NATIONAL INTEGRATED STRATEGY FOR CLOSING THE GAP IN INDIGENOUS DISADVANTAGE

Council of Australian Governments

An strategy agreed between

- the **Commonwealth of Australia** and
- the **States and Territories**, being:
  - The State of New South Wales
  - The State of Victoria
  - The State of Queensland
  - The State of Western Australia
  - The State of South Australia
  - The State of Tasmania
  - The Australian Capital Territory
  - The Northern Territory of Australia

This Strategy will contribute to the Council of Australian Government's targets for closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage and is a schedule to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement.

National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap (the Strategy) which is a schedule to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement. The foundation of the Strategy is the identification of and commitment to targets to reduce Indigenous disadvantage, and associated building blocks or areas for action. This Strategy acknowledges the importance of Indigenous culture, and engagement and positive relationships with Indigenous Australians. It discusses the contribution of the current COAG reform initiatives to meeting the targets and also the frameworks for accountability and performance reporting. Finally, it discusses directions for future work.

This Strategy is a living document. As initiatives begin to take effect and change occurs, COAG will respond and this Strategy will be updated.

Background

In 2007-08, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a number of ambitious targets to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage by improving outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in the areas of life expectancy, health, education and employment.

The Closing the Gap agenda was developed in response to concerns raised with governments by Indigenous and non-Indigenous persons, including through the Close The Gap Campaign and the National Indigenous Health Equity Summits.

The COAG National Indigenous Reform Agreement, agreed in November 2008:

- commits all jurisdictions to achieving the Closing the Gap targets;
- defines responsibilities and promotes accountability amongst governments;
- provides a roadmap for future action;
- notes the significant funding provided through Indigenous-specific National Partnerships to assist in meeting the targets; and
- links to other National Agreements and National Partnerships which include elements that will address the targets.

In 2008, COAG committed $4.6 billion in Indigenous specific funding over 10 years to drive fundamental reforms in remote housing, health, early childhood development, jobs and improvements in remote service delivery.

An unprecedented level of cooperation and coordination between the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments is needed to deliver on this commitment to Close the Gap. The

Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments are committed through COAG to the Closing the Gap agenda and this partnership, underpinned by effective engagement with Indigenous Australians, establishes a genuinely national approach.

COAG also recognises the need to work closely with the corporate and not-for-profit sectors. Meeting the targets can only be achieved through sustained multi-sectoral effort where all parts of the Australian community play a role.

THE NEED TO ACT

There are just over half a million Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia today, comprising 2.5 per cent of the Australian population.

Although many Indigenous Australians have access to life opportunities and a good standard of living, too many Indigenous Australians experience unacceptable levels of disadvantage in living standards, life expectancy, education, health and employment. Current data shows a significant gap in these critical areas between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population.

The disadvantage experienced by Indigenous people has many aspects. COAG has chosen to address fundamental interrelated issues.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2009 estimates show life expectancy for Indigenous Australians to be approximately 11.5 years lower than the non-Indigenous population for males and 9.7 years lower than the non-Indigenous population for females.[1]

In the period 2002-2006, Indigenous children under five died at around three times the rate of non-Indigenous children (305.2 compared with 102.4 deaths per 100,000). Approximately 83 per cent of Indigenous deaths below age five occurred within the first year of life, and of these nearly half occurred within the first month.

Indigenous children have a lower level of participation in early childhood education than non-Indigenous children. Without preschool learning opportunities, Indigenous students are likely to be behind from their first year of formal schooling.

While most Indigenous students in metropolitan and regional areas meet the minimum reading standards, the proportion achieving at least the minimum standard of literacy and numeracy skills decreases as the level of remoteness increases.

Australians who do not complete year 12 are less likely to have the same opportunities as those who do. In 2006, year 12 completions for Indigenous Australians were 45.3 per cent, compared to 86.3 per cent for non-Indigenous Australians.

Indigenous Australians also experience much higher levels of unemployment than non-Indigenous Australians. At the time of the 2006 Census, around 48 per cent of the Indigenous workforce-aged population was in employment. This compares to 72 per cent for other Australians – a gap of 24 percentage points.

(Source: Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, The challenge facing Australia: The evidence.)

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[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Experimental Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2005–2007* (cat. no. 3302.0.55.003). Canberra: ABS, 2009. Available at (accessed 28 May 2009): www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3302.0.55.0032005–2007?OpenDocument.

THE CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS

COAG reforms aimed at Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage are underpinned by a clear policy framework. At the core of this framework are the six targets. They are to:

- close the gap in life expectancy within a generation;
- halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade;
- ensure all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years;
- halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade;
- halve the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020; and
- halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

The Building Blocks Approach and the Evidence Base

Improving outcomes for Indigenous people requires adoption of a multi-faceted approach that sees effort directed across a range of Building Blocks. An improvement in the area of one building block is heavily reliant on improvements made across the other Building Blocks. The Building Blocks are:

- Early Childhood;
- Schooling;
- Health;
- Healthy Homes;
- Safe Communities;
- Economic Participation; and
- Governance and Leadership.

The National Indigenous Reform Agreement provides a more detailed explanation of the Building Blocks approach.

While each of the Building Blocks contributes to achieving one or more of the six specific targets, by addressing these concurrently, the conditions will be established to reduce Indigenous disadvantage across a broad range of policy fronts.

The Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage framework produced biennially by the Australian Productivity Commission has been realigned to reflect the new COAG environment and the Building Blocks approach.

A table providing examples of targets, building blocks, COAG Agreements and outputs is included at **Attachment A**.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE

Connection to culture is critical for emotional, physical and spiritual well being. Culture pervades the lives of Indigenous people and is a key factor in their wellbeing – culture must be recognised in actions intended to overcome Indigenous disadvantage.[2]

Pride in culture plays a vital role in shaping people's aspirations and choices. Efforts to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage must recognise and build on the strength of Indigenous cultures and identities.

Assuming, promoting and supporting a strong and positive view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and culture are important ways to reduce social exclusion for Indigenous Australians and to support them in their endeavours and aspirations for a positive future.

Cultural awareness and competency on the part of policy makers and people implementing government programs, the elimination of overt and systemic discrimination, and the development of programs that meet the cultural needs of Indigenous people will be an important part of the Closing the Gap initiatives.

ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

COAG recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders as Australia's first peoples.

In his Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples on 13 February 2008, the Prime Minister acknowledged that all governments have a special responsibility to engage with Indigenous communities in order to rebuild the trust lost through 'the laws and policies of successive Parliaments and governments that have inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss'.

COAG is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve the Closing the Gap reforms, recognising that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have demonstrated leadership to create opportunities for their families and communities and are working with governments and the not-for-profit and corporate sectors to build on these opportunities.

To date, engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the development of the Closing the Gap agenda has been at a very broad level. Implementation of the National Agreements and National Partnerships, both mainstream and Indigenous specific, agreed by COAG across the health, education, housing, employment and service delivery spheres will require developing and maintaining strengthened partnership arrangements. This is in line with the *National Framework of Principles for Government Service Delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians* agreed by COAG in 2008.

Suggested Approach

In establishing effective partnerships with Indigenous people, it is important that there is clarity regarding what can be delivered. Working in partnership ideally provides an opportunity to:

- seek involvement to ensure that views are reflected in options developed; or

[2] Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007*. Melbourne: Productivity Commission, 2007. Available at (accessed 28/05/2009): www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/indigenous.

- collaborate and partner with interested parties by directly incorporating their advice in the development of options and identification of the preferred solutions.

In some instances partnerships provide the platform for engagement enabling government to:

- inform or provide information to interested parties generally about the policy and/or decisions taken, why they were taken and the intended benefits to provide information on the process and opportunities for engagement;
- solicit information, seek feedback or input/views from interested parties through clearly defined channels to help guide the development of policies and programs.

There is a range of key mechanisms through which engagement can be undertaken and partnerships developed, including:

i) Jurisdictional advisory groups and representative bodies

A range of advisory groups or representative bodies both at the national and the jurisdictional level facilitate input to broad policy matters.

At the national level, Australia-wide consultations have been undertaken on the establishment of a national representative body to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a voice in national affairs. The exact role of the representative body is yet to be decided but it is anticipated that it will be the primary mechanism for engaging on national Indigenous policy issues.

Jurisdictionally based representative bodies have also been established in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia to inform policy direction and program implementation.

These bodies can act as conduits for information and avenues for the provision of advice to governments. They also provide feedback and advice to governments on policies and their implementation and review.

ii) Indigenous advisory groups – sector specific

A wide range of sector specific advisory groups has been convened by agencies at the Commonwealth and State levels covering areas such as health, education, housing (for example the National Indigenous Health Equality Council). These groups have detailed knowledge of issues and needs within their sector. Consultation with these groups on Indigenous programs or programs with an impact on Indigenous people is critical when shaping policy or its implementation or indeed considering the policy interactions that may need to be addressed.

iii) Indigenous expert organisations on specific topics

In formulating and implementing policies and programs, governments draw on available evidence and research and the knowledge of experts organisations. Such bodies include the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and the Centre for Aboriginal and Economic Policy Research. These specialist organisations also play a crucial role in reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of policies and program proposals and help to inform discussion about where policy can be further developed or existing approaches amended to better achieve positive outcomes for Indigenous people.

iv) Informal or ongoing relationships

Utilising available arrangements and existing informal ongoing personal interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, and building relationships over time, is another important way of engaging with and building partnerships with Indigenous communities.

All of these mechanisms will be utilised as appropriate under this Strategy.

