



Australian Government



**Prime
Minister's
Report 2010**

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Executive summary

The Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, and in particular the Stolen Generations, in February 2008 created the opportunity for a shared future and a fresh beginning for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

This was based on three principles:

- A clear acknowledgement and recognition of previous wrongdoing and failed policies;
- A practical commitment to closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, setting specific targets and working in partnerships based on mutual responsibility and respect; and
- A commitment to transparency and accountability in measuring progress over time.

For decades, successive Commonwealth, state and territory governments have not faced up to taking responsibility for inadequate housing and services in remote communities. They have also provided inadequate health, education and community services to many Indigenous people in regional and urban areas.

This was evident in the facts facing us at the time of the Apology. The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancy at birth was estimated at 17 years.¹ Indigenous children in Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory were 3.6 times more likely to die before they reached the age of five than non-Indigenous children.² Almost one in 10 dwellings in remote and very remote Indigenous communities was in need of

major repair or replacement.³ In 2006 only 47.4 per cent of Indigenous young people had attained Year 12 or equivalent.⁴ The employment gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 stood at around 21 percentage points in 2008⁵.

In other areas, such as literacy and numeracy, comparable national data did not exist, though a large gap in achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was evident⁶. Without a sound evidence base it was impossible to understand what was and what was not working well; and impossible to track our progress, in closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

Targets to Close the Gap

In November 2008, for the first time in Australian history, Australian Governments took a new approach. They agreed to work towards six clear and specific targets to significantly reduce the gap in life expectancy and opportunities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

These targets are:

- **Close the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation:** Currently the gap has been revised to 11.5 years for Indigenous men and 9.7 years for Indigenous women.

1 ABS *Deaths Australia* 2005, ABC CAT 3302.0, ABS; Canberra

2 ABS *Deaths Australia*, unpublished data, ABS Canberra

3 ABS *2007 Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities*, Australia, 2006, ABS CAT 4710.0, ABS Canberra

4 ABS 2006 Census of population and housing

5 The employment gap relates to the difference between the workforce-age employment-population ratio for Indigenous Australians and the workforce-age employment-population ratio for non-Indigenous Australians, with the data for Indigenous Australians sourced from the 2008 NATSISS the data for non-Indigenous Australians sourced from the 2008 SEW

6 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

- **Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five by 2018:** Indigenous children under 5 are more likely to die than non-Indigenous children.
- **Ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities by 2013:** Just over 60 per cent of Indigenous children are enrolled in early childhood education programs in the year before school compared to around 70 per cent for all children.
- **Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievement for Indigenous children by 2018:** Only 63.4 per cent of Indigenous Year 5 students were at or above the national minimum standard for reading compared to 92.6 per cent of their non-Indigenous counterparts.
- **Halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020:** Non-Indigenous 20–24 year olds are almost twice as likely to attain a Year 12 or equivalent qualification as their Indigenous counterparts.
- **Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018:** In 2008, almost 54 per cent of the Indigenous working-age population was employed compared with 75 per cent of the non-Indigenous working-age population.

In setting these targets to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, Australian Governments set out a program of large scale new investments, robust measurement to hold governments to account and a new way of working with Indigenous communities and their leaders.

Mutual responsibility and respect is core to our approach to closing the gap. Meeting the challenge of closing the gap cannot be done by Governments alone. Indigenous communities must take responsibility for

their futures too if we are to see real and sustainable change. The broader Australian community must also take on the challenge if we are to make concrete steps towards these critical targets.

Transparent and accountable

Over the past year, significant work has been undertaken to improve the collection and reporting of baseline, output and outcome data, to better track progress in closing the gap.

Governments and communities must be prepared to be transparent and accountable about what is working and what is not. Without tracking our progress against our targets, we cannot hope to close the gap.

To these ends:

- The Australian Government has committed to making an annual report to Parliament on progress and impediments in moving towards the closing the gap targets.
- In July 2009, the Australian Government committed an additional \$46.4 million over four years to improve the collection and reporting of data by national agencies, and in October 2009 the Closing the Gap Clearing House was launched to provide a central source of information on what has been demonstrated to work in closing the gap. Accurate and appropriate data remains a central challenge to tracking progress.
- In May 2010, the COAG Reform Council will publish its first report, providing a baseline and initial assessment against the COAG commitments on Indigenous early childhood, schooling, health, economic participation, housing, safe communities and governance and leadership.
- The Productivity Commission reports every two years on progress in overcoming Indigenous disadvantage. From 2009

onwards, this report is providing a public report card on the closing the gap targets.

- In last year's report to Parliament a new position of Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services was announced, with the power to assess the effectiveness of the COAG remote strategy and, if necessary, to 'name and shame' governments or agencies that are not fulfilling their commitments. The Coordinator General was appointed in July 2009, and published his first public six-monthly report in December 2009.

When reporting demonstrates that investments are not being delivered on the ground, the Commonwealth will act. Following concerns over the delivery of the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program in the Northern Territory in 2009, the Government took steps to address obstacles to implementation, and sent senior Commonwealth officers to co-manage the program and accelerate progress. In December 2009, Australian governments agreed to renegotiate the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing to strengthen requirements and incentives for jurisdictions to deliver on capital works targets on budget and within agreed timeframes.

Central to the Government's commitment to closing the gap is the \$4.6 billion COAG investment in Indigenous specific national partnerships, which is comprised of:

- An additional \$1.94 billion for remote Indigenous housing, taking total investment to \$5.5 billion over 10 years
- \$1.57 billion for Indigenous health over four years
- \$564.4 million for early childhood development over six years
- \$228.9 million for Indigenous economic development over five years

- \$291.2 million to improve remote service delivery over six years

Action on the ground

The Government's commitment to closing the gap is driven by three policy imperatives:

- Address decades of under-investment in services, infrastructure and governance;
- Re-build the positive social norms that underpin daily routines like going to school and work, and which foster community-led solutions; and,
- Re-set the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The challenge for the nation is immense, but action is underway on the ground.

Addressing decades of under-investment in services, infrastructure and governance

In health:

- The Australian Government's annual expenditure has increased to almost \$1 billion, by 57 per cent, since 2007–08 on Indigenous specific health programs.



- We have approved 53 new services for funding, including 40 services established, across Australia to provide child and maternal health services. A total of 11,000 mothers and babies will be assisted over five years under the \$90.3 million Mothers and Babies Services program.
- As part of the Central Australian Integrated Eye Health Strategy, 416 eye surgeries have been completed since 2007. This includes 52 eye surgeries completed in 2009–10 under the Improving Eye and Ear Health Services for Indigenous Australians for Better Education and Employment Outcomes measure.
- In the Northern Territory Emergency Response communities, we have provided 390 ear, nose and throat (ENT) consultations to 385 children and ENT surgery to 109 children between July and December 2009. We have provided a total of 1,990 dental services to 1,429 children over the same period.
- The Australian Government has also placed 273 health professionals in remote primary health care services on short term placements as part of the Remote Area Health Corps (RAHC). This includes 31 general practitioners, 178 registered nurses, 22 allied health Professionals and 42 dental personnel.

In education:

- We have recruited and deployed almost half of the 200 teachers in remote Northern Territory communities.
- In 2009, 43 projects were delivered under the Sporting Chance program for 9,000 students. Reports in 2009 show that for students at schools with a Sporting Chance academy, the attendance rate was around 6 per cent better for those students participating in the program.
- We provided daily meals to children in 67 communities in the Northern Territory covering 65 schools to help

them concentrate during the day. This includes over 2,600 breakfasts and over 4,400 lunches each school day with over 197 people employed to deliver these meals. 79 per cent of employees are local Indigenous people.

- Dr Chris Sarra's Stronger Smarter Learning Communities received \$16.4 million in Australian Government funding in September 2009 to support an initial 12 schools and communities in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia to become hub schools, which support and develop other schools in their region. This is anticipated to grow to 60 hub schools supporting 180 to 240 affiliated schools over the next 4 years.
- The Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) funded 45 scholarships for Indigenous secondary school students to attend boarding school in regional and urban areas. This is expected to increase to more than 100 scholarships in 2010.

In safer communities:

- We are implementing a \$150 million plan to transform the Alice Springs Town Camps to give residents a better chance at a safe, healthy life. The clean up and the 'fix and make safe' programs are close to completion across all town camps, and work on the first new houses and refurbishments will start soon.
- We have provided \$1.2 billion in extra investment for the Northern Territory Emergency Response since November 2007. Over sixty extra police have been deployed to remote Northern Territory communities, over 16,600 people are on income management, 81 night patrols are active, over 14,000 health checks have been undertaken and 66 community stores have been licensed for income management so that locals can buy fresh food and essentials.

- We have committed over \$19 million to build three new police stations and accommodation for extra police and child protection workers on the APY Lands in South Australia. Two of these stations are now operational and the third will be completed in coming months.
- We have provided leadership in child protection and family violence through the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children and the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women, due for release in the first half of 2010.

In housing and infrastructure

- We have started implementing major housing reforms to underpin long term housing investments. Indigenous communities have agreed to whole-of-township leases for Nguui in the Tiwi Islands, and for Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra on Groote Eylandt. Housing leases have been signed for 14 communities in the Northern Territory as well as on the APY Lands in South Australia, and in-principle agreement has been reached in the communities of Palm Island and Woorabinda in Queensland. Leases have also been signed for 17 Alice Springs Town Camps and new tenure arrangements are in place in Ilpeye Ilpeye to provide options for home ownership.
- We have taken unprecedented action to ensure the Northern Territory Indigenous housing program is on track to deliver on its targets. Over 50 new houses are under construction in Wadeye; Nguui on the Tiwi Islands; the Groote Eylandt communities of Angurugu and Umbakumba; Gunbalanya and Maningrida. New houses are being completed and families are moving in. Over 70 rebuilds and refurbishments have been also completed and are being allocated to families. Many previously unusable kitchens and bathrooms are now functional. Over 80 existing houses in poor condition are currently being rebuilt or refurbished.
- Under the Nation Building and Jobs Plan, funding has been provided for the construction of new social housing dwellings and refurbishment of existing social housing which will benefit Indigenous people. As at end-January 2010, construction commenced on more than 7,700 new dwellings and around 475 had been completed.
- The Government's \$6.2 billion investment in social housing will improve the supply of new dwellings for Indigenous Australians in urban and regional Australia.

In early childhood services

- The locations for 36 Children and Family Centres under the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreement have been finalised. Twenty-one will be located in regional and remote locations. The first centre will be operating by the end of this year with the majority of centres operational in the next two years.
- In November 2009 we commenced construction of a 24 bed facility in Cairns under the Indigenous Mothers' Accommodation Fund. In addition, in December 2009, construction began on the extension of an existing hostel in Katherine.
- We have assisted around 1,049 children and parents through playgroups in the Northern Territory in 2008–09. Playgroups with structured learning are designed to strengthen early childhood development and the parenting skills of Indigenous families.

In remote service delivery

- To tackle disadvantage in 29 priority remote communities in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales, we have committed to deliver the same level of services and infrastructure found in other Australian communities of equivalent size, location and need.
- We have appointed the new Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services to drive reforms and placed Government Business Managers in each of the 29 priority communities. Eleven Indigenous Engagement Officers have also been recruited to assist communities and Government Business Managers, and further recruitment is well under way.
- Around \$84 million was approved under the Building the Education Revolution for school projects including new classrooms, school halls and libraries in the 29 Remote Service Delivery communities, including Doomadgee State School and Halls Creek District High School.

Rebuilding the positive social norms in those communities where they have broken down to underpin daily routines like going to school and work and supporting community-led solutions

Through welfare reform

- The Australian Government is introducing major welfare reforms to roll out a new income management scheme in disadvantaged locations. The scheme will protect children, fight passive welfare and strengthen families, and will commence in the Northern Territory on 1 July 2010.
- Over 16,600 people are supported by income management under the Northern Territory Emergency Response. Over 200 people in Western Australia are also income managed under the trial of

the Child Protection Scheme of Income Management and over 300 people have signed up for voluntary income management in Western Australia. These schemes are operating across metropolitan Perth and the Kimberley. Income management ensures welfare is being spent in the best interests of children.

- Early evidence suggests that the Cape York Welfare Reform Trials, a partnership between the Australian Government, Queensland Government, the Cape York Institute and the Queensland communities of Coen, Aurukun, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge, are yielding positive results. For example, school attendance has increased in Aurukun from an average attendance rate of 37 per cent 12 months ago to an average rate of 63 per cent today. The community-led Family Responsibilities Commission has delivered 252 school attendance notices to parents, some of which have resulted in their income being managed.

More employment opportunities

- Major reforms to employment programs are ensuring more Indigenous people can get the skills needed to get and keep a job. Over 18,000 Indigenous job placements have been recorded by Job Services Australia providers since 1 July 2009.
- In the 2008–09 financial year, around 28,300 commencements in employment and training were made through the Indigenous Employment Program, an 18 per cent increase over the previous year.
- CDEP reform funded the creation of over 1,500 properly paid jobs for government service delivery that had previously relied on CDEP, 1,236 through the Commonwealth and 306 through the state governments.

- Over 540 Indigenous rangers are working on the land through the Government's Working on Country program, an increase from 124 in 2007.
- Employment targets on major government infrastructure programs are ensuring more Indigenous people get training and work experience. Employment of Indigenous people on the Strategic Infrastructure and Indigenous Housing Program (SIHIP) is currently exceeding the target of 20 per cent with Indigenous employees currently making up 40 per cent of the total SIHIP workforce. On the Tiwi Islands Indigenous employment as a percentage of the total workforce is 60 per cent and at Tennant Creek it is 39 per cent.

In housing reform

- The Government is working with state and territory Governments to introduce standard tenancy arrangements in Indigenous housing across Australia. Tenants will be expected to pay appropriate rent on time, cover the cost of any damage and not disturb the peace of their neighbours. State and territory governments will have clear responsibilities to undertake maintenance. To date, over 650 tenancies in five Queensland communities (Aurukun, Lockhart River, Naprannum, Doomadgee and Wujal Wujal) have been transitioned to standard tenancy arrangements.
- The Government is increasing the opportunities for home ownership for Indigenous Australians. Township leases in the Northern Territory communities of Nguju and on Groote Eylandt are providing opportunities for home ownership on Indigenous land. Over 14,000 Indigenous families in urban and regional areas have now bought their homes through Indigenous Business Australia's home loan program since 1975.
- The Government is supporting community solutions to social problems like alcohol control and violence. In communities like Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Doomadgee, and Groote Eylandt, local residents are leading the way with community alcohol restrictions, which are resulting in falls in the numbers of arrests and incidents of injury and violence.

Re-setting the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians

Through leadership by Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians

- The Government is supporting the establishment of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples to give Indigenous people a stronger voice in public life. The Congress is expected to become fully operational in early 2011 after the current establishment period is complete.
- In 2009–2010, approximately 900 Indigenous men and women are expected to participate in the Government's Indigenous Leadership Program, with 656 having participated to date.
- In 29 remote locations, Indigenous men and women are engaged in local planning with all levels of government to jointly determine priorities for the future development of their communities.

Through participating in the economic and social life of Australia

- The corporate and community sectors are increasingly engaged in closing the gap. One hundred and sixty five Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) are in place across Australia's workplaces creating an estimated 6,500 jobs for Indigenous people, with 3,000 filled to date, and \$750 million of contracts awarded to Indigenous businesses.

- The Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council was launched in September 2009. Since then, over \$3.3 million in contracts have been signed between Indigenous suppliers and corporate businesses and government agencies.
- The Australian Employment Covenant (AEC), launched in October 2008, is a private sector led initiative with an ambitious target of securing 50,000 jobs for Indigenous Australians. The Australian Government has committed to supporting the AEC, including \$4 million in start-up funding and a long-term funding model based on the achievement of outcomes. The AEC has received commitments by Australian employers to hire in excess of 16,000 Indigenous job seekers. Work is underway to convert those commitments into sustainable job outcomes for Indigenous Australians.
- The Government provided \$50.1 million over four years to settle native title claims, improve agreement-making and provide certainty for all stakeholders. Recognising native title in this way breaks down barriers to investment and infrastructure on Indigenous land.

