**First Meeting of the Joint Council on Closing the Gap**

**27 March 2019, Brisbane, Communiqué**

The Joint Council on Closing the Gap met for the first time today in Brisbane. The Joint Council is established under the Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap and represents an historic step forward in the practical working relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and governments. It will work to refresh the Closing the Gap framework and monitor its implementation over the next ten years. Ministers of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and representatives of the National Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisation (Coalition of Peaks) and the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) will work together for the first time as genuine partners in an agenda of major national significance. The Coalition of Peaks is a group of almost 40 community controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies, operating across a range of sectors important to Closing the Gap.

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed the Joint Council in December 2018 as a key part of its commitment to a formal partnership on Closing the Gap with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This commitment recognises that shared decision making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, through their representative organisations, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Closing the Gap framework is essential to closing the gap in life outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Joint Council, the first ever COAG Council that includes members from outside Governments, comprises 12 representatives elected by the Coalition of Peaks with broad geographic and subject matter coverage, a Minister nominated by the Commonwealth and each state and territory government, and one representative from the Australian Government Association.

Following meetings of the Joint Council, at least two times per year, decisions arising will be made public through a communique. A forward workplan for the Joint Council is also being developed and will be made public.

The formal partnership agreement between governments and the Coalition of Peaks came into effect on 22 March 2019 with the signatures of the Prime Minister, the Coalition of Peaks and the Chief Minister of the Australian Capital Territory.

**Members attending**

| **Member** | **Representing** |
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| Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion (Co-chair) | Commonwealth |
| Pat Turner AM (Co-chair) | Coalition of Peaks |
| Cheryl Axleby | Coalition of Peaks |
| Muriel Bamblett | Coalition of Peaks |
| Cindy Berwick | Coalition of Peaks |
| Natalie Lewis | Coalition of Peaks |
| John Paterson | Coalition of Peaks |
| Vicki O’Donnell | Coalition of Peaks |
| Melissa Clarke | Coalition of Peaks |
| David Warriner | Coalition of Peaks |
| Trevor Pearce | Coalition of Peaks |
| Katrina Fanning | Coalition of Peaks |
| The Hon Jacquie Petrusma MP | Tasmania |
| Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA | ACT |
| Tony Buti MLA | WA |
| Mayor David O’Loughlin | ALGA |
| Ngaree Ah Kit MLA | NT |
| The Hon Michelle Lensink MLC | SA |
| The Hon Gavin Jennings MLC | VIC |
| The Hon Jackie Trad MP | QLD |