

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS
AUSTRALIAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

Question No. 151

Senator Siewert asked the following question at the hearing on 18 November 2013:

1. Is the Commission involved in the development of a national implementation strategy for the National Health Plan?
2. What work still needs to occur to make the National Health Plan effective?

The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:

1. The Australian Human Rights Commission hosts the Secretariat for the National Health Leadership Forum (NHLF). The NHLF is a committee comprising of the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health peak bodies. The NHLF worked in partnership with the Australian Government in the development of the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023* (Health Plan).

The Health Plan included a commitment to develop a detailed implementation plan which set measurable benchmarks and targets. The NHLF will seek to work in partnership with the Australian Government during this implementation planning phase.

The Commission also hosts the Secretariat for the Close the Gap Campaign for Indigenous Health Equality and Commissioner Gooda is a Co-Chair of the Campaign Steering Committee. The Campaign Steering Committee will monitor the implementation of the Health Plan.

2. The Commission is of the view that the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023* as drafted, should be adopted by the current government. It contains the following key features:

- An overarching goal of closing the life expectancy gap by 2030;
- A human rights-based approach
- Addresses racism at both the individual and systemic levels;
- Adopts a holistic definition of health including recognition of the impacts of past policies and the ongoing cycle of trauma on the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the role of healing;
- Recognises the central role of culture and social and emotional wellbeing to the physical and mental health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- Is comprehensive and addresses the wide range of social and cultural determinants of health inequality; and
- Includes a commitment to develop targets and benchmarks to measure progress.

The Health Plan commits to the development of a national implementation planning within 12 months. It is essential that this implementation planning is undertaken and include measurable benchmarks and targets.