

A NEW WAY OF WORKING

TALKING ABOUT WHAT'S NEEDED TO CLOSE THE GAP IN LIFE
OUTCOMES BETWEEN ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT
ISLANDER PEOPLE AND OTHER AUSTRALIANS

Report from the NSW Consultation

November 2019



This report was prepared by the NSW Coalition of Peak Organisations (NSW CAPO). NSW CAPO consists of:

- NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- NSW/ACT Aboriginal Legal Services
- Link Up NSW
- NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group*
- NSW Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat
- First Peoples Disability Network

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Executive Summary

“...Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, when properly supported, are providing the solutions to entrenched poverty and disadvantage that is lived by our people”¹. National Manager for Oxfam’s First Peoples’ Program, Ngarra Murray.

In October and November 2019, the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (NSW CAPO) undertook a broadscale consultation with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. This consultation, part of the national consultation being undertaken by the Coalition of Peaks, was part of the new Partnership Agreement with governments.

The goal was to test the draft ‘refreshed’ targets for the Closing the Gap; to find new measures to improve the accountability of governments; and to increase the genuine involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in finding ways to Close the Gap.

Consultation meetings were held in communities across New South Wales.

The participants were asked to consider three new priorities for action:

1. Formal partnerships between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on Closing the Gap;
2. Growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled services; and
3. Improving mainstream service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

They were also asked to consider the current draft Closing the Gap targets.

Summary of Findings

In general, participants expressed strong support for the three action priorities, although some questioned whether, after all these years, they would make a difference.

Priority One: Formal partnerships between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on Closing the Gap

Participants said successful achievement of this priority would require:

- a genuine partnership which gave Aboriginal people a voice and built trust, through proper community consultation
- a partnership underpinned by open lines of communication
- cultures to be recognised, respected and embedded in the partnerships
- funding to be provided longer term, where it was needed locally, without duplication of services
- greater accountability.

Priority Two: Growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled services

Participants said successful achievement of this priority would require:

- community control of program development, service delivery and capacity building

¹ <https://nit.com.au/oxfam-australia-report-says-policy-rooted-in-self-determination-is-more-successful/> (accessed on 3/11/2019)

- government to understand and respect the diversity of Aboriginal cultures
- more services delivered by Aboriginal-controlled, locally-based organisations
- local engagement and more flexibility
- evidence-based research to demonstrate the services that actually make a difference.

Priority Three: Improving mainstream service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Participants said successful achievement of this priority would require:

- more accountability about where funding was spent and the results achieved
- more Aboriginal people employed in mainstream organisations, including through more identified positions, more senior positions and Aboriginal people on boards
- better partnerships between mainstream organisations and Aboriginal organisations and communities
- more funding and better funding allocation processes which removed duplication, was aligned to regional and community needs and delivered proven outcomes
- non-Aboriginal people who work with Aboriginal communities to undertake cultural competency and safety training.

Draft Closing the Gap Targets

The over-arching response to the targets were that:

- they put too much responsibility on the individual and not enough on government and communities
- they were not sufficiently aspirational and frequently came from the perspective of a deficit model
- many targets were unrealistic unless they were supported by sufficient funding, appropriately targeted.

They wanted services delivered seamlessly, with different levels of government working together. They wanted a separate Outcome Statement for Youth, across all other areas.

Participants suggested a range of changes to the current targets, to strengthen them, and also suggested a series of new areas for which targets should be developed, including small business development and ownership, transport, mental health and ageing.

Summary of Proposed Changes to the Draft Targets

Families, children and youth

Recommended changes to the draft targets for Families, children and youth:

- *Increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census to 100% by 2028.*
- *100% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025.*

New target areas:

Create a new outcome statement for youth with targets across all areas.

Health

New target areas:

Mental Health:

- *By 2021, an Aboriginal mental health worker available 24/7 at hospitals.*
- *Create a new target for the mental health of mothers, especially young mothers.*

Aged care: culturally appropriate aged care.

Reduction of drug and alcohol abuse.

Employment in health: create a new target related to the employment of Aboriginal people in all areas and levels of health.

Create a new outcome statement for people with disabilities.

Education

Recommended changes to the targets:

- *Remove the NAPLAN targets*
- *Close the gap in educational outcomes entirely between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people, for example "Aboriginal students achieve the same or better outcomes from school and post-school education as all Australian students."*

New target areas:

Create a target related to the teaching and learning of Aboriginal cultures, languages, and heritage in schools.

Economic Development

Recommended change to the targets:

- *Halve the gap in employment outcomes in a decade.*

New target areas:

"Every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student has a transition to work package by the end of Year 12."

Create new targets for:

- *Small business ownership by Aboriginal people.*

- *People with disabilities to gain employment.*

Housing

Recommended change to the targets:

- *Increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 100% by 2028.*

New target areas for development:

- *Increased home ownership.*
- *Decreased homelessness, with an additional specific target for youth.*

Justice, including youth justice

Recommended change to the targets:

Eliminate the incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people by 2028.

End the over-representation of young people and adults on community-based orders, in police custody and in prison by 2030.

New target areas:

Halve the number of Aboriginal people returning to prison.

Land and waters

New target areas:

Create a new outcomes statement and targets to increase the control and ownership of water, sea and land by Aboriginal Peoples.

Transport

New target areas:

Create a new outcomes statement and target for access to transport.

Additional Issues

In addition to the new areas discussed above, participants wanted to see a new outcomes statement and targets for transport.

Other important issues were raised by participants. These included:

- *better communication, particularly about entitlements*

- the importance of financial probity and transparency in the allocation of tenders and grants,
- Aboriginal identity
- ownership of data
- Local Government Representation
- more flexible funding models combined with accountability for the allocation and delivery of resources and services.

Participants expressed the need for trust to be built. Many participants wanted to know how the new arrangements would deliver better outcomes when the previous arrangements had failed. Participants were also interested to know how they could continue to put their views forward so they could participate and contribute to Closing the Gap at the local level.

Participants wanted to “Close the gap now. Ten years is too long.” (Participant from Walgett)

Conclusion

Aboriginal people are Australian citizens, so Aboriginal people want the same things other Australian citizens want. We want safe and secure housing, good health and good health care, access to transport, better lives for our children and good quality care when we are old. We want an end to the over-representation of Aboriginal people, especially young people, in gaols. We want an end to racism. We want to be small business owners. We want to own our own homes.

We want better education, from the earliest years to tertiary education, connected to vocational skills, higher education and employment. We want to see more Aboriginal people in employment, especially where those jobs are in communities, and at more senior levels. We want to be part of the economic development of Australia and have fulfilling lives within our communities.

We want to be respected and we want our cultures, heritage and languages to be respected and incorporated into education. We want the impact of colonisation and the stolen generation to be acknowledged and understood. We want higher levels of cultural competence in the people who work in and with communities.

We also want self-determination, because it works. Aboriginal people must be involved in describing the nature of the problems we face, creating the initiatives to address those problems and designing and implementing the solutions.

We hope this Partnership Agreement is the first stage in finally Closing the Gap, because we want to Close the Gap and we want to do it now.

Introduction

In December 2016, as the timeframes for a number of Closing the Gap targets were coming to an end and insufficient progress had been made, governments said they wanted to ‘refresh’ their approach to Closing the Gap.

Governments talked to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians and organisations during 2017 and 2018 about ‘refreshing’ both the targets and their approach to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies became concerned that COAG was going to agree to a ‘refresh’, focusing on new targets, without the formal agreement of representatives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. Not least amongst their concerns was that it was difficult to see how the input which had been provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations was being reflected in what governments were considering.

In October 2018, 14 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies wrote to the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers to ask that changes to Closing the Gap not be agreed without formal input and support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. We also asked for a seat at the table.

The Coalition of Peaks is made up of nearly 40 members of national, state and territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies within various sectors. It represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations that deliver and monitor a range of services and/or programs vital to Closing the Gap. (A full list of these organisations is at **TAB A**.)

With the support of the Prime Minister, governments agreed to a formal Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap which was signed in March 2019. The Partnership Agreement sets out how decisions will be made together.

The Partnership Agreement

The Partnership Agreement established a Joint Ministerial and Coalition of Peaks Council on Closing the Gap (Joint Council). The role of the Joint Council is to support national leadership, coordination and cooperation on Closing the Gap and provide advice to COAG. This is the first time that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices have not only been invited to the table but have also been empowered with shared decision-making responsibilities.

In March 2019, the Partnership Agreement between COAG and the Coalition of Peaks came into effect. The Partnership Agreement sets out how governments and the Coalition of Peaks will work together over the next ten years on Closing the Gap. It was also agreed that the Partnership Agreement will provide for new measures to improve the accountability of governments and increase the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in those arrangements.

The Partnership Agreement is based on the beliefs that:

- when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are included and have a real say in the design and delivery of services that impact on them, the outcomes are far better
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be at the centre of Closing the Gap policy: the gap won’t close without our full involvement
- COAG cannot expect us to take responsibility for outcomes or to be able to work constructively with them if we are excluded from decision making.

What the research tells us

These beliefs are supported by research. A recent research report released by Oxfam stated, “There is overwhelming evidence from Indigenous peoples around the world that the results are generally much better when local communities create and own the solutions to the challenges they face.”²

This finding is supported by the work of the Productivity Commission, which stated that research has identified six determinants of good Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (and government) governance; these determinants included self-determination.

