



Coalition  
of Peaks



CLOSING THE GAP

# Annual Report 2022-23



# Acknowledgement of Country

The Coalition of Peaks acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the Traditional Owners of the lands where we live, where we work, and across Australia. We recognise and pay respect to Elders past and present.

Always was, Always will be.

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

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This Annual Report covers the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. While the period of July and August 2022 were covered in the Coalition's first annual report, these months have been duplicated in this report to allow the reporting of a full financial year.

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# Foreword

**Our priority focus this year has been embedding the four Priority Reforms of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) into the way government works and makes decisions.**

The Priority Reforms were developed through one of the most extensive, Aboriginal-led, national engagements with our people, and were informed by what Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities have been saying for decades is needed to help improve our life outcomes and keep our cultures strong.

The work has been hard going. It has involved many meetings with governments to build understanding across the public service and ministers, their obligations and commitments under the National Agreement. We have worked to set up new structures and processes that help ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country can work in partnership with governments and have a share in decisions with a significant impact on our peoples' lives for years to come.

Change to the way government works takes time, but it is happening much slower than anticipated in the National Agreement, and much slower than our people need. Governments are already behind on several commitments, and some actions have been addressed in such a cursory way that they have not led to any genuine change.

In the wake of the referendum outcome and the slow progress to implement the National Agreement, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need bold and decisive action. Governments need to mobilise all the resources and opportunities available to them to implement the National Agreement in full and without delay.

Upcoming budgets should set out new investment to support the needs and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, delivered through our own community organisations; and equitable share, based on need, of big mainstream funding intergovernmental agreements and arrangements should be allocated to Closing the Gap.

At the same time, governments need to establish more genuine shared decision-making partnerships, including at the regional and community level, so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be properly heard, and make decisions with government on the policies and programs that have a significant impact on our lives.

The Coalition of Peaks remain unwavering in our commitment to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and in our belief that we need to work in partnership with governments to bring about genuine and lasting change. We look forward to seeing the tangible benefits for our people delivered as a result of our work with governments in 2023.



**Patricia Turner**  
**Lead Convener, Coalition of Peaks**  
CEO, National Aboriginal Community  
Controlled Health Organisation

PART 1

# The Coalition of Peaks

Dion Everett -  
The stillness of  
Country

# About us

## The formation of the Coalition of Peaks is an act of self-determination.

The Coalition of Peaks came together to provide legitimate community-controlled representation to change the way Australian governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We are more than 80 Peak organisations, representing some 800 organisations, working in collaboration to negotiate and agree with governments on a new approach to Closing the Gap. As a community-controlled structure, the Coalition of Peaks is accountable only to its membership and communities, not governments.

We gain authority from our extensive membership base of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, with their generations of action to advance the interests of, and deliver services to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should share decision-making with governments on policies and programs, positively impacting our lives through formal partnerships with all levels of Australian governments, because we know how to best advance our lives.

## Goals

The Coalition of Peaks brings together the voices, expertise and experiences of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sectors and provides legitimate community-controlled representation to the partnership with Australian governments on Closing the Gap, to improve the life outcomes of our people by:

- sharing decisions with governments on policies and programs impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- protecting and promoting the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as First Peoples of Australia, with distinct cultures and languages, as part of Closing the Gap
- ensuring the shared decisions with governments are informed by the needs and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, community-controlled organisations and peoples
- driving increased accountability of all governments with regards to the commitments in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

## Objectives

- 1 Change the way Australian governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities on Closing the Gap through partnerships based on our right to self-determination, shared decision-making and equal participation.
- 2 Strengthen and build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector, to provide a greater proportion of services to our people.
- 3 Pursue the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities to have access to all relevant data and information.

# Coalition of Peaks membership

**80+**

Peak organisations representing...

**800+**

organisations who provide services to...

**550,000+**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

The Coalition of Peaks includes representation from many national, state, and territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak organisations. Peaks Members and their member organisations have worked with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, communities, families, and people, and have represented them on issues important to our people for decades.

Coalition of Peaks membership has grown and so has the strength of the organisation, with many experienced leaders stepping up when required under the National Agreement, going beyond their everyday roles.

The Coalition of Peaks leads by example by demonstrating its commitment to sharing decision-making and respectful engagement. The Coalition of Peaks governance model brings Peaks Members together to discuss, debate, and agree shared policy positions and priorities. To achieve this, the Lead Convener chairs fortnightly meetings that are open to all Peaks Members.

This strong internal governance means the Coalition of Peaks can better represent the views of Peaks Members and their communities in partnership activities with governments. The Peaks Members appoint a Lead Convener and Deputy Lead Convenors to oversee the operations of the Coalition of Peaks.

## Lead Convener

Pat is the daughter of an Arrernte man and a Gurdanji woman and was raised in Alice Springs. As CEO of NACCHO, she is at the forefront of community efforts to Close the Gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Pat has over 40 years of experience in senior leadership positions in government, business, and academia, including being the only Aboriginal person and longest-serving CEO of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Commission (ATSIC).

## Deputy Lead Convenors

The Coalition of Peaks members appointed two Deputy Lead Convenors, Catherine Liddle and Scott Wilson, for two-year terms to assist the Lead Convener to undertake duties in supporting collective decision-making by members.



**Catherine Liddle**  
**Chief Executive Officer, SNAICC –  
National Voice for our Children**

An Arrernte/Luritja woman from Central Australia, Catherine has been a leading advocate in upholding the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at national, regional and local levels.

Catherine has held senior management positions in First Nations organisations, including First Nations Media and Jawun Indigenous Corporate Partnerships, as well as within the Northern Territory Education Department, the ABC and NITV/SBS.

A journalist by trade, Catherine’s motivation has always been to drive change that leads to positive outcomes and options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Over the past 10 years, she has led multidisciplinary teams, overseen workplace transformations and advocated for policy reform. Catherine is the CEO for SNAICC – National Voice for our Children, the national non-governmental peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, working for the fulfilment of the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, in particular, to ensure their safety, development and wellbeing.



**Scott Wilson**  
**Chief Executive Officer, Aboriginal Drug  
& Alcohol Council (South Australia)**

Scott Wilson is a well-respected Aboriginal leader and CEO of the Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (South Australia) for over 30 years. He is also an Adjunct Professor in the Public Health Centre for Alcohol Policy Research School of Psychology and Public Health at La Trobe University.

His other past leadership roles include the Deputy Chair of both the National Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Committee and the Foundation for Alcohol Research & Education.

Scott’s personal and professional experience in substance misuse has made him a valued member of nearly every major governmental and non-governmental committee in Australia for more than 30 years. He has received several awards, including the Australian Centenary Medal and the Sister Alison Bush Award from the University of Sydney.

Scott is also the Lead Convener of the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON) since 2019 and represents the specific needs of the SA Aboriginal community.

Scott is also the Lead Convenor for the International Indigenous Drug Policy Alliance which tries to ensure that Indigenous voices are heard at international forums such as the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs.

## **Support for the Coalition of Peaks**

The Coalition of Peaks are supported by a Policy and Secretariat Team (Peaks Secretariat) made up of majority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across the nation. Each member of the Secretariat brings their own lived experience and policy expertise, and as a collective are unwavering in their support of Peaks Members and the National Agreement.

## **Guide for new members**

During the year in addition to their regular business, the Peaks Secretariat progressed development of the Membership guide intended to help new Peak members understand how the Coalition of Peaks operates and how we can all work together to drive action on the National Agreement. The guide includes:

- a background to who we are and what we do
- information about how and when we meet
- our expectations of members
- getting the most out of membership
- who to contact for help.

## **Recruitment guide**

The Peaks Secretariat also developed a recruitment guide that provides information on recruitment practices Peaks Members could use to support building their workforce. These practices include:

- secondments
- advertisements
- interviews
- referee reports.