THE NEED FOR A COORDINATED AND SUSTAINED APPROACH

The Closing the Gap targets are ambitious and work to achieve them will need to be undertaken over a considerable period of time. The Strategy recognises that this will require:

- sustained commitment from all levels of government to work together;
- resetting of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians – this reconciliation involves building mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and other Australians that allows us to recognise our histories and our cultures; it will also involve us working together to solve problems and generate success that includes all Australians;
- action through mainstream programs and Indigenous specific initiatives;
- responses that address the nature of place and broader issues;
- sound measures for progress, accountability, the development of an evidence base and identification of best practice; and
- involvement by the corporate sector, non-government organisations and local government with the aim of Closing the Gap and building partnerships across all sectors.

It is recognised that Closing the Gap will require concerted action in urban, regional and remote communities.

Improving Service Delivery

COAG has agreed six core Service Delivery Principles that all governments have agreed should be applied when designing and delivering services for Indigenous people (see Box 1). Schedule D of the National Indigenous Reform Agreement provides more information on the Principles.

Box 1: Service Delivery Principles for Services for Indigenous Australians

Priority principle: Programs and services should contribute to Closing the Gap by meeting the targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs.

Indigenous engagement principle: Engagement with Indigenous men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services.

Sustainability principle: Programs and services should be directed and resourced over an adequate period of time to meet the COAG targets.

Access principle: Programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs.

Integration principle: There should be collaboration between and within Governments at all levels and their agencies to effectively coordinate programs and services.

Accountability principle: Programs and services should have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation.

Addressing the Needs of Indigenous People in Urban and Regional Australia

In order to close the gap nationally on the COAG targets it will be necessary to maintain an active focus on achieving significant gains in urban and regional locations.

The Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy will guide the significant investments made through National Agreements and National Partnerships agreed by COAG in 2008 to achieve positive outcomes for Indigenous people in urban and regional areas.

The strategy outlines the underlying evidence for action, the contribution of National Partnerships including those in Indigenous Health, Housing and Homelessness, Education, Early Childhood and Economic Participation to addressing disadvantage in urban and regional locations. It also details additional actions by all jurisdictions to give practical effect to COAG National Partnerships in a coordinated and targeted way, in urban and regional locations, in partnership with Indigenous Australians.

The strategy builds on the experience of all jurisdictions in listening to Indigenous people, and recognises that approaches to implementation will reflect the different circumstances and needs of Indigenous individuals, families and communities in each State or Territory.

The priority areas for action are:

1) Integration and Governance – developing a coordinated approach to identifying priorities at both intra- and inter-governmental levels;
2) Effective Services – delivery of reforms to service delivery systems;
3) Focusing on Local Need/Place Based Approaches – enabling initiatives to be delivered in a manner appropriate to needs in a particular location;
4) Strengthening Indigenous Capacity Engagement and Participation – promoting a strong and positive view of Indigenous identity and culture; and strengthening individual, family and community wellbeing and capacity as a necessary impetus to improved access to and take-up of services; and
5) Building Effective Accountability and Sustainability – requiring governments to improve statistical collection services and other information sources to improve the detail and accuracy of reporting on outcomes.

As a first step, all jurisdictions will report to COAG in late 2009 on progress in utilising the National Partnership agreements in the areas of health, housing, early childhood, education and employment, and associated changes to improve outcomes for Indigenous people in urban and regional locations.

The Strategy will be progressed in each jurisdiction as part of the Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plan agreed between the Commonwealth and each State/Territory.

Building on review mechanisms under the Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plans, the effectiveness of the Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy will be reviewed after three years.

The Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy for Indigenous People is at Schedule B of the National Indigenous Reform Agreement.

Addressing the Needs of Indigenous People in Remote Australia

For too long remote communities have been the recipients of disjointed, ad hoc and uncoordinated actions and responses from governments at all levels.

The Remote Service Delivery Strategy and National Partnership aim to:

- improve the access of Indigenous families to suitable and culturally inclusive services;

- raise the standard and range of services delivered to Indigenous families to be broadly consistent with those provided to other Australian in similar sized and located communities;
- improve the level of governance and leadership within Indigenous communities and Indigenous community organisations;
- provide simpler access and better coordinated government services for Indigenous people in identified communities; and
- increase economic and social participation wherever possible, and promote personal responsibility, engagement and behaviours consistent with positive social norms.

Recognising that it is not feasible for governments to provide the full range of services available in urban locations to remote areas, and the need to prioritise and coordinate investment, COAG has agreed to National Principles for Investing in Remote Locations (see Box 2).

Future investment decisions for remote locations will be guided by the principles that form part of the National Indigenous Reform Agreement. These Principles will be applied to program funding and service delivery decisions relating to Indigenous outcomes, through both mainstream and Indigenous specific programs, in remote Australia. They are designed to ensure that, wherever possible, governments can build on investments made across a range of areas so as to maximise outcomes in specific communities and regions.

Box 2: National Principles for Investments in Remote Locations

a) Remote Indigenous communities and communities in remote areas with significant Indigenous populations are entitled to standards of services and infrastructure broadly comparable with that in non-Indigenous communities of similar size, location and need elsewhere in Australia;

b) Investment decisions should aim to: improve participation in education/training and the market economy on a sustainable basis; reduce dependence on welfare wherever possible; and promote personal responsibility, and engagement and behaviours consistent with positive social norms;

c) Priority for enhanced infrastructure support and service provision should be to larger and more economically sustainable communities where secure land tenure exists, allowing for services outreach to and access by smaller surrounding communities, including:

d) Recognising Indigenous peoples' cultural connections to homelands (whether on a visiting or permanent basis) but avoiding expectations of major investment in service provision where there are few economic or educational opportunities; and

e) Facilitating voluntary mobility by individuals and families to areas where better education and job opportunities exist, with higher standards of services.

The Remote Service Delivery Strategy involves governments working together to implement a new remote service delivery model in priority locations.

Current priority locations include:

- **Northern Territory**: Angurugu, Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak, Gunbalanya, Hermannsburg, Lajamanu, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Nguiu, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Umbakumba, Wadeye, Yirrkala and Yuendumu;
- **Queensland**: Hope Vale, Aurukun (together with continuing work in Mossman Gorge and Coen which are also part of the Cape York welfare reform trial), Mornington Island and Doomadgee;

- **South Australia**: Amata and Mimili;
- **New South Wales**: Walgett and Wilcannia;
- **Western Australia**: Fitzroy Crossing and surrounding communities, Halls Creek and surrounding communities, and the Dampier Peninsula (with a focus on Beagle Bay and Ardyaloon).

A focus on priority locations will occur alongside activity and investment being undertaken in other communities or regions.

In developing the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery, COAG has sought to ensure that remote communities have access to adequate and appropriate services in order to improve the health, safety and economic outcomes for Indigenous people. This will help to rebuild the social values that underpin strong families and healthy communities. Over time, as backlogs are addressed and locations are brought up to comparable standards, the approach will be extended to other remote communities.

THE COORDINATOR-GENERAL

On 30 April 2009 COAG agreed to the role and operating arrangements for the Coordinator-General in the priority Remote Service Delivery National Partnership locations.

Under the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership, the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services (Coordinator-General) will drive the implementation of reforms across government in remote Australia to support achievement of the Closing the Gap targets.

Along with State and Territory coordinators, the Coordinator-General will provide strategic central leadership and coordination of the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership in agreed locations, initially being the 26 priority locations. In the future, new locations will be identified in consultation with relevant States and Territories.

The States and Territories will identify coordinators to provide a lead contact point at the jurisdictional and/or regional level and work in partnership with the Coordinator-General.

The Coordinator-General will:

- have the authority to work across agencies to cut through bureaucratic blockages and red tape, and to make sure services are delivered effectively – to achieve this, the Coordinator-General will have direct relationships with Commonwealth Secretaries and their Departments through membership of the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs and will report directly to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs regularly on the performance of government agencies in meeting their commitments in the priority communities;
- work collaboratively with State and Territory officials and Ministers to achieve a unified approach to implementing the remote service delivery model, including overcoming challenges that arise across jurisdictions;
- receive regular situation reports advising of progress within the locations and will receive alerts reporting on any problems as they arise; and
- be a statutory office reporting to the Minister for Families Housing Community Services and Indigenous Affairs – legislation was introduced to Parliament on 27 May 2009.

Commonwealth agencies will identify National Coordinators who will be the lead contact points in their agencies.

MEASURES TO DATE

In putting this National Integrated Strategy in place, COAG has made significant commitments regarding ways of working together as well as a substantial commitment of resources across the Building Blocks through the National Agreements and National Partnerships.

Each of the National Agreements under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations has Indigenous specific elements. (See also the National Indigenous Reform Agreement.)

The National Agreements provide special purpose funding to the States and Territories to improve services for all Australians, *including* Indigenous Australians.

Further to these agreements, COAG has agreed to a range of National Partnerships, providing additional funding for joint Commonwealth and State/Territory measures contributing to Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

The table at **Attachment A** illustrates how National Partnerships are related to the Building Blocks. Indicative examples of outputs under each National Partnership are provided to demonstrate these relationships. It shows, for example, that the *health* building block is being addressed by the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership, the National Healthcare Agreement, the Closing the Gap in the Indigenous Health Outcomes National Partnership and the Preventive Health National Partnership.

Each of the Building Blocks and each of the targets are addressed across a number of National Partnerships, in recognition that there are complex and interrelated causes to each issue which require interrelated responses and solutions over time.

The services provided under National Agreements are particularly important for Closing the Gap in urban and regional areas and ensuring the Indigenous people receive the same level of service as other Australians.

The Indigenous specific National Partnership Agreements address health, early childhood development, remote housing, remote service delivery and economic participation. Overall the National Partnerships act on the contributors to health and wellbeing from pre-natal care, through birth and early childhood, school and the transition to adulthood. They also address the social determinants of health and wellbeing including education, housing and employment.

