

# Commonwealth Closing the Gap Annual Report 2022



Australian Government



CLOSING THE GAP



## Commonwealth Closing the Gap Annual Report 2022

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Enquiries regarding this document are welcome at:  
Closing the Gap - National Indigenous Australians Agency  
PO Box 2191, Canberra ACT 2600  
[ClosingtheGap@niaa.gov.au](mailto:ClosingtheGap@niaa.gov.au)

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### Acknowledgement

The Commonwealth acknowledges the traditional owners of the lands and waters on which Australians live and work, and pays its respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

# Closing the Gap



**The objective of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is to enable First Nations peoples and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by First Nations peoples, and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.**

# Contents

<b>Prime Minister's Statement</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Minister for Indigenous Australians' Statement</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Overview: Closing the Gap</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Working in Partnership</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>How we are embedding the Priority Reforms</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Priority Reform One:</b> Formal partnership and shared decision-making .....	16
<b>Priority Reform Two:</b> Building the community-controlled sector .....	24
<b>Priority Reform Three:</b> Transforming government organisations .....	32
<b>Priority Reform Four:</b> Sharing access to data and information at a regional level.....	40
<b>Monitoring the implementation of the Priority Reforms</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Outcomes and Targets</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Outcome 1</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long and healthy lives.....	48
<b>Outcome 2</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong.....	55
<b>Outcome 3</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years .....	58
<b>Outcome 4</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years .....	63
<b>Outcome 5</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential .....	68
<b>Outcome 6</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways.....	72
<b>Outcome 7</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are engaged in employment or education.....	78
<b>Outcome 8</b> Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities .....	81

<b>Outcome 9</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need.....	84
<b>Outcome 10</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system.....	87
<b>Outcome 11</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system.....	92
<b>Outcome 12</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not overrepresented in the child protection system.....	94
<b>Outcome 13</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe .....	99
<b>Outcome 14</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing .....	103
<b>Outcome 15</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters .....	108
<b>Outcome 16</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing.....	114
<b>Outcome 17</b>	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives .....	118
<b>Cross-cutting outcome areas</b>		<b>122</b>
<hr/>		
	Disability .....	123
	Gender and sexuality .....	126
	Aged Care.....	128
<b>Annual reporting requirements</b>		<b>130</b>
<hr/>		
<b>Appendices</b>		<b>131</b>
<hr/>		
	Appendix 1: Partnership Stocktake 2022 .....	131
	Appendix 2: Progress on Sector Strengthening Plans .....	136
	Appendix 3: Reconciliation Action Plans.....	157
<b>Glossary of terms</b>		<b>159</b>
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# Prime Minister's Statement

**From the Yirrkala Bark Petitions of 1963 to the Uluru Statement from the Heart in 2017, the decades resound with the gracious, patient call of First Nations people for representation, partnership and self-determination.<sup>1</sup>**

Today, more than ever, we must recognise the truth spoken by Senator Patrick Dodson:

*'The track behind us is littered with the relics of policies, programs and projects that failed... mainly because they did not include Indigenous people in making the decisions'.<sup>2</sup>*

That is a mistake we must learn from and, guided by the grace of that call, never repeat. My Government is firmly committed to opening our hearts and ears to First Nations voices – as partners in discussion and leaders with the wisdom to determine the nature and scope of the legislation and policies that affect them.<sup>3</sup> Working with the Coalition of Peaks – methodically, practically, realistically<sup>4</sup> – we will achieve sustained progress on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

This is the first Commonwealth Annual Report under the 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap, and it responds to the 2021 *Closing the Gap Implementation Plan*. Its findings are the impetus for a renewal of our national commitment to genuine partnership between governments and First Nations people.

The 2022 Implementation Plan will give shape to our determination to close the gap in socio-economic outcomes that hold people back and act as a barrier to the full participation of First Nations people in our national life. The Government is committed to acting on the National Agreement's priority reforms to transform the relationship between governments and First Nations people, communities and organisations.<sup>5</sup>

We will answer the Uluru Statement from the Heart's call for a voice enshrined in our Constitution. To close the gap we must span the distance together, and walk forward on

a path to Voice, Truth, Treaty.<sup>6</sup> For the sake of our young people, the hope of our future, and in reverence to our Elders, we walk towards a future that embraces all Australians.<sup>7</sup>

From the COVID-19 pandemic onwards<sup>8</sup>, the challenges of the past two years have made clear just how crucial it is that the Government heed the voices of First Nations people in setting the targets we want to achieve. The wellspring of our progress will be the celebration and enhancement of connection to country, and the protection and preservation of traditional knowledge, languages and expressions of culture.

We know that the gap in Indigenous and non-Indigenous health will not close without engagement with Aboriginal community-controlled health services.<sup>9</sup> Our plan to develop and strengthen the First Nations health workforce is driven by the disproportionate burden of kidney disease and rheumatic heart disease in First Nations communities.<sup>10</sup>

Secure and culturally appropriate housing is also critical to meeting the needs of families and communities. Our program to improve housing in remote communities and homelands is grounded in the truth that safety and stability at home confers a sense of belonging, and with it the confidence to build a better future.<sup>11</sup>

The relationship between First Nations people and the justice system is an enduring blight in our national story. Our plan to address rates of incarceration and deaths in custody will tackle the root causes of crime and re-offending by providing landmark funding for justice reinvestment. This tragedy weighs down our past and burdens our present, but through justice and truth-telling we can ensure that it does not shape our future.

Our commitment to self-determination is at the heart of what we do.<sup>12</sup> By abolishing the Community Development Program and the Cashless Debit Card, we will end policies that aren't working. This is a clear statement of my Government's resolve to fulfil the principles of genuine partnership born of integrity, honesty and good will.

My Government is enriched and strengthened by the wise, generous presence of First Nations representatives in leadership positions: Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney MP; Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australians and the Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health, Senator Malarndirri McCarthy; the Special Envoy for Reconciliation and Implementation of the Uluru Statement, Senator Pat Dodson.<sup>13,14</sup> Their insight and leadership is central to our commitment to First Nations people.

It is 14 years since the then Labor Government released the first Closing the Gap Framework in 2008. Fourteen years in which governments have endeavoured with goodwill and integrity to realise the framework's intentions and aspirations. But for some of the targets, what we so gently call a gap has remained a chasm.<sup>15</sup>

As we go forward, our work will be shaped by an honest appraisal of the track behind us, a recognition of failure and celebration of success, and a promise for us all to embrace the way ahead. I commend this Commonwealth Closing the Gap Annual Report as the beginning of a new chapter that can all take pride in.<sup>16</sup>



**The Hon Anthony Albanese MP**  
Prime Minister  
November 2022

1. <https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement/history/>  
Clause 32 National Agreement on Closing the Gap
2. 'The track behind us is littered with the relics of policies, programs and projects that failed, that wasted taxpayers' money and failed to deliver real outcomes to those crying out for them. They failed mainly because they did not include Indigenous people in making the decisions' (Patrick Dodson, 'Reconciliation at the Crossroads', The National Press Club 18 April 1996, Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1996.  
[http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/dodson\\_1.pdf](http://www.multiculturalaustralia.edu.au/doc/dodson_1.pdf)
3. 'Labor will do this in full partnership with First Nations people: the people who hold the solutions and who should lead the way on the legislation and policies that affect them' [Labor's Commitment to First Nations Peoples, 2022, First Nations Peoples - PDF Free Download \(docplayer.net\)](#).
4. 'We can find a way forward. Methodically. Practically. Realistically' [My speech on Labor's response to Closing the Gap \(anthonyalbanese.com.au\)](#).
5. Based on language provided by the PM&C First Nations Policy team: 'My Government is committed to accelerated action under the National Agreement - ensuring that the socio-economic targets and outcomes are progressed and that we transform how we work with First Nations people by embedding the Priority Reforms. The four Priority Reforms in National Agreement establish the preconditions and enabling environment to accelerate progress and support my Government's First Nations policy priorities'.
6. 'Underpinning it all is the Uluru Statement from the Heart, that powerful and eloquent invitation to us all to go further as a nation. It calls for three things - Voice, Truth, Treaty' [My speech on Labor's response to Closing the Gap \(anthonyalbanese.com.au\)](#).
7. 'We today take this first step by acknowledging the past and laying claim to a future that embraces all Australians' [Anniversary of the Apology to the Stolen Generations \(anthonyalbanese.com.au\)](#).
8. Based on advice from the First Nations Policy team that COVID-19 be acknowledged as one of many challenges facing First Nations communities.
9. 'Labor recognises that the profound gap in First Nations health outcomes will never be closed without extra effort and close engagement with Aboriginal community-controlled health services' [Labor Will Strengthen First Nations Health \(anthonyalbanese.com.au\)](#).
10. 'Our policies will strengthen this vital sector, supporting the development of the First Nations health workforce, creating jobs and addressing the disproportionate burden of kidney and rheumatic heart disease in First Nations communities' [Labor Will Strengthen First Nations Health \(anthonyalbanese.com.au\)](#).
11. 'It's so much more than an aspiration to get on the property ladder, it's a sense of security and confidence, it brings hope and pride and belonging' [Vote for a Better Future \(anthonyalbanese.com.au\)](#).
12. 'The truth is, that the gap will only be closed when self-determination is at the heart of what we do. Self-determination isn't just a theory' [Baabayn Naidoc Celebration Emerton, Western Sydney \(anthonyalbanese.com.au\)](#).
13. 'In addition to that, not in the ministry list, but Senator Pat Dodson, the Father of Reconciliation in Australia, will serve as a Special Envoy for Reconciliation and the Implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart' [\(Press Conference | Prime Minister of Australia \(pm.gov.au\)\)](#).
14. [FULL LIST: Record number of Indigenous MPs voted in to serve the Australian people - National Indigenous Times \(nit.com.au\)](#)
15. 'A gap is something that is easily crossed or closed. The unflinching litany of lopsided statistics before us make it clear this is a chasm' [My speech on Labor's response to Closing the Gap \(anthonyalbanese.com.au\)](#).
16. 'This is Labor's commitment to First Nations people - the beginning of a new chapter that will make our nation proud' [Labor's Commitment to First Nations Peoples, 2022, First Nations Peoples - PDF Free Download \(docplayer.net\)](#).

# Minister for Indigenous Australians Statement

**“In this country, the burden of history falls most heavily on the First Australians. The disadvantage they have suffered for more than two centuries have placed great obstacles in our way. But I also believe that we stand at a moment of great historical possibility.”**

*The Hon. Kevin Rudd, 2009*

Fourteen years since the Closing the Gap framework was established by the Hon. Kevin Rudd, following the National Apology to Australia’s Indigenous Peoples, it’s more important than ever to reflect on the progress and setbacks in our efforts to close the gap.

Successive Governments have pursued policies and programs to assist in closing the gap between First Nations and non-Indigenous Australians.

Over that time we have seen progress in areas like life outcomes for children and rates of school attendance but also persistent and disappointing results in a number of other areas such as out-of-home care rates and adult imprisonment.

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap took effect more than two years ago and over that time we have been reminded of the challenges of locking in the improvements we all wish to see in the 17 socio-economic outcomes.

## **Only 4 of the 18 socio-economic targets are on track.**

We can and we must do better on the four Priority Reforms and all 18 socio-economic targets.

I understand that many First Nations communities are frustrated by a lack of progress.

Equally, I am filled with hope for the future.

In August the year, I co-chaired my first Joint Council on Closing the Gap meeting with the remarkable Pat Turner in Adelaide. I thank all partners, including the Coalition of Peaks, the President of the Australian Local Government Association and state and territory Ministerial colleagues for the goodwill and cooperation and commitment to working together to progress actions under the National Agreement.

Since the National Agreement took effect are the important foundations of maturing relationships and stronger policy partnerships between Governments at all levels and the Coalition of Peaks.

We have also seen solid efforts to strengthen the community-controlled sector as we know they play a vital part in the delivery of quality services to First Nations people across the country.

In the October 2022 Budget, the Albanese Government demonstrated its commitment to close the gap, by investing:

- \$54 million to train 500 First Nations health workers and practitioners;
- \$164 million in vital health infrastructure;
- \$33 million to make early childhood education more accessible for Indigenous families;
- \$100 million in improving in remote housing, particularly the Northern Territory Homelands;
- \$81 million in up to 30 community-led justice reinvestment initiatives - to divert our young people from the criminal justice system.



It is the ambition of the Australian Government to elevate all First Nations voices and remove barriers to the full participation in our national life and to close the gap in social outcomes that are holding First Nations people back.

We are committed to partnering with impact, by working in partnership with all parties to the National Agreement – including the Coalition of the Peaks, all state and territory governments, and the Australian Local Government Association.


By forging a new way to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and to help the close the gap.



**The Hon Linda Burney MP**

*Minister for Indigenous Australians*

*November 2022*



**Uluru Kata Tjuta National Park, NT**

# Executive Summary

**More than 2 years have passed since the Commonwealth, the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Peak Organisations (Coalition of Peaks), all state and territory governments and the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) entered into the Closing the Gap Partnership Agreement (Partnership), and agreed to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) forging a new way of working together to improve the lives of First Nations peoples.**

The National Agreement is premised on the belief that when First Nations peoples have a genuine say in the design and delivery of services that affect them, better life outcomes are achieved.

The National Agreement came into effect during the COVID-19 pandemic, and throughout this pandemic we have seen the practical benefits of all governments working in partnership to embrace shared decision-making with First Nations health experts and representatives. This approach has assisted efforts to keep First Nations peoples and their communities safe and enabled place-based responses to be delivered in a tailored and culturally safe way.

It has been a year since the Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan (Implementation Plan) was announced. This is the first Commonwealth Closing the Gap Annual Report (Annual Report), which outlines actions taken to progress both the socio-economic outcomes and the Priority Reforms focussed on improving our ways of working. It includes details on a number of new and established policies, programs and measures designed and implemented, in whole or in part, to contribute to Closing the Gap.

The Productivity Commission's latest Annual Data Compilation Report underscores the urgency of work, with only 4 of the socio-economic targets currently on track.

For the majority of socio-economic targets there is still little new data available to reliably track trends, although important work has been undertaken to improve the data.

During this foundational period of the National Agreement, the Commonwealth has deliberately focussed investments of time, people and resources in maturing our practice of working as a trustworthy partner, building relationships between the partners and establishing the Closing the Gap governance required to support specific actions and commitments.

Many key structural milestones have been accomplished together with our partners over the past 2 years across a range of policy partnerships, plans designed to strengthen the Aboriginal and Torres Strait community-controlled sectors, place-based initiatives, new targets and data enhancement. Only sustained improvements in socio-economic targets for First Nations peoples over the life of the National Agreement will confirm if structural changes through the Partnership have been successful.

The past 2 years have also provided opportunities for the Commonwealth to learn from foundational work in order to better invest efforts over the remaining life of the National Agreement. Some examples include:

- Carefully investing in strategic prioritisation and sequencing of shared commitments under the National Agreement. This ensures all Parties can participate in a manner that reflects the ambition of the Partnership and maximises the opportunities for successful outcomes.
- Whilst acknowledging the ongoing strategic coordination by the National Indigenous Australians Agency, greater awareness is required by all Commonwealth agencies to collectively and comprehensively embed the Priority Reforms.
- A deeper appreciation of the practice of working in formal partnership with First Nations peoples, organisations and communities. The Commonwealth acknowledges the capability that must be matured and retained across agencies to ensure it contributes to the Partnership in a manner that ensures the best people and most targeted resources are deployed to maintain momentum towards Closing the Gap.

Ongoing monitoring and reporting on the Partnership, National Agreement, implementation plans and regular interactions of the Parties through the governance arrangements are important accountability mechanisms. This will help to inform and drive change over the life of the National Agreement. This Annual Report provides valuable information and impetus to update the Commonwealth Implementation Plan.

The Commonwealth remains optimistic that by accelerating efforts to embed the 4 Priority Reforms, including openness to formal partnerships between governments and First Nations peoples, lasting results can be accomplished over the life of the National Agreement.

For the Commonwealth, 2022 brings new opportunities to strengthen the Partnership to deliver strong practical outcomes which focus on improving the lives of First Nations peoples.



# Overview: Closing the Gap

**PROGRESS  
TIMELINE  
2019 - 2022**

**MARCH 2019**

**Closing the  
Gap Partnership  
Agreement**

**JULY 2020**

**National  
Agreement on  
Closing the Gap**

**JULY 2021**

**Productivity  
Commission's Annual  
Data Compilation  
Report**

**At the heart of the National Agreement are four Priority Reforms that require all Australian governments to transform how they work with First Nations peoples.**

**The National Agreement also includes 17 socio-economic outcomes that provide the result our collective efforts are trying to achieve across health, education, employment, housing, justice, safety, land and waters, culture, language and connectivity.**

It recognises that achieving the aspirations of First Nations peoples can only be done when we work in genuine partnership and share decision-making on policies, programs and services.

As part of the accountability for attaining better outcomes, in August 2021, each Party to the National Agreement, including the Commonwealth, published their own implementation plans outlining how each will contribute to achieving the commitments.

Parties are required to prepare their own annual reports which provides transparency and accountability against the actions committed to in their implementation plans.

The Productivity Commission also tracks progress through a live online dashboard, and an annual data compilation report. Every 3 years, a detailed review is undertaken by the Productivity Commission in addition to a First Nations-led review to better understand First Nations peoples' experiences of change.

The Joint Council provides an overarching monitoring and accountability mechanism to ensure all Parties are on track and changes can be made to the National Agreement if needed.

It is the objective of the National Agreement, through partnership and shared decision-making, genuine collaboration on policy partnerships and sector-strengthening plans, and greater transparency and accountability, that we will see improved outcomes for all First Nations peoples.

**AUGUST 2021**

**Parties' implementation plans delivered to Joint Council**

**JULY 2022**

**Productivity Commission's Annual Data Compilation Report**

**NOVEMBER 2022**

**Parties' annual reports tabled in respective parliaments**



# Working in Partnership

## Partnership on Closing the Gap

The Partnership includes all levels of government, reflects a new way of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak representatives as partners, and increases accountability of all Parties for the achievement of outcomes.

The Commonwealth, through the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) supports the Minister for Indigenous Australians as a Co-Chair of the Joint Council and coordinates across the Commonwealth to enable the Minister to effectively represent the Commonwealth in the Partnership.

The NIAA also provides secretariat support to the Joint Council and the governance architecture that sits underneath it; including the senior officials-level PWG and Drafting Group (see Figure 1). Since 2020, Joint Council has held 6 meetings, PWG has held 20 meetings, and Drafting Group meets weekly. Joint Council communiqués are available on the Closing the Gap website:

[www.closingthegap.gov.au/joint-council](http://www.closingthegap.gov.au/joint-council).

The Commonwealth has provided \$10 million over 4 years (2022–2026) to the Coalition of Peaks to support their participation in the Partnership, including their role as Co-Chair of the Joint Council. This funding enables the Coalition of Peaks to deliver a secretariat and policy coordination function to its member organisations to engage in the implementation of the National Agreement.

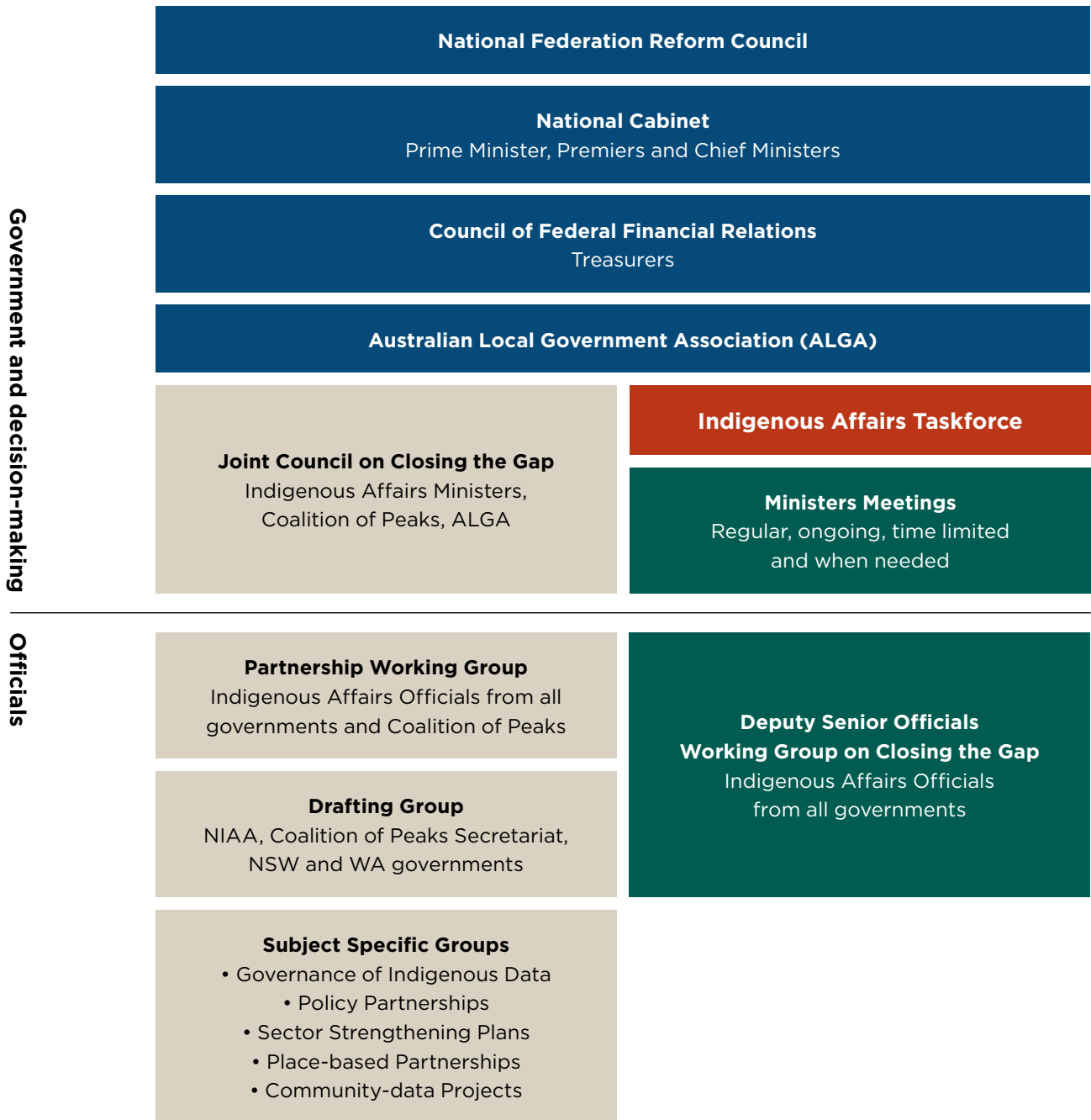
The National Agreement sets out that each government Party must establish their own formal partnerships to progress implementation.

## Commonwealth Closing the Gap Partnership

The Commonwealth's formal partner on implementation is the Coalition of Peaks. In 2021, the Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan Joint Working Group (JWG) was established as the formal governance mechanism to support this partnership (see Figure 2).

The JWG consists of Coalition of Peaks members and deputy secretaries of Commonwealth agencies with lead responsibility for Closing the Gap outcomes. The Commonwealth is the secretariat and 6 meetings have been held to date. Through the JWG, senior Commonwealth officials and the Coalition of Peaks are able to discuss priorities for Commonwealth action each year, work together to design actions, and monitor progress of implementation. Portfolio ministers and their agencies are also developing portfolio-specific partnerships, where they do not already exist, to drive target-specific actions.

**Figure 1: Closing the Gap Governance**



All Governments including local government



Indigenous Affairs Ministers from all jurisdictions

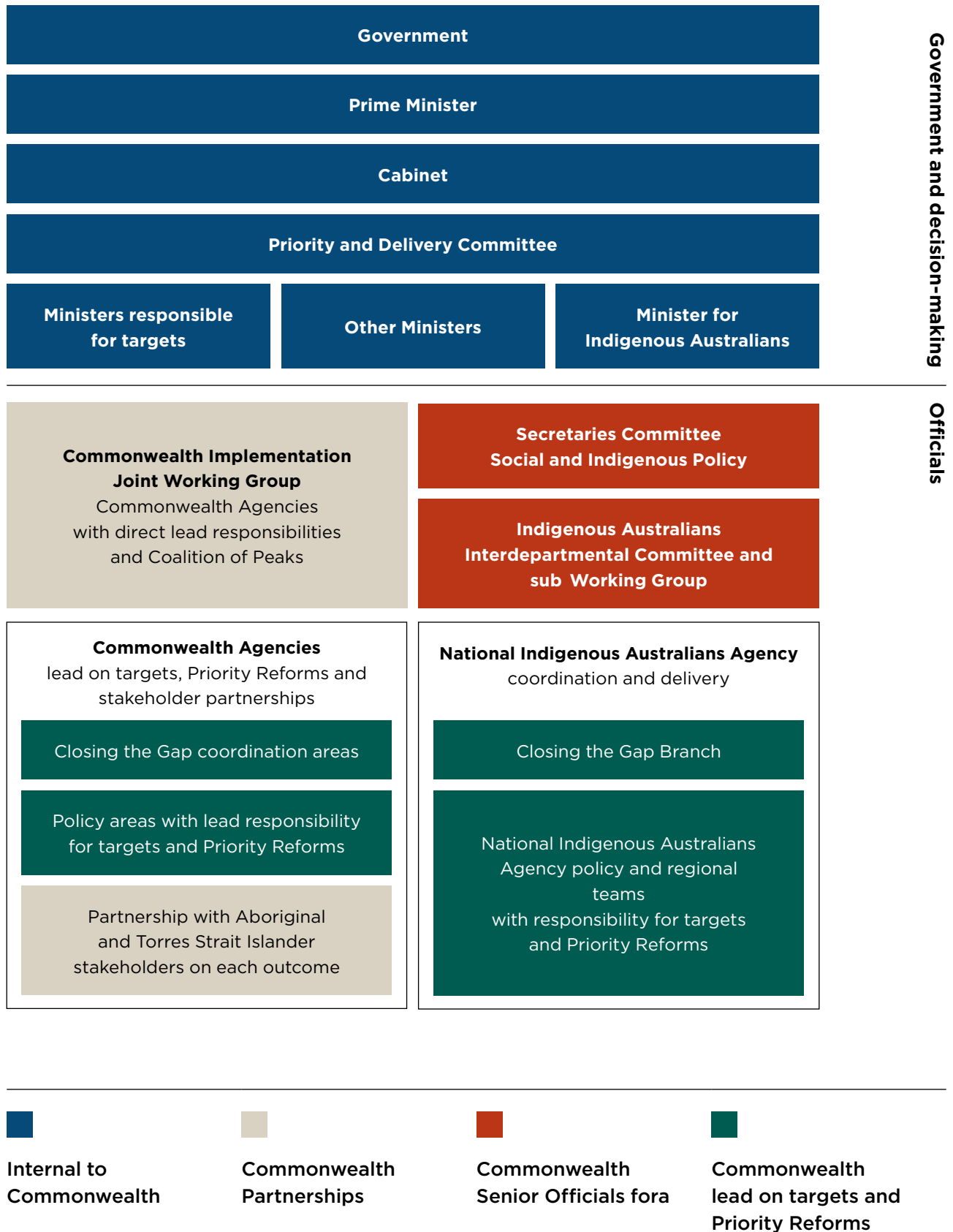


Closing the Gap Partnership



Cross jurisdictional fora on Closing the Gap

**Figure 2: Commonwealth Implementation Governance**





# How we are embedding the Priority Reforms

**A key element of the National Agreement is the commitment by all Parties, including the Commonwealth, to the Priority Reforms. They are central to Closing the Gap as they set the pre-conditions to achieve the socio-economic targets and transform how the Commonwealth works with First Nations peoples by:**

- 1.** Working with First Nations peoples to share decision-making authority through formal partnership arrangements in order to improve policy outcomes.
- 2.** Building the capability of First Nations organisations, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, so that they continue to deliver quality services.
- 3.** Ensuring that government organisations and institutions are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of First Nations peoples, including through the services they fund.
- 4.** Sharing access to location specific data and information to support First Nations communities and organisations to have information and data that can inform decision-making by First Nations peoples for their communities.

Achieving the Priority Reforms requires consistent effort within individual agencies and across the Commonwealth as a whole.

Since the National Agreement came into effect, the Commonwealth has deliberately prioritised building the relationships and policy infrastructure to support its delivery. Over the past 2 years, the Commonwealth has focussed on establishing the foundation to develop and implement the Priority Reforms. Whether this approach will sufficiently shift the dial on progress will become clearer over the next few years. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and the National Indigenous Australians Agency jointly led a whole-of-Commonwealth project to identify any existing limitations and consider new actions. Initial findings support an increase in consistency and coordination between Commonwealth agencies to better support a whole-of-Commonwealth approach to delivering the Priority Reforms.

**We know it will take time to embed the transformation required to change the way the Commonwealth works with First Nations peoples, communities and organisations. New actions under the Priority Reforms will be included in the update to the Implementation Plan.**



# Priority Reform One: Partnership and shared decision-making

## OUTCOME

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are empowered to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place based progress on Closing the Gap through formal partnership arrangements.

## TARGET

There will be formal partnership arrangements to support Closing the Gap in place between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments in each state and territory enshrining agreed joint decision-making roles and responsibilities and where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have chosen their own representatives.

## Priority Reform One: Overview

Embedding Priority Reform One is about empowering First Nations peoples to enact self-determination in partnership with all levels of government. The Commonwealth recognises that this change will lead to improved design and delivery of all policies, programs and services that have an impact on First Nations peoples and ultimately improve outcomes.

Working in formal partnership and shared decision-making with First Nations peoples moves beyond ad hoc engagement processes to structured relationships based on a shared objective, respect and trust. To enable this the Commonwealth has been focusing on establishing relationships and a range of policy and place-based partnerships to support shared decision-making between the Coalition of Peaks and all 3 levels of government.

The Justice Policy Partnership was agreed and established by Joint Council in 2021. The Social and Emotional Wellbeing (Mental Health) Policy Partnership and Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership were established and agreed by Joint Council in August 2022. These policy partnerships will drive First Nations-led outcomes and assist all government Parties to work collectively to progress the reforms needed to improve outcomes that have not previously had this level of shared decision-making.

This year, the Commonwealth undertook a Partnership Stocktake, setting a baseline analysis of the number of existing partnership arrangements between the Commonwealth and First Nations organisations and communities. In reviewing these partnerships, it is clear that continued efforts are needed to strengthen them in line with the Strong Partnership Elements in the National Agreement.

The Commonwealth Engagement and Partnership Framework will be developed by the first half of 2023 and will be used to assist agencies in strengthening and building formal partnerships that enable shared decision-making.

### Policy and Place-based Partnerships

#### National Agreement Clause 31:

The purpose of formal policy partnerships and place-based partnerships are to:

- drive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led outcomes on Closing the Gap;
- enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, communities and organisations to negotiate and implement agreements with governments to implement all Priority Reforms and policy specific and place-based strategies to support Closing the Gap;
- support additional community-led development initiatives; and
- bring together all Government Parties, together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities to the collective task of Closing the Gap.

### Policy Partnerships

#### National Agreement Clause 38:

By 2022, the Joint Council will establish a joined-up approach to five policy priority areas, between the Commonwealth, states and territories and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives. These will identify opportunities to work more effectively across governments, reduce gaps and duplication, and improve outcomes under Closing the Gap. These areas respond to the engagements and are:

- justice (adult and youth incarceration);
- social and emotional wellbeing (mental health);
- housing;
- early childhood care and development; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

The Commonwealth is a key driver of the 5 Policy Partnerships and to date has worked to establish policy partnerships for justice, social and emotional wellbeing (mental health), and early childhood care and development. For each of the 5 Policy Partnerships, the Commonwealth will coordinate the approach to resourcing their establishment and governance costs for the partnerships, including supporting the participation of First Nations partners.

## Justice Policy Partnership

The establishment of the Justice Policy Partnership was accelerated so it could commence in 2021 (rather than 2022) due to the urgency for joined-up national action and leadership to address increasing over-representation of First Nations peoples in incarceration and the enduring crisis of First Nations deaths in custody. Since its first meeting in September 2021, the Justice Policy Partnership has held 5 meetings, agreed to a 2021-22 Work Plan, and undertaken activities to inform the long-term strategic focus of the Partnership.

