

Australia misses targets to improve Aboriginal lives

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Australia is failing to improve Aboriginal lives, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said Tuesday, as a new report showed the government missing key targets, including cutting child mortality and raising life expectancy.

The ninth "Closing the Gap" report found that government and community efforts were only able to meet one of seven targets to boost health, education and employment to the level of the non-indigenous population.

"Even with successive Commonwealth and state governments investing more resources, and even with tens of thousands of dedicated Australians seeks to contribute and engage, we are still not making enough progress," Turnbull told parliament.

Aborigines—who make up about three percent of the total national population of 24 million—are among the most disadvantaged Australians.

Apart from lifting high school completion rates, all other targets including [child mortality](#), life expectancy, education and employment were not on track, the report said.

The mortality rate for indigenous children under four years old was at 165 per 100,000 from 2011-2015, more than double that of the rest of the population.

Aborigines also have significantly shorter [life expectancy](#) than their fellow citizens, with a gap of 10.6 years for males and 9.5 years for females, according to figures from 2013.

The community was also battling rising mortality rates from cancer, the report found.

Turnbull said his government was investing another Aus\$50 million (US\$38 million) to improve the research and evaluation of policies being rolled out to try to close the gap.

Efforts to implement policies featuring greater indigenous and local community involvement were also being made, he added.

Former [prime minister](#) Kevin Rudd—who made a historic apology to Aboriginal people for centuries of injustice in 2008—warned of a "second stolen generation" involving children being removed from their families under child protection laws.

The term "stolen generation" is used to describe children who were put in foster care with white families or institutions under an official policy that ended only in the early 1970s.

"We cannot simply stand back and let the numbers of [indigenous children](#) being removed grow year by year, without other options being tested within the wider indigenous community," Rudd said Monday.

He added that the annual report was "a political disaster for the government of the day, for governments of whichever political persuasion", The Australian newspaper reported.

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