The Closing the Gap in the Indigenous Health Outcomes National Partnership includes expanded primary health care and targeted prevention activities to reduce the burden of chronic disease. The National Partnership will lead to:

- reduced smoking rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples;
- reduced burden of diseases for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- increased uptake of Medicare Benefits Schedule funded primary care services to Indigenous people with half of the adult population (15-65 years) receiving two adult health checks over the next four years;
- significantly improved coordination of care across the care continuum; and
- over time, a reduction in the average length of hospital stay and reduction in readmissions.

This means that over a five-year period, around half of the adult Indigenous population (around 133 000 people) will receive a health check with about 400 000 chronic disease services delivered. More than 54 000 Indigenous people with a chronic disease will be provided with a self-management program, while over 70 000 Indigenous people will receive financial assistance to improve access to Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines.

The National Healthcare Agreement commits to Indigenous Australians achieving better health outcomes, comparable to the broader population, with the Indigenous Health National Partnership expanding primary health care and targeting prevention activities to reduce the burden of chronic disease on Indigenous Australians.

The National Education Agreement includes a focus on outcomes for Indigenous students, with a particular focus on improving literacy and numeracy and year 12 or equivalent attainment. The Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership has a particular focus on Indigenous students. The National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality will also have an emphasis on building professional pathways for Indigenous people and Indigenous education workers who wish to progress to teaching. Many Indigenous students will also benefit from implementation of the National Partnership on Low Socio-economic Status School Communities. These build on commitments to achieve universal action to early childhood education, especially for Indigenous children in remote communities and the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership.

Indigenous people in urban and regional areas will benefit from reductions in homelessness, and an increase in the supply of social housing through the Homelessness National Partnership, the Social Housing National Partnership and increases to funding for social housing, with a particular focus on those most at need including Indigenous Australians, through the National Building and Jobs Plan National Partnership. The Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership will address the significant overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and the severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities. Improving housing conditions will provide the foundation for lasting improvements in health, education and employment.

In a tangible contribution to COAG's commitment to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade, COAG agreed on a National Partnership for Indigenous Economic Participation.

As part of the initiative, jobs will be created in areas of government service delivery that have previously relied on subsidies through the Community Development Employment Projects program. Public sector Indigenous employment and career development strategies will also be reviewed to increase Indigenous public sector employment to reflect Indigenous working age population share by 2015, and governments will also strengthen current procurement policies to maximise Indigenous employment, skills development and business creation.

Recognising that full participation in society requires access to important means of communication and information, COAG agreed in July 2009 to a $6.96 million Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access. This National Partnership will deliver:

- public internet access facilities in remote Indigenous communities where there is limited or no public internet access;
- maintenance and support of public internet access in those communities, commencing in 2011-12; and
- training in basic computer and internet use in up to 60 remote communities a year.

The NP will result in increased access to online resources in remote communities, enhanced information and computer literacy, and increased use of the internet to facilitate transactions and communication with government agencies, businesses, communities and families.

In implementing all of these agreements and providing services to Indigenous people, a range of approaches will need to be undertaken to support improvements to the way services are delivered. Governments will need to reform service delivery systems to ensure that:

- services are effective and accessible;
- services are culturally competent to deliver good outcomes for Indigenous Australians;

- government investments maximise linkages between Indigenous specific and mainstream services; and
- government investments deliver service models that respond to high levels of mobility amongst Indigenous Australians.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING

Performance Indicators

In order to measure progress towards achieving the targets, the National Indigenous Reform Agreement identifies a number of Indigenous-specific indicators which will be used to evaluate progress against the Closing the Gap targets.

The COAG Reform Council has been appointed to independently analyse and report annually on progress in each jurisdiction against these indicators.

The National Indigenous Reform Agreement provides more information on performance indicators.

Indigenous specific National Partnership Agreements include provision for:

- agreed accountability and outcomes measures;
- arrangements that enable regular measurement of outcomes for related programs in each jurisdiction;
- regular meetings of senior officials to review and jointly report on progress of bilateral agreements;
- establishing or strengthening joint coordination arrangements;
- where possible aligning Indigenous reporting obligations; and
- An independent evaluation of the effectiveness of each National Partnership.

Additional Indigenous performance indicators are included in other COAG National Agreements and National Partnership Agreements.

As part of the National Education Agreement endorsed by COAG in November 2008, governments agreed to implement an Indigenous Education Action Plan. A statement outlining progress towards the development of a National Indigenous Education Plan is at **Attachment B**. It reflects a commitment to develop local and regional strategies in areas with concentrated Indigenous populations to assess how reforms are actually facilitating improvements, and to monitor progress to inform possible improvements to the approach.

Trajectories

Whilst annual performance reporting will demonstrate progress being made against the Closing the Gap targets, it is important to have an understanding of the likely and required rates of progress in order to achieve the targets in the timeframes set by COAG.

The required progress against the six COAG targets will be determined by plotting indicative straight line trajectories (between the baseline and the target) for each target and by jurisdiction; this will comprise six national trajectories (one for each target) and trajectories for each jurisdiction where data is available.

The COAG Reform Council will assess annually whether there has been genuine improvement against each target in the NIRA (i.e. whether the change is statistically significant). The COAG Reform Council will, using the trajectories, assess whether the pace of change, if maintained, is sufficient to meet the target.

Jurisdictions are committed to annual review of progress and will meet on a regular basis to review the contributions of existing and announced initiatives to meeting the targets.This review would comprise an analysis of factors affecting progress and the sequence of causal effects and would inform the COAG Reform Council's analysis of progress against the trajectories. Jurisdictions will contribute to regular meetings as a mechanism for ongoing accountability and review of policies and programs. The meetings will provide a forum to share best practice and identify areas where programs may need to be adjusted to help meet the targets.

ONGOING AND FUTURE WORK

COAG has made significant commitments concerning expenditure on initiatives for Indigenous people – $4.6 billion across early childhood, health, remote housing, economic participation and remote service delivery. However, it will take more than increased expenditure to meet the targets and to achieve better outcomes and better standards of health, education and life opportunities for Indigenous people. It will take a new way of working in partnership and doing business with Indigenous people.

Governments are committed to engaging with Indigenous people, and Indigenous people have many roles to play. They can participate and engage with government on the implementation of programs, through national, regional and local advisory bodies, and as participants and users of services. And they can actively take responsibility for accessing services for the health, education and economic security of themselves and their families.

Government has to change the way it works. The following are some areas where Governments are undertaking reforms.

Strengthening Engagements and Partnerships

Following COAG's agreement to a range of National Partnerships and National Agreements that will contribute to Closing the Gap, it is recognised that into the future, engagement and partnerships with Indigenous peoples will be focussed at a practical level on the roll out and implementation of these Agreements.

There is agreement that all jurisdictions will utilise existing frameworks and mechanisms to strengthen partnerships with Indigenous people in implementing COAG commitments. In so doing, all jurisdictions will also ensure that the *Service Delivery Principles for Programs and Services for Indigenous Australians* are applied and operationalised when undertaking engagement (see Box 1).

Effective engagement with Indigenous communities is critical to ensuring that Indigenous people's needs and aspirations are built into the planning and implementation of initiatives agreed by COAG.

Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the development of implementation plans is critical as their input, ideas and solutions will contribute to the overall success and sustainability of the reforms. Their active participation is integral to the effective design and implementation of the measures.

As bilateral and local implementation plans are developed, it will be important to ensure that appropriate structures are established to facilitate local level community engagement and partnerships, collaborative decision making and ownership of implementation.

The identification of strong Indigenous leaders to champion and demonstrate ownership of reforms, and who can involve Indigenous people in the design and delivery of programs locally and regionally, as well as share responsibility for the outcomes achieved over time, is needed.

Therefore, the Commonwealth and the State and Territory Governments commit to working in partnership with Indigenous people in relation to the:

- further development of the Closing the Gap agenda;
- development and monitoring implementation of bilateral and, where required, local implementation plans underpinning National Agreements and National Partnerships; and
- assessment of the impact of the Closing the Gap agenda.

They will do this through the use of existing frameworks or mechanisms for engagement established in each state or territory, and by sharing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people information on performance against indicators in implementation plans and agreements, and reports on progress towards the COAG targets.

Indigenous Economic Development

Barriers to Indigenous economic participation and development have become entrenched over many years. Overcoming these barriers will require a focus on:

- developing supportive regulatory and institutional arrangements;
- building the economic base, particularly in remote Australia;
- developing the capabilities of Indigenous people and communities to get jobs and establish businesses; and
- creating sustainable opportunities through effective partnerships and genuine engagement.

Ultimately, Indigenous economic development is about providing Indigenous people with the same opportunities as non-Indigenous Australians. The economic growth that creates wellbeing for the non-Indigenous population is primarily achieved through the activities of the private sector. The Indigenous population needs to have the capacity and the opportunity to engage with the private sector in order to share in this economic growth.

Reforms to the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) Program and the Commonwealth Indigenous Employment Program (IEP), beginning 1 July 2009, will ensure more Indigenous Australians have the skills they need to get and keep a job. The reforms will see CDEP and the IEP working in partnership with employment services to provide greater support to Indigenous Australians in finding sustainable employment.

The reform of CDEP is part of a new integrated approach to employment services for Indigenous Australians commencing 1 July 2009. Recognising that employment support needs are often different between remote and non-remote Australia, and that solutions must be adapted to local needs and to local economies, the reformed CDEP program will continue to operate in communities where there are limited economic opportunities and CDEP will cease in areas with established economies.

The reformed Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) will make employment and training services more responsive to the specific needs of Indigenous job seekers, Indigenous businesses and employers.