“The existence of these determinants contributes to the success of organisations, and leads to improved health, wellbeing and prosperity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.”³ The Productivity Commission also found, “Participation in decision making is a critical component of self-determination for all people.”⁴

Both reports reference the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, of which Article 3 states:

“Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”⁵

This is at odds with the way in which the funding under the Indigenous Advancement Strategy was awarded, an issue mentioned by participants in the consultations.

“Only 55 percent of IAS funding went to Indigenous organisations.

- Mainstream services from federal, state and territory governments accounted for 81.4 percent of all direct Indigenous expenditure in 2012-13.
- Between 2008 and 2009 and 2012 and 2013, funding to mainstream services rose 26 percent, while Indigenous-specific funding dropped 1.2 percent.
- In 2014-15, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health organisations suffered a reduction of \$1.2 million overall to frontline services, including alcohol and drugs, social and emotional wellbeing and youth.”⁶

As the following discussions show, participants in the consultation process were well aware of the intrinsically inter-related nature of poverty, poor housing, unemployment and underemployment, education, health and life expectancy, and this is strongly supported by the research:

“...more than one in five Indigenous households (are) in Australia’s poorest 10 per cent of households – more than twice the rest of Australia.” Oxfam Australia chief executive Dr Helen Szoke⁷

² Oxfam Australia, 2019. *In Good Hands: the people and communities behind Aboriginal-led solutions*. Oxfam. Carlton.

³ Commonwealth of Australia. 2016. <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/overcoming-indigenous-disadvantage/2016> p. 5.28 (accessed on 3/11/2019)

⁴ *ibid.* p. 5.2

⁵ United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf (accessed on 3 November 2019)

⁶ National Indigenous Times, *op. cit.*

⁷ National Indigenous Times, *op. cit.*

The average gap in life expectancy between the bottom 20 per cent of the population and the top 20 per cent is six years. “For people in the lowest 10 per cent of the population, it is 10 years.”⁸

When looked at in combination, these statistics provide a clear explanation for the life-expectancy of Aboriginal people being so far below that of other Australians, to which we can add:

“Numerous studies have indicated that poverty is one of the major drivers of child protection system involvement. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, high rates of poverty stem from experiences of colonisation, discrimination, forced child removal and the inter-generational impacts of resulting trauma (The Healing Foundation, 2013).”⁹

“In 2018, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were 10.2 times more likely to be residing in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children...We predict that the population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care will more than double in size in the next 10 years by 2028...”¹⁰

Studies have also shown the need to recognise the impacts on Aboriginal people who were stolen and on their descendants.

“The Stolen Generations...experienced a range of adverse health, cultural and socioeconomic outcomes at a rate higher than the Indigenous population that had not been removed.

- Key findings among these differences are: a higher likelihood of: being incarcerated in the last five years (3.3 times), being formally charged by police in their lifetime (2.2 times), having government payments as their main income source (1.8 times), not being a home owner (1.7 times) and being more likely to have poor general health based on a composite measure (1.6 times).

* * *

“The descendants were also consistently more likely to have experienced adverse outcomes over a broad range of health, socioeconomic and cultural indicators, compared with a reference group of Indigenous people aged 18 and over who reported neither being removed themselves from their own families, nor having any relatives removed.

- Key findings among these differences are a higher likelihood of: feeling discriminated against in the last 12 months (2 times), experiencing actual or threatened physical violence (1.9 times), having poor general health based on a composite measure (1.6 times), and having been arrested in the last five years (1.5 times).”¹¹

To be successful, Closing the Gap needs to respond to all these issues in concert and it needs to do so by giving Aboriginal Peoples agency to effect the changes they know are needed.

⁸ Research by Clarke and Erreygers cited in <https://www.thesaturdaypaper.com.au/news/economy/2019/11/02/the-fatal-cost-australias-rising-inequality/15726132009011> Mike Secombe (accessed on 3/11/2019)

⁹ https://www.familymatters.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/1097_F.M-2019_LR.f.pdf p. 10 (accessed on 6/11/2019)

¹⁰ <https://www.familymatters.org.au/the-family-matters-report-2019/> pp. 9 and 10 (accessed on 6/11/2019)

¹¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. 2018. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations and descendants: Numbers, demographic characteristics and selected outcomes*. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/indigenous-australians/stolen-generations-descendants/contents/table-of-contents> pp vii- viii (accessed on 23/11/2019)

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the key agents of change in Closing the Gap and must be granted agency in the development and implementation of policies and programs that impact their lives.”¹² (Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap 2019)

¹² https://www.coag.gov.au/sites/default/files/agreements/partnership-agreement-closing-the-gap_2.pdf p. 5 (accessed on 3/11/2019)

The Consultation Process

The Coalition of Peaks proposed three areas for priority action to accelerate the achievement of much better life outcomes for our people:

1. Formal partnerships between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on Closing the Gap;
2. Growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled services; and
3. Improving mainstream service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

These areas have been agreed in principle by governments.

However, we know there are other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations that are not currently represented by the Coalition of Peaks. That is why the Coalition of Peaks decided to talk to a broad range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, regional governance bodies, representatives and community members.

As part of this process, the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peaks held a series of twenty-nine community consultation forums right across New South Wales, from Broken Hill in the west to Coffs Harbour in the east; from Lismore in the north, to Albury in the south. From the biggest city, Sydney, with forums held in Redfern, Stanmore and Mount Druitt, to small remote communities like Dareton and Menindee. People who could not attend and those who did attend and wished to make additional comments were invited to participate in the national online survey which was conducted by NACCHO¹³.

In all, 597 people attended. (A list of the venues where consultations were held is at **TAB B**.) The attendees were asked their views on the proposed three priority areas and on the draft targets.

At the conclusion of the community consultations, participants were asked to complete an evaluation form. A summary of these are at **TAB C**.

This report outlines the responses to the three priorities and to the draft targets for Closing the Gap. Each of these is reported in turn. This is followed by an outline of other shared concerns related to Closing the Gap which were raised by the participants.

Note to this report. The participants who attended the NSW consultation forums were almost all Aboriginal people. It is for this reason that the report refers to Aboriginal people and not to Torres Strait Islander people or Indigenous people: we do not feel confident that we have sufficiently canvassed the views of Torres Strait Islander people in New South Wales to represent their views with any accuracy.

¹³ NACCHO is the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

The Responses

Priority One: Formal partnerships between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on Closing the Gap

Summary

Participants said successful achievement of this priority would require:

- a genuine partnership which gave Aboriginal people a voice and built trust, through proper community consultation
- a partnership underpinned by open lines of communication
- cultures to be recognised, respected and embedded in the partnerships
- funding to be provided longer term, where it was needed locally, without duplication of services
- greater accountability.

Responses

Genuine Partnerships

Participants strongly supported a genuine partnership, with some suggesting the word 'formal' being replaced by 'genuine'. "Change the wording to 'genuine partnerships'." "There need to be genuine partnerships between government and Aboriginal people, if you want to close the gap." They also said, "Closing the Gap is about communities." (Participants from Newcastle)

Participants wanted the partnership to be underpinned by open lines of communication between communities and governments at all levels and they wanted government to listen: "If Aboriginal people don't have a voice, nothing is going to change." (Participant from Dubbo) "The government is going to decide around Closing the Gap targets, and, yes, they already have had ten years and they have failed, but what we're saying is we need a voice at the table." (Participant from Stanmore)

There "...needs to be (a partnership), but not just on paper – (it) needs to be living." (Participant from Griffith)

This priority was strongly supported by participants: "Aboriginal people need to be involved in the decision-making...Aboriginal people know what is best for their communities (and) need to work with government." (Participant from Muswellbrook)

"Aboriginal organisations need to be the organisations that determine what kind of funding, and how much funding, they should receive for Aboriginal programs." (Participant from Redfern)

"(It's) very important because Aboriginal people know the issues, and we need that voice." (Participant from Dareton)

"There was, however, a caveat: issues of trust were frequently raised. "There's been a lack of consistency and transparency in the partnerships that have been established previously between government and Aboriginal people." (Participant from Bathurst)

Partnerships must recognise and respect Aboriginal culture

They also wanted culture to be recognised and respected: “Partnerships must include practice of cultural safety and protocols set by traditional owners/custodians/elders.” (Participant from Bathurst)

“Culture is the most important thing when it comes to closing the gap. Culture is embedded throughout all of these priorities and targets...If you don’t have a connection to culture, and you are not instilling culture in your children, and if you are not able to express your culture freely, we’re failing in every single aspect of these priorities and targets.” (Participant from Condobolin)

They also wanted to be assured that governments would continue to work within the terms of the Partnership Agreement on a long-term basis. “A change of government shouldn’t affect the agreement in any way, shape or form over the duration of the 10-year agreement.” (Participant from Broken Hill) “With a change of government, does it then carry on, rather than chopping and changing?” (Participant from Deniliquin)

“There’s no continuous funding. When something works, the funding is cut off. So there’s no consistency with the community. How can you build trust when you keep pulling funding on things that work in our area?” (Participant from Albury)

Participants were very keen to see all levels of government working in cooperation to deliver outcomes. “State/Federal/Local Governments should be working together to co-fund and to eliminate the duplication of services.” (Participant from Dubbo)

“Coordinate local services.” “Governments (should) give funding to local LALCs instead of diverting to duplicate structures.” (Participants from Wilcannia)

“We need to stop the duplication of services. Work with the services that work and get rid of the ones that are not and then see what’s missing.” (Participant from Condobolin)

Participants wanted to know how the new partnership arrangements would deliver better outcomes when the previous arrangements had failed to do so: “Why are we using the same language again if it hasn’t worked before?” (Participant from Redfern).