Through respect and understanding

- The Australian Government has made a statement of support for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and joined with the international community in affirming the aspirations of all Indigenous peoples.
- Legislation has been introduced into Parliament to lift the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act in relation to its application to the Northern Territory Emergency Response and the Cape York welfare reforms.
- A newly-established Healing Foundation is working with communities to strengthen

culture and give families the tools to help break the cycle of trauma and grief.

- The Government is overhauling the process of the repatriation of Indigenous remains from international institutions to make them more inclusive of Indigenous aspirations.

Through supporting Indigenous culture and heritage

- In August 2009, the Government moved to preserve the 145 Indigenous languages still spoken in Australia through a National Indigenous Languages Action Plan supported by \$9.3 million in 2009–10 for community-based language maintenance and revival projects across the country.
- The Government has also acted to support Indigenous art centres with funding of \$10.67 million in 2009–10, recognising their major contribution to Indigenous employment, education and cultural and social wellbeing, particularly in remote communities.
- Government funding of \$7.1 million will also support a range of festivals and visual and performing arts, including music, dance and other cultural events to showcase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and encourage young Indigenous Australians to stay connected to their cultures.
- The Government is also supporting 115 Indigenous community broadcasting projects in metropolitan, regional and remote Australia with \$14.58 million in 2009–10.



Section 1

Progress against targets

This section provides a statistical overview of Australia's Indigenous population, presents available baseline data for the targets, measures of progress, and brief context for the challenges of measuring progress accurately.

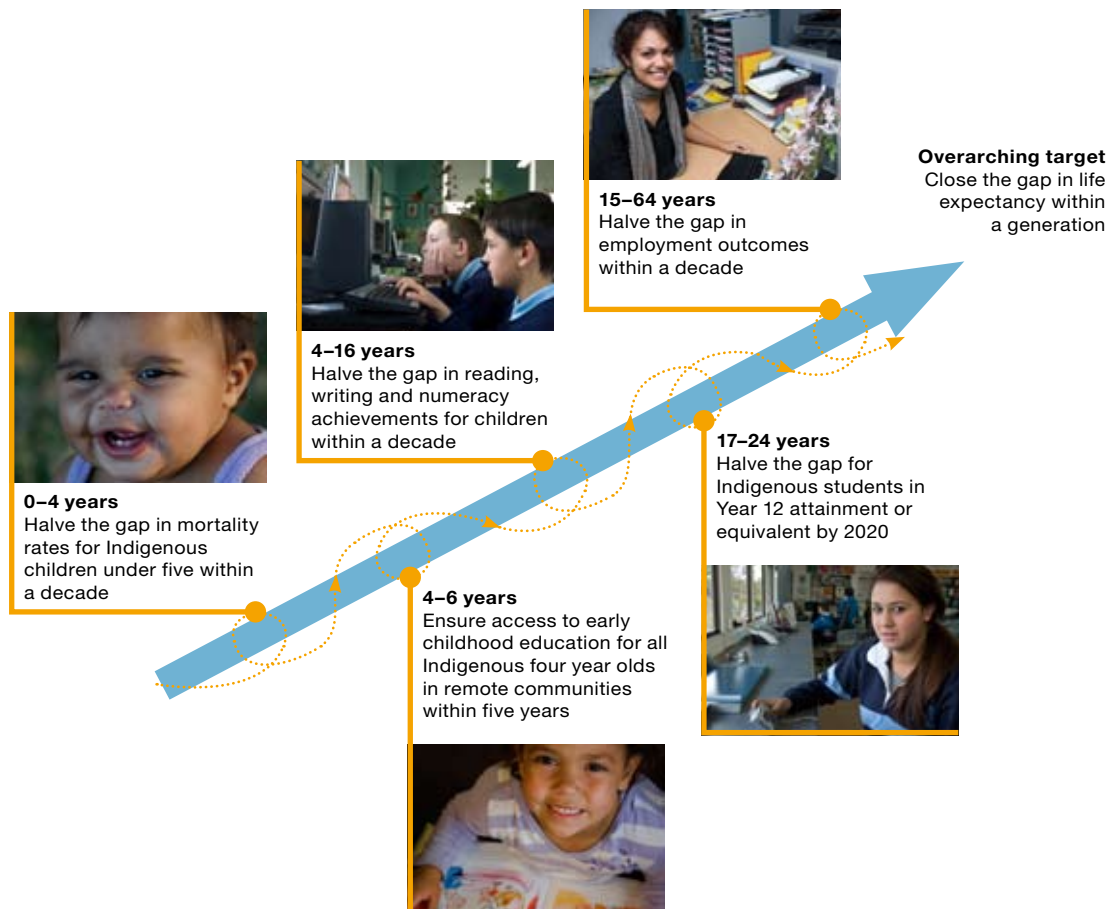
In most cases, two years since the Apology, data is not yet available to allow us to measure where we are on the path to reaching the targets. In 2009 we worked to establish baseline data and invested in improving the collection and reporting of Indigenous data.

In May this year, the COAG Reform Council will publish its first report, providing a baseline and initial assessment against the

COAG commitments on Indigenous early childhood, schooling, health and economic participation. Every year thereafter, it will publish data assessing and reporting the performance of governments against their commitments.

In July 2009 the Australian Government committed an additional \$46.4 million over four years to improve the collection and reporting of data by national agencies, and in October the Closing the Gap Clearing House was launched to provide a central source of information on what has been demonstrated to work in closing the gap. Accurate and appropriate data remains a central challenge to tracking progress.

Figure 1: The Closing the Gap targets



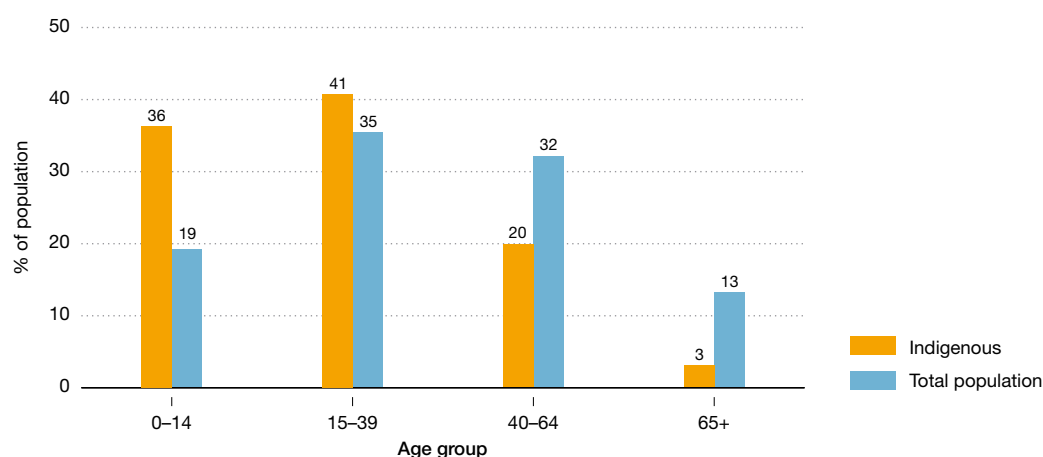
Australia's Indigenous population

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comprise 2.5 per cent of the Australian population. The Indigenous population is projected to grow from 517,000 in 2006 to as large as 721,100 in 2021. The projected annual growth rate of 2.2 per cent⁷ is substantially higher than the growth of between 1.2 and 1.7 per cent projected for the total Australian population. Some authors predict that Australia's Indigenous population could grow even faster than the ABS forecast above⁸.

The Indigenous population is young compared to the total population (see Figure 2). The relatively high proportion of people aged 0–14 is due to high fertility rates among Indigenous women and high mortality rates across all age groups. Population projections indicate the Indigenous population will remain relatively youthful, with the median age projected to increase from 21.5 years to 24.1 years⁹ from 2009 to 2021.

The Indigenous population is young

Figure 2: Population distribution by age group and Indigenous status, Australia 2009



Source: ABS 3101.0 *Australian Demographic Statistics, Jun 2009*; ABS 3238.0 *Experimental Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 1991 to 2021*

The Indigenous population is concentrated in New South Wales and Queensland, which together comprise 57.8 per cent of the total Indigenous population (see Figure 3 below). Western Australia and the Northern Territory also have large populations of Indigenous people.

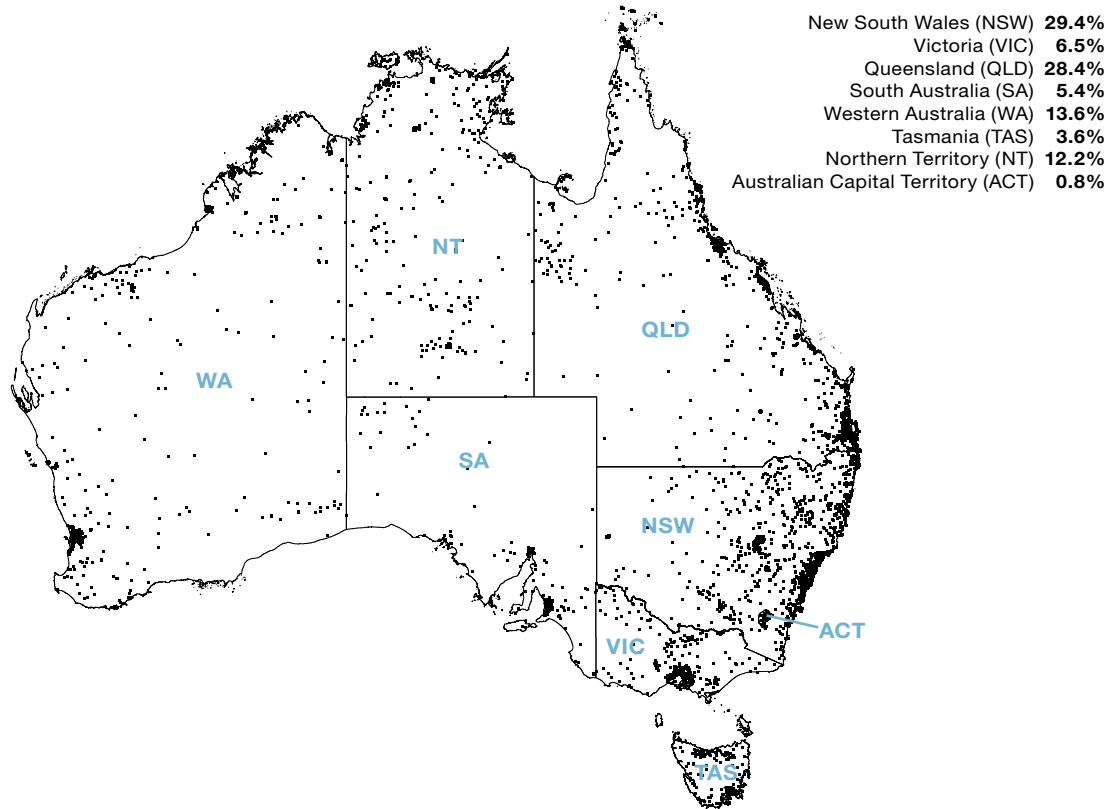
⁷ ABS 3238.0 *Experimental Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 1991 to 2021*

⁸ Biddle & Taylor, 2009

⁹ Assumes increasing life expectancy over the next 15 years for Indigenous Australians

57.8 per cent of Indigenous people live in NSW and QLD

Figure 3: Indigenous population distribution, Australia

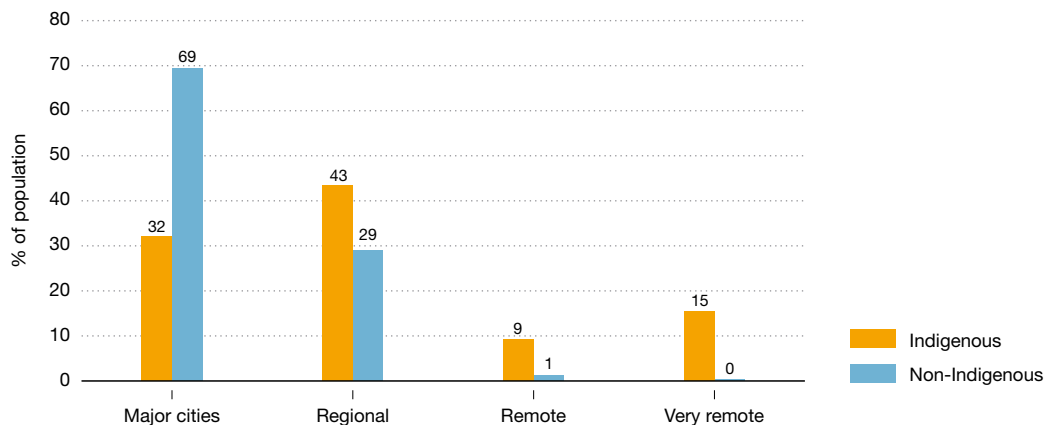


Source: ABS 3238.0 Experimental Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 1991 to 2021 (Series B); ABS Census, 2006

Indigenous Australians are more geographically dispersed than non-Indigenous Australians, with high proportions living in regional and remote areas (see Figure 4).

The Indigenous population is more geographically dispersed

Figure 4: Population distribution by remoteness area and Indigenous status, Australia 2006



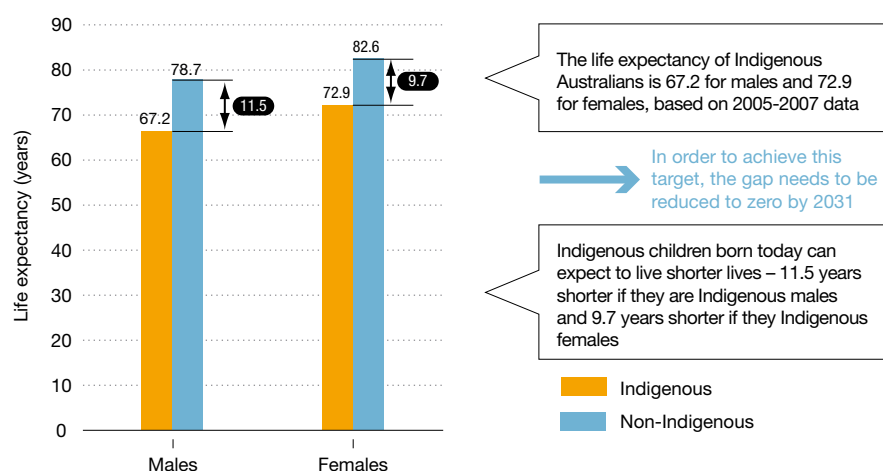
Source: ABS 3238.0.55.001 Experimental Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Jun 2006

Target: Close the gap in life expectancy within a generation

The Gap and the Baseline

This target aims to achieve equal life expectancy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2031, 25 years from the baseline of 2006. Due to recent improvements in the methodology used to calculate Indigenous life expectancy we are able to more accurately report the gap. For the period 2005–2007, the Indigenous life expectancy gap was 11.5 years for males and 9.7 years for females (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: In 2005–07, the Indigenous life expectancy gap was 11.5 years for males and 9.7 years for females¹⁰



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 3302.0 Deaths, 2008

Context

As the primary indicator of wellbeing and social equity, life expectancy remains the focus of efforts to reduce inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. A complex interplay of health, economic and social factors means there are no simple answers to the problems of Indigenous life expectancy.

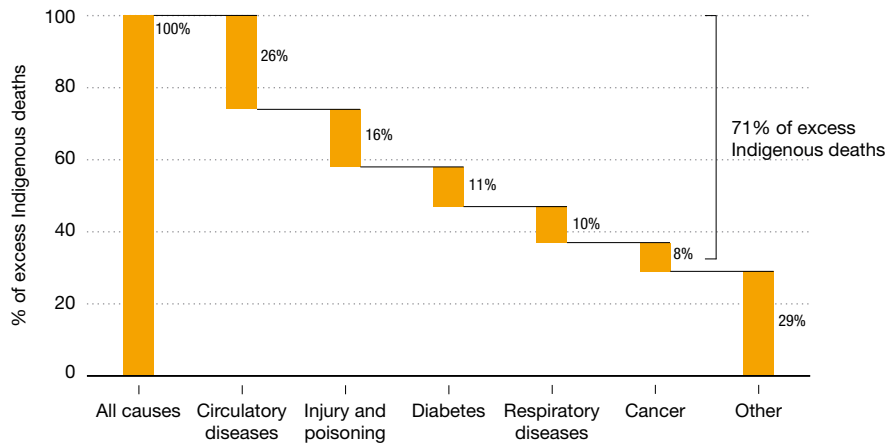
The five leading causes of increased Indigenous mortality rates¹¹ account for 71 per cent of the overall gap (see Figure 6). Most of the gap is due to various chronic diseases, while injury and poisoning is also a significant cause of excess deaths (16 per cent).