The development of a Commonwealth Indigenous Economic Development Strategy (IEDS) will contribute to achieving long-term economic independence for Indigenous Australians by promoting

economic participation and wealth creation by Indigenous communities and individuals, and through the strengthening of partnerships with the corporate sector.

Data

There is a need to take stock of current strategies and measures, analyse gaps and determine future directions for work on Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. The next phase of work will be informed by the outcome of the COAG Reform Council's assessment of the impact of the National Agreements and National Partnerships nationally and in each jurisdiction.

Agreed data quality improvements (at Schedule F of the NIRA) will help build the data sets and collections necessary to support the reporting and measurement of progress across the jurisdictions under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement.

COAG's future work program will also be guided by the evaluation of National Partnerships and other polices and programs, both Indigenous specific and mainstream, affecting outcomes for Indigenous people. Progress against the targets as measured against the trajectories will provide an indication of priorities for future work.

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse will provide a single national repository of reliable evidence (including best practice and success factors) on a broad range of topics related to improving Indigenous outcomes.

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse will:

- conduct systematic reviews of the research and evaluation evidence;
- improve the coordination of research and identify priorities for future research and evaluation;
- provide public online access to a centralised repository of quality information; and
- provide policy makers and program managers with an evidence base for achieving the Closing the Gap targets.

Remote Service Delivery

The Remote Service Delivery National Partnership will develop new ways of working across governments and engaging with local Indigenous people – ensuring that as the National Partnership is implemented, local people gain skills and jobs from the increased investment.

The evidence collected as this National Partnership is implemented will inform the further development and implementation of policies and programs addressing the needs of Indigenous people in remote areas.

Universal Services

All governments will be required to develop policy and program directions that embed the Service Delivery Principles for Programs and Services for Indigenous Australians (see Box 1). This will require key system changes and a coordinated approach to service delivery by universal programs within and across governments. Governments will need to reform service delivery systems to ensure that:

- government investments deliver effective and accessible services that are taken up by Indigenous people in urban and regional locations;
- service delivery agencies are culturally competent to deliver good outcomes for Indigenous people;

- government investments maximise linkages between Indigenous specific and mainstream services;
- government investments deliver service models that respond to high levels of mobility amongst Indigenous Australians; and
- investment on services and programs is prioritised and in specific locations that have the greatest impact on closing the gap and breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage.

Food Security

A national strategy for improving the affordability and availability of healthy food for Indigenous people living in remote Australia (i.e. improving their food security) will be developed for consideration by COAG in November 2009. Improving food security is a key part of the response required to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

Welfare Reform

Several models of income management are currently being piloted across Australia in Cape York in Queensland, the Kimberley in Western Australia, and in the Northern Territory.

COAG will give consideration to the outcomes achieved and possible next steps.

Evaluations of welfare reform pilots are currently underway or will commence during 2009. Evaluation of Income Management in the Northern Territory commenced in early 2009 and is expected to be finalised in August 2009. Evaluation of the Child Protection Initiative and Voluntary Income Management pilots in the Kimberley region and the Cannington district of metropolitan Perth in Western Australia commenced in early 2009 and is expected to be completed in January 2010. Evaluation of the Cape York Welfare Reform trials is expected to commence in August 2009 and continue until the end of 2011.

The results of these evaluations will be taken into consideration in the ongoing development of welfare reform initiatives.

Strengthening Indigenous Governance and Leadership

Strong governance and leadership by Indigenous people will contribute to the wellbeing of Indigenous individuals and communities. There are a number of current initiatives contributing to this outcome.

Funding is provided to Native Title Representative Bodies, and Native Title Service Providers are funded to deliver professional services for Indigenous people to pursue the recognition and protection of native title, and to Prescribed Bodies Corporate to help meet the costs of administering lands on behalf of successful native title claimants.

Support is provided to Indigenous Corporations, including advice on how to incorporate, training for directors, members and key staff, by ensuring legal compliance and through intervention when necessary.

Leadership development courses are delivered to Indigenous women, men and youth at national, regional and local levels to strengthen and increase their capacity and further develop their skills to lead more effectively in their lives, families and communities. Specific activities are also directed toward enhancing Indigenous women's leadership, representation, safety, wellbeing and economic status. In addition, the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership provides for technical support and funding to establish and maintain appropriate structures and capacity for governance in priority

locations. This will include the development and delivery of training to support local capacity building and community and leadership development.

Community Safety

Family and community safety will be addressed through agreed measures developed under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's children, under the response to *Time for Action: the National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*, or under the National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework.

Involvement of the Corporate Sector

Indigenous economic development cannot be achieved by government alone. Each sector of the economy has a role to play if Indigenous disadvantage is to be overcome. Significant effort has already been made by the private sector to increase Indigenous economic participation. This effort needs to be supported and built on, and the private sector's expertise needs to be harnessed for Indigenous economic development to occur.

The private sector plays an important role in creating employment opportunities for Indigenous people, both directly and indirectly through its investment decisions. The majority of Indigenous Australians in jobs are employed by the private sector. Stable employment is essential for wellbeing. It creates financial independence and facilitates positive social outcomes, such as improved health and reduced crime rates.

Investment in communities by the private sector creates employment opportunities and produces wider benefits beyond employment. It stimulates local economies and creates a market whereby improved services can be delivered to the local population.

The private sector also has an important role to play in Indigenous business formation and development. Like employment, business development can create financial independence and greater choices for Indigenous people. The willingness of the private sector to support Indigenous business through business-to-business transactions and mentoring is important for Indigenous businesses to have the ability to survive in the mainstream economy.

The Business Action Agenda recognises the key role of the private sector in creating jobs, investing in local economies, and promoting innovation and capability. The agenda will build on the work already being undertaken by the private sector to increase Indigenous economic participation by:

- further engaging the corporate, not-for-profit and philanthropic sectors to take action in closing the gap; and
- establishing a national advisory group to provide strategic advice to government on improving Indigenous economic participation.

The Business Action Agenda acknowledges that Closing the Gap can only be achieved with the initiative and support of the wider Australian community.

Governments will continue to encourage the corporate sector to engage with and Indigenous Australians and to contribute to Indigenous Australians' economic development, including through vehicles such as the Australian Employment Covenant.

Involvement of Local Government

Local government has an important role to play in providing programs and services to Indigenous Australians.

Local government is already contributing to the Closing the Gap strategy through the participation of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) in COAG and through the Australian Council of Local Government, which is promoting a dialogue on tackling Indigenous disadvantage.

ALGA supports the role of local councils in helping to ensure that they, and their communities, are more responsive to the needs of their Indigenous citizens. This includes the need to redress the social and economic disadvantage of Indigenous Australians.

As the closest level of government to Indigenous communities, local government is well placed to link with and provide support for COAG Indigenous National Partnerships and Agreements. The cooperation of all levels of government, including local government, is essential to the successful delivery of the Closing the Gap strategy.

Involvement of the Not-for-Profit Sector

The not-for-profit sector also has a critical role to play in making progress towards Closing the Gap. Community based organisations in all States and Territories are making a significant contribution through a range of practical initiatives.

The not-for-profit sector plays a significant role in service provision to Indigenous people, both on behalf of government and in their wider roles. This role ranges from delivery of on the ground services through to advocacy and contributions to policy development and program design.

Without not-for-profit sector involvement, it will be difficult to meet the Closing the Gap targets. COAG is looking at possible avenues for greater recognition of and engagement with the non-profit sector.

A National Compact with the not-for-profit sector is being developed by the Australian Government. It will provide a framework for the sector and government to work together to ensure that collaborative effective solutions can meet the policy challenges facing the Australian community, including Indigenous people.

Further Engagement with the Broader Community on the Closing the Gap Strategy

The support of the broader Australian community will be essential for the continuation of efforts by governments and to achieve recognition of the place of Indigenous people and cultures in Australia.

Best Practice

Gathering best practice examples is an important part of ensuring the potential of National Partnerships and Agreements is reached. Attachment C includes a collation of current best practice examples presented at COAG on 2 July 2009.

CONCLUSION

The target of Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage is a national challenge. The necessary transformation of communities will take many years, but the alternative is to do nothing. Australian Governments are prepared to act.

The disadvantage Indigenous Australians have suffered for more than two centuries has placed great obstacles in our way. Governments are prepared to work together with Indigenous Australians to

achieve change for the better. This Strategy outlines the directions and specific steps Australian Governments are taking to meet the Closing the Gap challenge.

