

# Closing the Gap

Commonwealth Annual Report 2025  
Commonwealth Implementation Plan 2026



Australian Government



CLOSING THE GAP



### **Acknowledgement of Country**

The Commonwealth acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia, and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past and present.

### **Cultural Advice**

This report may contain images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have passed away.

Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2025 Annual Report and Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2026 Implementation Plan

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ISSN 2653 5777/ISSN 2653 5750  
Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2025 Annual Report and Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2026 Implementation Plan (print)

ISSN 2653 5785/ISSN 2653 5769  
Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2025 Annual Report and Commonwealth Closing the Gap 2026 Implementation Plan (online)

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### **Graphic Design**

Dreamtime Creative

*Cover image: Mother and son, Kareen Ghee and Antwaun Bani-Ghee, Brisbane, QLD. NIAA photo shoot completed in 2023 by Carbon Creative.*



**This report outlines  
what the Commonwealth  
has delivered in 2025  
and its priorities for 2026  
to support the National  
Agreement on Closing  
the Gap.**







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. Nineteen 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.



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# Prime Minister's Foreword



**On behalf of the Commonwealth Government, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which Australians live and work. I recognise more than 65,000 years of continuous culture and connection to Country, and pay my respects to Elders past and present.**

For Australia to fulfil our potential, every Australian must have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.

This principle drives our Government's commitment to Closing the Gap: a partnership delivered with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, grounded in their knowledge and shaped by their aspirations.

The focus of this partnership and our Government is making a positive difference. Ensuring more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to the building blocks of a good life, from quality healthcare and safe housing to the opportunity of education and the dignity of work.

We know that a top-down approach cannot deliver the change required to close the gap. That truth is reinforced by the latest Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led reviews as well as Productivity Commission reporting, showing that only 4 of the 19 targets in the National Agreement are on track.

It is important to note that this story is not uniform. In different states and territories we can see real and encouraging progress on everything from healthy birthweight and early education to employment. That success offers us cause for hope and valuable opportunities to learn.



*The 2026 Implementation Plan demonstrates that our Government is determined to invest in what works and to focus on areas where the Commonwealth can have the greatest impact: jobs and economic opportunities, access to essential services, community safety, and long-term wellbeing.*





This is supported by new efforts to speed up progress in critical areas like employment, housing, early childhood development, and more.

From the suburbs to remote communities, economic empowerment is central to this approach. We know that empowering people to achieve financial independence rewards hard work and uplifts individuals and communities. It helps deliver better employment, health and education outcomes across the board.

In 2025, we signed the First Nations Economic Partnership Agreement with the Coalition of Peaks and the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance, working with First Nations communities as economic decision-makers to unlock opportunities.

This begins with strengthening Prescribed Bodies Corporate, so communities can participate in a meaningful way alongside investors. We are committing an additional \$75 million to support these bodies so they can deliver lasting economic benefits for their communities.

In order to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people build stronger futures, we are also expanding the Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program. More than \$290 million is being invested to create an additional 3,000 jobs, meaning 6,000 new jobs by 2030. Our First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program is delivering 500 qualified First Nations health workers, and 12 Mobile TAFE services will deliver training in everything from hospitality to renewable energy, on Country.

Our Government knows that a roof over your head is the foundation of a better life. We continue to work with the Northern Territory Government, Aboriginal Housing NT, and Aboriginal Land Councils of the NT to build and upgrade homes in remote communities. This is reducing overcrowding, boosting stability and giving families access to better housing and services.

We have also created a \$600 million First Nations housing stream as part of the Housing Australia Future Fund, which includes a 10% First Nations tenancy target across all social housing and a new First Nations concierge function to support providers through the application and delivery process. This will help ensure First Nations families have safe, stable and culturally-appropriate housing, and better economic security over the long term.

Quality early childhood education and care is another priority. As part of the Government's recent childcare reforms, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can access 100 hours of subsidised childcare each fortnight.<sup>1</sup> We are also expanding childcare support through the Closing the Gap Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, so First Nations children thrive in the crucial early years.<sup>2</sup>

.....

***Our Government approaches the work of closing the gap with urgency, determination and optimism. We see this as nothing less than a test of our national character, a test we will pass by trusting in our national character, by living up to our Australian values of fairness, aspiration and opportunity for all.***

.....

By continuing to learn from the wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, trusting in their aspirations and investing in their success we can work together to build the fairer and stronger future that all Australians deserve.



**The Hon Anthony Albanese MP**  
Prime Minister

1 [Hours of subsidised child care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children for Child Care Subsidy – Child Care Subsidy – Services Australia](#)  
2 [Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership – Department of Education, Australian Government](#)



## Minister for Indigenous Australians' Foreword



**Everywhere I go, from Arnhem Land to the Kimberley, from Redfern to Palm Island, I see the strength of First Nations people. I see communities coming together to care for one another, celebrate culture and create opportunities for the next generation. This is what Closing the Gap is all about.**

As a government, we are committed to the principle of no-one held back and no-one left behind. Across the country, we are seeing a range of actions that are delivering improved outcomes for First Nations people and we will continue to build on what is working.

Employment and economic empowerment are central to self-determination and critical foundations for achieving Closing the Gap outcomes. We are expanding the Remote Jobs and Economic Development program and will double the number of real jobs we are creating in remote communities, from 3,000 to 6,000. Across the country, more First Nations people are taking up training, stepping into local jobs, and building careers in their own communities.

We are increasing the Commonwealth's investment in food security in remote First Nations communities to deliver cost of living relief and improve health outcomes. The Low-Cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme will be expanded so all families in remote communities have reliable access to 30 affordable, nutritious foods and essential products. We will support approximately 75 remote stores to improve storage and operational capacity, building on the successful delivery of earlier investments.

We have launched *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (Our Ways)* a standalone First Nations National Plan for family safety.

Our Ways provides investment directly to a national specialist network to deliver community-led responses to reduce family, domestic and sexual violence and keep First Nations women and children safe.

We are continuing our investment in Birthing on Country, a powerful example of First Nations women leading the way to keep mothers and babies strong. Culturally safe crisis support is also being expanded through 13YARN to ensure First Nations people can access immediate, community-led help when they need it most.



The Government is improving access to safe, secure and affordable housing for First Nations families. In partnerships with states, territories and community organisations, we are investing in new homes and essential infrastructure that enable families to remain connected to Country and build strong futures.

We are holding ourselves and our partners accountable. I have established a Commonwealth Ministerial Working Group on Closing the Gap to support a strategic, whole-of-government approach to achieving the Closing the Gap targets and Priority Reforms. We will continue working with state and territory governments, local government and the Coalition of Peaks at the Joint Council on Closing the Gap.

.....  
*Every visit to community reminds me that when we listen and invest in First Nations people we see the results: strong families, connected communities and self-determination in action.*  
.....

*Malarndirri McCarthy*

**Senator the Hon Malarndirri McCarthy**  
*Minister for Indigenous Australians*

*Image: The Minister for Indigenous Australians at our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College - Wadeye, Port Keats.*





## A Coordinated Effort

Commonwealth Ministers are committed to delivering Commonwealth Closing the Gap commitments through a coordinated, whole-of-government approach. The Closing the Gap Ministerial Working Group drives cross-portfolio action by strengthening collaboration across government, improving how programs and services are delivered, and ensuring communities are better served through partnership with First Nations organisations. This coordinated effort drives stronger community outcomes, supports what works and reinforces accountability across all jurisdictions.



Minister for  
Indigenous Australians  
**Senator the Hon  
Malarndirri McCarthy**



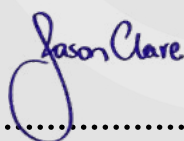
Minister for Finance,  
Minister for the Public Service  
**Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher**  
*Priority Reforms*



Treasurer  
**Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP**  
*Economic Empowerment  
Priority Reforms*



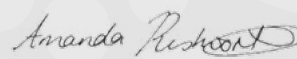
Minister for Health and  
Ageing, Minister for  
Disability and the National  
Disability Insurance Scheme  
**Hon Mark Butler MP**  
*Targets 1, 2 and 14*



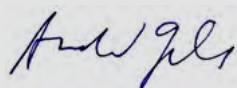
Minister for Education  
**Hon Jason Clare MP**  
*Targets 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7*



Minister for Early  
Childhood Education  
**Senator the Hon  
Dr Jess Walsh**  
*Targets 3, 4 and 7*



Minister for Employment  
and Workplace Relations  
**Hon Amanda Rishworth MP**  
*Targets 7 and 8*



Minister for Skills and  
Training  
**Hon Andrew Giles MP**  
*Targets 5, 6 and 7*



Minister for Housing  
**Hon Clare O'Neil MP**  
*Target 9A*



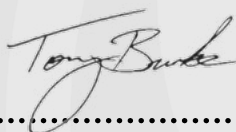
Minister for Infrastructure,  
Transport, Regional  
Development and Local  
Government  
**Hon Catherine King MP**  
*Target 9B*



Attorney-General  
**Hon Michelle Rowland MP**  
*Targets 10, 11, 15A and 15B*



Minister for Social Services  
**Hon Tanya Plibersek MP**  
*Targets 12 and 13*



Minister for the Arts  
**Hon Tony Burke MP**  
*Target 16*



Minister for the  
Environment and Water  
**Senator the Hon  
Murray Watt**  
*Target 15C*



Minister for Communications  
**Hon Anika Wells MP**  
*Target 17*



## Introduction

# The National Agreement on Closing the Gap **paves the way for all levels of government to deliver improved outcomes for First Nations people.**

This is the Commonwealth's combined Closing the Gap 2025 Annual Report and 2026 Implementation Plan. It highlights what the Commonwealth delivered in 2025 and outlines implementation priorities for 2026 to contribute to achieving the outcomes of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement).

The Government is committed to keeping its promise to First Nations people through the National Agreement by working alongside states, territories and local government, in partnership with the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Bodies (Coalition of Peaks), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities. This partnership approach is central to delivering what is required to build a future in which all Australians have access to the same opportunities.

There has been substantial progress toward implementing the Commonwealth's Closing the Gap commitments in 2025. The Commonwealth continues its significant investments across priority areas such as housing, education, health and jobs.

The activities outlined in the report demonstrate that the Commonwealth's role extends beyond funding. They reflect a strategic coordinated approach to remove barriers, explore and support creative community-led solutions and drive partnerships, across government, sectors and communities, to achieve lasting outcomes.

It also demonstrates a continued shift in the way the Commonwealth is working, embedding the 4 Priority Reforms outlined in the National Agreement into business-as-usual.

The Commonwealth also continued moving towards greater shared decision-making with First Nations people and stakeholders by strengthening and maturing partnerships, focusing on co-design and culturally appropriate approaches, supporting First Nations-led research, and increasingly transferring service delivery to Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).

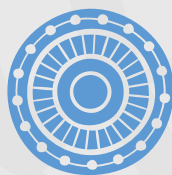


# 2025 Delivery and Outcomes Highlights



## Health and Wellbeing

- Culturally safe rheumatic heart care delivered across 114 sites.
- 10 Birthing on Country activities underway.
- 113 of an estimated 225 remote stores across Australia are accessing the 30 essential items under the Low-Cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme.
- 21 local First Nations staff will be employed as part of the Nutrition Workforce.
- Expanded the Closing the Gap PBS Co-payment Program to provide a 61% reduction for expenses.
- 155 completions of the First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program.
- 18 First Nations Health Infrastructure projects completed.
- 150 First Nations Doctors and 86 First Nations fellows undertaking training through the Specialist Trainee Support Program.



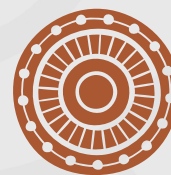
## Education and Early Years Development

- 50 boarding providers supported 2,500 First Nations students.
- 3 new Early Childhood Education and Care centres in Napranum Qld, Alice Springs NT and Kununurra WA.
- 10 new Regional University Study Hubs opened, with 491 students registered.
- Under the 3 Day Guarantee, baseline entitlement increased from 36 hours of subsidised early childhood education and care per fortnight to 100 hours, for each First Nations child.
- An additional 5 Remote Training Hub Network locations announced for remote communities.
- 44 new Junior Ranger activities are underway at over 50 locations nationally.



## Employment and Economic Development

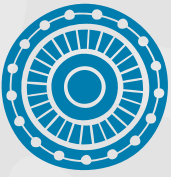
- Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) Program supported around 1,700 real, new jobs.
- New Remote Australia Employment Service launched to replace the Community Development Program.
- *National Statement on First Nations Trade and Investment* released.
- 37% of the Launch into Work program participants are First Nations people, with 79% moving into employment immediately following participation in the program.
- 168 activities under the Local Jobs Program Local Recovery Fund nominated an interest in First Nations participants.
- Workforce Australia supported almost 28,000 First Nations participants securing employment.
- 9,139 First Nations students enrolled in Free TAFE, which made up 5.7% of total enrolments.



## Housing and Infrastructure

- 264 new houses built for families across remote NT communities and Alice Springs.
- 583 concessional home loans approved under Indigenous Home Ownership Program in 2024-25.
- \$75 million of acute housing measure allocated to commence critical repairs and maintenance in remote communities.
- 10% of houses expected to be delivered nationally under the Social Housing Accelerator Payment (427 new social homes) have been allocated to First Nations households.
- Free NBN community wide Wi-Fi provided to 23 remote communities.
- 30 communities had community Wi-Fi infrastructure and equipment installed through the Digital Connectivity Project.
- The \$150 million National Water Grid Fund commitment to water infrastructure projects for First Nations communities was surpassed.





## Access to Justice

- National Access to Justice Partnership commenced on 1 July 2025, providing \$837.8 million for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and \$366.8 million for Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services nationally over 5 years.
- 28 community-led justice reinvestment initiatives funded.
- Developed the *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* to assess the success of the Commonwealth funded Justice Reinvestment initiatives.
- An interim National Justice Reinvestment Unit has been established and is fully operational.



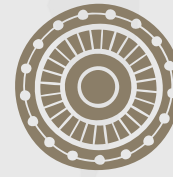
## Families and Kin

- The National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People was appointed and the Commission established.
- 10 ACCOs have received funding to prepare for the transition of child and family services under the National Child and Family Investment Strategy.
- 4 additional Leaving Violence Program regional projects were funded so that 567 victim-survivors of domestic and family violence were supported to stay in their homes safely.
- 23 Outcome and Evidence Fund projects in 7 locations were funded to provide culturally safe and trauma-informed activities for vulnerable women and children to address family violence and out-of-home care.
- Established 14 Supporting Adolescent Boys Trial sites nationally.



## Connection to Country, Culture and Languages

- 900 new jobs for expanded Indigenous Rangers Program with 82 new ranger projects, and 58 new organisations joining the Commonwealth Indigenous Rangers Program.
- 5 Kimberley Indigenous Protected Area projects have transitioned to First Nations organisations.
- Indigenous Languages and Arts Program funding delivered 29 community-based language conservation and revitalisation activities.
- First tranche of digitisation and preservation of over 750 historically and culturally significant native title records commenced.
- 24 remote community stores benefitted from the \$9.6 million Stores Efficiency and Resilience investment.



## Cross Cutting

- Released a *Multi-Agency Impact Analysis Group – First Nations Impacts Factsheet* to inform areas across the Commonwealth to consider First Nations people with disability in all policy development.
- Funded the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Institute for First Nations Gender Justice to co-create systemic change initiatives that respond to the intersecting needs of First Nations women, girls and gender diverse people.

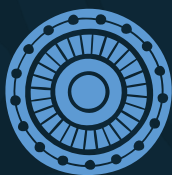


# Our Focus for 2026 Highlights



## Health and Wellbeing

- Invest \$44.4 million to continue Birthing on Country units across Australia to reach over 1,100 mother-baby pairs annually.
- Complete up to 8 renal dialysis units to improve the health of First Nations people with end-stage kidney disease.
- Invest \$16.5 million to address the rising rates of congenital syphilis.
- Invest \$19.2 million to detect, treat and prevent rheumatic heart disease in high-risk communities.
- Invest \$144.1 million to improve infrastructure across Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS).
- Invest \$41.7 million over 2 years to support suicide prevention through the Culture Care Connect program.
- \$27.4 million to remove the 152-store cap on the successful Low-Cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme and up to 75 stores will benefit from an expanded Stores Efficiency and Resilience investment of \$32.7 million.



