

Closing the Gap

**Commonwealth 2023 Annual Report
Commonwealth 2024 Implementation Plan**



Australian Government



CLOSING THE GAP

The Albanese Government is pleased to present this **2023 Annual Report and 2024 Implementation Plan.**

Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2023 Annual Report and Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2024 Implementation Plan

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Acknowledgement

The Australian Government acknowledges the traditional owners and custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledges their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past, present and emerging.

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Prime Minister's foreword

'...when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a genuine say in the design and delivery of services, better life outcomes are achieved.'

- National Agreement on Closing the Gap

On behalf of the Commonwealth, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which Australians live and work. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

The Commonwealth Government is committed to the ongoing National Agreement on Closing the Gap. We are determined to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to create new opportunities and achieve better outcomes.

Making progress depends on listening to people and communities, so their wisdom and experience can help shape the policies and programs that affect their lives.

By any standard, the status quo in everything from housing and health to jobs and justice remains unacceptable.

We cannot keep doing the same thing and expect to achieve a different outcome. As a Government and a nation, our approach has to change.

Australia must do more, we must do better and we must do it together.

At the heart of the National Agreement is a simple principle: the key to practical and sustainable change is ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are involved and empowered in the design and delivery of policies, programs and services that affect their lives, families and communities.

That is the best way to ensure that we are getting the best advice and it is the only way of designing solutions that will make lasting change.

My Government is particularly focused on practical progress, especially in the areas of jobs, housing, education, health and justice. These are the building blocks of a good life, for all of us.

That is why we are moving on from the failed Community Development Program. A new jobs program will fund community organisations to create 3,000 real jobs in remote areas. These jobs will build skills and experience, and deliver services that communities want. It will focus squarely on economic development that strengthens community and lays the foundations for long-term, positive change.



We have prioritised resourcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly the community-controlled sector. We have restored funding for key community-controlled services, including Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services.

This Implementation Plan builds on the progress outlined in the Commonwealth Annual Report on Closing the Gap, and sets out my Government's priorities for the year ahead.

Our focus will be on real and sustainable progress, achieved in genuine partnership with First Nations representatives.

I would like to express my gratitude to the ongoing work of the Coalition of Peaks, led by Pat Turner AM, for their determination to ensure the success of this endeavour. The Coalition of Peaks and the state and territory governments are vital partners in our national effort. Greater co-operation between us is key to making meaningful and sustained progress.

In July 2023, the Productivity Commission released its **Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report**, which found that 11 out of 19 socio-economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are improving. Only four are on track to meet their targets.

Sadly, we have seen outcomes worsen for four critical targets – children's early development, rates of children in out-of-home care, rates of adult imprisonment, and suicide. This is unacceptable and must change.

My Government is bolstered by a wealth of wisdom and expertise from the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney MP, and the Assistant Minister for Indigenous Australians and Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health, Senator Malarndirri McCarthy.

I also wish to acknowledge the work of former Senator Pat Dodson, the Special Envoy for Reconciliation and Implementation of the Uluru Statement, for sharing a lifetime of commitment and service to advancing reconciliation and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In 2023, our country engaged in a historic debate about the way forward on Indigenous issues. We accept and respect the results of that referendum. It was not the result that this government hoped for and worked toward, but it in no way diminishes our determination to advance reconciliation and seek better results for Indigenous Australians.

So often, the disadvantage and inequality faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been at the edge of the national conversation. The referendum brought it to the centre, and heightened the urgency of fixing it.

This Government will continue to listen to the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. We remain committed to Australians having a shared understanding of our history and a united vision for our future.

We are clear-eyed in our dedication to Closing the Gap. To building an Australia where more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are going to school, finishing school and finding a path to a qualification they want and deserve for a job they love.

Where more families know the stability of a roof over their head.

Where communities are safer, happier and healthier – shaped and secured by the voices and expertise and passion and vision of the people who call them home.

Where our solutions are infused with the spirit of learning and co-operation and shared progress.

What underpins it all is a simple truth that can brighten the path ahead for all of us: when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people advance, the entire nation moves forward.



The Hon Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister

February 2024

Minister for Indigenous Australians' foreword

I wish to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country, and recognise over 65,000 years of connection to land, water, culture, and language. I pay my respect to our Elders – both past and present.

When we talk about Closing the Gap, we're talking about real people with real lives.

Our focus is making sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have the same life chances as all Australians.

It is completely unacceptable that only four of the 19 targets are on track. We know that so much work needs to be done.

This Closing the Gap report gives us an opportunity to look at the progress we're making. To take stock of the practical action that is making a difference to people's lives.

In April last year, I joined Senator Malarndirri McCarthy and a group of women from the remote community of Borroloola in the Gulf of Carpentaria. The women were living in a hostel in Darwin, around 900 kilometres from their home, to get life-saving dialysis treatment.

There were tears of joy when we announced they'd no longer have to make the huge trek to Darwin. Borroloola would be getting a new dialysis unit as part of our commitment to provide Better Renal Services for First Nations people, with up to 30 four-chair renal dialysis units across the country.

This initiative will make such a difference to people's lives. It will allow them to live on country, with their families and their communities, while receiving treatment.

This Closing the Gap report commits to new actions that focus on making a practical difference across a range of priority areas.

Today we are announcing a new jobs program in remote Australia, as part of our commitment to replace the failed Community Development Program. This will see community organisations funded to create 3,000 jobs with real wages.

This is a major reform and one we are working on in partnership with First Nations people.

More than 14,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians have taken up the opportunity in vocational education and training, as part of our Fee-Free TAFE initiative.

We are working with the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sector, funding 500 new First Nations health workers. More than 180 trainees have enrolled in the First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program.



We are expanding the Indigenous Rangers Program as part of our commitment to double the number of Indigenous rangers to 3,800 by 2030. The first stage of this expansion will provide work on country for up to 1,000 people.

As part of our landmark First Nations justice reinvestment package, we are supporting up to 30 communities across the country to deliver local solutions. It's the largest justice reinvestment commitment ever delivered by the Commonwealth.

Under the Remote Housing Agreement, at least 157 houses are on track to be delivered by June 2024 to remote Northern Territory communities with extreme levels of overcrowding. Urgent works are underway on housing and essential infrastructure on NT Homelands through the Restoring Funding for NT Homelands agreement.

Our investment in social and affordable housing through the \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund will include \$200 million for improvements to remote housing.

We are investing in critical infrastructure to improve access to safe and reliable drinking water for remote communities like Yuendumu and Milingimbi.

And we are improving regional connectivity to support digital inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, with free community-wide Wi-Fi in 20 remote communities in partnership with NBN Co.

The resounding message in the Productivity Commission's Final Report on its first Three-Yearly Review of the National Agreement is that we all must do better.

We need to keep listening to Indigenous Australians about what works and what can make practical difference for the next generation.

I thank our Closing the Gap partners for their efforts – the Coalition of Peaks led by Pat Turner, with Deputy Lead Convenors Catherine Liddle and Scott Wilson, the state and territory governments and the Australian Local Government Association.

While the outcome of the referendum in 2023 was not what the government was hoping for, it has not diminished our resolve.

It's through working together, in genuine partnership that we will make meaningful and sustained progress.

This is not only in the interests of First Nations people.

It is in the interest of all Australians to build a better future for our nation.



The Hon Linda Burney MP
Minister for Indigenous Australians

February 2024

Executive summary

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) is approaching four years of implementation. All Parties to the National Agreement are continuing to embed transformative ways of working together in formal partnership to improve the lives of First Nations people.

This is the second Commonwealth Annual Report under the National Agreement and the third Commonwealth Implementation Plan. For the first time, the Commonwealth is releasing the Annual Report and Implementation Plan together as a single report. The Annual Report assesses the delivery of the 2023 Commonwealth Implementation Plan, whilst the 2024 Implementation Plan is forward looking. It outlines the Commonwealth's strategic priorities for Closing the Gap over the next year.

In preparing the report, Commonwealth agencies collaborated and worked in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak partners to assess progress over the past year and develop actions for 2024.

The Productivity Commission's July 2023 Annual Data Compilation Report showed that Parties to the National Agreement are making some progress towards achieving the outcomes and objectives in the National Agreement. Targets are on track to reduce the number of young people in detention and increase pre-school enrolments, land mass under legal rights or interests, and employment. However, rates of suicide have increased, as have the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in prison, children in out-of-home care and children not developmentally on track. As a result these four targets are not on track to be met. Slow progress is being made on most of the remaining socio-economic targets, and there are some targets for which current data limitations are preventing measurement. The Productivity Commission will produce the next annual data compilation report in July 2024.

There are challenges with shifting to a new way of working, and the Productivity Commission's three yearly *Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, recently released on 7 February 2024, has highlighted that more needs to be done to progress the Priority Reforms. Working in partnership is testing the Commonwealth's traditional processes, with issues to be resolved around how government representatives can best work with their First Nations partners, the changes needed to governance arrangements and how decision-making operates. The additional engagement load placed on First Nations partners and government parties can also constrain the pace of work and will need to be considered more seriously in future.

The Commonwealth's 2023 Annual Report summarises key areas of progress made in the Commonwealth's contribution against the socio-economic targets during 2023. It also shows the sustained uplift in effort to address the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms in the development of policies and programs addressing gaps in life outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It demonstrates effort across a broad range of mainstream agencies, truly embedding First Nations issues across the government agenda.

It also shows that work is on track for almost all of the 96 actions committed to in the 2023 Implementation Plan. The five actions where there are delays mainly relate to the Priority Reforms; specifically, there are delays in evaluations of Policy Partnerships and Priority Reforms, establishment of an Independent Mechanism and amending the *Public Service Act 1999*. These delayed actions are a renewed focus for 2024.

The actions throughout the 2024 Implementation Plan reflect the Commonwealth's commitment to do more to implement and embed the Priority Reforms – addressing a key finding in the Productivity Commission's Three-Yearly Review.

From 2024, all Commonwealth departments and agencies will be required to include a statement of progress against Closing the Gap in their Annual Reports, improving transparency and accountability.

A lot of good work has been done throughout 2023 to centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in design and implementation of government programs. The Commonwealth has increased the number of formal partnerships between government and the community-controlled sector in delivery of services; directed a higher proportion of relevant funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, including funding new peak representative bodies in housing and education; and has continued funding for key Aboriginal community-controlled services, including Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services.

Several agencies have established structural arrangements to help drive progress. Examples include Closing the Gap Steering Committees at the Department of Health and Aged Care and the Department of Social Services, First Nations Partnerships Branches at the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communication and the Arts, and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, and the Native Title and Priority Reforms Branch at the Attorney-General's Department. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade established the Office for First Nations International Engagement to lead Commonwealth efforts to embed a First Nations approach to foreign and trade policy to ensure that First Nations communities are better supported to participate in, and benefit from, Australia's international engagement.

In 2024 the Commonwealth will build on the work done in 2023 to increase the number of formal partnerships. The Commonwealth Partnership and Engagement Framework, due to be released early in 2024, sets principles and will be used to strengthen partnership arrangements with First Nations people and organisations.

New policy and place-based partnerships will be identified and progressed in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks. The effectiveness of partnerships will be tested through a critical value assessment of the jurisdictional partnership stocktakes and development of a Policy Partnerships Evaluation Methodology.

Executive summary continued

Grant prioritisation efforts in 2024 will aim to increase the proportion of funding going to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and to develop more collaborative approaches to commissioning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in service delivery. Accountability will be strengthened through development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework to measure the impact of sector strengthening plans, so we can assess what is working and what needs to change. The Commonwealth will continue its work, in partnership, to establish a local community data portal in six community data project sites, supporting the access, analysis and use of regional data to drive community-led development aligned with local priorities.

Practical change to drive acceleration of progress towards achievement of the socio-economic targets will be undertaken across government, in partnership with First Nations people, over 2024. The Department of Health and Aged Care will lead implementation of actions, throughout 2024, to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live **long and healthy lives**. This includes: continuing to roll out funding for 500 First Nations health workers; construction of a Birthing on Country Centre of Excellence; and strengthening initiatives for social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention.

The Commonwealth recognises that Australia has a good education system, but it can be better and fairer, and is committed to working with states and territories to achieve this. To ensure **thriving children and strong students**, First Nations outcomes and stakeholders are a key part of the Commonwealth's reviews across early childhood, school funding and higher education.

The Department of Education will lead work to refresh Target 3 to improve enrolment and participation of First Nations children in Early Childhood Education and Care and focus its efforts on improving Target 4. Work will continue across government on the next school funding agreement, informed by *Improving Outcomes for All: The Report of the Independent Expert Panel's Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System* and other processes.

To support **further education and economic development** for First Nations people, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations will implement the redesigned Skills for Education and Employment Program, by mid-year, and deliver an additional 300,000 fee-free TAFE places. These efforts will be supported by the introduction of the National Skills Agreement, which helps bring the Commonwealth, states and territories together with First Nations people to steward the Vocational Education and Training system.

To support employment in remote communities, the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) will provide funding for community-controlled organisations to create 3,000 real jobs that communities want, with proper wages and decent conditions. The NIAA will also implement actions to support roll out of the Indigenous Skills and Employment Program.

To ensure **the right housing and infrastructure**, the Commonwealth will release a 10-year National Housing and Homelessness Plan to address housing issues in Australia. This is expected to include a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing, developed in collaboration with the Housing Policy Partnership.

The Commonwealth also increased its investment in social and affordable housing through the \$10 billion Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) and National Housing Accord. The combined funding from the HAFF and Accord will support delivery of 20,000 new social and 20,000 new affordable homes across Australia over five years. Returns from the HAFF will also be used to fund a range of acute housing needs, including \$200 million over five years for the repair, maintenance and improvements of housing in remote Indigenous communities.

The National Indigenous Australians Agency will also work with members of the Joint Steering Committee for Remote Housing Northern Territory to plan for and develop future Northern Territory (NT) housing arrangements. Work will continue through the one-year Northern Territory Remote Housing agreement to deliver a minimum of 157 houses to remote NT communities and to deliver the Commonwealth's \$100 million commitment to address urgent housing and essential infrastructure on NT homelands.

The Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts will lead implementation of a long-term First Nations Digital Inclusion Roadmap, underpinned by a strong commitment to genuine engagement and collaboration with First Nations people and their communities. Work will also continue on improving regional connectivity to support digital inclusion for First Nations people.

To achieve **justice for all**, the Justice Policy Partnership will lead the development of a Justice Sector Strengthening Plan aimed at building capacity of the community-controlled law and justice sector. Another focus in 2024 will be establishing an independent National Justice Reinvestment Unit, to support the Commonwealth's implementation of community-led justice initiatives.

The Department of Social Services will lead work to ensure **strong families** through implementing actions in the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025* under the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032* and working towards reducing the rate of child abuse and neglect under *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031*.

To support and maintain **connection to Country, culture, and languages**, actions will focus on resolving Native Title and land rights claims and addressing recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the events at Juukan Gorge. The Commonwealth will advance language initiatives and policy priorities informed by key stakeholders, including the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Partnership.

The Commonwealth will continue to drive improvement across the **cross-cutting outcomes of Disability, Remote Australia, Gender, and Sexuality and Identity** in 2024. This includes considering the recommendations of the Final Reports of the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability (Disability Royal Commission) and the Independent Review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS Review).

Many pathways, many journeys



The artwork by Jordan Lovegrove, Ngarrindjeri, of Dreamtime Creative recognises the many pathways, many journeys of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to Closing the Gap. The Commonwealth is working with states, territories and community-controlled peak organisations to fundamentally accelerate improved life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through shared decision-making that benefits the different facets of First Nations people. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap is centred around four Priority Reforms depicted by the outer meeting places. Seventeen socio economic targets in key outcome areas, represented by the dots in the inside meeting place, reflect the desired result for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The people symbols on the outside of the central meeting place represent government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people sharing decision-making as well as responsibility and shared accountability to Close the Gap.

Jordan Lovegrove is a Ngarrindjeri Artist who grew up in Adelaide, South Australia. His family is from Raukkan, an Aboriginal community situated on the south-eastern shore of Lake Alexandrina in Narrung, 80km southeast of Adelaide. Raukkan is the home and heartland of Ngarrindjeri country. Jordan is one of the first Aboriginal artists to do Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander vector art, and has perfected this skill over many years.




This Annual Report and Implementation Plan takes a new approach to the socio-economic outcome areas. Targets and outcomes have been grouped to reflect the need to develop actions holistically to advance the aspirations of First Nations people.



Long and healthy lives

Outcomes 1, 2, 14 and Ageing populations

Progress

Everyone enjoys long and healthy lives (Outcome 1)	Improvement but not on track	
Children are born healthy and strong (Outcome 2)	Improvement but not on track	
People enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing (Outcome 14)	Worsening, not on track	
Ageing Populations	Cross-cutting (no Target)	

As reported in Productivity Commission Annual Data Compilation Report July 2023

Commitments

- › Additional funding to continue to work in partnership with The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to prevent acute rheumatic fever – **\$13.9 million.**
- › **NEW** Improve First Nations cancer outcomes through building capability and growing the healthcare workforce – **\$238.5 million.**
- › **NEW** Raise awareness and increase uptake of health assessments by First Nations people, including children – **\$11.5 million.**
- › First Nations Health Worker Traineeship program – **\$54.3 million** (2022-23 to 2026-27).
- › Residential facilities for First Nations people to age in place – **\$115 million.**
- › National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program residential facilities in very remote areas – **\$52 million.**
- › Cultural safety, trauma-aware and healing-informed training material for aged care providers – **\$5.3 million.**
- › Expand the Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program to remote Kimberley and Pilbara communities – **\$45 million.**
- › Construct the Birthing on Country Centre of Excellence – **\$22.5 million.**
- › Establish the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership – **\$8.6 million** until 2025.
- › Support the Culture Care Connect Program – **\$54.7 million** until 2025.
- › **NEW** 30 dialysis units for regional and remote locations – **\$73.2 million.**
- › **NEW** Support a dedicated Suicide Prevention Regional Response Coordinator in each Primary Health Network – **\$42.3 million** (2022-23 to 2023-24).
- › Address rheumatic heart disease – **\$45.4 million** (2021-22 to 2024-25).
- › **NEW** Expand the Tackling Indigenous Smoking program – **\$141.2 million.**

2023 Annual Report: Where we've been

In 2023, the Commonwealth worked in partnership to ensure that First Nations peak and community-controlled organisations are leading health and wellbeing initiatives. Activities focused on providing accessible, responsive, and culturally safe care across all stages of the life course. Good progress is being made on all but one of the 15 activities committed to in the 2023 Implementation Plan. In particular, the Commonwealth is continuing its efforts to reduce the number of First Nations people dying of suicide, including through the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership.

