



Council for the Australian
Federation

Canberra
9 February 2018

MEETING COMMUNIQUÉ

The Council for the Australian Federation (CAF) met this morning, reaffirming their commitment to work collaboratively on state and territory specific reforms that are vital to the delivery of services to the Australian people.

Providing Healthcare for All Australians

CAF discussed the Commonwealth's proposed Heads of Agreement for public hospital funding and health reform. Leaders noted that Health was a key focus of the 2015 Australian Leaders Retreat where they emphasised the need for a sustainable long-term health funding agreement. CAF called on the Commonwealth to honour that joint commitment and support an integrated approach to the health system that recognises the shared responsibility and individual accountability of both levels of government.

Delivering a better education to all Australian children

CAF Ministers recognised the importance of Early Childhood Education in supporting young people to achieve. The report commissioned by CAF officials, *Lifting Our Game*, demonstrated the strong evidence base that participation in quality early learning has on educational attainment later in life.

Leaders recognised the Commonwealth's proposal to extend the National Partnership Agreement for Universal Access to Early Childhood Education for 2019, but agreed the Commonwealth Government's short-term approach does not reflect the importance of Early Childhood Education and Care and the need to provide greater certainty for Australian families.

CAF Ministers also discussed the importance of reaching a long term, sustainable agreement with the Commonwealth on Schools Funding that recognises the connections between schools and early childhood education.

CAF Ministers also recognised the importance of continued cooperation between Australia's States and Territories to address bullying and cyberbullying amongst young people. Leaders look forward to a national summit on cyberbullying by the end of 2018.

Protecting Vulnerable Australians – Co-ordinating Responses to the Royal Commissions

CAF Ministers discussed the importance of jurisdictional responses to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, and the work underway to develop the redress scheme. Leaders affirmed the importance of placing the survivors and our most vulnerable people at the centre of how state and territory governments respond to recommendations of the Royal Commission.

The Chief Minister of the Northern Territory provided an update on the Northern Territory Government's response to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. CAF recognised the importance of the Commonwealth working jointly with the NT in responding to the report recommendations.

River Murray Royal Commission

The South Australian Premier provided CAF with an update on the newly established Murray-Darling Basin Royal Commission, and committed to providing further information to CAF in the coming months.

Closing the Gap

CAF reflected on the views expressed to them during a session of the Special Gathering, a meeting of First Ministers and prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders which was held in Canberra yesterday, and reaffirmed their commitment to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Leaders agreed it is essential that the community shapes the next phase of Closing the Gap.

CAF also encouraged the Commonwealth to continue its role in rural and remote housing.

A CAF-led Reform Agenda

CAF discussed opportunities to improve Federal Financial Relations through consolidating the number and reducing the complexity of national agreements and streamlining funding to reduce administrative burden.

Premiers and Chief Ministers agreed to meet in the middle of 2018 to consider opportunities for State-specific reforms being progressed by the Board of Treasurers, and reinforced their views that there is an important role for CAF as members of the Australian Federation, decoupled from COAG, in improving the outcomes for Australians.

The Council for the Australian Federation

The Council for the Australian Federation was formed to support and enhance our federal system by providing a forum for state and territory leaders in Australia to discuss and resolve important issues independently of the Commonwealth.

The Council for the Australian Federation consists of First Ministers of all of Australia's States and Territories. The premier of Tasmania did not attend as the Tasmanian Government is in caretaker, ahead of an election to be held on 3 March 2018.