## Education and Early Years Development

- Implement 3 Day Guarantee to ensure eligible families caring for a First Nations child receive 100 hours of subsidised early childhood education and care per fortnight.
- Finalise the First Nations Education Policy (FNEP) in partnership with First Nations peaks and states and territories.
- Provide \$31 million for the TAFE Technology Fund to implement mobile vocational and educational training delivery in remote First Nations communities.
- Implement the outcomes of the 2025 expansion grants round, bringing the total number of new Junior Ranger activities to 55 delivered in over 60 locations nationally.
- Invest \$5 million over 4 years to develop accredited teaching credentials and support First Nations participation.



## Employment and Economic Development

- Expand the RJED Program through a \$299 million investment, establishing an additional 3,000 jobs and delivering 6,000 jobs in remote communities.
- Continue roll-out of the Remote Australia Employment Service (RAES) to provide new jobs and better employment services for participants.
- \$75 million to support Prescribed Bodies Corporate to build capacity and accelerate investment.
- Work with the First Nations Economic Partnership to deliver a First Nations Economic Framework.
- Continue to implement Work Foundations, providing over 400 paid employment placements for participants, including for First Nations people, over 2 years.



## Housing and Infrastructure

- Round 3 of the Housing Australia Future Fund to include \$600 million dedicated funding and access to concessional loans for projects delivered by, or in partnership with, First Nations organisations. Round 3 will also introduce a 10% First Nations tenancy target across all social housing.
- Invest \$20 million to expand free Community Wi-Fi in up to 50 remote First Nations communities.
- Provide \$48.3 million to support Aboriginal Hostels Limited to provide future accommodation services.
- Provide \$63 million for 8 new projects over 4 years from 2025-26, as part of the National Water Grid Fund commitment.





## Access to Justice

- Establish an independent Justice Reinvestment Unit outside of government.
- Progress the National Access to Justice Partnership Closing the Gap schedule.
- Publish the *National Elder Abuse Research Program: The Abuse and Mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Older People Report*.
- Implement the *National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2025-35* and accompanying First Nations Action Plan.



## Families and Kin

- Implement *Our Ways, Strong Ways, Our Voices Plan*, with an immediate investment of \$218.3 million to address Family, Domestic, and Sexual Violence (FDSV) against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families.
- Introduce legislation for the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People.
- Invest \$33.5 million over 4 years to transition the National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People to a permanent, statutory authority, with \$8.4 million per year for the National Commission ongoing.



## Connection to Country, Culture and Languages

- Progress Ngurra Cultural Precinct and National Resting Place.
- Investing over \$600 million in the Indigenous Rangers Program, supporting the existing workforce and double the number of Rangers from 1,900 to 3,800 Rangers by 2030.
- Evaluate the impact of changes to the *Native Title Act 1993* made by the *Native Title Legislation Amendment Act 2021*.
- Celebrate and lift the profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages to reclaim identity.
- Invest \$25 million over 4 years to continue removing ghost nets and other marine debris from northern Australia's remote coastlines.



## Cross Cutting

- Support the Anangu Elders Advisory group to provide advice to Government on culturally safe aged care services.
- Deliver research under the Working for Women Research Partnership with a strong emphasis on the experiences of First Nations women.
- Identify and develop appropriate and culturally safe in-person and online training through Carer Gateway to ensure the diverse needs of carers such as people with disability, women and First Nations People are met.
- Establish a new Commonwealth individual disability advocacy program to deliver more culturally safe and responsible advocacy support and services.

## Priority Reforms

# Four Priority Reforms are central to deliver the objectives of the National Agreement.

They are interlinked and interact, requiring all of them to be progressed concurrently to achieve the systemic transformation required to improve life outcomes of First Nations people.

While the socioeconomic targets are the measure of progress towards Closing the Gap, it is the Priority Reforms that are the blueprint that all levels of government need to enact to deliver sustainable outcomes for First Nations people. The Commonwealth is delivering on the Priority Reforms, making significant achievements in 2025 under all 4 of the Priority Reforms.

*“The Peaks continue to stand firm on the delivery of the Priority Reforms. Each reform contains essential elements that—when fully embedded as the new ‘business as usual’ – will deliver the socioeconomic outcomes our people continue to call for.” – Patricia Turner, Lead Convenor, Coalition of Peaks (pictured below with the Minister for Indigenous Australians).*







*Image: Minister for Indigenous Australians appearing at Senate Estimates, 2025.*

## **Transforming Senate Estimates**

In 2025 we saw structural change to the way First Nations issues are scrutinised by the Australian Senate.

Closing the Gap and First Nations issues are no longer confined to a separate hearing at the end of the week, after the other portfolios are complete. In 2025, for the first time in 17 years, all 17 Closing the Gap outcomes were clearly outlined for consideration in the hearing programs across 6 Senate committees. Senators were able to directly ask questions of the responsible portfolio Secretaries, reflecting that Closing the Gap is a whole-of-government commitment. This marked a shift from Closing the Gap being treated as a discrete policy issue to being examined as core business of Commonwealth portfolios.

This structure allows for a more detailed examination by the Parliament of how policies affect First Nations people. Closing the Gap

outcomes are also able to be interrogated through intersecting policy lenses, including gender equality, justice, housing and health, and considered alongside broader government priorities, supporting more consistent and integrated policy decision-making.

With this change, the Government has recognised that Closing the Gap is not solely the responsibility of the Minister for Indigenous Australians, but is the responsibility of every Minister, every Secretary, Department, and Commonwealth agency. Each is accountable for improving life outcomes for First Nations people, ensuring they have the same opportunities as all Australians.

This was an enormous achievement for transparency and accountability on Closing the Gap.

# Priority Reforms



## Priority Reform One

### Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision-making

#### 2025

- Established the First Nations Economic Partnership to advance economic empowerment for First Nations people, communities and organisations.
- The Strengthening Families and Communities Partnership delivered projects that brought together families and communities in Central Australia, including young people, in safe spaces to strengthen community cohesion and prevent family violence.
- A further \$11.4 million was committed to extend the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP) for a second term from 1 July 2025 to 30 June 2028. The ECCDPP delivered its second set of recommendations to Joint Council on Closing the Gap and commissioned an independent evaluation of the Partnership's first term in operation.
- The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation (NATSIEC) finalised partnership arrangements with Education Ministers and with the Department of Education. SNAICC – National Voice for our Children also finalised a partnership agreement with the Department of Education.
- The 2025 Closing the Gap Partnership Stocktake (at Appendix E) includes information on 52 partnerships with shared decision-making between the Commonwealth and First Nations partners. Of these, 26 are place-based partnerships with First Nations communities, and the rest are with First Nations peaks, organisations or other groups. This is an increase from 38 partnerships in 2024.
- Released the Australia-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) First Nations Action Plan, developed with the pilot First Nations Trade and Investment Advisory Group, to provide a framework for Australia's first trade deal with a dedicated chapter on First Nations business.

#### 2026

- Invest \$5.3 million over 2 years to continue the Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) Policy Partnership.
- Invest \$6 million to extend the Housing Policy Partnership for a further 2 years from 2026-27.
- Progress the establishment of the First Nations Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Skills Policy Partnership.
- Work with states to finalise Place-Based Partnership Agreements in East Kimberley, WA and the Western Suburbs of Adelaide, SA.
- Continue implementation of 3 multi-year partnership agreements through the First Nations Environmental Water Partnerships Pilot Program.

*Image (left to right): Signing of the First Nations Economic Partnership Minister for Indigenous Australians, Pat Turner AM, Lead Convener Coalition of Peaks; Professor Peter Yu; Treasurer Hon Dr Jim Chalmers MP.*







## Priority Reform Two

### Building the Community Controlled Sector

#### 2025

- The Indigenous Lived Experience Centre, the Leaders in Indigenous Medical Education and Rotary Indigenous Health Scholarships programs transitioned to a First Nations-led organisation.
- The Disability Sector Strengthening Plan built the capacity of existing and new community-controlled disability services to deliver a full range of culturally safe and inclusive services, to respond to First Nations people with disability.
- The Commonwealth partnered with the ECCDPP to deliver implementation advice to Education Ministers on two research reports. This advice focuses on funding model options for ACCOs integrated early years services.
- NIAA provided \$1.7 billion through 3,656 grant activities to 1,697 organisations through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy. 67% were First Nations organisations up from 62% in 2024.

#### 2026

- Co-invest up to \$166.4 million, under the National Skills Agreement, through Bilateral Implementation Plans focused on investment in the capability, sustainability and growth of ACCOs and First Nations owned organisations.
- Collaborate with the ECCDPP to drive progress on strengthening and growing the First Nations workforce, and ACCO child protection and family support workforce.
- Work with states and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (NATSILS) to deliver the Justice Sector Strengthening Plan to better resource Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations within the justice sector.
- Support the transition of 15 Australian Family Partnership Program (AFPP) sites from the AFPP to their own First Nations-led maternal and child health programs.

#### Inaugural First Nations Exporter Award

2025 marked a historic moment in both the Indigenous and Australian economies, with the introduction of the First Nations Exporter Award. This new category celebrates and showcases the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses sharing First Nations culture and expertise with the world, while also supporting local communities.

First Nations Finalists for 2025 export bush food, art, fashion, rail signals, consulting and coaching services, highlighting the diverse nature of our businesses breaking into international markets and making their mark on the world stage. Successful First Nations businesses are central to empowered and

self-determined futures for First Nations Australians. They hire and retain more First Nations employees, strengthen their communities and lead the way in building inclusive Indigenous economies now and into the future.

The achievements of inaugural First Nations Exporter Award winner Munda Wines showcase innovation, resilience and leadership, inspiring others to go global.



Image: Jess Greatwich, Managing Director Munda Wines, and the Minister for Indigenous Australians.

# Priority Reforms



## Priority Reform Three Transforming Government Organisations

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### 2025

- Transformed how First Nations outcomes are considered at Senate Estimates, ensuring Closing the Gap outcomes are considered across 6 committees.
- Established a Ministerial Working Group to drive cross-portfolio action on Closing the Gap.
- Established the National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People and appointed the National Commissioner.
- Delivered the Commonwealth Priority Reform Roadmap to build the readiness of the Australian Public Service (APS) to achieve all 4 Priority Reforms in full.
- Increased First Nations representation at Senior Executive levels to 111 First Nations Senior Executive Service Officers.
- Implemented a pilot of the APS Integrated Unconscious Bias training program to educate a broad audience about unconscious bias and its impacts on First Nations staff and communities.
- Established an ongoing sub-committee of the Chief Operating Officer Committee to review initiatives across the APS to improve First Nations employment and cultural capability.

### 2026

- Co-develop an APS Priority Reforms Strategy with the Coalition of Peaks and Australian Public Service Commission.
- Commence implementation of Commonwealth actions in response to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Independent Review of Closing the Gap.
- Lead implementation of a national approach to working with and supporting First Nations people before, during and after disasters to enable more inclusive, culturally safe emergency management systems.
- Continue the Murra Program, a pilot initiative designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander university students, providing meaningful career development and pathway opportunities with the APS.

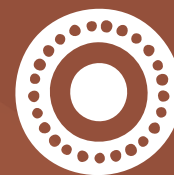
*Image: Chief Operating Officers Committee meet with First Nations APS staff at the pilot APS Collaboration Circle.*





## Priority Reform Four

### Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level



#### 2025

- Established the Data Policy Partnership with states and territories and Coalition of Peaks to address systems-wide barriers to shared data access and improve data on Priority Reforms and socioeconomic outcomes, targets, and indicators under the National Agreement.
- Appointed an Indigenous Data Champion in 5 Commonwealth agencies to ensure an advocate for Indigenous data sovereignty, with 11 other agencies in the process of appointing one.
- Established a Cultural Advisory Panel of First Nations leaders with decision-making authority, ensuring Indigenous voices shape key data outcomes through the implementation of the Jobs and Skills Australia's Murtu Yayngilyyn Study.
- Established the Governance of Indigenous Data (GID) Implementation Working Group to ensure First Nations perspectives guide the effective APS implementation of the GID Framework.
- Developed 16 GID first year plans across the Commonwealth to drive the shift in how data about First Nations people is collected, governed, and used.
- Partnered with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council for FDSV to finalise the scope of the culturally appropriate data collection mechanism on family, domestic and sexual violence statistics for First Nations people.

#### 2026

- Deliver and support the work program, deliberations and decisions of the Data Policy Partnership to enable a joined-up approach to data policies relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a focus on progressing Priority Reform Four of the National Agreement.
- Progress the development of socioeconomic Target 16 data baseline in line with Languages Policy Partnership priorities.
- Provide practical guidance material for APS agencies to develop culturally appropriate data request forms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations under the GID Framework.
- All parties to the National Agreement will work together to develop appropriate data indicators for Target 9b to measure progress on the investment in enabling infrastructure that helps connect First Nations Australians to essential services that enhance their health, safety, and overall living conditions.



*Image: Members of the Data Policy Partnership on Kurna Country at Meeting One.*

# Health and Wellbeing



## OUTCOMES

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long and healthy lives
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong
14. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing

## TARGETS

- Close the Gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91%
- Significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero



## Key Achievements for 2025

### Improved access to culturally safe rheumatic heart care

Culturally safe rheumatic heart care services are now being delivered in 114 sites across Australia that are facilitated by 29 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services. Rheumatic heart disease is preventable and disproportionately affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with 44% of cases between 2017-2021 occurring in children aged 5-14. Improved access to culturally safe rheumatic heart care services directly supports First Nations people, families and children to enjoy long healthy lives.

### Increased the number of specialists through the Specialist Trainee Support Programs Health workers

Specialty medical colleges have reported 150 First Nations Doctors and 86 First Nations fellows are in training. As of March 2025, all specialist medical colleges recorded 100% retention of their respective trainees, demonstrating that First Nations trainees are taking up the Specialist Trainee Support Program. By increasing the number of First Nations specialists that will provide First Nations patients with culturally appropriate high-quality care, First Nations people are more likely to access these services, resulting in better health outcomes.

### Expanded the Closing the Gap Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Co-payment Program

To ease cost of living pressures, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people registered under the Closing the Gap PBS Co-payment Program, can now access scripts under the PBS for \$7.70 per script from community pharmacies as well as private and public hospitals. This expansion will reduce out-of-pocket expenses by up to 61%, making medicines cheaper and more accessible, leading to improved outcomes for First Nations people.

### Established Charles Darwin University Medical School

The Commonwealth invested \$24.6 million to enable Charles Darwin University (CDU) to establish its medical school, contribute to the construction of the Garrwa Centre for Better Health Futures building, establish accommodation for rural and remote placements across the NT, as well as secure clinical supervisors and other key education and training support arrangements.

*Image (left to right): Special Envoy for Defence, Veterans' Affairs and Northern Australia, Luke Gosling, Medical Student Saleena Chandok, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Medical Student Jobe Bonney, Minister for Indigenous Australians.*



# Health and Wellbeing



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## **Restored the eyesight and independence of First Nations people**

The Indigenous and Remote Eye Service (IRIS) program provided 445 cataract surgeries for First Nations people across the NT to restore eyesight, address long surgical waitlists, and treat preventable blindness. This enabled First Nations people to return to normal life, reconnect with community, and reclaim their independence. Surgeries are conducted in culturally safe environments and in collaboration with ACCHOs.

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## **Delivered cheaper food and essential items for remote communities**

Approximately 225 remote stores across the country, with 113 stores already accessing the Commonwealth's Low-Cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme (the Scheme). The Scheme reduces the cost of living and high rates of food insecurity in remote First Nations communities. From rice and tinned vegetables, to nappies and toilet paper, the cost of 30 everyday essential items has been reduced in participating stores under the Scheme, so they are comparable to prices in urban areas. This is anticipated to save remote consumers up to 50%.

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## **Supported consumers to make health-conscious food choices**

The Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA) has commenced delivery of the First Nations Nutrition Workforce. The workforce will create healthy store environments that support customers to purchase healthy foods, by running in-store health and nutrition promotion activities, creating healthy takeaway options, implementing store nutrition policies and undertaking fresh fruit and vegetable preparation and display.

