

Fifth Meeting of the Joint Council on Closing the Gap

16 April 2021, Communiqué

The Joint Council acknowledged the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the many lands, waters and rivers that members joined from, and paid their respects to Elders past and present. The previous meeting was held on 17 November 2020 by Telepresence.

The Joint Council acknowledged the 30th anniversary of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and noted that joined up work between all governments in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives is critical to reducing the rate at which Indigenous people are incarcerated, and thereby reduce deaths in custody. Given the urgency and enduring nature of this issue, the Joint Council agreed to the high priority of accelerating the critical work to establish a **policy partnership on justice** with the aim of reducing youth and adult incarceration.

The Joint Council considered the **impact of Covid-19** on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Joint Council noted the success of the partnership approach between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and governments in responding to the pandemic. The success of community-controlled organisations in responding to the pandemic provides a strong platform to meet the commitment in the National Agreement to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can recover as fast as other Australians from natural disasters and pandemics.

The Joint Council noted the first annual **Partnership Health Check** Report and agreed a response to its recommendations. The Partnership Health Check reflects the commitment of all Parties to put in place actions and formal checks over the life of the historic 10-year Partnership Agreement to ensure an effective partnership. The Joint Council's response acknowledges the important leadership role of the Coalition of Peaks in bringing forward policy proposals for consideration and commits the Parties to strengthened shared decision-making processes to support the implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. This includes revisions to the **Joint Council Terms of Reference** and development of a **Risk Register**. Joint Council agreed in principle to publication of the Partnership Health Check Report, Joint Council Response, Risk Register and revised Joint Council Terms of Reference on the Closing the Gap website, subject to final feedback from jurisdictions.

The Joint Council is pleased to release a **Joint Communications Strategy**. This will support engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to build their awareness of the National Agreement and to assist them to talk to governments about how its commitments apply to communities and organisations across the country. The Strategy includes a central role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled media for the promotion and distribution of material and information. Jurisdictions will determine their resourcing allocations to support the Strategy and reflect this in their implementation plans. One of the first deliverables under the Strategy will be the development of a **new logo for Closing the Gap**.

The Joint Council also endorsed updates to the **Strategic Plan for Funding the Development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Sector** to include

investment priorities for the Health and Disability Sectors. The investment priorities are at Attachment A. Further details can be found in the Strategic Plan on the Closing the Gap website.

The Joint Council agreed to extend the deadline for the development of **Sector Strengthening Plans** and **Place-Based Partnerships** to allow more time for community and organisation engagement and further project design of the place-based partnerships. The locations for place-based partnerships and the Sector Strengthening Plans for the Health and Early Childhood Care and Development sectors will now be due for Joint Council consideration in November 2021. The Sector Strengthening Plans for the Housing and Disability sectors will be considered by Joint Council in April 2022. While Joint Council recognises the urgency in progressing these commitments, Members are committed to ensuring they are developed in full partnership with the Coalition of Peaks and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities.

Under Priority Reform Four of the National Agreement, **Community Data Projects** will be established in up to six locations across Australia to enable communities and organisations to access and use location-specific data on the Closing the Gap outcome areas. The Joint Council noted that the first two sites have now been agreed between the relevant State government and the jurisdictional peaks in partnership. They are Western Sydney and the Kimberley region.

The Joint Council noted all Parties will deliver their **Implementation Plans** to achieve the National Agreement's objectives and commitments ahead of the July Joint Council meeting. All Parties will publish their Implementation Plans as soon as possible after the meeting.

Finally, the Joint Council noted the Prime Minister, all Premiers, Chief Ministers, the President of the Australian Local Government Association, and the Lead Convenor of the Coalition of Peaks have now confirmed an amendment to the National Agreement to reflect a revised **Family Violence target** and new **Access to Information target**. The two targets agreed by the Coalition of Peaks and First Ministers are as follows, and are now incorporated into the National Agreement on the Closing the Gap website:

- *Family Violence – 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.*
- *Access to Information – By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion.*

Members attending

Member	Representing
The Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP (Co-Chair)	Commonwealth
Pat Turner AM (Co-Chair)	Coalition of Peaks
Muriel Bamblett AO	Coalition of Peaks
Jamie Lowe	Coalition of Peaks
James Christian	Coalition of Peaks
Esme Bamblett	Coalition of Peaks
Vicki O'Donnell	Coalition of Peaks
David Warrener	Coalition of Peaks
Katrina Fanning PSM	Coalition of Peaks
John Paterson	Coalition of Peaks
Scott Wilson	Coalition of Peaks
Wynetta Dewis	Coalition of Peaks
Priscilla Atkins	Coalition of Peaks
Hon Don Harwin MLC	New South Wales
Gabrielle Williams MP	Victoria
The Hon Craig Crawford MP	Queensland
The Hon Stephen Dawson MLC	Western Australia
The Michelle Lensink MLC (representing the Hon Steven Marshall MP)	South Australia
Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA	Australian Capital Territory
The Hon Selena Uibo MLA	Northern Territory
Mayor Tracy Roberts	Australian Local Government Association
NACCHO	
Donnella Mills	NACCHO Chair
Apologies	
The Hon Roger Jaensch (due to caretaker government)	Tasmania
Cindy Berwick	Coalition of Peaks

Attachment A

Health:

- Increase the capacity of the sector to provide comprehensive services, particularly in regional and remote areas, and having regard to the impact of the pandemic; in particular, targeted investment in the ICT (computers, software and digital clinical equipment) of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Organisations in order to enable and expand telehealth services.
- Support the sector's engagement in and implementation of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework and Implementation Plan 2021-2031 including specific consideration of clinical and non-clinical workforce areas of high demand and need in regional, rural and remote areas (such as drug and alcohol, mental health, aged care, nursing, midwifery, and antenatal and maternal health) and supporting emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders.

Disability:

- Build the capacity of the national peak body and other peaks to influence policy and build the sector at a national and jurisdictional level, including to engage across sectors particularly in health, early childhood and housing, to respond to the needs of First Nations people with disabilities.
- Build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to deliver a full range of culturally responsive disability support services that achieve much greater social and economic participation of First Nations people with disabilities.
- Grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disability workforce and improve training and professional development for workers.
- Support the capacity of the national peak body and other peaks to engage with governments to develop a dedicated, reliable and secure national funding model for Aboriginal community-controlled disability services to ensure Aboriginal people with disability are supported to participate in daily life.