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# Closing the Gap requires decisive First Nations voices

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## Statement from Reconciliation Australia on the 2023 Close the Gap Campaign Report

The 2023 Close the Gap Campaign report, *Strong Culture, Strong Youth: Our Legacy, Our Future* (<https://closethegap.org.au/ctg-annual-reports/>) calls for more to be done to close the gap and highlights the importance of youth voices in helping chart a path forward.

As a member of the Close the Gap Campaign, Reconciliation Australia supports the calls in the report, and believes that health equality and equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is critical for reconciliation.

The report finds that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are leading the way in strengthening the health and wellbeing of First Nations communities, and that First Nations voices are central to closing the gap.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations must lead the design, and implementation of the close the gap strategy and initiatives, if the targets are to be met.

According to Reconciliation Australia's research in the Australian Reconciliation Barometer, a majority of Australians agree that more should be done by governments to close the gap across health, education, justice and employment, supporting the calls of the campaign.

Reconciliation Australia welcomes the 2023 Close the Gap report and commends the efforts of all those involved to close the gap between First Nations peoples and other Australians.

We honour the hard work, determination and commitment of the community-controlled health services, legal services, children's and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and individuals who dedicate their lives and time to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

We acknowledge the successes in maintaining culture and lore, in defending traditional lands, in maintaining families and advancing First Nations self-determination despite the historical intransigence of governments.

We note the intergenerational nature of these successes and welcome the developing role of the next generation of young leaders as highlighted in the 2023 Report, Strong Culture, Strong Youth: Our Legacy , Our Future. (<https://closethegap.org.au/ctg-annual-reports/>)

Reconciliation Australia wholeheartedly endorses the campaign report's call for "a focus on the social and cultural determinants of health" and agrees that to meet the targets in the national agreement the approach must be based on "the inherent links between physical and mental health, and the health of connections to family, community, Country and spirituality."

We concur that Australian Governments need to do more, through greater investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equity and equality, young people and community-led service delivery.

We understand that, just as First Nations people should lead the Close the Gap strategy, so too should they have much greater role in the determination of policy and laws which affect them.

Embedding an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament in the Constitution and the implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart provide critical opportunities for Australia to create mechanisms for partnership, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led decision-making, self-determination, truth-telling and healing that will accelerate efforts to close the gap.

*Reconciliation Australia is a member of the Close the Gap Campaign (<https://closethegap.org.au/>) which comprises 52 First Nations and mainstream organisations who—since 2006—have come together as allies to advocate for greater investment and changed ways of working to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health equity and equality to become a reality*

## **Acknowledgement**

Reconciliation Australia acknowledges Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuing connection to lands, waters and communities. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to Elders past and present. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this website may contain images or names of people who have since passed away.

## **Get in touch (/contact-us)**

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