¹⁰ The baseline for this target is 2006 using the three-year average of 2005–2007

¹¹ This is known as excess deaths which is defined as total Indigenous deaths minus the number of deaths that would have been expected if Indigenous people had the same mortality rate as non-Indigenous Australians

Five leading causes explain a significant proportion of deaths

Figure 6: Leading causes of excess Indigenous deaths for QLD, WA, SA and NT, 2002–06¹²

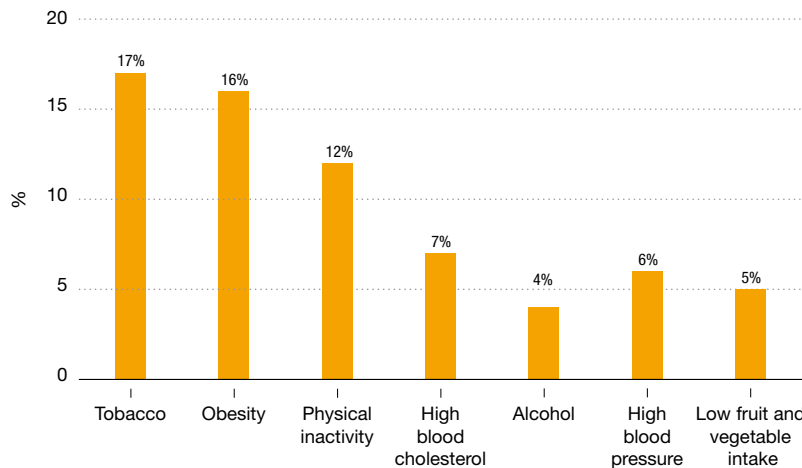


Source: Australian Institute for Health and Welfare 2008: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, 2008 report: detailed analyses. Cat. No. IHW 22

Tobacco, obesity and physical inactivity are the leading risk factors. Together, they account for an estimated 45 per cent of the total health gap (see Figure 7).

Tobacco, obesity and physical inactivity are the leading risk factors driving the Indigenous health gap

Figure 7: Risk factors contributing to the Indigenous health gap, 2003



Source: Burden of Disease & Injury in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People – Policy Brief 2003

12 The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare National Mortality database includes comparable data on excess deaths in these four states only, for 2002–2006

While smoking rates among Indigenous people have fallen from 52 per cent in 1994 to 47 per cent in 2008¹³, rates of overweight and obesity have steadily increased for Indigenous Australians in the last decade from 51 to 60 per cent. Indigenous Australians are nearly twice as likely to be obese as non-Indigenous Australians. Also, the proportion of Indigenous Australians who reported being sedentary increased from 37 per cent in 2001 to 47 per cent in 2004/05¹⁴.

There is evidence in some states and territories of continuing improvements in mortality in recent years, such as decreasing Indigenous infant mortality rates¹⁵. Further, all-cause mortality rates in the three jurisdictions for which there are good trend data decreased by 13 per cent between 1991 and 2006¹⁶.

13 ABS 4714.0 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008

14 Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2008, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report 2008*

15 ABS and AIHW 4704.0 *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*, 2008; ABS 3302.0 *Deaths Australia*, 2008

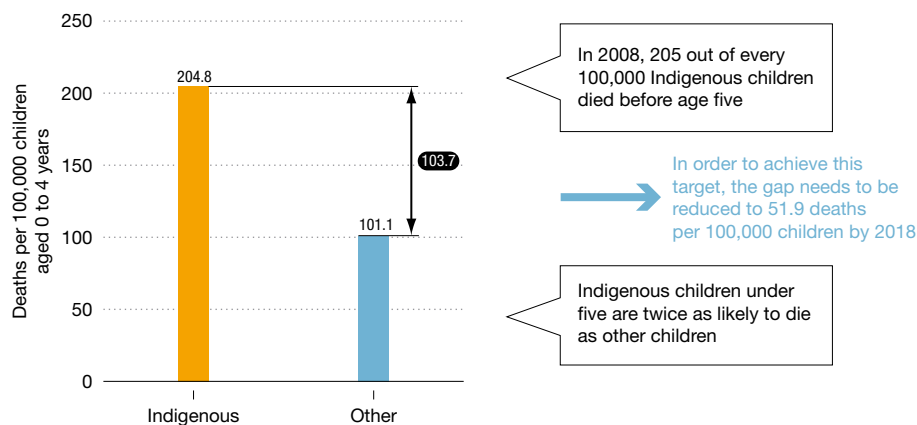
16 *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework*, 2008

Target: Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under 5 by 2018

The Gap and the Baseline

Performance against this target will be measured from a baseline of 2008, at which point the gap in child mortality was 103.7 deaths per 100,000 children aged 0 to 4 years (see Figure 8). In order to achieve this target, the gap will need to be halved by 2018, ten years from the baseline period. Progress against this target cannot be measured at this point as 2009 data is not yet available. Other data sources, however, can provide some measure of the change over time against this target.

Figure 8: The current gap in child mortality is 103.7 deaths per 100,000 children aged 0–4 years¹⁷



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (unpublished)

Context

Indigenous children under five are more likely to die than non-Indigenous children. They are also more likely to live with some chronic health conditions than non-Indigenous children.

Most childhood deaths occur in the first year of life, with total infant deaths accounting for around 85 per cent of deaths of children under five¹⁸. Indigenous infants are nine times more likely to die from a respiratory disease than non-Indigenous infants; they are also five times as likely to die from Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and four times more likely to die from infectious and parasitic diseases and injury and poisoning.¹⁹ For the 2003–2007 period, the Indigenous infant mortality gap was around 5.3 deaths per 1,000 live births (see Figure 9).

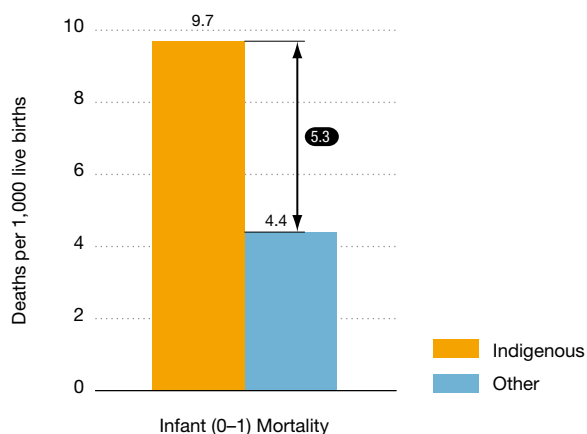
¹⁷ Other refers to mortality of non-Indigenous people and those for whom Indigenous status was not stated

¹⁸ Australian Institute for Health and Welfare, *Making progress: The health, development and wellbeing of Australia's children and young people*, 2008

¹⁹ Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2008, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report 2008*

Indigenous infant mortality (0–12 months) is more than double that of other infants²⁰

Figure 9: Infant mortality rates, 2003–2007



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (unpublished)

The major causes of infant mortality are conditions originating in the perinatal period, sudden infant death syndrome and congenital abnormalities. Factors that can exacerbate child mortality rates include poor antenatal care, smoking during pregnancy, alcohol consumption, teenage pregnancy, poor nutrition and low birth weight. Socio-economic disadvantage also increases the risk of child mortality²¹.

Progress against the target

Although the gap in child mortality is still considerable there are signs of improvement. Figure 10 below shows that for New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory combined there has been a steady decline in the gap in infant mortality rate over the past decade. The decline has been particularly evident over recent years. This has been due to improvements in sanitation and public health conditions, better neonatal intensive care, the development of immunisation programs, and the success of intervention programs for SIDS²².

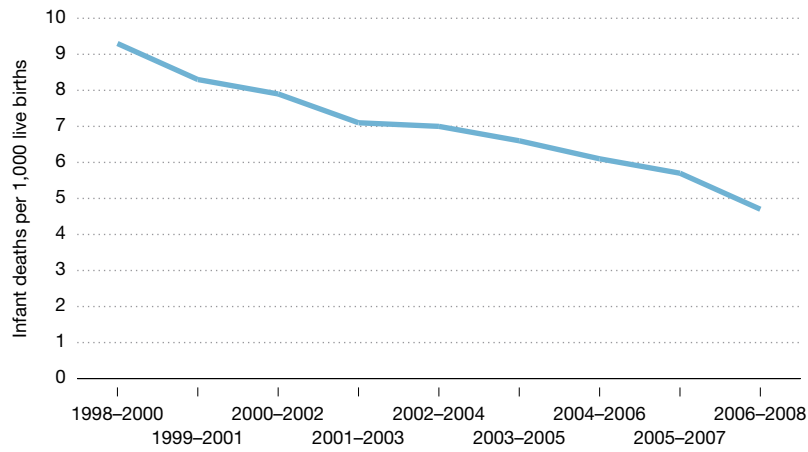
²⁰ Other refers to mortality of non-Indigenous people and those for whom Indigenous status was not stated

²¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *A Picture of Australia's Children 2009*

²² Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2008, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health Performance Framework Report 2008*

The infant mortality gap has fallen steadily since 1998

Figure 10: Gap in Infant mortality rates, NSW, QLD, SA, WA and NT combined, since 1998²³



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 3302.0 – Deaths, Australia, 2008

23 Data are reported by jurisdiction of residence for NSW, QLD, WA, SA and the NT only. These five states and territories are considered to have adequate levels of Indigenous identification in mortality data.

Target: Early childhood education access for all Indigenous 4 year olds in remote communities by 2013

The Gap and the Baseline

Governments have committed to providing early childhood education access to all remote Indigenous 4 year olds by 2013, 5 years from the baseline year of 2008. There is currently only limited data to inform this target. The best available data suggests just over 60 per cent of Indigenous children are enrolled in early childhood education programs in the year before school. This compares with around 70 per cent for all children²⁴.

Enrolments in all regions, including remote areas, have increased between 2005 and 2008 (see Figure 11). However, an assessment based on enrolments alone is not sufficient as there is evidence to suggest Indigenous children enrolled in early childhood education attend less frequently than non-Indigenous children²⁵.

Context

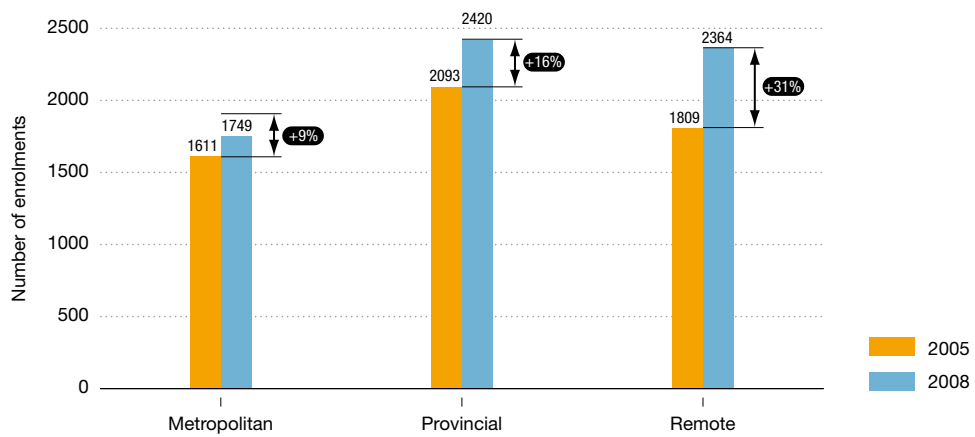
Early childhood education is critical to providing opportunities for all children to learn and have the best possible start in life. Early childhood education programs produce a number of benefits, including better intellectual development and independence, sociability and concentration, language and cognitive development, and preparation for a successful transition to school. They are also associated with a lower incidence of personal and social problems in later life, such as dropping out of school, welfare dependency, unemployment and criminal behaviour.

²⁴ National Preschool Census, 2008 (unpublished data); ABS 3238.0 Experimental Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 1991 to 2021; Report on Government Services 2010

²⁵ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Preschool enrolments have grown fastest in remote areas

Figure 11: Growth in preschool enrolments²⁶ for Indigenous 4 year olds by remoteness area, Australia 2005–2008



Source: National Preschool Census, 2009

²⁶ Enrolment is only a partial measure of access, due to a range of factors influencing attendance. Data excludes long day care facilities.

Target: Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy by 2018

The Gap and the Baseline

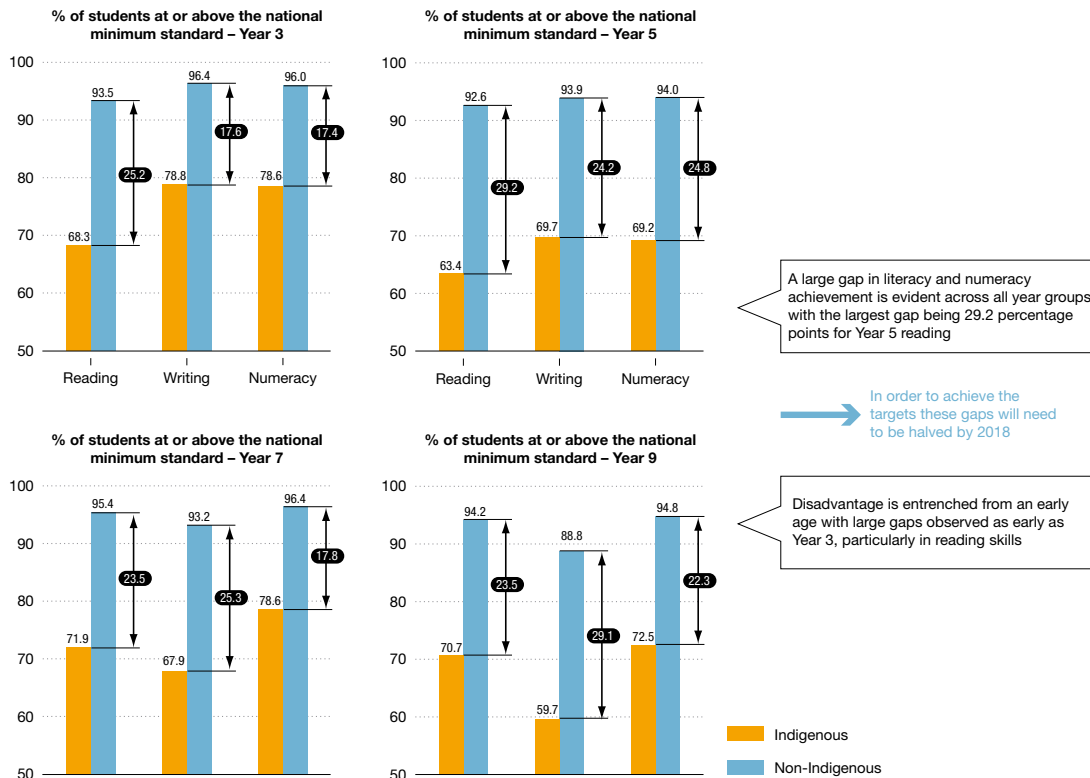
Progress against this target will be measured by variations in the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students who achieve at or above the national minimum standard for reading, writing and numeracy. The baseline for this target is 2008 with the aim of halving each of the 2008 gaps by 2018, 10 years from the baseline year.

While literacy and numeracy scores vary across grades, it is clear that Indigenous children are consistently underperforming. In 2008:

- The largest gap (29.2 percentage points) was for Year 5 reading, in which 92.6 per cent of non-Indigenous students were at or above the national minimum standard compared to 63.4 per cent of Indigenous students
- The smallest gap (17.4 percentage points) was for Year 3 numeracy where 96 per cent of non-Indigenous students were at or above the national minimum standard compared to 78.6 per cent of Indigenous students

The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students increases with remoteness. As Figure 12 shows, the gap in remote and very remote areas is significantly higher than the national gap. In 2009, the percentage of Indigenous students living in very remote areas achieving at or above the national minimum standards was as low as 26.4 per cent for Year 5 reading and 21.4 per cent for Year 9 writing.