ATTACHMENT A

Examples of COAG Targets, related Building Blocks, COAG Agreement and Outputs

1. Close the life expectancy gap within a generation		
Building Blocks	**COAG Agreements**	**Outputs**
Early Childhood	Indigenous Early Childhood Development NP	Increased provision of antenatal care services targeted at young Indigenous women
		Increased provision of sexual and reproductive health services for Indigenous teenagers
		Increased provision of maternal and child health services for Indigenous children and their mothers
		Establishment of a minimum of 35 Children and Family Centres in urban, regional and remote areas with high Indigenous populations and high disadvantage
		Provision of early learning, child care and parent and family support services to Indigenous families at or through each of the Children and Family Centres
Schooling	Preventive Health NP	School meals and nutrition programs
Health	Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes NP	Improved quality and coverage of primary health services
		Prevention, early detection and management of major chronic diseases
		Address key behavioural chronic disease risk factors (e.g. smoking, risky drinking, poor diet and obesity)
	National Healthcare Agreement	Improved quality and coverage of primary health services
		Prevention, early detection and management of major chronic diseases
	Preventive Health NP	Address key behavioural chronic disease risk factors (e.g. smoking, risky drinking, poor diet and obesity)
Economic Participation	Indigenous Economic Participation NP	Increased employment participation impacts positively on life expectancy
Healthy Homes	Remote Indigenous Housing NP	Address overcrowding and environmental health through: maintenance and repair of existing housing
	National Affordable Housing Agreement	Improved house design
		Increased stock of public housing and private rentals
		Home ownership assistance
	Social Housing NP	Increased stock of public housing and private rentals

Safe Communities	Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes NP	Addressing alcohol/substance abuse and harm through prevention, diversion and treatment services
		Mental health treatment that is culturally sensitive, in liaison with substance abuse and criminal justice services
	Preventive Health NP	Healthy living programs focusing on harmful/hazardous consumption of alcohol and smoking cessation

2. Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade		
Building Blocks	**COAG Agreements**	**Outputs**
Early Childhood	Indigenous Early Childhood Development NP	Establishment of a minimum of 35 Children and Family Centres in urban, regional and remote areas with high Indigenous populations and high disadvantage
		Provision of early learning, child care and parent and family support services to Indigenous families at or through each of the Children and Family Centres
		Increased provision of antenatal care services targeted at young Indigenous women
		Increased provision of sexual and reproductive health services for Indigenous teenagers
		Increased provision of maternal and child health services for Indigenous children and their mothers
Schooling	Indigenous Early Childhood Development NP	Establishment of a minimum of 35 Children and Family Centres in urban, regional and remote areas with high Indigenous populations
		Provision of early learning, child care and parent and family support services to Indigenous families at or through each of the Children and Family Centres
	Preventive Health NP	Meals programs in early childhood education programs
Health	Indigenous Early Childhood Development NP	Increased provision of antenatal care services targeted at young Indigenous women
		Increased provision of sexual and reproductive health services for Indigenous teenagers
		Increased provision of maternal and child health services for Indigenous children and their mothers
	Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes NP	Reduction in alcohol use and smoking
		More flexible models of service delivery and improved coordination of care
	Preventive Health NP	Reduction in alcohol use and smoking
		Promotion of breastfeeding

Economic Participation	National Healthcare Agreement	Increase number and quality of training of Indigenous health workforce
	Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes NP	Increase number and quality of training of Indigenous health workforce
Healthy Homes	Remote Indigenous Housing NP	Improve environmental housing (sewerage and water quality) to combat communicable disease
	Indigenous Early Childhood Development NP	Establishment of a minimum of 35 Children and Family Centres in urban, regional and remote areas with high Indigenous populations and high disadvantage
		Provision of early learning, child care and parent and family support services to Indigenous families at or through each of the Children and Family Centres
Safe Communities	Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes NP	Addressing alcohol/substance abuse and harm through prevention, diversion and treatment services

3. All four year olds, including in remote indigenous communities, have access to early childhood education within five years		
Building Blocks	**COAG Agreements**	**Outputs**
Early Childhood	Early Childhood Education NP	Children have universal access to a preschool program for 15 hours per week, 40 weeks per year
		Universal access to a preschool program is delivered across a range of settings at a cost which is not a barrier to access
		Indigenous children (including those in remote Indigenous communities) enrolled in and attending a preschool program
	TAFE Fee Waivers for Childcare Qualifications NP	Improve number and qualifications of workforce (including Indigenous)
	Indigenous Early Childhood Development NP	Establishment of a minimum of 35 Children and Family Centres in urban, regional and remote areas with high Indigenous populations and high disadvantage
		Provision of early learning, child care and parent and family support services to Indigenous families at or through each of the Children and Family Centres
Schooling	Low SES School Communities NP	School/Health/Family Hub Centres for family support

Health	Preventive Health NP	Pre-school meals programs
	Indigenous Early Childhood Development NP	Increased provision of maternal and child health services for Indigenous children and their mothers

4. Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade		
Building Blocks	**COAG Agreements**	**Outputs**
Early Childhood	Indigenous Early Childhood Development NP	Establishment of a minimum of 35 Children and Family Centres in urban, regional and remote areas with high Indigenous populations and high disadvantage
		Provision of early learning, child care and parent and family support services to Indigenous families at or through each of the Children and Family Centres
Schooling	National Education Agreement	Support for parents/carers to actively participate in children's education
	Improving Teacher Quality NP	Professional development in quality and culturally appropriate teaching methods
	Literacy and Numeracy NP	Early intervention and specialist teachers for low achievers (Accelerated Literacy Program)
	Low SES School Communities NP	Holistic services offered through school hubs
	Preventive Health NP	School meals programs
Healthy Homes	National Affordable Housing Agreement	Reduce housing overcrowding
	Social Housing NP	Reduce housing overcrowding
	Remote Indigenous Housing NP	Reduce housing overcrowding
Safe Communities	Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes NP	Addressing alcohol/substance abuse and harm through prevention, diversion and treatment services

5. At least halve the gap in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020		
Building Blocks	**COAG Agreements**	**Outputs**
Schooling	National Education Agreement	Improve school retention and completion rates from Year 9 up

Health	National Healthcare Agreement	Chronic disease management, including good health, fitness and nutrition
	Preventive Health NP	Chronic disease management, including good health, fitness and nutrition
	Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes NP	Chronic disease management
Healthy Homes	Remote Indigenous Housing NP	Reduce housing overcrowding
	National Affordable Housing Agreement	Reduce housing overcrowding
	Social Housing NP	Reduce housing overcrowding
Safe Communities	Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes NP	Addressing alcohol/substance abuse and harm
		Support youth at risk of contact with justice system
	Preventive Health NP	Addressing alcohol/substance abuse and harm
	Remote Service Delivery NP	Community Leadership Program

6. Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade		
Building Blocks	**COAG Agreements**	**Outputs**
Early Childhood	Indigenous Early Childhood Development NP	Establishment of a minimum of 35 Children and Family Centres in urban, regional and remote areas with high Indigenous populations
		Provision of early learning, child care and parent and family support services to Indigenous families at or through each of the Children and Family Centres
Schooling	Low SES School Communities NP	Provision of innovative and tailored learning opportunities and external partnerships with parents, other schools, businesses and communities
Health	National Healthcare Agreement	Chronic disease management
	Preventive Health NP	Chronic disease management, including good health, fitness and nutrition
	Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes NP	Chronic disease management and prevention, including good health, fitness and nutrition

Economic Participation	Indigenous Economic Participation NP	Focus on industry sectors with jobs growth potential (e.g. health, education, construction and government services)
		Increase access to employment and training services (extend intensive assistance program to Indigenous job seekers, wage assistance programs, and continue and extend to STEP program)
	National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development	Increase access to employment and training services – extend intensive assistance program to Indigenous job seekers
		Build aspirations and foundation skills of unemployed and those outside the labour force
	Improving Teacher Quality NP	Focus on industry sectors with jobs growth potential (e.g. education)
		Build professional pathways for Indigenous people and Indigenous education workers who with to progress to teaching
Healthy Homes	Remote Indigenous Housing NP	Local investment in construction – government procurement includes Indigenous participation
Safe Communities	National Healthcare Agreement	Mental health promotion programs (including coping skills)
	Preventive Health NP	Addressing alcohol / substance abuse and harm
	Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes NP	Mental health promotion
		Diversionary programs / skills learning within juvenile justice programs

ATTACHMENT B

Towards The Development of an Indigenous Education Action Plan

As part of the National Education Agreement endorsed by COAG in November 2008, governments agreed to implement an Indigenous Education Action Plan.

To date, jurisdictions have committed to establishing trajectories and reviewing progress at a national and state level. However, it is evident that progress towards the targets will be built on successful local and regional strategies (including place-based approaches) that draw governments, communities, businesses and philanthropic organisations together to address local issues. State and Territory Implementation Plans under the National Partnerships will help to inform a clear picture of what is happening at a local and regional level in areas with concentrated Indigenous populations (focus areas), in order to assess how reforms are actually facilitating improvements and monitor progress to inform possible improvements to the approach.

As a first step to building governments' capacity to assess and monitor progress at this level, State and Territory Governments commit to developing local and regional strategies in focus areas to achieve the COAG education targets. This will require evidence based reform strategies for the focus school communities and regions that target, for example, the following areas in an integrated way:

- improving enrolment rates;
- improving attendance;
- improving student engagement;
- improving literacy and numeracy attainment;
- developing an Indigenous education workforce;
- up-skilling the teaching workforce to better support Indigenous students;
- improving parental and community engagement;
- improving 'wrap around' support, including through extended service school models;
- improving retention rates;
- improving transitions from school to further education and training; and
- creating high expectations for Indigenous young people.

Governments note that the National Partnership (NP) funding builds on the substantial investment in schooling through the National Education Agreement (NEA). Under this Agreement governments have already committed to monitor actively improvements in Indigenous education outcomes. Governments agree that it will be essential that the Implementation Plans for all three Smarter Schools NPs have a strong and transparent focus on improving outcomes for Indigenous Australians, and well developed local and regional strategies. Documentation in the final Implementation Plans under the Low Socio Economic Status School Communities NP Agreement, Improving Teacher Quality NP Agreement and Literacy and Numeracy NP Agreement will reflect these strategies.

To support the NEA monitoring, and reinforce the importance of effective, integrated local and regional strategies, all governments agree that in addition to developing and monitoring national and jurisdictional trajectories for the reading, writing and numeracy and year 12 and equivalent attainment targets, by December 2009 State and Territory governments will develop a more focused, school based approach and interim rates of improvement needed to meet the Closing the Gap targets.

States and Territories will evaluate the success of local and regional approaches and will work with the Commonwealth to provide advice on the usefulness of these approaches to drive progress in other policy reform areas.

COAG will receive advice from the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs on a draft National Indigenous Education Action Plan for its endorsement in early 2010. It is expected that this draft will involve consultation with Indigenous Australians.