Key Achievements for 2023

Tackling Indigenous Smoking

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Twenty-six *Tackling Indigenous Smoking* Lead Organisations are already on the ground in communities, delivering a locally tailored mix of smoking and vaping prevention activities.
- The \$141.2 million expansion will provide additional funding to Lead Organisations that will expand and strengthen this delivery of on the ground activities aimed at preventing vaping uptake.

Working with the community-controlled sector

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Identified programs to transition to First Nations-led organisations under the *First Nations Health Funding Transition Program*.
- Transitioned four Northern Territory Government-operated primary health care clinics to Aboriginal community control.
- Place-based funding provided to help prevent acute rheumatic fever and improve evidence-based care through the *Rheumatic Fever Strategy*.

Embed First Nations' priorities for culturally safe and responsive mainstream health

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Included First Nations people in the design and implementation of the Strengthening Medicare reform measures, identified and prioritised cultural safety and existing gaps in cultural safety data.

Long and healthy lives continued

First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- NACCHO delivered a comprehensive Traineeship Framework for a steady pipeline of skilled and qualified workers, helping address Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (ACCHO) skills shortages across Australia. One hundred and eighty-two students have enrolled in the program.

Build a workforce of Elder Care Support (ECS) workers

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Achieved a better, safer experience for older First Nations people engaging in the aged care system to access aged care services. One hundred and eighty-two full-time equivalent ECS roles funded through the ECS Program.

Invest to enable older First Nations people to age in place

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Built and upgraded culturally safe and purpose-built residential aged care facilities in South Australia (SA), Northern Territory (NT) and Queensland (QLD) – \$115 million.
- In recognition of high cost service delivery in remote Australia, increased funding to National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care residential facilities in very remote areas – \$52 million.
- Developing cultural safety, trauma-aware and healing-informed training material for aged care providers – \$5.3 million.

Expand the Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Expanded in the Kimberley and the Pilbara to ensure programs meet the needs of remote communities.

Invest in Birthing on Country sites

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Since late 2022, the Commonwealth has invested in eight organisations to deliver Birthing on Country services. Birthing on Country models of care deliver culturally safe maternity services that return control to communities and First Nations.
- The Commonwealth has also invested in the construction of a Birthing on Country Centre of Excellence, in Nowra (NSW). Construction will commence in 2024 and the Birthing on Country Centre of Excellence will be operational in 2025-26.

Establish the Culture Care Connect Program

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- The *Culture Care Connect Program* brings together key streams of suicide prevention planning, coordination and activity across the network regions; including raising awareness, early intervention, crisis management and Aftercare Services. To date, the program has employed over 108 First Nations people to drive oversight and coordination of culturally safe suicide prevention activity across every state and territory.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Established to address the devastating impact of mental ill-health and suicide on First Nations people, families and communities.
- The Partnership identified priorities such as refreshing the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017-2023* (National Strategic Framework) and developing a First Nations-led commissioning framework.



Case Study:

Better Renal Services for First Nations people

Dialysis is essential, lifesaving and life sustaining treatment for patients with end stage kidney disease. First Nations people are almost four times as likely to die from chronic kidney disease as non-Indigenous people. The *Better Renal Services for First Nations People* Budget measure is aligned to Outcome 1, funding the construction of four-chair dialysis units, with an initial six regional and remote locations – Coober Pedy and Yalata (SA), Balgo (WA), and Atitjere (Harts Range), Borroloola and Ti Tree (NT). These units represent the first round of sites for an anticipated 30 dialysis units for First Nations patients, to be delivered over the next four years.

Through this measure, the Commonwealth is progressing Priority Reforms One, Two and Three in partnership with NACCHO, and ACCHOs such as Western Desert Nganampa Walytja Palyantjaku Tjutaku Aboriginal Corporation (Purple House), who have been engaged to deliver the first six dialysis sites.

This measure is supporting First Nations people living in remote areas to receive lifesaving treatment on Country, close to family. The measure will prevent people from having to relocate to regional or metropolitan areas and save hundreds of kilometres in travel time, which makes treatment difficult to maintain and results in poorer health outcomes.

A Better Renal Services Steering Committee has been established to help inform and deliver this measure, including making recommendations to the Minister for Health and Aged Care on appropriate sites for the remaining dialysis units, and providing advice on other issues affecting delivery of renal services to First Nations people. The Better Renal Services Steering Committee is co-chaired by the Commonwealth and NACCHO, with membership comprised of First Nations stakeholders, experts in First Nations kidney care, and government representatives.

Engaging with First Nations stakeholders to identify dialysis sites ensures their locations are decided in partnership. This will lead to better outcomes by ensuring services are provided where there is greatest need, and that services are both sustainable and accessible. It will ultimately assist in progressing achievement of Closing the Gap Outcome 1. With more First Nations people able to access this life extending treatment, this will improve life expectancy and lower the burden of disease currently faced by First Nations people with chronic kidney disease.



Left:
Coober Pedy.

2024 Implementation Plan: Where we're going

First Nations leadership at the outset of any decision-making process is key to strengthening First Nations health and wellbeing outcomes.

Key Actions for 2024

Deliver First Nations Cancer Packages

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Support NACCHO to employ up to 260 new positions in ACCHOs to deliver cancer treatment and other supports such as health promotion activities, support for patients to navigate cancer care following diagnosis, and access to treatment and care on Country – \$197.9 million.
- Support the Cancer Council to deliver a grant program for implementation of innovative approaches to embed culturally safe and responsive cancer care for First Nations people, a First Nations postgraduate scholarship program, a First Nations research grant and a refresh of the Optimal Care Pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – \$38.6 million.

Improve access to health care in prisons for First Nations people

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Review health care in prisons to improve health outcomes for First Nations people and consider co-design of strategies to strengthen ACCHO-led models of prisoner health care to prevent deaths in custody and achieve better health outcomes, support rehabilitation and reduce incarceration.

Provide Better Renal Services for First Nations people

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Continue action under the Better Renal Services measure, providing \$73.2 million to establish up to 30 dialysis units to help First Nations people in regional and remote locations with end stage kidney disease.
- Deliver six new dialysis units in the following locations: Coober Pedy and Yalata (SA), Balgo (WA), and Atitjere (Harts Range), Borroloola and Ti Tree (NT). The first of these sites will become operational in the first half of 2024 and future rounds for dialysis sites are in development and expected in 2024.

Strengthen cultural safety in health care settings

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Develop measures that report on institutional racism within the health system and measure access by First Nations people to culturally safe health services.

Improve equity and outcomes for First Nations people with cancer

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Support ACCHO-delivered cancer packages for prevention, screening, treatment and navigation and ensure mainstream cancer care services are culturally safe and accessible.

Co-design and roll out Deadly Choices initiative with Institute of Urban Indigenous Health

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Improve administration and coordination of health assessments and their linkages with allied health services in partnership with ACCHOs.
- This will increase the number of health assessments being undertaken through the continued provision of culturally appropriate and targeted health messaging to promote health checks locally.

Address rheumatic heart disease through the Rheumatic Fever Strategy

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Continue to develop rheumatic heart disease program activities at the community level to be implemented by local ACCHOs.
- Develop and implement an echocardiogram training program to support increased screening in remote communities.

Continue to deliver the Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alcohol and Other Drugs Treatment Services Initiative

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Continue to deliver up to \$66 million in funding to support improved outcomes for First Nations people and communities impacted by harmful substance use.

Continue strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Continue to support and develop the First Nations health workforce. This includes \$52.9 million to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Professional Organisations (ATSIHPOs) and \$54.3 million for NACCHO to deliver a First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program.

Ensure culturally safe and responsive aged care

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Support NACCHO to roll out the final tranche of ECS workers to help ensure the physical, emotional and cultural needs of First Nations people are understood and supported in aged care.
- Invest in essential aged care infrastructure projects to increase access to quality, sustainable and culturally safe aged care services.

Ensure children are born healthy and strong

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Ensure early access to culturally safe services including growing the maternity health workforce and re-designing maternity services to reach more First Nations pregnant women.

Ensure people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Refresh the National Strategic Framework and develop an implementation plan to guide actions.
- Work with Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia and First Nations experts to finalise the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy and develop an implementation plan to identify priority actions.

Thriving children and strong students

Outcomes 3, 4 and 5

Progress

Children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years (Outcome 3)	Good improvement and on track	
Children thrive in their early years (Outcome 4)	Worsening, not on track	
Students achieve their full learning potential (Outcome 5)	Improvement but not on track	

As reported in Productivity Commission Annual Data Compilation Report July 2023

Commitments

- › Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership – **\$10.2 million** over three years.
- › Expand the Community Child Care Fund Restricted program to establish services in mainly remote locations – **\$29.9 million.**
- › Expand the *Connected Beginnings* program to 50 sites nationally by 2025 – **\$81.8 million.**
- › **NEW** Support On-Country Learning as part of the *Better, Safer Future for Central Australia Plan* – **\$40.4 million** over two years.
- › **NEW** *First Nations Languages Education Program* – **\$14.1 million** over four years.
- › **NEW** Support high quality and culturally appropriate education for First Nations boys and girls in remote areas (\$9.34 million) and to expand junior ranger activities to 25 additional sites – **\$24.24 million.**

2023 Annual Report: Where we've been

In 2023, the Commonwealth commenced a range of activities to improve educational outcomes for First Nations children and young people. These focused on supporting and building the sector, and working with partners through the development of key education strategies and initiatives. Good progress was made on all 16 activities committed to in 2023, including the completion of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission Childcare Inquiry and the introduction of a base entitlement of 36 hours per fortnight of subsidised child care for families with First Nations children, regardless of their family's activity.

Key Achievements for 2023

Strengthening partnership arrangements

Minister for Education,

Minister for Early Childhood Education

- The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation (NATSIEC) was incorporated in August 2023 as the peak body for First Nations education. The Commonwealth engaged with the Department of Education's Indigenous Education Consultative Meeting to strengthen partnership and embed First Nations perspectives in our considerations. The Commonwealth also continued to strengthen engagement with SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children (SNAICC) through the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership.
- Negotiations towards a partnership agreement between Education Ministers and NATSIEC commenced and in anticipation of that agreement being negotiated, NATSIEC co-chair Aunty Geraldine Atkinson participated in meetings of the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC) and the Education Ministers Meeting.

Research projects to support First Nations children to thrive

Minister for Early Childhood Education

- In mid-2023, the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership commissioned SNAICC to undertake two research projects:
 - Develop identified funding model arrangements for the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) delivering early childhood education and care.
 - A systematic evidence review into the optimal hours of early childhood education and care for First Nations children aged zero to five for optimal wellbeing and educational outcomes.

Thriving children and strong students continued

Framework for transition of *Connected Beginnings* community-based 'backbone' teams

Minister for Education,

Minister for Early Childhood Education

- An ACCOs *Leadership Transition Framework* was developed by SNAICC in co-design with the Department of Education. The Framework will guide transition of the *Connected Beginnings* project's community-based 'backbone' teams from non-Indigenous organisations to ACCOs, where there is agreement and support from the respective communities.
- *Connected Beginnings* currently funds 41 projects across Australia, with the number of ACCO-led sites rising from 2 to 23 since SNAICC became Community Partner in June 2022.

Draft Early Years Strategy

Minister for Social Services,

Minister for Early Childhood Education

- The Commonwealth released a draft *Early Years Strategy* in December 2023 for feedback from parents, families, and other stakeholders. It is expected to be finalised in early 2024.
- The *Strategy* aims to create a more coordinated, holistic approach to the early years and better support the education, wellbeing and development of Australia's children, including First Nations children.

Plan for cheaper child care

Minister for Education,

Minister for Early Childhood Education

- From 10 July 2023, the Commonwealth introduced a base entitlement of 36 hours per fortnight of subsidised child care for families with First Nations children, regardless of their family's activity.

First Nations Language Education

Minister for Education

- The Department of Education partnered with First Languages Australia to design and deliver the Commonwealth's *First Nations Languages Education Program*, supporting the placement of up to 60 First Nations Language educators in schools by 2026.

On-Country Learning in Central Australia

Minister for Education

- The On-Country Learning measure, announced in May 2023, is part of the *Better, Safer Future for Central Australia* plan. Forty-five operating schools in Central Australia are receiving additional funding under the measure to design activities through School Action Plans, which they will implement from 2024.

Support for Indigenous Boarding

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The Commonwealth committed an additional year of funding for a review to identify systemic reform options that will provide a more sustainable approach to Commonwealth funding to support First Nations boarding students.

Building Boarding Schools on Country

Minister for Education

- Studio Schools of Australia worked with the local Bunuba community to select a new site for the establishment of the new Manjali Studio School in the West Kimberley region.

City-Country Partnerships Program

Minister for Education

- Eight partnerships were approved in 2023 between high-performing metropolitan schools and remote schools with a high proportion of First Nations students through the *City-Country Partnerships Program*. Schools will work together, and with the Yadha Muru Foundation, on implementing agreed activities in 2024.

Case Study: Early Years Support Program

The Early Years Support Program aims to significantly increase First Nations children's access to high quality, responsive, and culturally safe early learning services. SNAICC is leading a Commonwealth funded pilot of the Program, across NSW, WA, and Victoria, to facilitate co-design with ACCOs early years services to establish a model for tailored, on-the-ground support that reflects local needs and priorities.

Centring on community need and embedding self-determination at its core, the Program was developed by SNAICC in partnership with local ACCOs early years services. The Program prioritises relationship building and information sharing, meeting regularly with services, hosting annual gatherings to bring together local services, ensuring their views are amplified in decision-making about government policy and funding.

Partnership has been prioritised since the Program's establishment in 2021. For example, when establishing the Program in WA, co-design was challenged by COVID-19 restrictions, staffing shortages, and the wet season in the Kimberley, where most services are based. Despite this, the co-design was not compromised. SNAICC and its partner organisations ensured all services had their voices heard by adjusting the second co-design workshop timing and hosting online meetings if needed.

The Program is focused on expanding the ACCOs early years sector, as well as expanding its focus on supporting a growing number of ACCOs' services across the country. Supporting access to funding opportunities has been an early highlight, with the First Year Evaluation Report survey indicating 82 per cent of respondents had strongly improved access. The Program contributes to Outcomes 3 and 4 through a targeted strategy to increase access to quality, responsive and culturally strong support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, which helps them and their families thrive.

The Program currently supports 42 ACCOs early years services in NSW, seven in WA and 11 in Victoria. Despite being a relatively new program, it has a demonstrated ability to ensure strong, culturally safe structures and enablers for a high quality community-controlled early years sector equipped to meet the needs of families' and children.



Far right:

*SNAICC Ballarat
Aboriginal
Cooperative.*

Right:

*SNAICC Western
Australia Children's
Day 2023.*

2024 Implementation Plan: Where we're going

Partnership with First Nations stakeholders is key to ensuring First Nations children and students can access culturally safe and high quality education and care.

Key Actions for 2024

Develop a new school funding agreement

Minister for Education

- Negotiate a new school funding agreement with state and territory governments to replace the National School Reform Agreement, informed by the *Improving Outcomes for All: Report of the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education system*. The new agreement will be developed in partnership with First Nations stakeholders and seeks to ensure schooling needs of First Nations students are suitably met. It will come into effect from 2025.

Develop formal partnership agreements

Minister for Education,

Minister for Early Childhood Education

- Develop formal partnership agreements between the Commonwealth and peak First Nations education bodies NATSIEC and SNAICC.

Continue the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership

Minister for Early Childhood Education

- Continue the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership work – the Partnership will agree a 2024 workplan to outline priorities for the second year to build on the foundational work conducted in 2023, including considering opportunities to provide recommendations to Joint Council.

Expand *Connected Beginnings*

Minister for Early Childhood Education

- Expand the *Connected Beginnings* program by a further nine sites, to 50 sites, by 2024-25. This program prepares First Nations children for school, by ensuring that family services work together to help them access the services they need.

Finalise and deliver the *Early Years Strategy*

Minister for Social Services,

Minister for Early Childhood Education

- Finalise the *Early Years Strategy* in early 2024, and deliver through Action Plans. The strategy aims to deliver the best possible outcomes for Australian children by supporting better decision making around policies and programs that affect them. It will align with commitments under Closing the Gap and amplify the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy*.

Develop the Preschool Outcomes Measure

Minister for Early Childhood Education

- Develop the Preschool Outcomes Measure for trial in 2025. This measure will provide educators with an evidence-based formative assessment tool to enhance understanding of children's strengths and capabilities, and support planning.
- Drive improved participation in preschool in the year before full-time schooling through new attendance targets, including an attendance target for First Nations children.

Establish playgroups in First Nations communities

Minister for Social Services

- Support ACCOs to establish and operate playgroups in First Nations communities. These playgroups help to improve the early development and wellbeing of First Nations children, improve parent-child relationships and increase feelings of belonging and connection.

Maximise uptake of the Indigenous Cultural Responsiveness Initiative

Minister for Education

- The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership has invested a further \$1.035 million to maximise the uptake of cultural resources, including:
 - a Self-Reflection Tool
 - an Intercultural Understanding Continuum
 - an Intercultural Capability Framework.

City-Country Partnerships Program and Schools' Closing the Gap Evaluation

Minister for Education

- Continue to work closely with approved partnership schools and communities through the Yadha Muru Foundation as they move from establishment to implementation.
- Report early findings in May 2024 from an evaluation of schools' Closing the Gap measures (including the *City-Country Partnerships Program*, *Building Boarding Schools on Country* and *Scaling Up Proven Primary Reading Programs*). The evaluation focuses on establishment and initial implementation of the programs. A final report is expected in May 2026.

Commence Junior Rangers activities

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Support 42 new Junior Rangers activities between 1 January 2024 and 31 December 2025, totalling \$24.24 million. The Junior Rangers program supports First Nations students' education engagement and attendance through sharing and passing on First Nations knowledge, customary practice and caring for Country.

