

MEDIA RELEASE

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Time for Beattie to rethink stolen wages offer

The Queensland Government must rethink its inadequate compensation offer on stolen Aboriginal wages in light of a damning report from its own Indigenous Advisory Board, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation (ANTaR) said today.

“ANTaR supports the Indigenous Advisory Board’s call for an open inquiry into the issue”, National President, Phil Glendenning said.

“The Queensland Government’s offer of \$55.6 million was grossly inadequate, representing only about 10% of the wages withheld from Aboriginal workers over many decades”, Mr Glendenning said.

“Injustice cannot be remedied by further injustice. But that’s what the current offer amounts to according to the Government’s own expert advisors.

“The Indigenous Advisory Board’s report identifies serious flaws in the compensation offer and the consultation process from which it was derived. The report’s criticisms include the inadequacy of the offer, the lack of access to their personal records by claimants, and the pressure placed on claimants to sign up to the deal.

“Despite the deadline given by the Government having passed, formal respondents to the state’s offer represent only about 25% of potential claimants.

“That’s a serious vote of no-confidence in the offer.

“The Beattie Government should be congratulated for acknowledging Government culpability and for seeking to settle the issue by agreement. But, now that flaws have been identified in the negotiations process and it is clear that there is significant Indigenous opposition to the offer, Premier Beattie should gracefully admit it’s time to rethink the issue.

“An open, independent inquiry is the best way to resolve the current impasse.

“That would be a gesture in the spirit of genuine reconciliation.

“What could be fairer than honest acknowledgment of the enormous contribution of Aboriginal workers to the development of Queensland and a just recompense for their labour over decades?” Mr Glendenning concluded.

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