ATTACHMENT C

Best Practice Examples

Commonwealth

Activity, program, project or tool	Nganampa Health Council
Organisation	Department of Health and Ageing, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH)
Closing the Gap building blocks	▪ Health ▪ Early Childhood
What is it?	An Aboriginal community controlled comprehensive primary health care service operating on the APY (Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara) lands.
What does it do?	The Health Council has achieved: ▪ an 80% reduction in perinatal mortality in the first 10 years of the service (from 45.2 deaths per 1000 births to 8.65 deaths per 1000 births); ▪ an increase in average birth weight (by 103g between 1984 and 1996); ▪ a reduction in low birth weight (from 14% to 8% of live births between 1984-1996); ▪ a sustained child immunisation coverage at or close to 100% (since 2003 and compared to 50% in 1983); ▪ a greater than threefold increase in antenatal care attendance in the first trimester (since the inception of the service in 1983).
What was required to implement it?	The Nganampa Health Council is an Aboriginal owned and controlled health organisation that has been operating since the mid 1980s. Funding from the Office Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health for 1997-2009 is $82.9 million.
What are the outcomes or expected outcomes?	Improved maternal and child health.
What makes it special?	Critical success factors are: ▪ Rigorous monitoring of child growth monitoring ▪ Women's Business Manual – Appropriate Clinical Treatment ▪ Local Health Worker Training and Employment ▪ Tracking Patient Outcomes Over Time

Commonwealth

Activity, program, project or tool	New Directions: Mothers and Babies Services
Organisation	Department of Health and Ageing, Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (OATSIH)
Closing the Gap building blocks	▪ Health ▪ Early Childhood
What is it?	Funding program to increase access for Indigenous mothers and babies in high need regions to child and maternal health care delivered by primary health care providers.
What does it do?	Provides mothers and babies with increased access to antenatal care; standard information about baby care; practical advice and assistance with breastfeeding, nutrition and parenting; monitoring of developmental milestones. Funded organisations are required to develop and maintain linkages with organisations in the service region to improve child and maternal health and related services, and must demonstrate capacity and commitment to initiate and maintain linkages with other early childhood services (e.g. early learning and family support) in the local area. In 2008 and 2009, 43 new services in high need regions across Australia received funding and most are expected to commence delivering services in 2009. Additional services will be funded in 2009 to commence in 2010.
What was required to implement it?	Commonwealth funding of $90.3 million over five years from 2007-08. Under the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership, States and Territories will contribute a total of $75 million.
What are the outcomes or expected outcomes?	While service providers are not required to collect specific data relating to the program and no evaluation of individual services or the program is planned, it is expected that, as part of the broader COAG Indigenous Early Childhood Development NP, New Directions Mothers and Babies Services will contribute to improved Indigenous child and maternal health. To halve the gap in the mortality rate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous children under five within a decade, we need to increase the number of Indigenous women attending antenatal care in their first trimester; and decrease the number of Indigenous babies born with low birth weight. Evidence suggests that antenatal care provides a major opportunity to intervene at the earliest stages of child development, assists Indigenous women to modify harmful behaviours such as cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption, and is an ideal entry point to assess and refer at risk pregnancies to specialist support services – Indigenous mothers who attended antenatal care were less likely to have low birth weight babies (13%) than those who did not attend (39%).[3]

[3] Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council. (2008). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report 2008*. Canberra: AHMAC, p. 28

What makes it special?	New Directions Mothers and Babies Services funding allows primary health care providers the flexibility to deliver increased access to antenatal, postnatal and child health care in ways best suited to the communities they serve.

Western Australia

Activity, program, project or tool	Whole of government approach to safety
Organisation	Government of Western Australia, Police, Child Protection, Corrections, Attorney General and the Drug and Alcohol Office
Closing the Gap building blocks	Safe Communities
What is it?	Strategies working together to deliver better safety outcomes for Indigenous people.
What does it do?	The WA Government's approach provides for timely responses to violence and child abuse; coordinated efforts to support victims, their families and communities; strategies to address alcohol misuse and to create a safe environment for children; and, opportunities to promote economic independence and ensure safety in the long-term. Multi Function Police Facilities (MFPF) permanently co-locate police and child protection workers in specific remote Indigenous communities to restore civil order and create the environment and confidence for violence and sexual abuse disclosure to occur. There are nine MFPFs in WA and one in the Northern Territory (cross-border project). Three additional facilities will be operational by the end of 2009. Police presence has effectively increased in more than 50 communities in some of the most remote areas in WA as well as in the tri-state region (NT, SA and WA). This has established an important baseline for law and order. The introduction of mandatory reporting of children with sexually transmitted infections has also provided police and child protection agencies important intelligence to investigate alleged perpetrators of sexual abuse. Immediate responses to incidents of family violence and child sexual abuse are increasing confidence in reporting. There have been significant improvements in community security and safety, more disclosures of family violence and child abuse and a greater emphasis on community engagement and partnership in the development of local solutions. Alcohol supply restrictions in Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing are creating immediate safer environments for children, individuals and families. These restrictions are not intended to be the complete solution to the health and social issues associated with problematic drinking. They are being enhanced by the addition of a range of treatment, support and recreational services. Compulsory Income Management is applied on a case by case basis and is linked to family support. This dual strategy is operational in the East and West Kimberley and in four metropolitan locations. The Department for Child Protection provides ongoing case management and referral (for

	example to home based parenting support, financial counselling) while Centrelink works with families to identify their priority needs and direct their income managed funds accordingly. A Voluntary Income Management scheme has also commenced in these sites. New economic development projects (e.g. Kimberley Gas Precinct, Ord River Development) will create jobs and enterprise development opportunities for Indigenous people. The Ord River Development package will fund education, training health, housing and community based infrastructure which will provide direct improvements to the financial and social wellbeing of the local Indigenous community. In addition to significant and specific Indigenous employment opportunities, the Kimberley Gas Precinct will offer long term arrangements for economic, housing and education funds, cultural preservation and heritage reserves. The way forward will incorporate economic participation as a basis for safer communities.
What was required to implement it?	The initiatives are part of a whole of government approach to establish safety in Indigenous communities. They require significant engagement with local community in planning and implementation.
What are the outcomes or expected outcomes?	Provision of improved safety and security to provide a stable foundation for sustainable economic development. These initiatives have resulted in more timely responses to incidents of violence and abuse, increased community confidence in reporting abuse and violence and greater feelings of safety. Police data is showing that ongoing disclosures since 2007 have led to over 500 charges being laid against perpetrators in the remote Indigenous communities. Affected communities have identified that the impact of alcohol restrictions in Fitzroy Crossing (since October 2007) are delivering some early outcomes in community law and order, safety, security and health. These early indications provide a message of change in the community, with more hope and engagement with each other and with local services. Community leaders, police and hospital staff are reporting improvements in the community security, the health and safety of individuals and families, reduced rates of alcohol related hospitalisations, reduced rates of presentations to Emergency Departments and improved school attendance. Evaluations will determine what has worked well and how these approaches can be implemented in other locations. Feedback suggests that families are also benefiting from the income management scheme linked to wrap around services. Early data shows that people are self referring to the voluntary scheme at a rate of 3:1 (compared to the compulsory scheme).
How does the initiative contribute to best practice learning?	The MFPF model has been nationally recognised as a progressive model for policing in remote communities. It integrates police, child protection and justice services in partnership with local communities.

Victoria

Activity, program, project or tool	Koori Maternity Services Program
Organisation	Government of Victoria, Department of Human Services
Closing the Gap building blocks	▪ Health ▪ Early Childhood
What is it?	The Koori Maternity Services Program is a state government funded program through which Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) provide antenatal and postnatal care for Indigenous mothers and babies. Most services employ a midwife and an Aboriginal health worker with specific qualifications in mothers and babies health to provide a mix of clinical, linkage and advocacy services.
What does it do?	The services provided through the 11 Koori Maternity Services include: ▪ culturally appropriate antenatal and postnatal care for Indigenous mothers and babies; ▪ referrals and linkages for women requiring more complex maternity care; ▪ health promotion specifically relating to maternity care ▪ support for smoking cessation during pregnancy; ▪ advocacy and liaison with mainstream birthing services; and ▪ access to trusted health professionals accepted by the Indigenous community who understand and respect cultural practices and values relating to pregnancy and birthing.
What was required to implement it?	The Victorian Government has invested just over $10 million over 10 years to develop Koori Maternity Services. Other critical factors in establishing the program included: ▪ planning and co-ordination undertaken through VACCHO – the peak organisation representing Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in Victoria; ▪ deliberate strategies to strengthen the capability of ACCHOs to provide a maternity service; and ▪ effective partnerships between mainstream birthing services and ACCHOs.
What are the outcomes or expected outcomes?	▪ Increased participation of pregnant Indigenous women in the recommended number of antenatal visits to improve outcomes for mothers and babies. ▪ Reduce the number of Indigenous babies born with low birth weights. ▪ Work with the Indigenous community to deliver culturally appropriate services during pregnancy, birthing and postnatal stages. ▪ Contribute to improved health status for Indigenous children.
How does the initiative contribute to best practice learning?	The success of the Koori Maternity Services program is based on embedding the Koori Maternity Service activities within Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, and on working in partnership with hospital maternity services at a local level.

	The initiative requires significant engagement with local communities, and recognised peak organisations, for planning, implementation and monitoring.