Support high quality and culturally appropriate education in remote areas

*Minister for Indigenous Australians,
Minister for Education*

- Pilot community-led models of distance education in up to five remote communities in 2024 and 2025, with the aim of providing culturally appropriate and accessible distance education for First Nations students, to a total of \$9.34 million. The pilot locations will be determined in the first half of 2024 following consultations with education authorities and interested communities.
- Evaluate existing distance education models to determine what is working well and improvements needed to enable more First Nations students to access and benefit from distance education. The evaluation will report by the end of 2025.

Further education and economic development

Outcomes 6, 7 and 8

Progress

Students reach their full potential through further education pathways (Outcome 6)	Improvement but not on track	
Young people are engaged in employment or education (Outcome 7)	Improvement but not on track	
Strong economic participation (Outcome 8)	Good improvement and on track	

As reported in Productivity Commission Annual Data Compilation Report July 2023

Commitments

- › Support 180,000 Fee-Free Technical and Further Education (TAFE) places in 2023 focusing on a number of priority groups, including First Nations Australians. An additional 300,000 places to be made available from 2024-26 – **\$1.4 billion.**
- › Deliver the Australian Universities Accord – **\$2.7 million.**
- › **NEW** Extend demand driven funding for Commonwealth supported places in Higher Education to all eligible First Nations students – **\$34.1 million.**
- › **NEW** Up to 20 new Regional University Study Hubs and up to 14 Suburban University Study Hubs – **\$66.9 million.**
- › Increase higher education aspirations of regional and remote First Nations students in the Northern Territory – **\$1.4 million.**
- › **NEW** Establish a new jobs program for remote communities.
- › Extend the Tailored Assistance Employment Grants (TAEG) program for existing providers – up to **\$25 million** from 2023-25.
- › **NEW** Deliver up to seven Remote Training Hubs in Central Australia over five years – **\$30.2 million.**

2023 Annual Report: Where we've been

In 2023, the Commonwealth strengthened partnerships and policy frameworks for the higher education, vocational education and training, and employment sectors to ensure the needs of First Nations people are prioritised. Work was also undertaken to ensure mainstream services and First Nations specific supports are fit-for-purpose, culturally appropriate and effective in supporting educational attainment, economic participation and economic development. Four of the eight activities committed to in the 2023 Implementation Plan have been completed and the remaining three are underway.

Key Achievements for 2023

First Nations Economic Partnership

Treasurer,

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The Commonwealth announced a commitment to scope a First Nations Economic Partnership with the Coalition of Peaks and other organisations to empower First Nations people to share decision-making on policies that impact their economic wellbeing.

The Employment White Paper

Treasurer

- Released on 25 September 2023, the Employment White Paper will guide reforms to employment services with a key focus on increasing the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOS) in service delivery to meet the needs of First Nations people.

The National Indigenous Employment and Training Alliance (NIETA)

Minister for Employment and

Workplace Relations,

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- In 2023, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) supported the establishment of the National Indigenous Employment and Training Alliance (NIETA). NIETA is a group of First Nations organisations delivering employment and training services across Australia. NIETA was established to strengthen First Nations voices in employment policy, program design and implementation, and help shape further improvements to employment services and training supports to meet the needs of First Nations people.

Further education and economic development continued

Australian Universities Accord - review of the higher education system

Minister for Education

- An interim report was released in July 2023 and the Government has acted on the initial set of five priority actions that will support First Nations students including extending demand driven funding and up to 20 new Regional University Study Hubs (formerly known as Regional University Centres). The review considered new targets and reforms to support greater access and participation, including by First Nations students. The Government received the Accord's Final Report on 28 December 2023 and intends to release the report in due course.

National Skills Agreement (NSA)

Minister for Skills and Training

- In 2023, the Commonwealth agreed to the new NSA which commenced on 1 January 2024. The NSA will help bring the Commonwealth, states and territories together with First Nations people to steward the Vocational Education and Training system and to improve outcomes for First Nations communities.

Strengthened Quality of Training Delivery

Minister for Skills and Training

- The Commonwealth worked with states and territories and First Nations Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to revise the national Standards for RTOs. Proposed changes will help create an environment which better supports cultural safety for First Nations people. Draft standards are being piloted, with final implementation from 1 January 2025, subject to agreement from relevant Ministers.

Fee-Free TAFE

Minister for Skills and Training

- Through a 12-month Skills Agreement, the Commonwealth partnered with states and territories to deliver funding of \$1 billion for Fee-Free TAFE and vocational education places across Australia in 2023. First Nations people are a priority cohort for Fee-Free TAFE access. There were over 14,000 First Nations students enrolled in Fee-Free TAFE courses between January and September 2023. First Nations learners made up 4.9 per cent of the 296,000 Fee-Free TAFE enrolments up to 30 September 2023 nationally.

Regional Partnerships Project Pool Program

Minister for Education

- The program commenced in July 2023 and enables higher education aspirations of regional and remote First Nations students to realise their aspirations to higher education. The Commonwealth awarded Flinders University \$1.4 million to deliver a two-year project in the Northern Territory to increase First Nations students' awareness, aspiration and readiness for a higher education allied health pathway.

Self-Employment Assistance Program

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations

- Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, the program helped 384 First Nations people to explore self-employment and start a new small business. There was a focus on enabling First Nations people in remote Australia to access the program in 2023.

First Nations specific Indigenous Skills and Employment Program (ISEP)

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- This program aims to provide complementary support to mainstream programs to help connect First Nations people to jobs, career advancement, and to new training and job-readiness activities. During 2022-23, ISEP grant applicants were provided with seed funding to develop their detailed grant proposal in partnership with First Nations communities to ensure support would meet community needs. Following a competitive assessment process, approximately 35 ISEP providers will commence their projects by early 2024.

Redesigned Skills for Education and Employment (SEE) Program

Minister for Skills and Training

- First Nations organisations and sector representatives have informed a redesigned SEE Program. The redesigned program will provide learning, literacy, numeracy and digital skills training in metropolitan, regional, and remote areas with a specific focus on supporting up to 2,000 First Nations people to access tailored training per year.

Replacement of the Community Development Program (CDP)

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- In partnership with remote communities, the Commonwealth commenced trials in remote Australia to inform the design of a new remote jobs program. These trials include:
 - CDP Community Projects: providers in remote Australia are working closely with communities to trial innovative approaches to increase the number of jobs filled by local people. Trials will run until October 2024. Approximately 1,750 CDP participants were directly placed in paid jobs through trial projects with CDP job placements increasing overall by 15% over 12 months since the trials commenced in November 2022.
 - New jobs program trial: commenced in September 2023 to support up to 200 jobs in remote communities with real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions.
 - Ngaanyatjarra Lands Trial: commenced in July 2023 to trial tailored approaches to remote employment.
- Two examples of early successes through the trials include:
 - The 'Miyalk Kitchen' project in the Galiwin'ku region of Arnhem Land, where a commercial kitchen enterprise has been established, providing employment opportunities for 18 women to prepare meals for contractors visiting the island and provide low cost, high quality dinner options for community members.
 - A 'Wages to Growth' project in the East Kimberley region of WA provided participants with meaningful placements, intensive mentorship, and training to transition into permanent employment, and has seen around 60 CDP participants attaining paid work.

Case Study:

Larapinta Trail Tourism Project

The *Larapinta Trail Tourism Project* is a First Nations-led initiative that facilitates education and economic advancement to empower First Nations people to participate in local economies in line with Closing the Gap Outcomes 6, 7 and 8.

The Commonwealth has invested \$1 million (2023 to 2025) in the *Larapinta Trail Tourism Project* which sees First Nations owned and operated tourism enterprise, 100% Finke River Culture and Adventures, deliver training and mentoring to at least 100 local Indigenous people, including Western Arrernte women and men from Larapinta and the West MacDonnell Ranges. Participants obtain tourism qualifications by completing Certificates II and III through Charles Darwin University and are supported into employment as tourism guides.

The project aims to increase the number of local First Nations people employed in Central Australia's tourism industry by at least 100, by the end of 2025, while improving the viability of the region's new and existing First Nations travel businesses and training programs.

The *Larapinta Trail Tourism Project* was born of connection with community, with the National Indigenous Australians Agency involved in early discussions to determine how it could best support the venture – a key factor in its success. Additional benefits of the project include participants' connection to community and land, and the confidence and pride that comes with sharing stories and culture with visitors. Managing Director of 100% Finke River Culture and Adventures, Benjamin Kenny, stated, 'As a First Nations tour guide, this is so much more than a job. I am seeing my mob, my colleagues here at 100% Finke, build confidence and pride in who we are, and be inspired by the interest our visitors have in being here on our lands, hearing our stories and understanding our culture.'

(Morse, C 2023, '*Larapinta Trail Tourism Project* set to receive \$1 million boost', National Indigenous Times, 30 June 2023.)

Right:

Standly Chasm, one of the location sites for the Larapinta Trail Tourism Project – a First Nations-led initiative that facilitates tourism education and economic advancement of local First Nations people, and empowering them to lead and self-determine their participation in their local economy.



2024 Implementation Plan: Where we're going

2024 will see a sharp focus on implementing agreed reforms to the higher education, vocational education, and training and employment sectors that will support increased economic participation and economic development by First Nations people. Partnership and policy frameworks will continue to evolve over 2024 to consider additional reform actions and initiatives to ensure First Nations people have access to culturally safe, appropriate and fit for purpose education, training and employment programs and the tailored supports they need to participate in well-paid and secure jobs, including through improved outcomes for Indigenous youth.



Key Actions for 2024

New Australian Apprenticeships service delivery model

Minister for Skills and Training

- Implement the new Australian Apprenticeships service delivery model by July 2024 which will include the redesigned Australian Apprenticeship Support Services providing enhanced individual and employer support for Australian Apprenticeships. This includes specialist providers improving wrap-around support for women in male-dominated trades and supporting First Nations apprentices and apprentices working towards Clean Energy occupations.

Redesigned SEE Program

Minister for Skills and Training

- Implement the redesigned program from mid-2024.

First Nations specific ISEP

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Provide grants to 35 organisations to deliver their programs in partnership with communities.

Fee-Free TAFE places

Minister for Skills and Training

- Implement an additional 300,000 places from 1 January 2024.

Continue delivery of the Launch into Work program

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations

- Partner with businesses to co-design pre-employment projects that prepare job seekers for work in their business. The program areas will continue to support the design and delivery of projects with First Nations Owned businesses and those seeking to increase the representation of First Nations employees in their workforce.

Further education and economic development continued

Workforce Specialists initiative

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations

- Develop and deliver strategic projects to meet the workforce needs of identified industries and occupations, connecting them to eligible individuals in Workforce Australia Services, Workforce Australia Online and Workforce Australia – Transition to Work. As part of Workforce Australia, a panel of Workforce Specialists was established via an open Request for Proposal. First Nations projects are a high priority and will remain a key focus.

Replacing the Community Development Program (CDP)

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Design a new jobs program to create 3,000 jobs with proper wages and decent conditions in remote communities and a Community Jobs and Business Fund to complement wages and to fund capital equipment and capacity building services for community organisations to have resources their employees need to do their job.
- The new jobs program will be designed in partnership with First Nations people and informed by continued engagement with remote communities, CDP providers and participants, and other key stakeholders.
- A new jobs program will be complemented by a new employment service for remote Australia that is being developed in parallel to broader related work across Government.

Partner with the NIETA

Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations

- Work in partnership to scope a data project to improve employment services design. The data project is about working more closely with First Nations stakeholders and peaks into how employment services can work better.

First Nations Economic Partnership

Treasurer, Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Work with the Coalition of Peaks and other organisations to determine the scope of a potential First Nations Economic Partnership. The Partnership will focus on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and community-controlled organisations, opportunities for job creation and translating First Nations' knowledge, assets, interests and rights into tangible, sustainable social and economic benefits for communities. The Commonwealth will consider the outcomes of the scoping exercise in 2024.

Establish Remote Training Hubs Network

Minister for Skills and Training

- Work in partnership to deliver Remote Training Hubs over five years. Informed by community consultations undertaken by the Commonwealth alongside the Office of the Central Australia Regional Controller, and endorsed by the Central Australia Plan Aboriginal Leadership Group, DEWR, NIAA and the Northern Territory Government will work in partnership with Central Australian communities to establish two Remote Training Hubs in Central Australia by 2025 and up to seven over five years.

Increasing University Pathways

Minister for Education

- From 2024, all First Nations students in Australia will be guaranteed a Commonwealth supported place at a university of their choice, when accepted into their chosen course of study. An eligible university place is a non-designated, bachelor level course (other than medicine) at an Australian public university. This expands on the existing measure which supports regional and remote First Nations students. By expanding demand driven funding to all First Nations students, it is estimated that the number of First Nations students could double within a decade.

The right housing and infrastructure

Outcomes 9 and 17

Progress

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure, appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need (Outcome 9)

Target 9a: Improvement but not on track



Target 9b: Status unknown, no data available.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives (Outcome 17)

Status unknown, no data available.



As reported in Productivity Commission Annual Data Compilation Report July 2023

Commitments

- › Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) – \$10 billion. **\$200 million** in HAFF disbursements over five years will go towards repairs, maintenance, and improvements in remote Indigenous communities.
- › Deliver a minimum of 157 houses and Property Tenancy Management services in remote Northern Territory (NT) communities in 2023-24 – **\$111.7 million**, matched by the NT Government.
- › Deliver urgent housing and essential infrastructure on NT homelands – **\$100 million**.
- › Support water infrastructure in First Nations communities in remote and regional Australia – **\$150 million** over four years (\$17.5 million committed to projects).
- › **NEW** Help First Nations communities build local understanding, capability and empower communities to benefit from improved water infrastructure – **\$5 million**.
- › **NEW** Support Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) – **\$20.8 million** over two years.
- › **NEW** Rolling out free community-wide Wi-Fi in around 20 remote communities in 2023-24.

2023 Annual Report: Where we've been

Adequate housing and infrastructure in remote communities, including clean water, continues to be a priority for the Commonwealth. In 2023, the Commonwealth formalised its partnership with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association, provided funding to the Northern Territory for remote housing and infrastructure repair on homelands, and completed public consultations for the *National Housing and Homelessness Plan*. Good progress was made on nine of the ten activities committed to in 2023, with two activities completed.

Key Achievements for 2023

Housing Policy Partnership

Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness

- Establishment of the Housing Policy Partnership that brings together the Commonwealth, states and territories, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to identify opportunities to work more effectively across governments to achieve positive housing outcomes.
- The Commonwealth is providing \$5.5 million over three years to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association (NATSIHA), the first and only national leadership body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled housing in Australia. NATSIHA co-chairs and provides secretariat and policy support function for the Housing Policy Partnership. The Partnership's work focuses on improving housing outcomes and preventing homelessness for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Consultations on the National Housing and Homelessness Plan

Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness

- The Government has undertaken extensive consultations around Australia to inform the development of the National Housing and Homelessness Plan. The Commonwealth is also working with the Housing Policy Partnership.
- Feedback received has enabled a broader understanding of the issues and challenges First Nations people experience in Australia's current housing system, and is assisting in identifying short, medium and longer-term reforms to address them.

National Housing and Homelessness Data Sharing Protocol

Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness

- In May 2023, Housing Ministers agreed a National Housing and Homelessness Data Sharing Protocol as the foundation for sharing housing and homelessness data across jurisdictions.
- The Protocol considers a range of data governance matters including Indigenous Data Governance and Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

National Housing Supply and Affordability Council

Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness

- The Commonwealth established the interim National Housing Supply and Affordability Council (the Council) in January 2023 to provide independent advice on housing supply and affordability. Throughout 2023, the interim Council delivered a number of submissions on key housing issues and a report on Barriers to Institutional Investment, Finance and Innovation in Housing.
- A statutory Council was agreed through legislation, passed by Parliament in September 2023, and replaced the interim Council established in January 2023. The eight external members of the statutory Council were announced by the Minister for Housing in December 2023. The appointments provide a high level of skills and experience to the Council across a range of critical housing issues including the needs of First Nations people. The new Council will play a key role in providing independent expert advice to government to help boost supply and affordability.

Social Housing Accelerator

Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness

- The Social Housing Accelerator is funding more social housing for Indigenous families.
- Final implementation plans were delivered showing how many houses will be delivered in each state and territory, with many committing funds for First Nations housing.

Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF)

Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness

- The establishment of the \$10 billion HAFF will deliver an ongoing funding stream to support the delivery of 30,000 new social and affordable housing properties over five years. Returns from the HAFF will also fund a range of acute housing needs, including \$200 million over five years for the repair, maintenance and improvements of housing in remote Indigenous communities.

Northern Territory Housing Arrangements

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The one-year Remote Housing Northern Territory Federation Funding Agreement commenced in July 2023 to continue housing delivery to remote communities following expiry of the National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory. Through the agreement, the Commonwealth is providing \$111.7 million, matched by the Northern Territory Government to deliver a minimum of 157 houses in 2023-24 and Property Tenancy Management services.
- Works started in Northern Territory Homelands in April 2023 to deliver the Commonwealth's \$100 million investment for urgent repairs and maintenance to housing and essential infrastructure.
- Both agreements are overseen and informed by the Joint Steering Committee for Remote Housing Northern Territory.

National Water Grid Fund

Minister for the Environment and Water

- In 2023, the Commonwealth announced \$17.5 million to infrastructure projects to improve water security in the Northern Territory. An additional \$30.4 million was allocated to prospective projects in the Northern Territory, New South Wales and South Australia, which are expected to be contracted in the first half of 2024.
- The Commonwealth also committed \$5 million to building local understanding and capability and empowering communities to benefit from improved water infrastructure.
- Through the National Water Grid Fund, the Commonwealth also funded \$3.2 million to three projects that will support future infrastructure projects in First Nations communities.

First Nations Digital Inclusion

*Minister for Communications,
Minister for Indigenous Australians*

- In January 2023, the Commonwealth established the First Nations Advisory Group to provide advice on ways to close the digital divide, with an initial report released in October 2023.
- In July 2023, the Commonwealth released the *First Nations Digital Inclusion Plan*. The Plan outlines priorities for future action to support digital inclusion.

Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia

Minister for Communications

- The Commonwealth has boosted funding to support the Better Connectivity Plan (BCP) in rural and regional communities, including dedicated funding towards projects in First Nations communities.

2024 Implementation Plan: Where we're going

The Commonwealth remains committed to working with states and territories and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ensure safe and secure housing that is accessible, aligned with people's priorities and needs, and includes access to a range of essential services including digital technology.

Key Actions for 2024

Deliver recommendations to Joint Council from the Housing Policy Partnership

Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness

- Make recommendations to Joint Council about improving housing outcomes and homelessness prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the end of 2024.

Commence delivery of programs to be funded by returns from the Housing Australia Future Fund and the National Housing Accord

Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness

- Deliver the first social and affordable dwellings funded by the HAFF and the affordable housing component of the Housing Accord from mid-2024. These programs will deliver a combined 40,000 new social and affordable dwellings (30,000 from the HAFF and an additional 10,000 dwellings under the new Housing Accord) over five years.
- Repairs, maintenance, and improvements in remote Indigenous communities will be funded through \$200 million in HAFF disbursements.

Develop Implementation Strategy for Housing Sector Strengthening Plan

Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness

- Work collaboratively with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association to develop an implementation strategy under the Housing Sector Strengthening Plan.

Finalise *National Housing and Homelessness Plan*

Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness

- Release a 10-year *National Housing and Homelessness Plan*. Development will include collaboration with the Housing Policy Partnership as a conduit for First Nations needs and priorities.

Planning for future remote Northern Territory Housing arrangements

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The National Indigenous Australians Agency will work with the Northern Territory Government, and members of the Joint Steering Committee for Remote Housing Northern Territory to plan and develop longer-term housing arrangements beyond July 2024.

Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia

Minister for Communications

- In response to the initial report of the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group, the Government will roll out free community Wi-Fi services to around 20 First Nations communities in 2024.
- The Wi-Fi roll out will be undertaken in partnership with NBN Co, with access delivered via the NBN Sky Muster service and in-community Digital Ambassadors to support digital literacy.

Development of First Nations Digital Inclusion Roadmap

Minister for Communications

- Engage across government, industry and communities to identify opportunities to ensure access is affordable and fit for purpose, and that First Nations people are aware of their connectivity options and have digital skills to access the internet safely.

Implementation of projects to support improved First Nations telecommunications services

Minister for Communications

- Commence 44 projects to improve telecommunications services in First Nations communities, under Round Three of the *Regional Connectivity Program* (RCP) and Round Seven of the *Mobile Black Spot Program* (MBSP), delivered through \$54.8 million in funding.

Funding for safe and reliable water in remote and regional First Nations communities

Minister for the Environment and Water

- Continue to work in partnership with state and territory governments, communities, and service providers to identify opportunities and fund proposals for water infrastructure planning and construction projects, and to support science and other enabling projects that can ensure solutions are evidence-based, sustainable and align with community priorities.

Case Study: National Water Grid Fund

– Safe and reliable water in remote and regional First Nations communities

‘Water is life – we all live, survive and thrive with water’. This is one of many messages relayed at the Better Water in the Bush Forum in June 2023, held by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water in partnership with the Goyder Institute for Water Research and Desert Knowledge Australia.

Representatives from Indigenous communities, Land Councils, local government organisations, water and health service providers, and government agencies came together to hear stories from Country and to build a shared understanding of the challenges, solutions and enabling actions for water security in remote communities. The forum outcomes are informing future actions to enhance and sustain water infrastructure investment for water security.

The availability of safe and reliable water is vital for the self-determination, liveability and resilience of all communities. There is unequal access to safe and reliable water supplies in remote areas of Australia, which disproportionately affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Many First Nations communities in remote and regional locations do not have access to water sources that are safe for consumption, or to water supplies and services that can meet community needs. These conditions affect community health, economic development, and cultural and environmental water use outcomes, and contribute to overcrowding.

In February 2023, the Commonwealth committed \$150 million over four years within the National Water Grid Fund to support water infrastructure projects in First Nations communities in remote and regional Australia.

For the first projects, \$17.5 million has been announced to provide improved access to water to around 1,100 people in two communities: the Yuendumu Water Security and Supply Strategy, and the Milingimbi Water Security Strategy (Northern Territory).

The investment in critical water infrastructure projects in Milingimbi has unlocked the opportunity for housing development, with 32 new homes and the extension of a further 32 existing homes now possible, improving liveability in Milingimbi.

Prospective projects in the Northern Territory, New South Wales and South Australia have been allocated \$30.4 million in funding, with negotiations underway with those states.

Supporting First Nations communities on Country, particularly those in some of the most remote parts of Australia is a collaborative effort. Projects are being delivered in partnership with state and territory governments, and strongly informed by communities.

The Commonwealth has also committed \$5 million towards building local understanding and capability and empowering communities to benefit from improved water infrastructure. This funding will help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to make well informed decisions about water infrastructure for their community. It will ensure that achieving sustainable change within communities does contribute to Closing the Gap.



Top right:

Looking over Milingimbi in Central Arnhem Land, Northern Territory. The National Water Grid and Northern Territory Government are funding infrastructure to improve the reliability of the community's water supply. The National Water Grid and Northern Territory Government are funding infrastructure to improve the reliability of the community's water supply.

Image credit: Northern Territory Government



Centre right:

Current water supply infrastructure in Yuendumu, Northern Territory. The National Water Grid and Northern Territory Government are providing funding to address the risk of water source failure.

Image credit: Power and Water Corporation NT



Bottom right:

Coolamons are traditionally used for scooping out sand when digging into water sources or for carrying water, food or babies – symbolising the importance of water and the next generation. The coolamon was filled with personal messages from Better Water in the Bush Forum participants and presented to the Minister for the Environment and Water, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP.

Image credit: DCCEEW



Justice for all

Outcomes 10 and 11

Progress

Adults are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system (Outcome 10)	Worsening, not on track	←
Young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system (Outcome 11)	Good improvement and on track	✓

As reported in Productivity Commission Annual Data Compilation Report July 2023

Commitments

- › **NEW** Justice Policy Partnership – **\$10.7 million** over four years to continue funding for the Justice Policy Partnership (2024-25 to 2027-28).
- › Justice Reinvestment Programs – **\$69 million** for the National Justice Reinvestment Program (2022-23 to 2025-26) and **\$10 million** for the Justice Reinvestment in Central Australia Program (2023-24 to 2026-27).
- › **NEW** Continued funding of the Custody Notification Service – **\$4.4 million**.
- › Indigenous Legal Services – **\$440 million** over five years.

2023 Annual Report: Where we've been

In 2023, the Commonwealth worked with First Nations peaks and community-controlled organisations to address overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and young people in the criminal justice system. A Strategic Framework was developed and finalised through the Justice Policy Partnership, and the National Justice Reinvestment Program and the Justice Reinvestment in Central Australia Program were established to enable community-led, place-based initiatives addressing drivers of contact with the criminal justice system. However, there were also challenges to working in new ways, including what partnership meant for governance and decision-making, and the additional load on First Nations partners. Good progress was made on all six activities committed to in the 2023 Implementation Plan, including the implementation of options for consolidated national real-time reporting of deaths in custody. Activities supporting the community-controlled justice sector are on track for completion in 2025.

Key Achievements for 2023

Justice Policy Partnership

Attorney-General

- Finalised a Strategic Framework with all jurisdictions and the Coalition of Peaks to focus effort on transforming justice systems so they work for, not against, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; establishing formal partnerships for shared decision-making and accountability; strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector; and delivering holistic and integrated systems.

Justice reinvestment programs

Attorney-General, Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The *National Justice Reinvestment Program* and the *Justice Reinvestment in Central Australia Program* opened for applications in September 2023, and will enable First Nations communities to develop, implement and evaluate local justice reinvestment approaches to address the drivers of contact with the criminal justice system.
- Nine communities were successful in the first round of the Programs, which remain open to applications year round.

National real-time reporting on deaths in custody

Attorney-General

- The national deaths in custody real-time reporting dashboard was launched in June 2023, improving transparency and accountability of all governments' criminal justice systems.

Funding for Indigenous Legal Services

Attorney-General

- Continued support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services across Australia to deliver critical frontline services.

Consideration of minimum age of criminal responsibility

Attorney-General

- Finalised a report for the Standing Council of Attorneys-General, developed in partnership with First Nations experts from the Justice Policy Partnership, to support minimum age of criminal responsibility reform.

2024 Implementation Plan: Where we're going

In 2024, the Commonwealth will continue to strengthen its partnership arrangements as it moves into the implementation of a number of First Nations justice policy reforms.

The Commonwealth commits to drawing on learning and strengths from design consultations, and engagement on reform work undertaken in 2023 to establish stronger partnerships with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, communities and their leaders, and with states, territories, and philanthropic funders.

Key Actions for 2024

Implement the Justice Policy Partnership Strategic Framework

Attorney-General

- Develop a Justice Sector Strengthening Plan; anti-racism and cultural capability strategies for justice sector agencies; expand justice partnerships; and improve cross-sectoral partnerships with sectors such as disability, health, family violence prevention, care and protection, social and emotional well-being, education and housing.

Provide community grants for justice reinvestment

Attorney-General,

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Provide grants to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia to develop, implement and evaluate local justice reinvestment initiatives that address the drivers of contact with the criminal justice system. In February 2024 the Commonwealth announced nine successful initiatives selected in the first assessment cycle of the *National Justice Reinvestment Program*. The total amount of funding to support the initiatives is \$16.2 million. The initiatives are in Western Australia (WA), the Northern Territory (NT), Queensland and New South Wales, and take the total number of initiatives supported to 11, noting early investments in Alice Springs (NT) and Halls Creek (WA).

Establish the independent Justice Reinvestment Unit

Attorney-General,

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Coordinate and support justice reinvestment initiatives at a national level.

Reform the minimum age of criminal responsibility

Attorney-General

- Continue to work with state and territory governments in progressing minimum age of criminal responsibility reform nationally.

Case Study: Working in partnership with Jumbunna Institute to reform the justice sector

In 2023, the Commonwealth worked to embed the principles of strong partnership in implementing justice reinvestment. The joint Attorney-General's Department and National Indigenous Australians Agency's First Nations Justice Taskforce partnered with the Jumbunna Institute to undertake community consultations to inform the design of the *National Justice Reinvestment Program* and National Justice Reinvestment Unit, ensuring First Nations knowledge and expertise were central to their design and delivery.

Partnering with an organisation that had a strong history of working with justice reinvestment, and the respect of First Nations communities, enabled a level of access and feedback that would not normally have been possible and allowed the Commonwealth to access a broad range of issues being raised by community. Through the design phase, the Commonwealth received clear feedback from First Nations communities, justice reinvestment experts and Coalition of Peaks representatives, that communities wanted more time to be involved in these important discussions.


In response, the Attorney-General and Minister for Indigenous Australians adjusted the timeframe for opening the programs to allow more time for community feedback. Between March and August 2023, 44 design workshops were held with First Nations communities across Australia (including remote areas such as Lajamanu, NT and Halls Creek, WA). Consultations were also held with justice reinvestment supporting bodies, experts, and other non-government stakeholders and all states and territories.

Following those consultations, the Jumbunna Institute delivered its first report to the Commonwealth, which informed the design of the programs. To promote shared decision-making, a Working Group, with equal government and First Nations non-government representatives, was established to consider recommendations from the first report and co-design the grant guidelines for the *National Justice Reinvestment Program*. The Working Group also considered opportunities to tailor and innovate within the confines of existing grants processes. The Jumbunna Institute provided a second report to the Commonwealth in early September 2023, focused on the design of a National Justice Reinvestment Unit. Work will continue in 2024, in partnership with the Justice Policy Partnership, to design and implement the National Justice Reinvestment Unit.

Strong families

Outcomes 12 and 13

Progress

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not overrepresented in the child protection system (Outcome 12)	Worsening, not on track	
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe (Outcome 13)	Status unknown, data unavailable	

As reported in Productivity Commission Annual Data Compilation Report July 2023

Commitments

- › *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031* – **\$30 million**.
- › *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025* under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* and investment in the *First Nations National Plan* – **\$170.8 million** over five years.
- › Indigenous-led data collection to report progress on Target 13 and build the family and domestic violence evidence base for First Nations women and children – **\$15 million** over five years.
- › Two action plans (National and Commonwealth) in response to the *National Strategy to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse* – First Nations people are a priority group under the National Strategy, and there are two First Nations specific measures in these plans – **\$307.5 million** over four years.
- › Strengthening Families and Communities Partnership (Central Australia) – **\$30 million** over four years.
- › Family Violence and Prevention Legal Service providers – **\$68.6 million** over two years.
- › Place-based, trauma-aware and culturally responsive healing programs – **\$23.2 million** over four years.

2023 Annual Report: Where we've been

In 2023, the Commonwealth worked collaboratively to create policy and program settings that empower First Nations leadership to affect meaningful change. Good progress has been made, with all seven activities committed to in the 2023 Implementation Plan underway. Work focused on transitioning to formal shared decision-making arrangements, creating roles and funding for First Nations policy advice, and improving the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander evidence base. *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031* and the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032* have formed the basis of the Commonwealth's actions towards Outcomes 12 and 13. The Commonwealth will continue implementing these actions through 2024 and beyond.

Key Achievements for 2023

Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031

Minister for Social Services

- Launched *Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026* through a partnership between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group and Commonwealth, state and territory governments.
- Commenced scoping and design for establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support.
- Commenced an assessment of the needs and barriers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families engaged with child protection systems who require access to legal supports. This project forms part of a commitment to improve the availability and quality of legal support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families engaged with child protection systems, and acknowledge the issues of equitable access to justice.

First Nations National Plan

Minister for Social Services

- Committed to deliver Australia's first standalone *First Nations National Plan* to address the disproportionately high rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children acknowledging the need to listen and work together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with a willingness and commitment to doing things differently.
- Established the *First Nations National Plan* Steering Committee Secretariat, and completed the Expression of Interest process for Steering Committee members to lead the development of the *First Nations National Plan*.

Strong families continued

National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032

Minister for Social Services

- Launched the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025* through partnership between the Department of Social Services and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.
- Launched more than \$96 million in new grant opportunities for eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and community-controlled organisations to deliver:
 - Community-led prevention services, programs and campaigns for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
 - Community-led men's wellness centres for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
 - Increased capacity of crisis accommodation services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
 - Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Programs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.
- Commenced consultations to establish a First Nations National Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Peak Body in 2024.

National strategy to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse

Attorney-General

- Commenced implementation of two (National and Commonwealth) action plans (2021 to 2024) to achieve the outcomes under the National Strategy.
- Commenced delivery of all 62 measures in the action plans in partnership with states and territories and the non-government sector. First Nations people are a priority group under the National Strategy which provides a nationally coordinated, strategic framework for preventing and responding to child sexual abuse. There are two First Nations-specific measures, which are led by the National Indigenous Australians Agency.

Right:

Members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence with Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers for Woman's Safety at the launch of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025.



Case Study: Formal Partnership and Listening to Locals

To ensure the full diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and perspectives was heard and represented during the development of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025*, the Department of Social Services worked with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (Advisory Council) to undertake public consultation through an online survey and nation-wide consultations with communities. The expertise and guidance of the Advisory Council significantly enabled local perspectives to be heard.

Care was taken to provide sufficient communication of the development of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025* so rural and remote communities were appropriately informed of the release and its purpose.

Working in partnership with the Advisory Council required specific funding to Council members so they were appropriately resourced to undertake their role. The Department of Social Services provided staffing, resources, and time to develop and maintain positive relationships, and facilitate joint endorsement of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025*. The formal partnership being established early enabled the Department of Social Services to form strong relationships which supported regular and open communication throughout the development process.

This partnership has been a driving force for making sustained progress on developing and delivering the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025*, underpinned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and doing, evidence and data, including the ability for partners to drive the narrative associated with that data.



Left:

Launch of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025 through a partnership between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group and Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

2024 Implementation Plan: Where we're going

To end family, domestic and sexual violence in one generation the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be heard and First Nations women's and children's experiences of violence acknowledged in the national agenda.

Key Actions for 2024

Establish place-based community networks for Connected Family Safety Services

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Establish five place-based community networks in regional and remote locations to improve collaboration and service integration across the family safety sector. This will involve localised service mapping, gap analysis, and the development of a community plan to help build the evidence base for place-based investment in family safety.

Establish culturally appropriate data collection on family and domestic violence

Minister for Social Services

- Work in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.
- Further build the family and domestic violence evidence base for First Nations people and develop a culturally appropriate data collection mechanism to report progress reduction in violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

Finalise Stage Two and Implement Stage Three of the Closing the Gap Outcomes and Evidence Fund

Minister for Social Services

- Co-design, trial and evaluate projects that contribute to Targets 12 and 13. The projects are in eight selected locations to be announced when First Nations partners confirm the projects are ready to proceed in their communities.

Deliver 'Project BIRD' (Believe, Inquire, and Respond to Disclosure)

Minister for Health,

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Design, pilot and evaluate a trauma-aware, healing-informed and culturally appropriate national training package for frontline health care workers through SNAICC, partnering with Yamurrah.
- Improve early disclosure experiences and access to specialist services for First Nations victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. 'Project BIRD' will launch pilots in five locations across Australia in 2024.

Establish a First Nations National Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Peak Body

Minister for Social Services

- Under the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025*, the government committed to the creation of a First Nations national family, domestic and sexual violence peak body.
- The peak body will provide governance across the sector at a national level and play a vital role in leading and coordinating national efforts to ensure the safety and wellbeing of First Nations people, families and communities.

Launch the Safe and Supported Partnership Agreement for Shared Decision-Making

Minister for Social Services

- Deliver actions in the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026* in genuine partnership through the Safe and Supported Partnership Agreement for Shared Decision-Making between governments and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group.

Progress second wave of the Australian Child Maltreatment Study

Minister for Social Services

- Design and implement the First Nations component of this study to reflect Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles.

Embed the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle in the design of service delivery programs

Minister for Social Services

- Design service delivery models that provide early support to families with multiple and complex needs, aligning with a focus on embedding the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and its five elements of prevention, placement, participation, partnership and connection through the Improving Multidisciplinary Responses Program.