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## **Delivered First Nations Health Infrastructure and Closing the Gap Major Capital Works Programs**

18 major First Nations Health Infrastructure projects were completed in 2025. The activities across 16 ACCHS included:

- construction of 6 brand new fit-for-purpose culturally safe health clinics in NT, Vic and Tas
- renovations and expansions to 9 existing health clinics and staff housing
- provision of 5 staff accommodation units in remote and very remote communities
- purchase of specialised vehicles to support health outreach services
- installation of solar panels and batteries to improve environmental and financial sustainability of ACCHS; and
- upgrading cooling and ventilation systems to enhance infection control.

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## **Opened 8 Medicare Urgent Care Clinics**

Eight Medicare Urgent Care Clinics opened across remote and very remote areas of the NT and WA, enabling more First Nations people to access timely, quality healthcare. Where data is available, 22% of visits to the remote clinics were for patients who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Islander, compared to 5% nationally.

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For a full list of 2025 achievements, refer to Appendix F of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



## CASE STUDY

### Affordable essentials supporting good health in remote communities

Remote stores deliver crucial supplies to remote communities across Australia, and now a new Government scheme is ensuring that essential items are available at reasonable prices.

Charlene Rocky, who lives in the community of Lockhart River in Cape York, is proud to work at the remote store the “Freddie Clarence Moses Supermarket” operated by Community Enterprise Queensland. The store is named after her grandfather and distinguished leader of Lockhart River Community, Mr Freddie Clarence Moses.

Mr Moses advocated for the opening of the store and managed it for many years, providing a vital service to the local community.

‘He was the manager before... one of the Elders who fought to get a store in the remote community of Lockhart.’

Ms Rocky does her own fortnightly shopping at the store and appreciates the cost of some items has been brought down.

.....  
*“It’s actually great. Like, you know, like we have like discounts on some, some of the items here. Some of the items here that we sell here are a bit too expensive.”*  
.....

Image: Charlene Rocky at Freddie Clarence Moses Supermarket, Lockhart River.



# Health and Wellbeing



Like other remote stores across Australia, addressing the high cost of essential items compared to prices in urban areas has long been a challenge.

According to current Store Manager Soum Saha, this is due in part to the lower buying power of smaller stores compared to the big supermarkets and the high costs of operating stores in very remote locations.

With the store joining the Australian Government's Low-Cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme, some of that pressure has been eased.

The Scheme brings 30 essential items to remote communities at reduced and affordable prices. The savings for remote consumers is up to 50%. It means lower priced everyday items to help families save money and have greater access to healthy food. Over 100 remote stores have now joined the Scheme across Australia.

*Image: 30 Low Cost Essentials are now available in remote stores across Australia.*



Since the Lockhart River store joined the Low-Cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme, they have noticed items like canned vegetables, rice, and even nappies are now more affordable, and that makes a difference to community, says Soum Saha.

.....  
*“For the remote communities, it’s actually great. If we can provide a bit of relief on the food, that’s a big difference to make. People will save a bit of money, this is helping them. I can see people buying more.”*  
.....

Remote stores provider in the region, Community Enterprise Queensland, expects changes to shopping habits from the new initiative.

“We are empowering people to make better choices by making healthier food more accessible, and we are already seeing the buying patterns of our customers change,” said CEQ’s Chief Executive Michael Dykes.

A new nutrition workforce, team members equipped to support families make healthy choices in stores is being launched, to help drive long-term changes to habits and improvements to health and wellbeing outcomes.

The Low-Cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme is a part of the Government’s broader National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities. It is administered by the National Indigenous Australians Agency and delivered by Outback Stores, a not-for-profit Commonwealth company.

Store management companies, including Outback Stores (OBS), Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation (ALPA) and Community Enterprise Queensland (CEQ), along with many independent remote stores, are key to the success of the Scheme across the nation. ALPA is also leading the development of a nutrition workforce in stores to support healthy food choices in communities.

Read more about the Low-Cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme here:

[www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



Figure 1:  
Stores enrolled in the Low-Cost  
Essentials Subsidy Scheme



For a full list of participating stores visit: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/health-and-wellbeing/food-security-remote-first-nations-communities](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/health-and-wellbeing/food-security-remote-first-nations-communities)

Image: Shopper at Freddie Clarence Moses Supermarket, Lockhart River.



# Health and Wellbeing



## Our Focus for 2026

In 2026, the Commonwealth will take action to improve health, strengthen culturally safe care, and ensure community voices are embedded in decisions that close the gap in health and wellbeing. Achieving better health outcomes takes more than consultation, it requires genuine partnership. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices will continue to guide health policies and programs, and the Commonwealth will take action to demonstrate the voices of communities are being heard.

.....

### **Deliver First Nations-led Health Reform through the inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Schedule**

The inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Schedule (Schedule), commits the Commonwealth and all states and territories to progress First Nations-led health reform. In 2026, the Schedule will come into effect. This will be a significant milestone and supports the underpinning principles of the National Agreement. It will ignite First Nations-led healthcare reform and aligns with the principles of self-determination, enabling First Nations people and communities to take back control over their health and wellbeing.

.....

### **Continue Birthing on Country (BoC) to support mothers and offer babies the best start in life**

BoC is resulting in positive outcomes with research showing a 50% reduction in preterm birth rates and a 63% reduction in child protection involvement with reduced removals of First Nations babies from their families. In 2026, \$44.4 million will be invested for BoC programs to continue to provide culturally safe, continuity of maternal health care to mothers and babies for 3 additional years to 2028-29.

.....

### **Enable professional indemnity insurance coverage for eligible entities**

The recent amendment to the *Midwife Professional Indemnity Scheme Act 2010* legislates formal coverage of homebirths and intrapartum care outside a hospital setting, specifically including BoC models of care. In 2026, this will enable professional indemnity insurance coverage for eligible entities, such as Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs), that employ or engage midwives to provide these essential services.

.....

### **Reduce preventable infant deaths from congenital syphilis**

To address rising rates of infectious and congenital syphilis, the Government is committing \$16.5 million over 2 years to reduce preventable infant deaths in vulnerable communities. This includes funding for culturally safe enhanced antenatal care, co-designed with First Nations communities and delivered through community-controlled services.

.....

### **Increase the First Nations psychology workforce**

The Commonwealth is investing \$8.3 million over 4 years from 2025-26 to 2028-29 through the Westerman Jilya Institute to support up to 150 First Nations psychology students. The investment will strengthen First Nations wellbeing and mental health by increasing the number of First Nations psychologists who can provide culturally safe care to communities in areas of need.

.....

### **Increase the Nutrition Workforce**

The Nutrition Workforce will expand from 21 positions to 106 over the next 2 years. All staff undertake specialised health promotion and nutritional training and are further supported by qualified nutritionists.

.....



**Secure endorsement of the National Strategy for Food Security**

States and territories to formally endorse the *National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities* and commit to participate in the development and implementation of an Action Plan through a formal governance mechanism in partnership with NACCHO and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO) affiliates to reduce rates of chronic disease and improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote communities.

**Ensure essential items are affordable and accessible to families and communities**

The Government will invest an additional \$27.4 million to remove the cap under the Low-cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme to allow all eligible remote stores access to 30 essential items made cheaper by the Scheme. This will enable these stores to meet the needs of their communities and allow more families the opportunity to purchase healthy food and essential items like tinned vegetables, canned fruit and rice, along with everyday items including nappies and toilet paper at prices similar to metropolitan areas.

**Deliver additional First Nations health workers to provide culturally safe care**

Following the successful delivery of the First Nations Health Worker Traineeship program in 2025, an additional \$2.6 million will be invested to provide 30 more First Nations health workers, totalling 500. In 2026, the Government is committing \$1.8 million over 3 years to continue the Hepatitis B Partnership Approach to Sustainably Eliminating Chronic Hepatitis B Project in the NT. Continued funding will support the expansion of workforce training to over 90 primary health care teams across the NT, ensuring access to culturally safe chronic hepatitis B care and improved liver cancer survival outcomes for First Nations people.

**Deliver additional First Nations Health Infrastructure and CTG Major Capital Works Programs**

The Closing the Gap - Major Capital Works measure will fund 86 capital works projects worth \$390 million to replace ageing facilities and deliver modern, culturally safe clinics and housing for health professionals in Qld, NT, NSW, WA, Vic, and Tas. These upgrades will provide fit-for-purpose facilities for decades to come, improving access and outcomes for First Nations communities.

**Expand culturally safe crisis support through 13YARN**

The Commonwealth will invest \$13.9 million over 3 years from 2026-27 (and \$5.0 million per year ongoing) to expand culturally safe crisis support through 13YARN, building on increased investment to ensure more First Nations people can access trusted help when they need it most.

For the full list of 2026 Implementation Plan commitments, refer to Appendix G of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)

*Image: Associate Professor Dr Kris Rallah-Baker, Australia's first and only Aboriginal Ophthalmologist, performing cataract surgery on an IRIS patient is a positive demonstration of culturally safe services in action.*





## CASE STUDY

### Building a Strong First Nations Health Workforce

A national program designed to increase the number of First Nations people in the health workforce is seeing success in employment outcomes and the delivery of culturally appropriate health care.

Dylan White and Reeghan Finlay both completed a Certificate III in Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Health Care.

They are now employed at the Institute for Urban Indigenous Health (IUIH) clinics and in other community-controlled health settings.

Reeghan says that her participation in the national program brings her a bright future.

.....

***“I am very grateful to have been given the opportunity to complete the Certificate III in Primary Health Care.”***

.....

Dylan is also proud of his studies and wants to contribute to his community with his new skills.

“I want to work in community and ‘keep the wheels in motion’ and ensure mob are able to access our services.”

“I did this course to give back to those who have paved the way for us. EMPOWA supported me all through my training.”

EMPOWA Training was established recently as an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Registered Training Organisation (ACCHRTO) and achieved a 100% completion rate for their inaugural group of students, highlighting the strength of community-led training.

Nationally, the First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program has supported 159 trainees to complete their qualifications, with almost 600 enrolments since the program began in July 2023.

It supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainees to undertake Certificate III and IV qualifications while gaining on-the-job experience in Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and other health settings.

Qualification completion rate for the program is at 88%. The program is well on track to meet its target of 500 traineeships completed by June 2027.

Dr Alison Nelson, Executive Director Organisational Development at the IUIH says the program has benefits beyond the positive outcomes for each graduate.

“Increased training and employment not only meets the need for growing a culturally safe and connected workforce, it also contributes significantly to the social determinants of health.”

“Our inaugural 11 graduates will play a pivotal role in the expansion of culturally safe health and community care services across Queensland.”

Funded with a \$54.3 million Government investment, the program is delivered in partnership with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO).

NACCHO Chief Executive Officer, Pat Turner AM describes the success of the program in building community empowerment alongside development of skills in health care.

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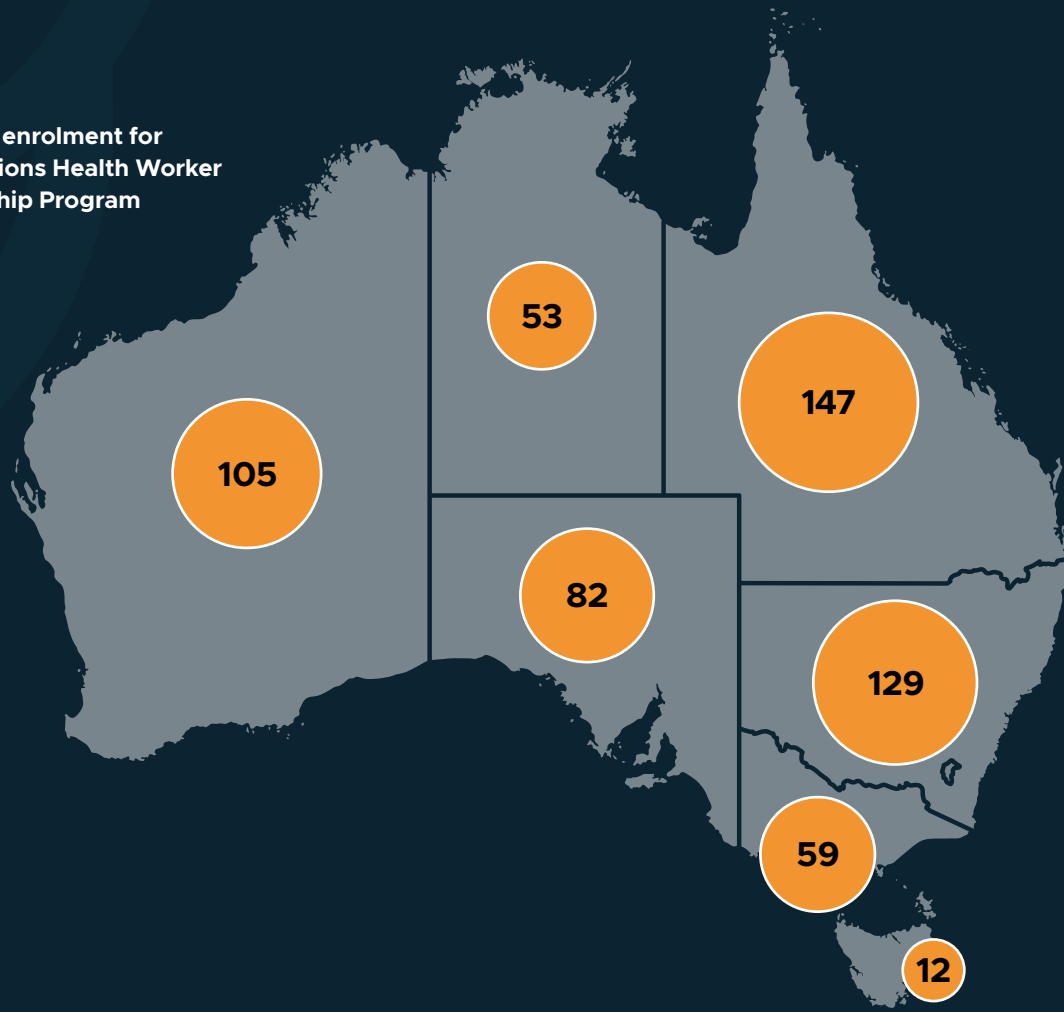
***“The First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program is proof that when our communities lead, we build strength that lasts. This program isn’t just about qualifications, it’s about empowerment.”***

.....

Read more about the First Nations Health Worker Traineeship Program here: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



**Figure 2:**  
National enrolment for  
First Nations Health Worker  
Traineeship Program



*Image: Dylan White*



*Image: Reeghan Finlay*



### OUTCOMES

3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years
5. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential
6. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways

### TARGETS

- By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Full Time Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95%
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55%
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20-24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%



## Key Achievements for 2025

### Opened 3 new Community Child Care Fund Program services in remote and very remote areas

Across remote and very remote areas within Australia, 3 new Community Child Care Fund services have opened under the Fund Restricted Expansion Program. New Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centres in Napranum, Qld, Kununurra, WA and Alice Springs, NT now provide culturally safe and inclusive environments for First Nations children and families. Combined, these 3 services are approved for 154 places, with a priority given to First Nations children.

### Passed 3-Day-Guarantee – legislation

The *Early Childhood Education and Care (3-Day-Guarantee) Bill 2025* passed Parliament. The 3-Day-Guarantee will replace the Child Care Subsidy activity test with a guaranteed minimum of 72 hours per fortnight of subsidised ECEC for all families, regardless of the time spent on recognised participation types, and a guaranteed 100-hour entitlement per fortnight for parents caring for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child. These changes came into effect from 5 January 2026.

### Extended the Aurora Education Foundations initiative

The Aurora Education Foundation's Redefining Indigenous Success in Education initiative provides tutoring and mentoring programs for First Nations high school students in NSW. Over 500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across 47 schools are being supported with the goal to reach 800 students.

### Expanded the Junior Rangers Program

The expansion of the Junior Rangers Program has continued to improve access to on-Country learning, cultural mentoring and vocational training opportunities for First Nations children and youth in over 50 new locations across Australia. In 2025, expansion projects supported approximately 3,000 First Nations primary and secondary students, having positive impacts on school engagement and retention. Projects also enhanced students' connection to Country, culture and community. In 2025, over 90% of students reported Junior Ranger projects had increased their understanding of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultures and traditional knowledge.

