



Signing of new National Agreement on Closing the Gap marks historic turning point in relations between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments

The National Cabinet, the Australian Local Government Association and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations have agreed the historic National Agreement on Closing the Gap, taking the country in a new direction to substantially improve life outcomes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The new National Agreement is a pledge from all governments to fundamentally change the way they work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations through four Priority Reforms that were overwhelmingly supported during the community engagements led by the Coalition of Peaks late last year.

The Priority Reforms commit governments to new partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the country; strengthen community-controlled organisations to deliver closing the gap services; address structural racism within government agencies and organisations; and improve sharing and information with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to support shared decision making.

The National Agreement includes new ‘partnership actions’ – joint actions that all governments will take to give effect to each of the Priority Reforms – and ‘jurisdictional actions’ – additional actions to be undertaken within each jurisdiction taking into account state and territory circumstances. All four Priority Reforms will have a target to measure government action in these areas which will be reported on annually.

New mechanisms are embedded in the National Agreement to ensure continued political ownership and accountability; that progress is publicly monitored; and that Closing the Gap remains a national priority. This includes formal opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have an ongoing and direct say to governments on how the policy is working.

The National Agreement also establishes 16 national socio-economic targets in areas including education, employment, health and wellbeing, justice, safety, housing, land and waters, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. The targets bring focus to new areas important to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and will help to monitor progress in improving their life outcomes.

Quotes Attributed to Pat Turner AM, Lead Convener of the Coalition of Peaks; CEO of NACCHO and Co-Chair of the Joint Council:

- “Our country has unforgivable gaps in the life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians in all aspects of life including mortality, chronic disease, disability rates, housing security, education, employment and wealth.”
- “These gaps have burdened our people and caused the erosion of health and well-being of generations of First Nations Australians. The National Agreement represents a turning point in our country’s efforts to close these gaps.”



- “The National Agreement has been hard fought between the Coalition of Peaks and governments. It was always going to be tough. This is the first time a National Agreement designed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been developed and negotiated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We have also had the voices of the more than 4000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who participated in our engagements on what should be included in the new National Agreement guiding us in our negotiations, and we needed to show that they had been heard.”
- “The Coalition of Peaks have always said that targets alone do not drive change. We have seen this from the past 10 years. It is the full implementation of the Priority Reforms by governments and a commitment to additional resources our communities need that will make the difference.”
- “Whilst the National Agreement does not include everything that the Coalition of Peaks wanted, we are confident that governments have been pushed in their commitments because the Coalition of Peaks have been at the negotiating table.”
- “There is a significant difference from what governments alone were prepared to commit to in December 2018 and where we are now. That change has come about because of the work of the Coalition of Peaks and the support of our communities and organisations.”
- “The Coalition of Peaks are firmly of the view that we needed to do all that we could do to influence the governments’ approach to the refresh of the Closing the Gap policy which it started in 2016 and was heading down a worrying path.”
- “The National Agreement and the work of the Coalition of Peaks compliments the many efforts led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country to improve the life outcomes of our people, including the implementation of the Uluru Statement of the Heart through a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament.”
- “Today we celebrate this historic Agreement and those who fought hard to make it a reality. But tomorrow, the true work begins when we start to implement its commitments within our communities.”

For media enquiries contact

Jo Scard on 0457 725 953 or jo@fiftyacres.com or Julia Macerola on 0422 337 332 or julia@fiftyacres.com

About the Coalition of Peaks

The Coalition of Peaks is a representative body of around fifty Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled peak organisations and members. The Coalition of Peaks came together on their own as an act of self-determination to be formal partners with Australian governments on Closing the Gap. Members are either national, state or territory wide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled peak bodies including certain independent statutory authorities. Their governing boards are elected by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and / or organisations. For more information on the Coalition of Peaks and to sign up for our mailing list, go to: www.coalitionofpeaks.org.au



Highlights of the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The new National Agreement was developed around four Priority Reform areas and outcomes:

1

1. Shared decision-making:

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.

2

2. Building the community-controlled sector:

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.

3

3. Improving mainstream institutions:

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.

4

4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led data:

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, their priorities and drive their own development.

PRIORITY REFORM 1: Formal partnerships and shared decision making between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives

The National Agreement commits governments to building and strengthening structures that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap. The National Agreement establishes two types of partnerships:

- Policy partnerships to bring concerted joined up action between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives on discrete policy areas; and
- Place-based partnerships between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, and others by agreement, in agreed regional areas.

Key Commitments:

- An initial five policy partnerships on: justice (adult and youth incarceration); social and emotional wellbeing (mental health); housing; early childhood care and development; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.
- An initial six new place-based formal partnerships between the Commonwealth, the relevant state or territory government, local government and agreed communities. Locations to be considered by Joint Council within 12 months.
- Governments to strengthen their partnership arrangements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their own jurisdictions in line with the strong partnership elements in the National Agreement.

Target on Priority Reform One:

There will be formal partnership arrangements to support Closing the Gap in place between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments in place 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 2: Building the formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services sector to deliver services

The National Agreement commits governments and the Coalition of Peaks to building strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sectors and organisations to deliver Closing the Gap services and programs.

Key Commitments:

- Governments and the Coalition of Peaks to jointly develop national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Sector Strengthening Plans. The first four Sector Strengthening Plans will be developed for early childhood care and development; housing; health; and disability within 12 months.
- Governments are putting in funding to support Priority Reform 2. This funding will help build and strengthen the community-controlled sectors to deliver services and programs to our people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations deliver better services for our better, they get better outcomes and employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- New measures by governments to increase the proportion of services delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly community-controlled organisations by:
 - Implementing funding prioritisation policies across all Closing the Gap outcomes to preference Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to deliver services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities; and
 - Where new funding initiatives are decided by governments which are intended to service the broader population across socio-economic outcome areas of the Agreement, a meaningful proportion will be allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations with relevant expertise, particularly community-controlled organisations.

