

## **7 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cabinet (NATSIC)**

Governing Council notes the report of Governing Councillor Joanne Kerr and CPSU Deputy Secretary Kristin van Barneveld on the progress and activities of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cabinet (NATSIC).

Governing Council calls on the Federal Government as part of its Closing the Gap strategy to provide full supplementation of salaries in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dominated agencies to address pay inequities and condemns the current proposed cuts in agencies like AIATSIS that will have a heavy impact on current levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment.

Governing Council commits to work with NATSIC on the following projects:

- aiming to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in Australian Government employment to 2.7% by 2015 as adopted by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and included in the APS Bargaining Framework;
- supporting and working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members in the DEEWR Identified Positions Pilot Project, which aims to develop strategies for the recruitment, retention and career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, together with improving client program and service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and
- supporting both the union partnership for Indigenous Australians arising from the ACTU Indigenous Conference and the implementation of the Action Plan.

[CARRIED Governing Councillor Joanne Kerr]

## **REPORT: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cabinet**

The key activities of NATSIC since September 2010 have been:

- developing NATSIC supported positions for the Better Way to Bargain campaign;
- the establishment of a CPSU NATSIC Identified Positions DEEWR pilot project;
- preliminary work on the setting up a network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander CPSU member contacts;
- participation in the ACTU Indigenous Conference (February 2011); and
- updating CPSU NATSIC materials.

Much of the focus of these activities has been around issues affecting APS NATSIC members. Over the coming year the work of the group will be adjusted to encourage greater participation from members in other areas, in particular NT and ACT governments and non APS agencies with high levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and/or service and program responsibility.

### **Better Way to Bargain**

The Better Way to Bargain campaign provides an opportunity to improve pay equity for those agencies with high levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, and to secure specific provisions in enterprise agreements to improve the attraction and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Governing Council commits to work with NATSIC to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in Australian Government employment to 2.7% by 2015 as mandated by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and included in the APS Bargaining Framework. The attached table from the most recent State of the Service

statistical bulletin provides some background to the scale of the work. NATSIC members across the APS are involved in a survey to develop service-wide positions on these strategies.

CPSU achieved some media coverage on pay equity issues affecting agencies employing a high percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff when the annual Closing the Gap report was tabled. (See attachments)

### **Identified Positions Pilot**

An Identified Positions Pilot Project has commenced in DEEWR. The project aims are to develop strategies for the recruitment, retention and career development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, together with improving client program and service delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The NATSIC group is seeking support from the Governing Councillors to make this campaign a priority over the next 12 months by assisting at a local/agency level. This involvement will depend heavily on the region and the agency, and it will include Governing Councillors:

- meeting with local NATSIC members
- facilitating local planning meetings
- engaging with and helping organise meetings with agencies/management
- assisting in member activities and awareness raising of the campaign

All of these activities will be managed on a local level (either agency or regionally specific), as there is a significant degree of difference in the application and use of identified positions nationally and local cultural sensitivities must be taken into account.

This campaign provides an opportunity for Governing Councillors to be involved in NATSIC and it is also an opportunity for the CPSU to build on the early achievements and continue to grow NATSIC as a central part of the CPSU agenda.

### **ACTU Indigenous Conference**

The ACTU Indigenous Conference, the first ever ACTU conference to be held in the NT, took place from 16 to 18 February as Cyclone Carlos descended upon Darwin. Seven CPSU members from a range of agencies were part of the CPSU delegation, along with three CPSU staff. Delegations members were:

Jo Kerr, FaCHSIA NSW  
Karen Ahern, ATO VIC  
Bindie Stewart-Fitzpatrick, DEEWR ACT  
Andrew Davis, DEEWR SA  
June Walley, Medicare Broome  
Don Cockatoo-Collins, Centrelink NT  
Sue Roman, NT Justice\*  
Nadine Flood  
Karen Atherton  
Paul Morris\*



\*Absent from photo

CPSU Governing Council Jo Kerr, chairs the ACTU Indigenous Committee and was Conference Facilitator.

The ACTU Indigenous Action Plan 2011-2013 developed at the conference was endorsed at ACTU Executive on 9 March 2011

The Action Plan is focused on employment and social justice issues including the Northern Territory Emergency Response. It highlights activities for the ACTU, affiliates and TLC's in four key areas – NTER, Employment, Social Justice and Land Rights. A copy will be distributed to Governing Council when it is released by the ACTU.