Develop the National Child and Family Investment Strategy

Minister for Social Services

- Support the shift towards proportionate and coordinated funding of early, targeted, holistic and culturally safe support services, with a focus on First Nations children and families. Principles and actions from the Investment Strategy will be practically demonstrated and assessed in select locations through the Innovation Fund grant opportunity.

Deliver the Strengthening Families and Communities Partnership in Central Australia in the Northern Territory

Minister for Social Services

- Support initiatives in the Central Australia region in the Northern Territory that will positively impact families and communities to improve family safety.

Deliver an assessment of the needs and barriers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families engaged with child protection systems who require access to legal supports

Minister for Social Services

- Support further activities under Safe and Supported to improve availability and quality of legal support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families engaged with child protection systems, and acknowledge the issues of equitable access to justice.

Develop the *First Nations National Plan*

Minister for Social Services

- Work in partnership with the *First Nations National Plan* Steering Committee and Committee Secretariat to conduct national consultations and draft the *First Nations National Plan*.

Connection to Country, culture and languages

Outcomes 15 and 16

Progress

People maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters (Outcome 15)

Improvement but not on track



Cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing (Outcome 16)

Status unknown, data unavailable



As reported in Productivity Commission Annual Data Compilation Report July 2023

Commitments

- › Continue the Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) program and establish 10 new IPAs – **\$231.5 million** over five years.
- › Double the number of Indigenous rangers by 2030 – **\$636.4 million.**
- › Develop a First Nations Clean Energy Strategy – **\$5.5 million.**
- › 20 Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC) Capacity Building activities – **\$8.4 million.**
- › Fund the Aboriginal Land Commissioner, who conducts formal land claim inquiries in the Northern Territory – **\$590,000.**
- › **NEW** Increase the *Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program* to \$100 million – additional **\$60 million.**
- › **NEW** Support Murray-Darling Basin First Nations to undertake cultural flows and cultural economy planning – **\$20 million.**

2023 Annual Report: Where we've been

All four activities committed to in 2023 are underway. In particular, the Commonwealth continued to work in partnership to support funding for systems and services to progress land and Native Title claims, and support Indigenous Rangers to care for and work on Country. The Commonwealth has also made progress working in partnership with First Nations people on issues impacting the PBC sector, heritage protection reform, and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Partnership.

Key Achievements for 2023

Resolution of Native Title and other land and sea claims

*Attorney-General,
Minister for Indigenous Australians*

- Twenty-five Native Title determinations, all made by consent. Approximately 55 per cent of Australia's landmass now has a recognised First Nations interest under the *Native Title Act 1993* or other statutory land rights regimes. Target 15b (sea Country) will have been met when Torres Strait determinations are included in the next Productivity Commission Annual Data Compilation report due July 2024.
- Twenty PBC Capacity Building activities commenced, totalling \$8.4 million.
- Established the Native Title Preservation Evidence Working Group.

Responding to the Inquiry into the destruction at Juukan Gorge

*Minister for the Environment,
Attorney-General,
Minister for Indigenous Australians*

- The Commonwealth continued to work in partnership with the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance to co-design options for heritage protection reform.
- The Commonwealth is working closely with the National Native Title Council (NNTC) and receiving advice from the PBC Steering Group on issues impacting the sector.

Connection to Country, culture and languages continued

Caring for Country

*Minister for Indigenous Australians,
Minister for the Environment*

- Continued support for the IPA program, opening funding opportunities to extend current IPA projects and to establish 10 new IPAs, over four years to 30 June 2028.
- Celebrated the 25th anniversary of the dedication of the first IPA in Nantawarrina, South Australia.
- Supported the formal dedication of three new IPAs – Wik, Wuthathi and Talaroo. A total of 85 dedicated IPAs now make up more than 50 per cent of Australia's National Reserve System, covering over 87 million hectares of land and 5 million hectares of sea Country.
- Opened grant round one of Indigenous Rangers Program (IRP) expansion to establish up to 1,000 people working caring for Country.

Supporting languages and culture to thrive

Minister for the Arts

- The Commonwealth, in partnership with First Nations languages experts, held the Australian launch of the United Nations' *International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032* and *Voices of Country*, a national action plan to guide Australia's participation in the Decade.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Partnership was established in 2023. The Partnership commenced community consultation on policy priorities and began developing a Roadmap for progress towards Target 16. Members of the Partnership also established a data working group.

National Indigenous Languages Survey

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies has continued to work with stakeholders to identify culturally appropriate methodologies to undertake the fourth National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS), expected to be completed by June 2026.

2024 Implementation Plan: Where we're going

The Commonwealth will progress efforts to expand the Indigenous Rangers Program, Indigenous Protected Areas and First Nations interests in land, sea and water to work towards Target 15 and to identify policy priorities to work towards Target 16. The Commonwealth will also continue to focus efforts on resolving Native Title and land rights claims, and will work in partnership to address the recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the events at Juukan Gorge.



Key Actions for 2024

Supporting the recognition of legal rights and interests in land and waters

Attorney-General,

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Continue to fund and facilitate the legal recognition of land and sea Native Title rights and interests under the *Native Title Act 1993*, including funding to Native Title Representative Bodies/Service Providers to assist Native Title claimants and holders in this process.
- Work with the Preservation Evidence Working Group to identify lawful and culturally appropriate options to preserve evidence to support the resolution of Native Title claims.
- Finalise the remaking of four legislative instruments under the *Native Title Act 1993* which are due to sunset (automatically terminate) in October 2024. This will improve and streamline processes in relation to Native Title claims, right-to-negotiate procedures and Indigenous Land Use Agreements.

Working with Indigenous Australians to care for Country

Minister for the Environment,

Attorney-General,

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Continue to progress the commitments made as part of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the destruction of caves at Juukan Gorge to co-design options to reform heritage protection.
- Continue to receive advice on issues impacting the PBC sector and consider the most appropriate mechanism/s to review the future acts regime in the *Native Title Act 1993* as recommended by the Juukan Gorge Report.

- Elevate the IPA program with a focus on closer stakeholder collaboration, enhanced on-ground support and environmental technical expertise, strengthened reporting, monitoring and evaluation, and increased communication.
- Finalise grant round one of the IRP expansion, with a focus on growing the Indigenous ranger sector, increasing the number of female rangers, and Indigenous rangers on dedicated IPAs.
- Progress development of the *First Nations Clean Energy Strategy*, ensuring First Nations people can lead and benefit from the clean energy transition.

Inland Waters

Minister for the Environment,

Minister for Indigenous Australians,

Attorney-General

- Continue to work closely with the Coalition of Peaks to progress development of the Inland Waters Target to accelerate progress towards securing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal rights and interests in inland water bodies under state and territory water rights regimes.

Strong, supported and flourishing languages

Minister for the Arts

- Continue to work with First Nations stakeholders, including as part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Partnership, to implement key actions and priorities that are identified in the Partnership's Roadmap to contribute to Target 16. This includes identifying and scoping policy priorities to support intergenerational language transfer, and implementing new language initiatives in partnership with the language sector.
- Continue working with First Nations communities to develop and deliver the fourth NILS. The NILS will provide essential updates and new data on the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, and assess progress against Target 16.

Case Study: Native Title Management through the PBC Capacity Building Program

The Nguddaboolgan Native Title Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC (NNTAC) holds Native Title rights and interests on behalf of the Djungan People of Far North Queensland. The determined lands span from north of the Walsh River near Dimbulah up through Mount Mulligan and Kondaparinga Station to the Walsh River.

NNTAC, supported by the North Queensland Land Council (NQLC), participated in the Commonwealth's *PBC Capacity Building program*, which provides funding to PBCs to strengthen their capacity and help deliver activities to support the social, cultural and economic aspirations of Native Title holders.

The program supported a coordinated approach between NNTAC, the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) and the NQLC to return Kondaparinga Station, a 148,000 hectare rural property with significant cultural and environmental heritage value, to the NNTAC on behalf of the Djungan People. It also supported NNTAC to develop the governance, financial and business capacity to effectively manage the station and undertake business and strategic planning, linked to economic opportunities including tourism, agriculture and windfarms.

The ILSC and NNTAC have been working closely together to establish a pathway to divestment of the station to NNTAC, or a related entity, as soon as NNTAC have the capacity to manage the station and capitalise on the property's commercial opportunities. Mr Judulu Neal, NNTAC Chairperson, says of the program:

'Although Djungan People acknowledge the importance and progress of the *PBC Capacity Building program*, they are aware that it is just the beginning of a longer journey of building connections between government organisations and the wider community for the successful implementation of Priority Reforms to achieve 'closing the gap' targets and outcomes. This includes, but is not limited to, the engagement of Djungan communities in truthful, meaningful and respectful consultation processes with government organisations; improved access to education, employment and economic opportunities; rejuvenation of Djungan cultural and spiritual lore, values, language and culture, and the accessibility to and protection of traditional lands and cultural sites.'

Right:

Yuku Baja
Muliku Land
and Sea Ranger,
Gauai Wallace
undertaking
cultural burning
at Archer Point.



Right:

Ngurrara senior ranger and fire officer, Sumayah Surprise, navigating the Kimberley's first all-woman, all-Indigenous aerial burning team.

Below:

Yuku Baja Muliku Land and Sea Rangers, Corey Burton, Adam Saunders, Gauai Wallace, Wayne Sycamore undertaking cultural burning.



Above:

Erubam Ranger attaches a block that attracts and kills male fruit flies.

Cross-cutting areas: Disability, Remote Australia, Gender, and Sexuality and Identity

In recognition of rich diversity, the differing needs and experiences of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities need to be heard when designing policy and programs. Achieving better life outcomes for women and girls, First Nations people with a disability, those who live in remote or very remote areas of Australia, and members of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual + Sistergirl and Brotherboy (LGBTQIA+SB) community, will support all targets and outcomes under the National Agreement.

Commitments

Remote Australia

- › Strategy development and early implementation to address food security in remote Australia – **\$11.8 million.**

Sexuality and identity

- › Research to improve treatment and care for LGBTQIA+SB people expected to be delivered in 2024, including a focus on models of care for sexuality and gender diverse people experiencing intersectional disadvantage, with First Nations LGBTQIA+SB people focused projects considered in scope for this opportunity – **\$26 million.**



2023 Annual Report: Where we've been

Disability

In 2023, the Commonwealth received a report on a proposed cultural model of inclusion framework and organisational assessment tool that draws on the strengths and experiences of First Nations people with disability and seeks to ensure disability services are culturally safe and inclusive.

Remote Australia

Remote Australia was introduced as a cross-cutting outcome area in the 2023 Implementation Plan, with the aim of providing greater focus and understanding of the unique situations facing First Nations people in remote regions and working towards improving outcomes.

Gender

In 2023, the Commonwealth delivered on its commitment to address the drivers of gender inequality by strengthening opportunities for First Nations leadership and participation in the decisions that affect the lives of First Nations women, in all their diversity. Activities ensured First Nations women's voices were elevated and were better placed to influence policy design.

Sexuality and Identity

In 2023, the Commonwealth listened deeply to improve awareness of the unique voices and views of First Nations LGBTQIA+SB people. Activities in 2023 were focused around improving health outcomes for LGTBTQIA+SB people including understanding the diverse and complex needs facing First Nations LGBTQIA+SB people in accessing healthcare.

All six activities committed in the 2023 Implementation Plan are underway and will continue in 2024.

Key Achievements for 2023

Disability

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Implemented the National Disability Footprint, which increases the capacity of the First Peoples Disability Network to improve systems and processes for First Nations people with disability through national engagement with governments, service providers, educators and the First Nations disability community.

Minister for Social Services

- The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025* (supporting the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032*) sets out a number of actions to address family, domestic and sexual violence against First Nations people with disability under the 'Inclusion and Intersectionality' reform area and was developed in genuine partnership with First Nations people.
- *Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026* was developed with disability-focused actions supporting First Nations parents, carers, children and young people living with disability.

Minister for National Disability Insurance Scheme

- Established the NDIS Workforce Capability Framework providing culturally appropriate resources for recruitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander NDIS participants.

Remote Australia

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The Commonwealth is developing a National Strategy for Food Security in Remote First Nations Communities. The Commonwealth also allocated \$11.8 million for strategy development and early implementation to support remote Australia.

Gender

Minister for Women

- Throughout 2023, the Office for Women (OFW) captured the views of First Nations women and organisations as it continued to develop a national strategy to achieve gender equality to guide whole-of-community actions to make Australia one of the most gender-equal countries in the world.
- The OFW published *Including Gender: An APS Guide to Gender Analysis and Gender Impact Assessment* to support the Australian Public Service (APS) to undertake gender analysis and consider how disadvantage and discrimination, including for First Nations women, impacts policy.
- The *Women's Leadership and Development Program* aims to improve the overall economic security, workforce participation, leadership representation and safety outcomes for women through investing in a range of job creation and skills building projects that support First Nations women to become financially independent.

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- In May 2023, more than 900 First Nations women and girls gathered for the landmark Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) National Summit, to raise their collective voice in a forum of decision-making, innovation and celebration.
- As at 31 August 2023, 51 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations have 50 per cent or more women on their boards.
- APS culturally sensitive gender training module will support Gender Impact Assessments and First Nations Impact Assessments and drive improved policy development by addressing unconscious biases across the APS by mid-2024.



Case Study: Elevating the voices of First Nations women and girls

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) supported the delivery of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani National Summit in May 2023. More than 900 First Nations women and girls from across Australia gathered to provide women's leadership at a national level and raised their collective voice in a forum of decision-making, innovation and celebration.

The National Summit was a culmination of a multi-year partnership between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Ms June Oscar AO, the team at the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and NIAA through the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Project (2016-17 to 2023-24). It followed on from the landmark *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Securing Our Rights, Securing Our Future Report* (2020), which was the first national report in more than 30 years where 2,300 First Nations women and girls have been heard as a collective and that elevates the diverse voices and aspirations of First Nations women and girls.

The National Summit provided the platform for First Nations women to showcase innovative approaches and initiatives across key thematic areas: Leadership and Decision-making; Language, Land, Water and Cultural Rights; Societal Healing and Intergenerational Wellbeing; and Economic Justice and Empowerment.

Outcomes from the Summit will be used to develop the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Change Agenda for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality (formerly named National Framework for Action), turning the *Women's Voices Report* (2020) into evidence-based actions. The Change Agenda will include indicators to measure change and be a tool for community, and public and private sectors, to identify and invest in strength-based initiatives that are designed and led by First Nations women and girls. It will be a mechanism to drive change and articulate the initial priorities of the independent Institute for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality located at the Australian National University.

Elevating the voices of First Nations women and girls through the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Project better informs and influences policy and program decisions across governments, community organisations, and private stakeholders. The Commonwealth recognises the critical need to listen to First Nations women's and girls' voices at the national level.



More than 900 First Nations women and girls from across Australia gathered at the Wiyi Yani U Thangani National Summit in May 2023.

2024 Implementation Plan: Where we're going

Disability

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap and *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-2031* set out the expectations for transformative change from First Nations people and people with disability. Both frameworks seek to embed a strengths-based approach to overcoming system-imposed barriers faced by First Nations people with disability.

Remote Australia

The Commonwealth will work in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks to embed, across the APS, best practice design and delivery of high quality and accessible services to remote First Nations communities.

Gender

Applying a First Nations gender lens across all government policies and programs is critical to effect systemic change to improve gender equality and socio-economic outcomes for First Nations women.

Sexuality and identity

When First Nations LGBTQIA+SB voices are at the forefront of policy and program design, the diverse experiences and identities of all First Nations people can be further empowered. This ensures that policy platforms and responses are inclusive, respectful, and culturally informed.

Key Actions for 2024

Disability

Minister for Social Services

- Undertake due consideration of recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS Review as they relate to improving outcomes for First Nations people with disability.

Remote Australia

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Lead development of a Remote Australia Whole of Commonwealth Government Framework Project through the NIAA, to support place-based effort across the Closing the Gap spectrum – social, cultural, environmental and economic areas.

Minister for Energy

- Implement the *First Nations Clean Energy Strategy*, to provide those living in regional and remote communities with reliable and affordable power.

Gender

Minister for Women

- Release the national strategy to achieve gender equality, informed by public consultations, including those specifically for First Nations women.
- Continue implementation of gender budgeting in the 2024-25 budget processes. In the 2023-24 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO), all Cabinet Submissions and New Policy Proposals were required to include gender analysis, and will continue to do so in the 2024-25 Budget.

Minister for Indigenous Australians

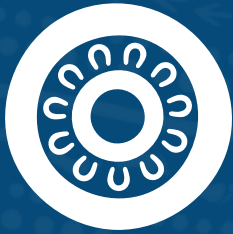
- Release the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Change Agenda for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality by mid-2024. This final outcome of the multi-year partnership between NIAA, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner and the AHRC will guide investment in First Nations women-led initiatives.
- Launch the *Understanding Gender in First Nations Policy and Program Work* online training module. Developed by NIAA, this module will be available across the APS in 2024.

Sexuality and Identity

Attorney-General,

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Embed First Nations Sexuality and Identity as a priority area across the Commonwealth.
- Implement the 10 Year National Action Plan for the health and wellbeing of LGBTQIA+SB people.



Priority Reform One

Formal partnerships and shared decision-making

Target

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.

Commitments

- › Work in partnership with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to prevent acute rheumatic fever – **\$13.9 million**.
- › Establish the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership to address the devastating impact of mental ill-health and suicide on First Nations people and communities – **\$8.6 million** until 2025.
- › Support the Culture Care Connect Program – **\$54.7 million** until 2025.
- › **NEW** Support a dedicated Suicide Prevention Regional Response Coordinator in each Primary Health Network – **\$42.3 million** (2022-23 to 2023-24).
- › **NEW** Continue and expand the Office for First Nations International Engagement – **\$13.6 million** over four years.
- › **NEW** Progress a national skills and training policy partnership framework – **\$35.9 million** over five years.

2023 Annual Report: Where we've been

In 2023, there was an increase in new formal partnerships across the Commonwealth. A key challenge was the need to ensure the Commonwealth's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners have adequate capacity and resourcing to engage with the increased number of partnership arrangements. Most of the six actions committed to in 2023 are completed or underway. This includes NIAA's early-2024 release of the *Commonwealth Partnership and Engagement Framework*. The one action that is delayed was the development of an evaluation methodology for policy partnerships, which is a priority for 2024.