Figure 12: In 2008 significant gaps in literacy and numeracy skills were evident from as early as Year 3



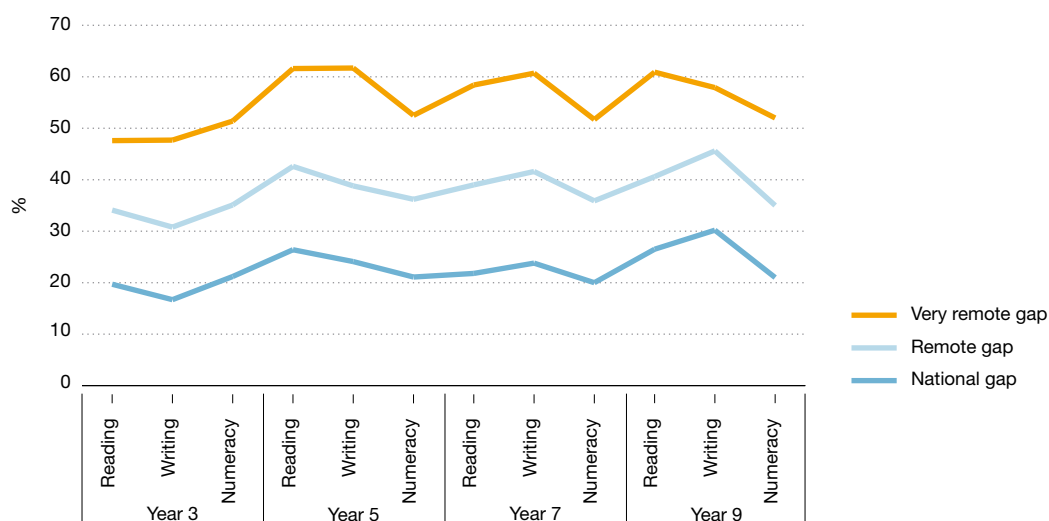
Source: MCEETYA 2008 National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement in reading, writing, language and numeracy, Melbourne

Context

Literacy and numeracy skills are fundamental to reducing inequality in education. As well as being an indicator of education outcomes, literacy and numeracy skills are vital to improving student participation in schooling through to Year 12, and gaining entry into higher education. School leavers who lack these skills are more likely to struggle at finding and securing a good job.

Literacy and numeracy gaps are greatest in remote and very remote areas

Figure 13: Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students achieving at or above the national minimum standard by remoteness, 2009



Source: MCEETYA National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy: Achievement, 2009

School attendance can have an impact on academic performance. On average, Indigenous students miss about 26 days of school per year compared with eight days for all students²⁷. Significant emotional or behavioural difficulties can also affect academic performance. Healthy living conditions and access to first-class health care can greatly improve children's prospects for achievement in education.

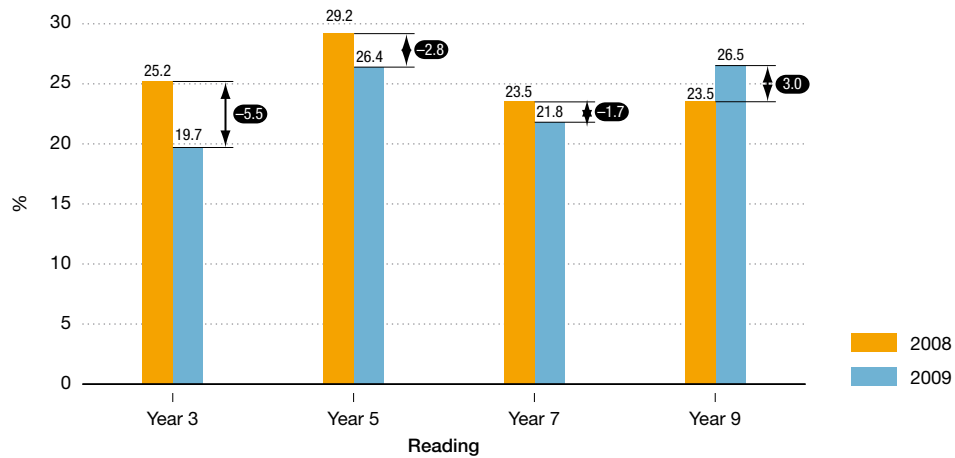
Progress against the target

The variation between 2008 and 2009 literacy and numeracy achievement showed mixed results. For reading, there was a slight reduction in the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous achievement for Years 3, 5 and 7 and a slight increase in the gap for Year 9 reading.

27 *ibid*

Between 2008 and 2009 reading gaps closed slightly for all years except Year 9

Figure 14: Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students achieving at or above the national minimum standard, 2008 to 2009



Source: MCEETYA National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy 2008 & 2009

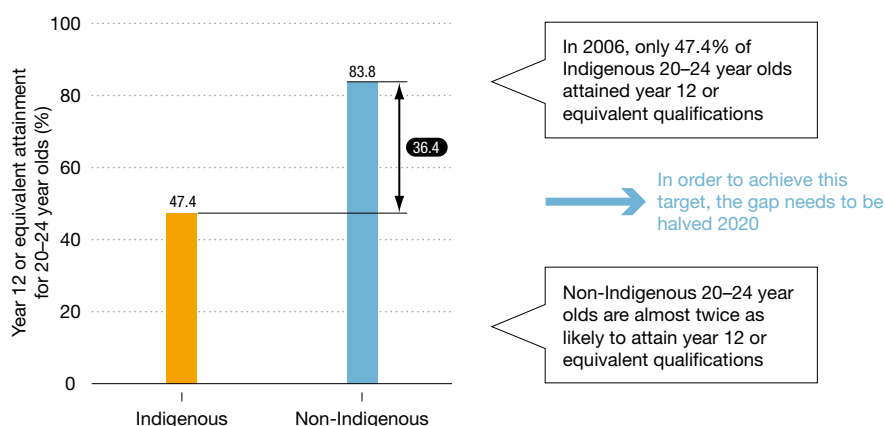
Target: Halve the gap in Year 12 or equivalent attainment for Indigenous 20–24 year olds by 2020

The Gap and the Baseline

The baseline for this target is 2006 at which point the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous 20–24 year olds stood at around 36 percentage points. The Government has committed to halving the gap in Year 12 or equivalent attainment for 20–24 year olds by 2020.

In 2006, only 47.4 per cent of Indigenous 20–24 year olds had completed Year 12 or equivalent qualifications, compared to attainment levels of 83.8 per cent for the corresponding non-Indigenous cohort.

Figure 15: In 2006, the gap in the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate between Indigenous and non-Indigenous 20–24 year olds was 36.4 per cent²⁸



Source: Council of Australian Governments Reform Council National Education Agreement: Baseline performance report for 2008

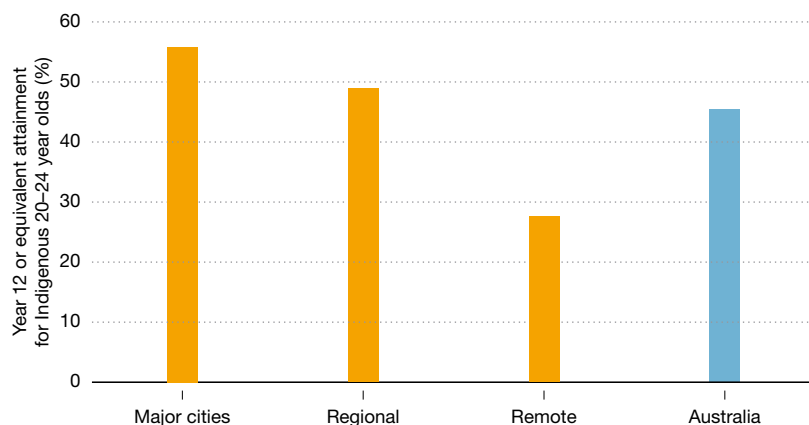
Context

Location is a major influence on Year 12 or equivalent attainment. Figure 16 shows that Indigenous young people in remote areas have considerably lower levels of attainment.

²⁸ The baseline for this target is 2006

Year 12 or equivalent attainment is lowest in remote areas

Figure 16: Proportion of the 20–24 year old Indigenous population having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent qualifications, by remoteness, 2008



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 4714.0 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS) 2008

Evidence suggests that the major influences on student completion of Year 12 are: Year 9 literacy and numeracy achievement, socio-economic background, home location and school attendance.²⁹

Progress against the target

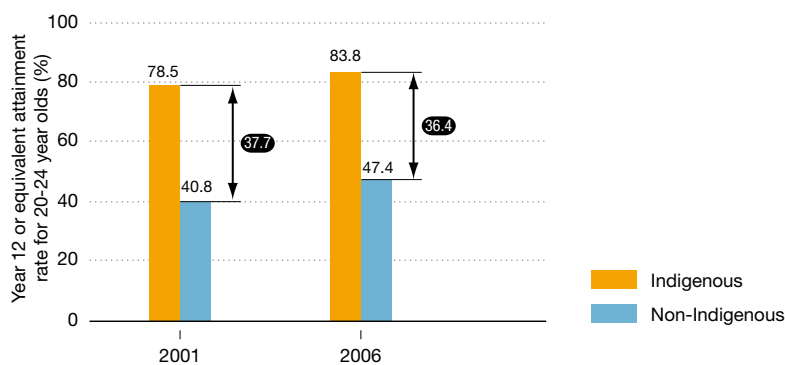
Although the attainment gap is large, there are some signs of improvement nationally, particularly in the last few years. Indigenous school retention rates from Year 7/8 to Year 12 have risen from 30.7 per cent in 1995 to 46.5 per cent in 2008. The increase has been especially evident over the last few years – a 6.4 percentage point increase between 2006 and 2008, compared to a slight decrease of 0.4 percentage points for non-Indigenous young people.³⁰

²⁹ Rothman, 2007

³⁰ ABS 4211.0 *Schools*, Australia 2008

Indigenous Year 12 or equivalent attainment has grown strongly, but the gap has closed only marginally

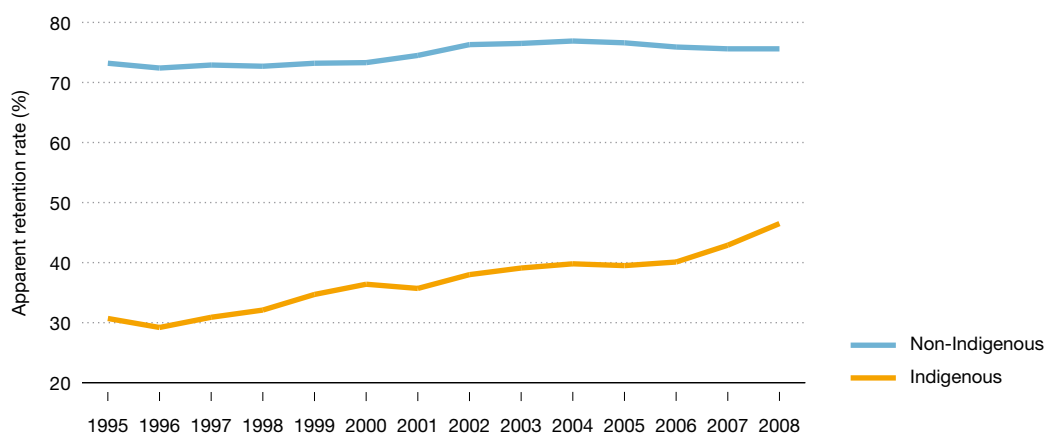
Figure 17: Proportion of Indigenous 20–24 year olds having attained at least Year 12 or equivalent qualifications, 2001 and 2006



Source: COAG Reform Council National Education Agreement: Baseline performance report for 2008; ABS Census (unpublished), 2001

Retention to Year 12 has been increasing among Indigenous school children

Figure 18: Apparent retention rates to Year 12 from Year 7/8, 1995–2008



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 4221.0 Schools, Australia 2008

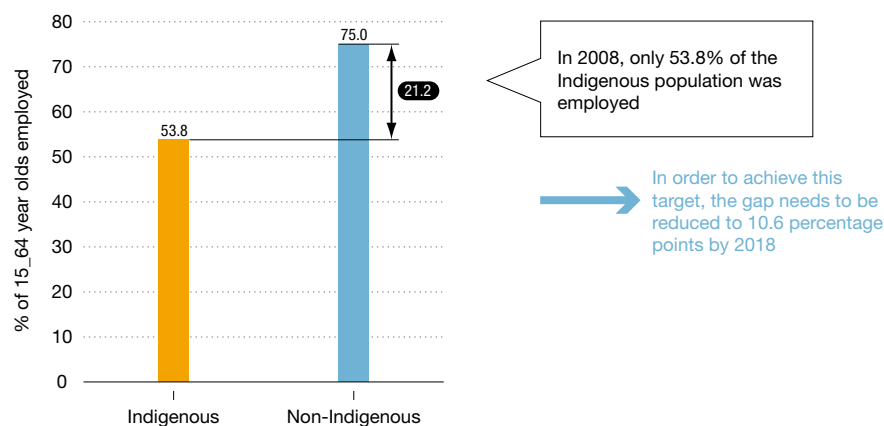
Target: Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018

The Gap and the Baseline

The baseline period for this target is 2008 at which point the employment gap³¹ was 21.2 percentage points. In order to achieve this target the employment gap will need to be reduced to below 11 percentage points by 2018, 10 years from the baseline period.

As Figure 19 shows, there are considerable variations in the employment gap across States and Territories. In 2008, the Northern Territory and New South Wales had the largest gaps.

Figure 19: In 2008, the employment gap was 21.2 percentage points

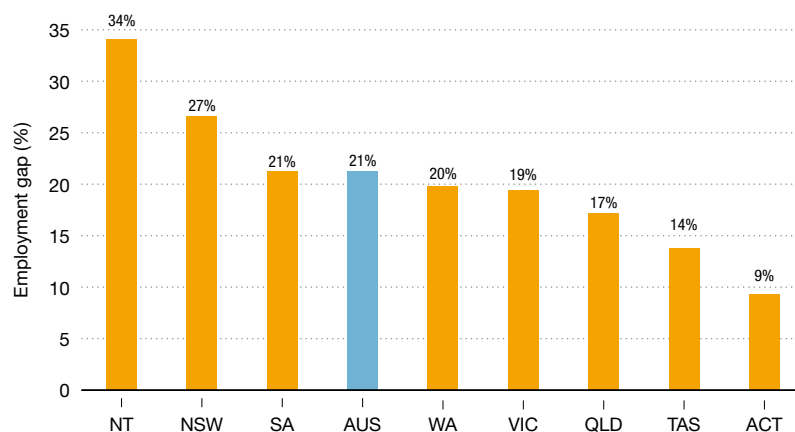


Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008; Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Education and Work, 2008

31 The employment gap is the difference between the employment rate for Indigenous Australians and the employment rate for non Indigenous Australians. The employment rate is the proportion of 15–64 year olds employed.

The employment gap is largest in NT and NSW

Figure 20: Gap in employment rate for Indigenous Australians by State/Territory, 2008



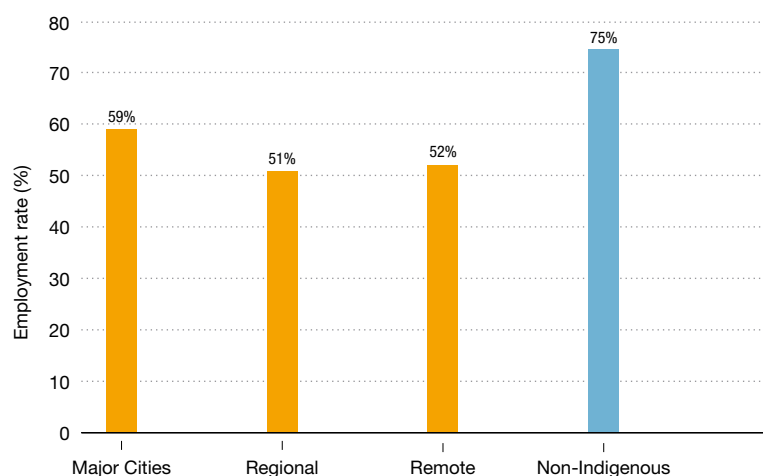
Source: ABS Survey of Education and Work, 2008; ABS NATSISS, 2008

Context

While the Indigenous employment challenge is greatest in regional and remote areas, employment rates in major cities are also significantly below the non-Indigenous average (see Figure 21). However, it should be noted that CDEP participation is included in ABS employment data where known, which may skew remoteness comparisons.