## **List of members**

### **National Members**

- Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
- Australian Indigenous Psychologists Association
- Alliance of First Nations' Independent Education & Training Providers
- Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives
- First Languages Australia
- First Nations Media Australia
- First Peoples Disability Network
- Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia Limited
- Indigenous Allied Health Australia
- Lowitja Institute
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council (NATSIAACC)
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Council (NATSIEC)
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services
- National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners
- National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services Forum
- National Native Title Council
- SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children
- The Healing Foundation

### **Members in the Northern Territory**

- **Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APO NT)**
- Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory
- Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT
- Anindilyakwa Land Council
- Central Land Council
- North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency
- Northern Land Council
- Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network
- Tiwi Land Council

### Member in Tasmania

- Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre

### Members in New South Wales

- **NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peaks (NSW CAPO)**
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- NSW / ACT Aboriginal Legal Services
- LinkUp NSW
- NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group
- NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council
- NSW Child, Family and Community Peak Aboriginal Corporation (AbSec)
- BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation

### Members in Victoria

- **Ngaweeyan Maar-oo**
- Aboriginal Community Elders Service
- Aboriginal Housing Victoria
- Federation of Victorian Traditional Owners Corporations
- Koorie Youth Council
- Loddon Mallee Aboriginal Reference Group
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd
- Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Victorian Aborigines Advancement League

### Members in Queensland

- **Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition (QATSIC)**
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (Qld) Ltd
- Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council
- Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Limited
- Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Services

### Members in South Australia

- **South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON)**
- Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council
- Aboriginal Family Support Services
- Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia
- Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement
- Aboriginal Sobriety Group
- Family Violence Legal Services Aboriginal Corporation
- First Nations of South Australia Aboriginal Corporation
- InComPro
- KWY Aboriginal Corporation
- Kura Yerlo
- Mobile Language Team – University of Adelaide
- Narungga Nation Aboriginal Corporation
- Ngarrindjeri Ruwe Empowered Communities
- Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council
- Nunga Mi:Minar
- Nunkuwarrin Yunti
- Nunyara Aboriginal Health Service
- Pangula Mannamurna Aboriginal Corporation
- Port Lincoln Aboriginal Health Service
- South Australian Native Title Services
- South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council
- South Australian Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation
- Tauondi Aboriginal College

### Member in Western Australia

- Aboriginal Health Council Western Australia
- Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia (CASWA)

### Member in the Australian Capital Territory

- ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body

PART 2

# Activities

Seleena Blackley -  
Ingki-ingki (basket dilly-  
bag), Kalkutungu Country

# Partnership activities

**During the year, the Coalition of Peaks has continued its role in paving the way for communities to engage with governments, value-adding to national policy through collaboration and delivering a unique level of engagement.**

The Coalition of Peaks Policy and Secretariat Team focused their efforts on supporting members to put forward the Coalition of Peaks positions at Joint Council, Partnership Working Group and associated working groups. The Team also promoted the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and what it means for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

In 2022–2023, Joint Council meetings were held:

- in Tarntanya–Adelaide in August 2022
- on Gadigal Land in Sydney in December 2022
- in Gulmmerogin/Garramilla–Darwin in June 2023.

Each Joint Council meeting is an opportunity for the Coalition of Peaks to engage in the shared decision-making centred in the National Agreement and progress a work plan that covers all Priority Reform areas.

## Partnership Health Check Interim Report

The Partnership Health Check is a regular deliverable that was instituted under the terms of the Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap. The purpose of the Health Check is to assess the Partnership against the agreed partnership success indicators, focused on the principles of shared decision-making, equal participation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agency.

In 2022–23, Coalition of Peaks members actively participated in the annual Partnership Health Check. The Joint Council considered findings within the interim report in June 2023, in preparation for the upcoming Health Check Report to be presented to the Joint Council in 2024.



Pat Lead Convenor, Coalition of Peaks and the host of the August 2023 Partnership Working Group, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnership, the Hon Leeanne Enoch MP.

# Communication and engagement

The Coalition of Peaks has focused on communication and engagement activities during the year, aimed at building awareness of the National Agreement within communities.

These activities support the implementation of the Joint Communications Strategy. The Strategy fulfills the ongoing engagement commitments within the National Agreement, particularly Clauses 132–136.

## New website

Enhanced useability was the focus of the Coalition of Peaks website rejuvenation during the year, following its initial development and publication in 2020.

The new website is easier to use for both visitors to the site and those responsible for its administration. Peak Members also have the opportunity to promote the important work of the Coalition of Peaks.

## Garma 2022

In August 2022, as part of a contingent from the Coalition of Peaks membership to the Garma Festival, we were fortunate to visit Gulkula, a ceremonial site on the ancestral land of the Gumatj, on Yolungu Country.

We enjoyed connecting with the community, yarning about the work we do to implement the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and hearing from our people in the community controlled sector about what they need.

## Barunga Festival 2023

In June 2023, we partnered with the Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APO NT) to engage with over 4,000 community members and visitors at the annual Barunga Festival. Members of the Secretariat team, along with representatives from APO NT, held a stall and spoke to Festival attendees about the ways the National Agreement on Closing the Gap works for our people, organisations and communities.



From left to right: Hope Davison, NT Minister Selena Uibo MLA and Bianca Brim.

## Social media statistics

		CHANGE TO 2021-22
Media releases published	11	
Mentions during the year	2.98k	+159%
Facebook followers	2,172	+35%
X (Twitter) followers	1,793	+19.5%
Instagram followers	1,643	+35%

## Social media activity

Social media formed an integral part of our communication strategy during the year, delivering proactive and engaging initiatives.

**During the year, the Secretariat Team developed a social media carousel about the Priority Reforms in the National Agreement.**

Ten slides will be translated into six Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, Yumplatok (Torres Strait Creole), Pitjantjatjara, Warlpiri, Eastern Arrernte, Djambarrpuyngu and Top End Kriol for increased engagement and awareness of the National Agreement.

The videos were rolled out each week commencing in February 2023. The content included:

- providing background information for context
- an overview of the four Priority Reforms
- how the National Agreement is different previous Closing the Gap endeavours
- a focus on the members and their hopes for the partnership.

PART 3

# National Agreement progress

Elliott Meehan -  
Scar Tree Sunset,  
Cessnock

# Formal partnerships and decision-making

**Outcome** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are empowered to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap through formal partnership arrangements.

**Target** There will be formal partnership arrangements to support Closing the Gap in place between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments in each state and territory enshrining agreed joint decision-making roles and responsibilities, and where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have chosen their own representatives.

Priority Reform 1 reflects a recognition of, and desire for, full, genuine partnerships that enable better policy and practice and improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Strong partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and government have the potential to deliver transformative change. Best practice approaches involve partnership and engagement models that are flexible, built on trust and transparency and enact shared decision-making with all stakeholders.

## Policy and place-based partnerships

According to the National Agreement (Clause 3), the purpose of formal policy partnerships and place-based partnerships is to:

- drive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led outcomes on Closing the Gap
- enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, communities and organisations to negotiate and implement agreements with governments to implement all Priority Reforms and policy-specific, and place-based strategies to support Closing the Gap

- support additional community-led development initiatives bring together all government parties together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, organisations and communities to the collective task of Closing the Gap.

## Policy partnerships

The National Agreement commits to five policy partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak bodies and representatives, the Commonwealth government, and state and territory governments. Policy partnerships are a critical component of shared decision-making and are integral to the implementation of the National Agreement.

All five policy partnerships are now established:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages
- Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB)
- Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD)
- Housing
- Justice.

A significant amount of work has progressed despite some of the policy partnerships being in their early stages of establishment. Each policy partnership has met, determined key priorities, and commenced strategic planning to address these. We are seeing a maturing approach to the way the policy partnerships operate and embrace change, to reflect genuine partnership and shared decision-making.

Importantly, there is an opportunity for policy partnerships to work closely together, and the Peaks continue to focus on their interconnected objectives as part of its broader work. Since the establishment of the policy partnerships, the significant connection across their work has become evident. For example, safe, secure and stable housing impacts on health and wellbeing, education, employment and justice outcomes.

Given this interconnectedness, the work of the policy partnerships must undertaken more strategically, including coordinated support to resolve challenges relevant to all partnerships. This will continue to be a key area of work for the Coalition of Peaks.

Experiences with government partners have been variable, and, overall, there is a need to focus on strong action in the partnerships, especially at jurisdictional levels, as a matter of urgency. The Peaks welcome the opportunity to strengthen the policy partnerships, enabling continued improvement and driving tangible outcomes for our people.

**In the period between September 2022 and June 2023, two partnerships, ECCD and SEWB, were established.**

## **Policy partnerships update**

### **Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) policy partnership**

The ECCD policy partnership focuses on actions to accelerate progress towards socio-economic outcomes 2, 3, 4, 12 and 13 of the National Agreement. The partnership met in:

- November 2022
- March 2023
- June 2023.

Over these three meetings, the ECCD policy partnership has agreed to its first-year priorities and work plan, including next steps for the six early opportunities identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members at its inaugural meeting.

The early opportunities include:

- better coordination of service delivery
- developing and progressing appropriate funding models
- integrating parallel initiatives into the ECCD policy partnership work plan, to better support holistic models of support and care for children.

The ECCD policy partnership has undertaken significant work to progress its year one priorities including:

- commissioning development of funding model options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations, early childhood education and care services
- progressing the establishment of a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People through collective workshops with the ECCD policy partnership and Safe and Supported governance members

- commissioning independent research on hours of access to early childhood education and care
- building the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led evidence base on models of child and family support.