The focus of the Justice Policy Partnership is to reduce the over-representation of First Nations children and adults within the criminal justice system (Outcomes 10 and 11). The Partnership is co-chaired by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department. The Commonwealth has provided \$7.6 million over 3 years to establish the Justice Policy Partnership, including to support NATSILS' engagement as co-chair of the Partnership, enhance the data capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services to undertake its work, and for the Commonwealth to provide secretariat support.

The Justice Policy Partnership represents a different way of working on justice policy, which has historically been the exclusive responsibility of governments and where there has not been high levels of trust from First Nations peoples. The Justice Policy Partnership is an important opportunity to build new and less adversarial relationships to improve trust, and to work together to achieve better policy outcomes led by First Nations voices.

A key focus of the Justice Policy Partnership to date has been on embedding the Priority Reforms into its work to set a strong foundation for Parties to work together in formal partnership. This is reflected in the 2021-22 Work Plan, which also prioritises actions on key justice sector issues including, improving justice outcomes for First Nations children, focusing on children under 14 years old, and partnerships between First Nations peoples and mainstream policing agencies and how these could be transformed and strengthened.

Documents from the Justice Policy Partnership meetings, including the 2021-22 Work Plan and summaries of meetings, are published on the Attorney-General's Department website: [www.ag.gov.au/legal-system/closing-the-gap/justice-policy-partnership](http://www.ag.gov.au/legal-system/closing-the-gap/justice-policy-partnership).

## Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership

The Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy Partnership was established and agreed by Joint Council in August 2022. The ECCD Policy Partnership will be co-chaired by SNAICC – National Voice for our Children and the Commonwealth Department of Education. The Commonwealth has committed \$10.2 million to the ECCD Policy Partnership over 3 years from 2022-23, including to support SNAICC's engagement as co-chair of the Partnership, enhance the policy and research capability of SNAICC to undertake its work, and for SNAICC and the Commonwealth to provide shared secretariat support. The first meeting of the ECCD Policy Partnership is scheduled to occur before the end of 2022.

The ECCD Policy Partnership will help drive coordinated reform efforts on priority areas of education, health, workforce, safety, housing, disability and cultural connection to improve the early childhood systems and sectors (Outcomes 2, 3, 4, 12, and 13). Ultimately, this work will improve a child's outcomes across their life course.

## Priority Reform One continued

### **Social and Emotional Wellbeing (Mental Health) Policy Partnership**

The Social and Emotional Wellbeing (Mental Health) Policy Partnership (SEWB Policy Partnership) was established and agreed by Joint Council in August 2022. The SEWB Policy Partnership will be co-chaired by Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care. The Commonwealth has committed \$8.6 million over 3 years from the 2022-23 Federal Budget to support social and emotional wellbeing First Nations organisations to engage in the partnership, and build governance and policy development functions. The first meeting of the SEWB Policy Partnership is scheduled to occur in the second half of 2022.

The SEWB Policy Partnership will ensure a joined-up approach between all governments and First Nations representatives to drive First Nations-led outcomes. It will support First Nations peoples to achieve the highest attainable standard of social and emotional wellbeing, improve mental health outcomes and reduce suicide rates to achieve Outcome 14.

### **The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Partnership and Housing Policy Partnership**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Partnership (Languages Policy Partnership) and Housing Policy Partnership are due to be established by the end of 2022. The Commonwealth and the Coalition of Peaks will form core groups to develop terms of reference and scope work plans for both partnerships in the second half of 2022, in partnership with state and territory governments.

The Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts will lead on the Languages Policy Partnership and the Commonwealth Department of Social Services will lead on the Housing Policy Partnership.

### **Place-based partnerships**

#### **National Agreement Clause 39:**

By 2024, six new place-based partnerships will be established across Australia under Jurisdictional Implementation Plans. These place-based partnerships will be between the Commonwealth, relevant states or territories, local government and agreed communities. They will be consistent with the agreed partnership elements and build on existing place based approaches. Locations will be considered by Joint Council within 12 months of the commencement of this Agreement.

Place-based partnerships focus on implementation of the National Agreement at the regional or local level through shared decision-making processes including relevant states or territories, local government and First Nations partners, as well as the Commonwealth through the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) regional presence. The Parties have agreed 5 of the 6 locations for new place-based partnerships in Doomadgee (Qld), East Kimberley (WA), Maningrida (NT), Tamworth (NSW) and the Western Suburbs of Adelaide (SA). The sixth location is expected to be agreed in the second half of 2022.

Place-based partnerships aim to empower First Nations partners to work with governments to set their priorities to accelerate progress against Closing the Gap outcomes. States and territories are responsible for leading and

funding their respective locations, recognising they have the key levers to enable these partnerships with their First Nations partners. The Commonwealth is supporting relevant states and territories to engage with First Nations partners to agree to the partnership design and formal agreement, ahead of operation and monitoring by 2024.

### **National Agreement Clause 37:**

Government Parties will include in their annual reports (Clauses 118 and 119) information on partnerships, including the number of partnerships, those that have been reviewed, for each partnership which strong partnership elements are met and unmet, and what has been achieved through the partnerships.

### **Partnership Stocktake**

The Commonwealth conducted a Partnership Stocktake between March and April 2022 to count and review existing partnership arrangements, and to provide a baseline measurement of current partnerships to measure progress on Priority Reform One.

This baseline will support the Commonwealth's efforts to increase the number of formal partnerships to support shared decision-making on the design and delivery of programs that affect them. The Partnership Stocktake identified 31 partnerships and shared decision-making arrangements that met some or all of the strong partnership elements set out in Clauses 32 and 33 of the National Agreement. These partnership arrangements work to improve policy and place-based outcomes in key areas such as health and disability, early childhood care and education, housing, justice, land and sea, employment, and language and data. A table listing the number of partnerships that meet each of the strong partnership elements is provided at Appendix 1.

### **Commonwealth Engagement and Partnership Framework**

The Commonwealth Engagement and Partnership Framework will provide guidance and direction for agencies to improve their engagement and partner effectively with First Nations peoples, communities and organisations on the matters that are important to them. The Commonwealth Engagement and Partnership Framework is currently being developed and will be finalised in the first half of 2023.

The Commonwealth Engagement and Partnership Framework combines 2 commitments in the Implementation Plan to deliver on Priority Reform One through a partnership and shared decision-making framework and Priority Reform Three through an engagement strategy. The Coalition of Peaks recommended that these commitments be combined into one framework noting that the principles for engaging with First Nations peoples should also underpin approaches to entering into formal partnership and shared decision-making arrangements.

### **First Nations Voice**

The Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process Final Report (Final Report) was provided to the Commonwealth in July 2021 and was subsequently released publicly on 17 December 2021. The Commonwealth is considering the Final Report and next steps to progress regional voice arrangements. The Final Report makes it clear that for the Local and Regional Voices to be successful, they will need to work with all levels of government. This means the first steps for implementation would involve securing support from jurisdictions.



## Priority Reform One continued

The Final Report acknowledged the existing effective relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and organisations and government, including the historic National Agreement on Closing the Gap between the Coalition of Peaks and all Australian governments.

The Commonwealth has committed to implementing the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full and will hold a referendum to enshrine an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice in the Constitution as a matter of priority. Enshrining an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice does not come at the expense of work to close the gap, rather it will complement work already underway and enable First Nations voices to be heard in the development of the laws, policies and programs that impact their lives.

An independent Makarrata Commission will be established to oversee a national process of truth-telling and agreement-making.

### Local shared decision-making

Empowered Communities is a First Nations designed and led shared decision-making framework across 10 regions that places First Nations peoples in partnership with the Commonwealth. The future of almost 200 Indigenous Advancement Strategy activities valued at over \$100 million have now been decided jointly by Empowered Communities regions and the NIAA, empowering First Nations peoples through shared decision-making, increasing the productivity of government resources on the-ground and improving outcomes.

Empowered Communities and Commonwealth agencies are also collaborating on broader responses to shared regional and government priorities, including employment and the COVID-19 pandemic. Building on this partnership experience, in 2020 and 2021 representatives of Empowered Communities

worked alongside other prominent Australians to contribute to the design of the Indigenous Voice as members of both the Local and Regional Co-Design Group and the Senior Advisory Group.

### Aboriginal Land Rights legislative reform

On 1 December 2021, the Commonwealth passed the most comprehensive set of reforms to the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* since its enactment. The legislation is the culmination of nearly 4 years of co-design with the Northern Territory Land Councils, Aboriginal Territorians and Government. The outcome of the legislation will help Aboriginal Territorians to benefit economically and socially from resources on their own land.

The centrepiece of the amendments is a new corporate Commonwealth entity, the Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation (NTAIC) which puts decision-making in the hands of Aboriginal people. The NTAIC will receive an initial injection of \$500 million as well as \$60 million a year for the first 3 years to get it firmly established. The reforms also make improvements to community-controlled township leases, fix anomalies with the permit system, and make mining and exploration licence processes clearer and more efficient, while strengthening the rights of Traditional Owners.







Kalgoorlie, WA



# Priority Reform Two: Building the community- controlled sector

## OUTCOME

There is a strong and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector delivering high quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.

## TARGET

Increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.



## Priority Reform Two: Overview

Embedding Priority Reform Two is about building a strong and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector to meet the needs of First Nations peoples across the country. The Commonwealth has committed funding to build the community-controlled sector and is actively working to maximise benefits through strategic investment and growing the demand for First Nations organisations.

The Commonwealth has been working through the Partnership to develop sector-based approaches to building and strengthening capability. This includes supporting strong governance and capacity (including through a peak body), a dedicated and identified workforce, and a sustainable funding model.

The Commonwealth also supports First Nations organisations, through the work of the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC), with corporate governance training for members and directors under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act) to help them establish and maintain good governance and financial management practices.

The Commonwealth is looking at ways to ensure First Nations organisations are recognised for the expertise they possess when delivering services to First Nations communities. To support this, the Commonwealth is developing a Grant Connected Policy that would make First Nations organisations the preferred service provider for relevant grants, where all other requirements are met. A business case for this policy is expected to be considered by the Commonwealth towards the end of 2023. To encourage an immediate change, the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) is also developing guidance to support all Commonwealth agencies to prioritise First Nations organisations within their existing grants and procurement activities.

The Commonwealth continues to reprioritise its efforts and opportunities through the review of spending on First Nations programs and services. Further capability support for First Nations organisations through initiatives such as Jawun, the Indigenous Procurement Policy, and ORIC will continue to be supported and reviewed over the next 12 months to ensure they are meeting the expectations of First Nations peoples and organisations.



## Priority Reform Two continued

### Sector Strengthening Plans

#### National Agreement Clause 42:

The Parties commit to building formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sectors to deliver services to support Closing the Gap.

The Commonwealth continues to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector through the development of Sector Strengthening Plans through the Partnership. The National Agreement sets out the elements that make up a strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector at Clause 45. This includes supporting strong governance and capacity (including through a peak body), a dedicated and identified workforce, and a sustainable funding model.

#### National Agreement Clause 50:

The initial sectors are:

- early childhood care and development;
- housing
- health; and
- disability.

Additional sectors for strengthening will be agreed by Parties in 2023.

In 2021, working groups were established to develop the initial 4 Sector Strengthening Plans between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, the Commonwealth and all states and territories. Each Sector Strengthening Plan Working Group was co-chaired as follows:

- Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan (ECCD SSP): SNAICC - National Voice for our Children and the Commonwealth Department of Education.
- Health Sector Strengthening Plan (Health SSP): National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care.
- Disability Sector Strengthening Plan (Disability SSP): The First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) with the Commonwealth Department of Social Services.
- Housing Sector Strengthening Plan (Housing SSP): National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association Ltd (NATSIHA) and the Commonwealth Department of Social Services.

Joint Council is responsible for agreeing and monitoring implementation of the Sector Strengthening Plans. In December 2021, Joint Council agreed to 2 Sector Strengthening Plans:

- ECCD SSP - sets out priorities and actions to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations across early childhood education, child protection and family support sectors. The ECCD SSP includes strategies to build organisational capacity, increase coverage and improve the quality of services with a focus on First Nations learning principles and values.
- Health SSP - this Plan includes priorities and actions to support the community-controlled health sector in continuing to provide culturally safe and responsive health services to address complex needs, including the critical social determinants of health.

In August 2022, Joint Council agreed the following Sector Strengthening Plans:

- Disability SSP – outlines the current state of the community-controlled disability sector, rationale for strengthening the sector and high-level objectives and outcomes for service delivery, capital infrastructure, workforce, governance, consistent funding models, and the peak body for the sector.
- Housing SSP – includes actions for all Parties to build a viable, culturally appropriate community-controlled housing sector that meets the ongoing needs of tenants, families and communities through improved housing services, and contributes to better life outcomes in health, disability, mental health, crisis support services, education, and employment.

All Sector Strengthening Plans are publicly available on the Closing the Gap website:

[www.closingthegap.gov.au/resources](http://www.closingthegap.gov.au/resources)

### **Funding to develop the community-controlled sector**

The Commonwealth has committed \$46.5 million over 4 years to the Virtual Funding Pool (VFP) for the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector, with states and territories contributing an additional \$30.7 million. Parties report quarterly to the Partnership Working Group on their respective allocations from the VFP.

The VFP is intended to support early jurisdictional actions to build the community-controlled sector in line with the Sector Strengthening Plans. The VFP is not the sole source of funding for sector strengthening, and is small compared to their implementation needs. There is an opportunity for this work to be supported through policy and program resources across a range of mainstream systems. The Commonwealth has worked with national

peak bodies to identify and fund proposals that lend themselves to a national approach or national policy levers, in line with priorities set out in the Sector Strengthening Plans.

To support development of the Sector Strengthening Plans, the Commonwealth has provided resources to national peaks: SNAICC; NACCHO; FPDN; Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA) and NATSIHA. These resources enabled the national peaks to lead development of the Sector Strengthening Plans through engagement with jurisdictions and stakeholders to identify priorities and actions to strengthen their sectors, and will support their Sector Strengthening Plans' early implementation.

Dedicated activities funded under the VFP include:

- An Intermediary Support Service Pilot by SNAICC has been funded to increase First Nations children's access to high quality, responsive, and culturally safe early learning services. The pilot primarily aims to strengthen the capacity and capability of workforce in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early childhood and care services in New South Wales, Western Australia and Victoria.
- Commonwealth funding for Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APONT) to undertake sector strengthening activities in the Northern Territory, in alignment with the 4 Sector Strengthening Plans.
- FPDN has been funded to build its capacity as the national peak body to influence policy and build the community-controlled disability sector, as well as to build a national footprint for the community-controlled disability sector through a national network.

## Priority Reform Two continued

- NATSIHA's establishment as the national peak housing body has been funded to support building its service offering to the community-controlled housing sector.
- NACCHO is being funded to support capacity building in community-controlled health organisations to support workforce training and development, design a roadmap for an environmental health workforce, and support the optimal utilisation of the Medicare Benefits Schedule.
- IAHA has been funded to implement health career pathways through continued delivery of the High Schools to Deadly Careers program in the Northern Territory, and its expansion to Western Queensland, Cape York, Torres Strait Islands, New South Wales and Western Australia.

To date, Commonwealth expenditure from the VFP has been modest. Of the \$46.5 million committed, \$35.917 million has been allocated, with \$8.34 million of the allocated funds expended to date. The Commonwealth continues to work with national peaks on additional proposals for the remaining unallocated \$10.583 million, with further funding decisions to be made in relation to the remaining unallocated funds.

### **National Agreement Clause 47:**

Government Parties will include in the annual reports information on action taken to strengthen the community-controlled sector based on the elements of a strong sector.

Information on how the Commonwealth is progressing key actions against the ECCD SSP and Health SSP is available at Appendix 2.

### **Expenditure Review and Reprioritisation Resources**

#### **National Agreement Clause 113:**

Government Parties, by July 2022, agree to review and identify current spending on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services to identify reprioritisation opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly to community-controlled organisations.

To meet this commitment, the Commonwealth undertook a review of programs and services specifically implemented for the benefit of First Nations peoples and communities during the 2020-21 financial year.

The Review process demonstrated that the type and level of information necessary to undertake a comprehensive exercise of this nature is generally not collected, recorded or reported in a consistent manner across Commonwealth agencies. Therefore, the total amount of expenditure and the types of service delivery organisations identified through the Review may not reflect total spending on programs and services implemented for the benefit of First Nations peoples and communities with a high degree of accuracy. It should be noted that there are currently no formal business rules or mechanisms to identify which grants are provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations. Therefore, assumptions were made based on secondary factors within the information available. Going forward, one action will be to improve the consistency of data across the Commonwealth.

Despite the limitations identified by the Review, the exercise provides some quantitative information which will be used by the Commonwealth to help inform reprioritisation discussions. The Commonwealth is also considering what practical changes could be quickly implemented within agencies to enable any future data collection of this nature to be completed with a much higher degree of accuracy.

**National Agreement Clause 118 d:**

The Parties agree to publicly list the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations that have been allocated funding for the purposes of Clause 24, 55a and 55b, and 135 of this Agreement; and subject to confidentiality requirements, also list the names of the organisations and the amount allocated.

The Commonwealth is developing a business case for a grant connected policy to prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations across all Commonwealth grants where they meet all other application requirements, including demonstrating value for money.

A working group has been established including the Coalition of Peaks and other Commonwealth representatives. Funding prioritisation policies, such as a grant connected policy, will not provide a guarantee of funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, but will provide a policy basis to prioritise funding in particular circumstances. This business case will be submitted to the Commonwealth for consideration in late 2023.

The work underway on the expenditure review and the grant connected policy will inform the development of options to implement Clause 55b of the National Agreement, which aims to shift a meaningful proportion of new mainstream funding relevant to one or more of the 17 socio-economic outcomes to relevant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and other First Nations organisations. The Commonwealth will work with the Coalition of Peaks to develop approaches to give effect to this commitment progressively, with implementation complete by 2024.

Given the ongoing status of the work outlined above, the Commonwealth is unable to accurately list the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and other First Nations organisations that have been allocated funding for the purposes of Clause 24, 55a and 55b, and 135 at this time. The Commonwealth expects to be in a position to report against 118d as the initiatives listed above progress.



### Capacity building of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations

The Commonwealth supports First Nations organisations, through the work of ORIC, to provide corporate governance training to members and directors under the CATSI Act to help them establish and maintain good governance and financial management practices. As at 30 April 2022, there are approximately 3,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations registered under the *CATSI Act*. Since 1 July 2021, ORIC has:

- Received and registered annual reports from 59.6 per cent of corporations.
- Responded to 4702 inquiries.
- Assisted with 270 complaints and 3 disputes involving corporations.
- Provided governance training to 422 participants from corporations.
- Finalised 13 examinations of corporations.
- Issued 3 compliance notices to corporations to address issues.
- Placed 3 corporations under special administration to prevent corporate failure.
- Returned 2 corporations back to member control after a period of special administration.
- Assisted the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions to achieve a successful outcome in a criminal prosecution against a former Chief Executive Officer of a corporation.

### Indigenous Procurement Policy

Since its introduction in 2015, the Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP) has created economic opportunities for First Nations business owners and employees, and enabled First Nations businesses to showcase their capability, drive and entrepreneurial spirit. Since the National Agreement came into effect in July 2020, there has been a marked increase in the number and value of contracts awarded to First Nations businesses, representing \$2.4 billion. As of May 2022, total purchasing through the IPP since its inception represents over 41,000 contracts with a total value of over \$6.2 billion from over 2,800 First Nations businesses. Markedly, 314 contracts across the Commonwealth, worth \$19 billion, have First Nations employment and supply use targets attached. Examples of how the Commonwealth is driving opportunities for First Nations businesses through the IPP are:

- The Department of Defence is the Commonwealth's largest procurer of goods and services, and continues to exceed First Nations procurement targets, and improve commercial relationships and networks for First Nations businesses, having awarded \$3.2 billion in contracts under the IPP in 2020-21.
- The Agriculture, Water and Environment portfolio has also significantly exceeded its First Nations procurement target set under the IPP. In 2020-21, it reported 1,621 contracts totalling \$40.23 million against its targets of 102 contracts, and \$13.56 million in expenditure.



## **Jawun Partnership**

The Australian Public Service Academy (Academy) in the Australian Public Service Commission continues to administer the Australian Public Service (APS) Jawun secondment program. Jawun is a First Nations-led empowerment program which fosters long term, reciprocal partnerships with the Australian corporate sector and all levels of government. The APS started the partnership with Jawun in 2011. From January 2022, Jawun and the APS have entered another 3 year Memorandum of Understanding, ensuring a continuation of the contribution to the capacity of First Nations organisations through skills and knowledge transfer. The Academy is also working with Jawun alumni to continue to integrate the learnings of secondees into the APS more broadly. These partnerships provide a valued platform for the transfer of skills, knowledge, expertise and culture between participants to foster sustainable relationships between APS and First Nations partner organisations.



# Priority Reform Three: Transforming government organisations

## OUTCOME

Governments, their organisations and their institutions are accountable for Closing the Gap and are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through the services they fund.

## TARGET

Decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experiences of racism.

## Priority Reform Three: Overview

Priority Reform Three is about the systemic and structural transformation of how governments operate to ensure that they are accountable for Closing the Gap and become culturally safe and responsive to the needs of First Nations peoples. The Implementation Plan outlined the foundational work required to support the delivery of Priority Reform Three, which includes changing corporate practice, workforce and how we engage.

To support foundational work and accelerate progress on Priority Reform Three, the Commonwealth has been working through the Partnership over the past 12 months to develop the Approach to Priority Reform Three project. The project will commission research to support a nationally consistent understanding of the elements under Priority Reform Three and collate best practice to support Parties with implementation.

The Commonwealth is prioritising efforts to build cultural capability of its workforce, recognising that this is crucial to achieving Priority Reform Three. Work is underway to support agencies to embed the Commonwealth Cultural Capability Framework in order to lift the cultural capability of the Australian Public Service (APS). This is an important element to growing and strengthening recruitment, retention and promotion of First Nations peoples across the APS.

The development of a Commonwealth Engagement and Partnership Framework (outlined under Priority Reform One) will support the APS to engage and partner with First Nations peoples, communities and organisations to design and deliver policies and programs. It will be used as a key tool to assist agencies' work towards strengthening and building formal partnerships and is due for finalisation in the first half of 2023.

The Commonwealth with its Coalition of Peaks partners agree that significantly more work will need to be done to deliver the transformation required to achieve Priority Reform Three over the life of the National Agreement. The objective in future years is to move to more system-wide changes that apply consistently across the APS.



### **National Agreement Clause 67:**

By 2023, Government Parties agree to each identify, develop or strengthen an independent mechanism, or mechanisms, that will support, monitor, and report on the transformation of mainstream agencies and institutions.

### **Independent Mechanism to support the transformation of mainstream organisations**

The Commonwealth is exploring how existing mechanisms may meet this commitment, or be augmented to do so, and is working with the Coalition of Peaks to determine which option will be best fit. There are currently a range of monitoring and reporting mechanisms built into the National Agreement, including the Productivity Commission's publicly available data dashboard, the Productivity Commission's annual data compilation report and 3 yearly reviews commencing from the end of 2023. In addition, 3 yearly independent First Nations-led reviews commencing in 2024 will follow each of the Productivity Commission's 3 yearly reviews to better understand First Nations peoples' experiences of change. These are on top of the annual reports each Party produces and publicly releases.

### **6 transformation elements**

The Productivity Commission's reviews will be comprehensive and focus on progress achieved against the Priority Reforms, the socio-economic targets, and examine the factors contributing to progress. This will include Priority Reform Three and the 6 transformation elements applicable to all government mainstream bodies and services.

It is important that the independent mechanism is designed carefully to deliver on intended outcomes and to ensure it builds on and complements these existing monitoring and reporting arrangements.

An element of this work is being driven through the Priority Reform Three Self-Assessment. Tracking progress on Priority Reform Three, including Clause 67, is key to future success. As such, the Commonwealth through the Partnership, will review indicators and work on further developing data to track progress.

### **National Agreement Clause 65:**

Government Parties will include in their annual reports information on how they are undertaking and meeting the transformation elements of Priority Reform Three.

The Commonwealth is undertaking and meeting the transformation elements of Priority Reform Three through the following actions. This is not a comprehensive list but captures some of the work underway:

**a. Identifying and eliminating racism:** working at a national level through the Closing the Gap governance architecture to define key concepts such as cultural safety, racism, institutional racism, discrimination, and unconscious bias. This is a first step being undertaken in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks and involves working with First Nations expertise to collate existing research. This nationally consistent approach is key to ensuring that racism can be identified, called-out, addressed and eliminated (An Approach to Priority Reform Three).

**b. Embedding and practicing meaningful cultural safety:** by understanding and defining concepts that support cultural safety through an agreed approach to Priority Reform Three, the Commonwealth will be able to improve embedding and practicing cultural safety at a nationally consistent standard (An Approach to Priority Reform Three).

**c. Delivering services in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities and people:** policy partnerships on justice, early childhood care and development and social and emotional wellbeing (mental health) have been established to improve policy specific outcomes (refer to Priority Reform One).

**d. Increasing accountability through transparent funding allocations:** the Commonwealth's review of current spending on First Nations programs provides some quantitative information which will be used by the Commonwealth to help inform future reprioritisation discussions (refer to Priority Reform Two).

**e. Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures:** the Commonwealth is investing in The Indigenous Language Dictionaries Project to enable the preservation of First Nations languages, facilitating support to educational programs and access to shared language resources (refer to Outcome 16).

**f. Improve engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:** the development of the Engagement and Partnership Framework demonstrates the Commonwealth is actively seeking opportunities to improve engagement and partnership with First Nations peoples (refer to Priority Reform One). These efforts will be linked to the APS Reform Agenda to work openly and with integrity with partners to deliver outcomes for Australians, informed by the Independent Review of the Australian Public Service.



## Priority Reform Three continued

### **An Approach to Priority Reform Three**

Prior to the National Agreement, actions across the Commonwealth in relation to improving cultural safety, such as Reconciliation Action Plans, have been important in setting some ground work for more sustained, substantial change. However, Priority Reform Three calls for more fundamental transformation.

In December 2021, Joint Council endorsed the Approach to Priority Reform Three project to drive a national understanding of the key elements of Priority Reform Three. This project also commits jurisdictions to review and assess the breadth, depth and gaps in actions to achieve Priority Reform Three.

### *Research Papers*

The Commonwealth and Coalition of Peaks are working with jurisdictional representatives to coordinate 6 research papers which will collate existing scholarship and build a nationally-consistent understanding (including definitions) for how to achieve Priority Reform Three:

1. Systems and Structural Level Transformation.
2. Racism and Unconscious Bias.
3. Cultural Safety.
4. Effective engagement with First Nations peoples.
5. Intersectionality under Priority Reform Three (including disability and gender).
6. Funding transparency and reprioritisation.

### *Self-Assessment of Priority Reform Three*

The Commonwealth has commenced a self-assessment of efforts in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks. It establishes a methodology for self-assessment, and identifies measures and actions across the Commonwealth that will lead to systems level transformation over time.

### **Building cultural awareness**

The National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse (Scheme) funds specialist Redress Support Services to provide culturally safe and appropriate support to First Nations applicants. The Scheme has engaged First Nations advisors to identify strategies to further build the capability of First Nations staff, and develop a framework to improve cultural awareness and capability to better support First Nations applicants. The Scheme has a dedicated team staffed with First Nations officers to respond to First Nations applicants who wish to speak to culturally aware and competent staff. This approach ensures First Nations applicants' needs are considered in a culturally responsive and safe environment.

Services Australia has developed a set of service design standards to guide the design and delivery of services to First Nations peoples. These standards ensure appropriate outcomes are considered and cultural best practice is applied. They also strengthen the commitment to improve service delivery to First Nations peoples. Agency subject matter experts review new initiatives and projects, and provide advice and support about the service needs of First Nations peoples. The standards are applied to all new budget initiatives and agency registered projects using existing agency project management processes and frameworks.



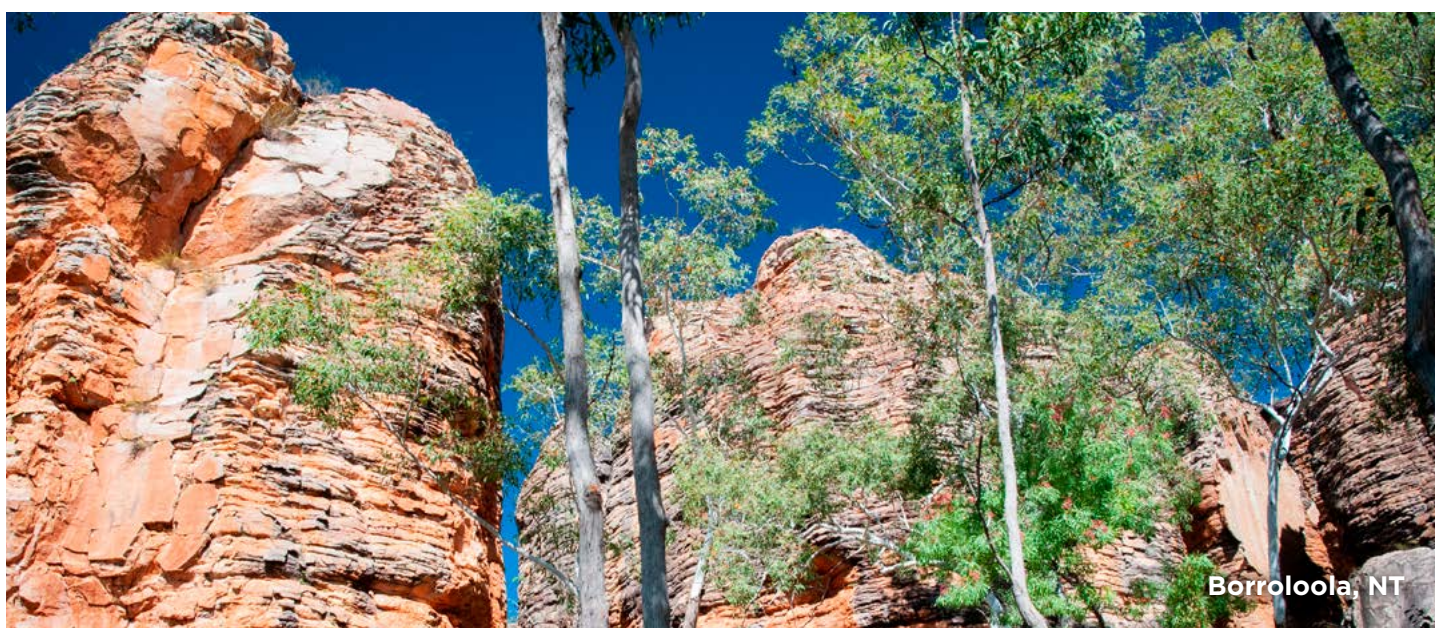
## **Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme**

On 1 March 2022, the Commonwealth opened the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme (Scheme) for First Nations peoples removed from their family and community in the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory prior to self-government, and the Jervis Bay Territory. The Scheme will remain open for applications until 28 February 2026.

The Commonwealth recognises that many of the issues impacting outcomes for First Nations peoples, including health and wellbeing, stem from past government policies of forced removal of First Nations children from their families.

To prevent unintended harm caused by inappropriate program design, the Commonwealth has been working in partnership with community to bring the Scheme together, seeking critical advice from trauma-informed and First Nations cultural authority groups to inform the establishment and ongoing operations of the Scheme. An External Advisory Board has been established to embed engagement with trauma specialists, Stolen Generations organisations and survivors into the design, implementation and evaluation of the Scheme to make sure it operates to best meet the needs of Stolen Generations survivors. This is in line with commitments set out in the National Agreement to engage fully and transparently on significant policy change that primarily impacts First Nations peoples.

The Scheme provides a financial and wellbeing package to Stolen Generations survivors consisting of a redress payment, a healing assistance payment, and the opportunity for each survivor to have their story of removal acknowledged by a senior Commonwealth official and receive personalised and genuine acknowledgement of the removal and resulting harm and trauma (this is known as a Direct Personal Response and is also referred to as a Personal Acknowledgement). Supporting healing will positively impact the health and wellbeing of Stolen Generations survivors, their families and communities. The Scheme supports the Commonwealth's commitment to a process of truth-telling as part of the nation's journey to reconciliation, and represents a major practical step towards healing.



### **BUILDING CULTURAL CAPACITY AND CAPABILITY**

The Australian Public Service Commission annual APS Employee Census tracks staff experiences of discrimination and racism across the Commonwealth through confidential attitude and opinion information including experiences of discrimination and racism. In 2021, 11.5 per cent of APS respondents had reported discrimination during the 12 months preceding the Census and in the course of their employment. Of these, 20.8 per cent said the discrimination was on the basis of race. Rates of discrimination reported in the 2021 Employee Census are higher for First Nations peoples, with 22.5 per cent perceiving discrimination and just over a third (36.3 per cent) stating that the discrimination was based on race and 42.6 per cent stating the discrimination was based on their Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander status.