Indigenous employment rates are low across city, regional and remote areas³²

Figure 21: Indigenous employment rates by remoteness area versus the non-Indigenous average, 2008



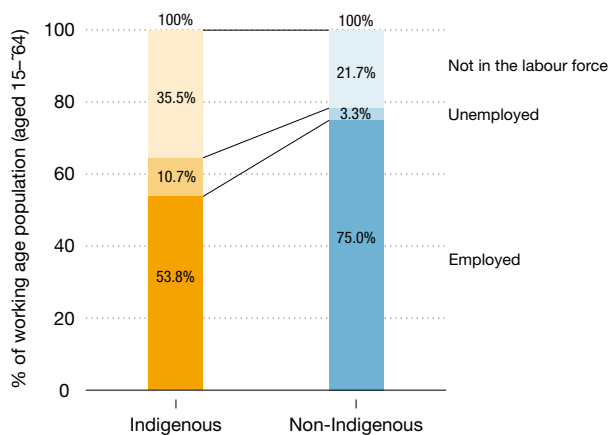
Source: ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008; ABS Survey of Education and Work, 2008

³² Includes CDEP participation

Meeting the Indigenous employment target will require a combination of improved labour force participation³³ and a reduction in unemployment. Labour force non-participation is a major contributor to the employment gap, with 35.5 per cent of the Indigenous workforce age population not in the labour force. This compares to 21.7 per cent for the non-Indigenous population (see Figure 22).

Low labour force participation underpins the Indigenous employment gap

Figure 22: Working age population by labour force status and Indigenous status, 2008



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2008; Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Education and Work, 2008

Low rates of labour force participation highlight the need to address broader issues around the engagement of the Indigenous labour force with the economy. Location is an issue for some, with limited employment opportunities in some parts of the country. For those who have left the labour force, we need to find ways for them to re-engage through culturally relevant training and employment programs.

A range of other factors are thought to influence the employment gap, including employer attitudes, job retention and health problems, which prevent many Indigenous people from finding suitable jobs. More than a third of Indigenous people not in the labour force assessed their health as fair or poor – more than double that for employed Indigenous workers (14 per cent)³⁴.

Progress against the target

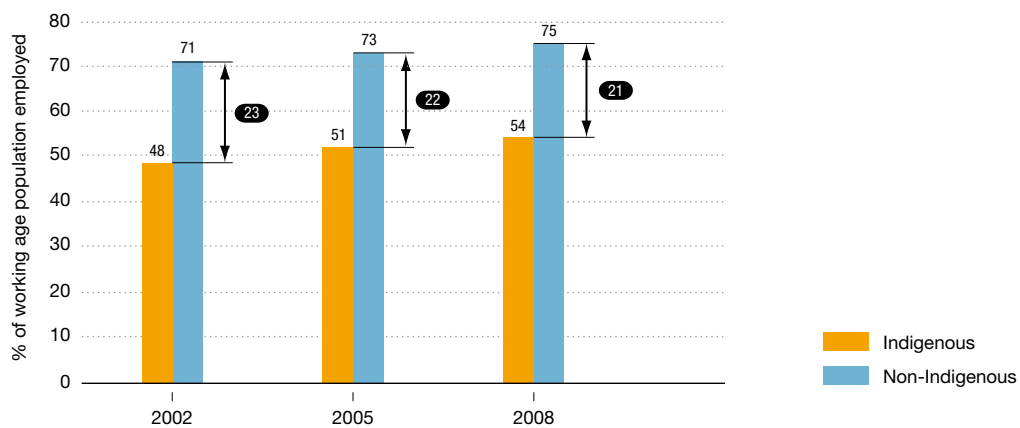
The employment gap fell from 23 to 21 percentage points between 2002 and 2008, as Indigenous employment growth slightly exceeded non-Indigenous employment growth, during a strong period for the Australian economy (see Figure 23). However, meeting the target will require the gap to fall a further 10.6 percentage points by 2018 – a faster reduction in the gap than has been recently achieved.

³³ The labour force participation rate is the percentage of the working age population who are in the labour force.

³⁴ Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

The employment gap has narrowed slightly since 2002

Figure 23: Share of working age population (aged 15–64) employed by Indigenous status, Australia 2002, 2005, 2008



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2002 & 2008; Australian Bureau of Statistics National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004–2005, Australian Bureau of Statistics Survey of Education and Work, 2002, 2005, & 2008





Section 2

Actions on the ground

In 2009 the Governments began the implementation of the closing the gap agenda. Governments recognise that actions aimed at achieving improvements in any one area will not work in isolation. This is evidenced from analysis of progress against the targets, which reflect the combined impact of action in a range of areas. Progress against the targets requires an approach that sees effort directed across a range of 'building blocks'. The 'building blocks' are:

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



We are using these seven building blocks to address the identified drivers of disadvantage, and address them in an integrated way, noting that in many cases they are interdependent.

In early childhood, the Australian government has provided significant new funding under the Early Childhood Education National Partnership (\$970 million over five years) to help all children get access to affordable, quality early childhood education in the year before formal schooling. Participation in early childhood education helps prepare children to learn, assists them to develop and gain confidence.

States and Territories have developed specific initiatives to encourage ongoing attendance. For example, Western Australia is undertaking a tailored public campaign to promote enrolment and attendance in early childhood education programs.

The Commonwealth is funding the establishment of 36 Children and Family Centres targeted at Indigenous families and their children under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development (\$564.4 million over six years). Each centre will bring together important services for children and families including child care, early learning and parent and family support programs tailored to the communities where they are located.

In addition, the Australian Early Development Index gives a national picture of children's health and development before school including Indigenous children.

Key achievements:

- Under the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreement, 21 of the 36 Children and Family Centres will be located in regional and remote locations (see Table 2), including Kununurra (WA), Mornington Island (QLD) and Walgett (NSW). The first centre will be operating by the end of 2010 with the majority of centres operating by the end of 2012.
- Construction commenced in November 2009 on a 24 bed facility in Cairns under the Indigenous Mothers' Accommodation Fund. In addition, in December 2009, construction commenced on the extension of an existing hostel in Katherine.
- Under the Indigenous Parenting Support Program, as at November 2009, eight new early childhood and parenting services were operational with a further 26 sites approved for remote Indigenous communities across Australia.
- In 2008–09, in the Northern Territory, playgroups supported around 1,049 children and parents with structured learning designed to strengthen early childhood development and the parenting skills of Indigenous families.

Table 1: Distribution of Children and Family Centres across states and territories

Centres	NSW	QLD	VIC	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT	Total
Regional/ Remote	4	6	1	2	4	0	4	0	21
Urban	5	4	1	1	1	1	1	1	15
Total	9	10	2	3	5	1	5	1	36

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

CASE STUDY: A MODEL OF SUCCESS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The Yuendumu Early Childhood Centre does more than provide child care; in many ways it is the heart of the community, and a model of successful Indigenous early childhood education and development.

For many children and their parents, the Centre is a welcoming place that provides education, food and protection. In Warlpiri, the official name of the centre, "Kurdu-Kurdu Kurlangu", means "a safe place for kids to play and learn".

Sabrina Lewis, a young Warlpiri woman originally from the Billanooka community in Western Australia has worked at the Centre for almost three years.

"This Centre is special because we come from five different camps in Yuendumu, so people feel they can trust us to look after their kids because all the families are represented among the staff."

"They look after them really well," says Georgina Wilson, a Warlpiri woman, whose three year old granddaughter Timika attends the Centre. "They give them lunch and breakfast, wash their clothes while they're having showers, and take them to the pool."

The Yuendumu community is located 290 kilometres northwest of Alice Springs and has a population of approximately 1,300 people, making it one of the largest communities in Central Australia.

Every day at the Centre, between 40 and 60 children along with their parents and extended family participate in a range of early childhood activities, which include reading books, painting, drawing, making things, doing puzzles, riding bikes, and playing.

The Centre employs 14 local Aboriginal Child Care Workers, all of whom are studying for their Certificate III in Child Care Studies with Central TAFE Western Australia, which provides on the job training and lectures every six weeks.

Nutrition and hygiene are priorities. And there are positive results, with the local clinic reporting that children attending at least three days per week have improved iron levels and are better at maintaining their weight.

Director and mentor Judith McKay is responsible for much of the success of the Centre. She has developed a strong relationship with the Yuendumu community creating innovative programs to meet the needs of local families and their children.

Through the Centre, the children and carers are connected to other services in Yuendumu, including nurse visits from the health clinic, swimming at the pool and cultural bush trips.

The Australian Government, under the Child Care Services Support Program, is providing the centre with \$507,513 in funding for 2009–10. Yuendumu has been announced as the site of a Children and Family Centre under the National Partnership Agreement for Indigenous Early Childhood Development.

In schooling, the Australian government has made significant investments to lift Indigenous student literacy and numeracy achievement through both mainstream and Indigenous-specific programs.

Funding of \$2.5 billion has been provided for the three Smarter Schools National Partnerships. The \$540 million Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership in particular seeks to accelerate improvement in student literacy and numeracy outcomes, especially for those students most in need of support. The \$1.5 billion Low Socio Economic Status School Communities National Partnership supports the learning needs and wellbeing of Indigenous students to improve engagement and attendance. The \$550 million Teacher Quality National Partnership will support teachers including those in schools with predominantly Indigenous students.

The Indigenous Education Action Plan has been published for public comment. The draft includes actions in six areas that evidence suggests will have the most impact on closing the gaps. They are:

- readiness for school
- engagement and connections
- attendance
- literacy and numeracy
- leadership, quality teaching and workforce development; and
- pathways to real post-school outcomes.

The final plan will be presented to COAG later this year.

The improved data through the My School website will also provide more information on how schools are catering for Indigenous students, including student numbers, teacher numbers and data on how the school is performing in national literacy and numeracy testing. This will inform future prioritisation of investment.

Key achievements:

- Approved 30 projects since July 2009 under the Parental and Community Engagement program, targeting over 4,200 Indigenous parents/caregivers and community members to improve the capacity of Indigenous families and communities to engage in school and education.
- Provided \$56.4 million to trial a number of specific intensive literacy and numeracy projects to lift Indigenous student outcomes, and provide support to teachers for the implementation of Personalised Learning Plans with all Indigenous students up to Year 10.
- Invested \$41 million in 30 literacy and numeracy pilots to improve outcomes at the school level and also build an evidence base of what works for disadvantaged students, particularly Indigenous students. Students in more than 400 schools across Australia are already involved in these trials, due for completion at the end of 2010.
- Achieved positive results in a trial project, QuickSmart—Improving Numeracy project. At the start of the program Indigenous students were tested in maths and after being tested again in November that year showed improvement in both speed and accuracy (see Table 4).

- Provided daily meals to children from 67 communities in the Northern Territory in 65 schools to help them concentrate during the day;
 - This includes over 2,600 breakfasts and over 4,400 lunches each school day with over 197 people employed to deliver these meals (79 per cent of employees are local Indigenous people).
- In 2009, 43 projects were delivered under the Sporting Chance program for some 6,000 students;
 - Reports in 2009 show that the average school attendance rate of students in the program was on average some 6 per cent better.
- About \$84 million was approved under the Building the Education Revolution for school projects in 29 Remote Service Delivery communities including Doomadgee State School and Halls Creek District High School.
- The Indigenous Youth Leadership Program aims to provide access to scholarships for Indigenous students, including those in remote areas. There were 362 students at 50 high performing schools and 33 university campuses in 2009, more than 60 per cent from remote and very remote areas.

In addition, the Government has been working with Northern Territory education providers over the last two years to improve Indigenous literacy and numeracy outcomes and improve the skills of local Indigenous education workers in over 70 targeted remote communities.

Some key achievements in the Northern Territory to date include:

- Almost half of the additional 200 recruited and deployed in remote Northern Territory communities;
- Enrolment of 24 Indigenous and two non-Indigenous education workers in a higher teacher qualification;
- Enrolments of 22 Indigenous teachers in a fourth year teaching qualification;
- 8 additional teaching scholarships awarded;
- The first intake of 20 assistant teachers in a Diploma of Education Support qualification;
- Recruitment and placement of 12 coaches in remote schools to support assistant teachers studying;
- Increase in number of assistant teachers undertaking study from 100 to 250;
- Over 100 completion bonuses to teachers and assistant teachers for the successful attainment of higher qualifications to offset study costs;
- Provided 250 laptops to assistant teachers undertaking formal study; and
- Regionally based specialist teams working with 51 remote schools to accelerate literacy outcomes.

Table 2: Examples of intensive literacy and numeracy projects aimed at Indigenous students (Indicative school and student numbers)

Program	Schools	Students	Description
National Accelerated Literacy Program (NALP)	96 schools	5,325 students	This program provides a structured and consistent framework for the teaching of literacy using age appropriate texts.
Make it Count – Mathematics and Numeracy	40 schools	1,000 students	This program assists schools to implement approaches to mathematics and numeracy that improve the achievement of Indigenous students.
QuickSmart – Improving Numeracy	31 schools	170 students	The QuickSmart program provides intensive focused instruction aimed at improving student fluency and facility with basic numeracy facts.
Strong Foundations	12 schools	298 students	This project builds the capacity of staff in early childhood centres, in low SES communities, to improve students' readiness for school.
Accelerated Indigenous Mathematics (AIM)	7 schools	113 students	This project will develop, trial and evaluate a culturally appropriate mathematics program for Year 8–10 Indigenous students.
Raising Achievement in Numeracy	8 schools	146 students	This project assists schools to implement numeracy plans to close the gap in outcomes for Indigenous students through a partnership between school leaders, teachers and parents.

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Table 3: Outcomes of QuickSmart program

QuickSmart Students	Pre-program	Post program
Addition – mean response time in seconds	3.69	2.51
Subtraction – mean response time in seconds	4.43	2.96
Multiplication – mean response time in seconds	6.35	3.71
Division – mean response time in seconds	6.06	4.45
Accuracy of the responses of QuickSmart students:		
Addition	92.5%	96.2%
Subtraction	85.1%	94.0%

Source: QuickSmart Progress Report 1, submitted by NSW Department of Education and Training to Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations 2009

CASE STUDY: STRONGER SMARTER LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

When Donna Bridge became principal of East Kalgoorlie Primary School in Western Australia in 2005, she knew she had significant challenges ahead of her. There was poor student discipline, lack of consistency in teaching practice, literacy and numeracy levels were low, staff turnover was high, and parents were worried about increasing levels of bullying and violence among children.

Ms Bridge realised that, if the school was going to improve, change involving staff, parents, community and children was crucial. Ms Bridge introduced three guiding philosophies:

- Aboriginal children can learn just as well as anyone;
- a school reflects the community in which it exists; and
- good teaching makes a difference.

“I met with every single family in the school and asked them to support me as the decision maker. Most accepted that proposition and that was the start of a long process” said Ms Bridge. The school receives strong support from the community, which now realises it has a responsibility to participate in the way the school is managed by active involvement in the school council.

Ms Bridge also encouraged students to be role models and see themselves as leaders. Students from years four to seven are given responsibilities and are expected to fulfil them.

Ms Bridge says the students at East Kalgoorlie now feel proud of who they are and being part of the school community and this is reflected in attendance. “Attendance for some students has risen from less than 50 per cent to 70 per cent and that is a huge shift.”