“We need more reporting back to the community.” (Participant from Lismore)

Participants overwhelmingly said that they wanted people to listen to their concerns and not to talk to and for them. “Governments need to give us an assurance that our voices will be heard; and from those voices, new policies WILL be implemented. You’ve got to walk the walk and talk the talk.” (Participant from Bourke)

They asked to be treated with respect, for themselves as people, for their communities and for their heritages, languages and cultures. “We need fair, equitable partnerships made in consultation with all Aboriginal people.” (Participant from Redfern)

They were also interested to know how they could continue to put their views forward “We need to be heard, and our needs should hopefully then be met up the chain.” (Participant from Young)

The great majority of the participants saw the creation of the Joint Council, and the Prime Minister’s decision to take advice from this group, as positive; and an improvement on the Prime Minister’s Advisory Council, because of the way the representatives were elected by Aboriginal people and not chosen by government. They wanted to see an end to government-appointed Aboriginal representatives and advisers (for example, Participants from Cobar, Bourke and Mt Druitt)

They also said it was important to have a Partnership Agreement based on a realistic purpose, with a framework for engagement with community. "...formal partnerships are important, but they need to be realistic with meaningful targets." (Participant from Wagga Wagga)

Finally, they were keen to see documented accountability for both communities and government. "People need to be held more accountable. Having only two of the seven targets being achieved is not acceptable." (Participant from Albury)

"The peaks need to be holding government accountable to the legislation and that helps us with our self-determination." (Participant from Tamworth) "Formal partnerships are good; however, improved accountability and firm KPIs need to be in place as part of reaching agreements." (Participant from Tamworth)

"There needs to be an audit with (the) regional body to be the reference point – non-Aboriginal NGOs and government (are) not being accountable. There needs to be an audit with links to accreditation standards." (Participant from Wyong)

"If we have to report to them every six months, why can't they report to us every six months?" (Participant from Tamworth)

In this context, they also wanted to take responsibility for evaluating the services provided themselves, "We need a community audit team on service delivery," (Participant from Coffs Harbour) and wanted incentives for proven effective delivery.

"Thought: the government wants to set targets, and the community has set a target. Funding stays until the target has been reached. Then consultation is done over again to come up with another target to meet (whatever) area of need is determined by the community." (Participant from Dubbo)

"How do we enhance our Aboriginal community-controlled organisations? Ensuring long-term funding arrangements for those that have got very good, and proven, performance indicators and audits." (Participant from Muswellbrook)

The Responses

Priority Two: Growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled services

Summary

Participants said successful achievement of this priority would require:

- community control of program development, service delivery and capacity building
- government to understand and respect the diversity of Aboriginal cultures
- more services delivered by Aboriginal-controlled, locally-based organisations
- local engagement and more flexibility
- evidence-based research to demonstrate the services that actually make a difference.

Responses

Participants without exception supported this priority: “Community control is essential.” “(It’s) not just about service delivery. (It) includes advocacy, program development, data capabilities (and) capacity building.” (Participants from Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern).

Participants described community control as an efficient and effective means of providing the services actually needed by communities. “So we are able to deliver services that community need and want in a culturally-appropriate way when they are needed and wanted.” (Participant from Queanbeyan)

They also said that Closing the Gap could be “...a model for reconciliation, but the main decisions and input (need) to come from the local grassroots people.” (Participant from Walgett)

Participants said that CAPO needed to ensure government understood the diversity of different Aboriginal Peoples, and, consequently, the diversity of their needs. “Acknowledge, value, respect the diversity of our culture” (Participant from Dubbo). “You need to respect the diversity and differences with our people.” (Participant from Bathurst)

At the same time, the importance of presenting a united front was also mentioned by many groups. “Diversity is very important, and (so is) being solid at the top so you carry our voice. This is something that gives us power and alignment.” (Participant from Tamworth)

Participants wanted to see more services being provided by organisations which were controlled by Aboriginal people and based in communities. Many spoke about the need to build community capacity, so that Aboriginal people had the skills needed to deliver the services needed locally. “We need to grow the community-controlled sector to deliver services and build capacity.” (Participant from Bateman’s Bay) We need “...more Aboriginal community-controlled services.” (Participant from Broken Hill)

“You need to allow pilot programs and organisations to have that period of time to set up in community and build trust with that community. This can be done by employing indigenous people in those frontline positions.” (Participant from Bathurst)

Participants wanted to be able to tender more successfully themselves: “We need more education on the government tender processes so we can obtain more government contracts.” (Participant

from Redfern) “How can smaller not-for-profit local Aboriginal organisations tender for bigger projects when they don’t have the resources?” (Participant from Newcastle)

They also wanted to see more Aboriginal people in more senior positions in service delivery organisations, whether these were Aboriginal community controlled organisations or other service providers:

- “We need more Aboriginal representation at senior levels.” (Participant from Bathurst)
- “We need more Aboriginal people representing us at more senior levels.” (Participant from Redfern)

Participants linked this to capacity-building: “We need more senior officials of Government training Aboriginal people to fill those senior positions. We have been asking for this approach to be adopted for years and it hasn't been done. We need more of a mentorship/leadership structure - where people are coming in and mentoring others.” (Participants from Albury) Growing leadership skills in communities was also mentioned at a number of forums, including at Queanbeyan and Cobar.

Participants did not feel that the Indigenous Advancement Strategy had been successful; “IAS has failed us - 80% went to non-Aboriginal organisations.” (Participant from Moree).

Participants were also concerned that funding models were used to drive services, rather than the other way around, placed undue demands on organisations and did not deliver the services communities needed. “New reporting requirements without additional and new funding is ridiculous.” (Participant from Wyong) “Why build a 1700 bed gaol when there should have been a rehab centre and TAFE Outreach centre.” (Participant from Coffs Harbour)

They also wanted governments to “Stop funding non-Aboriginal services when there are competent Aboriginal organisations.” (Participant from Coffs Harbour)

As a consequence, participants suggested that funding models should be changed to suit the service rather than, as currently, changing the service to fit the funding model. Examples of this included:

- funding being maintained until a target has been achieved, at which point consultation should occur to create a new target and new funding allocated. “Increase funding to organisations meeting or exceeding KPIs.” (Participant from Walgett)
- coordinated total funding being allocated to local communities against a range of services to be provided. The purpose was to give sufficient funds to communities to enable them to prioritise and fund the services each community required, rather than having smaller allocations to a number of service providers.

“New Zealand has established commissioning agencies that are based in the community and are a direct investment to community organisations to serve the needs of their families. Alongside that is a community-led data framework, so we're able to gather the impact and report on the impact.” (Participant from Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern) “There needs to be direct commissioning (instead of public health networks).” (Participant from Wyong)

Participants were clear that they did not support one-size-fits-all approaches, wanting local engagement and more flexibility. “We need proper/stronger partnerships. We need to have a genuine commitment. We need to have more flexibility and not a one-size-fits-all approach.” (Participant from Dubbo)

“There are some funding arrangements that are not applicable to our area, to our region, so how do we obtain funding for something that we really need?” (Participant from Albury)

“Should the government be accountable to actually visit the regions in person and tailor partnerships that suit each particular region on an individual basis.? It's not a one-size-fits-all approach.” (Participant from Condobolin)

“Funding contracts need to be more flexible so that funded services can provide assistance to the community members who don't meet eligibility requirements. People in need are falling through the gaps in service.” (Participant from Walgett)

They asked for evidence-based research on the success of different approaches to be undertaken and the results of this research published. “Partnership agreements need to align with what the evidence tells us will make a difference to people’s lives.” (Participant from Wagga Wagga)

Providing ‘one-stop shops’ for Aboriginal people to access services was raised in more than one consultation and was well supported. This was seen as a successful strategy that should be rolled out to more communities, both for better service provision and to employ more Aboriginal people.

“Good idea to have a one-stop-shop for delivery of services - ease of access, destigmatise reasons for access, opportunity to provide location/access for outreach services to deliver from offices.”

“One-stop-shops to employ Aboriginal people - cultural understanding and comfortable access.” (Participants from Dubbo)

The idea of building local coalitions of Aboriginal peak organisations, to mirror the state and national structure, was raised in several meetings as a way of building better collaboration and providing communication channels to the peaks and to governments. “There should be regional CAPOs throughout New South Wales.” (Participant from Kempsey)

Participants wanted to be sure that their voices would continue to be heard after the consultation was completed: “These consultations need to be ongoing.” “You need to have more consultations to get the word out there.” (Participants from Bateman’s Bay) Many participants from across the state had ideas for improving services which they wanted to share.