### Opened 10 new Regional University Study Hubs

Across Australia, 10 new Regional University Study Hubs are open and operational. There are currently 56 Regional University Study Hubs across the country. Of these, 3 Hubs, the Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Cooperation, the Wuyagiba Study Hubs and the Garrthlala Bush University Study Hub, support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tertiary students to learn while on Country. Another 4 Study Hubs, including Coast University Centre (CUC) Cape York, Cooktown, Qld, CUC Balonne, St George and Dirranbandi, Qld, Geraldton University Centre, WA and Cassowary CUC, Innisfail, Qld have dedicated First Nations Support Officer positions to provide culturally safe support for First Nations students.

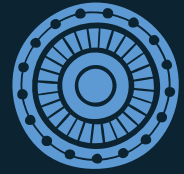
### Delivered culturally grounded, community-led training

The Trainer and Assessor Demonstration Project evaluation confirmed high student completion rates, effective and culturally safe training, strong stakeholder support, and sector-wide impact. With 48 student commencements, 40 completions and an 83% completion rate with potential to reach 92%, the program has successfully built the First Nations skills and training workforce within the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Registered Training Organisation sector.

### Uncapping places for First Nations medical students

The Government passed legislation uncapping Commonwealth supported places (CSPs) for First Nations medical students. This means every First Nations student who meets the requirements to study medicine from 1 January 2026 will have a CSP at an eligible university. Growing the First Nations medical workforce is an important step in improving healthcare outcomes for First Nations communities.

For a full list of 2025 achievements, refer to Appendix F of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



## CASE STUDY

### Learning on Country with Gudjaga-Laali Junior Rangers

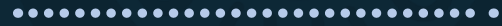
In the Shoalhaven region of NSW, the Gudjaga-Laali Junior Rangers Program is helping Year 6 First Nations students reconnect with culture and Country while building confidence and leadership skills.

Delivered by Gadhungal Marring, the program is part of a national initiative delivered by the Australian Government, expanding Junior Rangers Programs across the nation.

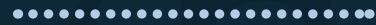
Students learn through weekly school sessions and on-Country camps, guided by cultural mentors, rangers, and Traditional Owners. Students who previously had low school engagement now look forward to every Junior Rangers session. They've learned Dharawal language, bush food knowledge, and traditional dance – and proudly share these skills with family.

“The ranger program for me has brought me happiness. Every week I was looking forward to going to school. If I am out in the bush, I can tell my family ‘not to go touch that’ or ‘you can eat that’. I have that knowledge”

The culturally aware approach is the key to making change according to Shakeela Williams, Program Coordinator.



*“For us, culture and language come first. When students see themselves and their world reflected in learning, they’re more engaged, happier, and thriving.”*



Across the Gudjaga-Laali Junior Rangers Program, school attendance among participants has lifted significantly, and students report feeling more confident and connected.

The Junior Rangers Program now reaches thousands of young people in approximately 150 partner schools across over 90 locations nationwide. It combines science, culture, and leadership, guided by Traditional Owners and Indigenous rangers. Students gain hands-on experience in environmental stewardship and cultural knowledge, improving engagement and confidence and delivering Closing the Gap in action.

Gudjaga-Laali Junior Rangers is supported through the Australian Government’s \$95 million Junior Rangers Program and local community partnerships.

Read more about the Gudjaga-Laali Junior Rangers here:  
[www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



Image: Gudjaga-Laali Junior Ranger.  
Photos courtesy of Gadhungal Marring.

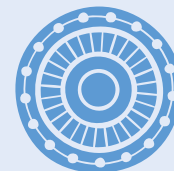




*Images (above and below): Gudjaga-Laali Junior Rangers meet with the Minister for Indigenous Australians.*



# Education and Early Years Development



## Our Focus for 2026

The Commonwealth is increasing the capacity of Early Childhood Education Centres to provide culturally safe early education for First Nations children, create more jobs and improve education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families, from early childhood to higher education. In 2026, the Commonwealth will continue to work in partnership to reform and enrich education systems, drawing on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cultures.

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**Increase the number of qualified First Nations educators**

The Commonwealth will invest \$5 million to fund Good to Great Schools Australia (GGSA) to develop accredited teaching credentials, with the aim to strengthen career pathways in regional, rural and remote communities and support First Nations participation.

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**Increase access to Mobile vocational and educational training delivery**

The Commonwealth will provide \$31 million to deliver Mobile TAFE. Mobile training units will enable VET providers to take skills on the road and train the next generation of workers in outer regional and remote communities. This new funding is expected to deliver up to 12 projects nationally. Courses offered through Mobile TAFE will vary across locations to suit local needs.

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**Implement the Community Child Care Fund Restricted (CCCFR) Expansion Program**

The Commonwealth will open a further 2 new CCCFR Expansion Program services in remote and very remote areas, building on the delivery of the 3 new ECEC services in 2025. Opening new ECEC services will give First Nations families greater access to culturally safe education and care, while creating opportunities to grow the local Aboriginal workforce and improve socio-economic outcomes. The Commonwealth is working with SNAICC, and state and territory governments to support program grantees in establishing and operating services.

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**Finalise National First Nations Education Policy (FNEP)**

The Commonwealth will develop and finalise the FNEP in partnership with First Nations peak organisations, state and territory education departments and the non-government sector. The FNEP will accelerate improvements in educational outcomes of First Nations learners by sharpening the national aspirations for First Nations education, defining shared priorities and actions, and establishing how change will be governed, enacted, and evaluated. The FNEP proposes to translate national commitments – such as the Mparntwe Education Declaration, Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and the National Agreement – into action by guiding, informing and complementing the policies and programs of jurisdictions, school systems and the Commonwealth.

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**Implement the Building Early Education Fund**

The Government is investing \$1 billion through the Building Early Education Fund (Building Fund) to build or expand ECEC services in areas of need. The Government will work with First Nations partners to identify ways the Building Fund can increase early learning delivered by ACCOs.

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**Implement the 3 Day Guarantee changes to the Child Care Subsidy (CCS)**

In January 2026, the Government replaced the CCS Activity Test with the 3 Day Guarantee, ensuring all CCS families are eligible for 72 hours of subsidised ECEC per fortnight. Families caring for a First Nations child are eligible for 100 hours of subsidised ECEC per fortnight.

**Needs Based Funding**

Commencing in 2026, implementation of Needs-based Funding will help students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, First Nations students, and students studying at regional campuses to participate and succeed at university. Universities will be able to provide more direct financial supports and services such as mentoring, peer learning, orientation and first year transition programs, as well as inclusive course design and training for staff to support more students to achieve a qualification.

**Appoint a First Nations Commissioner within the ATEC**

Subject to the passage of legislation, in 2026, the Commonwealth will appoint a statutory First Nations Commissioner within the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC). The Australian Universities Accord Final Report emphasised that First Nations participation in tertiary education across learning, teaching, and research, is critical to self-determination.

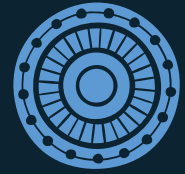
**Deliver the First Nations Teacher Strategy**

The First Nations Teacher Strategy will be delivered. The Strategy will strengthen the attraction, development, retention and success of First Nations teachers, resulting in more First Nations teachers in Australian classrooms.

For the full list of 2026 Implementation Plan commitments, refer to Appendix G of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



Image: Ashton O’Driscoll, teacher at Lockhart State School, which participates in the Education Engagement and Attainment Initiatives.



## CASE STUDY

### Connected Beginnings, Kutalayna, Tasmania

In the Kutalayna/Jordan River region of Lutruwita/Tasmania the Connected Beginnings program is reshaping early childhood outcomes through Aboriginal-led systems change.

Since transitioning to the local Aboriginal Community Health Organisation Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC), the program has demonstrated real impact in development milestones for children.

Connected Beginnings Lutruwita is part of the national Connected Beginnings initiative, designed to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in their early years. Activities are integrated into local support services so children and families can access culturally appropriate support services. The Kutalayna Connected Beginnings program's adoption of a collective impact framework has transformed how services in the area work together. Rather than operating in isolation, government agencies, health providers, early childhood services, and schools now collaborate around a shared vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

The approach is delivering better outcomes for many children. For example, one local family after years of disengagement, began regularly attending early learning sessions and health check-ups.



This shift was supported by culturally responsive outreach and the presence of Aboriginal staff who understood their journey.

Chloe Woolnough, Program Manager from Connected Beginnings Lutruwita, says that the approach is powerful and effective and has data at its core.



*“For us, data are stories. Data sovereignty means making sure those stories are held and shared in the right way, by and with community. We’re connecting and engaging with families our way and working with services and community to find the strengths in the five AEDC domains for Aboriginal children in Kutalayna, so they thrive in their formal learning but also grow strong in their connection to culture, Country and community.”*



The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children in the Kutalayna region has closed significantly, a substantial achievement for the community. Data shows a significant increase in percentages of children on track in all domains: physical health and wellbeing increased from 44% to 78%, social competence increased from 54% to 63%, emotional maturity increased from 47% to 63%, language and cognitive ability increased from 50% to 59% and communication skills and general knowledge increased from 50% to 75%.

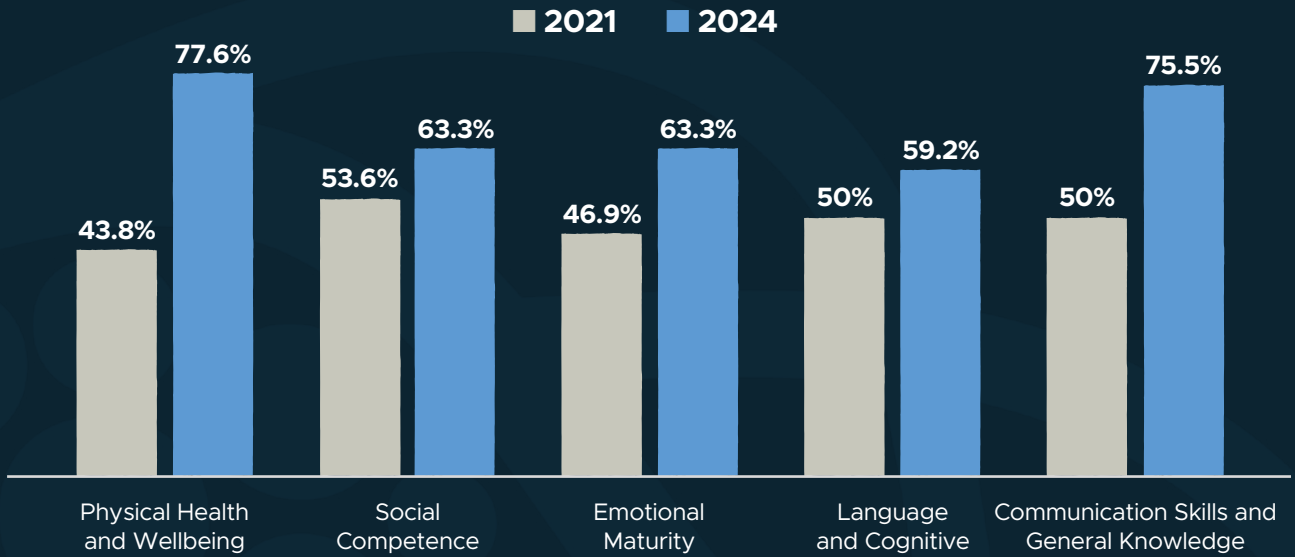
The program has fostered stronger partnerships between services and families, improved access to culturally safe early childhood support, and increased participation in health and education programs.

The Connected Beginnings program is delivered in partnership with SNAICC and NACCHO.

Read more about the Connected Beginnings program at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



Figure 3: Changes in development outcomes across key domains, 2021–2024



Images (previous page and below): Children enjoy on Country experiences with Connected Beginnings Kutalayna. Photos courtesy Connected Beginnings.



# Employment and Economic Development



## OUTCOMES

7. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment or education
8. Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

## TARGETS

- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%
- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed to 62%

## Key Achievements for 2025

.....

### Delivered Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) Program

Around 1,700 jobs have been approved for funding across 37 projects for 27 remote communities, providing people with the dignity of work, fair wages and meaningful employment that communities want and need. Funding is directed to eligible local employers through a competitive grant process to pay for wages and equipment so they can create new jobs for eligible job seekers. These are real jobs, with proper wages and decent conditions, developed in partnership with First Nations people in remote Australia. The program is helping communities grow their local workforces, strengthen businesses and remote economies.

.....

### Launched the new Remote Australia Employment Service (RAES)

The RAES replaced the Community Development Program in November 2025. The service provides tailored support for job seekers with over 85% being First Nations people across 1,200 remote communities. RAES builds on the success of job trials and reflects feedback from consultation with remote communities, job seekers and service providers to deliver culturally safe, flexible employment pathways. Providers will invest at least 25% of their funding into community-led projects that help people prepare for available work and create pathways for people to move into available work and contribute to their community.

.....



**Delivered Transition to Work to support First Nations young people**

Around 10,515 First Nations young people participated in the Transition to Work Program during 2025. They were supported to build confidence, develop practical skills and connect with education, training and employment opportunities across industries such as retail, construction, hospitality and administration.

**Establish the First Nations Economic Partnership**

The First Nations Economic Partnership was established on 29 September 2025 through an agreement between the Government, the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance and the Coalition of Peaks. The Economic Partnership demonstrates the Government's commitment to the Priority Reforms and establishes a shared decision-making mechanism on First Nations economic policy. Partners have commenced work on immediate priorities, including co-design of a First Nations Economic Framework.

**Established the Indigenous Liaison Officer (ILO) Network**

Established in 6 states and territories, ILOs play a critical role in building relationships with First Nations stakeholders, addressing service delivery gaps and challenges, and providing cultural guidance to ensure jobs and training programs are responsive to local needs. This approach enhances cultural competency, advances shared priorities for Closing the Gap and Reconciliation, and creates more inclusive and equitable opportunities for First Nations people.

**Supported First Nations International Engagement**

Australia's global partnerships and First Nations economic opportunities are evolving through the First Nations international engagement led by the Ambassador for First Nations People and the Commonwealth. The inclusion of First Nations' perspectives in our foreign policy advances key international priorities such as building a peaceful, stable, prosperous and unified Pacific region and promoting equitable trade and investment that showcases First Nations enterprise and innovation. The Commonwealth is supporting employment and economic development with a focus on practical measures to expand First Nations trade and investment.

**Workforce Australia supporting First Nations people**

Workforce Australia supported almost 160,000 First Nations people with tailored tools, culturally appropriate resources, and programs to help them build skills, and find and keep meaningful employment. This support contributed to nearly 28,000 First Nations participants securing employment.

**Provided 500,000 Free TAFE and vocational education training places**

The Commonwealth, in partnership with states and territories, is investing over \$1.5 billion in joint funding to deliver over 500,000 Free TAFE and VET places nationwide from 2023-2026, with First Nations Australians identified as a key priority group under the Free TAFE Skills Agreement. Since 2023, Free TAFE has supported thousands of First Nations learners to access nationally recognised qualifications by reducing cost barriers and creating pathways into priority industries like early childhood education, health, construction, agriculture and technology. From 1 January 2023 to 30 September 2025 there have been more than 725,000 enrolments in Free TAFE, including over 44,000 enrolments by First Nations students.

For a full list of 2025 achievements, refer to Appendix F of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



## CASE STUDY

### RJED Jobs Create Lasting Impact in Remote WA

In the community of Ardyaloon (One Arm Point) on the Dampier Peninsula in remote WA, two new roles created through the Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) Program are making a powerful impact.

Jayarna Mills and Phillip Carter are now employed to contribute to their community’s operations and wellbeing – showcasing how employment opportunities can strengthen local communities.

Jayarna has been employed as an office manager, ensuring the day-to-day operations at Ardyaloon Incorporated run smoothly and efficiently.

.....  
*“I’m eager to contribute, learn, and grow alongside my people, honouring our traditions while embracing the new opportunities this role brings.”*  
.....



Phillip started work in 2025 as a groundskeeper, helping maintain and improve the appearance and functionality of community spaces.

.....  
*“I want to keep up work skills and have a real full-time job.”*  
.....

These two positions – administration and groundskeeping – were made possible through RJED round one funding, which was granted to local organisation Ardyaloon Incorporated.

They are more than just jobs; they are vital roles that enhance community services and operations and help strengthen the economic and cultural wellbeing of Ardyaloon.

The Australian Government has introduced two new initiatives – RJED Program and the Remote Australia Employment Service (RAES) – to improve employment outcomes in remote areas.

