

National Agreement on Closing the Gap Ongoing Joint Communications Strategy

[Agreed by the Joint Council on Closing the Gap April 2021]

PURPOSE

This Joint Communications Strategy fulfils commitments in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap:

Section 10: ONGOING ENGAGEMENT

132. In order to achieve the objectives of this Agreement, the Parties will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take ownership of this Agreement.

133. The Parties are committed to ongoing engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:

- to build awareness and ownership of the Agreement to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to talk to governments on how to apply the commitments under the Agreement to communities and organisations across the country, and
- when significant changes to this Agreement are proposed.

134. An ongoing joint communications strategy will be developed by the Parties for this purpose, which will be considered by the Joint Council within six months of the commencement of this Agreement.

135. The joint communications strategy will include a central role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media, in particular community-controlled media, including the promotion and distribution of material and information across a range of mediums to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as to other Australians.

136. All communications under the Agreement should be widely accessible and help to preserve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

NATIONAL AGREEMENT PARTNERS

The Parties to the National Agreement and the Joint Communications Strategy are:

- Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Peak Organisations (Coalition of Peaks); and
- Australian Governments:
 - Commonwealth Government
 - Australian Capital Territory Government
 - Queensland Government
 - Victoria Government
 - New South Wales Government
 - South Australia Government
 - Tasmania Government
 - Western Australia Government
 - Northern Territory Government
- Australian Local Government Association

OBJECTIVES

As articulated in the National Agreement, this Strategy is designed to:

- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities to take ownership of and engage in the implementation of the National Agreement (Clause 133a)
- Build awareness and ownership of the Agreement to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in engaging with governments on how to apply the commitments under the National Agreement to communities and organisations across the country (Clause 132 and 133a)
- Provide for a central role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media, in particular community-controlled and community-generated media, that includes the production, promotion and distribution of materials and information across a range of mediums to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as to other Australians (Clause 135)
- Ensure all communications under the National Agreement are accessible and work to preserve the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages (Clause 136)
- Ensure communications are developed and implemented in partnership and with shared ownership between the Coalition of Peaks and Governments (Clause 17a)
- Proactively deliver clear, timely, relevant and accessible information about the Agreement in ways that meet local, place-based needs and interests
- Enhance the trust, credibility, reliability, accountability and reputation of the Agreement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders
- Build the positive reputation of the Agreement by promoting its progress and outcomes to the wider Australian community
- Encourage and promote community-generated content and communications to further education and understanding of Closing the Gap.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND GOVERNANCE

The following principles guide implementation of this Strategy:

- In line with the Agreement Principles (97), the National Agreement will be publicly acknowledged when actions are taken to implement the Agreement's outcomes so that relevant stakeholders and audiences are well informed
- Communication in every form must be easy to use, accessible, clear and understood by all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and other Australians
- Communication must be inclusive, purposeful and timely
- All communications will prioritise authentic voices and appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages
- Place-based approaches and consideration for culturally appropriate communications will be prioritised
- To the extent that the procurement and grant policies of Parties allow, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations will act as the core suppliers, in producing and distributing information relevant to the Agreement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait people and other Australians, their organisations and communities
- Communications activities and decisions will be underpinned by the understanding that demonstrating early action that makes a tangible difference to the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is critical to ownership of the Agreement and its accountability
- All parties acknowledge the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people understanding and taking ownership of the National Agreement is critical to its success.

To ensure success and consistency:

- The Strategy will be agreed by the Joint Council on Closing the Gap and Partnership Working Group will receive updates on key issues in its implementation six-monthly or as needed.
- Each party is responsible for implementing communication actions in line with the Strategy and outlining these as part of Implementation Plans, including reporting on their communication actions as part of their annual reporting on implementation.
- In line with the National Agreement, this Strategy is a dynamic document that will be reviewed and revised as needed to ensure relevancy and best practice.

AUDIENCE

This Strategy has been developed with a primary and secondary audience in focus, including:

- The primary audience for this Strategy are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their organisations and communities
- The secondary audience for this Strategy is the wider Australian community – to improve awareness of the issues and inequalities facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the importance of the National Agreement and its historic partnership approach, and to ensure strong systemic engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

This Strategy involves a wide number of stakeholders, with various responsibilities in relation to disseminating information and circulating key messages.