The Responses

Priority Three: Improving mainstream service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Summary

Participants said successful achievement of this priority would require:

- more accountability about where funding was spent and the results achieved
- more Aboriginal people employed in mainstream organisations, including through more identified positions, more senior positions and Aboriginal people on boards
- better partnerships between mainstream organisations and Aboriginal organisations and communities
- more funding and better funding allocation processes which removed duplication, was aligned to regional and community needs and delivered proven outcomes
- non-Aboriginal people who worked with Aboriginal communities to undertake cultural competency and safety training.

Responses

Most participants agreed that some services, such as universities, police and hospitals, would need to continue to be provided by mainstream services providers, noting that success depended on working well with Aboriginal communities and organisations. “Aboriginal and mainstream services need to work in unison with each other, not against each other.” (Participant from Condobolin)

“Contractual obligations for mainstream providers could include working with other service providers, reporting on the collective impact of the local service system and co-design and delivery with Aboriginal people.” (Participant from Mount Druitt)

“It is essential that ‘mainstream’ services deliver a high quality, culturally-appropriate service to Aboriginal people. This also means they must engage with Aboriginal communities in a genuine way to work out what doing better looks like.” (Participant from Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern)

However, participants also wanted to be sure funding was being well-spent. “Funding and accountability should be a priority with programs...for Aboriginal people.” (Participant from Broken Hill)

“We need more accountability of where the funding goes. Too much funding is being allocated elsewhere than communities.” (Participant from Lismore)

Participants wanted to see more sustainable funding, calling for longer-term and permanent grants and longer-term contracts, such as ten-year contracts with regular review and formal evaluation periods, beyond the three-year budget cycle. (This was also discussed under Priority One, above)

“Need ongoing funding for programs or services. Not just short term measures.” (Participant from Kempsey) “(We need) funding streams over five and ten years for land management on Aboriginal land.” (Participant from Tamworth)

They also wanted to ensure that the large proportion of funding awarded to service delivery agencies was spent on service delivery and not on administration. “Funding (is) propping up admin.” (Participant from Griffith)

“Funding needs to reach the ground and not just benefit service providers.” (Participant from Dubbo)

“There are presently a lot of non-performers at the moment, and we need to sift through those to make sure that no-one is a deficit to our mob. When you drill down into the report, they're heavily focused on administration.” (Participant from Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern)

Evidence and accountability for these services was frequently called for under this priority and participants wanted to be sure that services were not duplicated to ensure limited funding was used efficiently and effectively (see also discussion of Priority One).

To address this, they wanted more transparency about these funding arrangements: “Local, State and Federal Governments need to be open about the funding they allocate...” (Participant from Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern)

Participants wanted to see more Aboriginal people working in mainstream organisations, including in senior positions: “We need to create identified positions in organisations so we can represent Aboriginal people in government and other organisations.” (Participant from Menindee)

“Organisations need to be proactive and seek Aboriginal people to employ.” (Participant from Wagga Wagga)

“Some mainstream services have an Aboriginal voice, but it’s a token voice. They don’t employ our people in leadership positions.” (Participants at Redfern)

“We need identified positions, appointed by the people in those communities, to sit at the local government decision-making table so that Aboriginal people can be supported at that decision-making table.” (Participant from Bourke)

Participants at Mount Druitt suggested, “Representation of Aboriginal people on decision-making boards should be equivalent to the impact that these organisations will have on the lives of Aboriginal people. For example, a mainstream service provider, with 60% of its clients being Aboriginal, should be required to have 60% Aboriginal representation on boards and committees.” “Have Aboriginal people on boards to help make decisions.” (Participant from Stanmore)

They said that effective relationships were essential: “We’re working in partnership with mainstream services and having a clear line of communication.” “Successful partnerships can be established by healing, reviving and strengthening relationships.” (Participants from Albury)

Some participants, however, felt that Aboriginal communities should take control of the delivery of all services to communities or that funding should be increasingly moved to Aboriginal organisations. One such suggestion was to “establish Aboriginal police”. (Participant from Griffith)

“Less funding to mainstream services is critical as they do not know how to implement within an Aboriginal service delivery context.” (Participant from Lismore)

Others suggested that mainstream service providers could learn better practices from working with Aboriginal community organisations. “Why can’t mainstream services come and model their services from Aboriginal services?” (Participant from Dubbo) They also said, “Aboriginal people will use mainstream services where they feel welcome.” (Participant from Muswellbrook)

Many participants commented that resource allocation was not designed to meet local community needs and was not efficient. “Governments are setting up indigenous people to fail by providing funding that is not consistent with what our region requires.” (Participant from Bathurst)

“A lot of the funding was broken up into tiny little short-term programs that no longer continue.”
“When programs did work, there was no further funding.” (Participants from Albury)

“You need to change the funding structures so that a more holistic approach is taken to address our suicide rates. There is too much red tape.” “We need more funding to get kids in preschool for there to be a success.” (Participants from Menindee)

“We've been concerned about mainstream services being funded to do the Aboriginal services. We feel powerless to do anything about it, and yet governments still continue to do it. It's not the best way to provide services or deliver services to Aboriginal people.” (Participant from Batemans Bay)

Their comments were about both the reductions in funding they had experienced and the need to ensure services are provided where they are needed, not just where resources are allocated.

“Funding hasn't increased – in terms of populations growth, complexity in care and patient increases. Central Coast has both population growth and patient increases.” (Participant from Wyong) “Where has the funding gone to make a difference to our kids?” (Participant from Young)

Many participants, particularly those in smaller and more remote communities, said that there were insufficient resources, particularly in health and transport, meaning they could not access the services they needed locally for the treatment of serious illnesses and could not afford to travel to large centres for treatment. Poor transport also made it harder for people to access post-school education. The issue of access to transport was raised repeatedly across the state and is discussed below under Targets.

The need for TAFE NSW was raised by many participants. “TAFE is important.” (Participant from Dareton) “More TAFE courses to provide employment and/or skills for Aboriginal workers.” (Participant from Moree)

While some participants mentioned successful TAFE NSW programs such as IPROWD (Participant from Dubbo), others wanted more from TAFE: “TAFE needs to be more involved, and there needs to be more cultural awareness.” (Participant from Menindee)

Participants commented on the need for vocational education and training in communities, starting from school and continuing into post-school education and employment. They also wanted clear linkages between vocational education and jobs. “It would be good to have formal agreements around training and employment opportunities.” (Participant from Tamworth)

“I'd like to see children engaged in meaningful vocational education at all points of their school life. For example, year 10, year 11, year 12; university; or TAFE or whatever.” “We need traineeships in the schools. By the time they finish that traineeship, they have more purpose, more confidence, more self-esteem, more focus. They understand what it means to have responsibilities.” “We need more training for Aboriginal people in the building and trades sectors. For example, plumbers, electricians, bricklayers, plasterers, painters.” (Participants from Batemans Bay)

Participants were also focused on preventing incarceration, especially the incarceration of young people. (This is discussed in detail under the Targets for Justice, below).

Participants also suggested there should be different ways of staffing health services to support communities: “In the clinical space there is money directed to mainstream – this approach does not provide for cultural input and loses the voices of community. ACCHOs can provide this. Why can’t clinical positions be in ACCHOs?” (Participant from Wyong)

They also wanted better domestic violence services and support for families:

“We need more education around how to identify domestic violence situations earlier.” “We need more emergency housing for those who are victims of domestic violence and/or victims of abuse in our community. Families need to feel safe.” (Participants from Muswellbrook)

Participants also asked for non-Aboriginal people who work with Aboriginal communities to undertake cultural competency and safety training, mentioning for example health workers, Department of Families and Justice workers (whom they referred to as DoCS), people working in Aboriginal Housing, and the police. “The NSW Police. This has improved since we have had the police liaison officer.” (Participant from Albury)

“Police aren’t connected to Indigenous people. When police are undergoing their training, there should be Aboriginal cultural study courses to assist new recruits in understanding our culture and heritage.” (Participants from Condobolin)

Participants from Moree described “Promoting cultural safety” as an issue of accountability; and participants from Coffs Harbour stressed the importance of “cultural safety and integrity”. Participants from Bourke said mainstream services needed to be “Culturally appropriate.”

Participants said racist staff members of service providers – and racist institutions - should be removed. “Some areas are a racist working environment. You cannot continue to be a racist working environment working with other races and getting away with that.” (Participant from Albury)

“We need to address racism in mainstream service delivery.” (Participant from Newcastle) “Racist teachers need to be sacked.” (Participants from Dubbo)

Participants said service providers needed to have a much better understanding of the traumatic, inter-generational impacts of colonisation and of the stolen generation:

- “More cultural awareness, knowledge, (especially of intergenerational trauma and cycles of abuse), cultural sensitivity in workers.” (Participant from Bathurst)
- “More acknowledgment of (inter)generational trauma, for example, stolen generations.” (Participant from Lismore)
- “Community education on trauma and how it affects people.” (Participant from Condobolin)

They wanted people to recognise the impact of history on Aboriginal people, which affected their use of mainstream service delivery: “Identify, acknowledge and accept past injustices on our people, which reduces people’s use of the mainstream.” (Participant from Cobar)

“We need to re-educate government personnel with the pain, suffering hardships of Aboriginal communities through colonisation in the loss of culture, language, land, spirituality and identity.” (Participant from Newcastle)

Participants also said that “Compassion, respect and understanding the complexities and diversity,” combined with “cultural sensitivity and competency” made mainstream services work. (Participants from Deniliquin)

The Responses

Draft Closing the Gap Targets

Summary

The over-arching response to the targets were that:

- they put too much responsibility on the individual and not enough on government and communities
- they were not sufficiently aspirational and frequently came from the perspective of a deficit model
- many targets were unrealistic unless they were supported by sufficient funding, appropriately targeted.