Additionally, the ECCD policy partnership has worked on bedding down and strengthening shared decision-making processes and mechanisms. The ECCD policy partnership has also commissioned a probity framework and advice on commissioning, under the National Agreement.

### **Social Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) policy partnership**

The Social Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) policy partnership focuses on actions to accelerate progress towards socio-economic outcome 14 of the National Agreement. At the August 2022 Joint Council meeting, the SEWB policy partnership was endorsed, with its focus on social and emotional wellbeing, mental health and suicide prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Given its focus on holistic approaches, the SEWB policy partnership will also cover:

- prevention
- protective factors
- support after suicide.

The SEWB policy partnership had their first meeting in March 2023 on Kurna Country. During 2023, members formed a small working group to focus on:

- progressing the refresh of the National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing
- developing an associated implementation plan
- progressing the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration
- the refreshed National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy.

### **Justice Policy Partnership**

The Justice Policy Partnership was established in 2021 as the first Closing the Gap national policy partnership, in recognition of the urgent need to address the serious and worsening rates of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults and children in custodial settings, (socio-economic outcomes 10 and 11).

Concerningly, Target 10 is one of four targets not on track to be met and is worsening.

While Target 11 is currently on track to meet the minimum level required (a reduction in youth incarceration rates of at least 30%), continued efforts are needed to sustain this downward trajectory and prevent any signs of backsliding.

With rates of over-incarceration continuing to increase, we need all governments to redouble efforts and commit to meaningful actions, transforming the way police engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This necessitates urgent and ambitious measures by all levels of government to drive transformational change across justice systems.

In June 2023, the Justice policy partnership finalised its strategic framework, which establishes an ambitious national reform agenda to transform the way justice systems work for, and not against, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Justice policy partnership strategic framework reconfirms that focusing on socio-economic targets in isolation of the Priority Reforms will not achieve sustainable change. This means embedding shared decision-making, eliminating racism and establishing accountability. Accordingly, the framework is built around four key pillars:

- Transforming justice systems
- Partnerships and accountability
- Community-led change
- Holistic and inclusive approaches.



## Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages policy partnership

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages policy partnership focuses on issues and actions to accelerate progress towards Outcome 16 of the National Agreement. The Partnership met for the first time in March 2023 in nipaluna (Hobart).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members discussed their priorities for the future of our languages, and government members presented actions to support the languages within their jurisdictions.

The Languages policy partnership agreed on one and three-year goals, with a list of priorities to progress to future meetings, including a focus on improving data on languages.

## Housing policy partnership

The Housing policy partnership is committed to addressing issues to accelerate progress towards Outcome 9 of the National Agreement. The Housing policy partnership is focused on gaining a better understanding of the impacts within communities and navigating the work already underway across government, including establishing priorities and an agreed work plan.

An induction of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties was held in May 2023, with the inaugural policy partnership meeting held in Canberra in August 2023.

## Induction workshop to foster connection

In August 2022, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties of the ECCD, SEWB and Justice policy partnerships came together at an induction workshop hosted by the Peaks Secretariat, providing an opportunity to discuss priorities and desired outcomes.

## Place-based partnerships

Governments have a long history of doing place-based work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Not all place-based work in the past has been successful, or positive for communities. What's different about the place-based partnerships under the National Agreement is:

- Decision-making will be shared between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments.
- Long-term community development will be the underlying principle of the partnerships, meaning they are holistic, responsive to community aspirations and local priorities, and sustainable.
- Partnerships will track implementation of all aspects of Closing the Gap in the chosen locations, to demonstrate the practical impacts of the National Agreement on the ground.

Place-based partnerships are an act of self-determination that bring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities together with governments to share decision-making, drive community-led outcomes, and support community-led development initiatives. They strengthen and restore community governance and cultural authority to support holistic and sustainable community development.

Governments must provide adequate funding to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties to be equal partners in place-based partnerships to be successful.

Current place-based partnership locations are:

- Tamworth (NSW)
- Maningrida and Homelands (NT)
- Gippsland (VIC)
- Doomadgee (QLD)
- East Kimberley (WA)
- Western Suburbs of Adelaide (SA).

# Building the community-controlled sector

**Outcome** There is a strong and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector delivering high quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.

**Target** Increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations (ACCOs).

Under Priority Reform 2, Parties acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services are better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, achieve better results, employ more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and are often preferred over mainstream services.

ACCOs support our people’s self-determination, strengthen cultural connections and genuinely care for their communities. Our ACCOs are strong in some sectors and others need development. A strong sector has dedicated jobs and training, protected funding and shared knowledge about to deliver good services. Clause 49 of the National Agreement commits Parties to a joint national strengthening effort through sector strengthening plans.

In 2022, Joint Council had agreed in principle to the ECCD, Health, Housing, and Disability sector strengthening plans to be implemented over the next three years. The sector strengthening plans are a tangible outcome of when governments work in genuine partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-control sectors.

## Work on Priority Reform 2 partnership actions

Under Clause 55 of the National Agreement Parties commit to increasing the proportion of services delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly community-controlled organisations by 2024, through implementation of two partnership actions:

- Clause 55(a)-implementing funding prioritisation policies across all Closing the Gap outcomes that require decisions about the provision of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities to preference ACCO and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.
- Clause 55(b)-where new funding initiatives are decided by governments intended to service the broader population across socio-economic outcome areas of the National Agreement, that a meaningful proportion is allocated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations with relevant expertise, particularly community-controlled organisations.

In 2023, the Coalition of Peaks met with the Cabinets of every state and territory to ensure all governments and each Minister understood their obligations and commitments under the National Agreement. This includes, among other things, delivering adequately

funding our Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to deliver the services our people need. The Coalition of Peaks will continue to meet annually with Cabinets about progress made on the National Agreement commitments with an invitation to work to address barriers on progress in partnership with us.

The Coalition of Peaks continue to negotiate with governments to better account for expenditure, to identify opportunities for the redirection of funds to ACCOs and reworking of grant reporting requirements that are so often a barrier for our smaller ACCOs and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

### **Work on review of resourcing**

During the year under clause 113 and 114 of the National Agreement, Coalition of Peaks and Commonwealth officials progressed a review and identified current spending on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services.

In December 2022, Joint Council received a report outlining key findings of the review and tangible opportunities to progress for consideration.

Further investigations will continue, analysing the collection, recording and reporting against expenditure by governments on program and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It is hoped an approach to better connect with service providers, particularly within community-controlled organisations, will be identified as part of future expenditure reporting.

Monitoring the implementation of the current sector strengthening plans will also continue for ECCD, Housing, Health, and Disability sectors.

Designed to outline high level priorities, the sector strengthening plans guide joint, national efforts to build community-controlled organisational capacity and to continue and expand delivery of culturally safe and responsive services to our communities.

>>

The Coalition of Peaks is a **representative** body of more than 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled peak bodies. Our **authority** is derived from our extensive membership base. Our representatives are **elected** to boards by their communities and represent our people using **generations of experience**.



### **Ripple to river artwork**

**By Jaja Dare / Wiradjuri artist**

Coalition of Peaks Members have their own unique histories, needs and priorities, and share a commitment to legitimate community-controlled representation of our communities on matters that are important to our people.

The blue ocean represents the needs and wants of the communities.

These needs and wants are passed to Peaks Members, represented by the white water, and on to the Peaks Secretariat, represented by the sand directing the flow of water.

The Peaks Secretariat liaises with governments, making sure the voices of our communities from across Australia are represented and reflected in policies, programs, and services that affect our people.

# Transforming government organisations

**Outcome** Governments, their organisations and their institutions are accountable for Closing the Gap and are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through the services they fund.

**Target** Decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experiences of racism.

Institutional racism is a significant contributing factor to the entrenched disadvantage that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities continue to face. Accordingly, action by governments to implement important systemic and structural transformation under Priority Reform 3 is vital.

Implementation of Priority Reform 3 includes transforming the ways of working for public sector workers across all levels of government. The commitments made by governments under Priority Reform 3 also extend to the service providers and other entities that governments fund.

Under Priority Reform 3, governments have committed to implementing the transformational elements including:

- identifying and eliminating racism
- embedding and practising meaningful cultural safety
- delivering services in partnership with ACCOs, communities and people
- increasing accountability through transparent funding allocations
- supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures by facilitating truth-telling
- improving engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In July 2022, the Coalition of Peaks facilitated a workshop with our members to focus on progress to date on Priority Reform 3. Following this workshop, the Coalition of Peaks called on governments to accelerate action and implement the systemic and structural transformation required by the commitments they agreed to under this Priority Reform.

