NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT (CLOSING THE GAP)

Council of Australian Governments

An agreement between

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

This Agreement implements intergovernmental reforms to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

National Indigenous Reform Agreement

INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT ON FEDERAL FINANCIAL RELATIONS

PRELIMINARIES

1. This agreement is created subject to the provisions of the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations* and should be read in conjunction with that Agreement and subsidiary schedules. In particular, the schedules include direction in respect of performance reporting and payment arrangements.

2. The Parties are committed to addressing the issue of social inclusion. That commitment is embodied in the objectives and outcomes of this Agreement. However, the Parties have also agreed other objectives and outcomes which the Parties will pursue through the broadest possible spectrum of government action. Consequently, this agreement will be implemented consistently with the objectives and outcomes of all National Agreements and National Partnerships entered into by the Parties.

3. In December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a partnership between all levels of government to work with Indigenous communities to achieve the target of Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

4. This National Indigenous Reform Agreement has been established to frame the task of Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. It sets out the objectives, outcomes, outputs, performance indicators and performance benchmarks agreed by COAG. It also provides links to those National Agreements and National Partnership agreements across COAG which include elements aimed at Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

5. The National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage can be found at Schedule A. The foundation of the Closing the Gap Strategy is the identification of and commitment to targets addressing Indigenous disadvantage, and associated building blocks – areas for action. This Strategy acknowledges the importance of Indigenous culture, and engagement and positive relationships with Indigenous Australians. It discusses the contribution of the current COAG reform initiatives to meeting the targets, the frameworks for accountability and performance reporting, and also signals areas for future work.

6. The National Indigenous Reform Agreement, like other National Agreements, is a living document subject to enhancement over time to reflect additions and changes to existing and new National Agreements and National Partnership agreements. As COAG agrees to additional reforms to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage, these will be reflected in this Agreement.

COAG framework

7.   Despite the concerted efforts of successive Commonwealth, State and Territory governments to address Indigenous disadvantage, there have been only modest improvements in outcomes in some areas such as education and health, with other areas either remaining static or worsening. Even in those areas where there have been improvements, the outcomes for Indigenous Australians remain far short of the outcomes for non-Indigenous Australians. To Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage, COAG has committed to making significant reforms in order to address six specific targets (see Objectives).

8.   COAG recognises that overcoming Indigenous disadvantage will require a long-term, generational commitment that sees major effort directed across a range of strategic platforms or 'Building Blocks' which support the reforms aimed at Closing the Gap against the six specific targets. The Building Blocks endorsed by COAG are:

   (a)   Early Childhood;

   (b)   Schooling;

   (c)   Health;

   (d)   Economic Participation;

   (e)   Healthy Homes;

   (f)   Safe Communities; and

   (g)   Governance and Leadership.

9.   COAG recognises that strategies aimed at achieving improvements in any particular area will not work in isolation – the building blocks must fit together through the integration of policy ideas and an agreed approach to their implementation. Further information on the Building Blocks is at Box 1.

COAG commitments

10.   In the context of the Building Blocks framework, COAG has commenced the task of addressing Indigenous disadvantage across each of the strategic platforms. Some National Partnership agreements have an Indigenous specific focus, addressing one or more of the building blocks:

   (a)   Remote Indigenous Service Delivery;

   (b)   Indigenous Economic Participation;

   (c)   Indigenous Early Childhood Development;

   (d)   Indigenous Health;

   (e)   Remote Indigenous Housing; and

   (f)   Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access.

11.   In 2008, COAG requested the development of an urban and regional strategy to coordinate the delivery of services to Indigenous Australians. The National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy, at Schedule B is a plan for action developed by the

Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments. The Strategy recognises that without achieving significant gains in urban and regional locations, it will not be possible to Close the Gap nationally on any of the COAG targets. The strategy requires jurisdictions to leverage Indigenous specific and mainstream funding agreed by COAG, and other existing resources, to improve Indigenous Australians' outcomes in urban and regional areas.

12. Moreover, an important feature of the COAG framework is the focus on achievement of outcomes – including Indigenous outcomes – through the renegotiated National Agreements, and mainstream National Partnership agreements. These agreements aim to improve outcomes for a wide range of Australians, including Indigenous Australians. Some National Partnerships (such as Improving Teacher Quality) include Indigenous specific outcomes. Further information on the National Agreements and National Partnership agreements can be found at the Policy and Reform Directions section and at Schedule C.

13. A key feature of the National Agreements will be enhanced reporting against specified indicators – and COAG has agreed to reporting arrangements which will see many indicators disaggregated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous status. This will facilitate close examination by COAG and the public of progress towards Closing the Gap and will complement other reporting mechanisms, such as the COAG-sponsored Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators Report.

14. The objectives, outcomes, outputs, performance indicators, and performance benchmarks noted in this and other Agreements will be used by the COAG Reform Council to assess progress in Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. In doing so, the COAG Reform Council will have reference to, among other things, the Closing the Gap Measuring Progress framework agreed by COAG (see Performance Benchmarks).

15. In addition, COAG has agreed to a National Framework for Reporting Expenditure on Services to Indigenous Australians. Annual national Indigenous Expenditure Reports based on this framework will provide governments with a better understanding of the level and patterns of expenditure on services to Indigenous Australians, and assist policy makers to target policies to Close the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage.

16. The National Framework will enable the reporting of estimates of government expenditure on services to Indigenous people that will be comparable, relevant, reliable, cost effective and timely. The Framework will allow reporting on expenditure in a manner consistent with the COAG Building Blocks.

17. To ensure consistency across the development of National Partnership agreements, COAG has agreed service delivery principles (see Schedule D) and principles for investment in remote areas (see Schedule E). These principles are a guide for all COAG reforms, and all governments are expected to take these principles into account in designing policies and providing services.

Box 1: Building Blocks

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

Early Childhood

For an equal start in life, Indigenous children need early learning, development and socialisation opportunities. Access to quality early childhood education and care services, including pre-school, child care and family support services such as parenting programs and supports, is critical. Appropriate facilities and physical infrastructure, a sustainable early childhood education and health workforce, learning frameworks and opportunities for parental engagement are also important and require attention. Action in the areas of maternal, antenatal and early childhood health is relevant to addressing the child mortality gap and to early childhood development.

Schooling

Human capital development through education is key to future opportunity. Responsive schooling requires attention to infrastructure, workforce (including teacher and school leader supply and quality), curriculum, student literacy and numeracy achievement and opportunities for parental engagement and school/community partnerships. Transition pathways into schooling and into work, post school education and training are also important.

Health

Indigenous Australians' access to effective, comprehensive primary and preventative health care is essential to improving their health and life expectancy, and reducing excess mortality caused by chronic disease. All health services play an important role in providing Indigenous people with access to effective health care, and being responsive to and accountable for achieving government and community health priorities. Closing the Indigenous health gap requires a concerted effort in the prevention, management and treatment of chronic disease. Indigenous children and their parents need to access programs and services that promote healthy lifestyles.

Box 1 (cont): Building Blocks

Economic Participation

Individuals and communities should have the opportunity to benefit from the mainstream economy – real jobs, business opportunities, economic independence and wealth creation. Economic participation needs to extend to disadvantaged job seekers and those outside of the labour market. Access to land and native title assets, rights and interests can be leveraged to secure real and practical benefits for Indigenous people. Other financial assets, capacity building, employment and training programs, incentive structures and social and physical infrastructure, including communications and transport, are needed to foster economic participation and community engagement. Through this participation, parents and other adults can become effective role models for their families and community. The design and delivery of welfare (both transfer payments and services) needs to promote active engagement, enhanced capability and positive social norms. Ensuring that communities have support to address factors that are a barrier to engagement such as problem gambling is critical. Life-long learning is important and attention is also needed regarding adult literacy and numeracy skills.

Healthy Homes

A healthy home is a fundamental precondition of a healthy population. Important contributors to the current unsatisfactory living conditions include inadequate water and sewerage systems, waste collection, electricity and housing infrastructure (design, stock and maintenance). Children need to live in accommodation with adequate infrastructure conducive to good hygiene and study and free of overcrowding.

Safe Communities

Indigenous people (men, women and children) need to be safe from violence, abuse and neglect. Fulfilling this need involves improving family and community safety through law and justice responses (including accessible and effective policing and an accessible justice system), victim support (including safe houses and counselling), child protection and also preventative approaches. Addressing related factors such as alcohol and substance abuse will be critical to improving community safety, along with the improved health benefits to be obtained.

Governance and Leadership

Strong leadership is needed to champion and demonstrate ownership of reform. Effective governance arrangements in communities and organisations as well as strong engagement by governments at all levels are essential to long term sustainable outcomes. Indigenous people need to be engaged in the development of reforms that will impact on them. Improved access to capacity building in governance and leadership is needed in order for Indigenous people to play a greater role in exercising their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

OBJECTIVES

18. Through this Agreement, the Parties commit to working together with Indigenous Australians to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

19. COAG has agreed to the following targets:

    (a) closing the life expectancy gap within a generation;

    (b) halving the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade;

    (c) ensuring all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years;

    (d) halving the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade;

    (e) halving the gap for Indigenous people aged 20-24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020; and

    (f) halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

OUTCOMES

20. Outcomes describe the impact which government activity is expected to have on Indigenous community wellbeing. COAG has identified outcomes against all the Building Blocks. These COAG agreed Indigenous specific outcomes are at Schedule C.

