

KEYNOTE ADDRESS I

WHEN PREVENTION OCCURS 200 YEARS LATE: THE FUTURE FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are probably the most over-researched group in Australia. Report after report has recommended government and others take targeted, systemic and drastic action to improve the lives of our First Australians. However, the greatest policy failures have occurred in the realm of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy. No wider is the gap between what we know and what we do. Research tells us that if we are to succeed, we must start young. We must begin to focus on improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children if systemic change is to occur. The right to education must form part of the basis upon which we build credible, sustainable and workable policy. It is this right that holds the major key to unlocking the talent we know our children possess. But it must not be enough only to level the playing field; we must all play a better game, working together. Success is not simply the absence of disadvantage; it is a better sense of belonging, of pride, of innovation in our nation, amongst us all.