**In December 2022, Joint Council agreed that urgent and accelerated action was required by all Parties to progress Priority Reform 3 outcomes, with a particular focus on prioritising urgent action to identify and develop an independent mechanism(s).**

## Independent mechanism

Clause 67 of the National Agreement commits government parties to have an independent mechanism in place by 2023. An independent mechanism is fundamental to the transformation agenda agreed to by governments as part of Priority Reform 3.

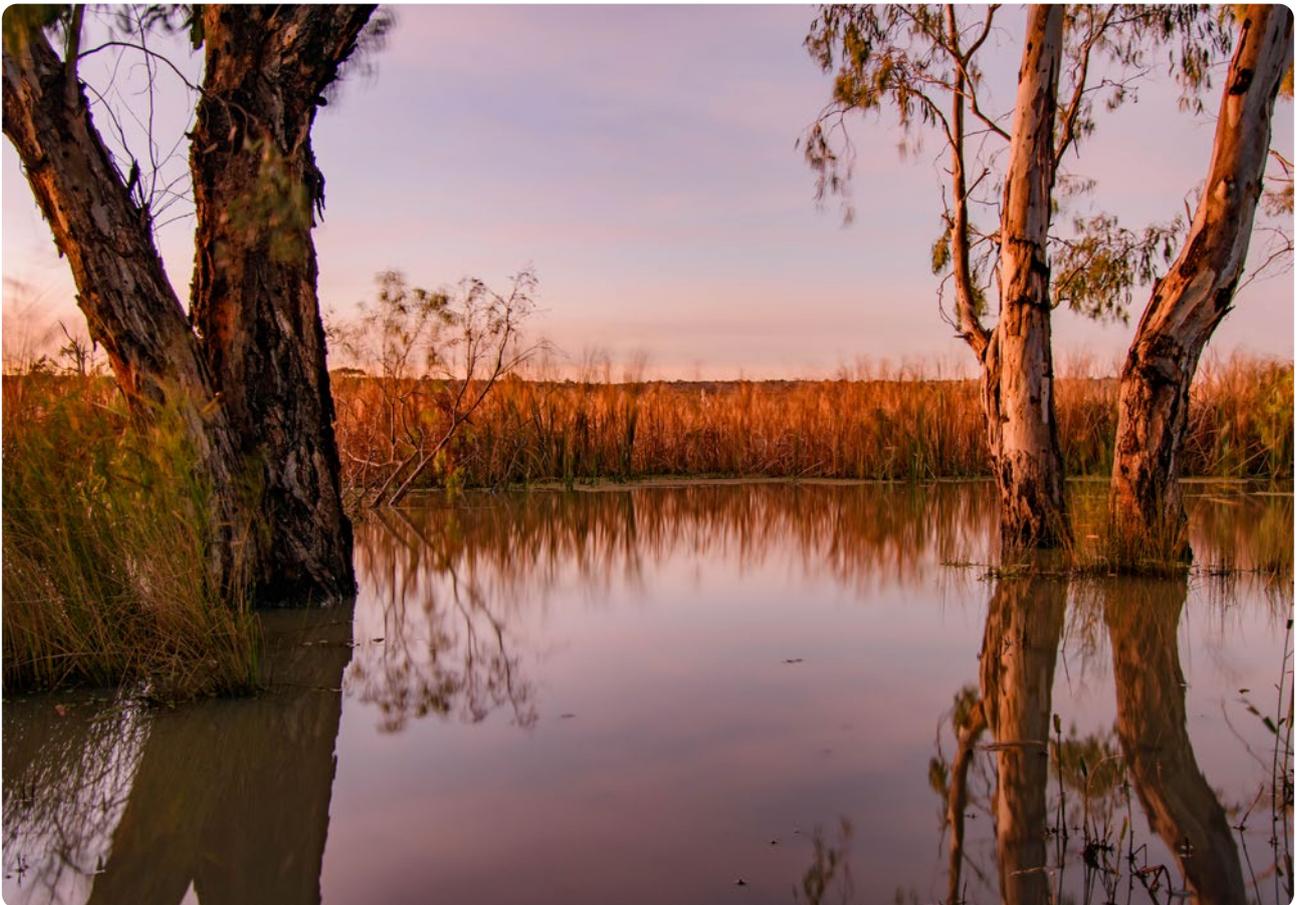
The Coalition of Peaks developed a set of principles to support standards in the development of independent mechanisms by jurisdictions. Once these were finalised, the Coalition of Peaks shared these principles with governments.

More work is required by governments. The Coalition of Peaks aim to support this work using our lived experience, skills and capabilities to lead individual and organisational change as part of the work we do with governments.

## Supporting Priority Reform 3

The Coalition of Peaks participated in the development of commissioned research to guide governments in their implementation of Priority Reform 3.

Noting the importance of this Priority Reform and its potential to create transformational change, government parties now need to take stock of the findings from this research and be bold in their implementation of Priority Reform 3 actions.



Cathy Brown – Sunrise, Permangk Country

# Shared access to information at a regional level

**Outcome** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to, and the capability to use, locally relevant data and information to set and monitor the implementation of efforts to close the gap, their priorities and drive their own development.

**Target** Increase the number of regional data projects to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to make decisions about Closing the Gap and their development.

Data is critical to the successful implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. All Parties committed to (Clause 72):

- share available, disaggregated regional data and information with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities on Closing the Gap
- establish partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and government agencies to improve collection, access, management and use of data
- transparency of data with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- build capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to collect, and use data.

This means supporting our people to collect and manage the data we need to make more informed decisions about our development objectives.

## Data and Reporting Working Group

The Data and Reporting Working Group (DRWG) provides advice and technical support to the Partnership Working Group on data and reporting issues relevant to the National Agreement. The DRWG is co-chaired by the Coalition of Peaks and National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA), meeting monthly throughout the year.

In August 2022, Joint Council endorsed the Data Development Plan developed by the DRWG. The Data Development Plan outlines the data which is still needed to accurately measure the four Priority Reforms and socio-economic targets.

The renewed focus of the DRWG is to:

- monitor the implementation of the data development items under each of the socio-economic targets in the National Agreement
- draft traffic light reports on the status of the data development items, with the priority reforms to be treated separately.

During the reporting period, the Coalition of Peaks, in partnership with the government, agreed to new terms of reference of the DRWG and the group began preparing the draft of the first traffic light report for Joint Council to consider in November 2023.

## Community data projects

The Community Data Projects are designed to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to analyse and use regional specific data, to help drive their own development and discussions with governments on Closing the Gap.

Clauses 74 and 75 of the National Agreement commit Parties to establishing Community Data Projects in up to six locations across Australia. All six locations have been agreed with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities involved and endorsed by Joint Council.

Community Data Projects in Western Sydney in NSW and the Kimberley region of WA are well established, and work continues to enable access to and sharing of data and information. The New Locations agreed include:

- Maningrida and Homelands, Northern Territory
- Doomadgee, Queensland
- Western Suburbs of Adelaide, South Australia
- Gippsland, Victoria

Community Data Projects in these locations are still in the process of being established by the Parties.

### **Support for Community Data Projects**

The early establishment of Community Data Projects in Western Sydney and the Kimberley region of WA provided Parties with key learnings to support the progress of other Community Data Projects in different locations.

Subsequently, the Coalition of Peaks engaged the Maïam nayri Wingara (MnW) Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective, based at the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Research ANU, to assist Community Data Projects by:

- Mapping the range of data and information needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, in support of their community development aspirations.
- Reviewing the NIAA data sharing agreement template and providing advice on how to enhance the data sharing agreement, including amendments to assist with community development objectives.

- Providing advice on data capability building to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to access and use the data and information in their decision-making for community development.

As a result, MnW were able to assist the Western Sydney NSW Community Data Project through a workshop on data mapping enabling Indigenous Data Governance and Sovereignty Principles were included in the Project.

In addition to the project work in Western Sydney, MnW developed resources to support the establishment of other Community Data Projects. MnW developed data sharing agreement resources and provided advice on how the data sharing agreement could be enhanced, including amendments to assist with community development aspirations.

As a result, the existing data sharing agreement resources were amended to enable the community data project locations/communities to be at the centre of the data sharing agreement, incorporating the Indigenous Data Governance and Sovereignty Principles.

The resources are now available to Peak Members and communities to use through the negotiation of a data sharing agreement with government parties.

### **Socio-economic target modelling project**

The Coalition of Peaks have been working in partnership with government on the Closing the Gap Modelling Project.

The Closing the Gap Modelling Project seeks to understand the impact of governments actions in one Outcome area has on the socio-economic targets. This work aims to assist government to target their effort and investment in different areas and understand the effect it would have on socio-economic targets.

The Closing the Gap Modelling Project has two parts:

- 1 Complete an examination of the socio-economic targets, their drivers, and the inter-linkages between these drivers and targets.
- 2 Build a proof-of-concept model (PoC model) that enables an analysis of the impacts of government actions on the targets.