Key Achievements for 2023

The Australian Public Service (APS) Charter of Partnerships and Engagement

Minister for the Public Service

- The Charter sets out principles for improving how the APS centres people and business in policy, implementation and delivery. While not First Nations specific, the Charter supports all APS staff to build the capability to genuinely partner and engage with people and communities, and non-government sectors, academia and industries, to develop more responsiveness.

Partnership Stocktake

Minister for Indigenous Australians, with support from all Ministers

- Thirty-eight Formal Partnerships with shared decision-making in line with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) have been identified in 2023 across the Commonwealth – an increase of 19 new partnerships from 2022.

Established the Partnership Priorities Committee

*Minister for Indigenous Australians,
Minister for Social Services*

- The Partnership Priorities Committee was established as a sub-committee of the Secretaries Board to embed partnership culture and behaviour in the APS to assist in developing better policy and responsive programs.

Maturing Policy Partnerships

Minister for Indigenous Australians, with Attorney-General, Minister for Health and Aged Care, Minister for Education, Minister for Social Services, Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness, Minister for the Arts

- The Policy Partnerships committed to under the National Agreement (Justice; Social and Emotional Wellbeing; Early Childhood Care and Development; Housing; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages) are all now operational. The newly established partnerships focused on building strong governance practices and relationships, while more mature partnerships focused on leadership capabilities, strategic frameworks, and leveraging other partnerships across their community and with governments.

Supporting establishment of Place-Based Partnerships

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The six Place-Based Partnerships have been established and are at different stages of maturity. Each have undertaken activities to meet the needs of the community in developing governance arrangements.

First Nations approach to foreign policy

Minister for Foreign Affairs

- Mr Justin Mohamed commenced as Australia's inaugural Ambassador for First Nations People, engaging over 100 stakeholders across Australia, including First Nations leaders, government agencies, businesses, non-government organisations, and communities to identify early priorities, as well as advocating on First Nations issues in international fora.
- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) established the Office for First Nations International Engagement, led by the Ambassador for First Nations People. The Office is working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to enhance collaboration between First Nations communities and partners across the Indo-Pacific – including in trade and investment, intellectual property and exports, climate change, human rights, tourism and development.



Left:

AIMS Aquaculture Assistant Jamiga Cummins caring for corals during the on-Country spawning experiments Nov 2022. Jamiga is a Woppaburra descendant and recently obtained her Certificate III in Aquaculture, funded through the project.

Credit: © AIMS/Jo Hurford

Case Study:

Woppaburra Coral Project-Partnership

The Woppaburra Coral Project is a place-based research partnership between the Woppaburra TUMRA Aboriginal Corporation (TUMRA) and the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS). Established in 2019 and continuing in 2023, this partnership seeks to undertake scientific research on the growth and survival of coral, while empowering Woppaburra Traditional Owners to have greater influence over the research, protection and custodianship of their sea Country.

Prior to commencement, AIMS undertook an on-Country workshop with 46 Woppaburra people representing multi-generations, gender diversity and all six ancestral familial lineages. A further 18 participants including AIMS staff, consultants, stakeholders and facilitators attended. The purpose was to consult the Woppaburra people about the project. The project was to investigate the drivers of survival and growth of baby coral during their first year of life, using Woppaburra corals and their sea Country as a natural laboratory. The newly established Indigenous partnership approach adopted by AIMS required 'Free, Prior and Informed Consent' (FPIC) of Traditional Custodians before the project could proceed – a key principle when appropriately engaging with First Nations stakeholder in a genuine and meaningful way. The AIMS team also sought to co-design the study locations for the project and identify areas and ideas for future joint partnership projects.

The workshop became a significant and rare opportunity to come together and return to Country. AIMS staff outlined marine science projects that had been happening since 1972 without engagement. Truth telling is an important first step in developing new relationships with Traditional Owners as it draws a metaphorical 'line in the sand' between the old ways and the new. Some of the information was received well; however, sometimes past projects represented culturally offensive practice and this was the case of one presented to the Woppaburra people.

This partnership has contributed to the scientific understanding of how to help fast-track reef recovery and has provided training, employment and capacity building opportunities for Traditional Owners, integrating traditional knowledge with modern science for better sea Country management outcomes. These outcomes have been achieved throughout 2023 with regular on-Country visits with the Traditional Owners to partner in the research. This partnership seeks to build meaningful relationships with the Woppaburra Traditional Custodians to better manage coastal ecosystems, weaving First Nations ecological knowledge with western marine science.

Right: AIMS Indigenous Partnerships Coordinator and Woppaburra Elder Bob Muir, working with other Woppaburra elders and Traditional Custodians to map culturally important places and contribute to the co-design of study locations.

Credit: © AIMS | Gus Burrows



2024 Implementation Plan: Where we're going

The Commonwealth will focus on ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnerships are healthy and adequately resourced and shared decision-making approaches are well established.

Key Actions for 2024

Strengthen the Commonwealth partnership stocktake

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Deliver greater transparency and accountability by ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners agree with the stocktake results including whether adequate funding is provided, and a more granular approach on assessing the number and type of place-based partnerships.

Undertake a critical value assessment of the jurisdictional partnership stocktakes

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Work in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks to review partnerships across all jurisdictions to analyse their breadth, strength and trends. The analysis will be used to identify gaps, including whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners are adequately resourced.

Develop a Policy Partnership Evaluation Methodology

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Engage a consultant to develop an Evaluation Methodology to be implemented by policy partnerships to measure their effectiveness, support annual reporting on their deliverables and inform a three-year review.

Identify future policy partnerships

*Minister for Indigenous Australians,
Treasurer*

- Work in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks to identify sectors for future policy partnerships.
- Consider the outcomes of a scoping study for the development of a First Nations Economic Partnership.

Maturing of formal Place-Based Partnerships

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Continue to support the six Place-Based Partnerships established under the National Agreement, and support state and territory governments to engage with First Nations partners ahead of full operation and establishment of monitoring by the end of 2024. The locations are at Doomadgee (Queensland), East Kimberley (Western Australia), Maningrida (Northern Territory), Tamworth (New South Wales), the Western Suburbs of Adelaide (South Australia), and Gippsland (Victoria).

Embed the APS Charter of Partnerships and Engagement and Commonwealth Engagement and Partnership Framework

*Minister for Indigenous Australians,
Minister for the Public Service*

- Release the *Commonwealth Engagement and Partnership Framework* in early 2024. This framework includes tailored advice that emphasises the importance of engaging and partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs. It complements the Australian Public Service Commission's *Charter of Partnerships and Engagement* and the two will be implemented through a coordinated approach.

Develop a First Nations approach to foreign policy

Minister for Foreign Affairs

- Further develop a First Nations approach to foreign policy strategy. The Office for First Nations International Engagement will continue to work across government, business, and community to develop and implement a First Nations approach to foreign policy, including trade and investment, and development; design and leverage programs to strengthen First Nations partnerships across the Pacific and Southeast Asia and lift First Nations Australians' participation in international activities; and support pathways to expand First Nations trade, economic and business opportunities.

Establishment of First Nations Health Partnership

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Provide strategic policy direction and drive progress against key health priorities for First Nations people to ensure policies and initiatives are culturally safe, responsive and best-placed to deliver better outcomes. This partnership will be co-designed with First Nations health leaders.

Establishment of interim First Nations Skills and Training Partnership Committee

Minister for Skills and Training

- Establish an interim First Nations Partnership Committee, networked with state and territory partnership arrangements, to contribute to Skills and Training policy, and guide the establishment of formal partnership arrangements as part of a staged approach over five years.



Priority Reform Two

Building the community-controlled sector

Target

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

Commitments

- › Deliver new or renovated clinics and associated housing for health professionals – **\$247.5 million.**
- › Publish a voluntary Grants Prioritisation Guide and develop a business case for a mandatory Grants Connected Policy to increase funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Organisations, particularly Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

2023 Annual Report: Where we've been

In 2023, the Commonwealth worked in partnership with all levels of government, Coalition of Peaks and the Indigenous community to progress work that would support prioritisation of funding for First Nations organisations, particularly community-controlled organisations. This work addresses procurement, grants, and policy proposals. Two activities were completed in 2023, including agreement on additional sectors for Sector Strengthening Plans; however, planned work to develop an evaluation methodology for Sector Strengthening Plans was not completed, and is a priority for 2024.

Key Achievements for 2023

Prioritising grants for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) published the Grants Prioritisation Guide, a comprehensive, voluntary guide providing practical advice to government agencies on how to prioritise funding in grant rounds.

Revisions to Cabinet and Budget Processes

*Prime Minister,
Minister for Finance*

- Revisions to the *Budget Process Operational Rules* and the *Cabinet Handbook* to better align with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, strengthened by a First Nations Impact Assessment Framework developed by the NIAA.

Commonwealth Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP)

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- All Commonwealth portfolios met their IPP targets in 2022-23 (3 per cent of the number of contracts and 1.75 per cent of addressable spend) and over 1,300 Indigenous businesses were awarded over \$1.5 billion of Commonwealth procurement contracts.

Identifying First Nations Health Expenditure

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Department of Health and Aged Care completed a health expenditure audit of programs and delivery organisations, which identified opportunities for services to be transitioned for delivery by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

Priority Reform Two continued

Establishing the First Nations Health Funding Transition program

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- To lead its coordinated effort in transitioning grants in programs that explicitly target First Nations health outcomes to First Nations-led organisations, starting with Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme.

Prioritising rural and remote primary health care access

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Through a focus on transitioning mainstream health clinics to community control.

Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO) Leadership Transition Framework

Minister for Education,

Minister for Early Childhood Education

- Guides the transition of the *Connected Beginnings* projects community-based 'backbone' teams, located across the country from non-Indigenous organisations to ACCOs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025

Minister for Social Services

- Recognises community empowerment through shared decision-making, representing strengths-based approaches that support communities to develop solutions to local issues and deliver outcomes by using the experience and knowledge of the community, \$262.6 million over five years to support capacity building of the family, domestic and sexual violence community-controlled sector.

First Action Plan 2023-2027

Minister for Social Services

- Supports building the community-controlled sector to enable community-driven, strengths-based, localised approaches to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

National Disability Footprint

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- NIAA supported First Peoples Disability Network to implement the *National Disability Footprint* as a key Disability Sector Strengthening Plan action.

Case Study: Safe Places Emergency Accommodation Program (Safe Places)

Safe Places is a competitive capital grants program aimed at funding emergency accommodation for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence. Safe Places was established under the Fourth Action Plan of the *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010-2022*.

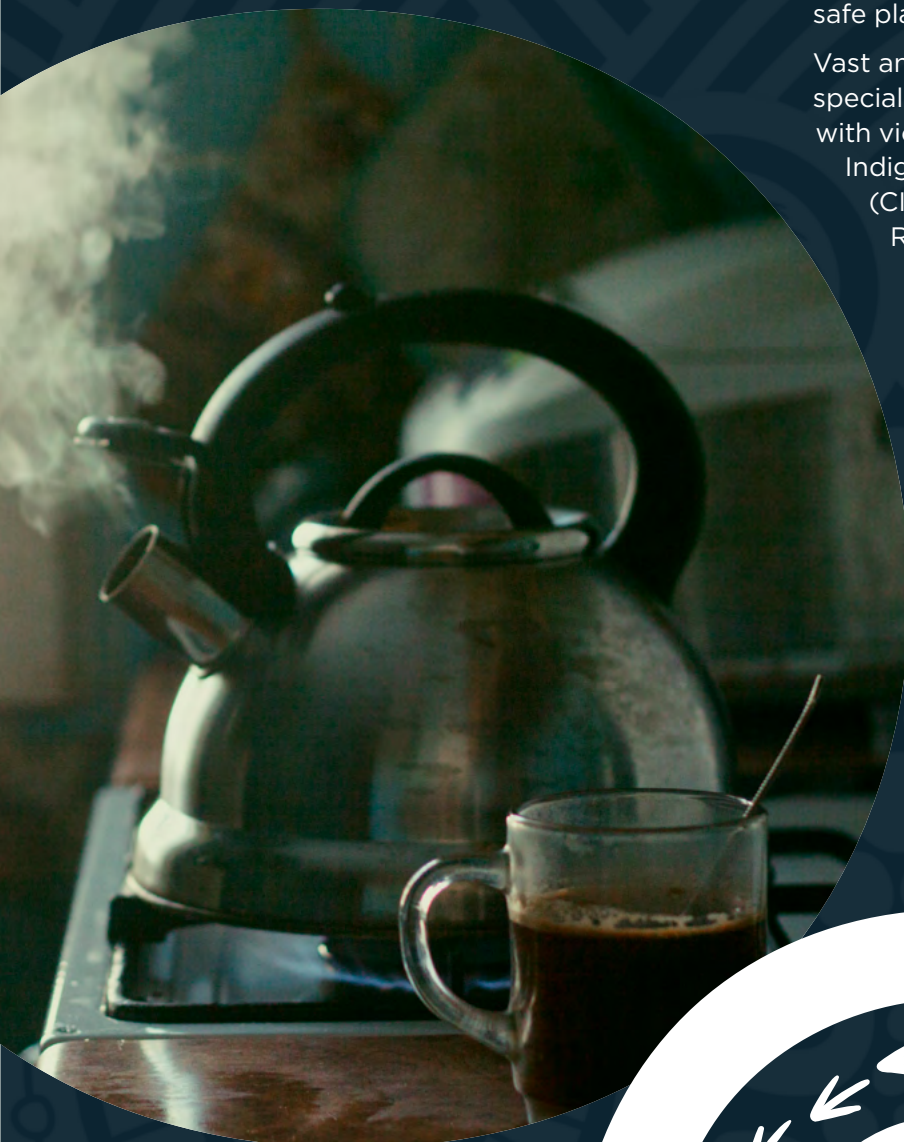
There are currently 41 projects funded through Safe Places to deliver up to 785 new safe places for women and children experiencing family and domestic violence. Of the 41 projects, three grantees are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led organisations.

Additional projects will be funded under the Safe Places Inclusion Round, focused on providing specific accessible supports to meet the housing needs of First Nations women and children, women and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and women and children with a disability.

The Inclusion Round will deliver an additional 720 new emergency accommodation places across Australia, bringing the total number of safe places to around 1,500.

Vast and meaningful consultation including specialist sector workshops and interviews with victim-survivors, facilitated by the Cultural Indigenous Research Centre Australia (CIRCA) has been part of the Inclusion Round. CIRCA consulted with people from urban, regional and remote areas, in a culturally safe way, with organisations working with and/or advocating for First Nations people, and interviewed victim-survivors with lived experience of emergency accommodation.

The Commonwealth has invested a total of \$172.6 million into the *Safe Places* program.



2024 Implementation Plan: Where we're going

Transparent government grant and budget processes, along with stronger monitoring and accountability mechanisms, are key to achieving a strong community-controlled sector.

Key Actions for 2024

Prioritising funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations

*Minister for Indigenous Australians,
Minister for Finance*

- Deliver the Business Case for a proposed Grants Connected Policy to Government for consideration in the first half of 2024.
- Roll out the Grants Prioritisation Guide across Commonwealth agencies and monitor uptake.
- Consultation process to strengthen the Indigenous Procurement Policy.

Identifying First Nations Expenditure

*Minister for Indigenous Australians,
Prime Minister,
Minister for Finance,
Treasurer*

- Support consideration of the future role of the *Indigenous Expenditure Report* and the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report* by National Cabinet, including considering the outcomes of those review processes.

Strengthening the community-controlled sector

*Minister for Indigenous Australians,
Attorney-General, Minister for Arts, Minister
for Social Services, Minister for Skills and
Training, Minister for Housing and Minister
for Homelessness*

- Design and implement a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Sector Strengthening Plans.
- Develop new Sector Strengthening Plans for Justice, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages and scope a Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Sector and a Skills and Training Sector Strengthening Plan.
- Work collaboratively with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Housing Organisations.

Implement the First Nations Health Funding Transition Program

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Develop transition plans to strengthen the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Sector.

Assisting First Nations organisations with capacity for governance, business, training and leadership

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Conduct 10 integrated care and commissioning trials across rural and remote regions, including support for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and ACCOs to expand into aged care and integrate service models.

Targeting programs for First Nations children

Minister for Education,

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Explore opportunities to expand programs that embed Priority Reform Two and improve how services are delivered to First Nations communities.

Building the housing community-controlled sector

Minister for Social Services,

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Work collaboratively with the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association to develop an implementation strategy.

Investing in the community-controlled sector

Minister for Social Services

- Develop a National Child and Family Investment Strategy.



Priority Reform Three

Transforming government organisations

Target

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

2023 Annual Report: Where we've been

In 2023, the Commonwealth focused on effecting real and impactful system-wide transformation. Nine activities were committed to in the 2023 Implementation Plan, including implementing structural changes to budget and policy frameworks, and driving critical progress towards addressing institutional racism and embedding cultural safety across the Australian Public Service (APS). Two of these activities have been completed, three are underway and four are delayed and will be a focus for 2024.

Key Achievements for 2023

Boosting First Nations employment in the Australian Public Service

Minister for the Public Service

- The Commonwealth established a new First Nations Unit in the APS Commission to prioritise First Nations employment in the APS.
- The Commonwealth launched the Cultural Capability Hub, providing practical guidance to understand and apply the Cultural Capability Framework.
- The Commonwealth developed the Affirmative Measure – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Recruitment Hub, assisting agencies with understanding how to attract and recruit prospective First Nations employees more inclusively.

First Nations Impacts Framework

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) established a *First Nations Impacts Framework* that provides self-service guidance and tailored advice to assist Australian Public Servants in analysing the impacts of new policies on First Nations people.

First Nations-led research into transformation elements

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The Commonwealth, on behalf of all Parties to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement), commissioned Indigenous research organisation ResearchCrowd to conduct research to achieve consistent standards in promoting and embedding cultural safety across all levels of government.

Priority Reform Three continued

Allyship Project

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The Commonwealth made early progress on its commitment to develop and embed the concept of First Nations allyship within the APS.
- The NIAA is developing a suite of resources to support the individual behavioural and organisational cultural shift required to improve cultural safety and dismantle systemic inequalities.

