



Hon Natalie Hutchins MP

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs
Minister for Industrial Relations
Minister for Women
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence

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M17/13908

Ms Anne Hywood
General Secretary
Anglican Church of Australia
Suite 4, Level 5
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Dear Ms Hywood

Thank you for your letters to the Premier the Hon Daniel Andrews regarding the resolutions recently passed by the General Synod. The Premier has asked that I respond to you on his behalf, as matters raised in the resolutions relate to my portfolio responsibilities.

I am pleased that the Anglican Church is committed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The Victorian Government is taking steps to address the issues raised in the Church's resolutions, which are set out below.

First Nations voice

Victoria is leading the nation in supporting Aboriginal self-determination. An important component of this support is the government's commitment to entering into a treaty or treaties with Victorian Aboriginal communities. I recently announced the establishment of the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission (VTAC), which will play a critical role in progressing treaty in Victoria. VTAC's primary role will be to establish the Aboriginal Representative Body. The Body will work in partnership with the state to develop the framework to support future treaty negotiations, such as an independent treaty commission to facilitate negotiations.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Issues

The Victorian Government works in partnership with Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), Traditional Owner groups and Aboriginal Victorians to ensure Aboriginal values and knowledge are part of Victoria's response to climate change. Initiatives on which we have partnered with Aboriginal communities include:

- The Aboriginal Water Program, which incorporates Aboriginal values and expertise into water management.
- Increased funding to support land management practices for RAPs, which contribute Aboriginal cultural heritage to policies and decision-making about climate change.
- A consultation process which included members of the Victorian Aboriginal community, led to permanently banning all onshore unconventional gas activities in Victoria, through the Resource Legislation Amendment (Fracking Ban) Act 2017, in March 2017.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community issues

Reducing the rates of youth suicides in Aboriginal communities is an issue that the Victorian Government takes very seriously. Accordingly, we allocated \$27 million over four years in the 2016/17 Victorian Budget to deliver the Victorian Suicide Prevention Framework. The Framework seeks Aboriginal input into culturally appropriate and safe suicide prevention approaches for Aboriginal Victorians.

In addition to this, the Victorian Government has recently launched the Balit Murrup: Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework. Balit Murrup outlines a suite of actions to improve Aboriginal social and emotional wellbeing and mental health outcomes over the next 10 years, and is supported by investment of \$8.4 million to expand the Aboriginal mental health workforce.

Victoria is also working to bridge the gap between Victoria Police and Aboriginal communities with an investment of \$2.7 million over four years. This investment will contribute to supporting four new Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers, which will expand existing resources to 13 officers.

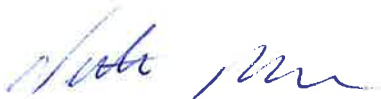
Domestic violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

As the Minister responsible for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence I am deeply committed to working with Aboriginal stakeholders and communities to address and respond to family violence in Aboriginal communities. The government continues to work in partnership with the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum to strengthen family violence reforms for Aboriginal Victorians, and to embed a community-led response to family violence.

The 2017/18 Victorian Budget delivered \$84.1 million over four years to meet the needs of Aboriginal victim survivors, work to prevent family violence from happening in the first place, and respond to family violence in Aboriginal communities.

Thank you again for your correspondence and the Church's commitment to pursuing issues of social justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.

Yours sincerely



HON NATALIE HUTCHINS MP
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

14 NOV 2017