Four targets were selected for the PoC model, based on data availability and priorities of the Coalition of Peaks. These targets were:

**Target 1** Life expectancy

**Target 7** Youth engagement

**Target 9a** Housing

**Target 12** Out-home care

In February 2023, a two-day workshop was attended by Peaks Members to:

- Create a systems map that ensured the lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities was incorporated into the model.
- Identify, categorise and map drivers of the current performance of each target, as well as flow-on effects for other targets.
- Discuss data availability, sources, gaps and other priority issues.
- Build a shared understanding of issues and challenges associated with the selected Closing the Gap targets.

The PoC model is currently going through a model validation process to assess the appropriateness and accuracy of the PoC model. Additionally, further work will be undertaken to incorporate qualitative data, which will allow lived experience and personal insights to be incorporated into the model.

In its current form, the PoC model projects the Closing the Gap targets to 2046 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote Australia, regional Australia and major cities.

It also enables modelling of selected policy scenarios, such as the impact of changes in social housing and increased funding of ACCOs.

The Commonwealth, in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks, are looking to explore options to expand the model to include all the Priority Reforms, all the socio-economic targets and their underlying drivers.

## New socio-economic targets

### **Community Infrastructure target 9b**

Alongside government data custodians and representations from NIAA, we worked as part of a working group to:

- establish indicators for the new target
- identify a list of discrete communities which meet the set criteria
- work with data custodians to ascertain existing data sources and data gaps.

This work has culminated in a community infrastructure data sharing paper being developed, highlighting progress towards data sharing, the agreed target framework and the draft indicators.

### Inland Waters Target 15c

During the year, work continued in partnership with governments to ensure proposed baseline data for the inland waters target was accurate, and meets commitments under the National Agreement. More work is needed to finalise the baseline data measurement.

The Coalition of Peaks want to work in partnership with governments to enable water to be handed back to its rightful owners.

PART 4

# State and Territory Implementation Plan Progress

Emma Robertson -  
Tassie Beach

# Australian Capital Territory

**During the year, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (the Elected Body) has made significant progress.**

The Elected Body has:

- supported the innovative work with ACT Health on Indigenous data sovereignty with the Mayi Kuwayu Team at the National Centre for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Research
- enabled pathways for more Indigenous representative bodies interfacing with the ACT Government
- worked hard to advocate for the establishment of more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in the ACT in key areas where there is an over-representation of our people, including child protection, justice and health
- undertaken remediation works at the Boomanulla Oval to prepare for an effective transition to community control in the coming years
- undertaken regular meetings with the Director General to discuss implementation progress of *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement* phase two action plans
- participated as part of the implementation committee of the *Our Booris, Our Way* recommendations, addressing identified issues in the child protection system in the ACT.

## **Greater independence for the Elected Body**

Over the past 12 months, significant work has been undertaken to ensure a greater level of independence for the operations of the Elected Body.

The appointment of a secretariat, independent of government, has enabled the Elected Body to have self-determined and independent processes and advice. The Elected Body has appointed an Indigenous consultancy to support the governance, strategic, policy and communications functions.

## **Greater transparency**

The Elected Body has successfully negotiated new arrangements to enhance transparency to the community on the work it does. This included the agreement for annual Elected Body Hearings to be live streamed into the future, an independent review of our own operations, and participation in an ACT Audit Office review of the ACT government's progress in implementing the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019–2028.

## **Broader Reach**

Elected Body members continued to advocate for a national voice and participate in a range of community activities in the ACT and across the country, to discuss the merits and achievements of their own 15-year-old voice model.

# Northern Territory

**Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APO NT) is an alliance of Aboriginal leaders and organisations working to promote and protect the rights of Aboriginal people living in the Northern Territory (NT).**

APO NT strive for Aboriginal self-determination and collectively share the aim of protecting and advancing the wellbeing and rights of Aboriginal people and communities.

The APO NT alliance comprises the:

- Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory (AMSANT)
- Central Land Council (CLC)
- Northern Land Council (NLC)
- North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA)
- Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory (AHNT)
- Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network (NTIBN)
- Tiwi Land Council (TLC)
- Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC).

The National Agreement holds the most promise for change in the NT, as the NT has the highest proportion of Aboriginal people (over 30%) of all the states and territories, and 45% of young people are Aboriginal. Yet, Aboriginal Territorians are experiencing growing disadvantage across eight of the 17 socio-economic indicators.

APO NT works in partnership with the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments and the Local Government Association of the NT (LGANT) on the implementation of the National Agreement.

## Progressing the Implementation Plan

The NT's second Implementation Plan was approved and published by the Northern Territory Government in October 2023. APO NT endorsed the Implementation Plan with the disclaimer that its actions would need to be costed, and funding would need to be allocated for the Implementation Plan to be achievable. However, this has not happened, and there is uncertainty about how to progress without funding to support action areas.

## Sector Strengthening Initiatives

APO NT has led the following sector strengthening initiatives, which are included in the second NT Implementation Plan:

- Worked in partnership with the Commonwealth to support ACCOs through the Aboriginal Governance and Management Program (AGMP).
- Facilitated and supported allocation of funding to APO NT members through the NT virtual funding pool as follows:
  - AGMP to continue working with AMSANT, implementing a health sector strengthening governance toolkit.
  - AHNT to continue delivering grants supporting ACCOs, providing housing management and tenancy support services in remote communities, homelands and town camps across the NT.
  - NAAJA as the co-chairing body of the NT Justice Policy Partnership (NT JPP) to engage with regional and remote Aboriginal Territorians, and capture their experiences to accurately inform the decisions of the NT JPP, and sitting fee arrangements for the NT JPP to be explored.

- AMSANT to engage a consultant to map existing NT disability services for Aboriginal people, and NT Aboriginal community-controlled disability services to identify gaps and needs to inform an NT Disability Sector Strengthening Plan based on the National Disability Sector Strengthening Plan.
- Facilitated and managed NT government funding to establish an Aboriginal Education Peak Body. This included the engagement of the community-led Aboriginal Steering Group, to inform the development of
  - the Aboriginal Education Peak Body and organising an Aboriginal Education Forum for Aboriginal organisations working in education in October 2023.
  - Met with SNAICC–National Voice for Children to progress work to establish an NT Aboriginal child and family services peak body

APO NT acknowledges the considerable leadership and courage of Aboriginal leaders within the community-controlled sector. We also acknowledge the leadership of the ministers and senior officials working in



From left to right: Margaret O'Brien, Rekisha Satour, Erin Lew Fatt, John Paterson, Federal Senator the Hon Malandirri McCarthy, Jerome Cubillo, Theresa Roe and Sernie Gamble.

the NT, but we do not believe that the NT or Commonwealth government has fully grasped the extent of transformation needed to give effect to their commitments under the National Agreement.

Government needs to improve its coordination and develop a whole-of-government strategy for Closing the Gap, to enable APO NT to be an equal joint partner. Our partnership must support and provide legitimate leadership and responsibility for each party to achieve the collective commitments in the National Agreement, based on respect and reciprocity.

## Victoria

**The Coalition of Peaks acknowledges the work of the Victorian Aboriginal Executive Council (AEC), in advancing the rights of Aboriginal peoples and communities in Victoria.**

We particularly note the efforts of the AEC in drafting of the 2021–2023 Victorian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan. The Coalition of Peaks membership thanks the AEC for their valued contributions.

# Queensland

**Against the backdrop of a very turbulent 2023, the promise of Closing the Gap to reduce disparities in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families is more important than ever.**

During the reporting period, Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition (QATSIC), has achieved important foundational pieces of work, in line with the Priority Reform areas.

## **New Membership**

In March 2023, QATSIC welcomed a new member: the CEO of the Queensland First Nations Media Coalition and AAA Radio Brisbane.

## **Funding to support QATSIC engagement in the implementation of the National Agreement**

During the year, QATSIC received funding for Senior Policy Officer positions. These positions have supported our partnership work with the Queensland Government.

The QATSIC Working Group was established, represented by the Senior Policy Officers, to support QATSIC's partnership with the government.

## **Sector Strengthening Plans**

QATSIC partnered with the Department of Treaty, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, Communities and the Arts (DTATSIPCA) to finalise Sector Strengthening Plans.