OUTPUTS

21. Outputs describe the services that are being delivered to achieve outcomes. Links to the National Agreements and National Partnerships which contain Indigenous specific outputs are at Schedule C.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

22. All of the Parties will work co-operatively to realise the objectives and commitments made in this Agreement, including, where agreed by the Parties, through the development of Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plans under this Agreement (incorporating implementation plans developed under all Indigenous specific National Partnerships). The Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plans will be publicly available from the Ministerial Council for Federal Financial Relations website.

23. Each Party commits to be accountable to the community for achieving outcomes in its area of responsibility (consistent with roles and responsibilities outlined in other COAG National Agreements and National Partnership agreements). Further information on roles and responsibilities in specific policy areas can be found in the respective National Agreements and National Partnership agreements. Links to these Agreements are at Schedule C.

Shared responsibility

24. The Commonwealth and States and Territories share the following roles and responsibilities, working in partnership to:

(a) achieve the agreed COAG targets for Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage;

(b) develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to addressing Indigenous disadvantage;

(c) develop, progress and review the national objectives and outcomes for Indigenous reform, including monitoring and reviewing the national objectives and outcomes for Indigenous reform against the COAG targets;

(d) meet obligations outlined in the National Agreements and National Partnership agreements;

(e) provide public leadership which encourages the community to recognise and embrace the importance of the nationally agreed outcomes for Indigenous Australians;

(f) ensure the ongoing development of a suitably skilled Indigenous workforce;

(g) ensure their data is of high quality, and is available for reporting, including research and evaluation. This includes data and other information required for-

(i) meeting the requirements of National Agreements and National Partnership agreements;

(ii) the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision in its role of producing the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Key Indicators Report and the Report on Government Services; and

(iii) the reporting requirements under the National Framework for Reporting Expenditure on Services to Indigenous Australians.

(h) ensure data quality improvements set out at Schedule F are met within the specified timeframes ;

(i) work across inter-agency and sectoral boundaries, including with non-government providers of Indigenous services; and

(j) engage with Indigenous Australians in the meeting of these responsibilities.

PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

25. COAG has identified the following Indigenous-specific performance indicators to measure progress against the Closing the Gap targets. The difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes against each of these indicators will be used by the COAG Reform Council to help assess progress towards the Closing the Gap targets. The role of the COAG Reform Council with respect to this Agreement is set out in the *Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations*. There are also Indigenous performance indicators in other National Agreements and National Partnership agreements (see Schedule C).

26. Performance indicators will be measured nationally and by jurisdiction, where possible, noting that data improvements will be required before all performance indicators can be accurately measured at a jurisdictional level.

27. The revised set of performance indicators, agreed to following the review of the NIRA conducted in 2011, is provided below. [1]

Closing the life expectancy gap within a generation (by 2031)

1. Estimated life expectancy at birth

   - Baseline data: 2005-07

2. Mortality rate by leading cause

   - Baseline data: 2006

3. Rates of current daily smokers

   - Baseline data: 2008

4. Levels of risky alcohol consumption –

   - Baseline data: 2004-05

5. Prevalence of overweight and obesity

   - Baseline data: 2004-05

Halving the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade(by 2018)

6. Under five mortality rate by leading cause

   - Baseline data: 2008

7. Proportion of babies born of low birth weight;

   - Baseline data: 2008

8. Tobacco smoking during pregnancy

   - Baseline data: 2008

9. Antenatal care

   - Baseline data: 2008

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[1] For a full description of the data sources and level of reporting on these indicators, please refer to the following link to METeOR: http://www.aihw.gov.au/pi/index.cfm

Ensuring all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years (by 2013)

10. The proportion of Indigenous children who are enrolled in (and attending, where possible to measure) a preschool program in the year before formal schooling.

    • Baseline data: 2011

Halving the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade (by 2018)

11. Percentage of students at or above the national minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy for years 3, 5, 7 and 9

    • Baseline data: 2008

    Measure 1: Rates of participation in NAPLAN reading, writing, and numeracy tests - years 3, 5, 7 and 9

    • Baseline data: 2008

Halving the gap for Indigenous people aged 20-24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates (by 2020)

12. Attainment of Year 12 or equivalent

    Measure 1: Proportion of 20-24 year-olds having attained at least a Year 12 or equivalent AQF Certificate II level (or above)

    • Baseline data: 2006

    Measure 2: Year 12 certification

    • Baseline year and data source yet to be determined

13. Attendance rates - Year 1 to Year 10

    • Baseline data: 2008

Halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade (by 2018).

14. Level of work force participation

    Measure 1: Employment to population ratio for the working age population

    • Baseline data: 2008

    Measure 2: Unemployment rate

    • Baseline data: 2008

    Measure 3: Labour force participation rate

    • Baseline data: 2008

15. Proportion of Indigenous 20-64 year olds with or working towards post school qualification in AQF Certificate III level or above

   - Baseline data: 2006

PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

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

29. Progress against the six COAG targets will be determined against indicative trajectories (between the baseline and the target) for each target and by jurisdiction; this will comprise six national trajectories (one for each target) and trajectories for each jurisdiction where data are available. The trajectories are a guide to progress from baseline performance to achievement of the target. They are an indicative path only and are not intended to forecast future progress at any point.

30. Schedule G discusses the magnitude of the improvement necessary to meet each of the Closing the Gap targets, and provides indicative national level trajectories.

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

32. Trajectories may be subject to change over time if the expected gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes changes. For example, if expected non-Indigenous outcomes improve and the gap widens, the trajectory will need to be steeper.

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

34. This review would include an assessment of the impact of initiatives being taken through COAG and other mechanisms on the targets and may include development of the likely rates of progress which represent what could happen in the absence of interventions. The outcomes of these deliberations would inform policy formulation processes in each jurisdiction and would assist the COAG Reform Council's annual assessment.

The trajectories will be reviewed from time to time by the NIRA Performance Information Management Group (a sub-committee of the Working Group on Indigenous Reform) as new data becomes available. The Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council will be able to review future updates to the NIRA Life Expectancy Trajectory and associated performance indicators. A joint review will be undertaken by the Working

Group on Indigenous Reform and the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council of the trajectories for life expectancy, under 5-mortality and aged standardised mortality during 2011.

The COAG Reform Council will have regard to advice provided by the NIRA Performance Information Management Group on the use of trajectories.

CURRENT POLICY AND REFORM DIRECTIONS

35. The Parties commit to ongoing reforms to overcome Indigenous disadvantage.

36. As at 2 July 2009, the following Indigenous specific National Partnership agreements have been agreed by COAG:

    (a)   Indigenous Early Childhood Development;

    (b)   Remote Service Delivery;

    (c)   Indigenous Economic Participation;

    (d)   Remote Indigenous Housing;

    (e)   Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes;

    (f)   Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access;

    (g)   Closing the Gap in the NT (NTER); and

    (h)   The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse

37. Other National Partnerships (such as Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities) as well as the National Agreements will also play a major role in contributing to meeting the Closing the Gap targets. Schedule C contains more detail and links to these National Agreements and National Partnership agreements.

38. The National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage at Schedule A identifies areas of ongoing and future work.

39. Parties are working to develop a Native Title National Partnership agreement, through the Native Title Ministers' Meeting, to facilitate efficient resolution of existing and potential Native Title claims.

40. Parties are working to develop a Remote Indigenous Infrastructure National Partnership. This National Partnership will be brought to COAG following the completion of the municipal and essential services audits under the Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership, the baseline mapping and service audits under the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership, and the preparation of a business case based on a rigorous costing process.

41. In the future, work will be progressed under the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, under the response to *Time for Action: The National Council's Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children*, and under the National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework.

42.   Improving food security is part of the response required to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. A national Strategy for improving the affordability and availability of healthy food for Indigenous people living in remote Australia was agreed by COAG in December 2009. The National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities at Schedule H identifies specific strategic actions that can be taken by all relevant jurisdictions to improve food security in remote Indigenous communities. The focus is on priority areas where the evidence shows a high level of impact can be achieved,

43.   The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–14 (the Action Plan) is to guide the national effort towards closing the gaps in early childhood and school education outcomes for Indigenous Australians, covering three of the six Closing the Gap targets. It includes a range of actions to bring about national, systemic and local-level improvements across six domains of activity that evidence has shown will make the most impact on Closing the Gap. The six domains are: Readiness for school; Engagement and connections; Attendance; Literacy and numeracy; Leadership, quality teaching and workforce development; and Pathways to real post-school options. A statement outlining implementation of the Action Plan is at Attachment B.

