Chief Minister Offers to Host Closing the Gap Meeting

Thursday 2 October, 2008

Chief Minister Paul Henderson said today’s COAG meeting in Perth discussed the global financial crisis, climate change, infrastructure development, Indigenous early childhood development and reform of Aged, Mental Health & Disability services.

Mr Henderson welcomed Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s announcement that a COAG meeting devoted to Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage would be held next year and offered to host the meeting in the Territory.

“A great opportunity exists for an even stronger partnership with the Commonwealth to make real progress on Closing the Gap of Indigenous disadvantage,” Mr Henderson said.

Mr Henderson said COAG leaders also signed an important agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development.

“COAG’s first National Partnership (NP) covering Indigenous Early Childhood Development is an important step in Closing the Gap of Indigenous disadvantage,” Mr Henderson said.

“The NP comprises $564 million in joint funding over six years and focuses on the development of children up to three years of age.

“Under the agreement, the Commonwealth will allocate $78 million to the Territory over the next six years

“It includes the establishment of 35 Children and Family Centres across Australia, with five in the Territory, to offer early learning, child care, pregnancy, reproductive health and family support programs.”

Mr Henderson said in principle agreement had been reached on reforming the delivery of mental health, aged care and disability services with a final agreement scheduled for the November COAG.

“The reform will result in better cooperation with the Commonwealth in providing services and a clearer understanding of who is responsible for delivering particular services,” he said.

Mr Henderson said COAG recognised the strong position of Australia’s banks and other financial institutions in providing a buffer against any fallout from the global financial crisis.

“While the effects will be felt to some extent throughout the world, the Territory’s strong economy also positions us well,” Mr Henderson said.

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