Census data is reported broadly and made available in the annual State of the Service Report. Agencies also publicly release reports of their Census results to improve transparency and accountability, and the Australian Public Service Commission provides guidance on addressing results.

The Commonwealth Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce Strategy 2020-2024 supports agencies to improve the experience for all First Nations employees across the Commonwealth. The Strategy requires agencies to focus on cultural integrity, and improve and embed the understanding of First Nations culture in the workplace to support the development of culturally safe work spaces and services, and to create a more inclusive Commonwealth public sector. The priority actions in the Strategy provide practical guidance for agencies on how to support cultural integrity.

Through the Strategy, the Commonwealth has committed to improving the cultural capability of its workforce. This includes refreshing the current Cultural Capability Framework and providing agencies with resources and tools to support its implementation:

- The Commonwealth is looking to improve its cultural capacity and capability in the delivery of better programs and policies. Examples of work underway include: The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) incorporates cultural learning throughout the life cycle of an employee. Recruitment and selection processes include questions on cultural competence. On commencement, mandatory induction training includes cultural awareness learning such as the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) Core Cultural Learning Program which equips staff with a comprehensive induction to First Nations culture and history. To support a continuous cultural learning journey, the NIAA has also developed the award-winning Footprints flagship program that embeds ongoing learning, knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity including First Nations culture, people and histories.
- The Department of Social Services is undertaking a \$7.7 million project to improve the level of cultural awareness, safety, and trauma-responsive skills and capabilities within family and community service providers and workforce. Training will be designed and delivered by training providers selected through a grants process opened in September 2022 with an activity commencement date projected for December 2022. Up to 500 service providers nationally will have access to this training. The Department of Social Services has since adopted the NIAA's Footprints program and is actively implementing it.
- The Department of Education has invested \$1.6 million to commission the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to undertake a project to support and enhance the cultural capability of teachers and school leaders in schools across Australia.



## Reconciliation Action Plans

The Commonwealth is investing \$10.8 million (2020-2023) through Reconciliation Australia, to improve relationships between First Nations peoples and other Australians. A key aspect of this is the Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) program. A RAP includes practical actions to drive organisations' contributions to reconciliation both internally and in the communities in which it operates. See Appendix 3 for a full list of Commonwealth agencies that currently have a RAP.

The RAP program contributes to advancing the 5 dimensions of reconciliation by supporting organisations to develop respectful relationships and create meaningful opportunities with First Nations peoples. Each of the 4 RAP types (Reflect, Innovate, Stretch, and Elevate) set out the minimum elements required from an organisation to build strong relationships, respect, and opportunities within the organisation and community.

The Commonwealth acknowledges the importance of demonstrating what has been achieved during the term of respective RAPs and makes effort towards this through the evaluation process overseen by Reconciliation Australia.

# Priority Reform Four: Sharing access to data and information at a regional level

## OUTCOME

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to, and the capability to use, locally relevant data and information to set and monitor the implementation of efforts to close the gap, achieve their priorities and drive their own development.

## TARGET

Increase the number of regional data projects to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to make decisions about Closing the Gap and their development.

## Priority Reform Four: Overview

Embedding Priority Reform Four is about providing shared access to location-specific data and information to First Nations communities and organisations. The sharing of data at the regional and local level can support informed decision-making by First Nations peoples. This is critical to support the efforts to achieve the first 3 Priority Reforms.

The Commonwealth is establishing partnerships with First Nations representatives and other governments to guide the improved collections, access, management and use of data. Key work to date includes establishing structures to support governance of First Nations data and intergovernmental data sharing that seeks to improve the accessibility, relevance, interpretability, and timeliness of government-held data for First Nations peoples. It is intended that this work will lead to First Nations communities and organisations having access to the same data and information from which any government decisions are made, subject to meeting privacy requirements, and ensuring data security and integrity.

Community data projects have been established in the Western Sydney and Kimberley region, which will allow these 2 locations to identify priority topic areas and be supported by governments to build capability and expertise in collecting, using and interpreting data in a meaningful way.

The Commonwealth will continue to progress data development work with Parties over the next 12 months and monitor progress in this significant area. All Parties are committed to ongoing evaluation of these activities to ensure that future work builds on the lessons learnt to date and ultimately achieve outcomes for First Nations peoples.



### **National Agreement Clause 74:**

By 2023, the Parties will establish data projects in up to six locations across Australia to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to access and use location specific data on the Closing the Gap outcome areas.

The aim of community data projects is to support regional shared decision-making by enabling access to detailed place-based data that can empower First Nations peoples and communities. The sharing of data at a regional and local level can inform decision-making by First Nations peoples for their communities.

The Commonwealth co-chairs and provides secretariat support for the Data and Reporting Working Group that includes representatives from all Parties to the National Agreement, as well as key Commonwealth agencies with data responsibilities. The Data and Reporting Working Group provides advice and technical support to the PWG and Joint Council on relevant issues, including progress against the Data Development Plan (DDP). It also gives further advice on changing the way data is collected and developed to support the objectives of the National Agreement.

The Commonwealth has also commenced work to develop a proof-of-concept model to better understand key drivers of outcomes in several socio-economic target areas.

### **Community Data Projects**

Community Data Projects are being established to allow communities to identify priority topic areas and to ensure there is an extensive array of both community and government data to inform actions to improve outcomes. The establishment of up to 6 Community Data Projects is underway, with 2 locations being endorsed by Joint Council in Western Sydney and the Kimberley region. Joint Council considered further location nominations in August 2022.

The Commonwealth is investing \$1.5 million through the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) over 3 years to provide the infrastructure for the projects, manage data access and data sharing protocols, and conduct community capability development. A steering committee comprising representatives from the Commonwealth, the Coalition of Peaks and AIHW has been established to oversee and guide AIHW's role in supporting the community data projects.

### **National Agreement Clause 73:**

Government Parties will include in their annual reports information on action taken to improve access to data and information by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

In July 2021, First Ministers agreed and signed a Data Sharing Intergovernmental Agreement between the Commonwealth and states and territories. Data and Digital Ministers agreed the inaugural work program should include Closing the Gap as a priority area to remove barriers, and increase volume and value of data sharing. The objective of this project is to identify and deliver a project scope for sharing data between jurisdictions.

### **Sub-Committee and Working Group on Governance of Indigenous Data**

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet have established a Deputy Secretaries Data Group (DSDG) Sub-Committee and Data Champions Network (DCN) Working Group, to develop an Australian Public Service (APS) Framework on the Governance of Indigenous Data (Framework).

The Framework aims to improve the accessibility, relevance, interpretability, and timeliness of government-held data for First Nations peoples. It will be developed by key First Nations stakeholders, non-APS experts in the field of Indigenous data and APS members with relevant expertise. The Framework will focus on improving data quality; enabling access; supporting digital capability; developing strategies, systems and structural approaches; and implementing effectively data access and transparency.

### **Data access through partnerships and programs**

Many Commonwealth agencies are enabling access to data through partnerships and programs. These include:

- Participants in the Department of Education's Community Child Care Fund (CCCF) Restricted Expansion consultation activities will receive the findings of the consultations held in their location. Data used to inform sites for possible CCCF Restricted Expansion include Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data, Australian Early Development Census developmental vulnerability data, data on existing early childhood services and programs services, and Connected Beginning sites. While most data is publicly available, communities may request further detail.

- The Department of Education's Connected Beginnings program shares data at a local level with participant communities, including administrative health and early childhood education data through a digital dashboard to assist communities to monitor their own progress.
- The Attorney-General's Department's new culturally appropriate family dispute resolution funding program will enable shared access to location-specific data and information for First Nations communities and organisations. The Department also continues to work with the ABS to collect data on people accessing legal assistance services (Schedule D of the 2020-2025 National Legal Assistance Partnership Agreement (NLAP)).

### **Indigenous Data Network community data project**

The Commonwealth is also providing \$1.8 million to the Indigenous Data Network (IDN) at the University of Melbourne for the research-focused IDN community data project (separate to the Community Data Projects). This project involves working with participating organisations in 3 First Nations communities across urban, regional and remote locations to support community access to, collection of, and use of the data they need to plan and self-determine their own development.

With a view to bridge data capability and access challenges experienced by many communities, the IDN community data projects will be reviewed to examine how the models can be further expanded.

## Priority Reform Four continued

### Data Development Plan

All Parties have contributed to a DDP which was agreed by Joint Council in August 2022. The DDP sets out actions to address data gaps identified in the National Agreement. This is important to ensure high quality reporting that reflects the difference of experience across the country and among First Nations peoples and communities.

The DDP provides guiding principles for data development prioritisation over the life of the National Agreement which should be considered by Parties in the setting of data development agendas. These principles are:

1. Ethical use of data, in particular acknowledging First Nations-led work about Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance.
2. Partnership and shared decision-making with First Nations peoples.
3. Prioritising data development which will promote Closing the Gap objectives.
4. Leveraging broader data development agendas.
5. Commitment to data sharing and collaboration.

The DDP also outlines clear timeframes for more than 100 data development items across the 17 socio-economic outcomes. The progress and prioritisation of data development for the Priority Reforms is being considered through a separate process, with the potential for that work to be incorporated into the DDP in the future. The DDP does not specify the method by which items should be progressed, or timeframes for their completion, beyond the commitment to progress them over the life of the National Agreement. Parties will be required to provide updates against the DDP in their implementation plans.

The DDP will be reviewed by Joint Council when it reviews the Productivity Commission and First Nations-led reviews, at which time they may consider changes to the plan.

### Intergovernmental Data-Sharing Agreement

The Commonwealth is developing a data sharing project proposal for possible inclusion on the next National Data Sharing Work Program, in support of the new community infrastructure target. The project identifies data that can be used to assess, and inform improvements to, community infrastructure and essential services for First Nations households including water, waste water, electricity and rubbish collection. Following consideration by states and territories, Data and Digital Ministers will agree projects for the second Work Program at their next meeting.

The National Disability Insurance Agency and the NIAA also signed a data sharing agreement in January 2022. The NIAA is now linking this data to internal data sets to show where the programs can work together for better outcomes for National Disability Insurance Scheme participants and people engaged in NIAA programs.



## **Regional data dashboard**

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts released the annual update of the Progress in Australian Regions and Cities Dashboard in December 2021. The dashboard is an online resource tracking regional trends across 7 themes: labour market; infrastructure; housing; economic activity; environment; demography; and wellbeing.

The Commonwealth is undertaking further work on its regional operating model and related operational dashboard. A key aim of this work is to integrate initiatives such as the regional data dashboard to provide improvements in operational effectiveness.

## **Better Data Use to Support Delivery for Regional Australians**

The Regional Data Hub (Hub), part of the Better Data Use to Support Delivery for Regional Australians program, will be a new central source of social, economic and demographic data for Australia's regions.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts undertook a nation-wide consultation in 2021. Regional decision makers received useful feedback from representatives of First Nations communities including the need for a 'one-stop-shop' for data about Australia's regions.

An External Advisory Panel (EAP) for the Hub, to help shape its development, held its first meeting in March 2022.

The Hub will help achieve outcomes under Priority Reform Three transformational elements through providing greater information on funding and resource allocations such as grants activities that relate to First Nations service delivery; and improving engagement with First Nations peoples by ensuring First Nations representatives play a leadership role through the EAP in developing the Hub. A prototype of the Hub was soft-launched in June 2022 and the final product is expected to be completed by 30 June 2024.

## **Knowledge Exchange Platforms**

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) has also developed a knowledge exchange platform 'Yumi Sabe' which provides access to an evidence-base searchable at a community and language group level. The evidence base will include projects funded by AIATSIS through a related research grants process.

# Monitoring the implementation of the Priority Reforms

**The Productivity Commission notes that important information required to understand progress in relation to the Priority Reforms is not currently available. We know the result we are trying to achieve but additional indicators are being developed with the Partnership to identify the right measures to know how all Parties are making a difference.**

Data development work is underway to disaggregate by the Commonwealth, each state and territory and by each of the 17 socio-economic outcomes. Once this work has been completed, all Parties to the National Agreement will be able to understand whether our collective efforts are making a difference and where we might need to change actions and approaches to improve outcomes over time. The Commonwealth continues to work in Partnership with all Parties to improve data collection relevant to Priority Reform Four.

Once this work has been completed, the Commonwealth will be able to include the Productivity Commission's findings on progress against the Priority Reforms in future annual reports.

## Outcomes and Targets

**The National Agreement includes 17 socio-economic outcomes that will make the greatest difference in improving the lives of First Nations peoples. These socio-economic outcomes take into account the accumulated life experiences of First Nations peoples and their socio-economic wellbeing, as well as their cultural identity and the need for intergenerational healing.**

The 18 targets measure these outcomes, noting Outcome 15 currently comprises 2 targets – targets 15A and 15B. The key drivers for achieving each target have been identified in the National Agreement, as well as indicators which will help measure whether efforts are making inroads on the things that will help achieve the targets. Together, they sharpen the focus of all Parties to direct effort and investment to what matters.

### Tracking progress

Getting the measurement right is important to promote accountability and to inform evidenced-based decision-making and policy development.

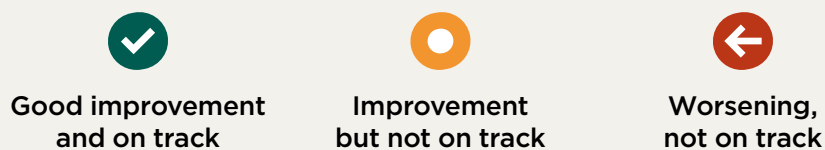
The Productivity Commission's 2022 annual data compilation report identifies that new data is available to assess progress against baseline data for 9 targets, 6 of which have data available to monitor progress up to 2021, one year after commencement of the National Agreement. No new data is available in relation to the remaining targets since the baseline year of measurement for each target.

A summary of progress against each socio-economic target is set out in subsequent sections of this report (see summary at **Figure 3**). While there is updated data available on 9 of the socio-economic targets, results should be used with caution, noting the small number of data points available. Over time, the monitoring and reporting will provide greater insight into what progress is being made under the National Agreement.

**Figure 3: Productivity Commission progress against targets**



**Legend: Socio-economic targets\***



\*Results relating to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and where new data are available since the 2021 Productivity Commission Compilation Report.

# Outcome 1

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long and healthy lives

### TARGET 1

#### Close the Gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031.

##### Minister responsible

Minister for Health and Aged Care; and Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health

##### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline	Latest	Assessment date
Not on track	2005–2007	2015–2017	March 2022

Nationally, the gap in life expectancy for First Nations peoples compared with other Australians born between 2015 and 2017, has narrowed from the baseline (2005-07). Based on progress from the baseline, the target shows improvement, but is not on track to be met by 2031. However, due to the limited number of available data points, caution should be used when considering progress against this target.

##### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Cohort	Baseline gap (years)	Latest gap (years)	Latest life expectancy (years)
Females	9.6	7.8	75.6
Males	11.4	8.6	71.6

Nationally, First Nations males born in 2015–2017 are expected to live to 71.6 years and females to 75.6 years, which narrowed the gap in life expectancy from 2005–2007 for males (from 11.4 years to 8.6 years) and females (from 9.6 years to 7.8 years). While this represents an improvement, the national target of ‘no gap’ in life expectancy is not on track to be met for males or females. However, this assessment should be used with caution as it is based on a limited number of data points.

## Outcome 1: Overview

Health outcomes continue to be comparatively worse for First Nations peoples, despite improvements in key areas. The Commonwealth recognises improved outcomes will only be achieved if First Nations peoples are able to make the decisions that impact their health and wellbeing.

Evidence suggests that a complex, interconnected set of factors contribute to the current gap in life expectancy for First Nations peoples. These are collectively known as the social determinants of health, and include (among others) education, maternal health, employment, community and family safety, culture, poverty, housing and racism. Addressing the social determinants of health is key to achieving health equity for First Nations peoples.

A key mechanism for the Commonwealth to drive improvements under Outcome 1, is the implementation of The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031 (Health Plan). Key areas identified for immediate action, as identified by First Nations peoples, include continuing to support and grow the community-controlled health sector; ensuring access to culturally safe and appropriate mainstream health services; increasing the First Nations health workforce; and action to support preventive health, health promotion, and early intervention.



### Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

#### The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031

The Health Plan was developed in partnership between the Commonwealth, states and territories and key First Nations representatives. It was released on 15 December 2021 and is the overarching national policy supporting First Nations peoples' health. Over the 10-year life of the Health Plan, effort will be invested into making health systems accessible, culturally safe and appropriate, effective and responsive for all First Nations peoples. This seeks to support good health and wellbeing across the life course, and to target risk factors at key life stages.

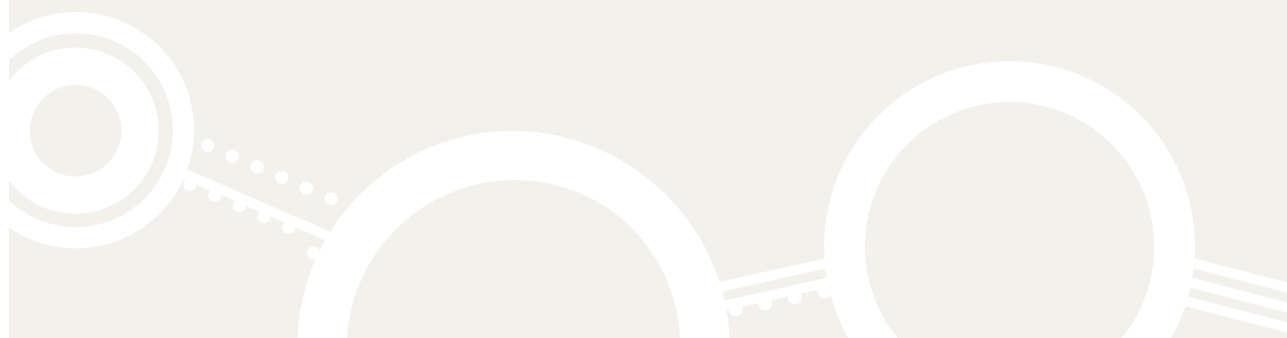
The Health Plan reflects the priorities of First Nations peoples and is intended to guide government action, including to transform mainstream health to embed cultural safety. The Health Plan recognises the historical and ongoing impact of racism in mainstream health settings on First Nations peoples' health. It includes a long-term vision to eliminate racism and prioritises action to improve cultural safety across the whole health system.

#### CLOSING THE GAP HEALTH INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

To address seriously deteriorating or non-existent health infrastructure, the Commonwealth has invested new funding of \$154.4 million over 2021-2025, as well as \$100 million over 2021-2025 from the Indigenous Australian Health Program (IAHP), to deliver new and renovated health clinics and associated housing for health professionals. This work is being developed in partnership with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) on behalf of the Aboriginal community-controlled health services sector. This includes establishing the program parameters and structure.

NACCHO has also approved the Grant Opportunity Guidelines, Assessment Plans, and communication materials to assist Aboriginal community-controlled health services with their applications, including hosting webinars, assessment, decision-making processes, and timeframes. NACCHO co-chairs the assessment committee and are also joint decision makers for grant outcomes.

This project comprises 2 streams of work: an annual Service Maintenance Program (SMP) for minor capital, and the Major Capital Program. Through the 2021-22 SMP grant opportunity, more than \$17 million has been granted to 79 projects across Australia.





## **Primary Care**

The Commonwealth invested \$527 million in 2020-21 for the delivery of comprehensive primary health care through the IAHP. The majority of this funding (\$459 million) goes to 134 Aboriginal community-controlled health services.

In 2021-22, the funding was increased to \$577 million with \$510 million going to Aboriginal community-controlled health services. This includes over \$144 million in additional funding provided through the IAHP Primary Health Care Funding Model over 3 years from 2020-21 to 2022-23.

Overall, available funding to the Aboriginal community-controlled health services sector under the IAHP Primary Health Care Funding Model will increase by 3 per cent year-on-year (including indexation) and once the current funding agreements with Aboriginal community-controlled health services expire, the Commonwealth will move to rolling 4 year agreements, from 1 July 2023.

### *Primary Health Care Services Expansion Funding*

The Commonwealth is investing over \$36 million over 3 years (2020-2023) through the Primary Health Care Service Expansion Funding. This will allow the health sector to expand access to comprehensive primary health care services to First Nations peoples, by investing in priority health areas in regions of high health need or high population growth. This complements the additional \$144 million provided under the IAHP Primary Health Care Funding Model.

### *Practice Incentives Program - Indigenous Health Incentive*

The Commonwealth is investing \$22.6 million over 4 years (2021-25) for improved access to primary health care through a series of policy changes to further incentivise chronic disease follow-up and additional patient inclusions. These improvements will encourage practices to support First Nations peoples with a chronic illness or health condition and improve their overall health outcomes.

From 1 January 2023, the Practice Incentives Program - Indigenous Health Incentive will change from a front-loaded payment structure to a back-ended payment structure to incentivise, with development and review of care plans and access to health services. A transition period will occur over 2023-24 to give practices sufficient time to adjust to the new payment structure.

Further policy changes include expanding registration eligibility to First Nations children under 15 years of age, and the inclusion of Mental Health Treatment Plans in addition to Chronic Disease Management Plans to trigger an outcome payment.

### **Primary Health Network After Hours Program**

The After Hours Program supports Primary Health Networks to plan, coordinate, support and commission population-based after hours health care services. The program focuses on addressing gaps in after hours service provision and improving service integration in communities. In 2021-22, \$71.9 million was provided to extend the program for one year.

## Outcome 1 continued

### *Increase access to and quality use of Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines*

In 2020-21, approximately \$1.6 million was added to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) items supplied to approved Remote Area Aboriginal Health Services (RAAHS) and expenditure was \$41.6 million.

In 2020-21, \$7.5 million Closing the Gap annotated PBS prescriptions were dispensed for more than 396,000 First Nations peoples, and expenditure was \$55.6 million. This represents an increase to the Closing the Gap dispensed prescriptions of 4.6%, and an increase in expenditure of 2.4% compared to the previous year.

In 2020-21, there were 25 pharmacies receiving the Pharmacy Support Allowance to provide support to 103 approved RAAHS and 83 outstations, at a cost of \$2.1 million. Expenditure on the Quality Use of Medicines Maximised for First Nations peoples Program in 2020-21 was \$2.5 million.

### **Chronic disease**

#### *National Cancer Screening Register*

The Commonwealth invested \$12 million in the 2021-22 Budget to continue to enhance the National Cancer Screening Register. Some of this funding is facilitating the direct distribution of National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP) bowel screening kits to First Nations peoples through primary health care centres including Aboriginal community-controlled health services. This alternative approach for accessing the NBCSP will be implemented through health care providers and aims to increase participation in screening by First Nations peoples.

The Commonwealth is continuing to work with a range of stakeholders to enable and support health care providers to order NBCSP kits in bulk and to supply them to under-screened people. Implementation is expected to occur from mid-late 2022. While arrangements for the national roll out of this alternative access model are being finalised, all First Nations primary health care centres that were approved to give out program kits during the National Indigenous Bowel Screening Pilot can continue to do so.

#### *Addressing Alcohol and Other Drugs use*

Funding for First Nations Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) services and support will increase by up to \$66 million to 2024-25, additional to current funding. First Nations' AOD Treatment Services funded under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy currently assists around 75 providers to deliver 90 activities.

The Commonwealth is undertaking a national consultation process with key First Nations stakeholders and the broader AOD treatment sector. The objective of this consultation is to inform decisions about how and where investments can be made. As part of this, the Commonwealth via procurement processes, has engaged 2 supplier services: a lead First Nations Consultation Service and a supporting Subject Matter Expert (SME) Service. Stage one consultations commenced in August 2022. Stage 2 consultations are expected to conclude by April 2023.

The additional investment in AOD is expected to strengthen and improve access to culturally safe and outcomes-focused AOD treatment services, such as boosting funding for treatment services, enabling infrastructure support, strengthening the capacity of the First Nations AOD workforce, and improving data collection and reporting.

The Commonwealth is also making significant investments to reduce the impact of harmful AOD use and the impacts of dependence on individuals, families and communities through the Drug and Alcohol Program. Support is provided for AOD treatment services and prevention, research and communication activities. The Commonwealth also provides significant funding to Primary Health Networks (PHNs), with nearly 30 per cent of this funding allocated for First Nations specific treatment services. In addition to this specific funding, it is a requirement of all AOD treatment funding agreements to deliver culturally appropriate care. This work supports Outcomes 1, 2 and 14.

### *Tackling Indigenous Smoking program*

The Tackling Indigenous Smoking (TIS) program funding has been extended to June 2026, which represents a further investment of \$187.8 million over 4 years. All TIS teams are implementing population health activities to reduce tobacco use amongst First Nations peoples who do not use Aboriginal community-controlled health services.

Independent analysis of the program has estimated coverage is currently 75 per cent of the First Nations population. Administrative changes to the program aim to achieve national coverage from 1 July 2023. Key priorities for the extended program include maintaining a focus on priority groups (remote, youth, and pregnant women) and strengthening the focus on preventive population health approaches.

## **Rural and Remote Health**

### *Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway*

The Commonwealth has invested \$9.51 million for 90 workplace training packages to attract and retain allied health professionals in rural and remote communities and expand the Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway (AHRGP). This includes up to 30 packages for Aboriginal community-controlled health services.

To date a grant agreement has been executed with Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health. The Commonwealth continues consultation with private allied health practices to determine their capacity and willingness to participate in the AHRGP program and support an early career allied health professional.

Additional consultations have commenced to identify practices and Aboriginal community-controlled health services who wish to participate in the AHRGP program. Packages commenced in early 2022 and will continue to be offered as available throughout the program period.

### *COVID-19 response*

The Commonwealth responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by establishing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group on COVID-19 which has been a critical partner in preparing First Nations peoples and communities for COVID-19. Utilising a partnership model, with shared decision-making, better enabled responses to be delivered in a tailored and culturally safe way. For example, through community preparedness grants; retrieval and evaluation packages; point of care testing; and Aboriginal community-controlled health service led General Practice respiratory clinics.

The Advisory Group and Aboriginal community-controlled health services influenced and informed the use of jurisdictional, local government area, and statistical area 2 level data, which was critically important for early planning and preparation, and for minimising the risk of COVID-19 transmission in First Nations communities. The use of First Nations specific data was undertaken in line with Priority Reform Four.

## Outcome 1 continued

Since 2020-21, and including additional funding to be provided in 2022-23, total COVID-19 funding from the Commonwealth to support Aboriginal community-controlled health services via NACCHO is up to \$52.95 million.

As at 16 June 2022, 85 per cent of First Nations peoples aged 16 years and over have received their first COVID-19 vaccine; 81.4 per cent have received 2 vaccines, and 54 per cent have received 3 or more vaccine doses.

### Next Steps

The Commonwealth is using the Health Plan as a basis to work in partnership with First Nations health experts, including through developing accountability and implementation arrangements. Governance arrangements will be strengthened to empower First Nations peoples to continue to share decision-making authority with the Commonwealth.

The Health Sector Strengthening Plan under Priority Reform Two will serve as a key link between the Health Plan and National Agreement. It provides practical actions to enhance, strengthen and where needed, build, the community-controlled health sector. This will include working in partnership with the community-controlled health sector on policy, program, and service delivery reforms to meet the needs of First Nations peoples. The Commonwealth will report on progress against these actions in next year's Annual Report.

# Outcome 2

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong

### TARGET 2

**By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91%.**

#### Minister responsible

Minister for Health and Aged Care; and Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health

#### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2017)	Latest (2019)	Assessment date
On track	88.8%	89.5%	June 2022

Nationally in 2019, 89.5 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies born were of a healthy birthweight, an increase from 88.8 per cent in 2017 (the baseline year). This is a good improvement with the national target of 91 per cent on track to be met. However, this assessment should be used with caution as it is based on a limited number of data points.





## Outcome 2: Overview

Birthweight is a key determinant of childhood health outcomes and health and wellbeing outcomes later in life. Children who are born within a healthy weight range have a lower risk of dying during their first year of life, are less prone to ill health in childhood, and are less likely to develop chronic disease as adults, including cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure, kidney disease and Type 2 Diabetes.

In line with the new National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031 (Health Plan), the Commonwealth is implementing the measures outlined in this chapter in partnership with key First Nations sector representatives and experts, including the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM).

The Commonwealth has worked with its partners to identify priority locations, service providers and activities that can best contribute to increasing the proportion of First Nations babies with a healthy birthweight, and support mothers and babies to have optimal outcomes in pregnancy, birth and infancy. The Commonwealth will continue to work in partnership to roll out all measures for this outcome.

## Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

### **The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031**

The Health Plan sets out the Commonwealth's approach to ensuring that mothers of First Nations babies get the best possible care and support for a good start to life. The Commonwealth, in partnership, is developing a companion accountability framework which will support governance and the implementation plan to achieve this goal.

### **Improving the Health and Wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mothers and Babies - Healthy Mums, Healthy Bubs**

The Healthy Mums, Healthy Bubs (HMHB) program provides \$45 million over 4 years (2021-2025) to support mothers of First Nations babies. HMHB has 2 key components:

- \$32.3 million to grow the maternity health workforce and redesign maternity services for First Nations peoples: support for culturally Birthing on Country (BoC) models of care; and
- \$12.8 million to expand the Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program (ANFPP) from 13 to 15 sites.



Consistent with a life course approach to health and wellbeing, BoC models of care provide holistic support for mothers and families from conception through pregnancy and birth, and into early infancy that lay the foundation for the best start to life. Strong, safe and resilient families are key to a solid foundation for social and emotional wellbeing throughout the life course. Instilling this in a child's life from conception has long-lasting consequences for a child's physical, mental and behavioural development and directly influences broader social determinant outcomes, such as engagement with schooling, child protective services and the juvenile justice system.

The HMHB also supports women pregnant with a First Nations child to help them become the best mum possible through the ANFPP home visiting program.

The ANFPP has been operating since 2009 and has supported 2,833 mothers. Beginning with 3 sites, it has expanded to 14 sites servicing 5 states and 2 territories. Through the HMHB, the ANFPP is expanding to 15 sites later in 2022-23, the location of which is being determined by the Commonwealth with key stakeholders.

### **Preventative health**

The Tackling Indigenous Smoking (TIS) program identifies pregnant women as a priority group. The majority of TIS teams are delivering directly targeted activities to reach and engage pregnant women or new mothers (and midwives), including through social media and group activities that raise awareness of the risks of smoking during pregnancy.

The TIS teams are also working within local communities to reduce exposure to second-hand smoke by increasing the number and range of smoke free environments, including smoke free homes, cars, workplaces and events. Program funding has been extended to June 2026, which represents a further investment of \$187.8 million over 4 years.

In addition, the TIS-funded iSistaQuit project provides training and resources for Aboriginal community-controlled health services and other mainstream health services seeking to improve their capacity to support the smoking cessation efforts of First Nations pregnant women in a manner that is evidence-based and culturally appropriate.

### **Next Steps**

The Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy Partnership will focus on ensuring First Nations children are born healthy and remain strong, nurtured by strong families in their early years. Further information on the ECCD Policy Partnership can be found under Priority Reform One.

The Health Sector Strengthening Plan and the Early Childhood Sector Strengthening Plan aim to improve culturally safe child health services and family support services. The Commonwealth will continue to work with First Nations and child health sector partners to support families to achieve optimal maternal and child outcomes, including building on existing models such as BoC as well as building and strengthening the maternal and child health workforce.