SCHEDULES

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

Schedule A: National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage

Schedule B: National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy for Indigenous Australians

Schedule C: Closing the Gap in Indigenous life outcomes

Schedule D: Service delivery principles for programs and services for Indigenous Australians

Schedule E: National Investment Principles in Remote Locations

Schedule F: Agreed data quality improvements

Schedule G: Progress towards the Closing the Gap targets (updated)

Schedule H: National Food Security Strategy

Schedule A

National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

INTRODUCTION

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

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

Background

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

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

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

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

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

An unprecedented level of cooperation and coordination between the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments is needed to deliver on this commitment to Close the Gap. The Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments are committed through COAG to the Closing the Gap agenda and this partnership, underpinned by effective engagement with Indigenous Australians, establishes a genuinely national approach.

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

THE NEED TO ACT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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[1] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), *Experimental Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2005–2007* (cat. no. 3302.0.55.003). Canberra: ABS, 2009.

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

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

THE CLOSING THE GAP TARGETS

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

§ close the gap in life expectancy within a generation;

§ halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade;

§ ensure all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years;

§ halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade;

§ halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20-24 in year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020; and

§ halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

The Building Blocks Approach and the Evidence Base

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

§ Early Childhood;

§ Schooling;

§ Health;

§ Healthy Homes;

§ Safe Communities;

§ Economic Participation; and

§ Governance and Leadership.

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

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

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

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

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE

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

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

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

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

ENGAGEMENT AND PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

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

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

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

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

[A2] Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007*. Melbourne: Productivity Commission, 2007.

Suggested Approach

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

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

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

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

§ inform or provide information to interested parties generally about the policy and/or decisions taken, why they were taken and the intended benefits to provide information on the process and opportunities for engagement; or

§ solicit information, seek feedback or input/views from interested parties through clearly defined channels to help guide the development of policies and programs.

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

i)   Jurisdictional advisory groups and representative bodies

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

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

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

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

ii)   Indigenous advisory groups – sector specific

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

iii)   Indigenous expert organisations on specific topics

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

iv) Informal or ongoing relationships

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

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

THE NEED FOR A COORDINATED AND SUSTAINED APPROACH

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

§ sustained commitment from all levels of government to work together;

§ a resetting of the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians – this reconciliation involves building mutually respectful relationships between Indigenous and other Australians that allows us to recognise our histories and our cultures; it will also involve us working together to solve problems and generate success that includes all Australians;

§ action through mainstream programs and Indigenous specific initiatives;

§ responses that address the nature of place and broader issues;

§ sound measures for progress, accountability, the development of an evidence base and identification of best practice; and

§ involvement by the corporate sector, non-government organisations and local government with the aim of Closing the Gap and building partnerships across all sectors.

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

Improving Service Delivery

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

Box 1: Service Delivery Principles for Services for Indigenous Australians

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

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

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

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

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

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

Addressing the Needs of Indigenous People in Urban and Regional Australia

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

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

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

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

The priority areas for action are:

1) Integration and Governance – developing a coordinated approach to identifying priorities at both intra- and inter-governmental levels;

2) Effective Services – delivery of reforms to service delivery systems;

3) Focusing on Local Need/Place Based Approaches – enabling initiatives to be delivered in a manner appropriate to needs in a particular location;

4) Strengthening Indigenous Capacity Engagement and Participation – promoting a strong and positive view of Indigenous identity and culture; and strengthening individual, family and community wellbeing and capacity as a necessary impetus to improved access to and take-up of services; and

5) Building Effective Accountability and Sustainability – requiring governments to improve statistical collection services and other information sources to improve the detail and accuracy of reporting on outcomes.

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

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

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

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

Addressing the Needs of Indigenous People in Remote Australia

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

The Remote Service Delivery Strategy and National Partnership aim to:

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

§ raise the standard and range of services delivered to Indigenous families to be broadly consistent with those provided to other Australians in similar sized and located communities;

§ improve the level of governance and leadership within Indigenous communities and Indigenous community organisations;

§ provide simpler access and better coordinated government services for Indigenous people in identified communities; and

§ increase economic and social participation wherever possible, and promote personal responsibility, engagement and behaviours consistent with positive social norms.

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

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

Box 2: National Principles for Investments in Remote Locations

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

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

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

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

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

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

Current priority locations include:

§ Northern Territory: Angurugu, Galiwinku, Gapuwiyak, Gunbalanya, Hermannsburg, Lajamanu, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Nguiu, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Umbakumba, Wadeye, Yirrkala and Yuendumu;

§ Queensland: Hope Vale, Aurukun (together with continuing work in Mossman Gorge and Coen which are also part of the Cape York welfare reform trial), Mornington Island and Doomadgee;

§ South Australia: Amata and Mimili;

§ New South Wales: Walgett and Wilcannia;

§ Western Australia: Fitzroy Crossing and surrounding communities, Halls Creek and surrounding communities, and the Dampier Peninsula (with a focus on Beagle Bay and Ardyaloon).

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

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

THE COORDINATOR-GENERAL

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

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

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

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

The Coordinator-General will:

§ have the authority to work across agencies to cut through bureaucratic blockages and red tape, and to make sure services are delivered effectively – to achieve this, the Coordinator-General will have direct relationships with Commonwealth Secretaries and their Departments through membership of the Secretaries' Group on Indigenous Affairs and will report directly to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous

Affairs regularly on the performance of government agencies in meeting their commitments in the priority communities;

§ work collaboratively with State and Territory officials and Ministers to achieve a unified approach to implementing the remote service delivery model, including overcoming challenges that arise across jurisdictions;

§ receive regular situation reports advising of progress within the locations and will receive alerts reporting on any problems as they arise; and

§ be a statutory office reporting to the Minister for Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs – legislation was introduced to Parliament on 27 May 2009.

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

MEASURES TO DATE

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

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

The National Agreements in other key areas of Commonwealth-State policy collaboration – healthcare, education, skills and workforce development, disability services, and affordable housing are associated with a National Specific Purpose Payment which provides funding to the States and Territories to improve services for all Australians, *including* Indigenous Australians.

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

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

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

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

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

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

§   reduced smoking rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;

§   reduced burden of diseases for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;

§   increased uptake of Medicare Benefits Schedule funded primary care services to Indigenous people, with half of the adult population (15-65 years) receiving two adult health checks over the next four years;

§   significantly improved coordination of care across the care continuum; and

§   over time, a reduction in the average length of hospital stay and reduction in readmissions.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

§ public internet access facilities in remote Indigenous communities where there is limited or no public internet access;

§ maintenance and support of public internet access in those communities, commencing in 2011-12; and

§ training in basic computer and internet use in up to 60 remote communities a year.

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

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

§ services are effective and accessible;

§ services are culturally competent to deliver good outcomes for Indigenous Australians;

§ government investments maximise linkages between Indigenous specific and mainstream services; and

§ government investments deliver service models that respond to high levels of mobility amongst Indigenous Australians.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND PERFORMANCE REPORTING

Performance Indicators

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

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

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

Indigenous specific National Partnership Agreements include provision for:

§ agreed accountability and outcome measures;

§ arrangements that enable regular measurement of outcomes for related programs in each jurisdiction;

§ regular meetings of senior officials to review and jointly report on progress of bilateral agreements;

§ establishing or strengthening joint coordination arrangements;

§ where possible aligning Indigenous reporting obligations; and

§ an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of each National Partnership.

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

As part of the National Education Agreement endorsed by COAG in November 2008, governments agreed to implement an Indigenous Education Action Plan. A statement outlining the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Plan 2010-2014 is at Attachment B. The Action Plan involves commitments to develop local, systemic and national strategies to assess how reforms are actually facilitating improvements, and to monitor progress to inform possible improvements to the approach.

Trajectories

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

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

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

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

ONGOING AND FUTURE WORK

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

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

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

Strengthening Engagements and Partnerships

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- § further development of the Closing the Gap agenda;

- § development and monitoring implementation of bilateral and, where required, local implementation plans underpinning National Agreements and National Partnerships; and

- § assessment of the impact of the Closing the Gap agenda.

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

During 2010 the Commonwealth delivered a comprehensive engagement strategy for use in working with communities under the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership. In addition, the Commonwealth will implement an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Framework across its agencies from 2011. The Framework will improve how Australian Public Service agencies engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on the policies, programs and services that affect them, and will strive to embed effective engagement as an integral part of day-to-day business.

The Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments will work together to embed best practice, including engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians living in urban and regional areas. These discussions will acknowledge agreement under this Schedule that all jurisdictions will utilise existing frameworks and mechanisms to strengthen partnerships with Indigenous people in implementing COAG commitments.

Indigenous Economic Development

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

§ developing supportive regulatory and institutional arrangements;

§ building the economic base, particularly in remote Australia;

§ developing the capabilities of Indigenous people and communities to get jobs and establish businesses; and

§ creating sustainable opportunities through effective partnerships and genuine engagement.