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

Minister for Social Services

- The *First Action Plan 2023-2027* under the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032* commits to improving and building capacity in mainstream government institutions, services and responses in line with Priority Reform Three, ensuring they are culturally safe and can better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Aged Care Commissioner

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Appointed an Interim Aged Care Commissioner, Ms Andrea Kelly, to engage with First Nations communities and stakeholders on the design and functions of a permanent Commissioner role and how the aged care system can better meet the needs of older First Nations people.

Case Study:

First Nations allyship

In 2023, the Commonwealth made early progress on its commitment to develop and embed the concept of First Nations allyship within the APS (originally a 2024 commitment).

The Commonwealth is developing a suite of resources to support the individual behavioural and organisational cultural shift required to improve cultural safety and dismantle systemic inequalities. The resources have been conceptualised with Priority Reform Three transformation elements and the voices of over 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees across the APS at their core, ensuring resources embody the spirit of allyship as told by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The commitment to embed the concept of First Nations allyship within the APS is underpinned by an understanding that strong allyship is crucial to achieving the critical mass required to eliminate racism and foster stronger cultural safety across government, as the Commonwealth has committed to in the National Agreement.

The project began during a landmark year in the history of our nation, with a referendum on the Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Both the lead up and aftermath contributed to the cultural load experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander APS employees. To develop a project that aimed to foster cultural safety in the APS, this operating context was initially perceived as a barrier.

It was clear that this project presented an opportunity to do things differently. The whole concept and approach had to be evidence-based, people-centred, and culturally safe. The project team led by example, modelled allyship and Priority Reform Three transformational elements. They innovatively designed and delivered culturally safe focus groups that centred cultural ways and employed principles of Participatory Action Research. This strengthened inter-agency networks and served as a unique platform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to directly influence whole-of-APS learning.

Early achievements include engaging with over 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander APS colleagues through Aboriginal-led, culturally-safe-and-informed engagement approaches. This stems from a strong focus on centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices. The approach provided the valuable lesson that by doing things differently, even on a microscale, APS employees can embed cultural safety in their work. The experiences and insights generously shared will directly inform a context-specific definition of allyship with First Nations people in government and help identify solutions for stronger First Nations allyship that support the collective aspiration for cultural safety in the workplace.

2024 Implementation Plan: Where we're going

The Commonwealth recognises that to deliver greater outcomes under Priority Reform Three, it must examine and transform standards, mechanisms and policies that impede its capacity to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. To achieve this, in 2024 the Commonwealth is focused on strengthening accountability, taking a more strategic and coordinated approach to driving transformation, and continuing to address institutional racism and embed cultural safety.

Key Actions for 2024

Strengthening accountability, transparency and reporting mechanisms

*The Prime Minister,
Minister for Indigenous Australians,
Minister for Health and Aged Care*

- Continue to develop a Monitoring and Accountability Framework (the Framework) through the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) and NIAA. PM&C have commissioned the Centre for Indigenous Policy Research at the Australian National University to design the Framework in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks and an APS Project Team. The Framework will measure cultural, systemic and structural transformation across the APS and will have a focus on measuring implementation of Priority Reform Three. The Framework is anticipated to be implemented in 2024. Delays have occurred as the Commonwealth is committed to ensuring the Framework is developed in partnership with stakeholders.
- Prioritise work on the design of an Independent Mechanism to support, monitor and report on the transformation of mainstream government agencies and institutions.
- Work with state and territory governments, through the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Collaboration, to improve cultural safety in health settings for First Nations people. Development of metrics in 2024 will inform better accountability mechanisms for mainstream health services.

Strategic and coordinated approach to systemic transformation

*The Prime Minister,
Minister for Indigenous Australians,
Minister for Public Service*

- PM&C, Department of Finance and the Treasury to develop a Central Agency Strategic Action Plan to drive cross-agency transformational change specific to budget and cabinet processes and the role of central agencies in consultation with NIAA and the Coalition of Peaks.
- Develop a Priority Reform Three Strategy, through the NIAA, to provide a coherent, whole-of-government approach for driving and delivering transformation in line with Priority Reform Three. This work will complement the Monitoring and Accountability Framework.
- Trial a First Nations System Lead role at the Senior Executive Services Band 2 level. This role will provide dedicated leadership across the APS, to drive systems-level cultural change and policy thinking across the APS Reform Agenda. The Systems Lead will identify legislative and non-legislative barriers to working in genuine partnership with First Nations people, and progress practical actions to address them.
- Establish a partnership arrangement with the First Nations community-controlled sector to develop the First Nations employee value proposition (EVP). This First Nations EVP will deliver a genuine and compelling proposition that positions the APS as an employer of choice and promotes the APS as a rewarding and safe place to establish a long-term career for First Nations people.

Eliminate institutional racism and embed cultural safety

*Minister for Indigenous Australians,
Minister for the Public Service*

- Establish a National Cultural Safety Working Group to implement a nationally consistent cultural safety definition and guiding principles to facilitate broader engagement and inclusivity by ensuring APS staff are more responsive and respectful to the cultural needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and staff.
- Implement resources developed through the Priority Reform Three allyship project, to support individual and organisational transformation.



Priority Reform Four

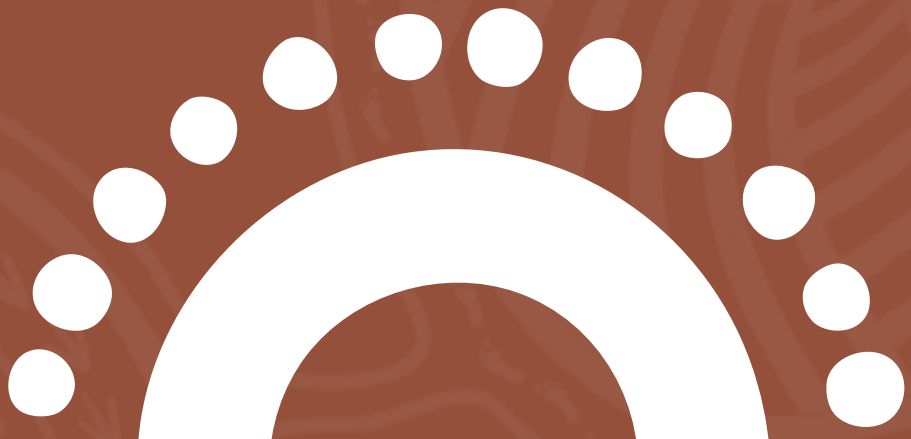
Shared access to data and information at a regional level

Target

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

Commitments

- › Priority Reform Measurement project by the Australian and New Zealand School of Government - **\$400,000** (from the Closing the Gap shared funding pool).



2023 Annual Report: Where we've been

In 2023, the Commonwealth committed to undertaking seven activities to progress Priority Reform Four. Key activities completed this year include working in partnership to choose locations and enter the establishment phase for six pilot Community Data Projects, and the development of an Australian Public Service-wide Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data. These projects will facilitate access to meaningful data to support the empowerment and self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. Progress is being made on the remaining activities, however the establishment of measurement frameworks and a data development timeline for the socio-economic outcomes has been delayed. Work will continue in 2024 to progress this.

Key Achievements for 2023

Connected Beginnings Community Level Dashboards

*Minister for Education,
Minister for Early Childhood Education,
Minister for Health*

- *Connected Beginnings* has continued to support self-determination through community level Data Dashboards, which allow communities to access accurate, current and meaningful data related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's and families' health and early childhood services.

Community Data Projects

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The Commonwealth worked in partnership with communities, Peaks and jurisdictional governments on six Community Data Project pilots in Blacktown (NSW), Doomadgee (Qld), Kimberley (WA), Adelaide (SA), Maningrida (NT), and Gippsland (Vic) to establish local steering groups, identify community priorities, match existing Commonwealth data to these priorities, and facilitate data sharing arrangements and protections.

Research-focused Indigenous Data Network Community Data Project

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- The *Indigenous Data Network* project aims to build users' data capability and improve access to regionally disaggregated data in three case study sites including urban, regional, and remote settings. In 2023, the *Indigenous Data Network* project team received ethics approval, undertook multiple field trips and finalised research Partnership Agreements for each site – East Kimberley (WA); Logan (Qld); and the NPY lands (tristate area of SA, NT and WA).

Priority Reform Four continued

Australian Public Service-wide Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data

*Minister for Finance,
Minister for Indigenous Australians*

- In partnership with First Nations representatives, the Australian Public Service developed a *Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data* that intends to provide First Nations people meaningful access to, and greater governance of relevant government-held data. The Framework also calls for data related capability building for First Nations people, which is essential for developing Indigenous self-determination and shared decision-making.

First Nations Disability Data Scoping Study

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- In collaboration with First Nations academic and expert Dr Scott Avery, Coalition of Peaks, and the Commonwealth, the First Nations Disability Network progressed the *First Nations Disability Data Scoping Study*, an element of the *National Disability Footprint*. This includes mapping of First Nations disability data initiatives and seeking ethics approval.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Protection Sub-Committee

Minister for Health and Aged Care

- Strengthening First Nations health data, improving the availability and use of communicable diseases data and facilitating data sharing between communities and jurisdictions.

National Housing and Homelessness Data Sharing Protocol

Minister for Social Services

- Shares housing and homelessness data and considers a range of data governance matters including Indigenous Data Governance and Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

Closing the Gap Outcomes and Evidence Fund

Minister for Social Services

- Department of Social Services (DSS) is embedding Priority Reform Four into the design of the Closing the Gap Outcomes and Evidence Fund.

Below right:

The Commonwealth currently funds 41 Connected Beginnings projects across Australia, supporting around 18,800 First Nations children aged zero to five to achieve the learning and development milestones necessary for a positive transition to school.



Above:

Preschool Children with Fire Brigade in Bourke July 2022.

Case Study: *Connected Beginnings* Community Level Data Dashboards

Connected Beginnings is a Commonwealth government program that aims to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's and families' engagement with health and early childhood education and care through improved access to existing early childhood, maternal and child health, and family support services.

Connected Beginnings supports self-determination and First Nations data sovereignty through community level Data Dashboards, which allow communities to access accurate, current and meaningful data. The Dashboards are a joint initiative between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Aged Care, and include health and education data. Data pipelines and data custodians were established to improve data access for communities.

The Commonwealth currently funds 41 *Connected Beginnings* projects across Australia, supporting around 18,800 First Nations children aged zero to five to achieve the learning and development milestones necessary for a positive transition to school.

The Program's Mid-Term Evaluation in July 2023 found *Connected Beginnings* to be a positive force in enabling communities and service providers to work collectively, shifting service delivery patterns from being siloed and reactive to collaborative, and ensuring families are heard, better supported and connected. The flexibility of the program's design, utilising a Collective Impact, place-based approach, allows for the community leadership to ensure that the program suits their needs.

Left:
Welcome Baby
Ceremony



2024 Implementation Plan: Where we're going

The Commonwealth recognises access to meaningful, localised data is critical to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Key Actions for 2024

Expand *Connected Beginnings*

*Minister for Education,
Minister for Early Childhood Education*

- Expand the *Connected Beginnings* program by a further nine sites, to 50 sites, by 2024-25. The program will continue to embed Priority Reform Four by enshrining self-determination and First Nations data sovereignty through community level Data Dashboards. The *Connected Beginnings* program prepares First Nations children for school, by ensuring that family services work together to help them access the services they need.

Progress Closing the Gap Community Data Projects

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Provide regional data and support via a portal and training for each of the six project locations to support participating communities and organisations to access, analyse and use regional data to drive community-led development aligned with local priorities.

Research-focused Indigenous Data Network community data project

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Undertake data ecosystem mapping; data access and agreement making, software development research, data linkage and descriptive epidemiology; and fieldwork trips to case study sites, including for data capability training as required. The final report is due in mid-2025 and will seek to map the data ecosystems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, provide better understanding of the key enablers and barriers to advancement and show how participating organisations were supported in their access, collection and use of data about their communities to plan and self-determine their own development.

Establish a measurement framework for Priority Reforms

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Finalise this activity, providing indicators to enable all parties to the National Agreement to consistently monitor and measure progress in achieving the Priority Reforms. This work will establish a clear idea of what success looks like, which will influence meaningful change and enable accountability for all parties' commitments to the Priority Reforms.

Data Development actions

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Lead development on 59 high priority data items in the Closing the Gap *Data Development Plan*. Data development will facilitate a richer array of high-quality data sources to provide an understanding of progress against the Priority Reforms and socio-economic outcomes where measurement is not currently available. In 2024, data development will provide insights into important aspects of the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to 15 of the 17 socio-economic outcomes, as well as being used to hold parties to account.

First Nations Data Scoping Study

Minister for Indigenous Australians

- Work to establish an intersectional model of First Nations disability research and data within community practice and policy through the First Peoples Disability Network. Ethics approval will be sought to undertake community consultation. Data validation will be undertaken; needs and gaps identified; and an interpretive guide for ACCOs and policy makers developed.

Connected Beginnings data sharing

Minister for Education

- Strengthen the way First Nations early childhood education and care, health and cultural data is shared back to communities, and between the Commonwealth and jurisdictions, to inform decision-making that supports self-determination.

Justice Reinvestment

Attorney-General

- Increase transparency about publicly available data, and where possible facilitate access to it, or consider data sharing arrangements. Then communities will be more equipped to monitor the progress of their justice reinvestment initiatives and accelerate progress to reduce the disproportionate rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander incarceration.

Place-Based Connected Family Safety Services

Minister for Social Services

- Establish five place-based community networks in regional and remote locations to improve collaboration and service integration across the family safety sector. The community networks will also increase access to local data and information to support shared decision-making at the local level.

Establishing culturally appropriate data collection on family and domestic violence

Minister for Social Services

- Work in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence to further build the family and domestic violence evidence base for First Nations people and develop a culturally appropriate data collection mechanism to report progress. This action will also enable consideration of Indigenous data sovereignty approaches as part of developing evidence and data eco-systems.

Governance

Figure 1: Closing the Gap Governance

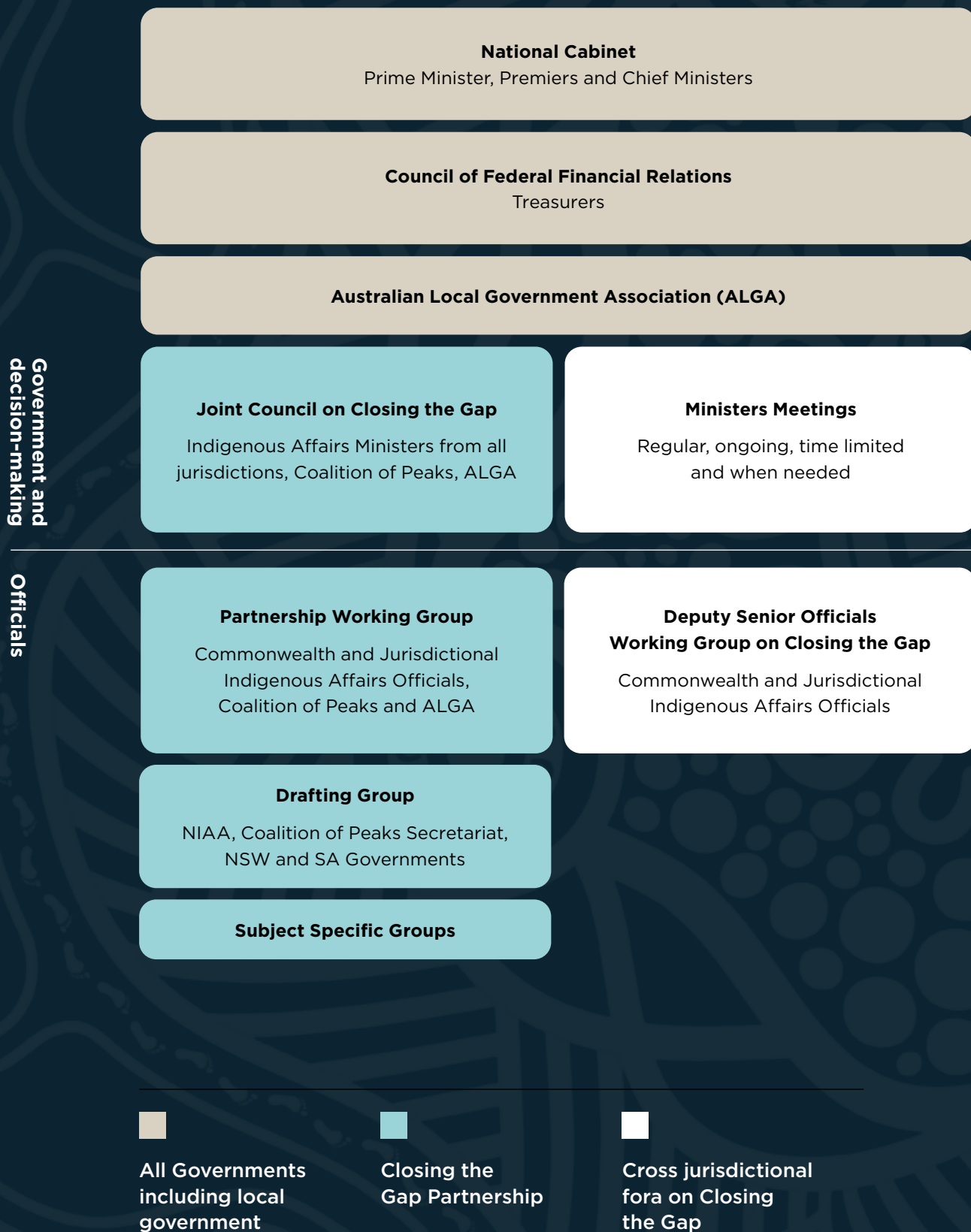
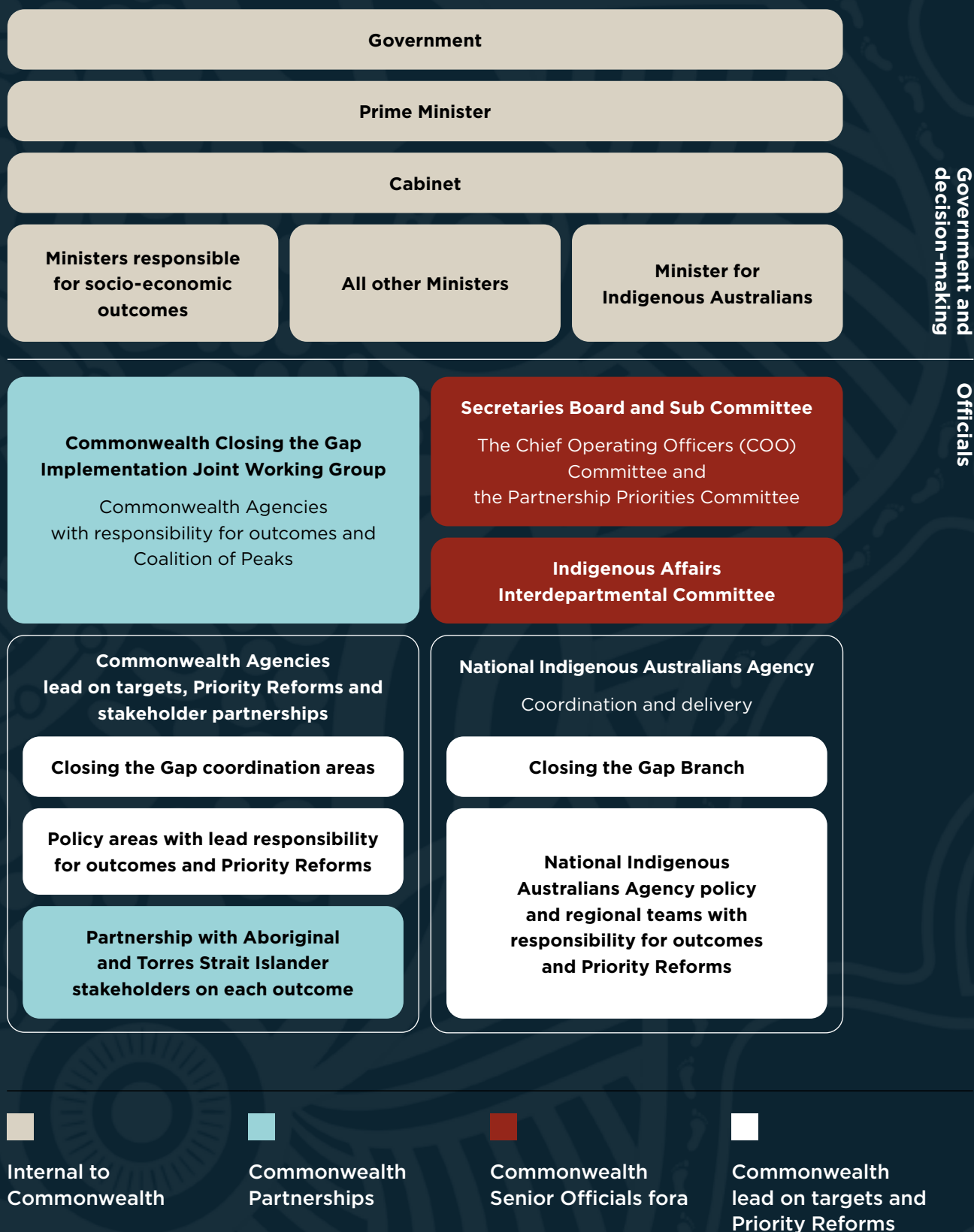