# Outcome 3

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years**

## TARGET 3

**By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling early childhood education to 95%.**

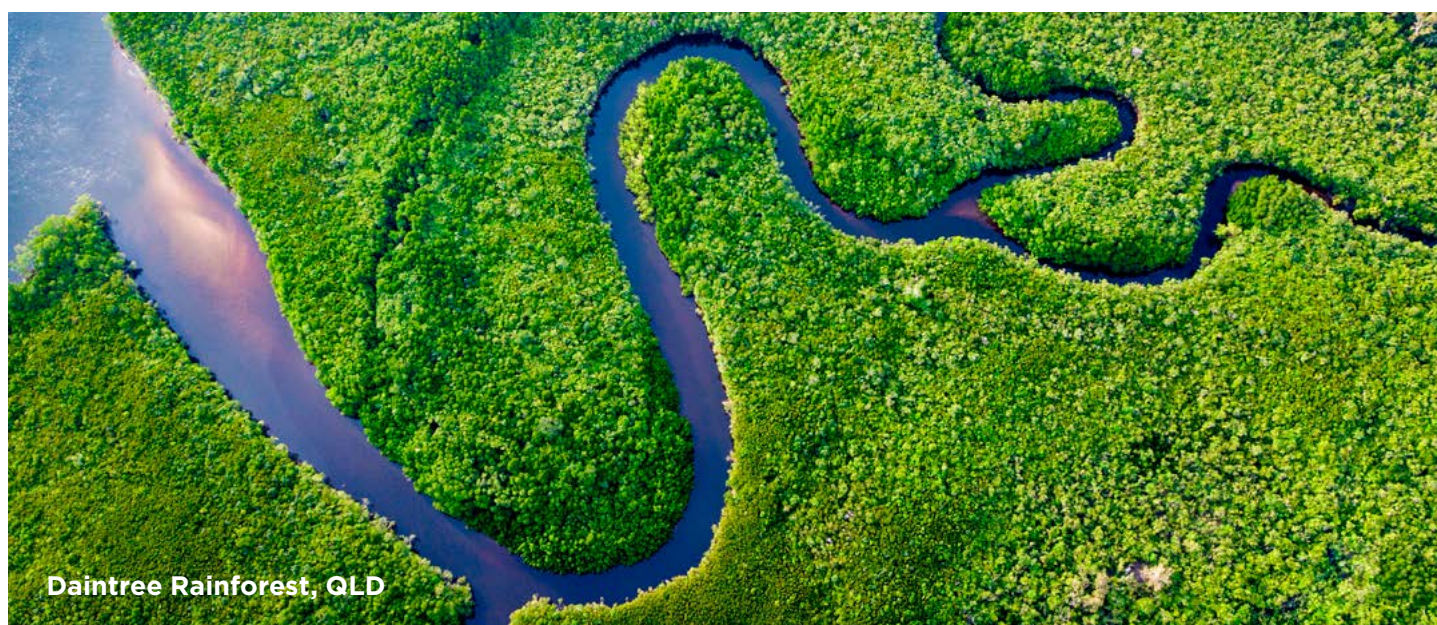
### Minister responsible

Minister for Education; and Minister for Early Childhood Education

### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2016)	Latest (2021)	Assessment date
On track	76.7%	96.7%	June 2022

Nationally in 2021, 96.7 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) age group were enrolled in a preschool program, an increase from 76.7 per cent in 2016 (the baseline year). This is a good improvement with the national target of 95 per cent on track to be met. This assessment is provided with a high level of confidence.



### Outcome 3: Overview

Preschool prepares children to participate in and enjoy learning through and post school, to build language skills, cognitive, social and emotional skills, and engage with their peers; and for parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents and carers to feel confident and empowered to guide and support their children's learning and development.

Enrolments of First Nations children in preschool have been improving since the introduction of the Universal Access National Partnership, exceeding the target in 2021, and with a higher proportion of First Nations children enrolled than non-Indigenous children. Changes to Child Care Subsidy in March 2022 have also reduced costs to childcare, improving access for First Nations children.

All Parties to the National Agreement have committed to develop a new target 3 by 2025 to further focus efforts towards improving preschool attendance for First Nations children.

The Preschool Reform Agreement (Agreement) was signed by all states and territories in 2021, with bilateral implementation plans agreed in 2022. This Agreement aims to lift preschool enrolments and attendance, and maximise preschool benefits by improving outcomes, with a focus on First Nations children.

New preschool outcomes measures and attendance targets are being developed with states and territories under the Agreement and will maximise the benefits of preschool for First Nations children.

The Commonwealth's early childhood reforms, including the Plan for Cheaper Child Care and the development of a new Early Years Strategy, will also support improved engagement in early learning for First Nations children.

### Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

#### Preschool funding arrangements through the Preschool Reform Agreement

The Commonwealth has committed up to \$2 billion to continue funding support for preschool through a new Preschool Reform Agreement (Agreement) from 2022-25 with states and territories. The Agreement aims to lift preschool enrolments and attendance, and maximise preschool benefits by improving outcomes, with a focus on First Nations children. This will ensure that every child has access to quality preschool education for 15 hours a week, or 600 hours per year, in the year before they start school.

As part of the new Agreement, the Commonwealth and states and territories are working together to develop and implement reforms that aim to lift preschool enrolments and attendance, and maximise the benefits of preschool, including:

- Commonwealth funding will need to follow the child at a setting level.
- New attendance targets will be established that will include a focus on First Nations children.
- A new preschool outcomes measure will be implemented.

Under the Agreement, the Commonwealth will agree bilateral implementation plans with states and territories each year. All states and territories have signed their 2022 implementation plans, and first payments have been made to states and territories. A Preschool Outcomes Measure Expert Advisory Group has been established and is supporting all governments on the development of a new outcomes measure and initial work on attendance targets. The Agreement contributes to improving outcomes against Outcomes 3 and 4.

#### Child Care Subsidy

Child Care Subsidy (CCS), and associated Child Care Safety Net measures, continue to help families with the costs associated with child care and support the inclusion of children who experience disadvantage. Safety Net measures include the Additional Child Care Subsidy, which provides additional financial support for eligible families, and the Inclusion Support Program, which aims to give children a strong start through access to inclusive and quality early childhood education and care services.

In the September quarter of 2021, 53,650 First Nations children were eligible for CCS and attended approved services. This is an increase of 3.7 per cent compared to the last reported figures at June quarter 2021.

From 10 December 2021, the \$10,655 annual CCS cap for families earning over \$190,015 was removed for the entire 2021-22 financial year onwards. From 7 March 2022, families with 2 or more children aged 5 years or under in care had their CCS rate increased by 30 per cent for their second child and any younger children, up to a maximum subsidy rate of 95 per cent. This has decreased out of pocket costs for First Nations families with more than one child aged 5 years or under in care.

Implementation of the Commonwealth's new Plan for Cheaper Child Care from 2023 will further increase access for First Nations families and contribute to progress against Outcomes 3 and 4.



## **THE NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EARLY CHILDHOOD STRATEGY**

The Commonwealth has partnered with SNAICC - National Voice for Our Children to co-design the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy (Strategy), launched in December 2021. The Strategy aims to strengthen coordination across early childhood and positively impact all aspects of young First Nations children's lives, including improving access to culturally appropriate early childhood education and care. It is critical to ensuring early years investment makes the most difference to children and families.

The Strategy enables stronger collaboration and coordination across all governments, and aligns effort across the systems and services that impact First Nations early childhood outcomes. This includes supporting access to quality, culturally appropriate, early childhood development, education and care and education services. The Strategy will help guide the approach to early life outcomes and enable other national strategies with a focus on children to prioritise the needs of First Nations children.

The Strategy identifies policy priorities and opportunities across early childhood domains including education, safety, health, and cultural connection. The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership will have a key role in the oversight and development of policy priorities and opportunities under the Strategy. This work supports both Outcome 3 and 4.

## Outcome 3 continued

### Next Steps

The Commonwealth will continue its work with states and territories to support access to preschool under the Agreement. States and territories will outline strategies to facilitate preschool attendance, including strategies relating to First Nations children. Consistent with the National Agreement, states and territories will engage with First Nations communities and/or representative bodies in the design process. The next step will be to agree the approach to measuring preschool attendance and trialling the outcomes measure through appendices to the Agreement.

The Commonwealth's new early childhood commitments will further improve access to early childhood education and care for First Nations children. The Commonwealth has committed to delivering its Plan for Cheaper Child Care from July 2023 through lifting the maximum child care subsidy rate to 90 per cent for families earning under \$80,000 for their first child in care, and increasing the rate for every family earning less than \$530,000. The higher rates of subsidy for families' second and younger children will also be retained.

As part of the plan, the Commonwealth will also conduct a comprehensive review of the early childhood and care sector through the Productivity Commission, with the aim of implementing a universal 90 per cent child care subsidy for all families in the future.

The development of a whole-of-government Early Years Strategy will also create a new integrated, holistic approach to the early years and support efforts across Outcomes 3 and 4. The Early Years Strategy will examine the range of programs and funding delivered across the Commonwealth that directly impact early childhood development, and ensure all children's development is supported, with a particular focus on First Nations children and children at greater risk of experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage.

The Commonwealth will work in partnership with First Nation representatives and with states and territories to drive national action through the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership under Priority Reform One.





# Outcome 4

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years

### TARGET 4

**By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census to 55%.**

#### Minister responsible

Minister for Education; and Minister for Early Childhood Education

#### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2018)	Latest (2021)	Assessment date
Not on track	35.2%	34.3%	June 2022

Nationally in 2021, 34.3 per cent of First Nations children commencing school were assessed as being developmentally on track in all 5 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains, a decrease from 35.2 per cent in 2018 (the baseline year). The national target of 55 per cent is not on track to be met. However, this assessment should be used with caution as it is based on a limited number of data points.



## Outcome 4: Overview

A strong start in life provides the necessary foundation for the years ahead. There is a critical window from conception to age 5 where more than any other time in life, children's health and wellbeing, development in language and cognitive skills, knowledge and identity can be positively influenced.

The 2021 AEDC saw a reduction of all Australian children on track in all 5 domains; however, the decrease was larger for First Nations children, declining by 0.9 percentage points. Concerted effort across all governments and partners will be required to ensure the recent trend can be reversed.

The Commonwealth's significant new investment in early childhood education will improve affordability and increase access to early childhood education and care, and work to improve developmental outcomes. The Commonwealth will also review early childhood programs and settings to ensure they are working effectively for First Nations children, and give them the best opportunities to support their learning and development through the development of a new Early Years Strategy and Productivity Commission review.

Supporting First Nations children to meet all 5 AEDC domains requires coordinated action across portfolios and all levels of government, in partnership with First Nations representatives. It involves addressing interconnected socio-economic factors like parental income, employment status and education level. Increased access to preschool and child care will support better access to early childhood education, and positively impact AEDC outcomes for all children. The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership will support this work and provide a formal partnership mechanism to develop further advice on measures and reforms to help First Nations children thrive in their early years.

## Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

### Connected Beginnings expansion

Connected Beginnings aims to support First Nations children aged 0 to 5 to be school-ready through the integration of early childhood education, health and family support services and programs in each community. In 2021, the Commonwealth committed an additional \$81.8 million to support the expansion of the program to 50 sites nationally by 2025.

The Commonwealth is working in partnership with SNAICC - National Voice for our Children and other sector representatives, such as the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and relevant state and territory community-controlled peak bodies, to support new site selection. An Expert Advisory Group, co-chaired with SNAICC, has been established with leaders across First Nations early years, child and maternal health, research and evaluation.

The program is committed to supporting Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to lead where possible. To operationalise this commitment, the program is working with its partners to develop a new framework to support greater community-controlled organisation engagement which will guide the approach to funding arrangements in new sites and transition existing sites. Of the 7 new sites which commenced in 2021-22, 5 are directly led by community-controlled organisations. The program also supports auspicing arrangements to community-controlled organisations and is funding backbone staffing positions to facilitate strong and meaningful engagement.

From 2022-23, SNAICC has also been engaged by the Commonwealth as the Community Partner for the Connected Beginnings program and Community Child Care Fund-Restricted Expansion to support the establishment of new sites and the ongoing implementation of community-led and culturally safe projects.

The program is continuing to support the sharing of data to communities with data sharing arrangements across Commonwealth agencies and state and territory governments. Additional tools and resources are being developed such as the Steppingstones tool, which is designed to help communities map their progress in working together and the joining up of services to create a positive impact for children and families.

### Community Child Care Fund expansion

In 2021, the Commonwealth committed an additional \$29.9 million to expand the Community Child Care Fund restricted program, a component of the Commonwealth's Child Care Safety Net, which contributes to giving the most vulnerable children a strong start in life. The expansion will establish up to 20 new, high quality early childhood education and care services in mainly remote and very remote areas. The Program is committed to supporting Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to lead the establishment of new services where possible.

Site selection is underway for additional sites. The Commonwealth is working in partnership with SNAICC and other key First Nations stakeholders, including those located in the selected consultation sites. In July 2022, consultations concluded at 18 sites, with an additional 2 sites to undergo consultations between August and October 2022.

## Outcome 4 continued

An Expert Advisory Group has been established, co-chaired by SNAICC, to provide final site selection advice. A phased grant application process to select service providers occurred in April and July 2022, with the final grant rounds to be offered by the end of 2022.

Services funded will receive ongoing operational support over the grant period, including access to individual business support and Community of Practice business support models. Ongoing sustainability funding will be provided through to 2024-25 to support the new services transition to the child care support system.

### **An intensive early childhood education and care model trial**

In 2021, the Commonwealth committed \$9 million to support a trial of an intensive early childhood education and care model to support vulnerable and disadvantaged children to bridge the gap to school readiness. The Program is a multidisciplinary model offers high quality, intensive early education and care, infant mental health and wrap-around family support for children from birth up to 3 years of age.

The model will be trialled at a total of four services. The first site commenced in Richmond (Vic) in October 2022. The remaining 4 sites are due to commence in 2023, including a co-developed First Nations specific site.

The Parkville Institute has been established to lead the delivery of the trial and has undertaken engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders as part of the initial planning phases of the trial. It is working in partnership with SNAICC and relevant local communities and First Nations leaders throughout the design and delivery of the model to ensure that it is culturally safe.

In 2022, the Commonwealth provided additional funding for the co-development of the model for the First Nations specific site, bringing the Commonwealth's contribution to a total of \$9.5 million. The First Nations specific site will be informed by a co-development process led by SNAICC and overseen by a steering committee to provide a strong cultural lens.

### **Early Learning Teaching Trial**

In 2021, the Commonwealth committed \$1.9 million to trial the design, implementation and evaluation of a new early learning teaching model that strengthens young children's literacy and numeracy learning through explicit instruction in the year prior to school.

The University of Melbourne has been appointed to deliver the Early Learning Teaching Trial with a focus on improving outcomes for First Nations children as they get ready for school. They are working in partnership with relevant local communities and First Nations stakeholders and experts throughout the design and delivery of the trial to ensure that it is culturally safe and tailored to community needs. This includes through the establishment of a sector expert advisory group that is overseeing and guiding the development and progress of the trial.

The 2 trial sites have been confirmed as Northern Territory and Victoria, with services selected in consultation with local communities and state government. Delivery and commencement of in-service activity professional learning and training commenced in August 2022, in advance of the trial taking place across 2023. The trial will be underpinned by ongoing monitoring and evaluation to help inform the evolution and improvement of the model, and develop the evidence-base on success factors for building school readiness.

## Next Steps

In 2022-23, the Commonwealth will build on the progress of the targeted early childhood Closing the Gap measures, with ongoing implementation and monitoring of the Connected Beginnings and CCCF Restricted Expansion program as new sites commence. In the Early Years Education Program expansion, the focus will be establishing the First Nations site, including the partnership with SNAICC to co-develop the program model for the site. The Early Learning Teaching Trial will commence full implementation in services in the Northern Territory and Victoria across 2023.

The Commonwealth will work in partnership with First Nation representatives and with states and territories to drive national action through the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy Partnership under Priority Reform One. In addition to the implementation of the Commonwealth's Plan for Cheaper Child Care and Productivity Commission review into early childhood education and care in 2022-23, work will also commence on the development of a whole-of-government Early Years Strategy. The Strategy will create a new integrated, holistic approach to the early years and support efforts across Outcomes 3 and 4.



# Outcome 5

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential**

## TARGET 5

**By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20-24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%.**

### Minister responsible

Minister for Education; Minister for Skills and Training; and Minister for Youth

### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2016)	Latest	Assessment date
No new data to assess progress	63.2%	N/A	N/A

Progress against this target is to be assessed using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data. At this time, 2021 Census data is not yet available at the appropriate level of detail to determine progress against this target.





## Outcome 5: Overview

The school education measures focus on scaling up initiatives that are demonstrating success at lifting student outcomes, attendance and engagement. Progress through 2021-22 has focused on planning and establishment, with initiatives in place in 2022 or expected to commence in the 2023 school year.

The Commonwealth is working to strengthen partnership efforts, including engagement with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council, and engagement with our Indigenous Education Consultative Meeting regarding the National School Reform Agreement. The Commonwealth will continue to build on this as foundational effort to underpin our actions moving forward.

This work will adopt strengths-based, high-expectation approaches where First Nations children and young people can thrive in education and be supported to reach their potential.

The Commonwealth recognises the importance of creating school environments that are culturally safe where First Nations cultures are valued, respected and visibly present. The Commonwealth has been working in partnership with First Nations stakeholders on establishing these initiatives in 2022.

## Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

### Quality Schools Funding

The Commonwealth is investing \$318.9 billion for recurrent school funding over 2018-2029. This includes \$5.7 billion through the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander loading. Funding provided through the loading will grow by 85.4% over this period.

In 2022, this additional funding is expected to benefit around 250,406 students who identify as First Nations. In addition to this loading, First Nations students attract SRS base funding to their school or system, and their school may also attract funding from other loadings depending on student and school circumstances.

### National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council

In 2021, the Commonwealth committed to assist with the establishment of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council (NATSIEC). The aim of NATSIEC is to identify and provide advice on barriers to student attainment, and provide a collective and representative voice on education matters relating to First Nations students. It will provide a formal engagement mechanism between the Commonwealth and First Nations education representatives.

NATSIEC is in the final stages of incorporation and is seeking further support for its establishment. It is also applying to join the Coalition of Peaks as the national education body representing and advocating for First Nations communities.

## Outcome 5 continued

### **Establishing a direct First Nations engagement mechanism with Education Ministers**

A co-design process is currently underway to establish a direct First Nations engagement mechanism to the Education Ministers Meeting (EMM), commissioned by all Education Ministers in 2021. The new mechanism will replace the existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Advisory Group, a sub-group of the EMM structures.

The Co-Design Partnership Group consists of government and First Nations community sector representatives for each jurisdiction and is co-chaired by Professor Peter Buckskin PSM FACE (First Nations community representative, Chair, South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council) and Ms Karen Weston (government representative, Chief Executive, Northern Territory Department of Education). The Group is meeting monthly and is examining and developing options for the scope and role of the First Nations engagement mechanism, and will submit a proposal to the EMM in late 2022.

### **Scaling Up Proven Primary Reading Programs**

In 2021, the Commonwealth committed to supporting a suite of targeted literacy programs to support teacher professional practice and improve early reading outcomes. The programs are intended to provide teachers with additional supports to accelerate First Nations students' literacy outcomes which is a key driver of Target 5. Grant agreements for the programs are now in place, with programs being delivered in 30 schools in 2022. Details on program roll out and participating schools will be published on the Department of Education website once confirmed.

### **Scaling Up Success in Remote Schools – building on learnings from the Kimberley Schools Project**

Planning is underway for the Scaling Up Success in Remote Schools initiative, which is expected to commence in schools in 2023. For this program, funding of \$10 million will be invested over 5 years to expand key elements of the Kimberley Schools Project into remote Western Australia. Key stakeholders and communities will be involved in the planning and design of this initiative.

### **Building Boarding Schools On Country**

The Commonwealth recognises that many First Nations students from remote areas have limited access to secondary schooling within a reasonable distance from their community. Studio Schools Australia (SSA) is being supported to expand their innovative model through establishing 3 new facilities in Western Australia and the Northern Territory, and refurbishing the existing Yiramalay site in the Kimberley. For the selected sites, this will support greater local community input into secondary schooling closer to home.

Community agreements are in place for the first new site in Windjana Gorge (Western Australia), and community engagement is now shifting to focus on design elements. SSA continues to work with the Commonwealth, Western Australia and Northern Territory governments and relevant First Nations communities to settle final site selection for the remaining 2 new facilities.

SSA is finalising their Approved Authority application under the *Australian Education Act 2013* and funding arrangements through relevant Block Grant Authorities will be progressed in early 2022-23.

## City-Country Partnerships

This initiative supports formal partnerships between high-performing, metropolitan independent schools and remote schools with a high proportion of First Nations students.

The Yadha Muru Foundation (YMF) is the delivery organisation for this grant. The YMF will work with schools and First Nations communities to identify and implement school partnerships. They will undertake a selection process with grantee schools to be agreed by the Minister for Education or departmental delegate.

Each proposed partnership will identify the goals and aspirations of their local school community and articulate this in their partnership plan, with a pathway to ensuring financial sustainability and long-term success beyond seed funding. These partnerships may also consider exploring opportunities to partner with local further education and training providers and employers to enhance further education and employment pathways for students.

Details on the program and partnership opportunities will be made available on the Department of Education website.

## Disability Standards for Education 2005

Approximately one in 5 students in Australia have a disability, and the rate at which First Nations peoples experience disability is significantly higher than other Australians.

The 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Review) had a focus on the experiences of First Nations students and their families. The Review found that First Nations students with disability faced intersectional disadvantage leading to poorer experiences and outcomes.

A key piece of work in response to the Review, is the co-design of information products to help students with disability and their parents and carers, understand and advocate for their rights under the Disability Standards for Education 2005. For more information about the Review please refer to Disability under the Cross-cutting outcomes areas.

## Next Steps

The Commonwealth will continue to work with relevant First Nations education stakeholders to support design and delivery of Implementation Plan actions, including establishment of a consolidated evaluation to consider outcomes across the 3 elements — Scaling Up Proven Primary Reading Programs, Building Boarding Schools on Country and City-Country Partnerships.

The Commonwealth will continue to engage with First Nations education partners to:

- Strengthen partnership arrangements with NATSIEC.
- Inform thinking on First Nations education reforms and targeted actions to be considered through development of the next National School Reform Agreement to commence from 2024.
- Support the co-design of a First Nations engagement mechanism to EMM with a view to submitting a proposal to EMM in late 2022.

# Outcome 6

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways**

## TARGET 6

**By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%.**

### Minister responsible

Minister for Education; Minister for Skills and Training; and Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth

### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2016)	Latest	Assessment date
No new data to assess progress	42.3%	N/A	N/A

Progress against this target is to be assessed using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data. At this time, 2021 Census data is not yet available at the appropriate level of detail to determine progress against this target.



## Outcome 6: Overview

Through various actions such as demand-driven funding for regional and remote First Nations students, expanding the Regional Universities Centres program and the Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships program, the Commonwealth is continuing to work towards achieving this target.

Although some progress has been made, First Nations peoples remain under-represented in universities, comprising 2.05 per cent of the domestic higher education student population, despite making up an estimated 3.3 per cent of the total Australian population (DESE 2022, ABS 2018). More work needs to occur to address the barriers that First Nations students experience over the student lifecycle that impact their access, participation, retention, success and completion.

Vocational Education and Training (VET) plays an important role in supporting the economic and social development of local communities, particularly in regional and remote locations. In 2021, 156,000 First Nations students were enrolled in VET, with Certificate III qualifications making up 3 of the top 5 qualifications for First Nations enrolments.

Despite strong levels of participation in VET by First Nations students (30.7 per cent of people aged 15-64, compared with 24.0 per cent of all Australians aged 15-64), qualification completion rates by First Nations students continue to sit well below national qualification completion rates (projected qualification completion rate of 34.0 per cent in 2019, 14.9 percentage points lower than non-Indigenous people at 49.7 per cent).

The Commonwealth recognises the importance of providing more opportunities for First Nations peoples to achieve higher level qualifications, and the improvement this will have on employment prospects as well as outcomes at a personal and community level. Throughout 2021-22, the Commonwealth has partnered with states and territories to improve the quality of training delivery nationally, including considering supports provided to First Nations students. Further, the Commonwealth has also taken steps to better understand the experience of First Nations peoples in the VET system and what contributes to positive experiences and outcomes for learners and communities.



### Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

#### Regional University Centres

The Regional University Centres (RUC) program helps students in regional and remote areas access higher education without having to leave their community. RUC provides student support and campus-style facilities for students who study online with any Australian tertiary provider. As at March 2022, 10.8 per cent of students (295) supported by RUCs were First Nations, an increase from 10.5 per cent (260) in 2021. Comparatively, in 2020 (latest available data), only 2.05 per cent of students accessing higher education were First Nations peoples. Of the Commonwealth-funded RUCs, 2 of the 26 include the Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal (ALPA) Corporation and the Wuyagiba Study Hub Aboriginal Corporation, which focus on supporting First Nations students in Arnhem Land. The RUCs also provide employment opportunities for First Nations staff with 100 per cent of Wuyagiba staff and 14 per cent of ALPA staff identifying as Aboriginal.

The Commonwealth is expanding the RUC program with up to 8 new Centres to be established from mid-2022. A grant round was held in early 2022 to select new locations with the assessment process taking into consideration First Nations student participation and outcomes. One of the successful applicants will establish a Centre in the Cape York region (Qld) which has a high First Nations population (47 per cent at the 2021 Census). This new Centre will include the provision of an Indigenous Support Officer to specifically focus on improving access to and participation in tertiary education for First Nations peoples in the region.

#### Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarship

The Rural and Regional Enterprise Scholarships program provides up to \$18,500 to eligible students from regional and remote Australia to undertake study from Certificate IV to doctorate. In 2022, over 1,000 scholarships are on offer. When assessing applications, priority consideration is given to First Nations students. Of the 4,180 scholarships that were awarded since 2018, 3.4 per cent (142) were to First Nations students.

The Commonwealth with the scholarship support organisation, Queensland Tertiary Admissions Centre, monitor uptake of the program and adapt promotional activities as needed. Recent work has been undertaken to increase the number of First Nations peoples accessing the scholarships.

#### Job Ready Graduates package for Universities Demand Driven Funding

From 2021, all First Nations students who live in regional and remote Australia are guaranteed a bachelor level Commonwealth Supported place at a university of their choice, when accepted into their chosen course of study. Based on estimates provided by universities, this program will support 3,937 students (equivalent full-time student load) at a cost of \$45.3 million in 2022. The Commonwealth continues to monitor the number of First Nations students from rural and remote Australia funded under this program. There will also be a review of the Job Ready Graduates package which will include a preliminary analysis of this program.



## **Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program**

From 1 January 2021, the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program (HEPPP) was expanded to support First Nations and regional and remote students alongside those from Low Socio-Economic Status (SES) backgrounds. This change directly responds to the recommendations of the Napthine Review. Under the new arrangements, HEPPP funding is allocated by a formula based on each university's share of students from these equity groups. In 2022, \$140.1 million has been allocated to 38 universities. Universities use HEPPP funding to conduct activities and implement strategies that improve access to undergraduate courses as well as the retention and completion rates of First Nations students.

### **Quality of training delivery**

Work is underway with states and territories to strengthen the quality of training delivery in the VET sector. Tools and resources are being developed which will include a focus on building the capability and capacity of RTOs to better support First Nations students. This will include VET workforce measures with a specific focus on supporting trainer and assessor quality and capability in areas such as delivering training to distinct learner cohorts, including First Nations learners.

### **Australian Apprenticeships programs**

As at 31 July 2022, \$167.5 million has been paid through the Boosting Apprenticeship Commencements (BAC) and Completing Apprenticeship Commencements (CAC) measures to support 15,450 First Nations apprentices and trainees. This represents approximately 5.4 per cent of all apprentices

and trainees. The BAC and CAC wage subsidies provide up to 36 months of tapered financial support for employers that engaged an apprentice or trainee between 5 October 2020 and 30 June 2022. There were 20,764 First Nations apprentices and trainees as at 31 March 2022. This comprises 5.4 per cent of all apprentices and trainees. In addition, 2,661 First Nations apprentices and trainees accessed additional financial support provided by a Trade Support Loan between 1 January 2021 and 31 July 2022.

Commencing from 1 July 2022, the new Australian Apprenticeships Incentive System will offer support to all apprentices, but through additional support for priority occupations will influence occupation choice and direct more First Nations apprentices into priority occupations with strong employment and wage prospects.

## Outcome 6 continued

### **Foundation Skills for Your Future - Remote Community Pilots**

The Remote Community Pilots (Pilots) aim to improve access to and development of English language, literacy, numeracy and digital (LLND) skills training for First Nations peoples in remote communities. The Pilots commenced from January 2021 and are due to cease on 30 June 2023. Each Pilot is unique and has been co-designed with the community, offering different training models and delivery methods to communities with distinct demographic and geographic features. The Pilots are located in:

- Far west coast communities of Ceduna, Koonibba, Scotdesco, Yalata and Oak Valley in South Australia.
- Djarindjin/Ardyaloon/Lombadina and Beagle Bay in the Dampier Peninsula of Western Australia.
- Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory.
- Doomadgee in northern Queensland.

The Pilots are being evaluated to determine the extent to which they:

- Improve the LLND skills of community members.
- Identify and develop systemic approaches to LLND skills training delivery in remote communities.
- Inform future program delivery, funding arrangements and/or changes to existing programs such as the Skills for Education and Employment Program.

### **Research project on the experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners in the VET system**

In September 2021, the Commonwealth engaged a First Nations consultancy to undertake this research project. The project sought to gain a deeper insight into First Nations learners in the VET system and particularly the factors that contribute to:

- Higher rates of participation, attainment and completion.
- Learners pursuing higher level qualifications (Cert IV and above).
- Better learning experiences and outcomes.
- Excellence in service delivery for First Nations learners.

A program of consultations and engagement sessions with stakeholders including students, training providers and VET organisations were undertaken as part of this project. The project was completed in 2022. This research will be used to inform policy development. It may also be used to inform the development of resources to support VET trainers and providers to deliver high quality, culturally safe training for First Nations learners and strengthen the quality of training delivery in the VET sector.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on VET governance and advisory bodies**

In February 2022, the National Careers Institute (NCI) appointed a First Nations person to the NCI Advisory Board. Mr Corey Tutt, a Kamilaroi man from Port Macquarie, New South Wales, is the Chief Executive Officer and founder of Deadly Science, a non-government organisation that provides science resources, mentoring and training to remote and regional schools across Australia. Mr Tutt brings a range of experience and expertise that will support

the NCI in tailoring its services to assist First Nations communities. Opportunities to ensure First Nations representation and partnerships in the design and delivery of VET policy and programs continue to be explored.

## Next Steps

New opportunities and initiatives that will support the achievement of this target continue to be explored. It will be critical that work progresses in close collaboration with Commonwealth agencies (particularly for shared targets), First Nations representatives and other key stakeholders.

The Commonwealth will continue to implement actions to improve university attendance through both existing programs and through new measures that may result from the Australian Universities Accord process.

The Commonwealth will further continue to progress VET workforce measures to build the capability and capacity of RTOs and the VET workforce, and revising the Standards for RTOs. This work will better ensure the training and support needs of First Nations peoples are identified and met.

The Commonwealth will also focus on supporting increased numbers of new First Nations apprentices into secure in-demand occupations through the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives System and provide mentoring, career support and referral pathways through the Australian Apprenticeships Support Network. Exploration of existing data systems and mechanisms to develop a better understanding of under-reporting of First Nations status in VET data is ongoing.

# Outcome 7

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are engaged in employment or education**

## TARGET 7

**By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%.**

### Minister responsible

Minister for Skills and Training; Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations; and Minister for Early Childhood Education and Minister for Youth

### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2016)	Latest	Assessment date
No new data to assess progress	57.2%	N/A	N/A

Progress against this target is to be assessed using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data. At this time, 2021 Census data is not yet available at the appropriate level of detail to determine progress against this target.



## Outcome 7: Overview

Increasing the proportion of First Nations young people who are engaged in employment, education or training significantly improves outcomes over the life course, including long-term employment prospects and improved health and wellbeing outcomes. Actions in Outcome 7 are an important determinant that will help achieve Outcome 8. Vocational education and training actions in Outcome 6 will also contribute to Outcome 7.

Measures for Outcome 7 remain focused on improving participation rates in the later years of schooling, lifting higher levels of educational attainment, and increasing economic participation in the labour market. With more than 9 in 10 new jobs projected to require post-school qualifications, there remains a need for First Nations youth to be able to access skills and employment supports that build their qualifications and connect them with employment opportunities.

## Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

### jobactive/Workforce Australia

The Commonwealth's mainstream employment service jobactive terminated on 30 June 2022 and was replaced by Workforce Australia from 4 July 2022. Workforce Australia will deliver employment services through a digital platform and investment in tailored provider services for unemployed Australians who are at risk of being left behind. As at 30 June 2022, there were 91,059 First Nations peoples participating in jobactive (11.8 per cent of the total jobactive caseload).

Workforce Australia will play a critical role in supporting job seekers, including First Nations youth, to build their skills and connect to emerging employment opportunities.