## **Co-design of a new governance structure**

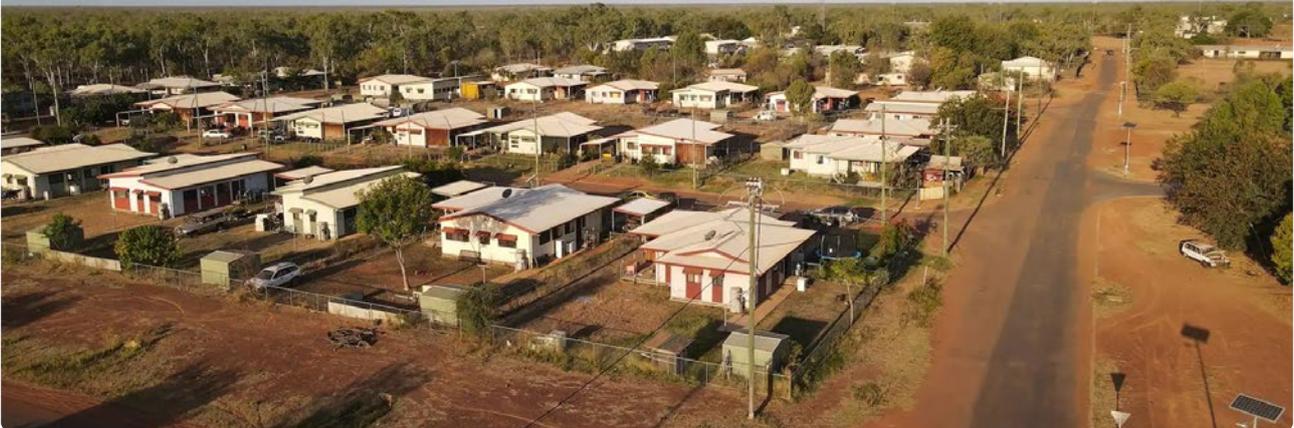
Designed to improve shared decision-making and create clearer Closing the Gap responsibilities, the new governance structure will focus on developing partnerships between QATSIC and Queensland Government ministers to address the targets and outcomes thematically, taking a holistic strength-based approach.

## **New government agency responses**

Designed in partnership with DTATSIPCA and the members of the QATSIC Working Group, a new government agency response template was developed to populate the entries in the Implementation Plan for 2023, and for use in the future.

**The needs-based approach used for the 2023 Implementation Plan will see individualised messaging used for each agency, to help prepare for implementation planning for 2024.**

QATSIC hope that this will further strengthen responses from government departments to achieve the Priority Reform areas, and the socio-economic outcomes and targets. This includes transforming relationships between government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, in transfer of power and decision-making.



### Torres Strait Islands

During the year, work commenced via the QLD Joint Council Representative for QATSIC to establish a regional peak for the Torres Strait region. It is anticipated once a Peak organisation for the Torres Strait has been established, they will be represented by QATSIC.

### Place-based partnership

Doomadgee's place-based partnership is starting to gain some traction, and with further investment, Queensland will see some significant momentum.

## CASE STUDY / QUEENSLAND

Over the next 12 months, QATSIC will embed a new way of working through the implementation of the first Breaking Cycles Action Plans.

Co-developed and co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the Action Plans will be driven by a strong partnership between the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak and the Department of Child Safety, Seniors and Disability Services.

The Action Plans will progress formal partnerships to reach agreement on how

to embed the Priority Reforms of the National Agreement. The Action Plans will create foundations for transformational change in the child protection system. They will focus on changing the way that services are designed, developed and delivered, with, and for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families, to break the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage.

The Action Plans will help to achieve outcomes of the Queensland Government's *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017-2037*.

# South Australia

**During the year, the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON), worked with government agencies to continue progress on significant actions from the National Agreement. SAACCON has received unwavering support from the South Australian Government's Aboriginal South Affairs and Reconciliation Agency.**

SAACCON achievements during the reporting period include:

## **Incorporation of SAACCON in March 2023**

On 17 March 2023, SAACCON welcomed news that the organisation had become an incorporated body. Transitioning to independence occurred partly in this financial year, with full transition to independence finalised in October 2023.

## **Community Data project: Western Suburbs of Adelaide**

The South Australian Government and SAACCON are working together to meet the socio-economic outcomes and targets of the National Agreement, through a steering committee with government agencies and a working group with SAACCON members.

There are six Community data Projects across Australia. In South Australia, this project is being undertaken across the western suburbs of Adelaide. It has been integral to strengthening the relationship with government.

During the reporting period, work has been undertaken to establish themes and understand the local context, with the foundation work to be built upon in the 2023-24 financial year.

Data is used to actively monitor progress towards South Australia's agreed target outcomes and provide supporting indicators. The ongoing and regular publication of data has provided public accountability and transparency related to the state's performance and delivery of South Australian commitments under the National Agreement.

## **Funding and staff for three Policy Officer roles**

During the reporting period, SAACCON Secretariat expanded with the addition of three policy officers. With only three staff, there was a lack of capacity to progress the work of the policy partnerships, including ECCD, Housing and Justice. The Policy Officer roles, appointed between July 2022 and October 2023, are designed to be a direct liaison to government agencies and member organisations.

## **SA Indigenous Expenditure Review 2021-22**

Expenditure review work was completed during the reporting period, capturing the previous year. While an ambitious project, it is disappointing that the government has indicated no plans to continue these reviews moving forward. While analysis of one year has been helpful to build knowledge, without context gathered over the coming years, it becomes an unhelpful point of reference.

## **Independent Mechanism workshop with SAACCON Members**

During the reporting period in February, SAACCON commenced the process of establishing independent mechanisms as part of their work on Priority Reform 3. This will continue during 2023-24 as a national initiative, designed to provide transparency and accountability in and around government.

## **Establishment of the South Australian Partnership Committee**

With an objective to serve as the central governance mechanism for implementation and monitoring of the National Agreement in South Australia, the Committee was established during the year. Representation is equal membership from SAACCON and the South Australian Government. A formal agreement was signed in November 2022.

The Partnership Committee has proven to be an excellent mechanism to enable not only information sharing but also for developing a shared understanding, crucial for relationship building.

The inclusion of executive-level South Australian government agency representatives is also promoting and strengthening an across-government response to Closing the Gap and will help build greater ownership of National Agreement outcomes going forward.

## **Multiple focused consultations for the Child and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 review**

In the review of the Child and Young People (Safety) Act 2017, SAACCON have had approximately four specific discussions with the Department of Child Protection, to provide insight and advice on how the revised version can strengthen the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle.

## **SA Joint Implementation Plan revision, including negotiations with government agencies across all sectors**

As a foundation to SAACCON's work, during the reporting period, they revised the South Australian Joint Implementation Plan, which included negotiations with government agencies across all sectors.

Aligned with the national work, the review will lead to the development of the implementation plan 2023-25. The next plan will move away from business as usual to a more innovative approach with tangible solutions.

The SAACCON Secretariat are keen to challenge and evolve the current approach, questioning current plans and making changes where necessary. This may lead to different allocation of resources and responsibilities over the coming years. While SAACCON will monitor implementation on behalf of the government, both parties will share responsibilities to undertake actions.

## **Aboriginal Community-Controlled Grant Fund (SA)**

The ACCO Fund (SA) is a Closing the Gap initiative, established in partnership with the South Australian Government to strengthen the ACCO sector to provide services and/or establish new initiatives to progress jurisdictional actions in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

In 2022-23, Round 1 of the ACCO Fund (SA) provided one-off grants ranging from \$25,000 to \$125,000 to support ACCOs participation in the SA place-based partnership and Community Data project, among other initiatives related to Priority Reform 2.

Over time, there will be three funding rounds, with two to be delivered during the 2023-24 financial year.

### **CASE STUDY**

#### **SA ACCO Grant Fund-Benefiting Aboriginal communities**

A beneficiary of the ACCO Fund, KWY Aboriginal Corporation, received \$100K for a data-driven service improvement project. KWY is a not-for-profit ACCO, committed to eliminating domestic and family violence. The funding has helped with the commissioning of consultant, Curious Communities, employment of additional IT staff members to undertake establishment work and a part-time IT professional.

A new dashboard was created, allowing managers to immediately access reporting items.

# New South Wales

**During the year, NSW Coalition of Peak Organisations (CAPO) commenced delivery of six Closing the Gap Priority Reform specific projects, funded under the government's 2022-23 budget.**

These projects cover:

- partnerships and shared decision-making
- strengthening the Aboriginal community-controlled sector
- transformation and shared access to data and information including Indigenous data sovereignty and Indigenous data governance.

Additionally, a further 21 projects developed under the 17 socio-economic outcome areas have been funded and are to be delivered by NSW CAPO organisations. These are in varying stages of delivery.

These activities aim to take practical steps to contribute to the implementation of the National Agreement.

## **NSW Partnership Agreement**

In partnership with the NSW Government, we commenced drafting the NSW Partnership Agreement, identifying how the government and CAPO will work together to implement commitments made under Closing the Gap. This Agreement is expected to be finalised during the 2023-24 year.

