



July 25, 2022

Government offers \$4 million to cover collapsed First Nations funeral scheme

One of Australia's leading social services groups, Catholic Social Services Australia, has welcomed the Federal Government's decision to provide \$4 million to cover the funeral costs for thousands of First Nation Australians who signed up for the failed Youpla Group's funeral insurance scheme.

Youpla, formerly known as the Aboriginal Community Benefit Fund (ACBF), went into liquidation in March this year, leaving 14,500 policyholders without cover.

The Government is reported to have committed an estimated \$4m to pay for the funeral claims of Youpla customers. It follows months of campaigning by the Save Sorry Business coalition, which has been calling for urgent support for abandoned customers

Francis Sullivan, Chair of Catholic Social Services Australia, said the decision by the Albanese Government to provide emergency funding will be a huge relief for hundreds of families who need to pay for funerals now.

"In June, there were tragic reports of at least 31 families having been left without the means of paying for funerals or having to leave their loved ones in the morgue while they raised funds.

"The collapse of this funeral insurance scheme poses very real and immediate cultural damage and community grief for hundreds of First Nations families," Mr Sullivan said.

Under the federal government scheme, to be announced by Indigenous affairs minister Linda Burney and financial services minister Stephen Jones today, people who held policies with ACBF-Youpla as of 1 April 2020 will receive a payout for funeral expenses equal to the one the company originally promised them.

People had paid between \$3,000 and \$30,000 into the fund during its operation, from 1992 to 2022. Details of how the Federal payments are to be made and how soon the money will be available are yet to be announced.

Families will be able to register for funding on the Treasury website.

Today's announcement comes as the corporate regulator, ACIS, pursue action against Youpla for potential breaches by directors and former directors, and legal action against the company alleging misleading and deceptive conduct in the way it sold its products.

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