### Transition to Work

Transition to Work is a demand-driven service that provides intensive pre-employment assistance to disadvantaged young people aged 15-24 who are at a high risk of becoming long-term unemployed. A procurement process was completed to select organisations to deliver the Transition to Work program from 1 July 2022. As at 30 June 2022, there were 8,670 First Nations peoples participating in the program (36.2 per cent of the total caseload).

The new Transition to Work services that commenced on 1 July 2022 will continue to actively support disadvantaged young people, including First Nations youth, to re-engage with education and training and/or be connected to sustainable employment.

## Outcome 7 continued

### Time to Work Employment Service

The Time to Work Employment Service (TWES) is a national, voluntary in-prison employment service that assists First Nations peoples between one and 4 months from release to access the support they need to better prepare them to find employment and reintegrate into the community. TWES has been extended for a further year to June 2023.

From the commencement of the program in 2018 to 30 June 2022, 6,785 participants have commenced TWES in non-remote areas. During 2021-22, 1,894 participants commenced servicing in non-remote areas. In remote areas, there were 138 commencements in 2021-22, and a total of 625 commencements and 315 completing Transition Plans since the start of the program in 2019.

### Self-Employment Assistance (formerly New Business Assistance with New Enterprise Incentive Scheme)

Self-Employment Assistance supports all job seekers, including First Nations peoples, to gain the skills they need to start a new small business. Workforce Australia – Self-Employment Assistance replaced the New Business Assistance with New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) program on 1 July 2022. In 2021-22, there were 856 exploring being your own boss Workshop participants (3 per cent were First Nations peoples), 9,101 NEIS training participants (4 per cent were First Nations peoples) and 7,715 participants commenced a new NEIS business (3 per cent were First Nations peoples).

A procurement process was completed to select organisations to deliver the Self-Employment Assistance program from 1 July 2022.

### Next Steps

Based on current trends, Outcome 7 is likely to be on track to be achieved due to ongoing increases in the number of First Nations youth completing Year 12. As the employment gap closes and the level of educational attainment increases, ongoing gains towards achieving Outcome 7 lay a strong foundation towards the achievement of other outcomes. While the Australian labour market has recovered strongly from COVID-19, the labour market impacts on First Nations youth transitions are not yet fully visible. The ongoing impact of COVID-19 and broader global trends on the Australian economy could have a negative impact on the labour market outcomes for First Nations youth.





# Outcome 8

## Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

### TARGET 8

**By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed to 62%.**

#### Minister responsible

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations

#### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2016)	Latest	Assessment date
No new data to assess progress	51.0%	N/A	N/A

Progress against this target is to be assessed using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census data. At this time, 2021 Census data is not yet available at the appropriate level of detail to determine progress against this target.



## Outcome 8: Overview

A key focus of 2021-22 involved providing continued support to First Nations job seekers while also undertaking transformational reforms to mainstream employment services to implement Workforce Australia from 4 July 2022. Assistance provided through mainstream services was supported by complementary programs that supported First Nations parents to prepare for work and place-based projects through the Local Jobs Program.

Throughout 2021-22 these supply side supports were complemented by demand side measures that sought to increase economic opportunities for First Nations peoples, such as the Indigenous Procurement Policy. These supply and demand side measures remain in place but will be strengthened by the introduction of Workforce Australia, expansion of Self-Employment Assistance, the reforming of remote employment and community development services, and the implementation of the Indigenous Skills and Employment Program. Progress towards achieving Outcome 8 will be heavily influenced by gains in other outcomes including education and health.

## Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

### Workforce Australia

Mainstream employment services have continued to assist First Nations job seekers to build their skills and experience to find work during 2021-22. On 30 June 2021 there were 101,549 First Nations job seekers participating in jobactive (or 10.0 per cent of the caseload), with this number falling to 91,059 (11.8 per cent of the caseload) on 30 June 2022. While these trends are positive, the percentage of First Nations job seekers on the caseload remains higher than pre-pandemic levels.

As outlined in Outcome 7, Workforce Australia, replaced jobactive from 4 July 2022. Workforce Australia will deliver employment services through a digital platform and investment in tailored provider services for unemployed Australians who are at risk of being left behind.

Workforce Australia has specific measures in place to assist First Nations peoples to gain employment. Workforce Australia providers

have access to a flexible pool of funds (the Employment Fund) to offer support tailored to the needs of participants, employers, and the local labour market. This fund provides eligible participants with the work-related tools, skills and experience that correspond with their difficulties in finding and keeping a job in the relevant labour market. Some of the items that the fund can pay for include accredited training, driving lessons and driver's licence fees, public transport, communications and technology costs, as well as wage subsidies paid to employers. In some locations, providers hold specialist licences to deliver targeted services to First Nations peoples. This level of support will be critical in assisting First Nations job seekers during the coming years.

Workforce Australia will complement demand side and place-based measures in Outcome 7 and 8 by supporting First Nations job seekers to build their skills and qualifications to fill future employment opportunities.

Within Workforce Australia, Yarrabah Employment Services will continue and a new servicing contract has been entered into with Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council to continue community delivered employment services in the Yarrabah community.

### **Indigenous Skills and Employment Program**

The Commonwealth is also funding the Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP) that supports pathways to employment for First Nations peoples through flexible, place-based and developed investment. The new program will increase economic opportunity and drive actions that connect First Nations peoples to jobs, targeting skills acquisition and career advancement opportunities. ISEP will complement mainstream employment services. During the latter half of 2022, ISEP investments will be developed with communities before commencing in the first half of 2023.

### **ParentsNext**

ParentsNext is a pre-employment program that aims to help parents, including First Nations parents, plan and prepare for employment before their youngest child starts school. Parents receive assistance to help them identify their education and employment goals, improve their work readiness and link them to activities and services in the local community.

### **Local Jobs Program**

The Local Jobs Program is a \$276.3 million place-based initiative delivered in 51 Employment Regions through facilitators across Australia commencing in 2020-21 and runs until 2024-25. The Employment Facilitators chair local community Taskforces that assist in identifying local labour market challenges and collaborate to design solutions. Each Taskforce works to create a Local Jobs Plan that identifies key priorities. Currently 39 Employment Regions identify First Nations peoples as a priority in their Local Jobs Plans. The program

harnesses local knowledge, experience, and networks to get people into jobs and address current and emerging workforce needs. This benefits individuals and local businesses and strengthens local communities.

### **Next Steps**

Achieving Outcome 8 will be heavily influenced by broader economic conditions. While the Australian labour market has performed well, future economic conditions are likely to be challenging. These challenging economic conditions reinforce the importance of mainstream employment services actively supporting First Nations job seekers to remain engaged in the labour market and build the skills and experience to fill new and emerging jobs. On the supply side, the implementation of Workforce Australia is expected to support First Nations employment outcomes in the coming years. This will be supported by a range of complementary and place-based programs. A continued focus on those demand side measures that seek to increase the number of jobs available for First Nations peoples will be critical.

The House of Representatives has established a Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services. The Committee will examine Workforce Australia, including pre-employment and complementary programs and ParentsNext. The Committee is due to provide an interim report on ParentsNext by the end of February 2023, and on its broader remit by September 2023.

However, employment services alone cannot close the gap and ongoing employment growth combined with improving First Nations educational attainment will be required. Consistent with Priority Reform One, the Commonwealth is currently identifying potential opportunities to work with First Nations peoples on actions to support the achievement of Outcome 8.

# Outcome 9

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need

## TARGET 9

By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88%.

### Minister responsible

Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness

### Australian Bureau of Statistics Census progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2016)	Latest (2021)	Assessment date
Improvements from baseline	78.9%	81.4%	N/A

Nationally in 2021, the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriate (not overcrowded) housing was 81.4 per cent, an increase from 2016. This result is slightly below the trajectory provided by the Productivity Commission of 81.9 per cent in 2021.





## Outcome 9: Overview

Housing is a key determinant of wellbeing with adequate housing universally recognised as part of the right to an adequate standard of living. Supporting First Nations peoples to access adequate housing provides a foundation for progress against other targets. Living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing supports health, wellbeing and safety.

On 30 March 2019, the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments entered into a National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory (2018-23), through which the Commonwealth will deliver up to \$550 million in funding over 5 years to help address high levels of overcrowding in Northern Territory remote communities. The Commonwealth's investment is being matched by the Northern Territory Government to create a joint \$1.1 billion government investment over 5 years.

The Commonwealth has committed to a comprehensive housing agenda, bringing national leadership and a strong focus on stable and affordable housing for all, including First Nations peoples. The Commonwealth is committed to continuing to work with the sector, including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association (NATSIHA), in developing and implementing its commitments and considerations for future resourcing and funding, recognising the importance of First Nations housing and homelessness in remote, regional and urban areas.

## Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

### **National Housing and Homelessness Agreement Review**

The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA) provides around \$1.6 billion to states and territories to deliver housing and homelessness services and programs. The Productivity Commission has completed its review of the NHHA and the final report was published on 30 September 2022. The Review considered a broad range of issues impacting on housing and homelessness outcomes, including the effectiveness the NHHA in supporting appropriate housing for First Nations peoples. The Government will consider the Productivity Commission's findings and recommendations in developing the National Housing and Homelessness Plan.

### **National Partnership for Remote Housing in the Northern Territory**

The National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory is overseen by a Joint Steering Committee (JSC) that provides a platform for First Nation Territorians to inform housing outcomes. The Northern Territory Land Councils have an oversight role over the investment through the JSC and, through the Northern Territory's Local Decision-Making policy, provide First Nations voices to be heard at all levels of housing delivery, from tenants to decisions of strategy and policy.

## Outcome 9 continued

### Indigenous Home Ownership Program (IHOP)

The IHOP, run by Indigenous Business Australia (IBA), provides home loans with low deposit requirements and flexible repayment conditions to First Nations customers unable to access mainstream lending. The Commonwealth provides approximately \$23 million per year to IBA to contribute to the provision of loans under IHOP.

In 2020-21, the Commonwealth's Regional Construction Stimulus Measure (RCSM) provided an additional \$150 million in IHOP funding, distributed over three years, for IBA to deliver 360 new housing construction loans in regional Australia. As at 31 August 2022, IBA had approved 98 RCSM home loans to the value of \$47.2 million. As part of Budget 2022-23, the Commonwealth extended the delivery time for IBA to provide RCSM loans by a further two years, to 2024-25, to allow for COVID-related and other delays.

Overall, IBA wrote 461 IHOP home loans in 2021-22, to the value of \$192.5 million. This included 45 RCSM loans to the value of \$20.1 million.

### Next Steps

The Commonwealth has a substantial housing agenda and recognises working with First Nations stakeholders will be a key component to the success of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan. The Commonwealth will work to implement this significant housing agenda over the next year, which includes \$100 million for housing and essential infrastructure on Northern Territory homelands, \$200 million of returns from the Housing Australia Future Fund for the repair and maintenance of housing in remote First Nations communities, and a new remote housing agreement with the Northern Territory. These commitments will drive further progress towards Target 9 and enable First Nations peoples to secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and needs.

A Housing Policy Partnership is due to be set up by end of 2022. It will identify opportunities to work more effectively across governments, reduce gaps and duplication, and provide advice on policy and implementation, as well as strengthen the sector to address Outcome 9.



# Outcome 10

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system**

## TARGET 10

**By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15%.**

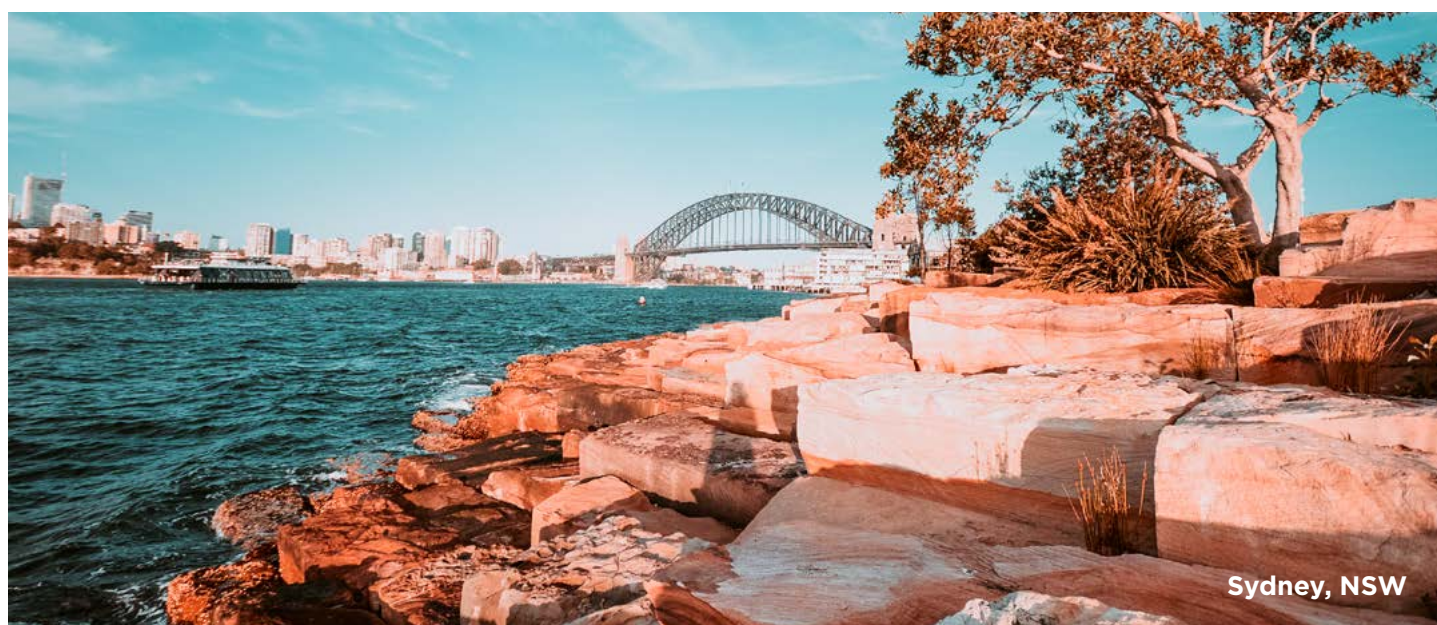
### Minister responsible

Attorney-General and Minister for Indigenous Australians

### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2019)	Latest (2021)	Assessment date
Not on track	2142.9 per 100,000	2222.7 per 100,000	March 2022

Nationally at 30 June 2021, the age-standardised rate of First Nations prisoners was 2,222.7 per 100,000 First Nations adult population, an increase from 2,142.9 per 100,000 First Nations adult population in 2019 (the baseline year). The national target of a reduction of at least 15 per cent in the incarceration rate is not on track to be met. However, this assessment should be used with caution as it is based on a limited number of data points.



## Outcome 10: Overview

The Commonwealth is committed to addressing social and economic issues that are identified as drivers of engagement with the criminal justice system and contribute to high incarceration rates. The Commonwealth funds programs to support healing and safer communities, strengthen families and enable children to thrive which are key to addressing social and economic issues such as child removal, youth detention and family violence.

Progress towards other Closing the Gap targets will assist the achievement of the broader justice outcomes. Most significantly, progress towards the targets relating to reducing out-of-home care (Target 12) and family violence (Target 13) will significantly assist in achieving justice outcomes. Progress on targets that focus on First Nations people's health and wellbeing, housing, education and employment outcomes will also benefit justice outcomes. The Commonwealth through the Justice Policy Partnership shares decision-making authority with First Nations peoples and organisations to drive and influence measurable change to justice outcomes. In recognition of the need to work in partnership to achieve Outcome 10, an initial focus for the Justice Policy Partnership is to identify governance arrangements between justice agencies and other human services sector agencies in each jurisdiction to drive joined-up action on justice outcomes.

To achieve Outcome 10, the Commonwealth is addressing the contributing factors listed above, along with the specific issues in the justice sector. The majority of prisoners in Australia are incarcerated for state and territory offences. Achieving Outcome 10 relies on action by state and territory governments, as each jurisdiction administers its own criminal justice system including policing activities, criminal laws, and bail and sentencing practices. The Commonwealth, through mechanisms such as the Justice Policy Partnership, will drive and influence action by state and territory governments to reduce incarceration rates. The Commonwealth is also working closely with states and territories to ensure that First Nations families and communities receive culturally appropriate support, including when engaging with the family court system.

## Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

### Support for specialist legal services

In the 2021-22 Federal Budget the Commonwealth has invested \$9.3 million over 4 years to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services to support clients involved in complex and/or expensive criminal cases and provide legal assistance to families of deceased individuals in coronial inquiries. The funding is being delivered through the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) 2020-2025, in consultation with states, territories and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (NATSILS).

Funding arrangements were finalised by the end of June 2022. This activity will be monitored through the reporting requirements outlined in the NLAP and as part of regular meetings with states, territories and NATSILS. The first reports on this activity will be received in September 2022. This work supports both Outcome 10 and 11.

### Addressing risks and drivers of incarceration

The Indigenous Advancement Strategy funds programs that support healing, strengthen families and enable children to thrive. These programs are key to supporting First Nations peoples at risk of incarceration, and to minimise the risk of contact with the justice system.

The Community Safety Patrol program employs First Nations peoples to patrol their local communities and offer culturally sensitive assistance and transportation to a safe place for those at risk of harm and potential incarceration. It is delivered by 21 providers across 90 communities, predominantly in the Northern Territory, but also in South Australia and Western Australia.

The Adult Through Care (ATC) programs provide intensive case management services to support First Nations peoples in prison to transition successfully back into their communities. Supports offered through this program address underlying drivers of incarceration and reduce risk of future contact with the justice system. Services are tailored to individuals and may include support to address accommodation, harmful alcohol and other drugs use and dependency, employment, and social and emotional wellbeing. Through Care programs have been shown to reduce reoffending and help improve socio-economic outcomes for its participants. ATC is delivered by 8 providers in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, South Australia and Tasmania.

### Culturally safe and appropriate family dispute resolution

The Commonwealth is investing \$8.3 million over 3 years (2021-2024) to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to support culturally safe and tailored models of family dispute resolution. The service delivery model for this measure will be developed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

## Outcome 10 continued

The Commonwealth consulted with the Coalition of Peaks, community organisations, interested community members and Commonwealth entities over a 10 week period between February and April 2022. Over 60 individuals and organisations participated in a number of virtual meetings and workshops and 18 written submissions were received. Feedback was obtained about what culturally safe and appropriate family dispute resolution for First Nations families could look like and how it would best operate. Feedback was also received about the name of the program, the grant selection methodology, the draft Grant Opportunity Guidelines and data and evaluation requirements.

The Commonwealth will engage closely with the Coalition of Peaks throughout the consultation process. The next step is a grant selection process through the Community Grants Hub in the second half of 2022, with the new services anticipated to commence in January 2023. This work supports Outcomes 10 and 13.

### **Family Violence Prevention Legal Services**

The Commonwealth has invested an additional \$26 million to improve the safety of First Nations women seeking support and legal assistance. This includes additional funding for the Family Violence Prevention Legal Services sector, developing a program to build the capacity of First Nations family safety services, and improving cultural safety of other family safety organisations. This work contributed to Outcomes 12 and 13.

### **Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships**

The Commonwealth is increasing funding to Domestic Violence Units and Health Justice Partnerships to provide outreach, such as online services, to women in rural, regional and remote Australia. This funding will provide additional legal, social and mental health support to women in these areas. All jurisdictions have countersigned the required amendments to the bilateral schedules under the National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-2025. All funding for 2021-22 was distributed to the states and territories.

### **Indigenous Liaison Officers (ILOs) in the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia**

The Commonwealth is providing ongoing funding for the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia to employ an additional 4 ILOs to support the operation of Specialist Indigenous Lists (SILs) in Adelaide, Alice Springs, Darwin, Melbourne and Sydney. ILOs provide culturally appropriate supports for First Nations litigants in the courts, engage directly with First Nations communities and supports, and provide culturally appropriate guidance and education for court staff. They also perform an important role of connecting First Nations Islander litigants to appropriate legal and non-legal support services.

The Commonwealth is continuing to work with the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia to identify opportunities to secure funding for the further expansion of ILOs and SILs.

## **Development of a National Bench Book on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the Legal System**

The Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration (AIJA) is being funded for the development and online publication of the National Bench Book on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and the Legal System by 30 June 2024, and to conduct and report on an evaluation by 30 June 2025. So far recruitment of the project team is in motion, the agreement between AIJA and the University of Melbourne has been prepared, and preparations have been made to establish a First Nations Advisory Group.

## **Next Steps**

The Commonwealth's commitments to justice for First Nations peoples include:

- \$81.5 million to establish an independent national justice reinvestment unit and expand justice reinvestment initiatives across Australia helping to decrease First Nations incarceration and deaths in custody.
- \$13.5 million in additional, specific, standalone funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services to assist First Nations families during and after all coronial processes related to deaths in custody.
- \$1 million to build capacity and support leadership of the NATSILS.
- \$3 million to support the work of the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum to increase access to justice for First Nations peoples experiencing or at risk of family violence, especially women and children.
- National action on deaths in custody by improving the reporting of deaths in custody at a national level and holding a national summit bringing together First Nations and state and territory representatives to ensure coordinated action on deaths in custody.

The Commonwealth will continue to drive national action through the Justice Policy Partnership, described under Priority Reform One.



# Outcome 11

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system**

## TARGET 11

**By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by at least 30%.**

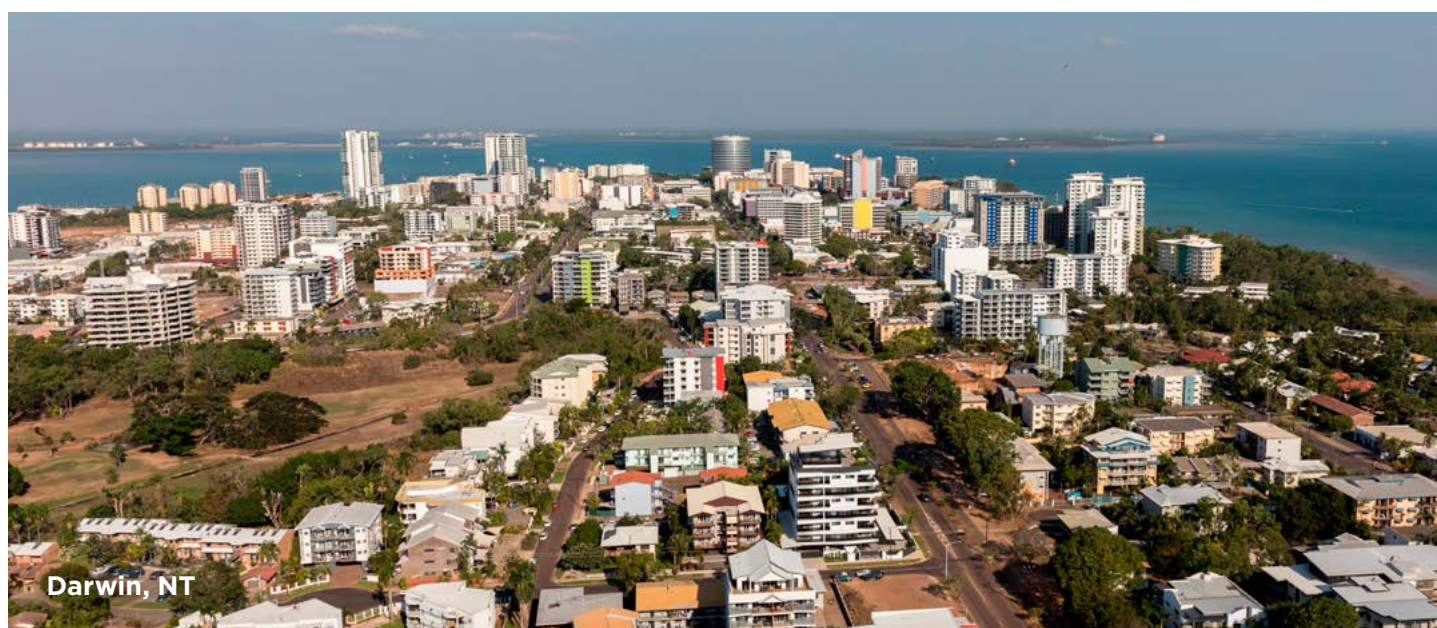
### Minister responsible

Attorney-General and Minister for Indigenous Australians

### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2018-19)	Latest (2020-21)	Assessment date
On track	31.9 per 10,000	23.2 per 10,000	June 2022

Nationally in 2020-21, the rate of First Nations young people aged 10-17 years in detention on an average day was 23.2 per 10,000 young people in the population, which is a consecutive decrease over 2 years from 25.7 per 10,000 young people in 2019-20 and from 31.9 per 10,000 young people in 2018-19 (the baseline year). This successive reduction over 2 years is a good improvement with the national target of a decrease of at least 30 per cent in the detention rate is on track to be met. However, this assessment should be used with caution as it is based on a limited number of data points.





## Outcome 11: Overview

As outlined in Outcome 10, a range of social and economic issues are drivers of engagement with the criminal justice system. In light of this, progress towards other Closing the Gap targets will assist the achievement of the broader justice outcomes. Most significantly for Outcome 11, progress towards the targets relating to reducing out-of-home care (Target 12) and ensuring that children thrive (Target 3) and are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years (Target 4) will significantly assist in reducing First Nations children's risk of contact with the criminal justice system. The Commonwealth is committed to working with First Nations people to ensure that First Nations children most at risk of entering the criminal justice system are provided the support they need to thrive in their early years, with strong connections to family, culture, community and country, and access to a culturally safe education.

To achieve Outcome 11, together with Outcome 10, the Commonwealth's approach addresses the contributing factors, along with the specific issues within the justice sector. First Nations children are almost exclusively imprisoned for state and territory offences such as public order offences and theft. As such, meeting Outcome 11 relies heavily on state and territory government action, as they administer their own criminal justice systems, including policing activities, criminal laws and sentencing practices. Through the Justice Policy Partnership, the Commonwealth is driving and influencing action by state and territory governments to reduce youth detention rates. The Commonwealth also funds the delivery of culturally appropriate justice services to First Nations families and communities, and support for young people leaving detention to transition successfully back into their communities.

## Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

### Addressing risks and drivers of incarceration

The Youth Through Care (YTC) programs provide intensive case management services to support First Nations young people in detention to transition successfully back into their communities. Supports offered through these programs address underlying drivers of incarceration and reduce risk of future contact with the justice system. Services are tailored to individuals and may include support to address accommodation, harmful alcohol and other drugs use and dependency, employment and social and emotional wellbeing. Through

Care programs have been shown to reduce reoffending and help to improve socio-economic outcomes for participants. YTC is delivered by 3 providers in the Northern Territory, Queensland and Victoria.

### Next Steps

The Commonwealth will continue to drive national action through its commitments to justice for First Nations peoples, described under Outcome 10, and through the Justice Policy Partnership, described under Priority Reform One.

# Outcome 12

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not overrepresented in the child protection system**

## TARGET 12

**By 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45%.**

### Minister responsible

Minister for Social Services

### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2019)	Latest (2021)	Assessment date
Not on track	54.2 per 1,000	57.6 per 1,000	March 2022

Nationally in 2021, the rate of First Nations children aged 0-17 years in out-of-home care was 57.6 per 1,000 children in the population, an increase from 54.2 per 1,000 children in 2019 (the baseline year). The national target of a reduction in the rate of out-of-home care by 45 per cent is not on track to be met. However, this assessment should be used with caution as it is based on a limited number of data points.



## Outcome 12: Overview

The Commonwealth is committed to improving outcomes and life trajectories for First Nations children at risk of entering, or already in, the child protection system. The Commonwealth will achieve this by transforming the way it works with states and territories and First Nations peoples, their organisations and communities. The Commonwealth recognises the importance, urgency and dedicated commitment required to reverse the over-representation of First Nations children in out-of-home care.

The Commonwealth aims to achieve systems reform through better integration and coordination of policies, programs and governance as well as a shift to early intervention and targeted support services. Transformative change will be achieved through enabling self-determination and the exercise of authority in child protection for First Nations peoples. The Commonwealth's primary mechanism to achieve this systems reform to achieve Target 12 is through *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 (Safe and Supported)*.

The Commonwealth is working in partnership with state and territory governments, the non-government sector and First Nations leaders to develop the First Action Plans under Safe and Supported which includes an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.

## Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

### Children and Family Intensive Support

Children and Family Intensive Support (CaFIS) provides support to children and families in the Northern Territory (NT) and Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands of South Australia to build on the strengths of families and communities to care for children in their culture and to address areas of concern that impact on children's safety and wellbeing.

The Commonwealth previously funded the Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS). In 2021-22, IFSS was recommissioned as CaFIS, in response to recommendations of the Productivity Commission Report on Expenditure on Children in the NT and an impact evaluation of IFSS.

Improvements have been made to strengthen the model including by ensuring CaFIS is strengths-based, child-centred, tailored to meet the needs of the community, and has a greater focus on the articulation, measurement and reporting of outcomes. In addition, a new grant opportunity was run for CaFIS and the majority of CaFIS services are now being delivered by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (11 of 12 providers with 1 delivering in a consortium with an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation).

## Outcome 12 continued

CaFIS aligns with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap by:

- Contributing to Target 12 (reducing the rate of over-representation of First Nations children in out-of-home care) by providing early intervention services for families.
- Contributing to Priority Reform Two (build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector) by working with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to deliver CaFIS services.

### **Improving Multidisciplinary Responses**

The Improving Multidisciplinary Responses project will provide \$49 million over 5 years (2022-2026) to review and redesign frontline service models to better support First Nations families with multiple and complex needs. All states and territories have agreed to participate in this project and bicultural design support partners have been contracted to lead the design work. This work will inform implementation via a grants process commencing in each jurisdiction in 2022-23.

Prior to service delivery commencing, consultation through tri-lateral stakeholder engagement (the Commonwealth, jurisdictions and the Aboriginal community-controlled sector) to ensure cultural capability and self-determination are key features to support First Nations people's engagement in the re-design of services.

The establishment of governance mechanisms and agreed appropriate cultural governance for implementation of the redesigned services, data and reporting requirements will be a focus of future work.

### **Developing the cultural awareness and trauma responsiveness of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child and family sector workforce**

A new grant is being developed to train up to 500 family and community service providers across Australia to provide cultural awareness and trauma-responsive training. This process will help inform future initiatives to provide similar training on a larger scale.

The Commonwealth has engaged key stakeholders, including peak bodies, cultural awareness training providers and child and family sector service providers to support the design and implementation of the grant.

Engagement is focused on understanding which priority regions and service providers should receive training in the initial phase and how to collect key data on employee's cultural awareness capabilities and quality of cultural awareness training available. Metrics will be developed to measure improvements in client engagements and outcomes over time. The grant opportunity will be advertised in September 2022 with an activity commencement date projected for December 2022.

### **Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families**

The SNAICC – National Voice for our Children has been contracted to undertake research to identify the strengths, opportunities, needs and barriers of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in delivering Commonwealth-funded programs, particularly Family and Children (FaC) activity programs.

SNAICC delivered an interim report in April 2022. The Final Report will capture feedback from surveys and in-depth interviews undertaken with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. Wunan Foundation, a First Nations organisation has been selected to lead Part 2 with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to identify and work to increase their strengths in the delivery of FaC Activity programs, including through sub-contracting arrangements with other organisations.



## **SAFE AND SUPPORTED: THE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR PROTECTING AUSTRALIA'S CHILDREN 2021-2031 (SAFE AND SUPPORTED)**

Safe and Supported was released in December 2021. It will be delivered by 2 sets of Action Plans with Outcomes Frameworks, a Theory of Change and a governance structure. This governance structure embeds a formal partnership between all Australian governments and First Nations leaders through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group (Leadership Group). The Leadership Group will share all decisions under Safe and Supporting that impact First Nations children, young people and families.

In addition to the First Action Plan, the Commonwealth has been working with First Nations representatives, state and territory governments, and the non-government sector to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific Action Plan, known as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan in particular addresses Focus Area 2 of Safe and Supported, addressing the over-representation of First Nations children in child protection systems. It focuses on actions and activities that will support the achievement of Target 12 and is underpinned by the 4 Priority Reforms.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan will include actions related to the exercise of authority in child protection by First Nations families, communities and providers; developing strategies to grow the proportion of services delivered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector; and actions to continue to build First Nations supports for data sovereignty.

The Commonwealth has also established a formal shared decision-making partnership with national First Nations representatives through the Leadership Group to support the development and implementation of Action Plans under Safe and Supported. These plans will describe the actions and outcomes needed to deliver sustained progress in reducing child abuse and neglect, and will include targeted strategies and actions to respond to Target 12. This includes actions which may relate to the exercise of authority in child protection by First Nations families, communities and providers, supporting self-determination for First Nations peoples.