RJED is creating 6,000 new jobs by 2030. The roles have good pay and conditions and the program is shaped by successful trials and community feedback. The RJED Program creates new jobs that communities want and need.

The RJED Program is already delivering results in communities across Australia. Through roles like those held by Jayarna and Phillip, individuals are gaining employment, developing skills, and contributing to their communities.

Read more about Remote Jobs at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)

Image: Phillip Carter works as a Groundskeeper in the community of Ardyaloon.



Figure 4:  
Number of jobs funded  
under RJED, by region.

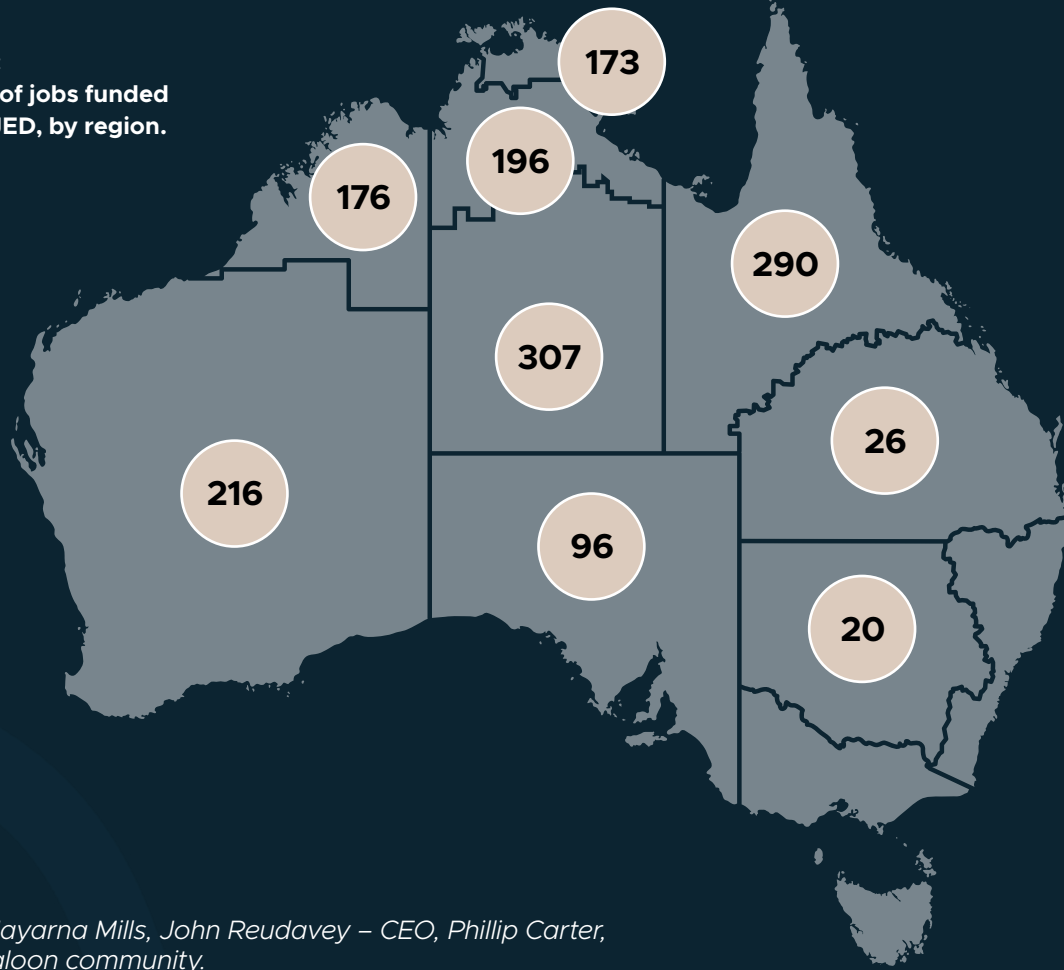


Image: Jayarna Mills, John Reudavey – CEO, Phillip Carter,  
at Ardyaloon community.





## CASE STUDY

### Building women’s confidence through digital skills

Indigenous owned creative and content agency Lola Digital is helping clients promote their brands using creative content strategies that are respectful to community, culture and traditions.

What began as a solo venture by founder Kantesha Takai has grown into a thriving business in the Torres Strait that is not only delivering high-quality digital services but also building local capacity in a region where these opportunities were previously rare.

“When I started, there was no one in the region I could subcontract to” Kantesha shared.

“I was working with people from the mainland and overseas. That’s when I saw the opportunity to grow skills locally.”

Kantesha applied for funding through the Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program. She says the funding came at a perfect time, enabling her to create new positions, which were filled by Laura de Jersey, Creative Project Assistant and Rozahlia Dorante, Content Creator.

“At Lola Digital, I have the sense that my work actually matters. I felt trusted to take ownership of my role and responsibilities, and felt encouraged to grow, both professionally and personally,” said Laura.

The team’s work has been featured in local newspapers, and they recently planned and hosted a local community event that over 200 people attended.

.....  
*“They took the lead and brought the community together. The team is also very eager to build on their industry capabilities. RJED funding can assist with these goals by supporting training and professional development opportunities,”*  
*Kantesha said.*

.....  
The agency’s impact was recently recognised when they won the 2025 Regional Indigenous Business Award. The award acknowledges businesses making impactful contributions to regional economies, a testament to Lola Digital’s leadership and innovation in the Torres Strait.

The Government is expanding the RJED Program through a \$299 million investment over 4 years to create an additional 3,000 jobs, bringing the total to 6,000 by 2030. The program funds jobs that communities want and need, offering flexibility around personal, family, and cultural obligations. So far, around 1,700 jobs have been approved for funding.

Read more about the RJED Program at:  
[www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



Image (left to right): Kantesha Takai, Laura de Jersey and Rozahlia Dorante from Lola Digital.



## Our Focus for 2026

The Commonwealth will build on 2025 foundations by expanding community-designed training and employment pathways, strengthening remote economic opportunities, and embedding local decision-making. Efforts will focus on deepening participation and longer-term economic outcomes, ensuring First Nations people have the same opportunities as all Australians.

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### **Expand the RJED Program to create an additional 3,000 jobs**

The Commonwealth is expanding the RJED Program through a \$299 million investment over 4 years from 2026-27, and \$161.7 million ongoing to create 3,000 additional jobs, helping to deliver 6,000 jobs by 2030. Real jobs pave the way for stronger social and economic participation, helping individuals and families move out of poverty and supporting long-term economic development in remote communities.

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### **Deliver a First Nations Economic Framework**

The Commonwealth will continue working with the First Nations Economic Partnership to advance economic empowerment. The Economic Partnership brings together the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance, the Coalition of Peaks, and the Commonwealth. Immediate priorities for 2026 include exploring how Specialist Investment Vehicles, Indigenous Business Australia and the Indigenous Land and Sea Future Fund can better deliver for First Nations communities across Australia. The Partners will also continue developing the First Nations Economic Framework, a shared national approach to supporting long-term economic empowerment for First Nations people. It will set out a clear vision and priority pillars to guide coordinated economic action across the Commonwealth.

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### **Work in partnership to unlock economic opportunities**

The Commonwealth will invest an additional \$75 million to support Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs), boosting governance, community decision-making and investor confidence, bringing support to PBCs to \$200 million over 3 years. This support will help PBCs manage opportunities on Country, attract capital and drive long-term economic benefits. The Government is working with the PBC Steering Group, improving the funding model for PBCs, and working together with the Economic Partnership to unlock sustainable, community-led economic development.

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### **Provide access to training, mentoring and employment opportunities**

RAES strengthens pathways to meaningful work for First Nations people across 1,200 remote communities. Backed by Commonwealth investment and consultation with remote communities, RAES provides flexible, culturally safe support that helps job seekers prepare for work and stay employed through mentoring and tailored assistance. The service supports community-led projects that build confidence and job readiness and gives providers greater flexibility to design solutions that reflect local strengths and priorities. In 2026, the focus will be on delivering the new RAES model across communities and expanding access to mentoring, training and job pathways.

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### **Deliver continued access to free TAFE and VET places**

The Commonwealth will continue boosting training access and local workforces, with early outcomes in this initiative showing increased First Nations participation and improved access to qualifications that align with community and regional workforce needs. In 2026, the focus will be on expanding access, strengthening pathways to secure jobs, and ensuring culturally safe and responsive training.

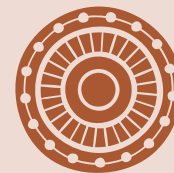
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### **Reconnection, Employment and Learning (REAL) Program**

The REAL Program supports First Nations people transitioning from the justice system into meaningful employment, training and community life. The program will be delivered initially in 16 locations, providing culturally responsive mentoring and support that strengthens confidence, connection to culture and creates pathways to lasting employment.

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For the full list of 2026 Implementation Plan commitments, refer to Appendix G of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



### OUTCOMES

9. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need
17. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives

### TARGETS

- By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88%
- By 2031, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households:
  - within discrete Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard;
  - in or near to a town receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town (including if the household might be classified for other purposes as a part of a discrete settlement such as a “town camp” or “town based reserve”)
- By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion



## Key Achievements for 2025

### **Delivered 264 new homes in remote Northern Territory communities.**

As part of the 10-year Northern Territory Remote Housing Federation Funding Agreement, 264 houses were built in 2025 across 34 remote communities and 2 Alice Springs Town Camps. This work is delivering new houses, reducing overcrowding and improving living conditions for First Nations families, while creating jobs for local communities through support for Aboriginal Business Enterprises. The agreement will deliver up to 2,700 new homes by 30 June 2034 and includes continued support for repairs and maintenance to ensure housing remains safe, culturally appropriate and sustainable.

### **Supported states and territories to increase social housing supply**

10% of the total number of houses expected to be delivered by states and territories nationally under the \$2 billion Social Housing Accelerator Payment (427 new social homes) has been allocated to First Nations households, with 181 already completed and 111 under construction. This investment is strengthening access to safe, affordable housing, reducing overcrowding, and supporting wellbeing for First Nations families across urban, regional, and remote areas, while increasing long-term social housing supply.

### **Delivered acute housing measures for remote communities**

First payments of \$25 million have been provided to Qld, WA and SA under the Federation Funding Agreement Schedule to commence critical repairs, maintenance and improvements in remote First Nations communities. Funding will improve the functionality and liveability of homes, helping address urgent housing needs and reduce overcrowding. The Commonwealth is working with the NT to finalise its implementation plan to enable work to begin, ensuring all jurisdictions can respond to housing needs and reduce overcrowding in communities.

### **Driven Indigenous Business Australia Home Ownership Program concessional loans**

Through Indigenous Business Australia, 583 concessional home loans were approved in 2024-25, exceeding annual targets and enabling more First Nations families to achieve home ownership and financial independence. The program is improving access to affordable finance, reducing overcrowding and helping single-income households, particularly women to build intergenerational wealth and long-term financial security. 19 home loans have already been approved under the new Single Carers package, providing tailored support for families on single incomes.

### **Free Wi-Fi provided to 23 remote communities**

Through partnerships with NBN Co., free community Wi-Fi is now available in 23 remote First Nations communities across the NT, SA, Qld and WA. Reliable community Wi-Fi is enabling better access to health services through telehealth, supporting students to engage in online learning, and strengthening economic participation by improving access to digital banking, job services and small-business tools. By reducing data costs and building digital confidence across all ages, the program is fostering safer, more inclusive digital access, helping families stay connected in everyday life.

### **Invested in water infrastructure projects through the National Water Grid Fund**

The \$150 million commitment to support water infrastructure for First Nations regional and remote communities from February 2023 was surpassed in August 2025. By December 2025, Commonwealth investment reached \$193.2 million and will continue to grow in 2026.

There are 40 construction projects currently underway or complete, supporting more than 110 First Nations communities and around 34,000 people, and 3 planning projects. These projects are being delivered with state and territory governments to provide safe and reliable water.

For a full list of 2025 achievements, refer to Appendix F of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



## CASE STUDY

### Home ownership pathways for First Nations families

Karisa, a proud Bundjalung woman, and her partner Dylan have achieved a milestone that will resonate for generations: owning their first home. After years of planning and financial discipline, they turned their dream into reality despite the challenges of a competitive housing market.

Karisa and Dylan worked diligently to improve their financial standing, including paying off all consumer debts, which significantly increased their borrowing capacity, as well as connecting with Indigenous Business Australia's (IBA) Indigenous Home Ownership Program.

Like many first home buyers, Karisa and Dylan faced a tough property market. Prices were rising, competition was fierce, and Karisa and Dylan attended an IBA information session early on to understand the services available. From that first session, they found not just information but ongoing support. IBA guided them through every step, offering tailored assistance and concessional loan options designed to help First Nations Australians access home ownership.

Karisa reflects that the workshops gave them the confidence to take the next steps.

.....  
*“The workshops were amazing, they gave us the knowledge and confidence to take the next steps.”*  
.....

Karisa encourages others to start early, learn about programs like IBA's shared equity support, and ask for help when needed.

.....  
*“IBA helped us every step of the way.”*  
.....

The IBA supports First Nations Australians into home ownership through supports like low deposit loans at range of rates depending on individual circumstances. It helps eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people access mainstream finance through low deposit requirements, flexible loan terms, and ongoing mentoring.

In the 2025 financial year, IBA approved 584 home loans for individuals and families across Australia. First Home Buyers comprised the majority of approvals, accounting for 506 loans, while 78 loans were provided to previous homeowners.

Read more about IBA Indigenous Home Ownership Program at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)

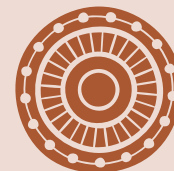


Images (this page and next): Homeowner Karisa with her partner Dylan and child at their new home. Photos courtesy IBA.





# Housing and Infrastructure



## Our Focus for 2026

The Commonwealth is improving housing, digital connectivity, and essential infrastructure so First Nations communities have safer homes and reliable services, including water, power and Wi-Fi – supporting better access to health care, education and jobs. The Commonwealth is prioritising culturally appropriate housing and services that enable participation in community life.

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**Deliver more social and affordable housing and better First Nations housing outcomes**

The Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) is being used to strengthen First Nations housing outcomes through community-controlled delivery, dedicated funding and clear tenancy targets. Round 3 of the HAFF includes a \$600 million First Nations funding stream for projects delivered by, or in partnership with, First Nations housing organisations, and introduces a 10% First Nations tenancy target across all social housing delivered in this round. This round will support more than 21,000 new social and affordable homes, contributing to the Commonwealth’s commitment to 55,000 homes nationally, while building the capacity of the community-controlled housing sector.

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**Invest in the Housing Policy Partnership (HPP)**

The Commonwealth will invest \$6 million to extend the Housing Policy Partnership (HPP) for 2 years from 2026-27. The HPP brings together governments and First Nations representatives to co-design housing policy, ensuring First Nations people have a genuine say in the design and delivery of culturally appropriate, safe and affordable First Nations housing.

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**Provide free community Wi-Fi in more remote First Nations communities**

The Commonwealth is investing \$20 million over 3 years from 2024-25 through a competitive grants program to expand free Community Wi-Fi in about 50 remote First Nations communities. Guided by community priorities and culturally informed design, this initiative will deliver reliable, affordable broadband, and strengthen digital inclusion. Improved connectivity will help families stay connected, access education and healthcare, engage in the digital economy, and maintain cultural and community ties. In 2026, the focus will be on rolling out approved sites, supporting installation and activation, and ensuring services are operational by 30 June 2027.

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**Provide culturally appropriate, safe and affordable short-term accommodation**

The Commonwealth is investing \$48.3 million to support Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) to provide culturally appropriate, safe and affordable short-term accommodation for First Nations people who need to be away from home to access essential services and economic opportunities. This investment maintains a national network of fit-for-purpose facilities, enabling access to education, employment, healthcare, and cultural obligations while staying connected to family and community.

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**Continue to invest in water infrastructure projects through the National Water Grid Fund**

Over 4 years from 2025-26, the Commonwealth will provide \$63 million to invest in water infrastructure planning and construction, science and other enabling projects that support delivery of safe and reliable water in regional and remote communities through the National Water Grid Fund. Some existing projects will reach completion in 2026, improving water availability and resilience in First Nations communities. By improving essential services, unlocking local development opportunities, and reducing long-standing infrastructure barriers, this investment lays the groundwork for economic empowerment and community-led growth in remote First Nations communities.