Target on Priority Reform Two:

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 3: Transforming government organisations

The National Agreement commits governments to systemic and structural transformation of mainstream government organisations to improve accountability and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Key Actions:

- Governments to work within their organisations and institutions, like police and child protection services, hospitals and universities to: identify and eliminate racism; embed cultural safety; deliver services in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations; increase accountability through transparent funding allocations; support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and improve engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- Governments to identify, develop or strengthen an independent monitoring mechanism(s) to report publicly on transformation efforts and outcomes, and make sure they are meeting their obligations.
- Governments to engage fully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people impacted by proposed changes to policies and programs that relate to the outcomes of the National Agreement through more open and transparent processes.

Target on Priority Reform Three:

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

PRIORITY REFORM 4: Shared access to data and information at a regional level

The National Agreement commits parties to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to, and the capability to use relevant government and other data and information. This is critical to the success of the first three Priority Reforms and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to set and monitor the implementation of regional efforts to close the gap, and develop their priorities and drive their own development.

Key Actions:

- Governments to share available, disaggregated regional data and information with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities on Closing the Gap.
- Governments to establish partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and government agencies to improve collection, access, management and use of data, including identifying improvements to existing data collection and management; and to build capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to collect, and use data.
- New 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.

Target on Priority Reform Four:

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.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS

In addition to the Priority Reforms targets, the National Agreement establishes 16 socio-economic targets to bring focus to new areas and help monitor progress in improvements in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Where possible, reporting on targets to include disaggregation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stolen generation survivors; people with disability; and LGBTQI status to make sure that progress on Closing the Gap can be monitored for these more vulnerable groups. Where this is not possible due to data limitations, consideration will be given to how this data can be developed as part of a new data development plan.

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| Target 1 | Close the Gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031. |
| Target 2 | By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91 per cent. |
| Target 3 | By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95 per cent. |
| 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 (AEDC) to 55 per cent. |
| 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 per cent. |
| 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 per cent. |
| 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 per cent. |
| Target 8 | By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed to 62 per cent. |
| Target 9 | By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88 per cent. |
| Target 10 | By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15 per cent. |
| Target 11 | By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by at least 30 per cent. |
| Target 12 | By 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent. |
| Target 13 | A significant and sustained reduction in violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children towards zero. |
| Target 14 | Significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero. |
| Target 15 | a: By 2030, a 15 per cent increase in Australia's landmass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests. b: By 2030, a 15 per cent increase in areas covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests in the sea. |
| Target 16 | By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken. |



IMPLEMENTATION

The success of the National Agreement relies on the full implementation of all commitments by governments. A key change from the National Indigenous Reform Agreement is that all governments are required to develop Implementation Plans. These will be developed and agreed in full partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives in each state and territory and made public. The Coalition of Peaks will also develop an Implementation Plan relevant to its responsibilities.

NEW ACCOUNTABILITY AND MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS

New mechanisms are embedded in the National Agreement to ensure continued political ownership and accountability; that progress is publicly monitored; and that Closing the Gap remains a national priority.

The Prime Minister, Premiers, Chief Ministers, the President of the Australian Local Government Association and the Coalition of Peaks will meet annually to monitor progress under the National Agreement. The Parties will also monitor and agree further partnership actions at set times.

All governments will table an annual report on progress in implementing the Priority Reforms and other commitments in respective Parliaments. The Coalition of Peaks to make a public report annually.

Three yearly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led reviews of progress, including a Coalition of Peaks' facilitated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Assembly on Closing the Gap. The Productivity Commission also has a monitoring role.

RESOURCING

The National Agreement acknowledges implementation requires significant and effective use of government resources.

The key actions under Priority Reform Two will help to bring additional funding to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector.

Governments will review 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. Following the reviews, the Joint Council will consider whether additional joint budget work is needed to meet the activities under the National Agreement.



To read the full new National Agreement on Closing the Gap, head to the Coalition of Peaks website:

<https://coalitionofpeaks.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/FINAL-National-Agreement-on-Closing-the-Gap.pdf>

About the Coalition of Peaks

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Coalition of Peaks Members

National members

- Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives
- First Nations Media Australia
- First Peoples Disability Network
- Indigenous Allied Health Australia
- Lowitja Institute
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services Forum
- National Native Title Council
- SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children
- The Healing Foundation
- Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association

Victoria

- Victorian Aboriginal Executive Council
- Victorian Aborigines Advancement League
- Koori Youth Council
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
- Djirra
- Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (FVTOC)
- Aboriginal Housing Victoria
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd
- Aboriginal Community Elders Service

Western Australia

- Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia

Tasmania

- Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre

Queensland

- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (Qld) Ltd
- Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Limited
- Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council
- Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Services

Coalition of Peaks Members

South Australia

South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network:

- Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council
- Aboriginal Family Support Services
- Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement
- Aboriginal Sobriety Group
- Family Violence Legal Service Aboriginal Corporation
- InComPro Aboriginal Association
- Kornar Winmil Yunti
- Kura Yerlo
- Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantatjara Yankunytjatjara Womens Council
- Nunkuwarnin Yunti
- Nunga Mi:Minar
- Pangula Mannamurna Aboriginal Corporation
- South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council
- Tauondi College

New South Wales

NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations:

- NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- NSW/ACT Aboriginal Legal Services
- Link Up NSW
- NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation
- NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
- NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council
- First Peoples Disability Network

Australian Capital Territory

- ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body

Northern Territory

Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory:

- Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory
- Central Land Council
- Northern Land Council
- Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory