



Coalition of Peaks



Important update from Pat Turner Lead Convener of the Coalition of Peaks

I am writing to reassure you that finalising a new National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) with Australian governments remains the number one priority for the Coalition of Peaks.

The Coalition of Peaks think that, now more than ever, a formal agreement needs to be in place between Australian governments and representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations on what steps need to be taken to improve the life outcomes of our people.

I know we are all feeling the impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic on our lives and in our communities. In addition to the immediate health risks we face, the coronavirus has also revealed the significant structural inequalities faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in areas like housing, education, health, employment and widespread poverty.

We also know that we have been able to respond better to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from COVID-19 where we have partnerships with governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives already in place; and where there are strong community controlled organisations and sectors, in areas like health, First Nations media and communications, and land access, that can



quickly support our people in changing environments.

The Coalition of Peaks have adapted to the social distancing requirements and are continuing to meet regularly over the phone and video conference. We have also moved our discussions with governments to phone and video conferences. Our Partnership Working Group meeting is happening later this week and officials from all governments, local government representatives, and Coalition of Peaks members will be negotiating the National Agreement online, from their corners of Australia.

The primary focus of our negotiations are the four Priority Reforms needed to change the way governments work:

1. Establishing formal partnerships between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives across the country on closing the gap;
2. Building and strengthening our community controlled organisations to deliver the services we need;
3. Making sure government institutions and agencies are changing the way they work with us; and
4. Having access to data and information to support us being able to make good decisions about our lives.

The Coalition of Peaks are certain, backed up by what you told us during the community engagements we did in 2019 on the proposed National Agreement, that if Governments implement these Priority Reforms, we will see positive changes to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.

The Coalition of Peaks heard your feedback during the community engagements, and we are bringing the issues you raised to our negotiations with governments. This includes working on changes to the Closing the Gap targets agreed by governments in draft in December 2018, to include issues that go to our health and well being. A detailed report on the engagements is being put together by the Coalition of Peaks and will be made public soon.

It is vital that we have the new National Agreement signed up to by all governments and the Coalition of Peaks as we emerge from the COVID-19 crisis. There will be long term social, economic, health and cultural costs of the pandemic – all areas fundamental to closing the gap, over the next ten years, and we mustn't take a backwards step.



Please take care of yourselves and each other. I know it's a tough time, having to sit at home and not being able to visit country and look after our families in the way we are used to. We need to stick together and not let this virus beat us.

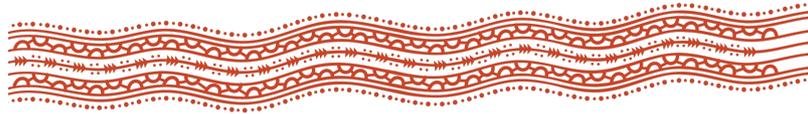
I will keep you updated as the negotiations on the National Agreement progress.



Pat Turner

Lead Convener, Coalition of Peaks

Chief Executive Officer, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation



Coalition of Peaks, 2 Constitution Avenue, Canberra, ACT 2601, Australia

[Unsubscribe](#) [Manage preferences](#)