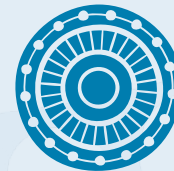
**Support Clean Energy and Climate progress**

The Commonwealth will evaluate and monitor the *First Nations Clean Energy Strategy Progress Report 2025-2026* and administer the First Nations Clean Energy Program to increase access to reliable and affordable clean energy, enable equitable partnerships and achieve economic benefits for First Nations people. Support will also be delivered to assist First Nations participation in consent and agreement-making processes for the Australian Carbon Credit Unit projects on Native Title land.

For the full list of 2026 Implementation Plan commitments, refer to Appendix G of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



Image: Mavis and Colin, with the keys to their new home in Maningrida.



## OUTCOMES

10. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system
11. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system

## TARGETS

- By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15%
- By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10–17 years) in detention by at least 30%

## Key Achievements for 2025

### Progressed National Justice Reinvestment Unit (JRU)

The Commonwealth progressed foundational work toward establishing an independent National JRU in 2025. The Interim JRU finalised design work for the future JRU's structure and governance, engaging with justice reinvestment communities, First Nations peak bodies, and governments. This included consultation on capability and data needs, preferred governance arrangements, and how the JRU could best support place-based justice reinvestment across Australia. These steps strengthen community input and prepare the groundwork for decisions to be taken in 2026 on the final form of the JRU.

### Launched the National Access to Justice Partnership

The National Access to Justice Partnership 2025-2030 (NAJP) commenced on 1 July 2025, representing the largest investment in legal assistance ever, with a total funding commitment of \$3.9 billion over 5 years. This includes \$837.8 million over 5 years for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and \$366.8 million over 5 years for Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services (FVPLS).



Invest in 28 community-led Justice Reinvestment Initiatives under the National and Central Australia programs

The Commonwealth expanded justice reinvestment, with 28 community-led initiatives selected nationally under the National and Central Australia programs, including 13 initiatives focused on youth justice reinvestment. One example is the Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service (CAYLUS) Mampu-Maninjaku initiative, announced in July 2025, which is delivered through a community-led model and focuses on crime prevention, alcohol and other drug counselling, and diversion activities to reduce over-representation of First Nations people in the criminal justice system and improve community safety in Central Australia. The Justice Reinvestment initiatives are designed and delivered by First Nations-led or community organisations through locally designed programs informed by community priorities.

Developed National Justice Measurement and Evaluation Framework

The Commonwealth, working in co-design with First Nations suppliers and stakeholders, developed a Measurement and Evaluation Framework to assess the success of the initiatives funded under the National Justice Reinvestment Programs. The Framework embeds Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in evaluation and ensures justice reinvestment initiatives are measured in culturally grounded and appropriate ways. This strengthens accountability, provides a shared evidence base to track progress and supports better justice outcomes for First Nations people.

Presented justice items to Standing Council of Attorneys-General (SCAG) and Joint Council

In June 2025, the Joint Council on Closing the Gap highlighted the urgent need for coordinated action to advance Target 11 and broader justice reforms. Co-Chairs engaged with Attorneys-General, Indigenous Affairs Ministers, and other key stakeholders to identify priority actions and Policy Partnerships developed a number of actions to strengthen collaborative effort on Target 11, endorsed by Joint Council, which will be implemented in 2026. Strengthening collaboration between the Joint Council and Policy Partnerships will be a key focus of the upcoming Co-Chairs Forum. The Justice Policy Partnership, as part of the SCAG Working Group on Bail and Remand Reform, also provided substantial evidence-based advice to SCAG in July 2025. Implementation of recommendations will be a matter for each state and territory.

Commenced development of an Implementation Approach for the National Review of First Nations Health Care in Prisons

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Collaboration began work to develop a national approach to implementation for the National Review of Health Care in Prisons, in line with a joint commitment from Health Ministers. An engagement process to inform the implementation approach has commenced with government and First Nations stakeholders from the health and justice sectors, which will continue into early-mid 2026. Once finalised, the implementation approach will aim to guide system-level reform across all jurisdictions to deliver equitable, culturally safe, and high-quality health care for First Nations people in places of detention.

Continued to deliver Custody Notification Service (CNS)

From 1 July 2025, the Commonwealth provides funding for the CNS in every jurisdiction through the National Access to Justice Partnership. This service provides an independent and culturally safe check on wellbeing and can include the provision of legal assistance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people entering and in police custody. This service reflects the ongoing implementation of recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in custody and supports progress against Target 10 and 11. In 2024-25, CNS providers received 138,903 notifications from police (approximately 2,671 notifications per week) and provided welfare checks in response to 118,570 calls.

For a full list of 2025 achievements, refer to Appendix F of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



## CASE STUDY

### Young people supported to find new ways

Old Ways New Ways (OWNW) is helping reduce the overrepresentation of First Nations children in the justice system by combining cultural knowledge with holistic support. Delivered by the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia (ALSWA) alongside Wadjak Northside, Stephen Michael Foundation, and Hope Community Services, the program is creating pathways for young people to reconnect with culture and community.

Supported by \$6.4 million in Commonwealth funding, OOWNW commenced in October 2024 with a pilot course and launched fully in February 2025. The program provides wraparound case management, mentoring, cultural activities – including on-Country camps – and throughcare supports for participants and families.



One participant, a 17-year-old Aboriginal woman, joined OOWNW in January 2025. At the time, she was disengaged from education and had an outstanding Juvenile Justice Team referral. Through OOWNW, she attended 6 activity days, received mentoring, and practical support like identification and bank account setup.

While the young woman had a limited history in the criminal justice system, she has not been charged with any new offences or been apprehended by police since she started OOWNW. In her own words, the young woman said the 3 most important things she learned during the program were ‘culture’, ‘connection with others’ and ‘communicating with other people’.

.....  
***“I grew up and no longer wanted to do silly things.” – Participant***  
.....

By July, she had transitioned into a peer mentor role with OOWNW. Today, she has her learners permit, works regularly as a mentor and is planning to study a Certificate III in Community Services.

From October 2024 to October 2025, OOWNW received 242 referrals, and has supported 143 young people in activities for a brighter future.

OOWNW is more than a justice initiative – it’s a movement that blends old ways with new ways, creating opportunities for young people to thrive.

.....  
***“She is a STAR.” – Elder***  
.....

Read more about Old Ways New Ways here: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)

*Images (this page and next): Young people participating in Old Ways New Ways activities. Photos courtesy Aboriginal Legal Service WA.*









## CASE STUDY

### Culturally Grounded Justice on Groote Archipelago

The Anindilyakwa Peacemaker Program is strengthening community safety and cohesion across the Groote Archipelago by drawing on traditional knowledge and leadership. Delivered by the Groote Archipelago Community Justice Group (CJG), the program is a community-led initiative that promotes healing and cultural integrity.

Supported by \$6.2 million in Commonwealth funding, the program currently has 29 registered Peacemakers representing both moieties and all 14 clans of the region. These respected individuals often serve as first responders when incidents arise, guiding resolution and restoring calm through cultural authority.

Offending has been reported as halved in the initial 12 months of the NT first Community Court and Community Justice Group established on Groote Eylandt. There were 130 offences recorded compared to 1,041 in 2019.

LW is a Moiety 2 Warnumamalya man who now plays a transformative role in the community.

LW supports a senior Elder who leads a culturally focused program centred on men's social and emotional well-being. He regularly assists with program delivery, helping to facilitate sessions and ensure events run smoothly. His presence is a steadying force, and his contributions are deeply valued. At the Anindilyakwa Healing Centre, LW engages with men referred through Community Court after pleading guilty to offences. His willingness to speak openly about his own journey has positioned him as a powerful role model.

LW is also a trusted source of community intelligence. He frequently reports on emerging issues, identifies potential risks, and offers sound recommendations. His insights are respected and often inform CJG's approach to community safety and mediation.

His commitment extends beyond formal roles. At the recent Umbakumba Festival, LW put himself forward to work overnight as a peacekeeper, ensuring community members got home safely and that tensions were diffused before they escalated.

LW now mentors young men, supports cultural programs, and works tirelessly to keep his community safe.

He is passionate about sharing his story with young people, encouraging them to make better choices and avoid the path he once walked. The CJG Co-ordinator Tex O'Neill says his leadership approach is strong and apparent.

.....  
*“Before I even met him, I'd heard a lot about LW and the work he was doing from other staff. When we first met at a NAIDOC event in June, he was already taking initiative – working on community safety in Umbakumba off his own bat. He's always been a peace maker.”*

.....  
For LW, cultural connection is central to identity, self-esteem, and a sense of belonging. He has applied for a formal role within CJG, seeking to further his independence and serve as a positive example to his children and the broader community.

“He is reliable from first response through to follow-up and referral. We consider him one of our main peacekeepers and a leader in the community.”

Read more about Anindilyakwa Peacemaker Program here: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



## Our Focus for 2026

The Commonwealth will continue partnering with First Nations organisations to strengthen justice outcomes by transitioning justice reinvestment initiatives to ongoing funding arrangements, improving prevention and early intervention, and supporting culturally informed pathways out of the justice system. These actions are grounded in Priority Reforms and shaped by community leadership, ensuring First Nations people can access safe, culturally responsive supports and justice systems that uphold dignity, fairness and self-determination.

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### **Progress the Justice Sector Strengthening Plan (JSSP)**

The Commonwealth is progressing the JSSP in partnership with NATSILS, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) and other peak organisations to strengthen capability and coordination across the justice sector. Stakeholders have called for clearer roles for ACCOs and funding models that support consistent service delivery. By strengthening leadership and resourcing for First Nations justice organisations, the JSSP aims to advance Targets 10 and 11, ensuring First Nations people can access culturally informed support and fairer justice system responses.

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### **Establish the National Justice Reinvestment Unit (NJRU)**

The Commonwealth is progressing work to establish the final form of the NJRU. The NJRU will sit outside of government and will be an ACCO or a First Nations-led organisation, which will support the self-determination of justice reinvestment initiatives. Establishment of the NJRU responds directly to the justice reinvestment community's call for an independent unit. The NJRU will provide extensive support in the areas of capacity and capability building, systems change, data, and measurement and evaluation.

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### **Improve the cultural safety of police responses to First Nations people experiencing FDSV**

The Commonwealth will work with jurisdictions to strengthen culturally safe policing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing FDSV. Communities have highlighted the need for trauma-informed practice, better recognition of victim-survivor experiences, and responses that avoid misidentification. New training and practice guidance will support police to understand the impacts of trauma and unconscious bias, and to respond in ways that are culturally informed and safer for families.

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### **End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People**

The Commonwealth will work with jurisdictions to deliver the *National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People 2025-2035* and its First Action Plan, guided by dedicated First Nations engagement. Community insights show elder abuse requires culturally safe, tailored and First Nations-led responses. Strengthening prevention, clear reporting pathways, and culturally appropriate supports will improve safety and wellbeing for older First Nations people. The Commonwealth will also publish the National Elder Abuse Research Program: The Abuse and Mistreatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older people report.

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### **Drive the NT Remote Aboriginal Investment (NTRAI) Remote Policing Schedule**

The new 6-year NTRAI Remote Policy Schedule will drive a cultural reform agenda for NT Police, building partnerships with communities, enhancing Aboriginal employment and leadership, and strengthening governance and accountability. This investment is an important part of the Government's efforts to help prevent further deaths in custody and improve relationships between First Nations people and police in the NT.

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For the full list of 2026 Implementation Plan commitments, refer to Appendix G of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



## OUTCOMES

12. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not overrepresented in the child protection system
13. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe

## TARGETS

- By 2031, reduce the rate of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (0–17 years old) in out-of-home care by 45%
- By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero

## Key Achievements for 2025

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### **Transitioned Family Violence Prevention Legal Services to NAJP**

The National Access to Justice Partnership 2025-2030 commenced on 1 July 2025, bringing FVPLS into the agreement for the first time. FVPLS are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services that deliver culturally safe wraparound legal assistance and non-legal support services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and survivors experiencing, or at risk of and/or recovering from FDSV, and their families and relevant kinship. Under the NAJP, FVPLS funding has been strengthened, including a doubling of investment to \$366.8 million, ensuring services can continue supporting families.

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**Appointed the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People and established the Commission**

The National Commission was established on 13 January 2025 and the National Commissioner, Sue-Anne Hunter, commenced on 1 September 2025. The Commonwealth worked in partnership with the National Commissioner to develop the primary legislation, drawing on extensive consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies, leaders, organisations and communities.

On 30 October 2025, the Australian Government endorsed the Minimum Requirements for National, State and Territory Commissioners for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People. The Minimum Requirements have informed the development of the legislation, to ensure the National Commissioner is independent, effective and appropriately empowered.

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**Expanded the First Nations Leaving Violence Program regional trials**

In July 2025, the Leaving Violence Program expanded to 4 locations in Broome, WA, Darwin, NT, Dubbo, NSW and Cairns, Qld. This is delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led organisations and focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors. As of 30 November 2025, the Regional Trials have provided over \$2.5 million to approximately 567 victim-survivors and are anticipated to deliver 3,000 financial packages in 2025-26. The program also offers outreach to connect victim-survivors to frontline services, with 287 outbound referrals made for victim-survivors by regional service providers for further support including personal and family safety, financial resilience, and mental health. Evaluation of the trials will start from July 2026.

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**Implemented the Outcome and Evidence Fund trial projects**

The Commonwealth worked with community panels and local leaders to identify potential projects for each site; there are now 23 projects approved across 7 locations. These projects are delivering culturally safe and trauma informed activities, such as cultural mentoring, healing programs, respectful relationships support and practical life skills workshop. These activities help strengthen families, support children and young people, and reduce risks linked to family violence and out of home care.

.....

**Supported ACCOs to Lead the Future of Family Services**

The Commonwealth finalised the Innovation Fund grant opportunity in 2025, with \$9.8 million committed over 6 years to support 10 ACCOs to prepare to deliver child and family services in targeted priority locations across Australia to test the principles of implementation for the Families and Children Investment Strategy.

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**Invested to keep Children Connected to Family, Culture and Country**

The Commonwealth funded SNAICC \$0.6 million to conduct a review of how state and territory governments are implementing principles to keep children in the justice system connected to their families and communities. These principles include prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection. The review culminated in a report that highlighted progress improvements and ongoing challenges that government and community are facing. Positive steps included legislative changes, cultural oversight committees and new leadership roles.

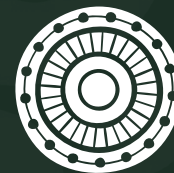
.....

**Integrated Legal and Human Services for Early Support**

The Commonwealth engaged NATSILS and SNAICC to conduct a legal scoping study that identified opportunities and options to address systemic discrimination and barriers, improve legal and related supports, and reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. Recommendations from the study included increasing funding for ACCOs and providing accessible legal support to families and children already in contact with the child protection system.

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For a full list of 2025 achievements, refer to Appendix F of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



# Spotlight: Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices

**Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices (Our Ways) is a joint 10-year agreement between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and First Nations people.**

Our Ways values the strength, leadership, culture and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and places these at the centre of action. It focuses on meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families. It recognises that experiences of FDSV are shaped by interconnected drivers and risk factors including poverty, homelessness, alcohol and other drug use, gambling and mental health challenges. Addressing these factors is essential to strengthening family safety and long-term wellbeing.

Our Ways provides a different pathway: one that is led by First Nations people, grounded in lived experience and cultural safety, and strengthened by deep connections with kin, Country and community. Delivery will be underpinned by genuine partnerships, that are transparent, accountable and focused on real and lasting change.

Our Ways is guided by evidence and what communities say is needed to create real and meaningful change. The Our Ways Action Plan will be developed alongside the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 and Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 second action plans to ensure an aligned approach for First Nations women, children and families.

Actions will be developed through shared decision-making to place culture, safety and self-determination at the centre of change, creating the conditions for healing, safety and strong futures for First Nations women, children and communities.

### **What you will see in the first 12-months**

The Australian Government is investing \$218.3 million to implement Our Ways, this will include the establishment of a national network of ACCOs to deliver holistic and specialist services to support First Nations families experiencing or at risk of experiencing FDSV and child removal, extension of Leaving Violence Program Trials and support for a new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Body for family, domestic and sexual violence, anticipated to commence operations in early 2026 following a community-led design and establishment process.