## **Community engagement**

During October, we held multiple NSW CAPO community engagement feedback sessions around the state, considered to be a great success, with the CAPO team heading to Newcastle, Wyong, Mount Druitt and Redfern.

In addition, a range of regional community engagements were undertaken related to the delivery of seven Closing the Gap projects.

Sessions were held in:

- Armidale
- Ballina
- Balranald and Broken Hill
- Coffs Harbour
- Coonabarabran
- Dareton
- Forster
- Grafton
- Gunnedah
- Inverell
- Kempsey
- Lismore/Casino
- Menindee
- Muswellbrook
- Narrabri
- Port Macquarie
- Tamworth
- Taree
- Wilcannia

The sessions reported back on previous community consultations and facilitated further discussion on the refinement of the NSW Implementation Plan (NSWIP) commitments.

Project teams were also involved in several consultations on partnerships, government accountability and Indigenous data sovereignty projects.

## Community events

The NSW CAPO team also reached out to the general public with general engagement and Closing the Gap promotional activities across a range of community events.

These events included:

- NAIDOC Week events
- Yabun Festival
- Elders Olympics
- regional Rugby League Knockout competitions
- Koori Knockout Rugby League carnival.

## Priority Reform 4 Awareness

In a commitment to implementing Priority Reform 4, including Indigenous data sovereignty, NSW CAPO presented on panels at the Australia and New Zealand School of Government and Data for Policy conferences, relating to work being done in NSW to implement the Reform.

# Tasmania

**Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) has continued to progress work towards achieving the Priority Reforms. Progress, in alignment with the Tasmanian Implementation Plan, is outlined below.**

## Work on Priority Reforms 1 and 3

The TAC has driven and co-ordinated work to establish five Closing the Gap Policy Partnerships with the Tasmanian Government.

Work during the reporting period has focused on further building the understanding and capacity of these policy partnerships, ensuring all members understand their individual and collective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities.

In addition, work has ensured that all policy partnerships have the necessary scope, influence and ability to be leaders in their agencies and across government, demonstrating their conscious commitment

to Priority Reform 3: changing the way that government works with, and for, Aboriginal people in Tasmania.

Each policy partnership has been specifically established to ensure whole-of-government coordination, involving one or more government agencies/deputy secretaries, with an identified 'lead' agency for Closing the Gap Priority Reform and key socio-economic target action. Each policy partnership is supported by sub-working groups whose members undertake much of the front-line work required to progress actions.

## Community Engagement/Aboriginal Engagement Strategy (Priority Reform 1)

TAC focused on creating a diverse range of flexible and alternative community engagement initiatives during the year. We undertook regular and consistent Closing the Gap regional conversations, and created meaningful opportunities for Tasmania's

Aboriginal people to influence the way we, as the Peak, progress the National Agreement and the Tasmanian Implementation Plan.

TAC continue to be aware of the general lack of understanding and knowledge relating to Closing the Gap, and invested considerable efforts into 'on the ground' work to increase community awareness of the importance of both the National Agreement and the Tasmanian Implementation Plan, to the everyday lives and wellbeing of all Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

Formal processes have been identified to progress the development of the Closing the Gap Tasmanian Aboriginal Engagement Strategy, and the community engagement work undertaken during 2022-23 has provided significant content to progress the Strategy, which will be completed in 2024.

### **Closing the Gap Governance Structure (Priority Reform 3)**

Work has commenced on identifying our specific and unique jurisdictional Closing the Gap governance requirements during 2022-23, including the Closing the Gap Formal Partnership Agreement, a range of schedules and processes. This ensures clear accountability and enables the progression of Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and actions.

### **Statewide Aboriginal Housing Review**

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

TAC led the drive for the inclusion of a statewide Aboriginal housing review, and a subsequent Aboriginal Housing Strategy and Action Plan, to be incorporated into Homes Tasmania's recently endorsed Tasmanian Housing Strategy and Action Plan 2023-2027. The Tasmania Government has also endorsed TAC to lead the statewide Aboriginal Housing Review in 2024.

### **Palawa Child Safety Project/Trail**

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

TAC successfully applied for Palawa Child Safety funding under the Closing the Gap Capacity Building Funding, which has enabled us to establish a child safety leadership group to oversee the project and employ a full-time staff member to commence the development of a unique Palawa Child Safety model, informing the upcoming one-year Palawa Out of Home Care Trial.

### **Palawa Kani Language in-school Trial**

**Target 16:** By 2032, there is a sustained increase in the number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken.

During the reporting period, TAC worked closely with the Department of Education, Children and Young People, to explore opportunities to share and access Palawa Kani, both within and beyond the Aboriginal community, and in line with the requirements of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Community.

TAC are now set to implement their first school-based Palawa Kani Language Trail on Cape Barren Island in 2024, delivered in partnership with the Department of Education, Children and Young People.

# Western Australia

**As the only Western Australian representative on the Coalition of Peaks, Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA), has been working closely with the Coalition of Peaks, Commonwealth and State Government on the implementation of the National Agreement.**

Some of the initiatives that AHCWA has been involved in include:

- Health Sector Strengthening Plan
- Disability Sector Strengthening Plan
- WA Closing the Gap Implementation Plan
- WA whole-of-government ACCO Strategy.

## **Establishment of the Closing the Gap Social Services Unit**

The Closing the Gap Social Services Unit was established to provide input into any activities related to the National Agreement and to establish a new WA Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation (ACCO) Peak Body.

The Unit has provided extensive input into the development of Commonwealth and WA state-wide policies and strategies including:

- WA Department of Communities ACCO Strategy
- WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Housing Organisation Sector Strategy
- WA Closing the Gap Implementation Plan
- Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan
- Health Sector Strengthening Plan
- Disability Sector Strengthening Plan
- WA whole-of-government ACCO Strategy.

A major achievement for the Unit **has been the establishment** of the new West Australian social services peak body, the Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia (CASWA). In March 2023 CASWA became a registered company under the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth).

CASWA is not affiliated with any one sector. Its constitution requires that the elected board comprise directors from members across the critical social services sectors, representing all of the regions of WA.

CASWA's strategic vision is that a strong and collective voice unites ACCOs in WA, enabling them to deliver place-based, community-led and culturally appropriate services, achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal people and their communities.

## **Attracting funding from the WA Government**

AHCWA was pleased to learn in May 2023 that the WA Government's 2023-24 Budget has allocated \$6 million over four years, to fund the newly established Council of Aboriginal Services WA (CASWA) operation.

While the allocated funding is welcomed, there is still a long way to go regarding investments in Aboriginal peak bodies in Western Australia compared to other states and territories.

AHCWA hopes the WA Government continues to see the commitment and merit in having increased representation for WA Aboriginal communities on the national decision-making stage and commits to longer-term, more sustainable funding moving forward.

PART 5

# Progress against Implementation Plan Actions



Laura Smith –  
Superb Fairy Wren

# The following tables show the progress the Coalition of Peaks have achieved against the key focus areas in our Implementation Plan:

Partnership and capacity building

Building understanding and ownership (engagement)

Monitoring and influencing progress

Communication

Public Accountability

## Partnership and capacity building

KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	2022-23 ACTIVITIES
<b>Connect policy approaches through policy partnerships</b> (Clause 30a)	Engage Peak members, broader sector and governments to determine policy areas for additional policy partnership development.	Two policy partnerships in place: Early Childhood Care and Development; Social and Emotional Wellbeing.
	Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties in the partnership establishment phase.	Regular meetings with Peaks policy partnership members.
	Monitor and strengthen existing policy partnerships.	Established a community of practice among Peaks and government secretariats.
<b>Strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sectors through sector strengthening plans</b>	Engage Peak members, broader sector and governments to determine additional sector strengthen plan development.	All actions in progress.
	Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties in development of new sector strengthening plans.	
	Monitor existing sector strengthening plans.	

KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	2022-23 ACTIVITIES
<p><b>Funding to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector</b> (Clauses 55a and 55b)</p>	<p>Identify barriers to the direct sourcing by governments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.</p> <hr/> <p>Audit non-Indigenous recipients of government funding.</p> <hr/> <p>Explore options on clauses in funding agreements to enable the transition of funding and services from non-Indigenous control to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.</p>	<p>All actions in progress.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening and sustaining our Coalition</b></p>	<p>Identify the support and development for senior leaders to sustain efforts. Identify emerging leaders for development and mentoring.</p> <hr/> <p>Develop succession plans.</p> <hr/> <p>Share good practice to support connections and learning.</p>	<p>In November 2022, a senior leadership strategic workshop was held to support Peaks Leaders and share good practice from jurisdictions and sectors.</p> <hr/> <p>Scheduled for 2024.</p> <hr/> <p>Ongoing, shared information as required.</p>
<p><b>Capability and capacity building</b></p>	<p>Identify shared development areas and deliver a group training program and resources to support development (i.e. policy development and inquiry submission, effective negotiation with governments).</p> <hr/> <p>Maintain quarterly group welcome sessions for new Peak members and their new staff.</p>	<p>Work is underway with the Peaks Policy Officer Group to identify preferred training or upskilling opportunities.</p> <hr/> <p>New member inductions are held as new members join the Coalition.</p>

## **Building understanding and ownership (engagement)**

<b>KEY FOCUS AREA</b>	<b>ACTIONS</b>	<b>2022-23 ACTIVITIES</b>
<b>Place-based partnerships</b> (Clause 30b)	Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties in the partnership establishment phase.	All place-based partnerships are in place and monitored by the Peaks Secretariat.
	Monitor and strengthen place-based partnerships.	
<b>Community data projects</b> (Clause 74)	Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties in the project establishment phase.	Progress delayed, dependant on negotiations with government parties.
	Monitor and strengthen existing community data partnerships.	Ongoing, regularly monitored.
<b>Inland waters target</b> (Clause 87ii)	Liaise with jurisdictions to agree on the inland waters target.	Work continued establishing the baseline data for the inland waters target.
	Support an accurate understanding and application of the inland waters target.	Near completion
<b>Implement the Data Development Plan</b>	Attend and contribute to the Data and Reporting Working Group.	Ongoing, attended all meetings scheduled.
	Contribute to the development of the traffic light report to identify ongoing work and ensure leading parties are accountable for their allocated items.	Ongoing, provided input necessary.
	Monitor implementation and support as required.	Briefings prepared for Peaks Members as required.
	Identify additional opportunities to strengthen implementation.	Ongoing, undertook all actions during the reporting period.

KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	2022-23 ACTIVITIES
<b>Coalition of Peaks' role and mandate</b>	Develop a statement on our role and mandate as the principal representative of the community-controlled sector and on Closing the Gap.	Scheduled for 2024.
	Develop a communication strategy to publicly deliver the message as widely as possible, by as many members as possible.	All other actions complete.
	Deliver annual strategic planning sessions with Joint Council Peak members to agree priorities and strategies.	
	Deliver annual workshops with all Peak members to connect, share learnings and maintain momentum on priorities.	

## Monitoring and influencing progress

KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	2022-23 ACTIVITIES
<b>Systemic and structural transformation</b> (Clauses 59 and 60)	Develop National Standards for cultural safety in frontline service delivery with government parties.	In progress, Peaks Members participated in commissioned research.
	Seek Joint Council agreement of the National Standards.	
<b>Independent mechanism or mechanisms that will support, monitor, and report on the transformation of mainstream agencies and institutions</b> (Clause 67)	Accelerate work on the independent mechanism with government parties.	Finalised independent mechanism principles to guide government implementation of Clause 67.
	Work with government parties to support the Joint Council's agreement for a consistent approach to the independent mechanism.	Facilitated a workshop on Priority Reform 3 for Peaks Members.
<b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander review of the National Agreement – People's Assembly</b> (Clause 125)	Engage with Peaks Members to develop and agree on the terms of reference and scope for the Review.	In progress.
	Undertake planning and establishment processes for review delivery.	

KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	2022-23 ACTIVITIES
<b>Data to make informed decisions to negotiate and partner with governments</b>	Identify our data needs and repositories.	In progress.
	Develop a strategy to access data.	Scheduled for 2024.
<b>Government accountability on implementation of the National Agreement</b>	Explore best practice.	In progress.
	Develop recommendations for Peaks Members' agreement.	All other actions scheduled for 2024.
	Engage government parties on a plan to implement recommendations.	

## Communication

KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	2022-23 ACTIVITIES
<b>Joint Communications Strategy</b> (Clause 134)	Review and update Joint Communications Strategy.	Complete
<b>Independent mechanism or mechanisms that will support, monitor, and report on the transformation of mainstream agencies and institutions</b> (Clause 67)	Review and update Joint Communications Strategy.	Finalised independent mechanism principles to guide government implementation of Clause 67.
		Facilitated a workshop on Priority Reform 3 for Peaks Members.
<b>Accessible communications</b> (Clause 146)	Continue seeking opportunities to publish more accessible content – particularly for social media and radio.	Radio advertisements were produced in both English and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.
		Easy-to-interpret videos outlining the National Agreement were produced and published on the Coalition of Peaks social media platforms.
		Social media carousel developed about the Priority Reforms in the National Agreement.

KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	2022-23 ACTIVITIES
<b>Build social media audience and reach</b>	Ensure all platforms are active, content is relevant and planned, and Peak Members can access resources for their own social media channels.	Complete
<b>Community engagement</b>	Identify key events and engagement opportunities to attend.	Complete – 2022: Garma Festival – 2023: Barunga Festival.
<b>Easy access to communications messages and collateral</b>	Review and refresh Coalition of Peaks website and maintain currency of information.	Complete
<b>Peaks Member and non-member engagement</b>	Draft and distribute quarterly eNewsletters.	Complete
<b>Increase awareness of Coalition of Peaks and National Agreement</b>	Proactive and reactive media releases and opportunities.	Complete – 11 Media Releases – Increased mentions and social media activity.



Kellie Andrews – Big Country Big Love.

## Public Accountability

KEY FOCUS AREA	ACTIONS	2022-23 ACTIVITIES
<b>Support for Peaks Members</b>	<p>Hold regular meetings in person and virtually.</p> <p>Provide papers and reports to Peak members to support consensus decision-making.</p> <p>Prepare an annual report.</p> <p>Contribute to the Drafting Group.</p>	Ongoing, undertook all actions during the reporting period.
<b>Partnership Working Group</b>	<p>Adhere to Partnership Working Group Terms of Reference.</p> <p>Contribute to the Drafting Group.</p> <p>Ensure Partnership Working Group papers are presented at a meeting of the Peaks prior to Partnership Working Group, and consensus is achieved on all positions.</p> <p>Conduct pre-meeting briefings and support for development of talking points.</p>	Ongoing, undertook all actions during the reporting period.
<b>Joint Working Group</b>	<p>Adhere to Joint Working Group's Terms of Reference.</p> <p>Ensure Joint Working Group papers are presented at a meeting of the Peaks prior to the Joint Working Group and consensus is achieved on all positions.</p> <p>Conduct pre-meeting briefings and support for development of talking points.</p>	Ongoing, undertook all actions during the reporting period.
<b>Progress tracker</b>	<p>Provide our information by relevant deadlines.</p> <p>Assess progress of partners at regular intervals.</p>	Ongoing, undertook all actions during the reporting period.

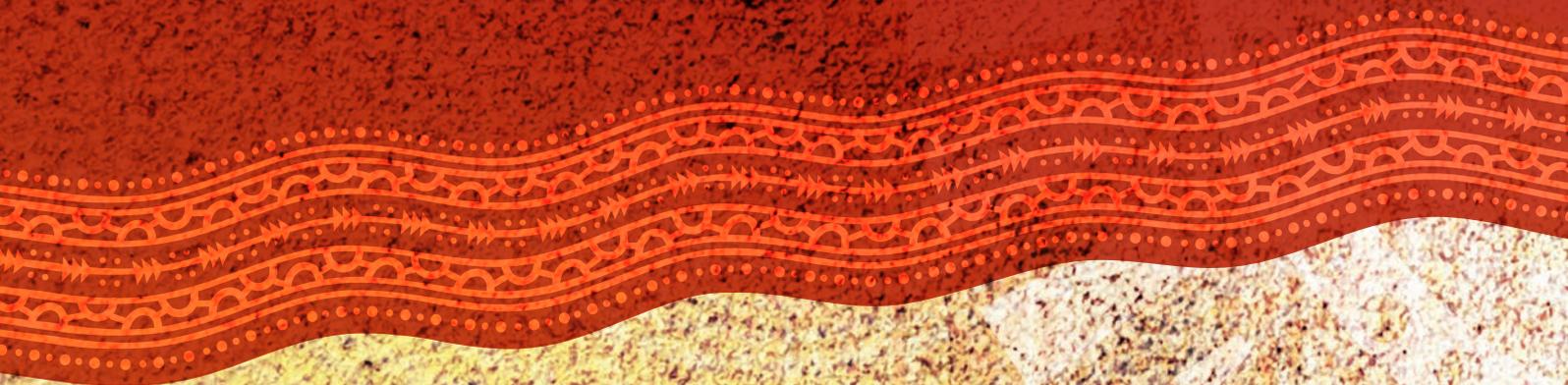




Coalition  
of Peaks



CLOSING THE GAP



[www.coalitionofpeaks.org.au](http://www.coalitionofpeaks.org.au)