This new approach is demonstrating significant improvements in literacy and numeracy at the school. In 2008, Year 3 students scored 286 in reading; in 2009 it was 309. Spelling and writing have dramatically improved by 71 and 63 points respectively over the same period. In 2008, Year 3 students scored 309 in numeracy, in 2009 it was 316.³⁵

Ms Bridge attributes the success at East Kalgoorlie Primary School to her participation in the Stronger Smarter Leadership Program – a minimum 12 month commitment ranging from leadership forums to on-the-ground work.

The program was developed in partnership by the Stronger Smarter Institute³⁶ at the Queensland University of Technology with the Commonwealth and State Governments. The Stronger Smarter Leadership Program seeks to challenge and support leadership in schools with Indigenous populations and to achieve better education outcomes for Indigenous students.

³⁵ www.myschool.edu.au

³⁶ Stronger Smarter Institute previously known as the Indigenous Education Leadership Institute

The Stronger Smarter Leadership Program both challenges and supports leadership to improve education outcomes for Indigenous students. The program's founding principle of 'High expectations, excellence oriented school cultures' is grounded in the belief that Indigenous students can aspire to be whoever, or whatever they want to be. High expectations of children enable them to dream, and to gain the confidence and competence to pursue those dreams.

The man behind this vision is the Executive Director of the Stronger Smarter Institute, Dr Chris Sarra. Dr Sarra developed his thinking while principal of Cherbourg State School in Queensland's third largest Indigenous community. In five years as principal between 1998 and 2003, Dr Sarra turned a struggling school into one that could achieve the same targets as the rest of the state.

Dr Sarra found that a close relationship between schools and their communities helped to dramatically improve attendance from 50 percent in 1997 to 95 percent in 2002 and significantly increased education outcomes. The Stronger Smarter Leadership Program focuses on building partnerships with school and community leaders and empowers Elders, principals, teachers, parents and community workers to transform their schools.

The program is offered nationally and has expanded to include regional programs currently offered in Queensland, New South Wales, Northern Territory and Western Australia. The Stronger Smarter Learning Communities project is working with 12 hubs and 32 further affiliated schools across the country and this number will grow to 60 learning communities and potentially 180 to 200 affiliated schools over the next 4 years.

East Kalgoorlie is one of the first schools in the program. Through a range of initiatives which have been built on the support and commitment of staff, parents, children and the community, it has been transformed from a place in crisis to a Dare to Lead National School of Excellence.³⁷

³⁷ Dare to Lead is a Commonwealth funded national project with a focus on improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students

In health, the Australian Government has increased its annual expenditure by 57 per cent since 2007–08 on Indigenous specific health programs.

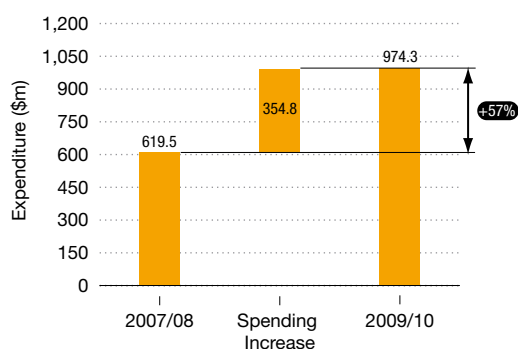
This includes \$805.5 million Indigenous Chronic Disease Package over four years. The package will reduce chronic disease risk factors; encourage earlier detection and better management of chronic disease in primary health care services; improve follow up care; and increase the capacity of the primary care workforce to deliver effective health care to Indigenous Australians.

Key achievements

- We approved 53 new services for funding across Australia to provide child and maternal health services. A total of 11,000 mothers and babies will be assisted over five years under the \$90.3 million Mothers and Babies Services program;
- Five sites established to support pregnant women to improve their own health and the health of their children under the \$37.4m over four years Australian Nurse Family Partnership Program pilot;
- 94 new Indigenous Project Officers and 83 Indigenous Outreach Workers to be appointed in health clinics and organisations across Australia under the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes;
- Launched the \$14.5 million Indigenous Tobacco Control Initiative – a package of 20 innovative anti-smoking projects in urban, regional and remote Indigenous communities. Six projects are already underway in New South Wales, Queensland and the Northern Territory. The projects focus on building an evidence-base on reducing Indigenous smoking rates by trialling various interventions in different communities;
- Funded 124 Bringing them Home Counsellors to provide grief and loss counselling to Stolen Generation, families and communities and 11 organisations to provide counselling, family tracing and reunion services;
- Launched the inaugural National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association to provide advocacy, support and mentoring to 1,600 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers;
- Established the National Indigenous Health Equality Council, headed by Professor Ian Anderson, to advise government on closing the gap on a range of health related areas;
- Established a national co-ordination unit to manage Rheumatic Heart Disease across Australia (\$2.6 million over four years) to establish a national database to improve monitoring and control of the disease, provide training of health staff to improve diagnosis, and help patients access regular antibiotics to prevent recurrence;
- Provided a total of 390 ear, nose and throat (ENT) consultations to 385 children with an ENT referral who live in the Northern Territory Emergency Response communities, plus 109 children with ENT surgery, between July and December 2009;
- Provided a total of 1,990 dental services to 1,429 children who live in the Northern Territory Emergency Response communities between 1 July 2009 and 31 December 2009; and
- Placed 273 health professionals in remote primary health care services on short term placements as part of the Remote Area Health Corps (RAHC). This includes 31 GPs, 178 Registered Nurses, 22 Allied Health Professionals and 42 dental personnel.

Indigenous health spending has increased 57 per cent since 2007–08

Figure 24: Australian Government Indigenous Expenditure, Health and Ageing Portfolio, 2007–08 to 2009–10



Source: *Portfolio Budget Statements, Health and Ageing Portfolio, 2009/10, Portfolio Budget Statements, Health and Ageing Portfolio, 2007/08*

Table 4: New Directions: Mothers' and Babies' Service, Operational Sites

States	No. of sites operational	Locations
ACT	1	Narrabundah
NSW	10	Mt Druitt, Wyong, Taree, Newcastle, Orange, Wollongong, Liverpool, Airds, Newcastle, Randwick
NT	7	Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine (x2), Nhulunbuy (x2), Yuendumu
QLD	11	Toowoomba, Woolloongabba, Mackay, Cairns (x2), Yarrabah, Mt Isa (x2), Cunnamulla, Innisfail, Far North
SA	2	Port Augusta, Port Lincoln
TAS	1	Hobart
VIC	3	Bendigo, Heidelberg, Robinvale
WA	5	Roebourne, Kalgoorlie, Carnarvon, Geraldton, Kimberley

Source: *Department of Health and Ageing*

CASE STUDY: NEW DIRECTIONS MOTHERS' AND BABIES' SERVICES

For many years Indigenous mothers in Toowoomba, Queensland were reluctant to use mainstream health services. As a result they presented late in pregnancy or not at all to the antenatal clinic at the hospital. Mothers were isolated within their community due to poor transport or a lack of funds. Babies were born with a low birth weight, prematurity or anaemia.

In August 2008, Carbal Medical Centre launched the New Directions Mums and Bubs service to enhance the provision of maternal and child health service. One of the key strengths of the service is flexibility, which allows local health providers to identify local priorities and tailor service delivery to the needs of clients.

Liz Webb, a nurse working at Carbal, firmly believes this service is helping to make a difference in closing the gap. Ms Webb said the service has “overcome women feeling isolated within their community (by offering) home visits to provide antenatal and postnatal care and transport and support” to ensure that clients attend medical appointments”.

Ms Webb moved to Toowoomba, Queensland 13 years ago and has worked in children's health care both in the Northern Territory and New South Wales. “I have found this position to be the most rewarding and professionally satisfying opportunity in my 30 year nursing career,” said Ms Webb.

Carbal New Direction's program offers, among others: home visits to clients; antenatal care and information about baby care, nutrition and parenting.

Women who attend the clinic have had pregnancies that extend past the 37th week and have had babies born within the normal weight range. To maintain healthy outcomes for Indigenous children, Carbal has established strong links with kindergartens, health services and schools in the community to smooth the transition to early learning and school.

The Australian Government is providing Carbal with \$391,844 in funding under the New Directions Mothers' and Babies' Services program in 2009–10. Through the program, the Australian Government is expanding mothers' and babies' services in high need localities as part of the Indigenous Early Childhood National Partnership.

In healthy homes, the Australian Government has committed significant funding to improve Indigenous housing. The National Partnership on Remote Indigenous Housing provides funding of \$5.5 billion over 10 years for capital works in Indigenous communities. It will deliver up to 4,200 new houses in remote communities in that time, as well as around 4,800 refurbishments to improve existing housing.

This national partnership also provides funding for improved tenancy management services, increased local training and employment opportunities in construction and housing management as well as improving access to affordable accommodation options in regional

centres to support employment, education, training and support services in regional areas of high employment.

Social Housing investments of \$6.2 billion over four years will also benefit Indigenous families, who are estimated to comprise 8 per cent of all occupants of public and community housing across Australia. Funding of \$1.2 billion in new housing and homelessness services aimed at halving homelessness in Australia over the next 12 years will also benefit homeless Indigenous Australians who represent about 9 per cent of over 100,000 Australians who are homeless.

Key achievements:

- Under the Nation Building and Jobs Plan, funding has been provided for the construction of new social housing dwellings and refurbishment of existing social housing. As at end-January 2010, more than 7,700 new dwellings had commenced construction and around 475 had been completed. Indigenous people will benefit from this additional social housing.
- Construction has begun on more than 140 houses across remote Australia. In addition, so far this financial year fifteen houses across Australia have been completed under the National Partnership. In addition, more than 240 refurbishments of existing homes in poor condition have commenced and 123 of these have been completed across Australia.
- This includes progress in the Northern Territory where over 50 new houses are under construction in Wadeye; Nguu on the Tiwi Islands; the Groote Eylandt communities of Angurugu and Umbakumba; Gunbalanya and Maningrida. New houses are being completed and families are moving in. Over 70 rebuilds and refurbishments have been also completed and are being allocated to families. Many have previously unusable kitchens and bathrooms which are now functional. Over 80 existing houses in poor condition are currently being rebuilt or refurbished.
- Assisted 348 Indigenous families into home ownership through Indigenous Business Australia's Home Ownership Program in 2008–09. Of these families, over 90 per cent were first home buyers and the majority were also low income earners. At the end of 2009, Indigenous Business Australia had over 3,408 active loans with a total portfolio value of over \$578.9 million.

In safe communities, the Australian Government has spearheaded the development of the National Child Protection Framework. New national standards to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of children living in foster homes in all States and Territories will be developed by the middle of the year.

- A National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women is due for release in the first half of 2010. The National Plan will contain a number of actions to specifically address violence experienced by Indigenous women.
- The Australian Government has also led the development of the National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework which was endorsed by COAG in November 2009. Through this framework, jurisdictions will identify and develop the most appropriate response to law and justice issues adversely affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people.

Key achievements:

- Under the Northern Territory Emergency Response, we have delivered 21 safe places in 17 communities across the Northern Territory. Men's facilities have had 16 intakes between 30 January and 21 October 2009. Women's facilities have had 158 intakes (with 145 children) between January and October 2009;
- Employed 13 Remote Aboriginal Family Community Workers (RAFCWs) in 10 of the 13 identified NT communities;
- Employed five child protection workers and one manager as part of the Mobile Child Protection Team in the NT. Between January and July 2009, this team investigated 236 cases and visited 40 remote and regional communities;
- 81 night patrol services are operating in 80 communities helping an estimated 39,000 people in a three month period.
- Provided culturally safe child abuse counselling, including sexual assault trauma counselling (non-statutory) services to Aboriginal children, families and communities in remote Northern Territory through the Northern Territory Sexual Assault Mobile Outreach Service. From April 2008 to 31 December 2009, teams have made 249 visits to 77 communities in the Northern Territory to provide casework, community education and professional development services.
- Under the Northern Territory Local Priorities Fund, 106 projects have been approved with these projects supporting child safety, community safety and environmental improvements.
- In the Northern Territory, as at 27 November 2009, five of nine new crèches are operational (Lajamanu, Peppimenarti, Robinson River, Areyonga and Yarralin) with three services in the final stages of establishment (Docker River, Milikapiti and Papunya).
- Under the Northern Territory Local Priorities Fund, 128 projects have been approved with these projects supporting child safety, community safety and environmental improvements.
- Five permanent police stations will be constructed in the Northern Territory communities of Gapuwiyak, Yarralin, Arlparra, Ramingining and Imanpa over the next three years; and
- Funding the recruitment and training of an additional 60 Northern Territory Police to gradually replace the Australian Federal Police (AFP) officers working in remote communities as part of the NTER.
- We have also committed over \$19 million to build three new police stations and accommodation for extra police and child protection workers on the APY Lands in South Australia. Two of these stations are now operational and the third will be completed in coming months.
- Invested \$9.1 million in Respectful Relationships programs for young men and women, several of which will specifically target Indigenous communities.

CASE STUDY: GROOTE EYLANDT

For years, Indigenous people on Groote Eylandt, 600 kilometres east of Darwin, had wanted a better road between the communities of Angurugu and Umbakumba. The current road is unsealed and dangerous. The community of Umbakumba is virtually inaccessible at night and during wet weather, preventing people from accessing police and other emergency services, from bringing business into the community or taking up the many jobs available on the other side of the island. In 2009 the people of Groote saw their chance and took it, to the point of paying for part of the road upgrades themselves.

In November 2009, Groote Eylandt's Anindilyakwa Land Council signed the second stage of a Regional Partnership Agreement with Commonwealth, Northern Territory and local governments and the mining company GEMCO. The unprecedented agreement brings jobs, services and opportunity to Groote Eylandt, including eight new teacher houses, a stronger school system across all ages, 54 new houses, a stronger police presence and a new AFL competition.

The force behind the agreement was strong Indigenous leadership. Through the Land Council, traditional owners contributed up to \$14 million of mining royalties to the agreement, including \$5 million towards sealing the road, with the remaining \$15 million in funding coming from the Commonwealth and Territory Governments. With Commonwealth and Territory funding, total funding for the agreement across Groote and Eylandt and Bickerton Island exceeds \$80 million for Stages 1 and 2. Indigenous leaders on Groote have worked with their communities, governments and business to develop a plan for the region, obtain services and take responsibility for their future.

Strict alcohol restrictions imposed by the community in 2005 have led to marked improvements in the community, including reduced violence. However, the challenges remain great. Education outcomes are poor and school attendance unacceptably low. Policing levels are a concern for many residents.

Nevertheless, contributions made by Traditional Owners to the Regional Partnership Agreement will be critical to raising life expectancy and working to close the gap on Groote Eylandt.

They include matching funds to construct a health clinic at Umbakumba; construction of new government staff accommodation so that essential health and teaching staff can live in the communities; \$1 million towards the island's education system and \$500,000 for two AFL club houses. To reduce the disproportionately high incidence of dental caries in the region, especially among young people, the Traditional Owners will also pay the capital costs of the fluoridation of water supplies on the basis the Territory Government meets ongoing running costs.

The partnership "gives us a voice and an equal seat at the table," said Anindilyakwa Land Council Chairman Walter Amagula. "Through it we can negotiate projects and monitor programs and expenditure so they better target the needs of our people. By planning better and working together we are getting the best bang for our buck."

In economic participation, the Australian Government has expanded employment opportunities with the reform of Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) and made major reforms to Jobs Services Australia and the Indigenous Employment Program which started on 1 July 2009.

Under the new Job Services Australia program, more than 90,000 Indigenous job seekers – including 35,000 in remote locations – have registered with Job Services Australia providers. Over 18 000 Indigenous job seekers have been placed into work from 1 July 2009 to 31 January 2010.

The Australian Government is providing funding of more than \$750 million for the reformed Indigenous Employment Program. This program links Indigenous people with potential employers in urban, regional and remote areas and provides the training and mentoring services needed to encourage people to stay in their positions. The IEP also provides financial assistance and support for Indigenous Australians to become self-employed and develop businesses in urban, regional and remote areas. In 2009 the IEP supported 28,300 employment placements for Indigenous Australians.

In remote Australia, the CDEP has been restructured to build relevant skills for Indigenous people, provide on-the-job work experience and mobility assistance, and build the capacity of Indigenous organisations to deliver a range of services, including employment services and community development. The restructure will ensure that Indigenous people in remote communities will have the same income and entitlements as people doing similar work in other areas.

