

Factsheet

National Agreement on  
Closing the Gap  
2020

ANTAR



# National Agreement on Closing the Gap

In July of 2020, a new National Agreement on Closing the Gap<sup>1</sup> was announced between the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations, and all Australian Governments (the Federal, State and Territory governments and the Australian Local Government Association).

The parties have committed to a new way of developing and implementing policies and programs that improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. The objective of the National Agreement is to overcome the entrenched inequalities faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, pushing for equality in life outcomes for all Australians.

This new National Agreement has been developed around four priority reform areas:

- Shared decision making
- Building the community controlled sector
- Improving mainstream institutions
- Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led data

Additionally, the National Agreement has established a broad list of 17 socio-economic targets to focus and monitor the improvements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, compared to the previous Closing the Gap Agreement which was limited to seven targets by 2031.

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<sup>1</sup> [New National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) (2020)

**“The four priority reform areas, including for the first time a commitment to fighting structural racism, are game changers that the government is committing to.”**

Pat Turner AM, CEO of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO)<sup>2</sup>



## **New targets**

**Target 1:** Close the gap in life expectancy within a generation by 2031;

**Target 2:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birth weight to 91%;

**Target 3:** 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%;

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<sup>2</sup> [Closing the Gap National Agreement offers “huge step forward ... if fully implemented”](#)

**Target 4:** By 2031 increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55%;

**Target 5:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (aged 20-24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%;

**Target 6:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%;

**Target 7:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%;

**Target 8:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed to 62%;

**Target 9:** By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88%;

**Target 10:** By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15%;

**Target 11:** By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by at least 30%;

**Target 12:** By 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45%;

**Target 13:** A significant and sustained reduction in violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children towards zero;

**Target 14:** Significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero;

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

**Target 15b:** By 2030, a 15% increase in areas covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples legal rights or interests in the sea;

**Target 16:** By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken.

**Target 17:** People have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives.

**“By July, we expect to see a comprehensive report outlining not only the data, but the governments’ understanding of the data. Most importantly, we expect to hear what governments plan to do about addressing those targets.”**

Close the Gap Campaign Co-Chairs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar AO and National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners CEO Karl Briscoe<sup>3</sup>

## Keeping track of progress

Each government will establish a data development plan for all 17 targets within 2 years of the Agreement commencing. The plan will be developed and agreed upon by all Parties, will prioritise actions over the life-span of the Agreement, outline clear timeframes for actions to be delivered and list who is responsible, and be periodically reviewed. The reporting of target progress will be relative to

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<sup>3</sup> [CLOSE THE GAP: We’re waiting but we will not be left wanting.](#)



non-Indigenous Australians in order to close the gap. National trajectories for each target with a numeric goal will be published on the Closing the Gap website and on the Productivity Commission Dashboard<sup>4</sup>.

Additionally, baseline data from States and Territories will be published on the Closing the Gap website and the Productivity Commission Dashboard, to enable jurisdictional monitoring of progress. The Productivity Commission will publish baseline data for any new targets under this Agreement. If progress is not on track or one of the Productivity Commission's three-yearly reviews indicates that achievement of a target is not on track, Parties have pledged to take action.

The purpose of the Productivity Commission undertaking three-yearly reviews of the Agreement is to provide an analysis of the progress of priority reforms, targets, indicators, trajectories, examine factors contributing to progress, evaluate evidence, and include advice or highlight areas for improvement if applicable. See the National Agreement on Closing the Gap for more detail.<sup>5</sup>

Of significant importance is the acknowledgement of reporting on particularly vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups<sup>6</sup> (Stolen Generation survivors, those with disability and the LGBTQI community) when applicable, to ensure progress can be monitored within these groups.

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<sup>4</sup> [Australian Government Productivity Commission – Closing the Gap](#)

<sup>5</sup> [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Highlights of the New Agreement on Closing the Gap](#)

## Why has this new Agreement been developed?

Reflecting on the previous Closing the Gap Agreement, Pat Turner AM, CEO of NACCHO, said “it’s time governments front up to their failure to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people”.<sup>7</sup>

Former Prime Minister Scott Morrison, said that the new National Agreement has been drafted in light of the accumulated evidence from the past 12 years on the previous Closing the Gap Agreement.