Figure 2: Commonwealth Implementation Governance



Appendix: 2023 Implementation Plan actions status (at time of publication)








Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
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Long and healthy lives (Outcomes 1, 2 and 14)

Additional Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Service sector funding for improved infrastructure	Minister for Health and Aged Care with Assistant Minister for Indigenous Health	Funding expended by June 2026	 Underway
Implementation of the Department of Health and Aged Care's Closing the Gap Action Plan to lead structural change required under Priority Reforms	Minister for Health and Aged Care	Ongoing	 Underway
Funding 500 First Nations health workers	Minister for Health and Aged Care	Traineeships commenced on 1 July 2023 with completion due by 30 June 2027	 Underway
Dialysis Treatment Buses in Far West NSW	Minister for Health and Aged Care	This one-off funding is scheduled for the 2nd half of 2023-2024	 Underway
Better Renal Services for First Nations people (Dialysis Units)	Minister for Health and Aged Care	Delivered over 2022-2023 to 2025-2026	 Underway Funding for the first six sites awarded in April 2023. Additional rounds anticipated to be offered in mid and late 2024.




PROGRESS LEGEND:  Completed  Underway  Delayed  Stopped

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.

Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
Improving Renal and Cardiac care for First Nations people (Upgrades and purchase of medical equipment)	Minister for Health and Aged Care	Funding provided within the 2022-2023 financial year	 Underway
Provision of rapid point-of-care cervical screening tests and follow up in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities	Minister for Health and Aged Care	Completion due by June 2025	 Underway
Indigenous media strategy and outreach program to increase uptake of digital health technologies	Minister for Health and Aged Care	Audit and Strategy to be delivered by June 2023	 Underway Delivery commenced 1 July 2023
AFL boosting physical activity in First Nations communities in Northern Territory	Minister for Health and Aged Care, Minister for Sport	30 June 2025	 Delayed
Birthing on Country Centre of Excellence	Minister for Health and Aged Care	Construction will commence in 2024 and the Birth Centre will be operational in 2025-2026	 Underway A workforce transition plan will commence to ensure a ready maternal workforce when the Birth Centre opens.
Closing the Gap Healthy Mums, Healthy Bubs measure	Minister for Health and Aged Care	Ongoing	 Underway
Targeted Regional Initiatives for Suicide Prevention	Minister for Health and Aged Care with Assistant Minister for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention	Completion by 30 June 2025	 Underway

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.

Appendix 1 continued

Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership	Minister for Health and Aged Care	2021-2024	 Underway
Culture Care Connect Program	Minister for Health and Aged Care	2021-2022 to 2024-2025	 Underway
Indigenous Health Workforce Traineeship Program	Minister for Health and Aged Care	Ongoing	 Underway

Thriving children and strong students (Outcomes 3, 4 and 5)


Preschool Reform Agreement funding	Minister for Education, Minister for Early Childhood Education	2022 to 2025	 Underway
Plan for Cheaper Child Care	Minister for Education, Minister for Early Childhood Education	Commencing July 2023	 Completed
Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership	Minister for Education, Minister for Early Childhood Education	2022 to 2025	 Underway
National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy 'Shaping Our Future'	Minister for Education, Minister for Early Childhood Education	2022 to 2031	 Underway
ECEC Workforce Package	Minister for Education, Minister for Early Childhood Education	2023-2024 to 2027-2028	 Underway
Australian Competition and Consumer Commission child care inquiry	Treasurer	Completion by 31 December 2023	 Completed

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.


Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
<i>Connected Beginnings</i>	Minister for Education, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Health	Ongoing	 Underway
Early Years Strategy	Minister for Social Services, Minister for Early Childhood Education	Over 18 months until 2024	 Underway
Intensive early childhood education and care model trial	Minister for Education, Minister for Early Childhood Education	2025-2026	 Underway
Early Learning Teaching Pilot	Minister for Education, Minister for Early Childhood Education	2024-2025	 Underway
Providing child care in remote communities through the Community Child Care Fund Restricted grant	Minister for Education, Minister for Early Childhood Education	Ongoing	 Underway
First Nations Playgroups	Minister for Social Services	2022-2023 to 2025-2026	 Underway
Up to 5,000 scholarships under National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (First Nations teachers are one of the target cohorts)	Minister for Education	Ongoing	 Underway
Indigenous Boarding Providers grants program	Minister for Indigenous Australians, Minister for Education	2023 to 2024	 Underway
Expansion of junior ranger activities to 25 additional sites	Minister for Indigenous Australians, Minister for Education	Ongoing	 Underway

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.

Appendix 1 continued

Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
Working in partnership to support First Nations languages	Minister for Education	2023 to 2026	 Underway


Further education and economic development (Outcomes 6, 7 and 8)

12-month Skills Agreement with states and territories	Minister for Skills and Training	2023	 Completed
Jobs and Skills Councils	Minister for Skills and Training	Ongoing	 Underway
Jobs and Skills Australia Advice	Minister for Skills and Training	Ongoing	 Underway
Employment White Paper	Treasurer	Completion in September 2023	 Completed
Youth Engagement Model	Minister for Youth	2023	 Underway
Examine opportunities for a Closing the Gap Policy Partnership on economic participation	Treasurer	TBC	 Underway
New jobs program trial (to inform replacement of CDP)	Minister for Indigenous Australians	Opening early 2023	 Completed
Protecting First Nations Intellectual Property	Minister for the Arts	Ongoing	 Completed

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.






Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
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The right housing and infrastructure (Outcomes 9 and 17)

Establish Housing Policy Partnership	Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness, Minister for Indigenous Australians	2022-2023 to 2024-2025	 Completed
National Housing and Homelessness Plan	Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness	This is a Government election commitment	 Underway
National Housing Supply and Affordability Council	Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness	An interim Council was established on 1 January 2023 and the statutory Council established through legislation commencing 27 December 2023	 Completed
Housing Australia Future Fund	Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness	The HAFF was established on 1 November 2023 and Housing Australia opened its first funding round in early 2024. The first \$500 million minimum annual disbursement from HAFF will occur in the 2024-2025 financial year.	 Underway
Housing Accord	Treasurer, Minister for Housing and Minister for Homelessness	Housing Australia opened its first funding round in early 2024 to commence delivery of the Commonwealth's affordable homes commitment.	 Underway

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.

Appendix 1 continued

Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
Northern Territory Housing and Essential Infrastructure	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2022-2024	 Underway
Target 9b Implementation Plan	Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government with Assistant Minister for Regional Development	2023	 Stopped
National Water Grid Fund – safe and reliable water for remote and regional First Nations communities	Minister for the Environment and Water	2023 to 2026	 Underway
Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia	Minister for Communications	2022-2027	 Underway
First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group	Minister for Communications	Funding provided up until 2026-2027	 Underway

Justice for all (Outcomes 10 and 11)

Establish justice reinvestment initiatives	Attorney-General, Minister for Indigenous Australians	Ongoing	 Underway
Increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services capacity for legal assistance in coronial processes	Attorney-General	June 2025	 Underway
Build National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Legal Services capacity	Attorney-General	One-off funding	 Underway

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.




Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
Explore options for consolidated national real-time reporting on deaths in custody	Attorney-General, Minister for Indigenous Australians	June 2023	 Completed
Coordinated approach to education and training for family, domestic and sexual violence frontline workers, family law practitioners, the judiciary and the justice sector more broadly	Attorney-General	June 2025	 Underway
Standing Council of Attorneys-General consideration of the minimum age of criminal responsibility	Attorney-General	New Action	 Underway

Strong families (Outcomes 12 and 13)

Endorse the Partnership Agreement to implement <i>Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031</i> through its two Action Plan	Minister for Social Services with state and territory Community Services Ministers and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group	Expected to be launched in February 2023.	 Delayed The Partnership Agreement is with Community Services Ministers and the Leadership Group for endorsement by March 2024.
<i>Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan</i>	Minister for Social Services with state and territory Community Services Ministers	The first Action Plans will be implemented from 2023-2026.	 Underway Implementation of the First Action Plan is ongoing.

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.

Appendix 1 continued

Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
Healing programs for First Nations families	Minister for Indigenous Australians	TBC	 Underway
Implementation of the <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025</i>	Minister for Social Services	Up to 2027-2028	 Underway Commenced in August 2023
Development of Standalone <i>First Nations National Plan</i>	Minister for Social Services	Up to 2024-2025	 Underway Endorse in 2024
Building the evidence base (to report on progress towards Target 13)	Minister for Social Services	Up to 2027-2028	 Underway
Specialised Family Violence Services - Aboriginal Community Controlled Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (FVPLS) providers	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2023-2024 to 2024-2025	 Underway

Connection to Country, culture and languages (Outcomes 15 and 16)

Double the number of Indigenous rangers	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2030	 Underway
10 new IPAs	Minister for Indigenous Australians, Minister for Environment	June 2028	 Underway

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.

Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
National Indigenous Languages Survey	Minister for Indigenous Australians	June 2024	 Underway
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Partnership Aligns with Priority Reform 1	Minister for the Arts	Ongoing	 Underway

Cross-cutting areas

(Disability, Remote Australia, Gender and Sexuality and Identity)







Develop and implement the First Nations Disability Data Scoping Study (National Disability Footprint)	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2022-2025 (Updated reference in 2023 Implementation Plan status table)	 Underway
Sport4All pilot project	Minister for Health and Aged Care	30 June 2026	 Underway
Disability Sector Strengthening Plan	Minister for Social Services Minister for Indigenous Australians	Ongoing (Not in 2023 Implementation Plan status table)	 Underway
NDIS First Nations Strategy	Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme	Ongoing (Not in 2023 Implementation Plan status table)	 Underway
NDIS market interventions	Minister for the National Disability Insurance Scheme	Ongoing (Not in 2023 Implementation Plan status table)	 Underway

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.

Appendix 1 continued

Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
National Strategy for Food Security in Remote First Nations Communities	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2023-2025	 Underway

Priority Reform One

Commonwealth Engagement and Partnership Framework	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2023	 Underway
Partnership Stocktake – critical value assessment of Partnerships	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2023	 Underway
Policy Partnership evaluation methodology	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2023	 Delayed
Gap Analysis to identify future Policy Partnerships	Minister for Indigenous Australians	Sectors to be decided over 2023 and 2024	 Underway
Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests in the APS Reforms Charter of Partnerships and Engagement	Partnership Priorities Committee	2023	 Completed
First Nations approach to foreign policy	Minister for Foreign Affairs	Completed in 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 financial years	 Completed

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.

Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
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Priority Reform Two

Agree additional sectors for Sector Strengthening Plans	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2023	 Completed
Sector Strengthening Plan evaluation methodology	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2023	 Delayed
Clause 55(b) 'meaningful proportion' guidance for agencies	Prime Minister, Minister for Finance	2023	 Completed

Priority Reform Three

Legislative amendments to the <i>Public Service Act 1999</i>	Minister for Indigenous Australians, Minister for the Public Service	2023	 Delayed
Monitoring and Accountability Framework	The Prime Minister, Minister for Indigenous Australians	2023	 Delayed
Identify, develop or strengthen an independent mechanism(s) to support, monitor, and report on the transformation of mainstream agencies and institutions	The Prime Minister, Minister for Indigenous Australians	2023	 Delayed
First Nations Impact Assessments Framework	The Prime Minister, Minister for Indigenous Australians	2023	 Completed
Additions to the Australian Public Service Survey of Trust	Minister for the Public Service	Expected in 2023	 Delayed

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.

Appendix 1 continued

Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
Communication and learning strategy	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2023	 Underway
Boosting First Nations employment	Minister for Indigenous Australians, Minister for the Public Service	By 2030	 Underway
First Nations-led research into transformation elements	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2023	 Completed
National Anti-Racism Strategy	Attorney-General, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs	Ongoing	 Underway

**As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.*

Action	Lead	Delivery Timeframe*	Status Update
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Priority Reform Four

Six community data portal sites selected	Minister for Indigenous Australians	End 2023	 Completed
Establishment of six community data portal sites	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2024	 Underway
Fully established measurement frameworks and data development timeline for socio-economic outcomes	Minister for Indigenous Australians	End 2023	 Delayed
Fully established measurement frameworks and data development timeline for Priority Reforms	Minister for Indigenous Australians	Completion by mid-2024	 Underway
Australian Public Service-wide Framework for Indigenous Data and Governance (Deputy Secretaries, Sub-Committee and Working Group)	Minister for Indigenous Australians	End 2023	 Completed
<i>Connected Beginnings</i> development of approach to data sharing in communities with overlap of programs	Minister for Education, Minister for Early Childhood Education, Minister for Health	Commence early 2023	 Underway
First Nations Disability Data Scoping Study	Minister for Indigenous Australians	2022-2024	 Underway

*As outlined in 2023 Implementation Plan.

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 people.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) – As defined in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (clause 44), an ACCO is an organisation that delivers services, including land and resource management, that builds the strength and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people and is: a) incorporated under relevant legislation and not-for-profit; b) controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people; c) connected to the community, or communities, in which they deliver the services; and d) governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led review – Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led reviews will be carried out within 12 months of each three-yearly independent review by the Productivity Commission. They are an opportunity to capture Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's 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.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – The Commonwealth acknowledges that there is no single Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture or group and that there are many diverse communities, language groups and kinships throughout Australia. For the purposes of this report, the terms Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, First Nations people and Indigenous Australians are interchangeably and respectfully used.

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 people.

Commonwealth – The legal entity of the Commonwealth of Australia, created by the Australian Constitution. The term may also be used to differentiate the Commonwealth from state and territory governments.

Cultural safety – Cultural safety is about overcoming the power imbalances of places, people and policies that occur between the majority non-Indigenous position and the minority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person so that there is no assault, challenge or denial of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person's identity, of who they are and what they need. Cultural safety is met through actions from the majority position which recognise, respect, and nurture the unique cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Only the First Nations person who is a recipient of a service or interaction can determine whether it is culturally safe.

First Ministers – The collective leaders of government Cabinets. This includes the Prime Minister, all state premiers and territory first ministers across Australia.

First Nations people – 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 report, the term First Nations people is respectfully used.

Implementation Plan – 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.

LGBTQIA+SB – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual + Sistergirl and Brotherboy

Mainstream institutions and agencies – Government agencies, institutions, organisations and services that fund and develop policies or deliver services to all Australians, including First Nations people.

National Agreement on Closing the Gap – The National Agreement was signed by all Australian governments including the Commonwealth and the Coalition of Peaks in July 2020. It sets out commitments for all Australian governments including the Commonwealth to work together with First Nations people to overcome the inequality experienced by First Nations people, and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.

NIAA – The National Indigenous Australians Agency is responsible for leading and coordinating the development and implementation of Australia's Closing the Gap targets in partnership with Indigenous Australians.

Partnership Agreement – The Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap 2019-2029, signed by COAG and the Coalition of Peaks, sets 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 three years.

Remote Australia – The term 'remote' encompasses all areas outside Australia's major cities and regional areas. Using the Australian Standard Geographical Classification System, these areas are classified as Remote or Very remote. For further information, please see the Australian Standard Geographical Classification System on the Australian Bureau of Statistics website.

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.



CLOSING THE GAP



Australian Government