



CLOSE THE GAP

MEDIA RELEASE

Today is National Close the Gap Day and it's time once again to mobilise the nation behind the voices of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The recent Closing the Gap progress report handed down by Prime Minister Morrison in early February found that only two of the seven whole of government closing the gap policy targets are on track. Despite another 12 years of action and considerable investment and time, little progress has been made. Whole of government attempts to close the gaps in life expectancy, health and education have evidently failed greatly. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have continued to bear the burden of gross social and health inequity for too long. Urgent government reform and investment is needed to embed our cultures, our voices and our choices at the front and centre of policy design and implementation.

While some may consider this task to difficult, this years Close the Gap Report, '*We nurture our culture for our future, and our culture nurtures us*', prepared by colleagues at the Lowitja Institute, shows us what is possible and that we are achieving these solutions. It provides examples and case studies of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing are being integrated into policies, programs and services across all health sectors. More importantly, it demonstrates that there are significant benefits to these approaches and that frameworks underpinned by cultural determinants of health are critical to improving outcomes across all areas of Indigenous policy. **It's time to end the disparity. See what is possible. Read the report, '*We nurture our culture for our future, and our culture nurtures us*', at: <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/close-gap-2020>.**

With a ten-year national shared decision-making agreement signed between the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations we are now entering a new era. For the first time in history Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are playing pivotal roles as agents of change, with a shared role in designing, implementing and monitoring the whole of government Closing the Gap policy framework.

While this way of doing business is long overdue – we all need to grasp this opportunity collectively. We cannot afford to stand around and let this failure continue while our people continue to suffer. There is no time for cynicism, scepticism, division or procrastination. Most Australians want a future that ensures fairness, equality and equity for all, and every single one of us has a role to play. With COVID-19 on our doorstep we also need to make sure our society leaves nobody behind. Now more than ever before we need you Australia to walk with us as one. Show your support by signing the Close the Gap campaign pledge at <https://antar.org.au/closethegappledge>.

Close the Gap Campaign Co-chair
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