Broadly this includes:

- Government Parties (Federal, State and Local)
- Coalition of Peaks members, stakeholders and affiliates
- Other community-controlled organisations
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled media organisations
- Other Indigenous media
- Mainstream media – Metro and Regional
- Wider Australian community

Priority order will vary according to communications initiative/message. A core component of this Strategy is that it asks all stakeholders to be actively engaged and contributing for it to be successful.

BUILDING OWNERSHIP THROUGH COMMUNITY-LED CONTENT DEVELOPMENT:

Building understanding, support and ownership from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations of Closing the Gap and the implementation of the National Agreement is best supported by commissioning, encouraging and promoting community-led content.

The below ideas are examples of community-led content to spread key messages of the National Agreement.

- *Logo and content development* – To ensure that communities are participating in the story of Closing the Gap, graphics should primarily be generated and shared by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- *Creative video series* – A competition series that allows for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to educate audiences through videos about what the Priority Reforms and Closing the Gap means to them. A

viral platform could be used to call on communities to participate in a challenge, encouraging young people to engage.

- *Community-controlled interviews or community profiles* – Mainstream and local media could be engaged to host interviews that are community-led. Feature pieces, guided and owned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth, can profile different communities, their families, their friends or community-based activists. This will allow for young people to act as a spokesperson for their community on Closing the Gap or for activists to submit their opinion editorial pieces.
- *Closing the Gap through Art* – Under the #ClosingTheGap hashtag, Government agencies could request Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists to submit art entries that are linked to the importance and implementation of the Priority Reforms. A selection of winners could have their arts displayed in a selected museum. Government-owned organisations, such as the National Gallery of Victoria, can be involved for a short exhibition.
- *Awareness through meaningful social media partnerships* – All collaborators could involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander activists to be involved in live Q&A sessions across social media channels.
- *Digital activation via microsite* – A microsite could act as a central platform for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to showcase their experiences, work and art, including creative writing, illustrations, paintings and other creative pieces, based on the Priority Reforms and their importance. The microsite could be used to showcase the diversity of Indigenous communities, with a focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, their communities and their unique experiences, while also offering resources, such as infographics, to disseminate information to wider Australian audiences.
- *Photojournalism series* – A photography exhibition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and artists could tour local libraries, galleries, museums and university halls, and be housed on interactive social media activations. Collaborators could call on submissions from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander photographers across Australia to showcase aspects of their culture and community that relate to the Priority Reforms, while ensuring agency and ownership.

FOCUS ON THE PRIORITY REFORMS AND PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

A key focus of the Strategy is communication of activities and outcomes of the National Agreement's Priority Reforms. Under the Strategy, communities and community-controlled organisation could be commissioned by governments to tell their own stories of the importance of the Priority Reforms and show their implementation and associated partnership actions in practice.

For example, the implementation of each place-based partnership action – the community data projects and place-based partnerships – could be documented from the communities' and organisations' perspectives over a three-year period. The same story telling model could be adopted for the work and implementation of the sector strengthening plans and the policy partnerships, as well as on the funding for Priority Reform Two.

CENTRAL ROLE FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY CONTROLLED MEDIA

The National Agreement commits that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media, particularly community-controlled media, will have a central role in the delivery of the Strategy. To give effect to this commitment, to the extent that the procurement and grant policies of Parties allow, Parties should undertake direct or limit tenders to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media and communications organisations, including community-controlled organisations, for the development and distribution of content developed under the Strategy.

To provide additional support to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled media, Parties could identify and consider opportunities to undertake promotional activities following Joint Council meetings or significant events related to Closing the Gap. Parties could also identify and consider opportunities to promote their

work to implement the Priority Reforms and their work on the National Agreement through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations.

DIRECT ENGAGEMENTS WITH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

The communications actions alone will not be sufficient to build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take ownership and engage with governments on implementation of the National Agreement. They should be supported by a series of face to face engagements between the Coalition of Peaks, in partnership with governments, and community-controlled organisations and communities. The face to face engagements, occurring in each state and territory, would focus on implementation and implications of the National Agreement to support organisations and communities build confidence in interacting with the National Agreement and understanding about its meaning and implications of the commitments in the National Agreement.

BUILDING AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FROM OTHER AUSTRALIANS

The Strategy is primarily focused on engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the reforms and activities of the National Agreement. However, broader awareness and support from other Australians is also important to ensure that all Australians are supporting Closing the Gap in their own workplaces and lives – to truly close the gap will require support and effort from all Australians. Additional tools and materials may be developed under the Strategy to support this aim.