The Commonwealth has allocated \$30 million for a suite of initiatives to support the goal of Safe and Supported. These measures will support progress towards achieving Target 12 and will cover a range of activities. This will include shifting investment from crisis responses to earlier intervention, increased advocacy at a national level for First Nations children through a National Advocate, building an evidence base and outcomes focused approach to the development of policies and programs, improving support for non-parent carers, and more targeted information and support for families.

Community Services Ministers (CSM) agreed that the Leadership Group should endorse the First Action Plans before they are finalised. At the CSM meeting on 5 August 2022, it was agreed that the First Action Plans would be agreed in principle in October 2022, with final approval and release in December 2022.

## Outcome 12 continued

### Outcomes and Evidence Fund

The Commonwealth is investing \$38.6 million over 3 years to fund projects that contribute to Targets 12 and 13, and the cross-cutting outcome area of disability, delivered by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.

First Peoples Disability Network, the Healing Foundation, SNAICC, and the National Forum for Family Violence Prevention Legal Services are participating in an Expert Panel to guide the design of the program, including scope, eligibility criteria, eligible grant activities and locations, and high-level reporting requirements.

### Next Steps

Once the Safe and Supported Action Plans are finalised, the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group will work in partnership to implement the Action Plans.

Safe and Supported has strong links with the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECPP) under Priority Reform One and the Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan (ECCD SSP) under Priority Reform Two. With a focus on ensuring First Nations children are born healthy and remain strong, nurtured by strong families and thrive in their early years, and strengthening support for children and families experiencing vulnerability and/or who are in contact with child protection systems.

Safe and Supported also recognises all Australians need to work together to keep children safe and achieve the best outcomes. This includes all jurisdictions working together in areas such as disability, early childhood education and care, health and mental health, alcohol and other drugs treatment and prevention including prevention of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, domestic and family violence, justice, housing, and employment.



# Outcome 13

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe

### TARGET 13

**By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced by at least 50%, as progress towards zero.**

#### Minister responsible

Minister for Social Services; and Minister for Women

#### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2018–19)	Latest	Assessment date
No new data to assess progress	8.4%	N/A	N/A

A current proxy baseline is identified for this target using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) data.

It is important to note the NATSIHS only includes a small amount of data relating to physical harm and does not capture all forms of violence against women and children.



## Outcome 13: Overview

Addressing the disproportionate rates of violence against First Nations women and children is an urgent national priority. Across the country, family violence, sexual assault and abuse against First Nations peoples is a major cause of personal harm, family and community breakdown, and social fragmentation. First Nations women experience disproportionately higher rates of violence than other Australian women and are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised because of violence.

The experience of family, domestic and sexual violence against First Nations peoples differs to that of other Australians as it is compounded by the ongoing effects of colonisation and racism. These impacts, particularly dispossession and the stolen generations, have left a legacy of trauma and loss that continues to affect First Nations peoples, their families and communities.

The Commonwealth recognises that First Nations peoples have the greatest knowledge of the issues that affect them, and how to draw on and strengthen the richness and strength of culture and community to address them. The Commonwealth has committed to a standalone National Plan for First Nations family safety (First Nations National Plan) acknowledging the need to listen and work together with a willingness and commitment to do things differently.

The Commonwealth is working in genuine partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence (Advisory Council) to develop a dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan (Action Plan) under the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 (National Plan).

## Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

### **National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032**

The Commonwealth is working closely with state and territory governments to finalise the National Plan which aims to connect the important work being done by all governments, community organisations and individuals to reduce violence so that we can work together to ensure each year more women and children live safely. A commitment to having the Action Plan and First Nations National Plan recognise

the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership in the national response to family violence against First Nations peoples.

The development of the National Plan has been informed by the work of the Advisory Council. The Commonwealth is working in genuine partnership and shared decision-making with the Advisory Council which is leading the development of the Action Plan.

This will ensure approaches to ending violence against First Nations women and children are community-led, culturally safe, and healing informed. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Ms June Oscar AO, and Associate Professor Marcia Langton AO, have been appointed as Special Advisors to the Advisory Council.

The Commonwealth has committed to delivering Australia's first standalone National Plan for First Nations family safety (First Nations National Plan). The development of the First Nations National Plan is expected to take some time to allow for a consultative process that supports genuine partnership and shared decision-making as articulated in the National Agreement. For the first time, the Commonwealth will have a dedicated plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's safety under the National Plan.

To support the First Nations National Plan, the Advisory Council will continue leading the development of the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan under the National Plan. The Action Plan will focus on addressing immediate family safety needs and establishing a strong base for the First Nations National Plan whilst its design and pathway for development are considered. This will set the foundations for healing informed, strength-based approaches that are culturally based and community-led, and ensure agreement across Commonwealth, state and territory governments to actions towards achieving Target 13.

### **National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse**

The *National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030* (National Strategy) was released on 27 October 2021. The National Strategy is a 10-year framework to establish a coordinated and nationally consistent approach to preventing and better responding to child sexual abuse. First Nations

peoples are a priority group under the National Strategy, which includes First Nations-led and place-based initiatives focusing on the prevention and awareness of child sexual abuse, and culturally safe support and healing from child sexual abuse. The Commonwealth is investing \$307.5 million to implement 2 (National and Commonwealth) action plans (2021-2024) to achieve the outcomes under the National Strategy.

The Commonwealth in partnership with states, territories and the non-government sector is delivering all of the National Strategy's 62 measures. Research, design and scoping activities have commenced to support implementation of these measures.

A public consultation paper was released in early January 2022 seeking feedback on a proposed model for the National Strategy Advisory Group and other consultative mechanisms. The Advisory Group was finalised in early April 2022 and membership includes First Nations peoples and organisations.

The Commonwealth has reprioritised resources to focus on developing an engagement mechanism for First Nations clinicians and other experts, who have experience with children with harmful sexual behaviours as well as related fields, to ensure the work of the Commonwealth is culturally safe and appropriate.

### **Improve information sharing between the family law and the family violence and child protection systems**

The Meeting of Attorneys-General (now the Standing Council of Attorneys General (SCAG)) endorsed the National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems (National Framework) on 12 November 2021. This will improve the exchange of information between the family law courts on one hand, and state and territory courts, child protection and welfare, firearms and police agencies on the other.

## Outcome 13 continued

The Commonwealth continues to support the co-location of state and territory policing and child protection officials in family law courts to provide timely information. The Commonwealth will continue to work with the Family Violence Working Group of SCAG to oversee the implementation of the National Framework, including progressing legislative amendments and supporting protocols needed to give effect to the National Framework.

An exposure draft process for consultation on legislative amendments to operationalise the National Framework will include consultation with peak national non-government organisations, including Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.

### Data Development

The Partnership recognises there is no single data point or source that currently could be used to measure progress toward Target 13. Rather multiple data sources are needed to truly understand and respond to the complex nature of violence against First Nations women and children. Initial actions under Target 13 seek to address this. Data development actions under the National Plan will prioritise strengthening the evidence-base by gathering information and conducting research on violence against First Nations women and children, and increasing reporting and in-depth analyses on the prevalence and incidence of violence.

As part of its commitment to data development, under the 2021-22 Budget, the Commonwealth will invest \$31.6 million over 5 years to establish a new primary national collection of family, domestic and sexual violence statistics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This collection will include and identify First Nations peoples living with disability. It will form a significant part of the evidence-base on violence against women and children, and address the gap in data on violence experienced by First Nations peoples.

### Next Steps

The Commonwealth is committed to working in true partnership with the Advisory Council to finalise the dedicated Action Plan under the National Plan. The Advisory Council will undertake a consultation process on the draft Action Plan, including at the Policy Forum on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family safety being held in September 2022 by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, as part of the final stage of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Project.

Once the Action Plan has been finalised, the Commonwealth will continue to partner with the Advisory Council, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, and other First Nations stakeholders to implement, monitor and report on progress. This will ensure that First Nations peoples, in particular First Nations women, have an ongoing voice in how the Action Plan is delivered and the measurement of achievement against its goals.

The Commonwealth is committed to ensuring close linkages between the National Plan and Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 (Safe and Supported), referred to under Outcome 12.

# Outcome 14

## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing

### TARGET 14

#### Significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero.

##### Minister responsible

Minister for Health and Aged Care; Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health; and Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

##### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2018)	Latest (2020)	Assessment date
Not on track	25.0 per 100,000	27.9 per 100,000	March 2022

Nationally, in 2020, the suicide rate (for New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined) for First Nations peoples was 27.9 per 100,000 people, an increase from 25.0 per 100,000 in 2018 (the baseline year). While caution should be used when considering progress against this target, due to the limited number of available data points, the increase of 11.6 per cent over the baseline indicates that this target is not on track to be met.

There is no specified trajectory or expected timeline for achieving zero suicide. This is because there is no acceptable rate of suicide – today or at any other time. A trajectory of a 75 per cent reduction in the suicide rate is presented here. This trajectory was one of 4 (20 per cent, 25 per cent, 50 per cent, and 75 per cent) developed through National Agreement processes and is presented here as the most ambitious of the target trajectories.



## Outcome 14: Overview

Social and emotional wellbeing is a holistic concept that recognises the importance of connection to land, culture, spirituality and ancestry, and the interrelated nature of these factors. First Nations peoples, families, kin and communities have a right to be socially and emotionally well, and be supported by mental health, suicide prevention and other services that empower them to achieve the highest attainable social and emotional wellbeing possible.

The Commonwealth has continued to build partnerships with First Nations communities and stakeholders, and establish critical components of the mental health and suicide prevention service system with states and territories. First Nations people's needs, experiences and voice will be central to guiding future actions under the Implementation Plan and the new National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement - ensuring a strong mental health and suicide prevention sector and workforce, enhancing connections with social and emotional wellbeing support, and holding mainstream services and organisations accountable to deliver safe, affordable and appropriate care.



Thursday Island, QLD



## Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

### **The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership in Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Strategy**

The Commonwealth is continuing its investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention leadership, including:

- \$6.1 million over 3 years to Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia as the national peak organisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention.
- \$1 million to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lived Experience Centre (auspiced through the Black Dog Institute) to support the inclusion of people with lived experience in the co-design, implementation and evaluation of suicide prevention activity.

The Commonwealth is working with Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia to revise the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy 2013-23. Gayaa Dhuwi is working with First Nations stakeholders to refresh the strategy which will aim to reduce the devastating and disproportionate impact of suicide and mental ill-health on First Nations peoples and their communities.

### **The National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing**

Gayaa Dhuwi has been engaged to provide advice to the Commonwealth on social and emotional wellbeing, and implementation of the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing (Framework). To inform this advice, Gayaa Dhuwi are delivering stakeholder gatherings on social and emotional wellbeing, 2 gatherings have been held. The next scheduled for the third quarter of 2022. Gayaa Dhuwi will provide advice to the Commonwealth in 2022 on options to progress this work.

All 31 Primary Health Networks are funded to lead primary mental health and suicide prevention planning and service commissioning at a regional level. This includes funding for services specific to First Nations peoples.

### **Funding for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Services**

Initiatives announced in the 2021-22 Federal Budget which aim to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and suicide prevention outcomes continue to progress, including:

- Establishing the first national 24/7 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Crisis Line (13 YARN). A comprehensive co-design process to inform the service was undertaken with First Nations peoples. 13 YARN commenced operation in March 2022, and will be nationally launched in the second half of 2022.

## Outcome 14 continued

- Working in partnership with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation to establish a community-led regional suicide prevention and aftercare service network, and First Nations mental health first aid training across the country – now referred to as the Culture Care Connect Program.
- Reviewing capability and funding frameworks within the Aboriginal community-controlled mental health sector to inform future direction of federal investment that aligns with Priority Reform Two.
- Finalising the National Suicide Prevention Leadership and Support Program which support several projects focused on suicide prevention for First Nations peoples.

Additionally, as part of the 2022-23 Budget, funding of \$8.5 million was announced for the Red Dust Program. This program aims to strengthen mental health and wellbeing through partnering with communities to design and deliver culturally appropriate social and emotional wellbeing, mental health care and support in First Nations communities and remote Northern Territory communities. The investment will also support the training and growth of local and First Nations workforces.

### Funding for healing

In 2021-22, under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy:

- Over \$33 million was provided to 114 providers for delivery of 126 activities to improve First Nations social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB). SEWB activities provide support for members of the Stolen Generations, working closely with Link-Up Services to reconnect families and address the impacts of intergenerational trauma. Activities also support individuals to address barriers to their wellbeing and improve SEWB outcomes for individuals and families.
- Up to \$5.4 million was provided for Workforce Development and Support Units to provide professional development and support for Commonwealth-funded SEWB and Alcohol and other Drugs workforces.
- \$6.6 million per year for the Healing Foundation, a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation that was established by the Commonwealth in 2009 after the formal apology to the Stolen Generations.
- \$12.8 million per year to Link-Up Services that provide support to Stolen Generations survivors and their families with family tracing, reunions, and SEWB counselling support. For information on the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme, refer to Priority Reform Three.
- \$0.6m per year to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies for family history tracing and provision of Certificate IV training for Link-Up workers to assist in the process of healing by providing family history research and support services for First Nations peoples and Link-Up Services, prioritising the needs of the Stolen Generations.

## Next Steps

The Commonwealth will continue to prioritise partnering with First Nations leaders in mental health, suicide prevention and social and emotional wellbeing, and work with communities to better understand how the design and delivery of mental health and suicide prevention services can best meet their needs. This includes the Partnership establishing the Social and Emotional Wellbeing (Mental Health) Policy Partnership under Priority Reform One.

Initiatives announced as part of the 2021-22 and 2022-23 Federal Budgets aim to support First Nations peoples and communities achieve the highest standard of social and emotional wellbeing possible, and reduce suicides. Initiatives are underpinned by strong partnership and shared decision-making approaches with First Nations organisations, which span across the initiative's design, implementation and delivery.

The National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement, signed by the Commonwealth and all state and territory Treasurers, recently came into effect on 8 March 2022. This Agreement and associated bilateral schedules set out the shared intention of all governments to work in partnership to improve the mental health of all Australians. It commits the Commonwealth and states and territories to improving mental health and wellbeing outcomes for a range of priority population groups, including First Nations peoples. This includes working with communities, organisations and businesses to improve First Nations mental health, social and emotional wellbeing, and access to, and experience with, mental health and wellbeing services and supports.

# Outcome 15

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters**

## TARGET 15A

**By 2030, a 15% increase in Australia's landmass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests.**

## TARGET 15B

**By 2030, a 15% increase in areas covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests in the sea.**

### Minister responsible

Attorney-General; and Minister for Indigenous Australians

### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Target	Status	Latest data	Assessment date
Land mass	On track	2021	March 2022
Sea country	Not on track	2021	March 2022

Target	Baseline (2020)	Latest (2021)	Increase since baseline
Land mass	3,911,679 km <sup>2</sup>	4,027,232 km <sup>2</sup>	3.0%
Sea country	90,252 km <sup>2</sup>	90,555 km <sup>2</sup>	0.3%

Nationally in 2021, 4,027,232 square kilometres of the land mass and 90,555 square kilometres of the sea country were subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests, which is an increase from 3,911,679 square kilometres of the land mass and 90,252 square kilometres of the sea country in 2020 (the baseline year). This is good improvement for land mass with the national target of a 15 per cent increase in land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests on track to be met. While it is an improvement for sea country, it is not enough for the national target of a 15 per cent increase in sea country subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests to be met. However, these assessments should be used with caution as they are based on a limited number of data points.

## Outcome 15: Overview

First Nations people's connection to their land and waters is central to their spiritual and cultural identity, and the wellbeing and health of their communities. Targets 15a and 15b recognise the priority of accelerating efforts to recognise First Nations people's legal rights and interests in their land and sea. In 2021-22, we have seen a more than 3 per cent increase in rights over land. This includes major achievements such as the return of nearly half of Kakadu National Park to Aboriginal hands in March 2022, resolving land claims more than 30 years old.

Outcome 15 also recognises the importance of removing barriers for First Nations peoples to exercise their valuable traditional knowledge and cultural practices in managing Country, to enjoy their rights to land and waters, and in doing so, to contribute to social, cultural, environmental and economic outcomes.

In 2021-22, the Commonwealth extended the Indigenous Rangers Program until June 2028 and 5 new Indigenous river ranger groups commenced projects in the Murray-Darling Basin. The Commonwealth has further committed to supporting the management of land and waters by First Nations peoples through increased investment in the Indigenous Protected Areas program and expansion of the Indigenous Rangers Program. This will include doubling the number of Rangers by 2030, growing the number of women rangers, and supporting youth pathways into land and water management. The Commonwealth also worked with Indigenous rangers, multiple jurisdictions, the private sector and non-government sectors to progress development of an Indigenous Ranger Sector Strategy that will continue to grow additional opportunities for First Nations peoples and businesses to deliver land and water management for the benefit of all Australians.

The Commonwealth continues to fund the native title system to support efficient resolution of native title matters. Native title has been determined over more than 40 per cent of Australia's land mass. For the first time in 2022, a new law allowed native title to be recognised over a park area where it had previously been extinguished.

### Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

#### Funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander land and native title interests

Approximately 54 per cent of all land in Australia now has a recognised First Nations interest under the *Native Title Act 1993* or Commonwealth or state statutory land rights regimes. 13.3 per cent is subject to native title claims. There are also 34 outstanding claims under the Commonwealth *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (ALRA) as well as other claims under state land rights regimes.

In 2021-22, the Commonwealth allocated \$139.7 million to the 4 Northern Territory Land Councils for the performance of statutory functions, including providing support for finalisation of the remaining outstanding Northern Territory ALRA land claims. This includes \$40 million under the Northern Territory Indigenous Economic Stimulus Package. The Commonwealth also provides funding and support for the operations of the Aboriginal Land Commissioner who conducts formal land claim inquiries under the ALRA to facilitate the finalisation of claims and associated grants of Aboriginal land (\$590,000 in 2021-22).

Significant progress has been made to finalise land claims including:

- Grant of Aboriginal land resolving 4 outstanding land claims in the Kakadu region covering a total land area of over 10,000 square km.
- Grant of land subject to the Elsey Region Land Claim comprising an area of approximately .05 square km.
- Procurement for the survey of land in relation to 14 claims, which will facilitate the grant of relevant Aboriginal land.
- A determination under the ALRA by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner which finally disposes of the Katherine Region Land Claim.
- Completion of one land claim inquiry and significant progress of inquiries into 6 further land claims by the Aboriginal Land Commissioner.
- In the 2021-22 and 2022-23 Budgets, the Commonwealth reprioritised Indigenous Advancement Scheme funding to significantly increase funding in Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs) and the broader native title sector.
- In 2021-22, \$36.7 million over 4 years was allocated to further strengthen PBC capacity and realise the benefits of native title for native title holders. This additional money was allocated into the Native Title program to support PBCs meet their basic operational and compliance requirements and for the PBC Capacity Building program.
- In 2022-23, another \$37.5 million was invested to further support PBCs and to develop a reform pathway for PBCs with the native title sector, including establishing a PBC reference group, adding to PBC Capacity Building, expanding training and Regional Forums for PBCs, and growing the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations' native title support services.



As at 30 June 2022:

- \$10.8 million was expended in PBC Basic Support in 2021-22 to help PBCs meet their corporate and operational obligations.
- \$8.8 million was expended in PBC Capacity Building grants in 2021-22 to help native title corporations build capacity to take advantage of economic opportunities, build long-term organisational capacity, and support effective native title agreement making.

Some examples of PBC Capacity Building initiatives are:

- Waanyi Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (\$168,200): Sustainable economic development and capacity building through Boodjamulla National Park transfer to Waanyi people. The Waanyi PBC is working with the Queensland Government to implement the transfer of Boodjamulla National Park (BNP). The primary aspects to the transfer are land title and co-stewardship/management. The transfer of BNP presents an opportunity to progress economic, social and cultural outcomes for Waanyi people.
- Bigambul Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (BNTAC) (\$486,440): Office and cultural hub. The activity supports BNTAC to build organisational capacity to pursue Bigambul people's aspirations for social, cultural and economic benefits from their native title by providing an office and cultural hub on Bigambul country as a base for corporate operations and development projects.

- Bardi Jawi Niimidman Aboriginal Corporation (BJNAC) (\$479,250): Implementing the inaugural Strategic Plan of the BJNAC. In November 2018, the BJNAC engaged external consultants to work with its directors for the purpose of formulating a Strategic Plan for the corporation. This process resulted in clear strategies being developed that will guide the future management of activities on Bardi Jawi lands. This funding supports BJNAC to implement these strategies.

The Commonwealth continues to fund the native title system to support the resolution of native title matters. This includes funding for the Federal Court of Australia, National Native Title Tribunal, native title claimants and the Native Title Anthropologists Grants Program.

The Commonwealth funds the National Native Title Council, as the peak body for the native title sector, through 5 contracts totalling \$8.7 million over 5 years focusing on PBC partnerships, PBC network building, skills development, resources and strategic policy for the PBC sector.

Native title has been recognised over 42 per cent (as at July 2022) of Australia's total land mass and over more than 90,000 square kilometres of sea country. Although the sea country target is showing as not on track, progress is being made toward determinations that include further areas of sea country.

The package of reforms contained in the *Native Title Legislation Amendment Act 2021* have now commenced and are contributing to the effective functioning of the native title system. For example, on 15 June 2022, the first determination of native title in reliance on the new section 47C of the *Native Title Act 1993* was made, recognising native title over the Pila Nature Reserve in Western Australia.

## SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES' MANAGEMENT OF LAND AND WATERS

The Indigenous Rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas Programs make a significant contribution to Outcome 15, facilitating the management of land and sea country by First Nations peoples according to aspirations of traditional owners and community. The programs contribute to cultural, social, economic and environmental outcomes through supporting First Nations people's access to Country, capacity to care for Country, practice of culture on Country, work on Country and learning on Country.

As at 30 June 2022, 128 Indigenous ranger groups supported approximately 1,900 full-time, part-time and casual jobs through 892 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, including 767 FTE jobs for First Nations peoples, and approximately 571 FTE jobs for women.

In 2021-22 the Commonwealth approved over \$746 million to extend the Indigenous Rangers Program to June 2028, providing longer-term funding security for Indigenous ranger organisations and facilitating the capacity for groups to undertake longer-term planning to manage Country. A further commitment was made by the Commonwealth to expand the Indigenous program providing more than \$636 million to double the number of rangers, including increasing the number of women rangers, building further capacity in the First Nations land and water management sector, and creating additional pathways for youth ranger programs.

In 2021-22, \$3.1 million was approved over 2 years to establish 5 new ranger groups, under the Murray-Darling Basin Indigenous River Rangers Program, creating up to 27 new Indigenous FTE positions across the Basin to work on waterway health. A further \$9.5 million was committed to extend the program until 2025.

As at 30 June 2022, Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) covered 49 per cent of the National Reserve System. Approximately 769 people were employed (full-time, part-time and casual) through IPA projects in the previous year, including 721 First Nations peoples.

In 2021-22, 3 IPAs were formally dedicated, following a period of consultation to develop IPA plans of management, adding an additional 10.5 million hectares to the National Reserve System. The Sea Country IPA program saw the addition of 10 consultation projects to potentially develop IPAs over approximately 6.4 million hectares of marine and coastal areas nationally.

Work continues across the Commonwealth, jurisdictions, First Nations land and water management organisations, and other related stakeholders to progress a strategy to further build the First Nations land and water management sector to amplify cultural, social, environmental and economic outcomes where there are ranger and IPA projects in place. In 2021-22, a draft of the Indigenous Rangers Sector Strategy was released for public consultation.



## Next Steps

The Commonwealth will continue to work with the Land Councils and Northern Territory Government, to ensure the resolution of the 34 outstanding land claims in the Northern Territory are prioritised.

The Commonwealth will also continue to bring together and work with jurisdictions to consider and develop native title policy and reforms, with an emphasis on streamlining legal and administrative arrangements for resolving land claims.

The Commonwealth will continue to implement Indigenous rangers and IPAs programs and work towards the delivery of the Indigenous Rangers Sector Strategy.



Broome, WA



# Outcome 16

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing**

## TARGET 16

**By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken.**

### Minister responsible

Minister for the Arts

### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2018–19)	Latest	Assessment date
No new data to assess progress	123	N/A	N/A

Progress against this target is to be assessed using National Indigenous Languages Surveys (NILS) data. At this time, updated NILS data is not yet available to determine progress against this target.



## Outcome 16: Overview

With the National Agreement now including a target that acknowledges the critical role language and culture plays in the ongoing health and wellbeing of First Nations peoples, a national focus and dialogue has been welcomed.

The Commonwealth has reflected on how they do things, and determined partnerships with First Nations peoples and organisations was a critical element for any headway on Target 16. First Languages Australia's input and advice has been essential in determining the location of the 3 new Indigenous Language Centres, and the establishment of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages Directions Group (Directions Group) which supports direct dialogue between First Nations peoples and the Commonwealth on policy priorities, key initiatives, and actions to support the Decade.

The Commonwealth is also investing in The Indigenous Language Dictionaries Project which enables the preservation of First Nations languages, facilitating support to educational programs and access to shared language resources.

The Commonwealth understands clearly that priorities and directions are to be led by First Nations peoples, and will be focusing on strengthening relationships and engagement. Creating strong partnerships and linkages with First Nations language stakeholders is vital to ensure a shared understanding on where to focus efforts going forward.



### Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

#### **First Languages Australia – advocacy body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language groups throughout Australia, funded under the Indigenous Languages and Arts program**

The Commonwealth has a close working relationship with First Languages Australia (FLA) and relies on FLA's expertise and partnerships across the sector to inform and progress the Commonwealth's investment under the Implementation Plan.

#### **The Indigenous Languages and Arts Program**

The Indigenous Languages and Arts (ILA) program and Indigenous Language Centre infrastructure are the primary mechanism for Commonwealth-driven progress against Target 16. To support the critical role of the ILA program in achieving Target 16, the Commonwealth is investing an additional \$22.8 million over 4 years from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for the following measures:

- \$12.1 million to support the existing ILA-funded Indigenous Language Centres to expand their capacity to do more of the critical work. In 2021-22, the Commonwealth allocated \$3.1 million evenly between each Indigenous Language Centre in the network.
- \$5.6 million to establish new Commonwealth-funded Indigenous Language Centres. The Commonwealth has consulted with FLA to seek its views on priority locations for the establishment of 3 new Indigenous Language Centres. The Commonwealth is engaging with Indigenous-led community organisations that could potentially deliver the services in south-west Queensland, south coast New South Wales, and Alice Springs.

- \$0.8 million to ensure endangered languages can continue to be recorded and preserved for future generations by protecting the most at-risk Indigenous languages. The Commonwealth has a grant agreement in place with FLA committing an additional \$200,000 per annum from 2021-22 to 2024-25 for its existing Priority Languages Support Project.
- \$4.3 million for the development of place-based partnerships between language centres and local service delivery partners in health and early childhood to support First Nations peoples to learn and use language(s) across their lifetimes. Indigenous Language Centres were invited to submit a grant application for this place-based opportunity. Applications have been assessed with Coalition of Peak partners, and successful applicants are expected to be notified by the end of August 2022.

The additional Closing the Gap investment is ongoing, except for the place-based partnerships pilot which terminates in 2023-24. The ILA program continues to consult with FLA on distribution of the Closing the Gap investment to ensure First Nations voices are at the centre of decision-making, including on priority areas that require additional funding support and ensuring investments are targeted and community-led.

A 12-month pilot using the Cultural Development Network's proprietary Takso online platform is also underway with 2 Indigenous Language Centres and one Aboriginal arts-based cultural organisation, which are all currently funded under the ILA program. Takso will be used to collect culturally appropriate data to measure outcomes across 5 public policy domains broadly understood

as cultural, social, economic, environmental and governance – each with its own schema of measurable outcomes. The pilot will test a range of culturally appropriate data collection systems to determine the most effective method for measuring the ILA program's contributions to Target 16. The pilot will sit alongside existing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data collection mechanisms, and others under development to inform progress against Target 16.

### **The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies Indigenous Language Dictionaries Project**

The Indigenous Language Dictionaries Project enables the preservation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, facilitating support to educational programs and access to shared language resources.

On 24 January 2022, the Commonwealth provided the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies with \$400,000 to 30 June 2023, to deliver the Indigenous Language Dictionaries Project. This funding contributes to the Commonwealth investment of \$2.482 million over 5 years, 2018-19 to 2022-23. The project will produce a minimum of 5 First Nations language dictionaries and will work with an existing network of researchers and linguists.

The dictionaries will preserve and support the ongoing use of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, be a resource shared by the language community and broader community, act as a key reference tool to support education programs that support the learning of languages; and build pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture.

### **Next Steps**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Partnership under Priority Reform One, will ensure a joined-up approach between all governments and First Nations representatives to drive a sustained approach to increasing the number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken.



# Outcome 17

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives**

## TARGET 17

**By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion.**

### Minister responsible

Minister for Communications

### Productivity Commission national progress against the target

Status	Baseline (2014-15)	Latest	Assessment date
No new data to assess progress	73.5%	N/A	N/A

Nationally, in 2014-15, 73.5 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over accessed the internet in their home. As the Productivity Commission has noted, there is no comparable data on home access to the internet for non-Indigenous Australians. As such, this means that measuring the pathway to achieving equal levels of digital inclusion is not currently possible. The Commonwealth recognises the importance of addressing the data issues relating to this target and notes the work currently underway, including the finalisation of the Data Development Plan by the National Indigenous Australians Agency.

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) provided data on Indigenous Australians from 2014 to 2020. Across that period, the ADII found that First Nations digital inclusion was improving, however, the rate of improvement was broadly in line with improvements in the national score.



## Outcome 17: Overview

While there has been some modest improvement in digital inclusion levels for First Nations peoples over recent years, as measured by the Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII), challenges remain.

The release of the First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan (FNDIP) is expected to support better planning and coordination of efforts across government. In parallel to the FNDIP, the Commonwealth is exploring options to leverage existing programs and investment more effectively, focusing on building on the initiatives that have shown to achieve meaningful results, in close consultation with First Nations communities.

There is a need to improve Target 17 data collection in order to enable parties to the National Agreement to track progress towards equal levels of digital inclusion, as well as measure the impact of specific policy measures. Improved data collection will also assist parties to better understand the complexities of the digital inclusion challenge for First Nations peoples, in relation to access, affordability and digital ability and across different geographies.



### Commonwealth actions contributing to progress

#### Mobile Black Spot Program

The Commonwealth is investing \$380 million in the Mobile Black Spot Program through the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts, which will improve mobile coverage and competition across Australia.

More than 1,270 new base stations have been funded across Australia, with over 1,040 now complete and delivering real benefits to Australian communities. This includes funding for 216 base stations in the Northern Australia with many in remote First Nations communities such as Punmu, Parnngurr and Kalumburu.

State and local governments have co-invested with the Commonwealth, mobile network operators and infrastructure providers, businesses and community organisations, with a total investment of more than \$875 million towards new mobile infrastructure.

#### Regional Connectivity Program

The Regional Connectivity Program (RCP) aims to improve connectivity in regional and remote Australia. The Commonwealth is investing \$117.4 million in more than 130 placed-based telecommunications infrastructure projects through the RCP. This includes funding for 44 projects in Northern Australia, with many in remote First Nations communities such as Munkata, Napranum and Bidyadanga. This funding has supported total new investment of over \$232 million in fibre, fixed wireless, mobile and satellite infrastructure in regional and remote Australia.

A further \$137.5 million has been committed to the RCP, including around \$70 million in dedicated funding to improve telecommunications infrastructure through the Connecting Northern Australia initiative.

#### 2021 Regional Telecommunications Review

The report of the 2021 Regional Telecommunications Independent Review Committee was tabled on 14 February 2022. It emphasises the importance of reliable, modern, high-quality telecommunications to regional, rural and remote areas, including First Nations communities. The Better Connectivity for Regional and Remote Australia Plan is relevant to key issues raised in the report.

#### NBN Co initiatives - Connection and Capability

NBN Co is focusing on regional and remote First Nations locations with low digital participation rates (152 locations) to influence take up of NBN high speed broadband services to greater than 25 per cent of premises taking up a service. The company's focus is on identifying and connecting health care clinics, educational facilities and arts studios. Through its Community Wi-Fi program and Awareness Campaigns, NBN Co has reduced the number of locations with digital penetration rates below 25 per cent from 152 to 48. NBN Co advised that an additional 46 Community Wi-Fi services were deployed by 30 June 2022, bringing the total to 106 Community Wi-Fi solutions in community.