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

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

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

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

The development of a Commonwealth Indigenous Economic Development Strategy (IEDS) will contribute to achieving long-term economic independence for Indigenous Australians by promoting economic participation and wealth creation by Indigenous communities and individuals, and through the strengthening of partnerships with the corporate sector.

Data

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

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

COAG's future work program will also be guided by the evaluation of National Partnerships and other polices and programs, both Indigenous specific and mainstream, affecting outcomes for Indigenous

people. Progress against the targets as measured against the trajectories will provide an indication of priorities for future work.

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

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse:

> § conducts systematic reviews of the research and evaluation evidence;

> § improves the coordination of research and identify priorities for future research and evaluation;

> § provides public online access to a centralised repository of quality information; and

> § provides policy makers and program managers with an evidence base for achieving the Closing the Gap targets.

Remote Service Delivery

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

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

Universal Services

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

> § government investments deliver effective and accessible services that are taken up by Indigenous people in urban and regional locations;

> § service delivery agencies are culturally competent to deliver good outcomes for Indigenous people;

> § government investments maximise linkages between Indigenous specific and mainstream services;

> § government investments deliver service models that respond to high levels of mobility amongst Indigenous Australians; and

> § investment on services and programs is prioritised and in specific locations that have the greatest impact on Closing the Gap and breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage.

Food Security

Improving food security is part of the response required to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. A national Strategy for improving the affordability and availability of healthy food for Indigenous people living in remote Australia was agreed by COAG in December 2009. The National Strategy for

Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities at Schedule H identifies specific strategic actions that can be taken by all relevant jurisdictions to improve food security in remote Indigenous communities. The focus is on priority areas where the evidence shows a high level of impact can be achieved.

Welfare Reform

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

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

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

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

Strengthening Indigenous Governance and Leadership

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

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

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

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

Community Safety

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

Involvement of the Corporate Sector

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

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

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

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

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

§ further engaging the corporate, not-for-profit and philanthropic sectors to take action in Closing the Gap; and

§ establishing a national advisory group to provide strategic advice to government on improving Indigenous economic participation.

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

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

Involvement of Local Government

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

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

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

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

Involvement of the Not-for-Profit Sector

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

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

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

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

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

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

Best Practice

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

CONCLUSION

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

The disadvantage Indigenous Australians have suffered for more than two centuries has placed great obstacles in our way. Governments are prepared to work together with Indigenous Australians to achieve change for the better. This Strategy outlines the directions and specific steps Australian Governments are taking to meet the Closing the Gap challenge.

Attachment A

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade

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

5. Halve the gap in Indigenous 20-24 year olds in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020

Building Blocks	COAG Agreements	Outputs
Schooling	National Education Agreement	Improve school retention and completion rates from Year 9 up

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

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

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

ATTACHMENT B

Implementing the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014*

Education Ministers and non-government education providers are seeking to ensure Australian children have a high quality, world standard education to equip them for life in the 21st century.

Under the National Education Agreement, governments have already committed to actively monitor improvements in Indigenous education outcomes. Implementation Plans for National Partnership agreements also have a strong focus on improving outcomes for Indigenous Australians. To support the National Education Agreement and National Partnerships and reinforce the importance of effective, integrated national, systemic and local level strategies, the Australian Government has united with other Governments in developing the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander Education Action Plan 2010-2014* (the Action Plan).

The Action Plan outlines how Ministers for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs will work together to achieve the Closing the Gap targets. Non-government education providers have agreed to join with governments to achieve these targets and progress actions outlined in the Plan. It is acknowledged that this sector includes providers that operate autonomously as they are not part of a system authority and will therefore require a more flexible approach.

The Action Plan seeks to progress the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy and the Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals of Young Australians and is part of a broader COAG reform agenda for school education that will contribute to closing the gap between the educational outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their peers.

The Plan identifies national, systemic and local actions in six priority domains that evidence shows will contribute to improved outcomes in Indigenous education. These priorities will guide effort over the life of the Action Plan. Priority domains are: Readiness for school; Engagement and connections; Attendance; Literacy and numeracy; Leadership, quality teaching and workforce development; and Pathways to real post-school options.

The Plan builds on commitments by governments through COAG to introduce substantial structural and innovative reforms in early childhood education, schooling and youth as outlined in National Partnership agreements between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories. These reforms are designed to improve outcomes for all Australian students by increasing access to quality early childhood education, improving literacy and numeracy achievement, addressing disadvantage in low socio-economic status school communities, improving teacher quality and increasing the number of young people attaining a Year 12 or equivalent qualification.

Ministers for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs have ensured the Action Plan reflects the experience and expertise of Indigenous Australians, educators and others.

The Action Plan is supported by an evaluation strategy and an annual reporting framework which will highlight progress and areas where more effort is needed against the six priority domains. The Plan contains trajectories which will be monitored as part of annual Action Plan reporting. Through these mechanisms Ministers will be assured that the benefits of national reforms are reaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and that resources are used effectively to support the Closing the Gap targets.

ATTACHMENT C

Best Practice Examples

Northern Territory

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

	§ Targets and Evaluation: The six COAG Closing the Gap targets, along with sub-targets and performance indicators under various National Partnership Agreements, have been adopted as the measurement framework for 'A Working Future'. *eHealthNT is an example of how new technologies are being explored as a way to implement the hub service delivery model of 'Working Future'. It is one example of Territory innovation that is advancing healthcare delivery in remote areas. eHealthNT offers a range of services that assist healthcare providers to securely store, share and transmit important healthcare information so that it is available when and where it is needed for care. The Shared Electronic Health Record is one initiative that forms part of a broader eHealthNT project.[4]*
What does it do?	'Working Future' sets the frame for future remote investment and service delivery, putting into action the agreed COAG National Principles for Investments in Remote Locations. *The eHealthNT Shared Electronic Health Record repository stores summaries of an individual's healthcare attendances that can be accessed by health professionals from their clinical desktop at the point of care. With consent, summary healthcare information is transmitted when an individual visits a participating health care provider such as a Northern Territory public hospital, a health centre or a GP. Available information includes a Current Health Profile, containing accumulative information about allergies, alerts, current health problems, current medications, diagnostic test results and immunisation history. The record is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.*
What was required to implement it?	'Working Future' acknowledges that a partnership approach with communities and cooperative arrangements within and across all tiers of government is required to implement the new remote service delivery and investment reforms. Local town and service planning will ensure that residents are partners to the process, and coordination across governments will be achieved through the appointment of the Northern Territory's Coordinator-General for Remote Service Delivery, new joined up remote service delivery arrangements and a good working relationship with local government. *For example, through the eHealthNT project, the Northern Territory and Australian Governments have jointly invested $45 million over 5 years in ICT infrastructure and e-health solutions and services. Partnerships have been developed with the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory, General Practice Network NT and Katherine Regional Aboriginal Health and Related Services.*
What are the outcomes or expected outcomes?	'Working Future' will result in better services, better outcomes from services, better infrastructure and amenities, more jobs, economic development and private investment, safer roads, long-term funding certainty to outstation / homeland residents and program and service providers. It focuses on tangible and practical results.

[A4] Note there are a number of other projects under eHealthNT including: Secure Electronic Messaging Service; Electronic Transfer of Prescriptions; Childhood Immunisation Records portal; Medchart Advanced Medication; Management in Acute care, Residential Aged Care and Primary Care; Accelerated implementation of the Primary Care Information System into Northern Territory Government remote health centres and prisons.

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For example, the eHealthNT Shared Electronic Health Record service has been enthusiastically embraced by Indigenous healthcare consumers and is well-utilised by healthcare professionals in day-to-day service delivery. Already there are:

§   *34,000 consumers registered, predominantly Indigenous people;*

§   *74 participating health centres, GPs and hospitals;*

§   *over 2,500 clinicians registered including GPs, Aboriginal Health Workers, Remote Area Nurses, Hospital Clinicians and Allied Health Professionals; and*

§   *participating Health Services in the Kimberley region of Western Australia and the APY Lands in South Australia.*

Work is progressing to expand the Shared Electronic Health Record service to Northern Territory prisons, the new Palmerston GP Superclinic, as well as South Australia's public hospitals, which provide tertiary services to Northern Territory residents.

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How does the initiative contribute to best practice learning?

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'Working Future' represents a comprehensive response to the challenges of working to service and promote greater self-responsibility of Indigenous people living in remote areas.