Specifically, the responses to the targets were in three key areas:

- government collaboration;
- comments on the current draft targets; and
- areas where the participants wanted to see additional outcomes statements and targets.

Government collaboration

Participants did not support the way targets are currently labelled “Commonwealth led” and “State led”. Instead they wanted to see services being provided seamlessly, where they are needed.

“Shared responsibility – no buck passing.” (Participant from Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern)

“There needs to be an equal level of responsibility for each of the levels of government.” (Participant from Deniliquin)

Comments on current targets

An overarching comment on the current draft targets was how many of them related to individuals and their personal responsibility and not to service provision. This was most strongly stated with regard to the educational and economic development targets. “We’re setting the targets on individual students. We’re not setting the targets on community and I think we need to be working more in that area.” (Participant from Batemans Bay)

“What are the government’s KPIs? What are their critical areas that they’re addressing?” (Participant from Bourke) “What is the government’s accountability? ... What are they going to do to ensure that our kids get there?” (Participant from Stanmore)

Many participants commented on how many of the targets were from a deficit model, particularly in health, and said they were not aspirational. “One of the big feedbacks really is about how deficit-based the language is, and I think that’s a really powerful message that needs to be taken back.” (Participant from Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern)

“The language that has been used for Closing the Gap needs to change. This is a deficit-focussed approach that relies on government funding. Closing the Gap should be about empowering, strengthening, and self-determination.” (Participant from Redfern)

Families, children and youth

Participants referred to the *Bringing them home* report,¹⁴ (Participants from Dubbo) and the intergenerational impacts for the Stolen Generations. They wanted to see more accountability for DoCS workers¹⁵: “DOCS need to be held accountable for their lack of dealing with Aboriginal children.” (Participant from Condobolin). Participants from Moree pointed out that 100% of the children in their area in out-of-home-care were Aboriginal.

Targets for children

Across the state, groups spoke about wanting much better outcomes for children. Participants from Cobar wanted the current target of 45% of children assessed as developmentally on track by 2028 to be increased to 95% or 100% by 2028; and 45% by 2021. “The 45% target is way too low. This needs to be doubled.” (Participant from Albury) “...we need to increase the percentage to 100%.” (Participant from Broken Hill) “It should be 100% or...75% to 80% within five years.” (Participant from Wilcannia) They also wanted to increase the percentage of four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education to 100%. (Participant from Bourke)

Targets for youth

Participants wanted the targets for youth to be drawn out into a separate stream, across all areas of service provision. Participants then wanted funding under these new targets which would support and grow existing successful initiatives, for example those which engage students in education and those which address drugs and alcohol misuse by young people. They also asked for a target “...to minimise homelessness in youth.” (Participant from Young)

Participants also wanted Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers to be called when children and young people were picked up by the police. “Our people get locked up, but the liaison officer is not called. Some have been locked in glass cages (13 and 14 year olds).” (Participant from Newcastle)

Targets for domestic violence

The need for better domestic violence support was frequently mentioned. “Go back to basics. We need to treasure our family, women and children.” “Reduce the rate of domestic violence in our community.” (Participants from Tamworth)

To achieve these targets, they called for more access to family support, early intervention and diversion, rehabilitation, and victim support. Participants linked family violence to a range of other target areas, including housing: “Housing is a major issue in extended family violence.” (Participant from Walgett) “Make sure there is more crisis accommodation for victims of domestic violence.” (Participant from Redfern) “We need more focus on domestic violence and housing relocations.” (Participant from Tamworth)

Recommended changes to the draft targets for Families, children and youth:

- ***Increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census to 100% by 2028.***

¹⁴ <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/bringing-them-home-report-1997> (accessed on 6/11/2019)

¹⁵ This is a reference to staff of the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, referred to as DOCS by several participants.

- **100% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025.**

New target areas:

- **Create a new outcome statement for youth with targets across all areas**

Health

“Where is mental health? Where is aged care? Where are the disability services?” (Participant from Moree)

Participants said that ‘life expectancy’ was a proxy for other factors and that the current draft target missed everything between birth weight and end of life: “It’s missing everything in the middle.” (Participant from Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern)

“Health check-up records are a better way to measure the baby’s health than birth weight.” (Participant from Albury) “We don’t care about birth weight. Is the mother healthy, happy, safe and on country?” (Participant from Wilcannia) They also suggested pre-natal support should be increased. (Participant from Cobar)

They also wanted to see a strong focus on culture, heritage and language, because they know that “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with strong attachment to culture have significantly better self-assessed health,”¹⁶ as well as the other life outcomes being targeted under Closing the Gap.

Access to services

For Health in particular, participants wanted the same access to services, no matter where people lived (for example, Participants from Newcastle and Young), including through the provision of outreach services (Participant from Coffs Harbour). Many participants spoke about the need for better management of chronic disease (for example, Participants from Kempsey, Lismore, Tamworth and Moree). Participants also wanted to see more Aboriginal health workers employed. They also wanted to see “Aboriginal people employed alongside others in all areas and levels of health.” (Participant from Menindee)

Mental health

An issue raised repeatedly was mental health, in the contexts of health generally, the trauma of colonisation and the stolen generation, and resultant abuse of alcohol and other drugs. Participants across the state wanted to see better mental health services: “Access to mental health services in times of crisis.” (Participant from Lismore) It was suggested a target be created for this area: “By 2021, an Aboriginal mental health worker available 24/7 at hospitals.” (Participant from Wagga Wagga). They also wanted services for people before they had been discharged from mental health facilities (Participants from Condobolin); and from hospitals more generally (Participant from Bourke). Participants from across the state (for example at Bathurst, Menindee, Kempsey and Coffs Harbour) also wanted better access to rehabilitation services.

¹⁶ Dockery, A.M., 2009, ‘Culture and Wellbeing: The Case of Indigenous Australians’, CLMR Discussion Paper Series 09/01, The Centre for Labour Market Research. Cited in http://iaha.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/000214_cultureclosinggap.pdf (accessed on 3/11/2019)

As an example of where youth targets needed to be seen across all services areas, a number of participants mentioned suicide prevention as part of the discussion of mental health.

Aged care

The need for culturally appropriate aged care was frequently raised: “Need to support and care for our growing number of Elders. We need to increase the number of Aboriginal carers.” (Participant from Griffith) “Aged care support; Who is looking after the Elders?” (Participants from Deniliquin) “We need aged care-specific services. For example, palliative care.” (Participants from Redfern) “We need a target for aged care. We need culturally appropriate aged care.” (Participant from Albury)

Disability services

“Disability services? How can this be achieved, and where is the support coming from?” (Participant from Deniliquin)

Participants at Stanmore said there was a need to grow the disability sector. “We need a First Peoples disability network for Australia.” (Participant from Lismore; and Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern)

Some participants wanted a target created concerning support given to Aboriginal and Torres strait Islander People with disabilities through the employment process (Participant from Wagga Wagga). They also asked, “Where can our young people with disabilities go instead of nursing homes?” (Participant from Moree)

In this context, the impact of parental disability should also be considered:

“...parental disability— particularly when related to mental health issues—is linked not just to higher rates of disability among their adult children, but also to a greater need for a range of welfare payments.” The author goes on to say that parental disability provides a pathway “...through which intergenerational disadvantage may be occurring.”¹⁷

“We need more support for the disability sector in our community. The aged care and disability services sectors need to be improved. In order for these sectors to improve, they need more funding and better systems in place for these sectors to work effectively.” (Participants from Redfern)

Recommended changes to the target for Health:

Expand this from a single target to look at other areas of concern. This should include:

- ***Mental health***
- ***Aged care: culturally appropriate aged care.***
- ***Drug and alcohol abuse: prevention and rehabilitation***
- ***Disability services and the NDIS.***

New target areas:

Mental Health:

- ***By 2021, an Aboriginal mental health worker available 24/7 at hospitals.***

¹⁷ <https://www.lifecoursecentre.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019-19-LCC-Working-Paper-Cobb-Clark-1.pdf> p. 9 (accessed on 6/11/2019)

- **Create a new target for the mental health of mothers, especially young mothers.**

Aged care: culturally appropriate aged care.

Reduction of drug and alcohol abuse.

Employment in health: create a new target related to the employment of Aboriginal people in all areas and levels of health.

Create a new outcome statement for people with disabilities.

Education

Participants wanted to know why this gap couldn't be closed altogether, saying that if some children and young people could achieve these outcomes, why couldn't they all. "Don't halve Closing the Gap. If 8,500 kids can, why can't we replicate it nationwide." (Participant from Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern)

Education was an area where participants seriously criticised the targets as being related to personal responsibility and not services provision. They wanted better quality teaching and more Aboriginal teachers. "Quality teaching is what makes a difference." (Participants from Young; and Newcastle)

While some participants wanted a target related to attendance, others said that engagement was the more important issue and related this to the completion of further education and to jobs.