Key achievements:

- Recorded over 18,000 Indigenous job placements by Job Services Australia providers from 1 July 2009 to 31 January 2010;
- Recorded around 28,300 commencements in employment and training through the Indigenous Employment Program in the 2008–09 financial year, an 18 per cent increase over the previous year;
- Created over 1,500 properly paid jobs for government service delivery that had previously relied on CDEP, 1,236 through the Commonwealth and 306 through the state governments;
- Worked through COAG to develop jurisdiction specific targets for Indigenous public sector employment, contributing to a national target of 2.6 per cent Indigenous public sector employment by 2015. This will lead to over 8,000 additional jobs for Indigenous Australians in the public sector;
- Contracted 540 Indigenous rangers to deliver environmental services such as fire management, weed and feral animal control biodiversity survey and monitoring, revegetation, water quality monitoring and cultural site protection Under the Working on Country projects;
- We have set a minimum employment target of 20% as part of our agreement with the states and territories in delivering our major housing investment to ensure more Indigenous people get training and work experience. The Northern Territory housing program is currently exceeding this target;

- Funded 87 new Indigenous Community Support Service Providers to assist 140 communities to connect with a range of services in the areas of caring for families, early childhood, education, training, employment, financial management, housing, health and legal services;
- Supported 11 Indigenous organisations through the jobs fund to deliver 12 projects to build community and social infrastructure, leading to employment and skills development;
- Launched the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council in September 2009. Since then, over \$3.3 million in contracts have been signed between Indigenous suppliers and corporate businesses and government agencies;
- Supported Indigenous young people at risk and assisted them to engage in education and training through the \$723 million Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership. From 1 January 2010, the Youth Connections program requires providers to deliver a percentage of outcomes for Indigenous young people in areas identified as having a high indigenous population.

In governance and leadership, the Australian Government has acted to strengthen national Indigenous leadership by supporting the establishment of a new representative body, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. The Congress will ensure Indigenous people play a strong role in policy and program development on matters that affect them and will be a trusted source of advice to the government, corporate and community sectors.

Key achievements:

- Appointing the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services to oversee the coordination and implementation of remote service delivery, including cutting through red tape;
- Delivering leadership programs to over 650 Indigenous men and women this financial year;
- Improving service delivery on the ground by establishing one point of contact in the targeted remote communities for the delivery of all services in each of the 29 communities. Government Business Managers are in place for each of the 29 priority communities. Eleven Indigenous Engagement Officers have also been recruited to assist communities and Government Business Managers, and further recruitment is well under way;
- The creation of the Indigenous Governance Awards by Reconciliation Australia in partnership with BHP Billiton to identify, celebrate and promote effective Indigenous governance. The national awards highlight success in Indigenous Australia – strong leadership, good management, effective partnerships and brave, creative thinking.





Section 3

Tackling the national challenge

Closing the gap cannot be achieved by governments alone. Making real and lasting change demands the concerted effort of government, the corporate and community sectors and Indigenous people themselves working together in partnerships based on mutual responsibility and respect.

Most Indigenous Australians take responsibility for their children, sending them to school providing a safe and happy home. But, as in the rest of Australian society, in some communities social norms have broken down. This section outlines progress in restoring positive social norms in these Indigenous communities, by fostering strong partnerships with government; strengthening the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and supporting Indigenous leadership. It also details the work underway by business and community organisations who are getting involved in closing the gap.

Restoring positive social norms

Tackling the Indigenous inter-generational transfer of disadvantage demands a reform agenda which recognises that the old ways of doing things have comprehensively failed generations of Indigenous Australians.

It requires us to re-set our relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples using our combined will and resources in a national effort to close the gap. We will only succeed if Indigenous people develop and drive solutions.

While it is the responsibility of governments to deliver the infrastructure and services that support and sustain healthy social norms, at the individual level there must be the restoration of personal responsibility that is at the heart of family life and the foundation of strong communities.

Individuals have responsibilities to provide safe and secure homes for their families, to make sure their children go to school, and to provide financially for their families through stable financial management.

In 2009, progress was made towards restoring positive social norms:

- More Indigenous people are employed in sustainable, properly paid jobs, including in remote communities.
- More Indigenous families are taking responsibility for making sure their children go to school.
- More Indigenous families are able to access income management, financial literacy programs and money management services.
- More Indigenous families are providing a safe and happy home for their children through agreeing to mainstream tenancy arrangements in public housing or moving to own their own home.
- More Indigenous people are employed in sustainable, properly paid jobs, including in remote communities.

Using income responsibly

Income management is integral to the Government's broader welfare reforms to promote responsibility and strengthen families. Income management ensures that welfare is spent where it is intended – on the essentials of life and in the best interests of children. It reinforces social norms by stabilising people's financial circumstances, and ensuring that children's needs are met.

In 2009, the Government conducted a review of the impact of NT Emergency Response. Research evaluating the income management scheme, conducted by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, showed that while there were mixed views about the measure, Indigenous people were starting to see benefits:

- Three-quarters of clients interviewed reported spending more on food;
- More than half of parents interviewed reported that their children were eating more, weighed more and were healthier;
- More than half reported that the payment of rent or other bills had been easier; and
- Half of clients interviewed reported less gambling, less alcohol abuse and less harassing for money (humbugging) due to income management as well as other Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) measures, such as alcohol restrictions, community store licensing and increased police presence.

The Government has listened to Indigenous Australians. Between June and August 2009, it carried out one of the most extensive consultation processes ever conducted with Indigenous people in the Northern Territory.³⁸ The consultations on the future of the NTER included more than 500 meetings and workshops attended by several thousand people. Indigenous people strongly supported the reinstatement of the Racial Discrimination Act. While a broad range of views were expressed in consultation meetings, people said that income management was delivering benefits, particularly to children, women and the elderly. Many people, particularly women, indicated strongly that the NTER alcohol restrictions should stay in place but that local responses were needed to effectively address alcohol misuse.

Reforming the welfare system and reinstating the Racial Discrimination Act

Landmark legislation introduced into Parliament last November will comprehensively reform the welfare system and reinstate the application of the Racial Discrimination Act to the Northern Territory Emergency Response. The Bill before Parliament will also reform the laws associated with the NTER to improve them and to ensure that they are more consistent with the Racial Discrimination Act.

It is intended that a new scheme of income management will start first in the Northern Territory in urban, regional and remote areas. Funding of \$53 million over four years will also be provided for financial literacy programs and money management services. Over time, and drawing on evidence from the NT, it will be progressively rolled out in disadvantaged locations across Australia, to tackle the destructive, intergenerational cycle of passive welfare.

³⁸ *Report on the Northern Territory Emergency Response Re-design Consultations*, published November 2009

In four remote Cape York communities, Aurukun, Mossman Gorge, Hope Vale and Coen, income management is being trialled as part of the Cape York Welfare reforms which are jointly funded by the Australian and Queensland Governments. A centrepiece of the reforms is the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC). The primary purpose of the FRC is to hold conferences with community members with a view to restoring socially responsible standards of behaviour and re-establishing local Indigenous authority. The FRC may conference with welfare recipients, within their jurisdiction who are the subject of an agency notice from one of the four notifying bodies – the Magistrates Court, the Department of Communities (child safety services), Education authorities and Housing tenancy authorities. After attempting to conference with welfare recipients, the Commission may issue income management notices to Centrelink or make referrals to support services. At the end of September 2009, the FRC was actively tracking the engagement of 424 clients who they had referred to services. As at 1 January 2010, Centrelink is implementing 110 income management notices from the FRC. Since the establishment of the FRC there have been improvements in school attendance when compared to similar periods in 2008. For example between Term 3 2008 and Term 3 2009, school attendance increased at Aurukun by 21.5 percentage points.

CASE STUDY: CAPE YORK WELFARE REFORM TRIAL

After 29 years service, Doris Poonkamelya a respected Health worker at the Aurukun clinic has taken on an additional role as a commissioner with the Family Responsibilities Commission so she can work with her community “to make sure children attend school and parents provide a good life for the children.”

The Cape York Welfare Reform Trial is a community- driven initiative to move people from passive welfare to engagement in the real economy, and to rebuild basic social norms including parents sending children to school, abiding by the law, and taking care of their families. They have been established through a partnership between the communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mosman Gorge, the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership, and the Queensland and Australian Governments.

The reforms involve all welfare recipients living in any one of the four Cape York communities. Under its rules, anyone who has been the subject of a notification from a School, Queensland Department of Communities (concerning child protection matters), Public Housing Landlord or the Magistrates Court comes within the jurisdiction of the Commission. The Commission may decide to meet with the person at a conference to discuss the matters that have led to the notification. At the conference, the commissioners will decide on an appropriate course of action. The alternatives range from: discussing the matter and deciding on no further action, to recommending that the person’s income be managed by Centrelink and/or referred to community support services to address their behavior.

Mrs Poonkamelya is one of six commissioners in Aurukun working with local people to set high standards of individual responsibility.

Noel Pearson, Director, Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership has been the driving force behind the reforms. Mr Pearson says ‘to restore social norms to our people and our kids and communities, we need people willing and able to uphold those norms and fight for them. It’s going to be tough, but there’s two sides to caring – being tough and being compassionate, and we have to find out how to bring them together.’

The Aurukun Commissioners also say that people are now coming forward asking for assistance. Some are entering into voluntary income management because they can see its benefits. School attendance has improved and children are better cared for because the tavern is closed. The children are getting a good night’s sleep because currently there are no all night parties and loud music.

The positive change is apparent in one woman’s story:

I used to drink and smoke excessively as a way of dealing with the problems in my life. I thought the alcohol was helping me but I could feel my life going out of control.

I was very angry when I was first told to attend the conference. I was initially very unhappy about having my income managed when the Commissioners made this decision at the conference. I have now changed my mind as having my income

managed means that I always have money on my Basicscard to buy food and I have opened a savings account.

The Commissioners also arranged for me to have a case plan and attend the Wellbeing Centre here in community. The staff at the Wellbeing Centre are a great source of support and I continue to go there when I need to talk to someone. I am very proud that I have successfully completed the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Services program and have learnt other strategies to deal with stress like talking about the problems, finding other ways to relax and not worrying about things that I have no control over.

I am also now working three days a week and I enjoy going to work and feel proud when I have done a good job. I voluntarily joined the women's group so I could share my story and seek support from the other women in community. I enjoy spending time with my four children, playing with them and watching movies. It feels good to have little bit of extra money tucked away for a rainy day. I am planning for the future which includes moving out of the house that I share with extended family members and I want to move into my own house. I enjoy the outdoors and I one day would like to be a ranger or work as a landscaper. I have obtained a learner's drivers license and I am working towards getting my provisional license. I now have a lot of reasons to smile.³⁹

Trials are also underway in the Northern Territory and Queensland, linking school enrolment and attendance with welfare payments. Families in the Logan suburbs of Woodridge, Kingston, Logan Central and Eagleby, and the communities of Doomadgee and Mornington Island will take part in a trial linking school enrolment and attendance with welfare payments. Around 2000 parents receiving income support in the trial sites will be required, if requested, to demonstrate to Centrelink that their children are enrolled, and that they are taking reasonable steps to make sure their children attend school regularly. Thirty schools will be involved in this measure across the trial sites.

Parents who fail to enrol their children in school or fail to take reasonable steps to get their children to school may have their income payments suspended until the problem is resolved.

Taking care of homes

Decent housing is critical to closing the gap. No child can thrive in a house without running water, where more than a dozen people share three rooms, where they are exposed to adult activities, unmonitored visitors or violent behaviour. To overcome years of neglect, the Government is making an unprecedented investment in remote Indigenous housing – \$5.5 billion over ten years. Such a level of investment demands security of tenure to protect assets and to make sure repairs and maintenance are carried out. It underpins the responsibility of residents to pay the rent and maintain and care for their homes.

To support our housing investment, Governments are negotiating new land leasing arrangements in partnership with remote Indigenous communities. With clearly defined leases, governments can take full responsibility for government services and buildings, while community members can take responsibility for the payment of rent and compliance with tenancy agreements. With secure land tenure, families can also choose to buy their own homes and, through home ownership, build security and wealth for themselves and their children.

In the Northern Territory, land tenure arrangements have been agreed for major housing development sites in 14 communities under the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP). Whole of township leases have been agreed for Nguiu in the Tiwi Islands and Angurugu, Umbakumba and Milyakburra on Groote Eylandt. In December 2009, leases were finalised for 17 Alice Springs town camps allowing work to begin under the \$150 million Alice Springs Transformation Plan which will see the construction of 85 new houses as well as essential infrastructure and significant rebuilds and refurbishments of existing houses in poor condition.

Land leasing reforms are also making home ownership on Indigenous land possible. In January 2010, the Australian Government acted to meet the aspirations of 60 to 100 residents in one of the Alice Springs Town camps, Ilpeye Ilpeye, to pursue individual home ownership. The acquisition by the Australian Government means their land can be subdivided into individual housing blocks – and that arrangements can be negotiated to enable them to own their own homes.

In urban and regional areas, 36 per cent of Indigenous households own or are purchasing their homes. In 2008-09, Indigenous Business Australia assisted 348 Indigenous families with home loans, bringing the number of families it has assisted since 1975 to more than 13,800.

In 2009, to further assist the delivery of housing and essential services in Indigenous communities, the Commonwealth Government also introduced the Native Title Amendment Bill into Parliament, as foreshadowed in last year's report. The bill aims to expedite the process for resolving tenure issues on Indigenous land that may be affected by native title to enable the construction of much needed community infrastructure and public housing. The Queensland and Western Australian Governments are also improving their Indigenous land and housing legislation to reform land tenure in remote communities, recognising the significance of secure land tenure for the social and economic development.

Employment to build a strong future for Indigenous Australians

Limited economic development and decades of welfare dependency mean in many Indigenous communities proper employment is the exception rather than the rule.

In remote Australia, over 1,500 sustainable, properly paid jobs in government service delivery have been created – 1,236 through the Commonwealth and 306 through the state governments. These jobs had previously relied on Community Development Employment Program projects. These changes mean Indigenous people in remote communities have the same income and entitlements as people doing similar work in other areas.

The Government's Working on Country program now employs 540 Indigenous rangers, up from 124 in 2007. The program is popular in communities because it supports the creation of fulfilling and healthy jobs that draw on Indigenous people's environmental and cultural knowledge. It provides training and access to scientific land and water management support, improves the health of their country and supports them in passing their vast knowledge of the land and their culture to their children.

Across the country, Indigenous people are signing up for job training and placement services. Under the new Job Services Australia program, launched in July 2009, more than 90,000 Indigenous job seekers – including 35,000 in remote locations – have registered with Job Services Australia providers. In seven months over 18,000 Indigenous job seekers have been placed into work as at 31 January 2010.

In addition, the Commonwealth is providing funding of more than \$750 million for the reformed Indigenous Employment Program (IEP). This program links Indigenous people with potential employers in urban, regional and remote areas and provides the training and mentoring services needed to encourage people to stay in jobs. For example, the IEP provides funding to support a pre-vocational training program at the Newmont Tanami Mining Operations Granites facility in the Northern Territory, which also helps Indigenous students find suitable employment. In October 2009, eight Indigenous students graduated from Newmont with a Certificate II in Mining Operations and have started a work experience program in Newmont's milling departments, after which they will have the opportunity to move into permanent positions.

The IEP also provides financial assistance and support for Indigenous Australians to become self-employed and develop businesses in urban, regional and remote areas. For example, the Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council was supported through IEP to conduct a feasibility study and develop a business plan for the Sand Tour Business which is now up and running.

Recognising the potential of the native title system to provide long-term and sustainable benefits for more Indigenous people, the Government is providing an extra \$62.1 million to Native Title Representative Bodies⁴⁰ (NTRBs) as part of a wider strategy to make the system less adversarial, working through agreement-making rather than costly and protracted litigation.

Supporting Indigenous Leadership

The Australian Government is committed to re-setting the relationship with Indigenous Australians, by strengthening Indigenous leadership at the national level and supporting strong leaders to transform their communities locally.