In this way, the eHealthNT project:

§   *provides easy, fast and secure electronic access to reliable and comprehensive information;*

§   *helps to overcome difficulties of distance and provide patient centred care in an environment involving multiple providers across the public and private sectors; and*

§   *alleviates difficulties in responding to health outcomes of a highly mobile population with high health needs.*

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Queensland

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

The CYWR trial is based on a partnership between community and government in working towards achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The CYWR trial aims to transition people from passive welfare dependence to engagement in the real economy, and to rebuild basic social norms that are the fabric of any society – such as sending children to school, abiding by |

	the law, and taking care of one's family or house.
What does it do?	The CYWR trial seeks to achieve these changes through a range of projects grouped under four streams – education, housing, economic opportunity and social responsibility.
	A central reform initiative is the Family Responsibilities Commission (FRC) that links improved care of children directly to receipt of welfare and other government assistance payments. It also works with families in partnership with community leaders and connects them with a wide range of support services.
	The FRC is an independent, statutory body, headed by a highly experienced, legally qualified Commissioner as well as Local Commissioners, who are well-respected community leaders.
	The FRC acts on notifications from Queensland Government departments and the Magistrates Court. Once a notice is received, Commissioners hold conferences with individuals and families as well as designated community members to ensure effective help and support is provided.
	These conferences are often held in the local Indigenous languages, for example, Wik in Aurukun.
What was required to implement it?	The Queensland Government has established a partnership with the Australian Government, the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership (CYI) and the four communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge.
	New legislation was introduced to establish the FRC under the *Family Responsibilities Commission Act 2008* (Qld). The Australian Government also enacted changes to the *Social Security (Administration) Act 1999* (Cth) to enable the FRC to work with Centrelink on the income management components of the trial.
	A new model of integrated service delivery was developed to support the FRC and to assist in creating an environment that develops positive social norms in the Cape York communities. For example, the FRC is supported by a network of services including: § Wellbeing Centres, providing counselling, support, and assistance § School Attendance Case Managers, supporting parents to ensure children attend school every day and that their children's educational needs are met. There are also Family Income Management programs to assist with family budgeting. The FRC's conferencing style ensures that compulsory income management is ordered as a last resort.
	Additional support services being rolled out in 2009 include enhanced positive parenting services, alcohol and drug rehabilitation programs, as well as gambling support and family violence support programs.

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

South Australia

Activity, program, project or tool	The South Australian Aboriginal Sports Training Academy
Organisation	Department of the Premier and Cabinet (Social Inclusion Unit) and Department of Education and Children's Services
Closing the Gap building blocks	§ Governance and leadership § Safe Communities § Economic Participation § Health § Schooling
What is it?	The South Australian Aboriginal Sports Training Academy (SAASTA) works with young Aboriginal men and women (aged between 16-24) in their final school years to fulfil their aspirations for a career in sport, health and recreation. The Academy is an initiative of the Social Inclusion Board, and is managed by the Department of Education and Children's Services. SAASTA operates at the Para West Adult Campus, Kaurna Plains School, John Pirie Secondary School, Port Lincoln High School, Coober Pedy Area School and Ceduna Area School. Negotiations are underway to extend the program to three more schools in Whyalla, Murray Bridge and Christies Beach in 2010. SAASTA builds on existing sporting and teaching resources available to these schools. Teachers are supported to become Coordinators for the SAASTA program, and financial support is available for the schools to purchase further equipment, goods and services required to run the program. The success of SAASTA depends on partnerships with the Sports Industry, the Aboriginal community, local government and the corporate sector. Peak sporting bodies such as Netball SA and Basketball SA provide elite coaching, and organisations such as the Central District Football Club provide access to their facilities. Recently, the South Australian Dental Service partnered with the Academy to provide dental care for students. The Football Federation of South Australia has also established a partnership with SAASTA to support young Aboriginal people to compete in national championships.
What does it do?	All students study an integrated SACE/VET curriculum, and are awarded nationally recognised certificates in sports and recreation upon completion of the Academy's programme. Students are encouraged to complete Year 12. As well as qualified teachers, the Academy staff includes coaches who build students' skills in football, netball, basketball and athletics. The school's

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

Schedule B

National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy for Indigenous Australians (July 2009)

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

Introduction

In 2008, COAG requested the development of an Urban and Regional Strategy to coordinate the delivery of services to Indigenous Australians. To achieve significant gains in urban and regional locations, COAG requires an active focus across health, housing, early childhood development, education and employment, as means of achieving progress towards COAG's Closing the Gap targets.

Addressing the disadvantage experienced by many Indigenous Australians living in urban and regional areas will require a multi-faceted approach. Work to achieve improvements will need to be undertaken over a considerable period of time. While this Strategy sets out what Governments plan to do, it also recognises that Indigenous individuals and families need to be the focus of this effort. Boosting Indigenous demand for and take-up of services, strengthening Indigenous leadership and family and community well-being, individual capacity and responsibility for decision-making about their own lives, together with changes to health, education, housing, early childhood development and employment will see immediate benefits and improved longer-term outcomes for Indigenous individuals and their families.

This Strategy builds on the experience of all jurisdictions in listening to Indigenous people in urban and regional areas, and recognises that approaches to implementation will reflect the different circumstances and needs of Indigenous individuals, families and communities in each State or Territory. It reflects COAG's commitment to working in partnership with Indigenous people to achieve the Closing the Gap reforms agreed by COAG across the health, housing, early childhood development, education and employment spheres and recognises this will require the development and maintenance of strengthened partnership arrangements.

The Strategy outlines:

- the underlying evidence for action;

- the contribution of Indigenous specific and mainstream National Partnership Agreements (NPAs) in Health, Housing and Homelessness, Early Childhood, Education and Economic Participation to addressing disadvantage in urban and regional locations; and

- actions that can be taken by all jurisdictions to give practical effect to these key NPAs, and other initiatives of the Commonwealth and the States and Territories to improve outcomes for Indigenous Australians in urban and regional communities in a coordinated and targeted way.

Using this Strategy, all jurisdictions will report to COAG late this year on their progress in utilising the Indigenous specific and mainstream NPAs in the areas of health, housing, early childhood, education and employment to improve outcomes for Indigenous people in urban and regional areas and the progressive roll-out of the Strategy. This report will underpin each jurisdiction's commitment to a concerted and ongoing effort, as outlined and monitored through an Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plan agreed between each jurisdiction and the Commonwealth.[1]

A review of the overall Strategy is planned for three years' time.

What the evidence tells us

In 2006, the estimated resident Indigenous population was 517,000, or 2.5 per cent of the total Australian population. Three-quarters (75 per cent) of the Indigenous population were living in major cities and regional areas, with the remaining 25 per cent in remote areas.[2] Whereas there are large Indigenous populations living in remote Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory (NT), in most jurisdictions (other than the NT), urban and regional locations are the predominant locations in which Indigenous people live.

The proportion of the Indigenous population resident in urban and regional areas rose markedly from 44 per cent in 1971 to 74 per cent in 2001, with almost one-third now resident in major cities. While this remains considerably less than the total Australian population resident in major cities (63 per cent), it represents a substantial increase over the past 30 years. The 2006 Socio-Economic Indexes for Area also shows that 45 per cent of Indigenous people aged 0-18 years live in highly disadvantaged areas.[3]

Census data also indicates a continuation of well above national average (11 per cent) Indigenous population growth between 2001 and 2006 throughout most of Victoria, the eastern half of New South Wales, south east and coastal Queensland, the south east of South Australia and south west Western Australia.[4]

Data also shows continued net migration to particular regional centres in Australia, including Shepparton, Mildura, Dubbo, Broken Hill, Esperance, Charters Towers and Kalgoorlie. Generally there is also a corresponding net movement of non Indigenous people out of these locations, contributing to a higher concentration of Indigenous people in particular locations.[5] In addition, the rate at which Indigenous people are away from their usual place of residence is 7 per cent; almost double that for the rest of the population. The effect is to create a catchment around service towns or centres which has very significant implications for service delivery.[6]

Recent analysis of the levels of socioeconomic disparity between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations in a given location, based on 2001 and 2006 Census data, confirms that Indigenous

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[1] Bilateral Plans are yet to be developed with the ACT and Tasmania.

[2] Classification is based on ABS 2006, Statistical Geography: Volume 1 *Australian Standard Geographical Classification (ASGC)*, (cat. no. 1216.0).

[3] Unpublished 2006 Census data.

[4] Noting that the increased disclosure of Indigenous status over this time is a factor.

[5] Taylor, J. 2006, *Population and Diversity: Policy Implications of Emerging Indigenous Demographic Trends*, CAEPR Discussion Paper No. 283/2006.

[6] Prout, S.2008, *On the move? Indigenous temporary mobility practices in Australia* – CAEPR Working Paper No. 2008/48.

disadvantage is not just because Indigenous Australians are more likely to live in remote towns or outstations.[7]   Even within the same suburb or large regional town, Indigenous Australians, for a range of reasons, fare relatively poorly in terms of employment, education, income and housing.

These disparities in outcomes have not been met with a concerted effort to address Indigenous health, housing, early childhood development, education and employment needs guided by a clear sense of the gaps in outcomes experienced by Indigenous Australians. Instead, there has been a mixed response at all levels of government, which has produced a number of factors which need to change in order for Indigenous people to take up services, and get better outcomes from them. These factors include:

- *structural factors* – such as poor planning and co-ordination across government resulting in gaps, overlapping services and lack of clear roles and responsibilities between mainstream providers and Indigenous community service organisations; Indigenous organisations and clients having to deal with multiple programs and agencies; up-front costs; lack of infrastructure and transport issues;

- s*ervice provider staffing issues* – ranging from difficulties in recruiting and maintaining staff, the challenges in securing skills and competencies required to manage complex issues (including lack of culturally aware staff and Indigenous staff) and inappropriate staff attitudes;

- *Indigenous people's reticence to use government services*;

- *ineffective engagement* by service providers with Indigenous communities; and

- *levels of disadvantage* – disadvantage in and of itself does not solely relate to low income.