COMMUNICATIONS ACTIONS

The following sets out key actions that could be undertaken by parties to implement the Strategy, as part of their respective Implementation Plans.

Communication medium	Actions	Responsibility
Commissioning of local content and stories on the Priority Reforms and partnership actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The implementation of each place-based partnership action – the community data projects and place-based partnerships – could be documented from the communities’ and organisations’ perspectives over a three-year period The same story telling model could be adopted for the work and implementation of the sector strengthening plans and the policy partnerships, as well as on the funding for Priority Reform Two 	All – governments to prioritise commissioning community-controlled organisations
Face to face engagements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a series of face to face engagements, in each jurisdiction, with key community-controlled organisations and communities to support their understanding and interaction with the National Agreement 	Lead by the Coalition of Peaks, in partnership with governments
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider developing social media content calendars to plan activity, track movements and ensure that platforms are active Develop a consistent tone and content for social media platforms, when disseminating key messages about the Agreement Develop social media tiles and graphics relevant to milestones and encourage audiences to re-share Use social media channels to engage and encourage feedback from the wider community As mentioned above, social media collaborations with relevant parties could be secured and encouraged across Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn 	All – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations could be engaged as a priority to assist with the development of social media tiles and other graphics
Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All key messages and communications should be housed and easily accessed on the Closing the Gap website Social media channels to encourage website visits Website to act as a key channel for updates, resources and relevant information The National Agreement ‘<i>At A Glance</i>’ tool be incorporated into CoP, Members and relevant Government websites All collaborators could develop landing pages on their respective websites to share information in regards to the National Agreement – through these websites, audiences will be directed to CoP for further information on the Coalition of Peaks 	All

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As outlined in the top line ideas for community-led content, microsites should be developed where appropriate, to house specific information/initiatives 	
Email	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quarterly e-newsletter to stakeholders regarding work and progress under Agreement could be developed 	All
Logo	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of an identifiable Closing the Gap logo for use by all Parties and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations engaged in activities under the National Agreement. Additional branding elements may be commissioned separately to compliment the logo. 	
Productivity Commission Dashboard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The dashboard will be used to provide updates on progress against the Closing the Gap targets, including the Priority Reforms 	
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Media releases by individual Parties are encouraged for key announcements regarding progress on the Priority Reforms and Targets, as well as key milestones In line with the Guiding Principles above, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations could be a primary focus for spreading information In line with the Guiding Principles above, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations could assist with generating widespread media lists and journalist contacts Reactive media opportunities should be identified where possible – existing narratives to be leveraged and linked to current initiatives under the Agreement Case studies could be generated if local community members are involved in a communications initiative describing implementation of the National Agreement, so that the media can accurately represent them 	All – including distribution through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Media
Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider developing annual calendar of events where the Agreement could be profiled, i.e., Garma, conferences, specific celebrations etc Consider developing materials that tell the story of the Agreement and its achievements for use at events, i.e., infographics or leaflets to be shared, including digital versions CoP and Government agencies could offer communication materials promoting the Agreement at relevant events where they have a presence – further, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people could be involved in the creation and design of such products 	All

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider developing an engagement calendar for briefing major stakeholders on progress eg elected representatives and staff of Federal Government, agency heads, business groups, NGO sector etc • Closing the Gap statement and associated activities could include CoP member opportunities for engagement and promotion of progress, i.e., Campfire Yarns series • CoP and relevant Government bodies should work together to create any presentation materials for events, i.e., Powerpoint presentations or videos 	
<p>Communications Materials</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Posters, leaflets, infographics and flyers could be created for distribution, in line with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and community centres to offer language translations • Community service announcement scripts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Media could be developed to use when approaching mainstream and local news • A National Agreement “<i>At a Glance</i>” document could be developed to highlight key actions and milestones 	<p>All</p>

COMMUNICATING MILESTONES

The following sets out suggested communication milestones that Parties could build into their Implementation Plans to provide an opportunity for joint communications.