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Sector Strengthening Plan will support implementation of Our Ways and will be developed in partnership with communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence and Australian, state and territory governments.

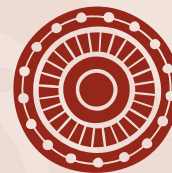
Together these actions will create the conditions for healing, safety and strong futures for First Nations women, children and communities.



*Image: Mother and daughter.  
Photo NIAA.*



# Families and Kin



## Our Focus for 2026

A key priority for 2026 is building on what works. The Commonwealth will continue to invest in approaches where communities are already seeing positive results, including culturally led family safety initiatives, early intervention supports and ACCO-delivered programs that strengthen families, heal trauma and keep children connected to culture, kin and Country.

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### **Reduce rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children**

The Commonwealth is investing \$218.3 million towards *Our Ways, Strong Ways, Our Voices* to address family, domestic and sexual violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families. Actions and investments will be detailed in the *Our Ways, Strong Ways, Our Voices Plan (Action Plan)*, to be developed in partnership with First Nations organisations. The Action Plan will complement the FDSV Sector Strengthening Plan to improve service delivery, coverage, and capacity for community-controlled organisations. The Outcome Framework will also outline the theory of change and guide indicators, monitoring, and evaluation.

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### **Introduce primary legislation for the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People**

The Commonwealth is investing \$33.5 million over 4 years to transition the National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People to permanent, statutory arrangements, with \$8.4 million per year ongoing to support its operations.

In 2026, primary legislation will enable the National Commissioner to operate with dedicated functions and powers to drive greater accountability and influence systemic issues that disproportionately impact First Nations children and young people, such as out-of-home care and youth detention. The National Commissioner will support better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, with respect to their rights, safety, development, and wellbeing and ensure their voices are reflected in advice to Government.

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### **Drive the Consent Can't Wait**

Sexual consent remains one of Australia's most misunderstood and avoided conversations, with nearly half (48%) of Australians struggling to define it and often defaulting to silence. For First Nations communities, these barriers are compounded by cultural and social considerations. The Consent Can't Wait campaign aims to reduce sexual violence over the long-term by building awareness of consent within First Nations communities, empowering adult influencers to have culturally appropriate conversations with young people and providing tailored resources to guide these conversations safely and effectively. The Consent Can't Wait campaign has been demonstrated to be particularly effective with First Nations audiences, with high rates of recognition and campaign-related actions, which is expected to continue in Phase 2.

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### **Continue the Lighthouse Project**

The Commonwealth will provide \$33.8 million over two years from 2026-27 for the continuation of Lighthouse and culturally responsive support for First Nations Australians. This investment will ensure the family law system maintains and strengthens approaches to screen for and manage risk and continue supports for First Nations families to engage with the family court process.

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**Uphold the rights of children to remain connected to family, culture, and Country**

Out-of-home care often fails to provide safe, supportive environments that meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Early consultation on the National Out-of-Home Care Standards Refresh shows strong calls for cultural safety, holistic wellbeing, self-determination, and government accountability. Stakeholders want systems that uphold children's rights to stay connected to family, culture, and Country. The refreshed National Standards aim to improve care quality so children in out-of-home care have the same opportunities as others, with stronger alignment between national and jurisdictional standards. This includes lifting service quality and creating a cohesive approach across governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives in 5 priority areas to close gaps and reduce duplication.

.....

**Improve Access to Justice: Insights from the Safe & Supported Legal Scoping Study**

Informed by the Safe and Supported Legal Scoping Study undertaken by SNAICC and NATSILS, the Commonwealth will identify areas for improvement across child protection systems, youth justice systems and relevant legal systems to address barriers faced by First Nations families in seeking legal supports.

.....

For the full list of 2026 Implementation Plan commitments, refer to Appendix G of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



Image:  
Rebecca from  
Puuya Foundation  
with EEAI  
participant Neil.



### OUTCOMES

15. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters
16. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing

### TARGETS

- By 2030, a 15% increase in Australia's land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests
- By 2030, a 15% increase in areas covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests in the sea
- By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken





## Key Achievements for 2025

### **Expanded Indigenous Rangers Program**

The Commonwealth expanded the Indigenous Rangers Program to create an additional 900 new jobs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. 82 new ranger projects will receive funding, and 58 new organisations will join the Commonwealth Indigenous Rangers Program, as the Government invests over \$190 million across 3 years (2025-28). Indigenous Rangers Program Round One created more than 1,000 new Rangers jobs, supported over 110 new ranger projects and welcomed 80 new organisations into the Indigenous Rangers Program for the first time in over a decade.

### **Commenced digitising and preserving historically and culturally significant Native Title records**

The Commonwealth committed to preserving the cultural and historical legacy of Native Title through digitising significant records held by the Federal Court of Australia and the National Native Title Tribunal. The first tranche of digitisation and preservation of historically and culturally significant Native Title records has commenced with 1,067 native title paper files already complete. A further 700 boxes of records that hold the stories, evidence, and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been uplifted for digitisation in 2026 to improve community access to histories, supporting intergenerational sharing of knowledge, language, and connection to Country.

### **Transitioned Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) to First Nations organisations**

The successful transition of 5 IPA projects to delivery by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in 2025 represents a milestone in advancing capability building and self-determination. These transitions – from non-First Nations providers – ensure that Traditional Owners lead and manage the care of Country in line with cultural values.

### **Drive revitalisation of First Nations Languages through Community-Led Action**

The Indigenous Languages and Arts Program has provided \$7.2 million in funding over 3 years to 2026-27 to support 29 community-led projects focused on conserving, revitalising, and sustaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's languages as a living expression of culture, identity, and connection to Country. Communities are reconnecting with ancestral languages, strengthening cultural identity, and creating opportunities for intergenerational learning and pride. All funding recommendations are made in partnership with First Languages Australia, ensuring cultural integrity and community voice is at the decision-making table. This initiative will continue to evolve, guided by community insights to preserve language and culture and strengthen the spiritual and cultural fabric of First Nations Australia.

### **Driving sustainable language leaders and educators**

First Nations Language Education Program (FNLEP) has provided an opportunity for the Commonwealth to work in partnership with First Languages Australia and communities to design a program that meets the needs of both community and schools. This program is supporting 28 projects across the country, working with 46 language communities and connecting more than 70 schools with approximately 120 trainee language educators. Further, more than 90 First Nations people are employed through these projects, and approximately 300 adult language learners in total are engaging in language learning through the program.

### **Build disaster resilience**

Outcomes of Round 3 of the Commonwealth's Disaster Ready Fund were announced, including an investment of \$13 million in 9 disaster resilience and risk reduction projects delivered by First Nations-led organisations.

### **Increased disaster resilience in First Nations communities**

24 remote community stores benefitted from the \$9.6 million Stores Efficiency and Resilience investment to ensure remote communities have reliable access to nutritious food and groceries, especially during the wet season and severe weather events. Investments included increased cold and dry storage and improved power solutions.

For a full list of 2025 achievements, refer to Appendix F of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



## CASE STUDY

### Girringun Rangers

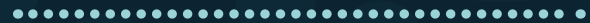
In Cardwell, Queensland, the Girringun Rangers are safeguarding Australia’s agricultural and environmental future through the Indigenous Ranger Biosecurity Program (IRBP). Their work strengthens early detection systems for exotic pests and diseases, protecting Country and supporting Australia’s \$94 billion agricultural industry.

Girringun Rangers conduct biosecurity surveillance across remote and high-risk areas that are costly and difficult to access. Their deep cultural connection to Country and Traditional Knowledges enables them to identify subtle environmental changes, providing early detection and rapid response that prevents expensive eradication campaigns and economic losses.

*Image: Girringun Ranger Talisha Mothe with Douglas Bulmer and Shantiashe Congoo working on Girramay Country (Cardwell, Queensland). Photo courtesy Girringun Aboriginal Corporation.*

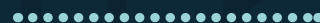


Close connection with the surrounding Country provides valuable insights, according to Girringun Ranger, Talisha Mothe, proud Girramay Traditional Owner, one of the nine tribes that Girringun Aboriginal Corporation work for.



*“Early detection is critical – not just for trade and market access, but for protecting the Country we belong to.*

*Our knowledge of land and sea Country means we can see changes others might miss.”*



Girringun Rangers are part of a broader IRBP network of 71 Indigenous groups spanning northern Australia, supporting thousands of residents in remote regions.

The program creates employment and training opportunities, fosters cultural connections, and enhances Australia’s biosecurity system. By preventing pest incursions, the program protects agricultural exports, environmental industries, and cultural heritage.

The IRBP makes an important contribution to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, advancing targets in employment, economic development, and culture through work that maintains connection to Country.

The Girringun Rangers was successful in gaining funding as a part of the Commonwealth’s Indigenous Rangers Program, in the recent Indigenous Rangers Program Expansion Round 2. This funding will build on the successes the group has achieved so far, to focus on strategic activities to generate economic and social benefits from effective use of their land.

Read more about the Indigenous Ranger Biosecurity Program at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



## CASE STUDY

### Reclaiming Identity: The Power of Language Learning

For Kurna man Mark Catanzariti, learning the Kurna language through Tauondi Aboriginal College's accredited courses was more than education – it was a profound reconnection with culture, identity and purpose.

Mark was actively involved in community and cultural activities but felt his connection to language was missing. He couldn't speak Kurna fluently or deliver a Welcome to Country in his family's language.

Encouraged by his mother and other students, Mark enrolled in Tauondi's language program. He found support and mentorship from staff and fellow learners.

.....  
*“Being part of the program has helped me develop a stronger sense of identity and belonging. It also led me to become a member of Kurna Warra Karrpanthi (KWK), and eventually, a Director.*

*Being given this opportunity completely changed my life... I'm proud to be someone who can advocate for and encourage others on their language journey.”*  
.....

Tauondi Aboriginal College, based on Kurna Country, offers accredited language courses developed with communities and ACCOs to support formal learning and teaching pathways.

Courses are now delivered across several states, with national expansion underway. Mark's journey after learning his language includes becoming a Cultural Services Officer, enrolling in Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, and becoming a director of the Kurna language organisation Kurna Warra Karrpanthi (KWK),

For participants like Mark, the program is a gateway to cultural renewal, leadership and employment. His story shows how language learning can transform lives.

Read more about Tauondi Aboriginal College and the Indigenous Languages and Arts (ILA) program at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



Image: Mark Catanzariti.  
Photo courtesy Tauondi Aboriginal College.

# Connection to Country, Culture and Languages



## Our Focus for 2026

In 2026, these initiatives will deliver more meaningful jobs on Country, strengthen cultural identity, and support safer, more resilient Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. They will help protect language and culture for future generations, improve community wellbeing through stronger local economies, and ensure First Nations people have greater control in caring for their lands, seas and futures.

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### Expand the Indigenous Rangers Program

The Commonwealth is investing over \$600 million from 2026 to expand the Indigenous Rangers Program to support the existing workforce and double the number of Rangers from 1,900 to 3,800 by 2030. All new projects will have dedicated positions for women rangers, which will see approximately half of the new ranger positions held by First Nations women, bringing us closer to gender parity by the end of the decade. This will ensure language preservation, maintain cultural practices, and support sharing of cultural knowledge across generations, building local resilience, creating meaningful employment, and improved wellbeing through connection to land and identity.

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### Remove ghost nets and other marine debris

Expanding the Ghost Nets Initiative (GNI) supports Indigenous groups to detect, collect, and recycle ghost nets from beaches and coastal areas across northern Australia and the Torres Strait. The \$25 million commitment over 4 years will increase the employment opportunities of the existing program and support First Nations communities to continue to lead on the preservation of sea Country.

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### Support more caring for Country

Eight new IPA consultation projects are expected to be established under the Australian Bushland Program. This will fund Indigenous organisations to undertake Traditional Owner-led consultation activities to determine whether an IPA should be established. It will support First Nations people to exercise self-determination and decision-making over the management of Country.

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### Strengthen languages and Culture

Building on the back of a successful communications campaign to raise the profile of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, the Commonwealth is responding to the 7 national priorities of the Languages Policy Partnership designed to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, and ensuring actions align to the themes of *Voices of Country: Australia's Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022–32*.

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### Lead initiatives for drought resilience

The Future Drought Fund (FDF) will implement the First Nations Advisory Group's advice to embed First Nations insights and priorities into its systems and structures. This includes delivering the Strengthening Drought Resilience on Country grant program and Supporting Participation Activities to increase First Nations participation in FDF programs and initiatives.

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### Boost disaster resilience

A total of 75 remote stores will benefit from an expanded Stores Efficiency and Resilience investment of \$32.7 million over 3 years from 2025-26 to provide place-based solutions ahead of the October to March higher risk weather season.

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**Progress National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Precinct (Ngurra)**

Ngurra will be a nationally significant precinct that will speak to the central place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold in Australia’s story. Ngurra aims to close the widely acknowledged gap among the existing National Cultural Institutions by creating a dedicated place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander storytelling. In 2026, work will progress to build a shared understanding of our past, present and our future, furthering the national narrative of what it means to be an Australian.

**Evaluate the Native Title Act 1993**

The Commonwealth will evaluate changes to the *Native Title Act 1993* made by the *Native Title Legislation Amendment Act 2021*. This evaluation is due to be tabled by mid 2026, and will be informed by feedback from those interacting with the system. The evaluation is an opportunity for the Commonwealth to ensure the 2021 amendments are operating efficiently and as intended, and to identify potential improvements.

**Strengthen biosecurity**

The Indigenous Ranger Biosecurity Program will be delivered to protect Australia’s environment and biosecurity while supporting First Nations peoples connection to Country and way of life. This includes fee-for-service contracts and strengthening First Nations rangers capability through training and knowledge sharing workshops while creating biosecurity employment opportunities through First Nations traineeships.

**Develop a National Framework for disaster resilience**

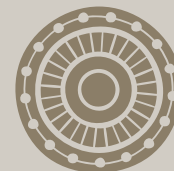
To build capability across the emergency management sector, the Commonwealth will continue to provide support to Monash University’s National Indigenous Disaster Resilience Program to develop a national framework to guide how all governments can appropriately work with First Nations communities before, during and after disasters. The framework is being developed in consultation with state, territory and local governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.

For the full list of 2026 Implementation Plan commitments, refer to Appendix G of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



Image: Jabalbina Rangers work on Country.

## Cross Cutting



The National Agreement also specifically recognises that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is incredibly diverse. By including the commitment that, where available and appropriate, data against targets and outcomes are disaggregated by disability, gender and age to better understand how actions being taken are addressing the needs of these groups, including those who live in remote Australia. Achieving outcomes for these cohorts are critical to achieving the targets and outcomes under the National Agreement.

### Key Achievements for 2025

.....

**Develop mechanisms for better engagement with First Nations people living with disability**

The Commonwealth consulted with First Nations people with disability, peak bodies and community-controlled organisations, and state and territory governments, on a First Nations Disability Forum or other appropriate shared decision-making mechanism to ensure First Nations people living with disability have a stronger voice in policy, program and service design and responses.

The Commonwealth released a Multi-Agency Impact Analysis Group - First Nations Impacts Factsheet to inform and support impact analysis areas across the Commonwealth.

.....

**First Nations Disability Strategy Implementation Plan**

The co-design of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) First Nations Disability Strategy Implementation Plan was completed to ensure First Nations people to have a say in how the Strategy will create change for participants within the NDIS. Implementation to commence in 2026.

.....

**Deliver better care for First Nations Elders and ageing people**

Three Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander assessment organisations with existing experience in delivering aged care needs assessments have been engaged as pilot organisations to provide a culturally safe, trauma aware and healing informed pathway for older First Nations people. Operating across 5 states and territories in metropolitan, regional, remote and very remote areas, the pilots offer increased choice in accessing aged care assessments.

.....

**Better support for First Nations women, girls and gender diverse people**

Implementation of the *National Action Plan for the Health and Wellbeing of LGBTQIA+ People 2025-2035* has commenced with the National Health and Medical Research Council to develop new national clinical practice guidelines for transgender and gender diverse children and adolescents and formal training to improve skills and knowledge to deliver LGBTQIA+ inclusive healthcare. This includes a voluntary accreditation program to help LGBTQIA+ people identify safe and trusted services.