Even when adjustments are made for low SES, Indigenous Australians in urban and regional areas still experience higher levels of disadvantage relative to other Australians.

The contribution of key COAG National Partnership Agreements to addressing disadvantage in urban and regional locations

While this Strategy acknowledges that addressing disadvantage will require action across a number of areas, a very significant contribution to addressing the needs of Indigenous Australians living in urban and regional locations has been made through COAG's agreement to a range of Indigenous specific and mainstream NPAs that increase investment in health, social housing and homelessness services, early childhood development, education and economic participation.[8]

Health

The NPA on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience a burden of disease two-and-a-half times that of non-Indigenous Australians[9], and that chronic diseases and associated risk factors are responsible for a majority of the life expectancy gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

[B7] Biddle, N. *Same suburb, different worlds: Comparing Indigenous and non-Indigenous outcomes in city suburbs and large regional towns*, People and Place (forthcoming).

[B8] Note that not all jurisdictions are signatories to all National Partnerships.

[B9] Vos T, Barker B, Stanley L, Lopez AD (2007). *The burden of disease and injury in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 2003*. Brisbane: School of Population Health, The University of Queensland.

Almost half the life expectancy gap is caused by 11 risk factors including: smoking (50 per cent of Indigenous Australians smoke and this has not changed since 1995); overweight and obesity (60 per cent of Indigenous Australians); physical inactivity (47 per cent of Indigenous Australians in 2004-05); alcohol; and low fruit and vegetable intake.[10]

Leading causes of mortality for Indigenous Australians include circulatory disease (26 per cent), injury and poisoning (16 per cent), diabetes (8 per cent), chronic respiratory disease (9 per cent) and cancer (15 per cent).[11]

The Commonwealth and the States and Territories are together contributing $1.58 billion to the NPA, focused on five priority areas:

- *Tackling smoking* – the Commonwealth and States and Territories will together work to reduce the smoking rate and reduce the burden of tobacco-related disease for Indigenous communities, as smoking is the single biggest killer of Indigenous people and the number one risk factor for chronic disease:

    – Smoking is responsible for 12 per cent of the burden of disease for Indigenous Australians and 20 per cent of deaths;[12]

- *Healthy transition to adulthood* – the States and Territories will fund services to support positive life choices by young Indigenous people, reduce risk taking behaviours and increase resilience, with this expected to lead to, among other benefits, an increased sense of social and emotional well-being, reduced uptake of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs; and reduced hospitalisations for violence and injury.

    – Excess mortality among Indigenous Australian teenagers and young adults is mainly due to violence, accidents, substance abuse and self-harm, including suicide;[13]

- *Making Indigenous health everyone's business* – the States and Territories will fund services to improve coordination and responsiveness to Indigenous health outcomes from non-health services such as child protection, juvenile justice, corrections, and housing, especially those services that target socially isolated and high-risk populations.

- *Primary health care services that can deliver* – the Commonwealth and the States and Territories will work together to improve access to culturally secure primary health care for all Indigenous Australians, with improved access to quality primary health care through better coordination across the care continuum, particularly for people with chronic diseases and/or complex needs; increased uptake of MBS-funded primary health care services by Indigenous people; and increased cultural competence of the primary health care workforce.

    – While Indigenous Australians have morbidity and mortality levels 200-300 per cent higher than non-Indigenous Australians, their access to health care services overall is only 10 per cent higher.[14]

[B10] Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (2008). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report 2008*, AHMAC, Canberra.

[B11] AIHW analysis of National Mortality Database as seen in the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (2008). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report (2008)*, AHMAC, Canberra.

[B12] Ibid., Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (2008).

[B13] Ibid., Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (2008).

[B14] Ibid., Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (2008).

- *Fixing the gaps and improving the patient journey* – the Commonwealth and the States and Territories will work together to better manage the care transitions for Indigenous Australians across different parts of the health sector, especially for those at risk of, or with, a chronic disease, leading to improved levels of engagement between Indigenous patients, referred care providers and primary health providers (public or private) to deliver better follow-up and referral processes and reduce admissions and incomplete treatments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

  – Indigenous Australians are hospitalised for conditions that should be treated in primary health care at 6 times the rate of other Australians, and this is rising for chronic conditions (161 per cent increase since 2000-01).[15]

The specific commitments to address inequalities in health outcomes and the burden of chronic disease in urban and regional Indigenous populations are complemented by a commitment to national system-level changes which will focus on: setting national minimum service standards for all organisations providing primary health care services to Indigenous individuals and families; improved quality of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification in health data sets; establishing electronic records sharing; increasing the number of Indigenous people in the health workforce; and promoting respect and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures in the delivery of quality health care.

The NPA on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes will be monitored by 31 performance indicators that align with the COAG Closing the Gap targets for Indigenous Health. Jurisdictions will report annually against the performance benchmarks and output indicators included in their Implementation Plans through the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council.

Housing and Homelessness

The NPA on Social Housing and the NPA on Homelessness recognise that Indigenous people in urban and regional Australia are over-represented amongst people who are homeless[16], or at risk of homelessness[17], in public housing and on the waiting lists for public and social housing. The proportion of Indigenous households in social housing is around 7 per cent of public and community housing households and 10 per cent of total social housing households (which also includes state owned and managed Indigenous housing households). In June 2008, 7.2 per cent of households in public housing were Indigenous (23,953 out of a total of 331,136 households); 6.4 per cent of households in community housing were Indigenous (2,298 out of a total of 35,667 households) and 100 per cent of households in state owned and managed Indigenous housing were Indigenous (12,375).

The NPA on Social Housing will provide $400 million over two years for a Social Housing Growth Fund; and will fund State and Territory Governments to increase the supply of social housing, through the construction of approximately 2,000 new dwellings nationally by 2010-11. In particular, the

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[B15] Ibid., Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council (2008).

[B16] At the 2006 Census, 9 per cent of the homeless (9,531 people of the total 104,676) were Indigenous. Indigenous people made up 3.8per cent of people staying with other households, 6 per cent of those in boarding houses, 16 per cent of people in improvised dwellings and 20 per cent of people in specialist homelessness services. Overall, 2.4 per cent of people were identified as Indigenous in the 2006 Census.

[B17] 'at risk of homelessness' relates to secondary and tertiary levels of homelessness:

Secondary homelessness - people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation and people residing temporarily with other households because they have no accommodation of their own. It also includes people staying in emergency or transitional accommodation provided by governments and non-government organisations and people residing temporarily in boarding houses for 12 weeks or less.

Tertiary homelessness - people living in boarding houses on a medium to long term basis for over 12 weeks.

Agreement will support projects that enhance the ability of persons who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, including Indigenous people.

Through the Social Housing Initiative in the NPA on the Nation Building and Jobs Plan, the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments will significantly increase the supply of social housing throughout Australia and provide much needed accommodation to many disadvantaged Australians, particularly those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Through this initiative the Commonwealth will commit funding of $6.4 billion over the years 2008-09 to 2011-12. Over this period, around 20,000 additional social housing dwellings will be built, adding to the social housing stock, together with around 47,000 existing public housing dwellings being refurbished. Funding will be allocated to states generally on a per capita basis, subject to jurisdictions submitting suitable proposals that meet the requirements of the initiative.

The NPA on Homelessness will also benefit Indigenous Australians who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Through this NPA the Commonwealth and States and Territories will commit $1.1 billion over five years from 2008-09. The 'Place to Call Home' initiative will provide additional new dwellings, with tenants receiving targeted support services for the first year of their tenancy. This is expected to particularly benefit Indigenous people in urban and regional locations. Homeless Indigenous young people, including those exiting the care of child protection services, could also benefit from the introduction of service models such as the 'Foyer' model, that provide supported accommodation combined with employment pathway skills in urban and regional locations. Indigenous people who are 'rough sleepers' will be assisted by outreach programs and programs to implement long-term stable accommodation.

All States and Territories will assist Indigenous people to access housing–public, private and community under the Homelessness NPA by addressing the following three areas:

- street to home initiatives for chronic homeless people (rough sleepers);

- support for private and public tenants to help sustain their tenancies, including through tenancy support, advocacy, case management, financial counselling and referral services; and

- assistance for people leaving child protection services, correctional and health facilities, to access and maintain stable affordable housing.

The particular measures being put in place by States and Territories, including those targeting Indigenous Australians, in relation to these outputs will be agreed in Implementation Plans.

This will ensure services are responsive to client needs and enable integration of specialist and mainstream agency support.