New South Wales

Activity, program, project or tool	Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service (AMIHS)
Organisation	New South Wales Government, NSW Health
Closing the Gap building blocks	▪ Early Childhood ▪ Health ▪ Safe Communities
What is it?	AMIHS was developed by NSW Health in 2000, in response to the NSW Aboriginal Perinatal Health Report. The Report showed that Aboriginal babies were far more likely than non-Aboriginal babies to die in the first month after birth, had a much higher rate of preterm birth, and almost double the rate of low birth weight (less than 2500 grams) of non-Aboriginal babies. Low birth weight and preterm birth is associated with higher risk of death and illness in the first month after birth. In order to improve the health outcomes of Aboriginal mothers and their babies, the Report recommended a specific model of service provision which included a team approach to community maternity services (midwife and Aboriginal health worker working in partnership), a flexible and non-judgmental approach, and sensitivity to the underlying social and economic circumstances which have such an impact on the lives of Aboriginal people. This model is the core of AMIHS. Another important AMIHS component is the Training and Support Unit (TSU). The aim of the TSU is to break down isolation and to develop networks of support for AMIHS workers though the provision of professional training and support.
What does it do?	The aim of AMIHS is to improve the health of Aboriginal women during pregnancy and decrease peri-natal morbidity and mortality. The programs involve a midwife working in partnership with an Aboriginal Health Worker or Aboriginal Education Officer and in collaboration with existing local medical, maternity, paediatric and child and family health staff to provide care to pregnant Aboriginal women, new mothers, their babies and families in a culturally safe environment. AMIHS provides antenatal and postnatal care up to eight weeks after the baby is born. The service includes support, education and information and help with transport. The programs also include community development activities that improve engagement and provide a holistic approach to developing the health and wellbeing of the women and the families involved.
What was required to implement it?	The total current funding of AMIHS is over $7 million for 31.5 services. The successful implementation of AMIHS is reliant on project management centrally and locally for the development and implementation of:

	▪ a standard service delivery model; ▪ a workforce development and recruitment strategy; and ▪ the provision of a dedicated TSU. Critical components include program orientation, professional development, clinical supervision, workforce sustainability, program workshops/conferences and the promotion of service networks.
What are the outcomes or expected outcomes?	The qualitative and quantitative independent evaluation of the first three years of AMIHS (2001-2004) was completed in late 2005. The evaluation demonstrated: ▪ a decrease in Aboriginal perinatal mortality from 20.4 per 1,000 to 14.2 per 1,000; ▪ a decrease in prematurity (before 37 weeks gestation) from 20 per cent to 11 per cent; ▪ an increase in the number of Aboriginal women accessing antenatal care before 20 weeks pregnant. This is an increase from 65 per cent to 78 per cent, a 13 per cent increase overall; and ▪ an increase in Aboriginal women breastfeeding at six weeks from 59 per cent to 62 per cent in 2004. Strengthening efforts to address risk factors associated with perinatal morbidity and mortality, especially reducing smoking and alcohol use in pregnancy, is an important component of AMIHS. Engaging Aboriginal health workers in health promotion projects such as the *SmokeCheck Training Project* will build the capacity of the workforce and give Aboriginal health workers the skills and confidence to provide smoking cessation advice and support to clients.
How does the initiative contribute to best practice learning?	There are essential elements required to ensure the sustainability of the program and the improved outcomes for this population. These include: ▪ the midwife and Aboriginal health worker/education officer working in partnership; ▪ a dedicated Training and Support Unit; ▪ a community based, culturally sensitive, continuity of care model that is flexible and tailored to the local needs of the community; ▪ community development and health promotion initiatives alongside antenatal and postnatal care; ▪ effective local Aboriginal community partnerships and collaboration with the Aboriginal community controlled sector; and ▪ collaboration with general practice, maternity, paediatric and child and family health staff and clear systems for transfer of information between health care providers.

Northern Territory

Activity, program, project or tool	'Working Future' is the Northern Territory's long term strategic framework for remote investment and service delivery. *As a specific example of best practice remote service delivery under the 'Working Future' framework, the presentation will include a focus on the eHealthNT – Shared Electronic Health Record project.*
Organisation	Northern Territory Government
Closing the Gap Building Blocks	All
What is it?	'Working Future' is the Northern Territory Government's long-term strategic investment and service delivery framework for the remote Territory. The strategy has six components: 1. **Territory Growth Towns:** An initiative to grow 20 key remote communities into proper towns that will become the economic and service delivery hub for their regions, servicing more than 80 percent of the Territory's population outside our urban and regional centres. Residents will have access to services and amenities available in similar sized rural towns anywhere in Australia. 2. **Outstations and Homelands**: A policy that will provide clarity and certainty to outstations and homelands about future government support. A new funding disbursement methodology will be developed along with a Statement of Expectation of Service Delivery for each and every occupied outstation. 3. **Remote Service Delivery:** Building on the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery, the 15 Remote Service Delivery priority locations will be prioritised for development as Territory Growth Towns. Remote funding reform will see short term funding arrangements replaced with long-term, multi-year funding giving communities the ability to plan for the future. 4. **Employment and Economic Development:** Secure land tenure will pave the way for private investment in remote towns and provide the foundation for the Australian Government's new Indigenous Economic Development Strategy. An audit will be completed in each of the 20 towns to assess the jobs market and potential for local businesses, and to identify areas where private investment can be encouraged. 5. **Remote Transport Strategy:** An integrated remote transport strategy is under development to support the Government's hub service delivery model and to facilitate improved participation in the mainstream economy. With proper transport systems in place and better roads, people will be able to stay on outstations while accessing the services they need in the nearby towns. 6. **Targets and Evaluation:** The six COAG Closing the Gap targets, along with sub-targets and performance indicators under various National Partnership Agreements, have been adopted as the measurement framework for 'A Working Future'. *eHealthNT is an example of how new technologies are being explored as a way to implement the hub service delivery model of 'Working Future'. It is one example of Territory innovation that is advancing healthcare delivery in remote areas. eHealthNT offers a range of services that assist healthcare providers to*

	securely store, share and transmit important healthcare information so that it is available when and where it is needed for care. The Shared Electronic Health Record is one initiative that forms part of a broader eHealthNT project.[4]
What does it do?	'Working Future' sets the frame for future remote investment and service delivery, putting into action the agreed COAG National Principles for Investments in Remote Locations. *The eHealthNT Shared Electronic Health Record repository stores summaries of an individual's healthcare attendances that can be accessed by health professionals from their clinical desktop at the point of care. With consent, summary healthcare information is transmitted when an individual visits a participating health care provider such as a Northern Territory public hospital, a health centre or a GP. Available information includes a Current Health Profile, containing accumulative information about allergies, alerts, current health problems, current medications, diagnostic test results and immunisation history. The record is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.*
What was required to implement it?	'Working Future' acknowledges that a partnership approach with communities and cooperative arrangements within and across all tiers of government is required to implement the new remote service delivery and investment reforms. Local town and service planning will ensure that residents are partners to the process, and coordination across governments will be achieved through the appointment of the Northern Territory's Coordinator-General for Remote Service Delivery, new joined up remote service delivery arrangements and a good working relationship with local government. *For example, through the eHealthNT project, the Northern Territory and Australian Governments have jointly invested $45 million over 5 years in ICT infrastructure and e-health solutions and services. Partnerships have been developed with the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory, General Practice Network NT and Katherine Regional Aboriginal Health and Related Services.*
What are the outcomes or expected outcomes?	'Working Future' will result in better services, better outcomes from services, better infrastructure and amenities, more jobs, economic development and private investment, safer roads, long-term funding certainty to outstation / homeland residents and program and service providers. It focuses on tangible and practical results. *For example, the eHealthNT Shared Electronic Health Record service has been enthusiastically embraced by Indigenous healthcare consumers and is well-utilised by healthcare professionals in day-to-day service delivery. Already there are:* ▪ *34,000 consumers registered, predominantly Indigenous people;* ▪ *74 participating health centres, GPs and hospitals;* ▪ *over 2,500 clinicians registered including GPs, Aboriginal Health Workers, Remote Area Nurses, Hospital Clinicians and Allied Health Professionals; and* ▪ *participating Health Services in the Kimberley region of Western Australia*

[4] Note there are a number of other projects under eHealthNT including: Secure Electronic Messaging Service; Electronic Transfer of Prescriptions; Childhood Immunisation Records portal; Medchart Advanced Medication; Management in Acute care, Residential Aged Care and Primary Care; Accelerated implementation of the Primary Care Information System into Northern Territory Government remote health centres and prisons.

	and the APY Lands in South Australia. *Work is progressing to expand the Shared Electronic Health Record service to Northern Territory prisons, the new Palmerston GP Superclinic, as well as South Australia's public hospitals, which provide tertiary services to Northern Territory residents.*
How does the initiative contribute to best practice learning?	'Working Future' represents a comprehensive response to the challenges of working to service and promote greater self-responsibility of Indigenous people living in remote areas. *In this way, the eHealthNT project:* ▪ *provides easy, fast and secure electronic access to reliable and comprehensive information;* ▪ *helps to overcome difficulties of distance and provide patient centred care in an environment involving multiple providers across the public and private sectors; and* ▪ *alleviates difficulties in responding to health outcomes of a highly mobile population with high health needs.*

Australian Capital Territory

Activity, program, project or tool	Integrated Service Delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Project
Organisation	Australian Capital Territory Government Departments of Disability, Housing and Community Services, and of Education and Training, and ACT Health
Closing the Gap building blocks	▪ Early Childhood ▪ Schooling ▪ Health ▪ Healthy Homes ▪ Safe Communities
What is it?	The Integrated Service Delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People Project was set up to develop and foster an integrated and coordinated approach to service delivery across identified health, education and family support services.
What does it do?	The project focuses on at-risk Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people's education, health and wellbeing and aims to improve outcomes for these children and youth, and their families, particularly in regard to strengthening the children's transition to school and their transition from primary to high school.
What was required to implement it?	The project is an initiative across three government agencies – the Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, the Department of Education and Training (DET) and ACT Health. So far, the ACT Government has committed over $3 million towards the initiative. The funds are being used to establish a dedicated team of professionals to work with vulnerable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families utilising an integrated case management and coordination framework.