NAPLAN

"NAPLAN is the problem for our kids." (Participant from Redfern) Participants generally were not supportive of NAPLAN being used for targets. One suggested the Basic Skills Test was "a diagnostic tool that was much better than NAPLAN. (Participant from Moree).

Some said NAPLAN itself was "irrelevant" (Participant from Wilcannia), it was "not a true indication of how our kids are being educated" (Participant from Bourke) or "a child's ability" (Participant from Bateman's Bay); nor was it "an effective way to measure a child's ability" (Participant from Menindee) because it "doesn't reflect the skills the students do have" (Participant from Batemans Bay). "It's ridiculous that they're using NAPLAN as a target." (Participant from Stanmore)

"Understanding NAPLAN results are the only way to have nation-wide data to compare. It is a place to start, but it is not usually data that is indicative of our Aboriginal students' academic ability in a normal classroom environment. It does not take into account students living in remote areas who have fewer interactions outside their own community;" and "Communities and those that speak traditional languages as a first language are disadvantaged in NAPLAN. Interpreters should be provided, or extra time to complete the NAPLAN tests should be considered." (Participants from Muswellbrook) We note that a review of NAPLAN was currently being undertaken in several jurisdictions at the time of writing.

Aboriginal languages, cultures and heritage

Participants wanted to see the teaching and learning of Aboriginal languages, cultures and heritage strengthened, including through "...on-country training in culture and language" (Participant from Lismore). Some suggested that "First nations schools (be) set up to retain Aboriginal students in the

system,” as well as “First Nations community classrooms.” (Participant from Walgett) Participants from Tamworth wanted “...culture and languages as community priorities.”

“Schools are doing a lot for language and country. For example, class on country and language classes.” (Participant from Menindee) “Need to have Aboriginal culture education as a target.” (Participants from Young); and “Target: Aboriginal language/culture at school.” (Participant from Newcastle) “Culture needs to be embedded through language. This can be achieved through schools.” (Participant from Condobolin) Participants also wanted to see a focus on the “8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning.” (Participant from Coffs Harbour)

Higher School Certificate

Participants felt that rather than halving the gap in Year 12 attainment, it should just be closed.

“The HSC is important...as long as they can get employment at the end. They need support in their pathway.” (Participant from Batemans Bay) Participants suggested there should be “More Aboriginal Studies for Aboriginal students to gain access to university.” (Participant from Kempsey) “We need to introduce school-based apprenticeships and/or traineeships for our youth.” (Participant from Albury)

We also note that the NSW Premier has developed a new priority for school attainment which may be of assistance in revising the education targets: “Increase the proportion of Aboriginal students attaining year 12 by 50 per cent by 2023, while maintaining their cultural identity.” “Recent studies show a clear link between completion of year 12 and positive future employment or educational outcomes.”¹⁸

Post-school education

There was general but not universal support for the post-school education target, particularly related to the attainment of Certificate III at TAFE as a minimum qualification post-school (for example, Participants from Young). However, some participants pointed out, “There’s currently a skilled workforce in Western NSW with no jobs for them to go to.” (Participant from Bourke)

“We need practical training and paid apprenticeships. Increase wages with Certificate (levels);” (Participant from Menindee) and “(We need) Pathways to employment after training.” (Participant from Broken Hill)

People wanted to see a range of targets related to post-school pathways and outcomes: “Not just...the HSC but getting them into meaningful tertiary education...” including the option of trade courses. (Participant from Batemans Bay) Participants from Redfern also wanted to see the pathways to higher education improved.

Recommended changes to the targets:

- ***Remove the NAPLAN targets***
- ***Close the gap in educational outcomes entirely between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children and young people, for example “Aboriginal students achieve the same or better outcomes from school and post-school education as all Australian students”.***

New target areas:

¹⁸ <https://www.nsw.gov.au/improving-nsw/premiers-priorities/increasing-the-number-of-aboriginal-young-people-reaching-their-learning-potential/> (accessed on 3/11/2019)

Create a target related to the teaching and learning of Aboriginal cultures, languages, and heritage in schools.

Economic development

“If we work together with government-funded bodies here, we could rebuild this town.” (Participant from Wilcannia)

Importance of employment

Household income, linked to employment and economic development, was an overarching issue for many participants. “Contribute to economic development through the employment of Aboriginal people.” (Participant from Griffith) “Everyone should have a right to get an education and attain a working position.” (Participant from Young) “If you’ve got a job, you’ve got a life.” (Participant from Wilcannia) They also wanted better support for the transition to work from school (Participant from Wagga Wagga); and much tighter targets: “Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous in a decade.” (Participant from Moree)

Some participants questioned whether the current targets under ‘economic development’ were adequate measures and asked why the target was set at only 65%. “You need to give Aboriginal people an incentive to go out and work and make them proud again.” (Participants from Batemans Bay)

Participants from the Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern felt that this was the most positively phrased of all targets and should be led by the Commonwealth. However, others noted:

- “We can’t even get 10% employment out here.” (Participant from Menindee)
- “How can we achieve 65% of our children in employment, education and training if they’re not finishing school, or 40% of them are in prisons? These targets are not realistic or reasonable.” (Participant from Redfern)
- “There’s no pathways to employment in Bathurst. (We need an) Aboriginal employment strategy.” (Participants from Bathurst)

Some participants wanted Community Development Employment Projects to be reinstated, for example Participants from Bourke. Others said, “Work for the dole should not be included.” (Participants from Albury)

Participants also linked this area to the employment of Aboriginal people by service providers, including local councils and schools.

TAFE NSW

Many participants commented on TAFE NSW and the importance of vocational education and training for young people, both in schools and beyond (This is discussed in detail under Priority Three) They also wanted to see “Regional traineeships and cadetships;” and “Proper industry analysis – creating opportunities for our mob in the region.” (Participants from Lismore)

Business development

Many participants wanted to see increased ownership of small businesses by Aboriginal people, both individuals and communities, for example, Participants from Broken Hill and Coffs Harbour, and a target set for this. “We need skilled people to set up great businesses.” (Participant from Deniliquin)

“(Include) Business development as a goal...own our own businesses” (Participant from Tamworth) Initiatives to assist Aboriginal people who had occupational skills but not business skills, were seen as important elements of economic development. “Economic development should be about business-people owning their own businesses to be economically independent.” (Participant from Redfern) “We need to build the Aboriginal industries together as one.” (Participant from Muswellbrook) Participants in Kempsey suggested there be a “business hub to support the development of Aboriginal businesses.”

Recommended change to the targets:

- ***Halve the gap in employment outcomes in a decade***

New target areas:

“Every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student has a transition to work package by the end of Year 12.”

Create new targets for:

- ***Small business ownership by Aboriginal people***
- ***People with disabilities to gain employment.***

Housing

“It’s like a job: if you have a house and a job, you’ll be more responsible and healthier.” (Participant from Wilcannia)

Participants were keen to see a new target and a range of initiatives to support an increase in home ownership. “We need improvements in ownership.” (Participant from Tamworth) They linked this to ownership of land and control of the design of housing: “We need more investment in social housing for Aboriginal people who own land to build portfolios. This can be built and managed by government.” “We need to be designing and building communities from the ground up.” “We need to create housing opportunities that build communities.” (Participants from Muswellbrook) “Why can’t the rent money we pay for government housing go towards the purchase of that house.” (Participant from Albury)

With 66% of all Australians owning their own home¹⁹ (with or without a mortgage), as opposed to 38%²⁰ of Indigenous Australians, home ownership would appear to be an area where a new target might easily be designed.

Affordable housing was a widely discussed issue. “We need more affordable housing, both to own and to rent.” (Participant from Redfern) “Rents are way too high out here.” (Participant from Menindee) “It’s about getting additional housing, new housing and affordable housing.” (Participant from Batemans Bay) This was an area where longer-term, sustainable funding was also raised (see discussion under Priority One).

¹⁹ <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-07-17/home-ownership-falling-while-more-people-are-renting-abs-study/11318070> (accessed on 3/11/2019)

²⁰ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/indigenous-housing> (accessed on 3/11/2019) Note that both these figures may be sourced back to ABS data.

It was suggested the current draft target be changed from 82% to 100% by 2028. (Participant from Bourke) Others wanted more certainty about the data being used: “What’s the percentage? What’s the current state? ...the lack of information means it’s very hard as to what they should do in that space.” (Participant from Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern)

This was another area where participants wanted service providers to have a better understanding of Aboriginal culture and suggested that better collaboration with communities could lead to a reduction in the waiting list. “Housing to take account of cultural ways of living (with) community cooperation...to reduce the waiting list.” (Participants from Wagga Wagga) “

Participants from a range of forums suggested that housing needed to be more flexible to suit a range of different needs. “Aboriginal housing needs are different from mainstream.” (Participant from Queanbeyan) “Consultations around housing styles for families, youth and people with disabilities.” (Participant from Moree) These included:

- “Culturally appropriate to suit large families – larger homes.” (Participant from Kempsey)
- “Aged care: we need more culturally appropriate facilities.” (Participant from Dubbo)
- “Aboriginal retirement villages.” (Participant from Condobolin)
- “We need more housing for our youth.” (Participant from Coffs Harbour)
- “...housing for young people and new families, and single people...” (Participant from Menindee)

“What are you doing to help the homeless? No emergency housing available.” (Participant from Bathurst) “More halfway houses for youth who are seeking bail but don’t have stable accommodation.” (Participant from Redfern) Participants from a number of areas, such as Moree, also wanted to ensure vacant buildings were used.