Indigenous women and children experiencing domestic and family violence will be assisted to stay in their housing through a number of measures located in metropolitan and regional locations (also to be agreed in Implementation Plans). The Homelessness NPA also provides support for children who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to maintain contact with the education system.

Education

Arrangements agreed by COAG in 2008 create a framework which provides schools and school systems with greater resources and flexibility to allocate resources to areas that will produce the best outcomes for students to achieve the Closing the Gap targets. This includes flexibility to develop strategies to respond to individual needs of Indigenous students and to suit the circumstances of each

school community. Similarly, specific targets, strategies and measures to achieve outcomes under the Education Agreements will vary across jurisdictions and will be negotiated bilaterally.

The bulk of funding that supports the education of Indigenous students is delivered through schools funding which has been significantly increased in 2009-2012 through the National Education Agreement and the Schools Assistance Act 2008. In addition, NPAs covering Early Childhood Education, Indigenous Early Childhood Development, Low Socio-Economic Status Schools, Literacy and Numeracy, Teacher Quality, Digital Education Revolution, Trade Training Centres and Building an Education Revolution, have been established between the Commonwealth and States and Territories to drive reforms in key areas of national significance. These reforms, which address the relevant COAG targets, will focus on:

- strengthening the access and quality of early childhood education - as part of the bilateral agreements under the National Partnership on Early Childhood Education, each state and territory has identified their baseline position and the strategies that will be implemented, given the circumstances operating in that jurisdiction. In addition, the Australian Government is leading the development of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Universal Access Strategy. This strategy will focus on practical, effective approaches to increasing access to quality preschool education for Indigenous children in all geographic locations. The strategy will identify what works, current and planned activities and gaps and opportunities;

- supporting high quality teaching with a clear focus on the fundamentals of English literacy and numeracy;

- improving educational outcomes in schools with a high proportion of students from disadvantaged backgrounds;

- strong school leadership that can respond innovatively to improve student outcomes and engage local communities; and

- investments in infrastructure that builds a 21st century learning environment in schools.

In particular, the Smarter Schools–Low Socio-Economic Status (SES) School Communities NPA will fund a range of within-school and out-of-school reforms to support the educational needs and wellbeing of students in schools in low SES communities. The Commonwealth will invest $1.5 billion over seven years, to be matched by investment from the States and Territories which will include redirection and reprioritisation of existing school funding sources and new funding commitments. The National Partnership is aimed at improving student engagement and educational achievement and addressing entrenched disadvantage.

A new NPA on Youth Attainment and Transitions was agreed by COAG in July 2009. It includes targets to increase participation in education and training by 2010 and increase Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2012 – in support of COAG's 2015 target of 90 per cent overall Year 12 or equivalent attainment. $100 million in reward funding is available under the NPA for achievement of these targets. In addition, the NPA will include an agreement to a national trajectory for halving the gap in Indigenous Year 12 or equivalent attainment by 2020, and a commitment to monitor and report annually on leading indicators of Indigenous participation and attainment. This trajectory requires Indigenous 20-24 year old Year 12 or equivalent attainment to increase from 41.4 per cent in 2006, to 66.1 per cent by 2020. The Australian Government will work closely with the States and Territories to deliver a total of $723 million of measures under this NPA, to pursue reforms to improve young people's educational attainment and transitions from school, and contribute towards achieving the COAG targets.

Performance indicators and national targets have been broadly agreed to galvanise effort towards unprecedented improvements in education outcomes of Indigenous Australians. The 2008 National Action Plan Assessment Program, Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) data shows that the gaps between the results for Indigenous students and all students in urban and regional areas were of similar magnitude. The largest gaps in writing achievement for urban and regional areas were for Year 9 students, with a gap of 21 percentage points in urban areas and 22.1 percentage points in regional areas. The largest gaps in reading achievement for urban and regional areas were for Year 5 students, with a gap of 18 percentage points in urban areas and 19 percentage points in regional areas. For achievement in numeracy the largest gaps in urban and regional areas were for Year 9 students, with a gap of 15.5 percentage points in urban areas and 16.7 percentage points in regional areas. The smallest gaps (around 9 percentage points) between Indigenous students and all students in urban and regional areas were for Year 3 students in writing and numeracy. Through the Literacy and Numeracy NPA, targets based on NAPLAN data are also to be agreed with government and non-government systems for accelerated improvement for participating Indigenous students. Achievement of these targets will be key precursors to $350 million of reward payments.

Early Childhood Development

Indigenous children are the most vulnerable group of children in Australia and disparities with non-Indigenous children in some outcomes have widened in recent years. The NPA on Indigenous Early Childhood Development commits $564 million of joint Commonwealth, State and Territory funding to improve access to antenatal care, teenage sexual and reproductive health services, child and maternal health services and integrated early childhood development and family support services.

Commonwealth funding of $292.6 million over six years from 1 January 2009 is being provided to States and Territories to establish 38 Children and Family Centres in targeted urban, regional and remote areas with high Indigenous populations and disadvantage and high population of Indigenous children between birth and four years of age. Of the 38 centres, 15 are to be established in urban areas and the remaining 23 will be established in regional and remote locations. This place based approach ensures that each Centre can be tailored to the needs of its community and recognises that, particularly in urban areas, there are more opportunities to link with existing infrastructure and services.

Commonwealth investment of $107 million over five years from 1 July 2009 is being provided to the States and Territories to: improve access to, and use of, antenatal care by young Indigenous mothers and provide support to reduce risk factors such as smoking; support young Indigenous people, including those who are disengaged from school, to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health; and drive improved data collection and reporting. States and Territories are focusing their efforts in areas with significant numbers of young Indigenous women and high numbers of births to teenagers.

This NPA also seeks to increase access to, and use of, maternal and child health services by Indigenous families by building on the existing Commonwealth election commitment of $90.3 million for New Directions: An Equal Start in Life for Indigenous Children (new mothers' and babies' services) and includes complementary State/Territory investment of $75 million. Services will be established in regions identified as high need and will be culturally inclusive and responsive to local needs to better engage Indigenous children and families.

The mainstream Early Childhood Education NP will deliver universal access to early childhood education in the year before formal schooling. A key performance indicator in the Early Childhood Education NP is the proportion of Indigenous children (by geographic location as identified by the

Australian Standard Geographic Classification), who are enrolled in (and attending, where possible to measure) a preschool program in the year before formal schooling.[18]

Economic Participation

The gap in the Indigenous workforce-aged employment to population ratio (also known as the employment rate) at the 2006 Census was around 24 percentage points. To reduce this gap to 12 percentage points by 2018, Indigenous employment growth of around 100,000 jobs over ten years would be needed. This represents a 63 per cent total increase on the number of Indigenous people employed at mid 2006.

Analysis of changes in labour force status between 2001 and 2006 shows the gap narrowed as a ratio from 0.71 to 0.75, with improvement most evident in urban and regional areas. Particular attention will need to be given to job creation in urban and regional areas and especially regional labour markets in New South Wales and Queensland if overall targets are to be met.[19]

In 2006 the employment-to-population ratio (employment rate) for those aged 15 and above was considerably lower for both Indigenous males (51.2 per cent) and females (41.2 per cent) than for non-Indigenous Australians (71.9 per cent and 58.4 per cent respectively). The proportion of Indigenous people employed in Major Cities in 2006 was 50 per cent compared to 44 per cent in Inner Regional areas, 44 per cent in Outer Regional areas, 44 per cent in Remote areas and 45 per cent in Very Remote areas. While the gaps in remote areas are large[20], much of the overall gap is concentrated in urban areas given the relative population shares. As an example, only 16.9 per cent of unemployed Indigenous Australians were located in remote or very remote areas in 2006. Unemployment rates were highest in Inner Regional areas (males 18.6 per cent and females 18.1 per cent) and Outer Regional areas (males 18.1 per cent and females 17.0 per cent), and unemployment rates were at intermediate levels in Major Cities (males 15.3 per cent and females 14.5 per cent) and Remote areas (males 15.3 per cent and females 13.5 per cent).

It is recognised that employment leads not only to improved incomes for families and communities, but also enhanced self-esteem, increased opportunities for self development and reduced social isolation. The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation seeks to narrow the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by building the capacity of Indigenous people to participate in the economy as well as generating opportunities for their participation. Current projections indicate that this National Partnership will assist up to 13,000 Indigenous people into employment over a five year period contributing to the COAG target to halve the gap in employment outcomes.

The Agreement involves complementary investment of $228.8 million over five years to significantly improve opportunities for Indigenous people to engage in private and public sector jobs through:

- creating real sustainable employment for up to 2,000 Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) participants in areas of government service delivery that have previously relied on subsidisation through the CDEP program;

- strengthening current government procurement policies and creating up to 3,000 jobs to maximise Indigenous employment;

[B18] Preschool program as defined in the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education is: structured, play-based early childhood education.

[B19] Biddle,N, Taylor, J and Yap, M, *Indigenous Participation in Regional Labour Markets 2001-06*, CAEPR Discussion Paper, 288/2008.