In 2009, in recognition of the key role of Indigenous leadership the Government worked to:

- Strengthen Indigenous leadership at a community and national level, by supporting grass roots leadership and supporting the establishment of a new national Indigenous representative body;
- Introduce legislation to reinstate the Racial Discrimination Act in the Northern Territory and Cape York and endorsing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people; and
- Promote strong Indigenous cultures, heritage and languages, by developing a National Indigenous Languages Action Plan and providing funding support for Indigenous arts centres and broadcasters.

Recognising the need for a strong national voice for Indigenous people, the Government is supporting the establishment of a new representative body, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples. Indigenous leaders, in consultation with Indigenous people have developed the model for the Congress. Mr Tom Calma, former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, in particular, has provided tremendous leadership.

The Congress will:

- play a lead role in holding governments to account for their performance;
- ensure that Indigenous people play a central role in research, policy and program development on issues that affect them; and
- advance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues with the government, corporate, philanthropic and community sectors.

The Government has provided \$29.2 million over four years to establish the Congress and provide recurrent funding.

Indigenous leaders were also at the forefront of the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation Ltd to help Indigenous individuals, families and communities address the trauma and loss caused by past government policies, including the Stolen Generations. In 2009 a team of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders with experience and expertise in Indigenous healing held workshops with more than 450 Indigenous Australians to decide the role of the Foundation. It will focus on grass-roots actions to support community

⁴⁰ NTRBs are the legal representatives of most claimant groups.

and family healing. In October 2009 the Government supported the establishment of the Foundation with \$26.6 million of funding over four years.

Indigenous leaders also come together to share their knowledge and experiences through participation in the national component of the Government's Indigenous Leadership Program.

Indigenous community organisations are also showing strong leadership in achieving improvement in Indigenous life outcomes. For example, the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association (AIDA) is helping to increase the number of Indigenous medical professionals while advocating for the health and wellbeing of Indigenous Australians and their communities. The number of Indigenous doctors in Australia is expected to reach approximately 150 this year, rising from 61 in 1996.

Leaders are not only found at the national level in official roles. They are also operating in community businesses, schools, health centres, football clubs, and in families.

Under the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership the Government is helping leaders in communities such as Lajamanu, Ntaria, Fitzroy Crossing, Doomadgee, Walgett and Mimili to develop local implementation plans. Goals are being established across health, education, employment and housing, with leaders being clear about the services they need the government to deliver. These plans will drive the delivery of government investment, with local leaders and reference groups nominated to guide progress and hold governments to account.

Strong Indigenous leadership at the regional level is critical to closing the gap. The Nganampa Health Council for example, has been working with women on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands in South Australia over the last ten years. It has achieved outstanding results including an 80 per cent reduction in perinatal mortality, an increase in average birth weight and a reduction in low birth weight⁴¹.

41 National Indigenous Reform Agreement, COAG

CASE STUDY: BLANK PAGE SUMMIT ON SUICIDE

Mary Victor O'Reeri lost two brothers to suicide. Although devastated, she was not destroyed. Instead, she and her father, Stephen Victor Senior, decided it was time for change.

In July 2009, Ms O'Reeri's home community of Billard, four kilometres from the community of Beagle Bay in the Kimberley, convened the Blank Page Summit on Suicide. Almost 150 people from all over Australia – including the Federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Jenny Macklin, Western Australian Chief Justice Wayne Martin and Western Australian Coroner, Alastair Hope – attended in an effort to stop high levels of suicide among Indigenous people.

In 2008, Coroner Hope's report into the deaths of 22 Indigenous men and women exposed the conditions and circumstances that contributed to the suicides of Indigenous people in the Kimberley. It helped to produce the call to action that led to the Summit.

Arising from the powerful work of the Summit over four days, Stephen Victor Senior, Mary Victor O'Reeri and members of the Billard Aboriginal Community invited others to join them in a call for action. This call for action comprised these key messages:

- to create suicide-proof communities in the Kimberley
- to train families to be families
- to encourage self-care through staged support

These strategies aim to protect individuals at immediate risk of suicide as well as to address the phenomenon of 'slow suicide', a gradual retreat into despair that stems from a persistently low quality of life.

The Australian and Western Australian Governments have committed to actions in response to the summit. Many of these measures will be advanced through the four Kimberley communities – Beagle Bay, Ardyaloon, Fitzroy Crossing and Halls Creek – that are priority communities under the Council of Australian Governments' National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery.

In September 2009, the Western Australian Government officially launched its Suicide Prevention Strategy with a commitment of \$13 million. The strategy requires all state agencies to make suicide prevention a priority and to work on a coordinated response. A new Western Australian Ministerial Council for Suicide Prevention will coordinate state wide initiatives for suicide prevention and identify communities and locations requiring additional support.

Through the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership, the governments are seeking to work with communities to improve the quality of life for Indigenous people in the region. Among other measures, this includes the introduction of income management and establishment of children and family centres in Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing. In addition, Indigenous Parenting Support Services will be established in the four priority Kimberley communities.

However, while governments have an important role to play, Indigenous leaders in communities will be central to this agenda. As Mary O'Reeri has said: "We are the people we've been waiting for."

Throughout 2009, Indigenous organisations continued to strengthen their communities. For example, the Stronger Smarter Institute based at the Queensland University of Technology worked with community leaders to reshape Indigenous education (see case study). Indigenous leadership workshops, conducted by Reconciliation Australia in Mount Isa and Kalgoorlie, focused on Indigenous community networks and good governance with sessions on management, conflict resolution and leadership strategies.

Re-setting the relationship

Resetting our relationship with Indigenous Australians also requires reforms which are vital to heal, unite and restore human dignity and cultural pride.

In April 2009 Australia endorsed the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. For more than two decades before its adoption, Indigenous Australian leaders had contributed to the development of the Declaration. Under the previous government Australia was one of only four countries to vote against the Declaration. In supporting the Declaration, the current government pledged to uphold the human rights of Indigenous peoples based on principles of equality, partnership and good faith. Through the Declaration, the Government also reaffirmed its commitment to upholding the rights of vulnerable people, including women and children, to live free of violence, abuse and neglect, and to the rights of all Indigenous people to lives that are safe, secure and free from intimidation.

The Government has also acknowledged the repatriation of ancestral remains as an important element in healing the pain of past injustices and resetting the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Over the past two years, the Government has worked with traditional owners across the country to negotiate the return of more than 100 remains from countries including the United Kingdom, the USA, Austria and the Netherlands. The remains of more than 1,000 Indigenous Australian remains are still held in museums around the world so there is a long way to go. The Australian Government is providing funding of \$4.7 million over four years for the repatriation of ancestral remains as well as sacred objects. A committee of eight Indigenous Australians was established in October 2009 to provide advice to the Government on how to improve the repatriation process.

In August 2009, the Government moved to preserve the 145 Indigenous languages still spoken in Australia through a National Indigenous Languages Action Plan. In 2009–10 the Government is providing \$9.3 million for community-based language maintenance and revival projects across the country.

The Government has also acted to support Indigenous art centres, recognising their major contribution to Indigenous employment, education and cultural and social wellbeing, particularly in remote communities. In 2009–10, funding of \$10.67 million is being provided to Indigenous art centres and support organisations across the country. Government funding

of \$7.1 million will also support a range of festivals and visual and performing arts, including music, dance and other cultural events to showcase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and encourage young Indigenous Australians to stay connected to their cultures.

Funding of \$8 million from the Aboriginals Benefit Account has been allocated for the upgrade of art centres across the Northern Territory and an Indigenous Australian Art Commercial Code of Conduct is being developed to guide ethical commerce and protect the rights of Indigenous artists.

The Government is also supporting the development of broadcasting services that promote Indigenous cultures and languages and convey important information providing \$14.58 million in 2009–10 to support 115 Indigenous community broadcasting projects in metropolitan, regional and remote Australia.

More business and community organisations are getting involved

The non-government and private sectors have a key role to play in employing Indigenous people and contracting Indigenous businesses, both of which are important to closing the gap. Community organizations too are taking positive steps, and working in partnership with the private sector and local communities to effect change.

The Australian Government is committed to supporting enterprise from all levels of government, the private and community sectors, to take concrete action towards closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage, and engaging the broader Australian community in the challenge.

In 2009, the Government provided \$1.75 million to Indigenous Community Volunteers to fund over 1,000 volunteer assignments where mainstream Australians and Indigenous Australians work together to do something positive and help close the gap. Last year, 440 volunteer projects generated over 33,000 hours of community service for Indigenous people.

A number of new partnerships are being developed between Indigenous communities and non-government organisations. Organisations such as Mission Australia, Life Without Barriers, Fred Hollows Foundation and Oxfam Australia are delivering targeted programs to address Indigenous disadvantage.

For example in 2009, a partnership was struck between the Red Cross and Outback Stores to ensure Aboriginal children in a number of remote communities in the Northern Territory will be eating more fresh fruit. Outback Stores is providing fruit for the Red Cross' Good Start Breakfast Club menu in every community in which an Outback Store is located. Red Cross has been operating breakfast programs in remote areas of the Northern Territory since 2006 and is now working with 33 communities and 13 homeland centres to achieve improved nutrition for children.

In 2009, business and community organisations made a particular impact in employment and education.

- In education, not-for-profit organisations are achieving positive results in improved school attendance and retention.

- In employment, more businesses and community organisations are getting involved and there is an increasing sense that closing the gap can be good for business. There are positive signs of a stronger Indigenous presence in the corporate sector.

Innovation in Education

A range of not-for-profit organisations are seeing good results in education, and particularly on improvements in school attendance and retention, and in supporting young Indigenous people make the transition from school to employment or training.

Key achievements in 2009 include:

- The Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) funded 45 scholarships for Indigenous secondary school students to attend boarding school in regional and urban areas. This is expected to increase to more than 100 scholarships in 2010.
- By the end of February 2010, the Clontarf Academies will have programs catering for 2,300 students in 36 schools across 3 states, achieving school attendance of greater than 80 per cent.
- Dr Chris Sarra's Stronger Smarter Learning Communities project helps schools which make progress in lifting school attendance and achievement to become hub schools, which support and develop other schools in their region which are affiliated with the project. Stronger Smarter Learning Communities received Australian Government funding in September 2009 to support an initial 12 schools and communities in New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australia become hub schools. With funding over four years, this is anticipated to grow to 60 hub schools supporting 180 to 240 affiliated schools over the next 4 years.
- Mission Australia is currently working with Telstra to pilot their transition-to-work program – Getting to Work – for Indigenous young people in Victoria. This program focuses on increasing the education, skills and cultural awareness and well-being of young Indigenous people to get them ready for employment. The program is also due to be piloted in other states.

CASE STUDY: AUSTRALIAN INDIGENOUS EDUCATION FOUNDATION

The Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) supports students like Carlie Smart, who moved from Bowraville to complete Year 12 at St Vincent's College in 2008. Carlie is now studying Arts/Law at UNSW. Through her university law degree, Carlie has also been working at the Kingsford Legal Centre assisting people in need with Legal Aid. Carlie mentors and supports her two younger sisters who are also boarding at an AIEF partner school in Sydney.

Employment & Economic Development

The private sector has a key role to play in employing Indigenous people and contracting Indigenous businesses. There is an increasing sense that closing the gap can be good for business and positive signs of a stronger Indigenous presence in the corporate sector. The Australian Government has been active in its support for businesses and organisations who are interested and willing to undertake positive action to close the gap.

In 2009, the Government focused on reforming the structures that underpin employment participation and transitions from school to work or training. In coming months the Government will release the Indigenous Economic Development Strategy to strengthen work between Indigenous people, the corporate sector and governments to drive economic development.

Reconciliation Action Plans translate good intentions into meaningful actions. They require organisations to make long-term commitments that include hiring Indigenous employees, using Indigenous contractors and offering school-based traineeships and higher education scholarships. Launched in 2006 with seven plans, the program has 165 plans in operation today, and will expand by another 168 this year.

Over a quarter of the membership of the Business Council of Australia – including Australia's largest 11 companies – have or are developing Reconciliation Action Plans making long-term commitments that include hiring Indigenous employees, using Indigenous contractors and offering school-based traineeships and higher education scholarships.

- BHP Billiton has 10 contracts with Indigenous businesses worth \$350 million, and employs 255 Indigenous workers through its WA Iron Ore subsidiary. Another 465 Indigenous people are currently employed by organisations that contract to WA Iron Ore.
- The ANZ Bank has taken on 420 Indigenous trainees in the past five years and has committed to filling 10 per cent of entry level positions by Indigenous people by 2011.
- Rio Tinto has 1300 Indigenous employees, up from 130, ten years ago.

In less than four years since the Reconciliation Action Plans were created, organisations with plans have created 6,000 positions for Indigenous people, and filled 3,000 of them. Through the plans, \$750 million worth of contracts have been awarded to Indigenous businesses.

The Australian Employment Covenant (AEC), launched in October 2008, is a private sector led initiative with an ambitious target of securing 50,000 jobs for Indigenous Australians. The Australian Government has committed to supporting the AEC, including \$4 million start-up funding and a long-term funding model based on the achievement of outcomes. The AEC has received commitments by Australian employers to hire in excess of 16,000 Indigenous job seekers. Work is underway to convert those commitments into sustainable job outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

A 2009 survey conducted by the Business Council of Australia⁴² shows that more businesses are seeing the economic and social benefits that can flow from sustainable closing the gap initiatives.

The Commonwealth Bank has launched an Indigenous Customer Assistance Line, for customers in remote communities in far North Queensland. It is the first of its kind for an

⁴² *Many Connections, One Goal: Closing the Gap, 2009*

Australian bank. This is one of the initiatives of their new Indigenous Banking Team that aims to provide the highest quality service to Indigenous customers. Their Reconciliation Action Plan focuses on a range of community partnerships aimed at driving economic development such as their work with the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council to whom they provide mentoring and leadership development, or their work with One Laptop Per Child providing educational laptops to children throughout remote Australia.

Business and community organisations can play an important role by assisting with clear training and recruitment pathways for Indigenous people to obtain vocational training or higher education and then finding suitable employment.

In 2009 ANZ provided 70 Indigenous school-based traineeships with the aim of training the students for long-term employment and the Commonwealth Bank Group provided 40 traineeships in 2009 and is developing a cadetship program to further support long-term Indigenous employment.

The Government also recognises the central role of the private sector in creating jobs, investing in local economies, and promoting innovation and capability. In September 2009 the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council was launched to connect Indigenous businesses with Australian corporations and government agencies to create business opportunities. Businesses such as the Commonwealth Bank Group, Corporate Express, Cisco Systems and Wesfarmers are members of the new Council. First quarter reporting (to 31st December 2009) shows that \$3.3 million of contracts between Indigenous suppliers and corporate businesses and government agencies have been signed.

In the same month, Desert Knowledge Australia launched a new \$10 million project – Outback Business Networks – providing practical help to small and medium businesses in the most remote parts of the country. Desert Knowledge Australia is funded by the Australian Government, the Northern Territory Government, Desert Knowledge Australia, BHP Billiton, Qantas, Telstra and 28 regional partner organisations.

CASE STUDY: NATIONAL AUSTRALIA BANK

In December 2008, the National Australia Bank's chief executive officer, Cameron Clyne, spoke candidly to a meeting in Parliament House.

He acknowledged that his bank's history of engaging with Indigenous Australians was not always a distinguished one. Too often in the past, its services to Indigenous Australians "were poorly co-ordinated and delivered with varying levels of consultation and success."

Mr Clyne said he was proud to launch the bank's first Reconciliation Action Plan. It followed two years of close engagement with Indigenous people, including substantial research to understand their banking needs and a requirement that bank leaders spend time in an Indigenous community.

A year later, in launching the NAB's second Reconciliation Action Plan, Mr Clyne said the bank had met 17 of 22 commitments in its first plan and made significant progress on another four. In 2009 it hired 35 Indigenous employees and wrote nine loans – totalling \$180,000 – for Indigenous business through its Microenterprise Loan program. NAB also supports the Traditional Credit Union in the Top End, providing a \$1.2 million no-interest loan and additional funds to enable the credit union to launch five new branches in Indigenous communities.





Australian Government