**“[Close the Gap] not showing what we hoped for, clearly we have to do more and we must do things differently ... without true partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, we will hamper our own progress.”**

Former Prime Minister Scott Morrison

## Strengths and ACCHOs

One of the [key strengths](#) within the 2020 National Agreement, is the adoption of a strengths based approach with a partnership that places Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as decision makers, enabling more community-controlled services.

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<sup>7</sup> [NACCHO Aboriginal Health News Alerts](#)

**“First Nations people have waited many years for governments to give us a seat at the decision-making table, and many years for something to be done to address the egregious health inequities our people suffer in our own country.”**

Close the Gap Campaign Co-Chairs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar AO and National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners CEO Karl Briscoe<sup>8</sup>

For the first time<sup>9</sup>, targets include reducing the rates of Indigenous incarceration, children living in out of home care, overcrowded housing, suicide, family violence, and focus on critical strengths regarding connection to Country and language. Working together in genuine partnership is a central commitment of the Federal, State, Territory governments, the Australian Local Government Association and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations. The former Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon. Ken Wyatt AM, said that the National Agreement “demonstrates the government's commitment to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people”.

Pat Turner AM, chair of the Coalition of Peaks, on the day the new National Agreement was launched, stated “today truly is an historic occasion”.<sup>10</sup> The Coalition has 51 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander member organisations that negotiated the National Agreement with all levels of government, after Morrison acknowledged<sup>11</sup> that the previous Closing the Gap strategy failed as it was not led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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<sup>8</sup> [CLOSE THE GAP: We're waiting but we will not be left wanting](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Closing the Gap National Agreement offers “huge step forward ... if fully implemented”](#)

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*



The Coalition of Peaks came together as an act of self-determination, demanding to be formal partners with Australian Governments on Closing the Gap. Members are either National, State or Territory based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak bodies (some independent statutory authorities) with governing boards elected by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities or organisations. Responsibilities of the Coalition of Peaks centre on policies, programs and services that correspond to closing the gap.

**“The Council of Peaks is confident that the National Agreement if fully implemented has the potential to establish a strong policy foundation for what is needed to make a difference.”**

Pat Turner AM, chair of the Coalition of Peaks<sup>12</sup>

Another key strength<sup>13</sup> of the National Agreement is priority reform area 2, building the community-controlled sector which emphasises a strong and sustainable sector delivering high quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.

The agreement places Aboriginal community-controlled organisations at the centre of reform. Aboriginal community-controlled health services (ACCHOs) are organisations initiated and established in local Aboriginal communities, delivering holistic and culturally appropriate health services. ACCHOs are a crucial component in addressing the inequalities faced by First Nations peoples, as they focus on prevention, early intervention, comprehensive care, reducing access barriers and racism, improving individual health outcomes, training medical workforce, employing First Nations peoples, and delivering best practice, culturally safe care.<sup>14</sup> The first ACCHO, the Redfern Aboriginal Medical

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<sup>12</sup> [Closing the Gap National Agreement offers “huge step forward ... if fully implemented”](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Highlights of new National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Aboriginal community controlled health services: leading the way in primary care](#)

Service, celebrated 50 years of service in 2021, and has provided a range of quality healthcare services to the local Aboriginal community since 1971.

## Summary

In summary the National Agreement reflects on the failures of the previous Agreement, and has adopted measures intended to prevent past mistakes.

**“We didn't look at the gap through the eyes of Indigenous Australians, we told Indigenous Australians what the gap was.”**

Former Prime Minister Scott Morrison<sup>15</sup>

It is pleasing, and well overdue, to see a commitment of Governments to genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and organisations. Moreover, with the four priority reform areas and the 17 socio-economic targets, there is genuine hope in efforts to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**“The new Closing the Gap Agreement takes a positive step towards improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.”**

SNAICC Chair, Muriel Bamblett<sup>16</sup>

Overcoming the entrenched inequalities faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is a national priority, and hopefully this Agreement marks the beginning of real, effective and long-term change.

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<sup>15</sup> [Closing the Gap National Agreement offers “huge step forward ... if fully implemented”](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Media release – SNAICC welcomes new National Agreement on Closing the Gap to strengthen outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families](#)

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**With thanks:**

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**ANTAR is proud to acknowledge and pay our respects  
to First Nations Peoples as the traditional owners  
of the lands on which we work across the continent.**

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