An evolution of the Digital Capability Tool (Tool) for First Nations peoples was released in July 2022. Digital capability resources linked to the Tool will be fit for purpose initiatives such as IndigiMob and Be Deadly Online. NBN Co and the Jonathon Thurston Academy have entered a 2-year agreement to support communities through life skills programs such as JTLeadLikeAGirl. Though this program is for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities nationally, it has a specific focus on the underserved areas where NBN Co is digitally enabling through the Community Wi-Fi program.



NBN Co is continuing to promote and encourage First Nations business participation and innovation online through the Innovate with NBN Grants Program. In 2021-22, NBN Co received 22 submissions for the Indigenous category of the program. It includes a total of \$95,000 funding with \$10,000 per category (across 7 categories) and \$25,000 for the overall winner. The program will be run again in 2022-23 and there will be an Indigenous category as in previous years.

NBN Co will also work with partners such as the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation to focus on uplifting digital capability in communities specifically related to health, education and business digital participation.

### **NBN Co's Regional Co-Investment Fund**

NBN Co's \$300 million Regional Co-Investment Fund is being used to co-invest with federal, state and territory governments and local councils to deliver access to higher speed wholesale broadband services over the NBN to homes and businesses in regional and remote areas of Australia. Across all NBN co-investment programs, about 9 per cent of requests relate to First Nations communities.

### **First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan**

The Commonwealth is developing the FNDIP, focused on improving access, affordability and digital ability for First Nations peoples. In September 2021, the Commonwealth commenced working with relevant members of the Coalition of Peaks, First Nations organisations and businesses, industry, and Commonwealth agencies to develop the FNDIP.

### **Remote First Nations Communities Telecommunications activity**

The Commonwealth continues to monitor and maintain a network of up to 229 community payphones, 301 Wi-Fi telephones and 24 Wi-Fi hubs in remote First Nations communities. These services provide public telephone and public Wi-Fi internet services in around 450 communities.

### **Free calling from Telstra payphones**

Arrangements are in place to provide all Australians with access to broadband, voice and payphone services regardless of their location. As part of these arrangements, under its contract with the Commonwealth, Telstra operates payphones in approximately 570 remote First Nations communities. In August 2021, Telstra introduced free national calling from its payphones, thereby continuing the free calling arrangements it first trialled in remote First Nations communities.

### **Next Steps**

The Commonwealth will continue to work with First Nations stakeholders, states and territories and industry to address the digital divide in access, affordability and digital ability, and on the broader outcome on access to information. This includes addressing the data gaps relating to the First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan, releasing the FNDIP, and exploring options to leverage existing programs, including building on initiatives that have shown to achieve meaningful results, in close consultation with First Nations stakeholders.

# Cross-cutting outcome areas

The Commonwealth recognises that the First Nations population is incredibly diverse, and different groups of First Nations peoples have different needs. In recognising this diversity, unique experiences must be considered when designing policy and programs to achieve outcomes for all First Nations peoples. The Commonwealth recognises that all Ministers responsible for socio-economic targets have a role in embedding cross-cutting areas to achieve their outcomes.

The National Agreement includes the commitment that, where available and appropriate, data against targets and outcomes will be disaggregated by disability, gender and age to understand whether actions being taken are addressing the needs of these groups.

Recent Productivity Commission reporting provides limited evaluation disaggregated by disability, gender and age for selected targets. Information and data on outcomes across different population groups (disaggregation of the targets) is somewhat limited at this stage for Closing the Gap. Broad patterns indicate that barriers to better outcomes appear to have a greater impact on First Nations peoples than other Australians.

**The following sections highlight what the Commonwealth is doing in addition to the socio-economic outcomes actions to cater for these groups**



## DISABILITY

### Minister responsible

Minister for Social Services

### Overview

First Nations communities have been inclusive of people with all capabilities and have supported participation in community and cultural life for millennia. First Nations people with disability are more likely than other people with disability to participate in community and cultural life. However they experience acute socio-economic challenges outcomes across all other indicators. The Commonwealth is working in partnership with First Nations peoples with disability and community-controlled organisations to ensure equitable and equal opportunity to participate in all aspects of life.

In the Implementation Plan, disability is a cross-cutting outcome area, recognising First Nations peoples with disability experience acute inequalities across all social-economic outcomes. Commonwealth investments under all socio-economic outcome areas must consider the need of people with a disability to ensure they are both inclusive and accessible to achieve equitable outcomes.

A key achievement this year is the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan (Disability SSP) being developed in partnership between First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN), all governments and representatives of the community-controlled sector.

The Disability SSP will serve as a key link between Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031 and Closing the Gap. It will provide a framework aligning the key priorities of the Strategy and Closing the Gap, while ensuring all implementation efforts are centred in human rights and strength-based approaches. The Disability SSP also aligns with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with a Disability, including its principles, processes and outcomes.

A specialised First Nations Disability Policy Unit has been established in the Department of Social Services to drive and facilitate operationalising the cross cutting structural and cultural reforms of access and inclusion across the Commonwealth, embedding the Priority Reforms within the Social Services portfolio, and embedding access and inclusion in the department's policies and programs.

### Funding First Peoples Disability Network

FPDN has been funded by the Commonwealth to support the development and early implementation of the Disability SSP under the Virtual Funding Pool for the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector. As a key implementation measure, FPDN was resourced to develop and implement the National Disability Footprint. The Footprint is designed to strengthen the representation of First Nations peoples with disability across all policy areas to ensure their needs, expectations and priorities are met, and the community controlled disability sector is strengthened to effectively support First Nations peoples with disability. Elements include strengthening data, research and knowledge infrastructure, a culturally inclusive workforce and training footprint, and enhancing the community disability rights footprint.

The Department of Social Services has also extended funding for FPDN under the Disability Representative Organisations program to provide systemic advocacy as the Disability Representative Organisation for First Nations peoples with disability until 30 June 2024.

### Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031

On 3 December 2021, the Commonwealth launched Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031, developed by all levels of government with people with disability, their families, carers and representatives. Australia's Disability Strategy is seeking to have an inclusive Australian society that ensures people with disability can fulfil their potential as equal members of the community, including First Nations peoples with disability. It recognises the importance of adopting an intersectional approach when delivering on its policy priorities. This recognises that a person, or group of people, can be affected by multiple forms of discrimination and disadvantage. The implementation of Australia's Disability Strategy complements the National Agreement and the Disability SSP.

Australia's Disability Strategy includes a collaborative leadership model to support implementation. A key feature of the shared leadership model is all portfolios should include a focus on First Nations peoples with disability when bringing forward actions to address the Closing the Gap socio-economic targets.

The First Nations Disability Policy Unit in the Department of Social Services is working to ensure the alignment between Closing the Gap and Australia's Disability Strategy, as well as embed structural and cultural reforms. In order to build Commonwealth public service policy capability of First Nations inclusion and disability priorities, the department has partnered with Dr Scott Avery, a leading Worimi researcher who is profoundly deaf, to co-design and deliver policy, evidence, and research policy forums. The purpose of these policy forums is to increase Commonwealth agencies' capability to ensure inclusion, accessibility and equity for First Nations peoples with disability in public policy within their areas of responsibility.

The endorsement of Closing the Gap and Australia's Disability Strategy by all levels of government presents an important opportunity to drive national action, amplify commitments under all frameworks, and improve outcomes with and for First Nations peoples with disability.

### **Disability Data Scoping Study**

The Commonwealth is funding FPDN to develop a national First Nations Disability Data Scoping Project under the Disability SSP. The project responds to the considerable limitation in available prevalence and administrative data as well as the approaches to disaggregation of data of First Nations peoples with disability. This is due to different definitions and methodologies across both disability and First Nations data sets as well as the under-reporting of disability by First Nations people due to a range of different cultural and other reasons. The First Nations Disability Data Scoping Project aims to identify gaps and develop a data strategy for prevalence, administrative and community-led data, including a specific focus on remote areas. The study will take account of Closing the Gap and the Disability Strategy data improvement plans and Outcomes Framework. This also includes alignment with the National Disability Data Asset. FPDN is undertaking this project in collaboration with Western Sydney University. Key scholars and Commonwealth agencies co-designed the project.

A First Nations People and Disability Working Group has been established to support the implementation of this study which commenced in mid-2022.

### **Disability Standards for Education 2005**

The implementation of recommendations from the 2020 Review of the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Standards) includes specific consideration of the experiences and needs of First Nations students with disability.

In 2020, the Commonwealth engaged Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) to co-design new information resources to help students with disability and their caregivers to understand their rights under the Standards. In developing these new resources, CYDA engaged with the FPDN to address the needs of First Nations students with disability. The resources aim to provide practical, user-friendly information that is culturally appropriate.

As part of the implementation, the Commonwealth also engaged Education Services Australia to develop new online case studies to support teachers and school leaders with their obligations under the Standards. Case studies will include examples of culturally capable engagement with First Nations students with disability and their caregivers.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership is considering the needs of First Nations students with disability and their communities in a project to support teachers and school leaders to implement more inclusive practices, including through making reasonable adjustments in schools. This work will help schools to better support First Nations students with disability.



## **GENDER AND SEXUALITY**

### **Minister responsible**

Minister for Women; and Minister for Indigenous Australians

### **Overview**

In the Implementation Plan, gender and sexuality is a cross-cutting outcome area, recognising First Nations gender and sexuality represents a commitment to reflect the distinctive needs of First Nations women, girls and LGBTQIA+SB (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual + Sistergirl and Brotherboy) communities in policies and programs across all socio-economic targets.

The Commonwealth is delivering and supporting a number of initiatives to elevate the voices and views of First Nations women, girls and LGBTQIA+SB communities in advocacy and decision-making. When gender and sexuality are meaningfully incorporated into policy and program design, as part of a range of intersectional considerations, it ensures that the diverse experiences and identities of all First Nations peoples are included, supported and empowered. Gender Impact Assessments will assist policy makers to understand the impact policies will have on women and the advancement of gender equality for all women.



Broken Hill, NSW

## **Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) project**

The Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Securing Our Rights, Securing Our Future Report (Women's Voices Report) was delivered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commission, Ms June Oscar AO on 9 December 2020. The Women's Voices Report is a landmark document that will inform policy and give all governments a better understanding of the issues that impact First Nations women and girls. On 6 April 2022, the Commonwealth responded to the Women's Voices Report and its recommendations to embed the empowerment of First Nations women and girls and their communities in agency processes.

The Commonwealth has formally recognised the critical elevation of First Nations women and girls' voices to the national level through the calls for action, pathways forward, and overarching recommendations of the Women's Voices Report.

The Commonwealth has acknowledged the intersectional challenges and compounding disadvantage faced by First Nations women and girls and recognises that their roles in families and communities are central to the development, growth and diversity of Australian society. This is why the Commonwealth continues to support the delivery of the Women's Voices Project including the widespread dissemination, accessibility and improved understanding of the findings contained within the Women's Voices Report throughout 2021.

In 2022, the Commonwealth is supporting the delivery of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Leadership Summit and a research project to identify effective strengths-based programs and approaches for First Nations women and girls.

## **Improve gender representation on boards**

The Commonwealth is exploring options to improve gender representation on the boards of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations registered under the *CATS/ Act*.

Development of a mandatory Australian Public Service wide culturally sensitive gender training.

The Commonwealth is exploring options for the development of an Australian Public Service-wide culturally sensitive gender and sexuality training program to inform decision-makers and policy and program design. This action will improve the capability of the Australian Public Service to identify and eliminate racism, sexism, homophobia and transphobia across the Commonwealth, and challenge unconscious biases that result in decisions based on stereotypes. This work is being undertaken to create an online resource for all Australian Public Service staff.

### AGED CARE

#### Minister responsible

Minister for Health and Aged Care

#### Overview

In the Implementation Plan, aged care is a cross-cutting outcome area, acknowledging that Elders and older First Nations peoples play an important role in their communities through teachings, guidance and passing down of traditional knowledge to future generations. Many Elders and older First Nations peoples are affected by health issues later in life. There is a need to consider how to meet their needs through culturally appropriate and safe aged care services that can be delivered within a reasonable distance to enable ongoing connection to families, communities and Country.

The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety findings demonstrated the need to improve the aged care experience of older First Nations peoples. A new consumer-focused Aged Care Act is likely to include specific changes for First Nations peoples to include entitlement to receive support and care that is culturally safe and recognises the importance of their personal connection to community and Country.

By 1 July 2023, an Australian Aged Care Commission will be established and will include a designated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner responsible for ensuring that appropriate aged care services are widely available for First Nations peoples.

The new aged care system being developed out of the reforms is expected to make specific and adequate provision for the diverse and changing needs of First Nations peoples and ensure they receive culturally respectful and safe, high quality, trauma-informed, needs-based and flexible aged care services regardless of where they live which will ultimately improve this group's outcomes across the Closing the Gap Framework.



## **The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety**

The Commonwealth responded to the Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety on 11 May 2021 to ensure our oldest and most vulnerable Australians receive care that supports and respects their dignity, and recognises the contribution they have made to society.

The Commonwealth agrees with the Commissioners that strong action is needed for fundamental and ambitious reforms. In 2021-22, the Commonwealth invested \$17.7 billion into aged care reform, designed to deliver sustainable quality and safety in home and residential aged care services. Part of this investment includes \$572.5 million to improve outcomes for First Nations peoples:

- The Commonwealth has invested \$106 million to improve the aged care experience of older First Nations peoples through trusted face-to-face support, and to better assist with navigate and access care. Following group and individual co-design sessions in October and November 2021, a Limited Tender was released in December 2021 and closed on 11 February 2022. A contract for services with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation to deliver the Trusted Indigenous Facilitator program was executed on 22 June 2022 with a staged roll-out of services expected to commence in some jurisdictions from early 2023.
- The Aged Care Capital Assistance Program (ACCAP) is providing \$397 million over 4 years to support investment in essential aged care infrastructure projects to increase access to quality, sustainable and culturally safe aged care services; Key cohorts include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people living in regional, rural, and remote Australia; and people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

- The Commonwealth is providing \$61.5 million in additional funding to National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program service providers to better support the delivery of quality and culturally safe aged care services to older First Nations peoples to remain close to home and country. This additional funding was provided to National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Care Services in early 2022.
- The Commonwealth is delivering on its investment of \$8 million over 4 years to assist Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations to build their capacity to deliver culturally safe aged care services to older First Nations peoples. The first of these capacity building projects will be delivered to organisations in Perth, Darwin and Western Sydney metropolitan areas and will focus on governance, regulation, business, training and leadership.

The Commonwealth has agreed to develop a new consumer-focused Aged Care Act which is likely to include specific changes for First Nations peoples to include entitlement to receive support and care that is culturally safe and recognises the importance of their personal connection to community and Country.

An Australian Aged Care Commission will be established by 1 July 2023 to include a designated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commissioner responsible for managing the performance of the Commission's functions and ensuring that appropriate aged care services are widely available for First Nations peoples. The Commissioners should have the powers to do all things necessary or convenient in connection with the performance of their functions.

# Annual reporting requirements

## Meeting our commitments

This Annual Report meets all the requirements set out in the National Agreement. See check list:

As per the National Agreement, jurisdictional Annual Reports will:	Section reference	✓
Commonwealth Parties will include in their annual reports (Clauses 118 and 119) information on partnerships, including the number of partnerships, those that have been reviewed, for each partnership which strong partnership elements are met and unmet, and what has been achieved through the partnerships. (Clause 37)	See Priority Reform One and Appendix 1	✓
Commonwealth Parties will include in their Jurisdictional annual reports information on action taken to strengthen the community-controlled sector based on the elements of a strong sector, as outlined in Clauses 118 and 119. (Clause 47)	See Priority Reform Two and Appendix 2	✓
Commonwealth Parties will include in their annual reports information on how they are undertaking and meeting the transformation elements. (Clause 65)	See Priority Reform Three	✓
Commonwealth Parties will include in their annual reports information on action taken to improve access to data and information by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. (Clause 73)	See Priority Reform Four	✓
Commonwealth Parties, by July 2022, agree to review and identify current spending on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services to identify reprioritisation opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly to community-controlled organisations. Actions taken to implement the outcomes of these reviews will be included in Jurisdictional implementation plans and annual reports. (Clause 113)	See Priority Reform Two	✓
<p>The Parties agree to make public information on their progress on the Agreement and their Implementation Plans through annual public reports. The annual public reports will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• draw from the dashboard and annual Productivity Commission data compilation report, to ensure consistency of measures of progress</li> <li>• include information on efforts to implement this Agreement's 4 Priority Reform areas, particularly outlining how implementation aligns with the principles for action</li> <li>• demonstrate how efforts, investment and actions are aligned and support the achievement of Closing the Gap goals</li> <li>• list the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations that have been allocated funding for the purposes of Clause 24, 55a and 55b, and 135 of this Agreement; and subject to confidentiality requirements, also list the names of the organisations and the amount allocated. (Clause 118)</li> </ul>	See Priority Reforms and Socio-economic target chapters	✓
Jurisdictions' public reports will be tabled in their Parliaments. (Clause 119)		✓



# Appendix 1

## Commonwealth Partnership Stocktake 2022

**The Commonwealth conducted a Partnership Stocktake between March and April 2022 to count and review existing partnership arrangements in order to provide a baseline measurement of current partnership arrangements and measure progress on Priority Reform One.**

This baseline will support the Commonwealth's efforts to increase the number of formal partnerships to support shared decision-making on the design and delivery of programs that affect them.

The Partnership Stocktake identified 31 partnerships and shared decision-making arrangements that meet some or all of the strong partnership elements set out in Clauses 32 and 33 of the National Agreement. This is depicted in the table below. These partnership arrangements work to improve policy and place-based outcomes in key areas such as health and disability, early childhood care and education, housing, justice, land and sea, employment, and language and data.

### **National Agreement Clause 32: Strong Partnership Elements**

- A.** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners are appointed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- B.** Formal partnerships are supported by an agreement.
- C.** Decision-making is shared.

### **National Agreement Clause 33:**

Adequate funding is needed to support Parties to partner with government.



## Appendix 1 continued

No:	Name of Partnership	Partners	Socio-economic Outcome Area	Clause 32			Clause 33
				A	B	C	
1.	Justice Policy Partnership	5 Coalition of Peaks members and 5 independent First Nations members Attorney-General's Department and National Indigenous Australians Agency	Outcomes 10 and 11	✓	✓	✓	✓
2.	Disability Sector Strengthening Plan Working Group Partnership	First Peoples Disability Network Department of Social Services	Cross cutting outcome; Disability	✓	✓	✓	✓
3.	Housing Sector Strengthening Plan Working Group Partnership	Northern Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Health Alliance (NATSIHA) Department of Social Services	Outcome 9	✓	✓	✓	✓
4.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ear and Hearing Health Partnership Committee	National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) Hearing Australia	Outcome 1 and cross cutting outcome; Disability	✓	✓	✓	✓
5.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and suicide prevention partnership	Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia (GDPSA) Department of Health and Aged Care	Outcome 14	✓	✓	✓	✓
6.	Health Sector Strengthening Plan Working Group Partnership	NACCHO Department of Health and Aged Care	Outcome 1, 2 and 14	✓	✓	✓	✓
7.	Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan Working Group Partnership	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) Department of Education	Outcome 3 and 4	✓	✓	✓	✓
8.	Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan Joint Working Group	The Coalition of Peaks members National Indigenous Australians Agency	All outcomes	✓	✓	✓	✓
9.	Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment Corporation interim Board partnership	8 of the 12 Board members are Aboriginal Territorians National Indigenous Australians Agency	Outcome 8	✓	✓	✓	✓
10.	Partnership Agreement on the Reforming of Indigenous Cultural Heritage Protections	The First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	Outcome 15	✓	✓	✓	✓

No:	Name of Partnership	Partners	Socio-economic Outcome Area	Clause 32			Clause 33
				A	B	C	
11.	Partnership on Closing the Gap governed by the Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap	The Coalition of Peaks National Indigenous Australians Agency	All outcomes	✓	✓	✓	✓
12.	Empowered Communities	Empowered Communities National Indigenous Australians Agency	All outcomes	✓	✓	✓	✓
13.	Partnership with a Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group on the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 and Safe and Supported Action Plans	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group Department of Social Services	Outcome 12 and 13	✓	✓	✓	✓
14.	The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Protection (NATSIHP) Sub-committee	NACCHO; Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia; Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of New South Wales; Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory; First Peoples Disability Network; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation; Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation; Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health and Community Services; Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia; Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Service; Aboriginal Hostels Limited Department of Health and Aged Care	Outcome 1	✓	✓	✓	✓
15.	Kids Safe, Families Together, Communities Strong: 10-year Generational Strategy for Children and Families, Generational Strategy Steering Group and Generational Strategy Implementation Group	Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APONT); Northern Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) Department of Social Services National Indigenous Australians Agency	Outcome 2, 3, 12 and 13	✓	✓	✓	✓
16.	Connected Beginnings Program	10 Indigenous organisations that have an agreement Department of Education	Outcome 3 and 4	✓	✓	✓	✓

## Appendix 1 continued

No:	Name of Partnership	Partners	Socio-economic Outcome Area	Clause 32			Clause 33
				A	B	C	
17(i)	Stronger Places, Stronger People Gladstone (Qld)	First Nations Working Group and First Nations people on whole of community Leadership Group Department of Social Services	All outcomes	✓	✓	✓	✓
17(ii)	Stronger Places, Stronger People Logan (Qld)	Gnirigomindala Karulbo leadership group Department of Social Services	All outcomes	✓	✓	✓	✓
17(iii)	Stronger Places, Stronger People Bourke (NSW)	Bourke Tribal Council Department of Social Services	All outcomes	✓	✓	✓	✓
17(iv)	Stronger Places, Stronger People Far West Region (SA)	Far West Aboriginal Community Leadership Group Department of Social Services	All outcomes	✓	✓	✓	✓
18.	Integrated Approach to Suicide Prevention Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group	NACCHO and members appointed by NACCHO Department of Health and Aged Care	Outcome 14	✓	✓	✓	✓
19.	Djalkiripuyngu (Blue Mud Bay) Indigenous Enterprise Project Partnership	Baniyala Garrangali Aboriginal Corporation (BGAC) and Djalkiripuyngu Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)	Outcome 8	✓	✓	✓	✓
20.	Joint Management of Booderee National Park	Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council (WBACC) Director of National Parks	Outcome 15	✓	✓	✓	✓
21.	Joint Management of Kakadu National Park	Bininj/Mungguy Traditional Owners Parks Australia	Outcome 15	✓	✓	✓	✓
22.	Joint Management of Uluru-Kata Tjuṯa National Park	Anangu Traditional Owners Parks Australia	Outcome 15	✓	✓	✓	✓
23.	Supporting Healing for Families Indigenous Expert Group	Healing Foundation, SNAICC, NACCHO and Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia National Indigenous Australians Agency	Outcome 14	✓	✓	✓	✓
24.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence	NACCHO and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations Department of Social Services	Outcome 12 and 13	✓	✓	✓	✓

No:	Name of Partnership	Partners	Socio-economic Outcome Area	Clause 32			Clause 33
				A	B	C	
25.	Indigenous Economic Mapping project	National Native Title Council, Western Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation, Ashburton Aboriginal Corporation, Jundaru Aboriginal Corporation Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)	Outcome 8	✓	✓	✓	✓
26.	International Decade of Indigenous Languages Directions Group	First Languages Australia and representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts	Outcome 16	✓	✓	✓	✓
27.	Sea country values mapping partnership	Mandubarra, Wuthathi, Giringun, Darumbal and Woppaburra Traditional Owner groups Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority	Outcome 15	✓	✓	✓	
28.	Stronger Communities for Children	10 Northern Territory Local Community Boards National Indigenous Australians Agency	All outcomes	✓	✓	✓	
29.	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Advisory Group	Representatives from peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health organisations Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Healthcare	Outcome 1, 2, 14 and crosscutting outcome: Disability and Aged Care		✓	✓	✓
30.	Community Child Care Fund Restricted Closing the Gap Expansion Expert Advisory Group	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people Department of Education	Outcome 3 and 4		✓	✓	
31.	First Nations Aged Care Governance Group	Organisations including, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the National Indigenous Advisory Group on Aged Care</li> <li>NACCHO</li> <li>First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN)</li> <li>the Healing Foundation</li> <li>Indigenous Allied Health Australia (IAHA)</li> </ul> Department of Health and Aged Care	Crosscutting outcome: Aged Care		✓	✓	

**Total: 31**



# Appendix 2

## Progress on Sector Strengthening Plans

### **National Agreement Clause 47:**

Government Parties will include in their Jurisdictional annual reports information on action taken to strengthen the community-controlled sector based on the elements of a strong sector, as outlined in Clauses 118 and 119.

In their annual reports, jurisdictions, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, may prioritise implementation of different Sector Strengthening Plan actions at different times, depending on the requirements of the sector in a particular jurisdiction. Progress on implementing Sector Strengthening Plans for Health and Early Childhood Development Care, agreed in-principle by Joint Council in December 2021, is outlined below. Ongoing annual reporting will also provide progress updates on jurisdiction's actions to implement the Housing and Disability Sector Strengthening Plans, which have recently agreed in-principle by Joint Council in August 2022, as well as additional Sector Strengthening Plans as they are developed.

**Progress on key Commonwealth actions from the Early Childhood Care and Development and Health Sector Strengthening Plans is outlined on the following pages.**

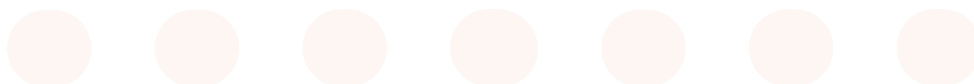
## Action Table Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan

### A. Workforce

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
A1	Examine 2021 National Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Workforce Census data to develop an accurate picture of the current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC workforce across Australia, and the workforce for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC services.	The Commonwealth in collaboration with state and territory governments and sector representatives.	Existing or to be determined by the parties.	The Department of Education is working with early childhood stakeholders, including First Nations representatives, to develop a relevant analysis framework for the 2021 National ECEC Workforce Census results. The department will work with SNAICC - National Voice for our Children (SNAICC) to consider future opportunities to assess gaps in the information captured with respect to the community-controlled sector. They will also consider further opportunities for a dedicated research project and data evaluation process to fulfil this action, as needed.
A2	Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander career development through secondary school career engagement, preparation of the workforce, on-the-job staff development, mentoring, career development and progression.	All governments and sector representatives	Existing or to be determined by the parties	<p>All governments collaborated with the sector to co-design a new 10-year National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy, released by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) in October 2021. SNAICC is a member of ACECQA's Stakeholder Reference Group that contributed to the development of the Strategy and has participated in a range of reference group and bilateral meetings.</p> <p>The 2 initial national priorities for targeted workforce programs under Focus Area 2 are First Nations peoples, and the regional and remote workforce. As the Strategy's Implementation and Evaluation Plan is developed for the Education Minister's consideration in the second half of 2022, the Department of Education and SNAICC will remain engaged to help build strategic partnerships that support First Nations students to enrol in and complete children's early childhood education and care qualifications.</p>
A3	Support for tertiary qualification pathway programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early educators in line with promising practice.	All governments and sector representatives	Existing or to be determined by the parties	<p>The National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy includes specific focus on building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and regional and remote workforce. As the Strategy's Implementation and Evaluation Plans are developed, discussions may include consideration of how to enhance tertiary qualification pathway programs and scale-up initiatives that currently demonstrate successful, community-led solutions.</p> <p>This action may also be further considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership established in August 2022. It will bring together representatives from all governments and Peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members to ensure a joined-up approach to early childhood care and development. The Policy Partnership will have oversight and drive development of policy reforms proposed as part of this Sector Strengthening Plan.</p>

## Appendix 2 continued

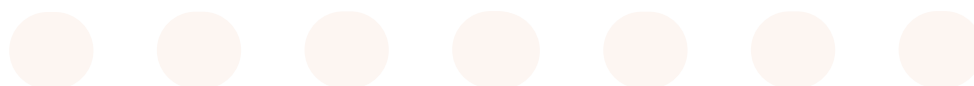
No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
A4	Development of long-term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development plan that identifies priorities and actions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development, in conjunction with the implementation of the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy.	All governments and sector representatives	Existing or to be determined by the parties	<p>The development of a dedicated long-term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development plan is an ongoing priority for consideration by all governments and SNAICC as the lead representative for the early childhood Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector.</p> <p>This action may also be considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (refer to A3).</p>
A5	Support, develop and resource community-based workforce development initiatives led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care services.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>The Commonwealth has contributed \$9.1 million, including \$2 million from the Department of Education, towards SNAICC's Intermediary Support Services Pilot. This pilot aims to build capability and support for community-based workforce development initiatives in participating early childhood education and care services.</p> <p>As the pilot continues to operate until the end of 2024, the Commonwealth will work with SNAICC to evaluate successes and opportunities to expand the program and apply learnings to other programs, where possible.</p> <p>This action may also be considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (refer to A3).</p>



No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
A6	Scope current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and community-controlled child protection and family support workforce and projected workforce development needs in line with sector growth under Priority Reform 2 of the Closing the Gap Agreement.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>Through the Action Plans under Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 (Safe and Supported), all governments will implement actions to build the capacity of the child and family Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and community-controlled sector, including its workforce.</p> <p>The Stronger ACCO, Stronger Families measure provides \$3.2 million over 2 years to identify the strengths, barriers, needs and opportunities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in delivering Commonwealth programs, particularly Family and Children Activity (FaC) programs.</p> <p>This includes building the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to better report on their outcomes, building the capacity of their workforce, and expanding to deliver new or different services. This measure also supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and non-Indigenous organisations to work together in genuine partnership to deliver FaC programs involving sub-contracting arrangements.</p> <p>The Improving Multidisciplinary Responses for Families with Multiple and Complex Needs measure provides \$49.0 million over 5 years to work with states and territories to review and re-design frontline service models to better support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with multiple and complex needs.</p>
A7	Develop and implement strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and community-controlled sector workforce development.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	Progress reported against A6 is the same as A7.
A8	Develop the cultural competency and trauma responsiveness of the child and family sector workforce engaged through DSS grant funding.	The Commonwealth in collaboration with state and territory governments and sector representatives	\$7.7 million over 3 years	<p>This measure will invest \$7.7 million over 3 years to develop the cultural awareness of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream child and family sector organisations and workforce, funded by the department.</p> <p>It will include grant/s to one or more First Nations organisation/s to develop the cultural awareness of frontline workers and organisations to assess, re-design and implement training modules for frontline workers.</p> <p>This grant opportunity seeks to support the delivery of a training and development program to improve the cultural competency and trauma-informed capabilities of service providers in the child and family sector.</p> <p>A stakeholder engagement strategy has commenced with national members from the Coalition of Peaks, cultural awareness training providers, and child and family sector providers. Publishing of the grant opportunity is anticipated for September 2022.</p>

## Appendix 2 continued

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
A9	Assess the needs of and increase the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in the child and family sector (specific initiative led by DSS)	The Commonwealth in collaboration with state and territory governments and sector representatives	\$3.2 million over 2 years	<p>SNAICC has been procured to develop a research report for Part 1 of the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families measure. The research report looks into the strengths, needs, barriers and opportunities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in delivering Commonwealth programs, and particularly FaC programs. The Interim Report and Survey (to be sent to more than 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations) has been submitted and the final report is due in mid-2022.</p> <p>Wunan Foundation, a First Nations organisation has been engaged to lead Part 2 of the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families measure. In early June 2022, the selected lead organisation commenced implementation of a trial to support other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and mainstream organisations to work together in genuine partnerships, and support the capability and growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to deliver FaC services.</p> <p>Trial sites are to be confirmed and will be in a number of locations where the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters and Communities for Children Facilitating Partners programs operate.</p>
A10	Priorities for action under Safe and Supported	Community Services Ministers	To be determined by the parties	Australian governments, in partnership with SNAICC and an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group, are working on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and General Action Plan under Safe and Supported. This is due to be considered and finalised in late 2022.