.....

**Improved education outcomes for young people in Central Australia**

The *Better, Safer Future for Central Australia: On-Country Learning* measure is supporting students and their families to engage in education and pathways to employment on-Country. On-Country Learning initiatives support 2-way learning opportunities, foster culturally responsive learning environments, and invite Indigenous language and culture into the day-to-day delivery of curriculum, including through bilingual education programs.

.....

For a full list of 2025 achievements, refer to Appendix F of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap).



## CASE STUDY

### Alec and Bessie Baker – Back on Country

Alec and Angkuna (Bessie) Baker, respected Elders and artists from the APY Lands, are now living closer to family and Country thanks to support from Australian Regional and Remote Community Services (ARRCS) and the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program (NATSIFACP).

Alec and Bessie have spent their lives in Indulkana, raising their family and contributing to their community. Both are artists at the Iwantja Art Centre and hold deep cultural and spiritual responsibilities. Alec, now 93, is a highly respected Elder and spiritual leader. In 2024, Bessie’s health declined, and she was placed in the Old Timers Aged Care Home in Alice Springs – far from her home and community.

Being away from Country was difficult for Bessie and her family. Alec travelled to Alice Springs whenever he could, often staying in respite care to be near his wife.

These visits were emotionally and physically demanding. After discussions with Alec and his family, ARRCS’ Return to Country team supported Bessie to move permanently to the Pukatja Aged Care Home on the APY Lands, where she could live close to family and community.

.....

*“This is our home – coming back to my Country makes my heart happy.”*  
– Bessie

.....

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program (NATSIFACP) funds service providers to deliver flexible, culturally safe aged care to older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people close to their family, Country, island home and community. This model allows providers to adapt services to meet individual and community needs, supporting Elders to remain connected to home and culture.

Read more about Alec and Bessie at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)

*Image: Alec and Bessie at Pukatja Aged Care Home.*



# Cross Cutting



## Our Focus for 2026

Looking ahead for 2026, the Commonwealth will continue to listen to the needs and voices of diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cohorts – people who are living with disability, ageing, gender and sexually diverse, and who live in remote Australia. Action will align with underpinning national strategies, such as *Australia’s Disability Strategy 2021-2031*.

.....

**Build a stronger and more responsive disability sector**

The Commonwealth will work in partnership with First Peoples Disability Network (FPDN) to build capacity within the community-controlled disability sector and foster shared decision-making to improve wellbeing outcomes for First Nations people with disability, consistent with the Disability Sector Strengthening Plan. As a result, it is expected the disability sector will be more inclusive and capable and deliver better supports and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

.....

**Identify enablers and remove barriers relating to gendered experiences in the workplace**

The lack of data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the workforce was a key theme during consultations for the Working for Women program; an initiative aimed at improving gender equality outcomes. In 2026, the Commonwealth will conduct research about opportunities and barriers shaping gendered experiences and inequalities in Australian working life, including a strong emphasis on the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

.....

**Support the Anangu Elders Advisory Group**

Elders from across Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands, also known as the APY Lands, informally came together to discuss their concerns about the delivery of aged care across their communities. Following these discussions, the group wrote to the Commonwealth requesting assistance to formalise the group with the aim to take back control of community aged care delivery services. In 2026, the Commonwealth will continue to support the Anangu Elders Advisory Group to incorporate into an entity, enabling the group to continue to provide advice to Government and providers on culturally safe care, with progress to delivering aged care services in the future.

.....

**Investing in infrastructure**

The Commonwealth’s record investment in roads, rail, port and aviation lays the foundation for improved access to essential services for First Nations Australians, particularly in regional and remote communities. Place-based initiatives, such as the Barkly Regional Deal and the Central Australia Plan, show how community infrastructure can drive sustainable social and economic development. In 2026, this progress will continue, with governments and First Nations communities working together to deliver community infrastructure that supports safe spaces for play, sport, creative expression and cultural connection.

.....

For the full list of 2026 Implementation Plan commitments, refer to Appendix G of the Report at: [www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap](http://www.niaa.gov.au/our-work/closing-gap)



Image: Artist at Barunga Festival 2025.



## Appendix A: Strengthening How We Work

In 2025, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities shared their views on the National Agreement through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Independent Review (the Independent Review). The Independent Review gives voice to First Nations peoples' experiences with the National Agreement and aspirations for future reform and drew on discussions at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Assembly which took place over 3 days in Canberra.

The Independent Review identifies 3 core themes: self-determination, capability uplift for all parties, and the need to strengthen governance systems. The 9 recommendations and 12 findings embed and build on the outcomes of the 2024 Productivity Commission Review of the National Agreement (Productivity Commission Review).

Both reviews show the National Agreement is a landmark framework with strong foundations, an ambitious scope and strong grounding in the 4 Priority Reforms designed to shift the way governments work with First Nations people. They acknowledge promising practices that are making a real difference to the lives of First Nations people while also highlighting implementation gaps and areas where more needs to be done. The need for greater accountability and systemic reform is central to the recommendations of both reviews.

Local, state, territory and Commonwealth governments and the Coalition of Peaks (representing 81 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Bodies), agree the National Agreement is essential to supporting First Nations people thrive, by addressing persistent and systemic inequalities. The challenge now lies in ensuring all parties meet the ambition of the National Agreement through consistent, coordinated and targeted implementation and investment. These reviews provide a clear basis for focusing efforts on actions that will deliver the greatest impact. Appendix D of this report provides an update on the Commonwealth's efforts in response to the 2024 Productivity Commission Review.

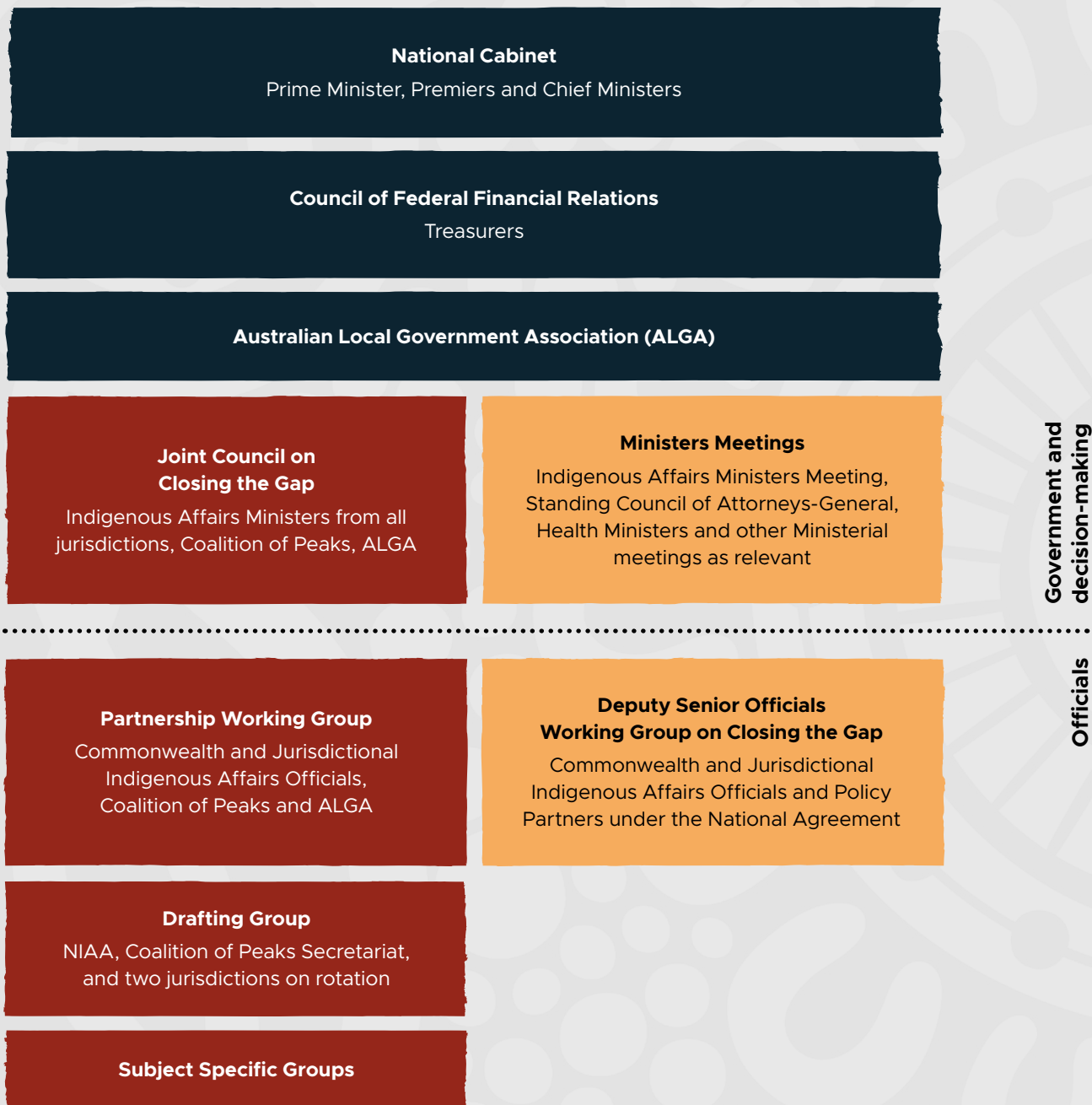


*Image: Weaving at Barunga Festival 2025.*



# Appendix B: Governance

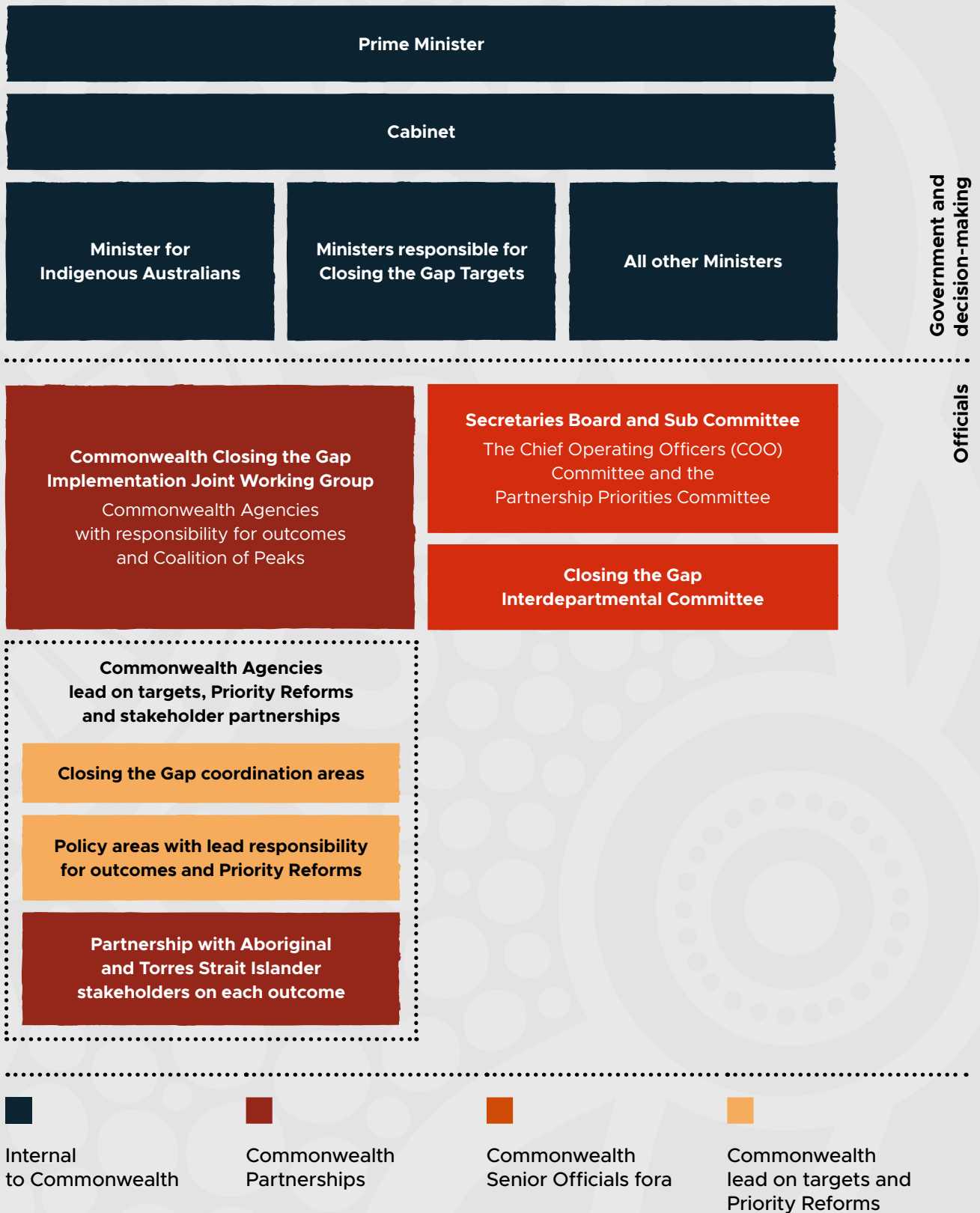
**Figure 1: Closing the Gap Governance**



- All Governments including local government
- Closing the Gap Partnership
- Cross jurisdictional fora on Closing the Gap



**Figure 2: Commonwealth Implementation Governance**



## Appendix C: Progress against Closing the Gap socioeconomic targets (Productivity Commission Dashboard Data)

Progress against Closing the Gap socioeconomic targets is set out below, taken from the Productivity Commission’s Data Dashboard (PC Dashboard). The purpose of the PC Dashboard is to provide the most up-to-date information on Closing the Gap targets and indicators agreed in the National Agreement, where available. For further information on Closing the Gap data, please visit: [www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard/](http://www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard/)

### Legend



Good improvement and on track



Improvement but not on track



No change from baseline










Worsening, not on track



No assessment available

No.	Outcomes	Assessment of progress against socio-economic targets	Progress	Latest update	Latest reporting period
1	<b>Long and healthy lives</b>	Males: Close the Gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031.		6 Mar 24	2020-22
		Females: Close the Gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031.		6 Mar 24	2020-22
2	<b>Children are born healthy and strong</b>	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91%.		12 Mar 25	2022
3	<b>Children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years</b>	By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95%.		30 Jul 25	2024
4	<b>Children thrive in their early years</b>	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55%.		30 Jul 25	2024



No.	Outcomes	Assessment of progress against socio-economic targets	Progress	Latest update	Latest reporting period
5	<b>Students achieve their full learning potential</b>	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20-24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%.		15 Jun 23	2021
6	<b>Students reach their full potential through further education pathways</b>	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%.		15 Jun 23	2021
7	<b>Youth are engaged in employment or education</b>	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%.		15 Jun 23	2021
8	<b>Strong economic participation</b>	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed to 62%.		15 Jun 23	2021
9	<b>Housing</b>	A. By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88%.		15 Jun 23	2021
		B. By 2031, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• within discrete communities receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard</li> <li>• in or near to a town receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town.</li> </ul>		N/A	N/A
10	<b>Criminal Justice</b>	By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15%.		30 Jul 25	2024

## Appendix C: Progress against Closing the Gap socioeconomic targets (Productivity Commission Dashboard Data)

No.	Outcomes	Assessment of progress against socio-economic targets	Progress	Latest update	Latest reporting period
11	<b>Youth Justice</b>	By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by at least 30%.		30 Jul 25	2023-24
12	<b>Child Protection</b>	By 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (0-17 years old) in out-of-home care by 45%.		30 Jul 25	2024
13	<b>Family Safety</b>	By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero.		23 Jun 21	2018-19
14	<b>Social and Emotional Wellbeing</b>	Significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero.		12 Mar 25	2023
15	<b>Land and Waters</b>	A. By 2030, a 15% increase in Australia's landmass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests.		12 Mar 25	2024
		B. By 2030, a 15% increase in areas covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests in the sea.		12 Mar 25	2024
16	<b>Culture and Languages</b>	By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken.		6 Mar 24	2018-19
17	<b>Access to Information</b>	By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion.		30 Jul 25	2022-23



*Image: Student participating in Education Engagement and Attainment Initiatives, 2025.*





Australian Government



CLOSING THE GAP