Participants wanted to see significant improvements in how the quality, safety and security of housing stock was managed, repaired and maintained. “Better maintenance and upkeep of housing. Need to be more responsive to repairs.” (Participants from Young) “Housing needs to be appropriately maintained.” (Participant from Newcastle)

Participants from Moree wanted to “Link skilled employment strategies to housing.” “We need more apprenticeships and local builders and people to do the maintenance jobs in our area.” (Participant from Menindee) They also wanted to see an “increase in environmental sustainability and alternative energy.” (Participant from Deniliquin) They also suggested “Local procurement for tendering and repairs and maintenance.” (Participant from Cobar).

Some participants suggested that responsibility for Aboriginal Housing should be moved completely to the Commonwealth Government; but others expressed concern that the Commonwealth Government does not recognise western New South Wales as remote and this already impacts on their provision of services.

Other participants suggested governments should, “Move funding into one key Aboriginal organisation.” (Participant from Walgett) and others wanted to see Aboriginal communities managing their own housing: “Aboriginal services delivered by Aboriginal-controlled organisations.” (Participant from Coffs Harbour) “Allocate more funding to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to purchase, build and develop land for housing purposes.” (Participant from Redfern)

Across the state, participants were agreed on the importance of quality housing for the well-being of Aboriginal people: “Aboriginal housing is a foundation for Aboriginal people, for their health, education and employment.” (Participant from Batemans Bay)

Recommended change to the targets:

- ***Increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 100% by 2028.***

New target areas for development:

- ***Increased home ownership***
- ***Decreased homelessness, with an additional specific target for youth***

Justice, including youth justice

This was seen as a particularly weak target: participants wanted a target for the complete elimination of young people and adults in incarceration “This percentage should be nil.” (Participants from Bourke)

Participants from Menindee suggested there should be a series of changes to this area.

- “Increase to 100% reduction in detention for youth”
- “We need at least 40% reduction in (the overall) incarceration rate.”

Others suggested the target, “End the over-representation of young people and adults on community-based orders, in police custody and in prison by 2030.” (Participants from Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern) Other suggested incremental decrease in incarceration: “Young people in detention to reduce by incremental percentages. For example, 20% in two years; 40% in four years; 60% in six years; 80% in eight years and 100% in ten years.” (Participant from Broken Hill)

Participants from the Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern suggested, “There could be recidivism targets – halving the number of people returning to prison.”

Participants also said this was an extremely important area in which “All people need to be treated the same,” (Participant from Young), rather than, “Different sentencing if people play into poverty and racist stereotypes.” (Participant from Menindee)

Participants suggested that Aboriginal support positions should be created in justice, especially juvenile justice, with the creation of “Youth Koori courts and Aboriginal back-up staff to deal with families' problems;” and “...safe houses within the Aboriginal community for when police pick up our children; not for the police to just put them in gaols.” (Participants from Dubbo)

“There needs to be community-led programs for our youth instead of putting them in detention centres.” “More prevention programs for our youth.” (Participants from Bourke)

They also wanted better follow-up and support for people on parole and far less incarceration generally: “Programs instead of incarceration.” “Program for people released from prison (with) extensive case management.” (Participants from Condobolin) “(We) need a rehab in the region.” (Participant from Dareton) “...mums and bubs/kids rehab available in rural areas.” (Participant from Kempsey)

Participants also spoke about preventing deaths in custody: “Aboriginal deaths in custody: Police and corrective services are not meeting our needs in gaol.” (Participant from Kempsey) “Police need to be accountable for their treatment of Kooris. (Participants from Condobolin).

They suggested there should be, “Funding to do welfare-related services. This has come as a result of a woman who died in custody.” (Participant from Batemans Bay)

Some participants also thought that Aboriginal people should be a formal part of the justice system, “Maybe the legislation needs to be changed, for the Magistrates Court, District Court, Supreme Court, Court of Appeal and the High Court, so that Aboriginal people have a seat at the table with these jurisdictions.” (Participant from Bourke)

“Communities need to sit with judges and Magistrates and be part of the decision making. We need cultural authority on local issues.” (Participant from Menindee)

Recommended change to the targets:

Eliminate the incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people by 2028.

End the over-representation of young people and adults on community-based orders, in police custody and in prison by 2030.

New target areas:

Halve the number of Aboriginal people returning to prison.

Land and waters

“We know how to look after our land and waters. You need to listen to us. We need to be able to manage the land and waters. This is what we have done since the beginning of time.” (Participants from Albury)

Land and waters was seen as a particularly important area and participants were keen to be involved in the development of this target, as well as taking care of land and water themselves: Participants from Young said, “We want to protect our waterways.” “Support local Aboriginal communities to care for country.” (Participant from Kempsey)

They sought, “More control over development on culture and heritage sites.” (Participant from Newcastle) Participants at the Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern said, “We understand the importance of water and land culturally and spiritually; but land, and the use of our land, is our economy. Our future prosperity in a large part rests on how well we manage our land assets into the future.”

Participants from Batemans Bay said, “Land rights need to include water and sea rights,” and they wanted to see Aboriginal people gain more access to jobs in the fishing and farming industries. Participants from Dubbo wanted land clearing to stop.

Others wanted constitutional protection of land and water, through:

- “Treaty with the Federal Government to protect country, waterways and cultural property;” (Participant from Redfern)
- “...a state-based land treaty with the NSW Government.” (Participant from Coffs Harbour)

They wanted access to country and reduced timeframes for land claims (Participant from Cobar). Participants from Wagga Wagga suggested reserves could be heritage listed. Others suggested that communities should have developmental control over cultural heritage areas. “Better environmental

protection mechanisms and outcomes for Aboriginal communities and sustainability.” (Participant from Tamworth)

Water was an issue of considerable concern: “Don’t sell off our water rights to other countries.” (Participant from Dubbo) “Stop selling the land and water to the highest bidders/developers.” (Participant from Muswellbrook) “We need sovereignty of our land and waters.” “We need to preserve our land, waters, flora and fauna in our region.” (Participants from Redfern)

Participants wanted access to clean, healthy, fresh water and better managements of water trading and irrigation:

- “Stop water trading and irrigation through dry times
- Allocation of cultural flows
- Access to clean, healthy, fresh water.” (Participants from Cobar)

“Water quality and access...is a public health issue and not (just) a community issue.” (Participant from Walgett) “Why do we pay water rates for water we cannot use?” (Participant from Menindee) “No fees for water licensing.” (Participant from Kempsey)

Some participants wanted the rivers to be allowed to flow naturally (Participant from Dubbo).

Participants said, “Our people have managed this water and looked after the land. We’re the custodians of this area. We know how to look after it, we know what to do, we just want permission.” (Participant from Batemans Bay) “Water is a precious commodity that no-one should own. The Darling should be registered as living.” (Participant from Wilcannia)

New target areas:

Create a new outcomes statement and targets to increase the control and ownership of water, sea and land by Aboriginal Peoples.

Other additional outcome areas and targets

There were several areas where participants felt additional targets were needed. Most common amongst these were:

- Ageing, discussed above;
- Disability, discussed above;
- Small business development and ownership, also discussed above; and
- Transport.

Transport

Participants across the state spoke about transport as an issue which impeded access to other services, with participants from forums including Menindee, Tamworth, Coffs Harbour and Albury saying it was a priority in their area. “Transport - we need to be able to get to appointments in our community.” (Participant from Bathurst)

Participants, including those from Wagga Wagga and Dubbo, wanted to see targets for transport, to allow people in small communities to access services such as health, to travel to post-school education and universities and TAFE and to allow them to participate in their communities. “...living in rural and remote communities, some people cannot get access to the treatments they need...”

(Participant from Muswellbrook) “(We need) Transport to medical services.” (Participant from Dubbo)

“A lot of the issues that we do see with our mob, is the lack of transport. The biggest thing in this community is the transport issue – there is no public transport network here.” (Wagga Wagga)

New target areas:

Create a new outcomes statement and target for access to transport.

Inter-relationship of issues

The participants in our forums also recognised that the issues being described through these targets are inter-related, just as the research cited in this report shows. They recognised that life expectancy outcomes are impacted by homelessness and other factors; poor health leads to poor educational outcomes; poor quality housing is linked to poor health; living with disabilities is linked to poverty; and loss of culture and heritage with all of these poor life outcomes. With this knowledge, participants stressed the need to look at these issues from a holistic perspective.

Summary of Other Key Issues Raised

A series of other issues were raised which related to the implementation of Closing the Gap. It should be noted that these are comments made by participants and have not been subject to a formal verification process. These shared concerns were:

1. Communication
2. Financial probity and transparency
3. Funding models
4. Ownership of data
5. Aboriginal identity
6. Building faith in the new approaches to deliver results.

There were, of course, other issues raised by individual people which have not been included where they do not relate to a shared concern.

Communication

The consultations revealed that there is considerable work to be done to let communities know about the full scope of Closing the Gap. “We need more feedback, reporting and accountability.” “We need a clear understanding of the processes and procedures for government agencies.” (Participants from Lismore)

Some participants told us that, prior to the consultation, they had thought that Closing the Gap was only related to health and others added they were vaguely aware that education was also part of Closing the Gap. Some people expressed surprise at the range of areas covered by the targets. However, they were well-informed about the lack of progress on Closing the Gap in a general sense.