What are the outcomes or expected outcomes?	As at 30 June 2009, the project is working with 17 Indigenous families, comprising 94 individuals – 32 adults and 62 children.
How does the initiative contribute to best practice learning?	Integral to the project is the voluntary involvement of the families in the decision-making process, particularly decisions about the provision of support services to them and about the people and community services they prefer to work with as their primary contacts. In accordance with general case management practices, this project is about identifying an Indigenous family in need, undertaking an assessment of that family in terms of their issues and needs and then developing and implementing a case management plan in partnership with that family.

Tasmania

Activity, program, project or tool	Aboriginal Early Years Initiative
Organisation	Department of Education, Aboriginal Education Services
Closing the Gap building blocks	▪ Early Childhood ▪ Schooling
What is it?	The Aboriginal Early Years initiative has been supporting parents/caregivers of Indigenous children aged 0-5 since 2005. The program employs four Aboriginal Early Years Liaison Officers state-wide to work closely with parents/caregivers of Indigenous children from birth to 5 years of age. Successful projects include 'Make and Take Workshops' where a variety of resources are made by the families for use at home to support early literacy and numeracy acquisition.
What does it do?	The Aboriginal Early Years Liaison Officers are also involved in implementing the Universal Access to Early Childhood Education Project for Indigenous children aged five. This project aims to identify all Indigenous students who are not enrolled in Kindergarten and to support their parents/caregivers in the enrolment process. It also aims to monitor attendance and support parents/caregivers to enable their children to attend Kindergarten and to support transition into primary schooling.
What was required to implement it?	The success of the initiative is built on partnership and engagement of the Aboriginal community; firstly with outreach workers, and then with schools. The employment of Aboriginal people in the program is pivotal to achieving effective engagement. A strong cultural context for learning and utilisation of traditional practices and resources is also important for sustaining inclusive practice.
What are the outcomes or expected outcomes?	The initiative has been successful in connecting Indigenous families with their local early years education services and providing parents with culturally appropriate activities to assist them to nurture and stimulate their children's learning with emphasis on early literacy, language development and school readiness. The program has operated since 2005 and has included over 400 children and 175 families during the period. This cohort of children are now beginning to indicate improved outcomes – evident

	in 2008 results across all Year 3 indicators. For example, the gap in numeracy outcomes has reduced from 9.9 percent in 2006, to 2.2 percent in 2008.
How does the initiative contribute to best practice learning?	The Aboriginal Early Years initiative contributes to building the capacity of the Department of Education's *Launching into Learning* program to successfully engage Aboriginal families. The *Launching into Learning* program is providing $12.6 million over four years to enable schools to develop a culture and provide programs that recognize and value learning from birth, and to network and share successful practice. The Aboriginal Early Years initiative is becoming an integral part of this program, especially in areas where there is a high Aboriginal population.

South Australia

Activity, program, project or tool	The South Australian Aboriginal Sports Training Academy
Organisation	Department of the Premier and Cabinet (Social Inclusion Unit) and Department of Education and Children's Services
Closing the Gap building blocks	▪ Governance and leadership ▪ Safe Communities ▪ Economic Participation ▪ Health ▪ Schooling
What is it?	The South Australian Aboriginal Sports Training Academy (SAASTA) works with young Aboriginal men and women (aged between16-24) in their final school years to fulfil their aspirations for a career in sport, health and recreation. The Academy is an initiative of the Social Inclusion Board, and is managed by the Department of Education and Children's Services. SAASTA operates at the Para West Adult Campus, Kaurna Plains School, John Pirie Secondary School, Port Lincoln High School, Coober Pedy Area School and Ceduna Area School. Negotiations are underway to extend the program to three more schools in Whyalla, Murray Bridge and Christies Beach in 2010. SAASTA builds on existing sporting and teaching resources available to these schools. Teachers are supported to become Coordinators for the SAASTA program, and financial support is available for the schools to purchase further equipment, goods and services required to run the program. The success of SAASTA depends on partnerships with the Sports Industry, the Aboriginal community, local government and the corporate sector. Peak sporting bodies such as Netball SA and Basketball SA provide elite coaching, and organisations such as the Central District Football Club provide access to their facilities. Recently, the South Australian Dental Service partnered with the Academy to provide dental care for students. The Football Federation of South Australia has also established a partnership with

	SAASTA to support young Aboriginal people to compete in national championships.
What does it do?	All students study an integrated SACE/VET curriculum, and are awarded nationally recognised certificates in sports and recreation upon completion of the Academy's programme. Students are encouraged to complete Year 12. As well as qualified teachers, the Academy staff includes coaches who build students' skills in football, netball, basketball and athletics. The school's Aboriginal Community Education Officer supports the program to engage with the Aboriginal community at the local level. Students are also encouraged to become active in their community and develop their leadership skills. For instance, SAASTA students run sports programs for younger children and give presentations on their experiences. Many of the Academy's students face significant disadvantage. Therefore, SAASTA has a flexible approach to offering students with learning difficulties improved case management support by providing connection with other service agencies, breakfast and lunch programs and support incentives such as participation in the Aboriginal Power Cup.
What was required to implement it?	A project coordination team was required to implement SAASTA. It also required support from schools, the local community and partners, such as local football clubs.
How does the initiative contribute to best practice learning?	Since 2005, over 260 Aboriginal students have participated in SAASTA, with 116 students currently enrolled. In 2008, six Aboriginal students completed Year 12, Stage II SACE, bringing the total number of Aboriginal SACE graduates through the Academy to eleven. A further 20 students completed Year 11, Stage I SACE in 2008 and are enrolled in SACE II for 2009. The following accreditations were also awarded to SAASTA students in 2008: ▪ 200 coaching certificates in basketball, football, athletics and netball; ▪ 40 Senior First Aid certificates; and ▪ 140 umpiring certificates in basketball, football, athletics and netball. Six SAASTA graduates are currently studying at Adelaide University and an AFL football team has recruited SAASTA graduates.

Queensland

Activity, program, project or tool	Cape York Welfare Reform Trial
Organisation	Queensland Government, Department of Communities
Closing the Gap building blocks	All
What is it?	The Cape York Welfare Reform (CYWR) trial commenced in January 2008 and will run for four years in the Cape York communities of Aurukun, Coen,

	Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. The CYWR trial is based on a partnership between community and government in working towards achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The CYWR trial aims to transition people from passive welfare dependence to engagement in the real economy, and to rebuild basic social norms that are the fabric of any society – such as sending children to school, abiding by the law, and taking care of one's family or house.
What does it do?	The CYWR trial seeks to achieve these changes through a range of projects grouped under four streams – education, housing, economic opportunity and social responsibility. A central reform initiative is the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) that links improved care of children directly to receipt of welfare and other government assistance payments. It also works with families in partnership with community leaders and connects them with a wide range of support services. The FRC is an independent, statutory body, headed by a highly experienced, legally qualified Commissioner as well as Local Commissioners, who are well-respected community leaders. The FRC acts on notifications from Queensland Government departments and the Magistrates Court. Once a notice is received, Commissioners hold conferences with individuals and families as well as designated community members to ensure effective help and support is provided. These conferences are often held in the local Indigenous languages, for example, Wik in Aurukun.
What was required to implement it?	The Queensland Government has established a partnership with the Australian Government, the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership (CYI) and the four communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge. New legislation was introduced to establish the FRC under the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (Qld). The Australian Government also enacted changes to the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* (Cth) to enable the FRC to work with Centrelink on the income management components of the trial. A new model of integrated service delivery was developed to support the FRC and to assist in creating an environment that develops positive social norms in the Cape York communities. For example, the FRC is supported by a network of services including: ▪ Wellbeing Centres, providing counselling, support, and assistance ▪ School Attendance Case Managers, supporting parents to ensure children attend school every day and that their children's educational needs are met. There are also Family Income Management programs to assist with family budgeting. The FRC's conferencing style ensures that compulsory income management is ordered as a last resort.

	Additional support services being rolled out in 2009 include enhanced positive parenting services, alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs, as well as gambling support and family violence support programs.
What are the outcomes or expected outcomes?	While it is still too early to see clear trends, there are indications from the FRC's most recent Quarterly Report that improvements are emerging. These early signs of success include: ▪ increased school attendance; ▪ decreased court appearances; ▪ increased use of support services. In addition there has been an increase in people volunteering to use Family Income Management services. Centrelink data suggests that over 90 per cent of income managed welfare payments are spent on food, clothing and other essentials such as whitegoods. To develop an understanding of the trends over time there is a rolling evaluation program culminating in a complete appraisal of the trial's outcomes and a report by early 2012.
How does the initiative contribute to best practice learning?	The CYWR trial is built on an innovative partnership approach to address entrenched social challenges which cannot be achieved by governments alone. The Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership was instrumental in designing the trial as well as determining key policy principles of welfare reform. With financial support and program implementation from the Queensland and Australian Governments, a unique partnership emerged to drive place based and targeted reform initiatives for individuals and local Cape York communities. The Queensland and the Australian Governments have also combined to establish pooled funds to support local, community specific activities. For example, 'Pride of Place' provides monetary incentives for individuals and groups who spend their own money on gardening, painting and other improvements to private and public spaces. A key learning has been the approach to rebuilding social norms and local Indigenous authority through appointing respected Elders to positions of responsibility as Local Commissioners. This helps empowers the elders to re-establish local Indigenous community values of respect and responsibility and sends a clear message about appropriate community behaviour. Local Commissioners have already proven effective in re-establishing local authority and acting as role models. Conducting FRC conferences in local languages is a key success factor. Continuous program evaluation will provide valuable learning's about place based, social change programs in a small community, including the effective use of incentives and deterrents in rebuilding social norms.