Islander children.

All we are asking for is an appropriately resourced, well-reasoned, evidence-based, culturally strengthening approach. **The first step is to LISTEN Up!**