Participants asked that future communication about Closing the Gap be in plain English so that everyone can understand easily what is intended and where successes and failures are. They commented that the issue of plain English and easily understood summaries related to all government documents and not just to Closing the Gap. In relation to both health and other areas, they also asked for better communication about their entitlements.

Participants also wanted to know more about the Partnership Agreement and how it would work; and about the National Coalition of Peaks. They also wanted to learn more about the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (NSW CAPO), the processes for organisations to join NSW CAPO and the relationship between the two levels of Coalitions of Peaks and Closing the Gap.

As mentioned above, the concept of creating local CAPO-style groups to encourage collaboration between elected Aboriginal organisations was also proposed. Related to this, the possibility of holding regular forums like those held for this consultation process was also suggested.

Better communication around processes, deliverable outcomes and entitlements is not just good practice. It will build more confidence in the Partnership Agreement and help communities to help governments to deliver more efficient and effective services to Close the Gap.

Financial Probity and Transparency

A number of participants from across New South Wales raised concerns about financial probity and transparency. These comments related particularly to the processes for awarding tenders and grants. People wanted to understand how tenders and grants were awarded, how successful tenders were chosen and how the outcomes from these tenders and grants were measured.

They were also interested in probity issues, particularly around closed tender processes (ie where only a specific organisation was invited to lodge a proposal) and wanted more transparency about these processes as well.

Funding models

As discussed under the Priorities, above, participants wanted changes to funding models. "It's not just funding Aboriginal organisations to deliver a specified service. When we look both in Australia and internationally, that's one of the ways where governments have tried to short-change indigenous peoples by saying, 'I will direct the investment to your organisation, but then we'll use our funding agreements to significantly constrain your own decision making and what services you deliver and how. So we'll make you deliver it in the way we want,' which is not what community wants." (Participant from Jurisdictional Meeting at Redfern) "(We need) Long term solutions and commitment to funding." (Participant from Dareton)

They also asked governments to examine how much funding is going into an area for Aboriginal people across the sectors and to look at ways to bundle that money up and ask the community to determine and deliver the services they require, for example using commissioning (discussed above under Priority Three).

Ownership of data

Participants stressed the importance of owning their own data, especially when it was being used to make decisions. This related also to the issue of decisions being made for Aboriginal people and not with Aboriginal people. They repeatedly expressed concerns about the accuracy of data, especially given its primacy in Closing the Gap. Participants also expressed the desire to see state and local data (for example, Participant from Broken Hill).

Aboriginal Identity

The issue of Aboriginal Identity was frequently raised in connection with the provision of services and entitlements to people who claimed to be Aboriginal but who, in fact, were not. Participants were keen to see better processes put in place to ensure that resources were allocated to the people for whom they were intended. This issue was raised at a number of forums including Redfern, Griffith, Wilcannia and Kempsey.

Local Government Representation

Having representatives in local government, including identified representational positions, was raised in a number of forums, including Condobolin, Wilcannia, Bourke, Menindee and Broken Hill. There was also concern expressed about how long it had been in some areas since the last local government election.

Building Faith in the New Approaches to Deliver Results

A number of people said they had been discouraged by the failure of previous versions of Closing the Gap to deliver results. They were keen to understand how the new approaches would deliver better results for Aboriginal people. These comments were related to the need for the different levels of government to work more effectively together and to be seen to work more effectively together.

Participants were adamant that they wanted to see an end to governments choosing people to represent them and, in general, endorsed the new arrangements for the Partnership Agreement, where community-controlled organisations were at the table with governments. They wanted to be sure that governments would follow through on what was agreed.

They also wanted to be sure that the organisations which formed NSW CAPO and the National Coalition of Peaks were not exclusive, so that the representatives of Aboriginal people meeting with governments on Closing the Gap were from genuine community controlled organisations.

Conclusion

Closing the Gap continues to be important because Aboriginal people are over-represented in a range of areas that governments say they are determined to address for the whole population of Australia.

Better targets for Closing the Gap require a better understanding of the nature of those problems and more precisely designed initiatives to address them. Our participants want to be part of the implementation, not just because it is more effective but also because it is more efficient. Aboriginal people in NSW don't want to see any more money wasted on poor quality approaches undertaken by organisations with no connections to Aboriginal Peoples.

Aboriginal people are Australian citizens, so Aboriginal people want the same things other Australian citizens want. We want safe and secure housing, good health and good health care, access to transport, better lives for our children and good quality care when we are old. We want an end to the over-representation of Aboriginal people, especially young people, in gaols. We want an end to racism. We want to be small business owners. We want to own our own homes.

We want better education, from the earliest years to tertiary education, connected to vocational skills, higher education and employment. We want to see more Aboriginal people in employment, especially where those jobs are in communities, and at more senior levels. We want to be part of the economic development of Australia and have fulfilling lives within our communities.

We want to be respected and we want our cultures, heritage and languages to be respected and incorporated into education. We want the impact of colonisation and the stolen generation to be acknowledged and understood. We want higher levels of cultural competence in the people who work in and with communities.

We also want self-determination, because it works. Aboriginal people must be involved in describing the nature of the problems we face, creating the initiatives to address those problems and designing and implementing the solutions.

We hope this Partnership Agreement is the first stage in finally Closing the Gap, because we want to Close the Gap and we want to do it now.

COALITION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEAKS MEMBERSHIP AT TIME OF SIGNING

The following organisations comprised the membership of the Coalition of Peaks at the time of signing the Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap, 2019-2029

National Members

Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives
First Nations Media Australia
First Peoples Disability Network
Indigenous Allied Health Australia
Lowitja Institute
National Congress of Australia's First Peoples
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations
National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum
National Native Title Council
SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children
The Healing Foundation
Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association

State and Territory Members

New South Wales Coalition of Aboriginal Peaks (CAPO):

- NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- NSW/ACT Aboriginal Legal Services
- Link Up NSW
- NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group*
- NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council
- NSW Aboriginal Child, Family and Community Care State Secretariat
- First Peoples Disability Network

Victorian Aboriginal Executive Council:

- Victorian Aborigines Advancement League
- Koori Youth Council
- Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated
- Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service
- Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency
- Djirra
- Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (FVTOC)
- Victorian Aboriginal Housing Board
- Victorian Aboriginal Health Service
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
- Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd

Queensland Coalition of Peaks being established including:

- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (Qld) Ltd
- Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Limited

Western Australia:

- Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia

South Australia:

- Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement Incorporated, consulting with a policy group of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in South Australia

Tasmania:

- Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre

Australian Capital Territory:

- ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body

Northern Territory Aboriginal Peak Organisations:

- Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT
- Central Land Council
- Northern Land Council

* Also provides a national perspective pending the formation of a national peak for Indigenous education.

NSW Consultation Forums

	Venue	Date
1	Deniliquin	Tues 15th Oct
2	Griffith	Thurs 17th Oct
3	Wagga Wagga	Tues 15th Oct
4	Young	Wed 16th Oct
5	Queanbeyan	Thurs 17th Oct
6	Bateman's Bay	Fri 18th Oct
7	Jurisdictional Meeting (Redfern)	Mon 21st Oct
8	Dubbo	Tues 22nd Oct
9	Condobolin	Wed 23rd Oct
10	Cobar	Thurs 24th Oct
11	Bourke	Fri 25th Oct
12	NSW AECG - Stanmore	Fri 25th Oct
13	Newcastle	Tues 22nd Oct
14	Central Coast	Wed 23rd Oct
15	Muswellbrook	Fri 8 November
16	Tamworth	Fri 25th Oct
17	Broken Hill	Tues 29th Oct
18	Wilcannia	Wed 30th Oct
19	Menindee	Thurs 31st Oct
20	Dareton	Thurs 7th Nov
21	Lismore	Mon 28th Oct
22	Coffs Harbour	Tues 29th Oct
23	Kempsey	Wed 30th Oct
24	Albury	Mon 4th Nov
25	Redfern (community)	Mon 4th Nov
26	Mount Druitt	Tues 5th Nov
27	Bathurst	Thurs 7th Nov
28	Moree	Tues 5th Nov
29	Walgett	Wed 6th Nov
Total number of people attending consultations in NSW		597

NSW Consultation Forums - Summary of Participants Evaluation Sheets

Participants were asked to complete an evaluation sheet at the end of the consultation. The questions were to seek the individual's views and rate how they thought the meeting went. The table below outlines the percentages of the responses received.

Question	1 Strongly disagree	2	3 Agree	4	5 Strongly Agree
1. The meeting was good to help me understand who the Coalition of Peaks are.	1.5%	5.1%	40.9%	21.9%	30.7%
2. The meeting was good to help me understand how the Coalition of Peaks and governments are working together on Closing the Gap.	1.5%	10.6%	38.0%	29.2%	20.8%
3. The meeting was good to help me understand what is going to happen next on Closing the Gap.	1.5%	8.0%	38.3%	23.7%	28.5%
4. I had opportunity to ask questions.	0.7%	1.1%	28.8%	23.0%	46.4%
5. I know where to get more information about the Coalition of Peaks on Closing the Gap.	1.5%	6.9%	32.1%	26.3%	33.2%