ATTACHMENT

# MEDIA RELEASE



9 February 2011

## Government should do more to close Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pay gaps in the APS

The Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) is calling on the Gillard Government to improve pay rates for public sector staff employed in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies.

According to the CPSU, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies have been underfunded for many years which means staff receive lower pay rates than colleagues in other public sector agencies for doing the jobs classified at the same level.

CPSU National Secretary Nadine Flood said: “While we welcome the *Closing the Gap* measures announced by the Prime Minister today, we believe the Government can and should do more to address the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pay gaps in its own workforce.

“The fact remains that public service agencies with higher levels of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees tend to have much lower pay rates, despite the Government’s best intentions.

CPSU analysis of pay rates across the Australian Public Service (APS) shows that staff in Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) – a government agency with 80% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff – earn thousands of dollars less a year than staff at the same level in other agencies.

For example, AHL staff at the APS 1 entry level earn at least \$10,000 a year less than staff at the APS 1 in higher paid public service agencies.

Similarly, pay rates at the Torres Strait Regional Authority, which has 56% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, are ranked in the bottom 10% of all agencies at most classifications.

“No one doubts that the Government wants to close the gap and make a difference for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. Working with staff and unions to fix the pay gaps within their own workforce would be a positive step,” said Ms Flood.

### Comparison of public service pay rates

		Pay Ranking*							
	% of Indigenous staff	APS 1	APS 2	APS 3	APS 4	APS 5	APS 6	EL1	EL 2
Aboriginal Hostels Ltd.	80.49%	84/86	89/90	92/92	91/91	92/92	92/92	91/91	91/91
Torres Strait Regional Authority	56.41%	72/86	78/90	84/92	82/91	87/92	85/92	86/91	85/91
AIATSIS	22.73%	79/86	86/90	88/90	88/91	89/92	88/92	89/91	89/91
National Native Title Tribunal	8.98%	61/86	66/90	71/92	70/91	71/92	72/92	77/91	73/91

- Ranking = how the pay rates in each agency’s enterprise agreement compare with pay rates in other public service agencies. eg a rating of 91/91 means that pay rate is the lowest of all 91 PS agencies
- Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff in public service overall = 2.19%

**For comment:** Nadine Flood 0407 731 330

## **Calls to Close the Gap within the public-service**

<http://www.governmentnews.com.au/2011/02/10/article/Calls-to-Close-the-Gap-within-the-public-service/JPHRTNHWAM.html>

### **Parity begins at home by closing PS pay gap, union says**

David McLennan

Canberra Times 10 February 2011

The public-sector union is reminding the Federal Government that "closing the gap starts at home" and is urging it to address big pay shortfalls in indigenous-dominated agencies.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard also faced criticism after using the 'third Closing the Gap statement yesterday to call for indigenous people to change their behaviour, too.

"To take care of your children. To take a job when you find one. To create a safe environment. To send your kids to school, pay your rent, save up for a home. To respect good social norms and to respect the law. And to reach out to other Australians," she said.

Indigenous Social Justice Commissioner Mick Cooda said it was important for Aboriginal people to take responsibility for their lives but argued many faced serious obstacles.

"I think we've got to be careful of playing a game here where we start blaming the victim too much," he said.

"It's nice to say 'Take a job when it's available' but are there jobs available?"

Ms Gillard said she was confident of meeting two of the statement's six targets and three more were attainable, but the final goal of closing the life-expectancy gap within a generation was the most challenging.

"That means the life expectancy of indigenous men will need to increase by over 20 years and the life expectancy of indigenous women will need to increase by over 16 years by 2031." she said.

"This is a 30-year target. No one thinks it can be achieved sooner."

Ms Gillard said she was confident the Government would be able to halve the gap in mortality rates for indigenous children under five by 2018 and ensure access to early childhood education for all indigenous four-years-olds in remote communities by 2013.

However, Community and Public Sector Union secretary Nadine Flood urged the Government to look at its employees, saying public service agencies with high proportions of indigenous staff tended to have much lower pay rates.

For example, an APS 1 entry-level worker at Aboriginal Hostels earned at least 510,000 a year less than equivalent level staff in some other agencies.

She called for more funding for such agencies.

Opposition Leader Tony Abbott said the report had little specific information about outcomes and there was a sense of disappointment in some areas.