## B. Capital Infrastructure

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
B1	Identify capital infrastructure gaps for community-controlled ECEC services and support capital infrastructure development through relevant programs to address gaps.	All governments, in consultation with sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>SNAICC's research report for the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families measure will draw on a survey of over 200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations. A section of this report, to be completed in mid-2022, identifies capital infrastructure gaps and relevant options to address them.</p> <p>Identification of capital infrastructure gaps for community-controlled ECEC services is an ongoing priority for consideration by all governments and SNAICC, as the lead representative for the early childhood Aboriginal community-controlled sector.</p> <p>In August 2021, the Commonwealth announced \$29.9 million to expand the Community Child Care Fund (CCCCF) restricted program by establishing up to 20 additional high quality ECEC services in partnership with mainly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations, predominantly in remote and very remote areas with low or no supply of Child Care Subsidy (CCS) approved child care. Ongoing consultations are in place to ensure unique community-specific needs are considered, including potential access to flexible service delivery and integrated supports. The first year of the expansion funding will include an establishment phase where services will be able to access the Community Partner function for foundational supports to assist them to become operational in the second year.</p> <p>This action may also be considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (refer to A3).</p>
B2	Scope service gaps to inform roll out of future community-controlled integrated early years' services in locations of high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and high child vulnerability.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>Scoping service gaps to support future community-controlled integrated early years' services in relevant locations is an ongoing priority for consideration by all governments and SNAICC, as the lead representative for the early childhood Aboriginal community-controlled sector.</p> <p>The Connected Beginnings expansion and its enhanced community consultation process prioritises the funding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations wherever possible, and where they are assessed through community consultation and assessment processes as the most appropriate and suitable organisation. Similarly, the CCCC Restricted Expansion (refer to B1) supports this action.</p> <p>This action may also be considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (refer to A3).</p>
B3	Identify and plan for opportunities to transfer land and building ownership to community-controlled early years services to support their long-term sustainability and security.	State and territory governments	To be determined by the parties	Nil.

## Appendix 2 continued

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
B4	Map and review existing infrastructure for multi-functional community hubs that can address the multiple psychosocial needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children delivered through community-controlled organisations. Consider opportunities to address infrastructure gaps and needs.	To be determined	To be determined by the parties	Nil.

### C. Service Delivery

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
C1	Undertake an assessment of the supporting materials and resources, and Authorised Officer training under the National Quality Framework (NQF) and National Quality Standards (NQS) to address gaps and ensure they provide quality, culturally appropriate and accessible supports to Authorised Officers and services for the regulation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector.	All governments and sector representatives.	To be determined by the parties	<p>The Department of Education has engaged ACECQA and SNAICC to assess the supporting materials and Authorised Officer training under the NQF and NQS Standards. The project scope includes the identification and analysis of any issues, gaps or opportunities for development in national supporting materials, resources and training, and development of recommendations on the approach to address gaps or to build on opportunities for national resources and training. ACECQA, in collaboration with SNAICC, will consult with state and territory regulatory authorities, who regulate services and employ and train authorised officers, and sector representatives.</p> <p>This project will produce an evidence-based report for governments to consider, with recommendations outlining future implementation opportunities to further support community-controlled organisations.</p> <p>Given the cross-jurisdictional scope of this action, the outcomes of this project may also be considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (refer to A3).</p>

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
C2	Provide support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to operate within the scope of the NQF, where appropriate, and to meet and exceed standards against the NQS.	All governments and sector representatives, in collaboration with ACECQA	The Commonwealth funding of \$1.5 million for the Quality and Safety Training Package and a further \$950 thousand for the regulation projects.	<p>The Department of Education has also engaged ACECQA to run an 18-month professional development program focused on quality improvement and building capability in key areas of safety and supervision in CCCF Restricted Expansion services.</p> <p>The South Australian Education Standards Board and the Northern Territory Department of Education have been engaged to monitor and report on the quality and safety performance of 52 identified CCCF Restricted Expansion funded services across the 2 states. Expenditure for the projects is approximately \$1.05 million. They will run until June 2024 and will provide baseline data to inform the next steps towards regulation under the NQF, where appropriate, and to meet and exceed standards against the NQS.</p> <p>The Commonwealth has contributed \$9.1 million, including \$2 million from the Department of Education, towards SNAICC's Intermediary Support Services Pilot that will support participating services to strengthen and build compliance, capacity and development on the NQF requirements in the community-controlled early years sector. The Pilot will provide support such as resources, workshops, policies, and procedures assistance, mentoring and capacity building for participating services in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. As the pilot continues to operate until the end of 2024, governments will work with SNAICC to evaluate successes and opportunities to expand the program and apply learnings to other programs, where possible.</p>
C3	Support for the Aboriginal community-controlled ECEC sector through expansion of existing programs and services.	All governments and sector representatives, in collaboration with ACECQA	Connected Beginnings \$81.8 million CCCFR \$29.9 million State and territory support to be determined	<p>The Commonwealth has committed \$81.8 million to expand the Connected Beginnings program by bringing it to 50 sites by 2024-25 and helping ensure First Nations children aged 0-5 achieve the learning and development milestones necessary to achieve a positive transition to school. The expansion and enhanced community consultation process prioritises the funding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations wherever possible, and where they are assessed through community consultation and assessment processes as the most appropriate and suitable organisation.</p> <p>A framework will be developed in 2022-23 in partnership with SNAICC to guide how the program can further involve and support community-controlled organisations. SNAICC have also been engaged in the role of Community Partner to support the program expansion and help guide the implementation approach on the ground. This includes foundational support for existing sites, co-design processes, capacity building, and mentoring and support for collective impact.</p> <p>The CCCF Restricted Expansion (refer to B1) supports this action.</p>

## Appendix 2 continued

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
C4	Develop and implement strategies to build community-controlled sectors to respond to child and family needs at levels aligned to engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with child protection systems.	State and territory governments	To be determined by the parties	To be considered as part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander first 5-year Action Plan for Safe and Supported.
C5	Identify opportunities to progressively transfer authority in child protection to community-controlled organisations.	State and territory departments with responsibility for child protection and family support	To be determined by the parties	<p>Over the life of Safe and Supported, all governments have committed to progressive systems transformation which has First Nations self-determination at its centre. This includes taking active steps towards families, communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations partnering in child protection system design and administration.</p> <p>Additionally, it includes a commitment to undertake reform in each jurisdiction's next review of relevant legislation and policy, with a view to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fully embedding the 5 elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle.</li> <li>• Supporting delegation of authority in child protection to families, communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.</li> <li>• Supporting the principle of self-determination.</li> </ul> <p>How this will occur will be considered as part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander first 5-year Action Plan for Safe and Supported.</p>
C6	Improve Multidisciplinary Responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with multiple and complex needs.	All governments	\$49 million	<p>The Department of Social Services has progressed the following as part of the design phase of these measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confirmed state and territory commitment to participate in the measure.</li> <li>• Engaged the Australian Centre for Child Protection and PricewaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consultancy to lead development of the measure's design and stakeholder engagement.</li> <li>• Engaged 2 service providers representing different operating contexts to provide service provider input into the design phase.</li> <li>• Engaged the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group for Safe and Supported on governance consultations and a shared decision-making, framework for the measure. Trilateral consultations will commence in August 2022.</li> </ul> <p>Commence the implementation phase of the measure in 2022-23 with the evaluation and reporting phase commencing in 2025-26.</p>

## D. Governance

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
D1	Investigate mechanisms to consolidate and streamline reporting and compliance requirements for community-controlled integrated early years services.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	Review of the reporting and compliance requirements for community-controlled integrated early years services is an ongoing priority for consideration by all governments and SNAICC. This action may also be considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (refer to A3).
D2	National, state and territory community-controlled peak organisations provide direct supports for quality governance development, with government resources and support.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	The Commonwealth has contributed \$9.1 million, including \$2 million from the Commonwealth Department of Education, towards SNAICC's Intermediary Support Services Pilot, which is standing up jurisdictional peak organisations in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. As the pilot continues to operate until the end of 2024, governments will work with SNAICC to evaluate successes and opportunities to expand the program and apply learnings, where possible.
D3	Governance measures under Safe and Supported	Community Services Ministers	To be determined by the parties	The Department of Social Services is working with jurisdictions, SNAICC, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group, and the non-government sector on a draft governance structure which includes mechanisms for shared decision-making between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, consistent with the National Agreement. The structure is expected to be released in 2022, alongside the final Action Plans.
D4	Investigate mechanisms to consolidate and streamline reporting and compliance requirements for community-controlled child protection and family support services.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	The Commonwealth is considering this action as Focus Area 3 of Safe and Supported is focused on improving information sharing, data development and analysis.
D5	Investigate the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led standards for the community-controlled sector in each state and territory.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	Nil.



## Appendix 2 continued

### E. Consistent Funding Model

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
E1	Review early childhood education and care program and funding arrangements, including in Implementation Plans, to determine and implement changes needed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled ECEC services.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>Review of early childhood education and care program and funding arrangements is an ongoing priority for consideration by all governments and SNAICC.</p> <p>This action may also be considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (refer to A3).</p>
E2	Increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled service delivery.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<p>The Department of Social Services has committed to increasing funding to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector through 3 relevant initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcomes and Evidence Fund – \$38.6 million for 2021-2024.</li> <li>• Improving Multidisciplinary Responses – \$49 million 2021-22 to 2025-26.</li> <li>• Stronger Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, Stronger Families – \$3.2 million for 2021-22 and 2022-23.</li> </ul> <p>The department is utilising its data analytic capability to estimate the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations receiving Department of Social Services funding to establish a baseline of current funding provided to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.</p> <p>The Commonwealth has committed \$81.8 million to expand the Connected Beginnings program by bringing the program to 50 sites by 2024-25 and helping to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-5 achieve the learning and development milestones necessary to achieve a positive transition to school. The expansion and enhanced community consultation process prioritises the funding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations wherever possible, and where they are assessed through community consultation and assessment processes as the most appropriate and suitable organisation.</p> <p>A framework will be developed in partnership with SNAICC to guide how the program can further involve and support these community-controlled organisations. SNAICC have also been engaged in the role of Community Partner to support the program expansion and help guide the implementation approach on the ground. This includes foundational support for existing sites, co-design processes, capacity building, and mentoring and support for collective impact.</p> <p>The CCCF Restricted Expansion (refer to B1) supports this action.</p>

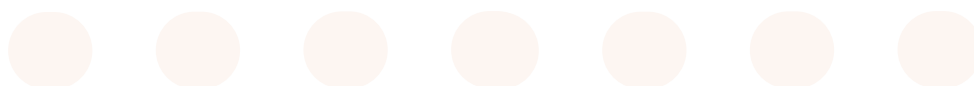
No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
E3	Develop an agreed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early childhood education and care sector definition and scope to inform efforts to build and strengthen the sector.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	Developing an agreed definition for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early childhood education and care sector is an ongoing priority for consideration by all governments and SNAICC.  This action may also be considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (refer to A3).
E4	Reduce service gaps and establish new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled integrated early years' services in locations of high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and high child vulnerability.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	The Connected Beginnings expansion (refer to B2) and the CCCF Restricted Expansion (refer to B1) supports this action.  This action may also be considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (refer to A3).
E5	Develop jurisdictional plans for developing and resourcing community-controlled organisation functions aligned to the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle	State and territory child protection departments	To be determined by the parties	One of the 6 principles of Safe and Supported is the commitment to embed the 5 elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle – Prevention, Partnership, Placement, Participation and Connection. This action is likely to be considered in jurisdictional-specific plans developed as part of Safe and Supported.
E6	Assess the needs of and increase involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in delivery in Commonwealth child and family sector programs (specific initiative led by DSS)	The Commonwealth	\$3.2 million over 2 years	Part 1 of the Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families (refer to A9) supports this action.  Under Part 2 of the measure, the Department of Social Services has committed funding of \$1.88 million across 2021-22 and 2022-23 to strengthen genuine relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and mainstream organisations in FaC and to explore increased involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in the child and family sector.

## Appendix 2 continued

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
E7	In line with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, increase the proportion services delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations	All governments	Nil.	<p>The Department of Social Services is contributing to whole-of-government efforts to better understand the funding profile to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, including through grants, and to develop pathways to increase the 'meaningful proportion' of funding to these organisations.</p> <p>The Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families measure commits \$3.2 million over 2 years and focuses on new ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. Wunan Foundation, a First Nations organisation has been funded to identify the strengths and opportunities as well as needs and barriers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in delivering children and family services, in recognition that government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations need to work with each other to achieve better outcomes in service delivery.</p> <p>This project is a foundational piece to support the Department of Social Services and other portfolio agencies in implementing processes to identify opportunities to transition funding to First Nations organisations, preferably Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.</p> <p>The Department of Social Services is implementing \$98 million across 4 measures to address the over-representation of First Nations children in child protection systems and to work towards reducing all forms of family violence experienced by First Nations women and children. The implementation of these measures will be undertaken in consultation with community-controlled organisations and/or Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander organisations, and where possible these organisations will be funded to deliver the programs.</p> <p>Safe and Supported First Action Plans recognises the Commonwealths' commitment under Closing the Gap to increasing the proportion of services delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, in particular through Focus Area 2. This action will be further considered in the forthcoming Safe and Supported First Action Plans.</p> <p>Increasing the proportion of services delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations is an ongoing priority for consideration by all governments and SNAICC.</p>

## F. Peak Body

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
F1	Develop a national and state/territory intermediary model to strengthen and represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC community-controlled services.	Sector-led action in collaboration with all governments	Sector Strengthening Virtual Funding Pool (pilot establishment and evaluation) to be supplemented by additional investment by other relevant portfolios and philanthropy.	The Commonwealth has contributed \$9.1 million, including \$2 million from the Department of Education, towards SNAICC's Intermediary Support Services Pilot that aims to build capability and support community-based workforce development initiatives in participating early childhood education and care services. As the pilot continues to operate until the end of 2024, the Commonwealth will work with SNAICC to evaluate successes and opportunities to expand the program and apply learnings to other programs, where possible.
F2	Develop a plan to support and enable community-led development of a peak body in each state and territory.	State and territory governments where peaks are not yet established or in development (WA, NT, ACT and TAS)	To be determined by the parties	The Commonwealth has contributed \$9.1 million, including \$2 million from the Commonwealth Department of Education, towards SNAICC's Intermediary Support Services Pilot, which is standing up jurisdictional peak organisations in New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia. As the pilot continues to operate until the end of 2024, governments will work with SNAICC to evaluate successes and opportunities to expand the program and apply learnings, where possible.
F3	Support adequate and sustainable funding for existing peak bodies.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	In line with Priority Reform One and the strong partnership principles outlined in the National Agreement, the Commonwealth has committed funding to enable SNAICC to Co-Chair and lead the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership. This is in addition to funding to support the participation of the independent First Nations members of the Partnership.  Core funding to support adequate and sustainable operations for existing peak bodies is an ongoing priority for further consideration by all governments.
F4	Develop a strong evidence base for best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled service delivery through peak bodies.	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	The Commonwealth will consider this action, as Focus Area 3 of the National Framework is focused on improving information sharing, data development and analysis.  As part of its remit to commission targeted research and develop evidence-based advice, this action may also be considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (refer to A3).



## Appendix 2 continued

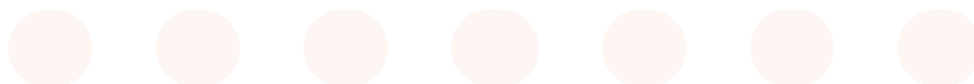
### Action Table Health Sector Strengthening Plan

#### A. Consistent Funding Model

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
A1	Develop a needs-based funding model in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector.	Sector-led action in collaboration with all governments	Sector Strengthening Virtual Funding Pool (pilot establishment and evaluation) to be supplemented by additional investment by other relevant portfolios and philanthropy.	Continue to strengthen the Aboriginal community-controlled health services sector by providing stability and growth in funding, for the delivery of critical primary health care services under the Indigenous Australians' Health Programme (IAHP). The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) is continuing to work on developing the Core Services and Outcomes Framework including identifying the cost of delivering a needs-based funding model.
A2	Re-prioritise First Nations health program funds being directed to mainstream non-government organisations, towards the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector. This includes current and new investments in mental health, alcohol and other drugs treatment and support services, aged care and emerging health priorities for First Nations people.	All governments	Nil additional financial cost	While the majority of funding under the IAHP for the delivery of comprehensive primary health care is provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health services, the Department of Health and Aged Care is continuing to explore options to re-prioritise funding from mainstream providers to the community-controlled health sector. This will be a key focus of the Department's new internal Closing the Gap Steering Committee.
A3	Optimise utilisation of Medicare in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector.	The Commonwealth, NACCHO and Sector Support Organisations	\$3.7 million (estimated)	outreach team is currently progressing 3 targeted initiatives to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities through greater use of Medicare: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Aboriginal Medicare Services strategy</li> <li>• The General Practice Indigenous Health Service strategy</li> <li>• A Medicare - Closing the Gap pilot</li> </ul> Through the Virtual Funding Pool (refer to Priority Reform Two) is funding a project to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health services to improve efficient Medicare Benefits Schedule claiming practices and ensure this is sustainable and nationally consistent.

## B. Workforce

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
B1	Invest in a permanent, highly skilled, and nationally credentialed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health workforce.	NACCHO, Sector Support Organisations and All governments	Sector Strengthening Virtual Funding Pool (pilot establishment and evaluation) to be supplemented by additional investment by other relevant portfolios and philanthropy.	The Commonwealth has contributed \$9.1 million, including \$2 million from the Department of Education, towards SNAICC's Intermediary Support Services Pilot that aims to build capability and support community-based workforce development initiatives in participating early childhood education and care services. As the pilot continues to operate until the end of 2024, the Commonwealth will work with SNAICC to evaluate successes and opportunities to expand the program and apply learnings to other programs, where possible.
B2	Build community-controlled RTO capacity and improve the quality of RTO training within or linked to community-controlled health organisations.	All governments	To be determined by the parties	Through the Virtual Funding Pool (refer to Priority Reform Two) is funding building the capacity and capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Health Registered Training Organisations (RTO).  Delivery of RTO courses will be considered further in the broader context of leadership, education, and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan.
B3	Convene a Clinical Workforce Taskforce to analyse and systematically address the full range of pertinent industrial, professional, socio-economic and employment impediments affecting the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector.	The Commonwealth, NACCHO and Sector Support Organisations	To be determined by the parties	Barriers to the recruitment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals are to be considered under the first 3 strategic directions of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan.





## Appendix 2 continued

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
<b>B4</b>	Resource permanent health career pathways co-designed in jurisdictions through partnerships between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector, its Sector Support Organisation, relevant national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce peak bodies, governments, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, and vocational training/tertiary institutions.	All governments, NACCHO, Sector Support Organisations, and Member services and partners as negotiated	To be determined by the parties	Improving information sharing, data development and analysis. As part of its remit to commission targeted research and develop evidence-based advice, this action may also be considered by the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (refer to A3).

### C. Capital Infrastructure

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
<b>C1</b>	Fund major and medium-size capital and physical infrastructure including permanent clinic builds and large-scale renovations, mobile clinics, maintenance, repairs and extensions to ensure facilities meet building codes and accreditation standards.	All governments	\$254.4 million over 4 years (as announced)	The Commonwealth has contributed \$9.1 million, including \$2 million from the Department of Education, towards SNAICC's Intermediary Support Services Pilot that aims to build capability and support community-based workforce development initiatives in participating early childhood education and care services. As the pilot continues to operate until the end of 2024, the Commonwealth will work with SNAICC to evaluate successes and opportunities to expand the program and apply learnings to other programs, where possible.

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
C2	Fund staff accommodation required to ensure regional and remote communities have the stable health workforce they require with equitable access to staff accommodation for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce.	The Commonwealth and Western Australian Government	\$254.4 million over 4 years includes funds for clinical staff accommodation only (see A8)	Through the Virtual Funding Pool (refer to Priority Reform Two) is funding building the capacity and capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Health Registered Training Organisations (RTO). Delivery of RTO courses will be considered further in the broader context of leadership, education, and training of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health professionals under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan.
C3	Fund reliable IT capacity and connectivity for electronic clinical information systems, telehealth, community engagement, and client connection with their community-controlled health service in every region (urban, regional and remote) and equitable access to other technological and digital innovations to improve culturally safe, cost-effective service delivery.	The Commonwealth	To be determined by the parties	Investment of \$154.4 million and \$100 million from the IAHP will deliver new or renovated health clinics and associated housing for health professionals. Engagement with the sector in co-designing the infrastructure program, through NACCHO as co-design partner, is complete. Grant opportunities closed in March and April 2022 with the Department of Health and Aged Care and NACCHO acting as co-chairs and joint decision makers for these processes. NACCHO has estimated the need for additional infrastructure investment nationally to be in the order of \$900 million.

#### D. Service Delivery

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
D1	Rectify overburden of activity reporting to governments to allow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector to focus on outcomes while maintaining accountability.	All governments	\$254.4 million over 4 years (as announced)	The Department of Health and Aged Care Closing the Gap Steering Committee will oversee a review of policies and programs to identify areas to focus on the Priority Reforms, outcomes and targets.

## Appendix 2 continued

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
D2	Fund health workforce leadership development programs and initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working in or aspiring to work in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector to maximize service impact and health outcomes.	NACCHO	To be determined	<p>Through the Virtual Funding Pooling (refer to Priority Reform Two):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a governance training and support project that will build capacity and capability as well as strengthen and support governing bodies and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical services nationally. This includes activities to develop health workforce leadership such as governance training for Boards, CEOs and emerging leaders, increasing networks through identifying and establishing partnerships and mentoring arrangements and delivery of a residential leadership program for youth and emerging leaders.</li> <li>a project across multiple jurisdictions that will develop career aspirations, education and training pathways in the health sector for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.</li> </ul>

### E. Governance

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
E1	Transition government-managed primary health clinics in Queensland, Northern Territory and Western Australia to community-controlled comprehensive primary health care services, and identify locations in all jurisdictions where new community-controlled primary health care services are required to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	The Commonwealth, NACCHO and Sector Support Organisations	To be determined	The Department of Health and Aged Care continues to work with the sector on transitioning government-managed primary health care clinics to community-control and will work with the sector to identify locations where new community-controlled primary health care services are required.

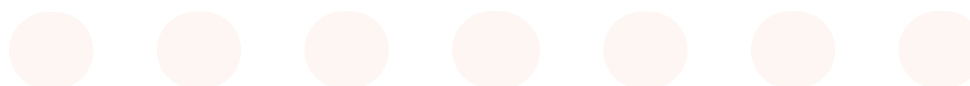
No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
E2	Fund Board corporate governance programs including needs assessment, capability development and support including independent expertise where required for CEO recruitment and essential criteria for CEOs across the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector.	NACCHO and Sector Support Organisations	To be determined	Through the Virtual Funding Pool (refer to Priority Reform Two) is funding a governance training and support project that will build capacity and capability as well as strengthen and support governing bodies and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical services nationally. This includes establishing resources and tools to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health services to develop CEOs and leaders, increasing networks through identifying and establishing partnerships and mentoring arrangements, delivering a residential leadership program and increasing governance training for Boards, CEOs and emerging leaders.



## Appendix 2 continued

### F. Peak Body

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
F1	Expand independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation on government and non-government bodies and other decision-making entities whose decisions affect the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	The Commonwealth, NACCHO and Sector Support Organisations	To be determined	<p>Governance arrangements to oversee the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021-2031 and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework 2021-2031 will be implemented in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector representatives and other relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander COVID-19 Advisory Group is jointly chaired by the Department of Health and Aged Care and NACCHO with members nominated based on their expertise and experience. The Advisory Group was set up to provide advice on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health aspects related to COVID-19. The Advisory Group reports to the Australian Government Chief Medical Officer, and liaises with the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee and the COVID-19 Vaccine Program Principal Committee.</p> <p>The National Advisory Group for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care is funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care to provide advocacy and advice on aged care policies, programs and services that meet evidence-based needs of older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Group members are representatives of First Nations providers of in-home and residential aged care services, as well as nationally recognised researchers in First Nations aged care. The Group played a pivotal role in shaping the reform recommendations of the Aged Care Royal Commission. In 2021, several members of the Group established the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aging and Aged Care Council Limited (NATSIAACC) as an independent body and sought peak body recognition to represent the voice of the First Nations ageing and aged care. The Department continues to collaborate with NATSIAACC to provide opportunities as a lead stakeholder to help drive change in First Nations aged care policy, program, cultural capability training, and communications including with broader mainstream ageing and aged care services.</p>



# Appendix 3

## Reconciliation Action Plans

Department	RAP Type	Location	Period	Status
Australian Broadcasting Corporation	<b>Elevate</b>	National	November 2019 to June 2022	<b>Active</b>
Services Australia	<b>Elevate</b>	National	June 2018 to June 2022	<b>Active</b>
Australia Post	<b>Stretch</b>	National	March 2021 to December 2022	<b>Active</b>
Australian Bureau of Statistics	<b>Stretch</b>	National	August 2018 to August 2021	<b>Expired</b>
Australian Tax Office	<b>Stretch</b>	National	December 2021 to June 2024	<b>Active</b>
Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	<b>Stretch</b>	National	May 2021 to April 2024	<b>Active</b>
Department of Defence	<b>Stretch</b>	National	July 2019 to December 2022	<b>Active</b>
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade	<b>Stretch</b>	National	May 2019 to June 2022	<b>Active</b>
Department of Home Affairs	<b>Stretch</b>	National	May 2019 to June 2022	<b>Active</b>
Department of Social Services	<b>Stretch</b>	National	June 2021 to June 2024	<b>Active</b>
National Indigenous Australians Agency	<b>Stretch</b>	National	February 2022 to February 2025	<b>Active</b>
Airservices Australia	<b>Innovate</b>	National	May 2021 to May 2023	<b>Active</b>
Attorney-General's Department	<b>Innovate</b>	National	June 2020 to May 2022	<b>Expired</b>
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission	<b>Innovate</b>	National	February 2020 to February 2022	<b>Expired</b>
Australian National Maritime Museum	<b>Innovate</b>	National	November 2021 to November 2023	<b>Active</b>
Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation	<b>Innovate</b>	National	June 2021 to January 2022	<b>Expired</b>
Australian Parliamentary Service	<b>Innovate</b>	National	November 2019 to October 2022	<b>Active</b>
Australian Prudential Regulation Authority	<b>Innovate</b>	National	November 2020 to November 2022	<b>Active</b>
Australian Public Service Commission	<b>Innovate</b>	National	August 2019 to August 2021	<b>Expired</b>
Australian Research Council	<b>Innovate</b>	National	December 2019 to December 2021	<b>Expired</b>
Australian Security Intelligence Organisation	<b>Innovate</b>	National	May 202 to May 2022	<b>Expired</b>
Australian Trade and Investment Commission	<b>Innovate</b>	National	August 2019 to August 2021	<b>Expired</b>
Australian War Memorial	<b>Innovate</b>	ACT	May 2020 to December 2021	<b>Expired</b>
Bureau Of Meteorology	<b>Innovate</b>	National	December 2021 to December 2023	<b>Active</b>
Cancer Australia	<b>Innovate</b>	National	March 2019 to September 2021	<b>Expired</b>
Civil Aviation Safety Authority	<b>Innovate</b>	National	February 2021 to March 2023	<b>Active</b>
Comcare	<b>Innovate</b>	National	November 2021 to November 2023	<b>Active</b>
Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)	<b>Innovate</b>	National	December 2021 to December 2022	<b>Active</b>



## Appendix 3 continued

Department	RAP Type	Location	Period	Status
Department of Finance	Innovate	National	July 2021 to July 2023	Active
Department of Health and Aged Care	Innovate	National	December 2021 to December 2023	Active
Department of Industry, Science, Energy and Resources	Innovate	National	July 2019 to July 2021	Expired
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet	Innovate	National	May 2021 to July 2023	Active
Department of Treasury	Innovate	National	July 2021 to July 2023	Active
Export Finance Australia	Innovate	National	May 2020 to May 2022	Expired
Fair Work Ombudsman	Innovate	National	July 2020 to July 2022	Active
Geoscience Australia	Innovate	National	April 2021 to April 2023	Active
National Broadband Network Co	Innovate	National	November 2020 to November 2022	Active
National Library of Australia	Innovate	National	October 2020 to July 2022	Active
Reserve Bank Australia	Innovate	National	September 2020 to August 2022	Active
The Office of the Commonwealth Ombudsman	Innovate	National	November 2020 to October 2022	Active
Tourism Australia	Innovate	National	May 2021 to April 2023	Active
Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional development, Communications and the Arts	Innovate	National	July 2022 to July 2024	Active
National Disability Insurance Agency	Innovate	National	May 2019 to May 2021	Expired
Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission	Reflect	National	September 2021 to September 2022	Active
Australian Submarine Corporation (ASC) Pty Ltd	Reflect	N/a	February 2021 to February 2022	Expired
Australian Digital Health Agency	Reflect	National	September 2020 to October 2021	Expired
Australian Fisheries Management Authority	Reflect	National	July 2021 to July 2022	Active
Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership	Reflect	National	July 2021 to May 2022	Expired
Australian Skills Quality Authority	Reflect	National	January 2021 to November 2022	Active
Climate Change Authority	Reflect	ACT	August 2021 to August 2022	Active
Digital Transformation Agency	Reflect	National	May 2021 to August 2022	Active
National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environment Management Authority	Reflect	N/a	December 2021 to December 2022	Active
Safe Work Australia	Reflect	National	November 2020 to November 2021	Expired

# Glossary of terms

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation (other than an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisation)** – There is no one definition of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation in Australia. For the purposes of this plan, it can be a business, charity, not-for-profit organisation, incorporated under Commonwealth, state or territory legislation, that, as a minimum requirement, is at least 50 per cent owned, controlled and managed by First Nations peoples.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led review** – Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led reviews will be carried out within 12 months of each 3 yearly independent review by the Productivity Commission. They are an opportunity to capture Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities experience of Closing the Gap implementation.

**All Australian governments** – consisting of the Commonwealth Government, state and territory governments, and the Australian Local Government Association.

**Coalition of Peaks** – the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Peak Organisations. The Coalition of Peaks is a representative body consisting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander national and state and territory community-controlled peak organisations that work to improve life outcomes for First Nations peoples.

**Commonwealth** – The legal entity of the Commonwealth of Australia, created by the Australian Constitution. The term may also be used to differentiate the Australian Government from state and territory governments.

**Cultural safety** – Cultural safety refers to overcoming the power imbalances of places, people and policies that occur between the majorities other position and the minority First Nations person so that there is no assault, challenge or denial of the First Nations person's identity, of who they are and what they need. Cultural safety is met through actions from the majority position that recognise, respect, and nurture the unique cultural identity of First Nations peoples. Only the First Nations person who is a recipient of a service or interaction can determine whether it is culturally safe.

**Data and Digital Ministers** – are working to align policies and services across Australia by focusing on: transforming government services around life events; reforming cross-jurisdictional data and digital platforms, services and protocols; and enhancing government capability to build public trust and deliver digitally.

**First Ministers** – are the collective leaders of government Cabinets. This includes the Prime Minister, all state premiers and territory first ministers across Australia.

**First Nations peoples** – The Commonwealth Government acknowledges that there is no single Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander/First Nations culture or group and that there are many diverse communities, language groups and kinships throughout Australia. For the purposes of this Annual Report, the term First Nations peoples is respectfully used.

## Glossary of Terms continued

**Implementation Plan** – refers to the Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan.

**Joint Council** – The Joint Council on Closing the Gap is the Ministerial Council on Closing the Gap, with representation from all levels of government and the Coalition of Peaks. Further details on Joint Council can be found in the Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap 2019-2029.

**Mainstream institutions and agencies** – These are government agencies, institutions, organisations and services that fund and develop policies or deliver services to all Australians, including First Nations peoples.

**National Agreement** – The National Agreement on Closing the Gap was signed by all Commonwealth and the Coalition of Peaks in July 2020. It sets out commitments for all Commonwealth to work together with First Nations peoples to overcome the inequality experienced by First Nations peoples, and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.

**Partnership Agreement** – The Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap 2019-2029, signed by COAG and the Coalition of Peaks, setting out shared decision-making arrangements on the next phase of Closing the Gap.

**Productivity Commission** – Commonwealth Government’s independent research and advisory body on a range of economic, social and environmental issues affecting the welfare of Australians. It will develop and maintain a publicly accessible dashboard comprising data and associated supporting materials to inform the reporting on progress of Closing the Gap. The dashboard will be updated on a regular basis (at a minimum annually) and will be maintained for the full term of the National Agreement. It will also undertake a comprehensive review of progress every 3 years.

**Significant and sustained** – A year-on-year improvement relative to the baseline data that is equal to or greater than the historic rate of change.

**Traditional Owners** – First Nations person who is a member of a local descent group having certain rights and responsibilities in relation to a tract of land or area of sea.





**Australian Government**