Milestone	Timeframe	Govt action	CoP action	Comments
Implementing Priority Reforms	Ongoing	<p>Consider publicising commitments to achieving Priority Reforms as made by Govts</p> <p>Engage communities and organisations involved in the implementation of the Priority Reforms to develop stories of their experiences</p> <p>Identify and consider opportunities to regularly promote the implementation of the Priority Reforms through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media</p> <p>Develop Implementation Tracker to enable easy identification of progress.</p>	<p>Consider informing organisations about the Priority Reforms and associated government commitments</p> <p>Promote demonstration of the Priority Reforms in practice</p>	<p>The promotion of the implementation of the Priority Reforms is the key focus of all communications</p> <p>Priority Reform 2 received strongest support in community engagements</p> <p>Development of community data projects and identifying locations for place-based partnerships</p>
Target development Target progress	<p>Early 2021</p> <p>As required (at least annually for each target area)</p>	<p>Consider follow up media through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations – op ed, radio, social media</p>	<p>CoP members will develop joint communications plan with Govt to demonstrate progress under targets</p>	<p>Family Violence and Access to Information Targets to be announced</p> <p>Inland waters and Community Infrastructure Targets to be developed and announced</p>
Implementation Plans	Annually from 2022	<p>Publish annual reports with clear implementation tracking to enable easy identification of progress</p> <p>Publication on Closing the Gap website and jurisdictional websites</p>	<p>Publication on Coalition of Peaks website</p> <p>Promote Implementation plan and milestone achievement through a range of media</p>	<p>Report progress as part of public annual reports on implementation plans</p>

		Promote implementation plans and milestone achievements through a range of media		
Joint Council meetings	Biannual	<p>Communique for each, published on Closing the Gap website and jurisdictional websites</p> <p>Promote on social media</p> <p>Suggested that Parties do follow up media through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations</p>	<p>Publish Communique on website</p> <p>Photos and key points on social media</p>	
Productivity Commission Dashboard	At least annually	Includes updates for media reporting on website		
Annual reports and tabling in Parliament (including any statements)	Annual	Consider follow up media through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations – op ed, radio, social media	<p>Publish on Coalition of Peaks website and promote through social media</p> <p>Provide media briefings outlining progress and challenges</p> <p>Annual update for CoP member organisation Boards and membership</p>	
Productivity Commission Review	Triennial	Promote outcomes of review and Joint Council response	Promote outcomes of review and Joint Council response	Complements the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led review.
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander-led review	Triennial (post PC)	<p>Consider developing promotion activities through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media</p> <p>Update on Closing the Gap and government websites</p>	<p>Engagement opportunities promoted by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations</p> <p>Report to be published on Coalition of Peaks website</p>	Within twelve months of Productivity Commission reviews



Response by Joint Council to reviews		Consider follow up media through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations – op ed, radio, social media	Develop a set of key messages/actions/issues/highlights and promote through media	
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RESOURCES AND PRODUCTS

Governments will develop communication actions in line with the Strategy in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks and outline these as part of Implementation Plans, including reporting on their communication actions as part of their annual reporting on implementation.

Development and distribution of resources and communication products to support the communication actions and activities, to the extent that the procurement and grant policies of Parties allow, will include a central role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media organisations.

The Coalition of Peaks will develop additional resources specific to their memberships and communities.

All resources will be (co) branded under the Closing the Gap logo.

Resources and communication products should be available on each Parties' websites.

Parties are encouraged to share materials with each other, for on use or learnings for their own communication products. Parties are also encouraged to share communications products across platforms and cross promote on CoP members and Government social media whenever possible.

ENSURING SUCCESS – RESOURCING AND REPORTING

To ensure a successful implementation of the Strategy, CoP and Government Parties must contribute to its roll-out, monitoring and assessment. In particular:

- Implementing the communication actions will require resourcing from governments
- Updates on key issues with implementation of the Strategy will be provided to PWG six-monthly or as required.
- All Parties will report on communication actions as part of their annual Implementation updates, and contribute to the six monthly discussion at the Partnership Working Group on progress.
- This Strategy is a living document that is routinely reviewed and adjusted, when necessary, to take into account new opportunities for development and delivery.

To ensure and measure success of this Joint Communications Strategy, Parties are encouraged to:

- Involve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relevant meetings and feedback sessions
- Track and analyse general feedback from audiences and the wider community, using these to further communications tactics
- Record media mentions/interviews regarding the National Agreement, with significant media movements to be advised in advance to all Parties so that departments can properly prepare
- Identify recognition and acceptance of the National Agreement among stakeholders through surveys, in meeting feedback and anecdotally
- Measure website hits and traffic through website data and analytics
- Specific market research may also be undertaken as part of evaluating specific priority actions under the National Agreement
- Record overall communications activities as part of Joint Council papers and communique.



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