[B20] Lower measured unemployment rates in remote areas are a function of participation in Community Development Employment Program (the ABS classifies CDEP participation as a form of employment).

- incorporating Indigenous workforce strategies into all new major COAG reforms thereby contributing to the Closing the Gap targets; and

- reviewing all Public Sector Indigenous employment and career development strategies and employing up to 8,000 Indigenous people to reflect national Indigenous working age population share by 2015, currently projected to be at least 2.6 per cent.

A key joint commitment under this NPA is agreement to incorporate Indigenous workforce strategies into all new major COAG reforms contributing to the Closing the Gap targets.

Workforce strategies will have as core components the acquisition of recognised and accredited mainstream qualifications and articulated training pathways for Indigenous Australians. In particular, those reforms targeted specifically at the Closing the Gap targets should also support achievement of the target to halve the gap in employment outcomes.

From 1 July 2009, Indigenous jobseekers in regional areas with established economies will be serviced through the reformed employment services instead of CDEP. The existence of CDEP in regions with established economies has often reinforced the isolation of Indigenous people from labour market programs and opportunities. The new employment services focus particularly on the disadvantaged and long-term unemployed. There will be more tailored and individualised assistance and providers will be required to have a comprehensive Indigenous employment strategy.

The Government has also committed an additional $190.6 million over five years to a reformed and expanded Indigenous Employment Program which will make services more responsive to the specific needs of Indigenous job seekers, Indigenous businesses and employers. The Indigenous Employment Program operates across Australia, targeting regional areas and specific industries experiencing labour shortages, as well as providing assistance to develop plans to recruit and retain Indigenous employees.

What else needs to be done?

While each of these NPAs will on their own make a significant contribution to addressing the needs of Indigenous people living in urban and regional locations, the evidence shows that changes are required across a number of priority areas so that positive outcomes for Indigenous people can be achieved across all the areas of health, housing, early childhood, education and employment.

These investments need to be brought together as parts of a bigger effort to address all aspects of Indigenous disadvantage in urban and regional locations. This will also include a focus on respect for Indigenous people and their cultures, through promoting and supporting a strong and positive view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and culture. This will be particularly important for reducing the social exclusion of Indigenous Australians and for increasing the positive outcomes from specific initiatives to improve their health, housing, early childhood, education and employment prospects.

This more comprehensive approach provides a way for governments, service providers and the wider community to harness new investment for better outcomes and is set out below. A number of action areas provide the basis for developing jurisdiction-specific implementation plans for the Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy. These action areas allow for differences between the States and Territories in population characteristics, mobility patterns and existing social and physical infrastructure and services.

Integration and Governance

Governments propose to take a much more transparent and systematic approach to coordinating services to address Indigenous disadvantage to overcome a legacy of piecemeal and post-hoc adjustments, to address the needs of Indigenous individuals and families. At the highest level, all Governments will be guided by the Service Delivery Principles for Services for Indigenous Australians agreed by COAG in 2008.

A comprehensive approach by Governments, in partnership with Indigenous communities, will facilitate effective services on the ground for Indigenous people. The appropriate governance mechanisms to enable this to occur will need to be developed by each jurisdiction.

- Governments will establish, primarily through Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plans, appropriate mechanisms to coordinate policy and services in their jurisdiction which contribute to Closing the Gap targets; and

- Governments will also use existing and future government commitments, including the Nation Building and stimulus packages, to improve outcomes for Indigenous people, as appropriate.

Effective Services

A range of strategies and approaches needs to be undertaken to support improvements to the way services are delivered to Indigenous people. Fundamental to success will be the engagement of Indigenous people and working in partnership to address barriers to their take-up of services.

To do this, Governments will reform service delivery systems to ensure government investments:

- deliver effective and accessible services that are taken up by Indigenous people in urban and regional locations;

- deliver culturally competent services that achieve good outcomes for Indigenous Australians;

- maximise linkages between Indigenous-specific and mainstream services; and

- deliver service models that respond to high levels of mobility amongst Indigenous Australians.

Focusing on Local Need/Place-Based Approaches

A place-based approach is a practical way to implement initiatives designed to combat disadvantage in urban and regional areas to achieve real and sustainable outcomes. This approach recognises the diversity of issues and allows local initiatives to be delivered in a manner that is appropriate, and therefore more likely to be effective, for each community. This approach permits the flexibility for jurisdictions to implement targeted initiatives to meet their priorities.

To do this, Governments will:

- prioritise investment in services and programs and, where appropriate, in specific locations that have the greatest impact on Closing the Gap and breaking the cycle of intergenerational disadvantage; and

- work together to identify any priority locations in a State or Territory in which to undertake focused place-based work.

Strengthening Indigenous Capacity, Engagement and Participation

Promoting and supporting a strong and positive view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity and culture will be a particularly important method of reducing social exclusion for Indigenous Australians. Strengthening individual, family and community wellbeing and capacity is critical in urban and regional locations and provides an opportunity for developing responses to local needs which are driven by both the community and government.

To do this, Governments will:

- support community and individual leadership skills and governance training;

- recognise the importance of working in partnership with Indigenous organisations to strengthen and support families and children affected by past policies of forced removal;

- strengthen cultural awareness and create an environment of broader respect and recognition of Indigenous peoples and their culture; and

- promote Indigenous Australians being actively involved in all aspects of Australian society.

Building Effective Accountability and Sustainability

The commitment to monitoring and reporting requires that Governments improve statistical collection services that are currently insufficient to allow monitoring of key outcomes. Statistics are often skewed by the under-identification of Indigenous people in administrative data sets and limited sampling of Indigenous people in more general surveys.

These problems are compounded by such factors as uncertainties in the underlying Indigenous population statistics and inconsistencies in data across the jurisdictions. To give effect to the COAG commitment to accurate monitoring of outcomes for Indigenous Australians, Governments commit to taking specific action to support improvements to data quality consistent with Schedule F of the National Indigenous Reform Agreement.

To do this, Governments will:

- ensure that programs and services have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation; and

- build the evidence base and share good practice.

Next Steps

This Strategy outlines the ongoing commitment to achieve sustained improvements for Indigenous people living in urban and regional locations. As a first step, all jurisdictions reported to COAG in December 2009 on progress in utilising the Indigenous specific and mainstream National Partnership Agreements in the areas of health, housing, early childhood, education and economic participation associated changes to improve outcomes for Indigenous people in urban and regional locations.

The Strategy has progressed in each jurisdiction as part of the Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plan agreed between the Commonwealth and each State/Territory (either through a specific implementation schedule detailing actions to be taken for each key action area or through integrated efforts across all schedules under the Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plans, depending on the circumstances and preferences of each jurisdiction). These Plans are in the final stages of completion.

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

As the Overarching Bilateral Implementation Plans are being finalised, the Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy schedules provide a basis for ongoing work to underpin activities in urban and regional settings. Across all jurisdictions, Commonwealth and state and territory governments are well advanced in actively considering, planning and in some cases implementing a program of activities in target locations.

Jurisdictions have also agreed an annual reporting process, with a report for 2010 being prepared in early 2011. A review of the Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy has been agreed for 2012 and jurisdictions will consider the scope of this review in early 2011 so that planning on the review can commence soon after.

Closing the Gap in Indigenous life outcomes

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

Closing the gap in Indigenous life outcomes		
Close the life expectancy gap within a generation Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade Ensure all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade At least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020 Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade		
Building Blocks	**COAG Indigenous Specific Outcomes***	**COAG Policy and Reform Directions***
Early Childhood	• Indigenous children are born and remain healthy • Indigenous children have the same health outcomes as other Australian children • Children benefit from better social inclusion & reduced disadvantage, especially Indigenous children • Quality early childhood education and care supports the workforce participation choices of parent in the years before formal schooling • Indigenous children acquire the basic skills for life and learning • Indigenous children have access to affordable, quality early childhood education in the year before formal schooling as a minimum	Indigenous Early Childhood Development NP agreement To improve the early childhood outcomes of Indigenous children by addressing the high levels of disadvantage they currently experience, to give them the best start in life. Early Childhood Education NP agreement Through this Agreement, the Commonwealth and the State and Territories work together to ensure universal access to quality early childhood education in the year before school. TAFE Fee Waivers for Childcare Qualifications NP agreement TAFE and other government providers do not levy fees on students undertaking eligible child care courses in 2009. Investing in the Early Years - a National Early Childhood Development Strategy This Strategy details the areas where action is required to develop an effective early childhood development system by 2020.
Schooling	• Schooling promotes the social inclusion and reduces the educational disadvantage of children, especially Indigenous children. • Indigenous children and youth meet basic literacy and numeracy standards, and overall levels of literacy and numeracy are improving • Indigenous young people successfully transition from school to work and/or further study	National Education Agreement All Australian school students acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalised economy. Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities NP agreement The Agreement supports a suite of within school and broader reforms designed to transform the way schooling takes place in participating schools and address the complex and interconnected challenges facing students in disadvantaged communities. This Agreement aims to improve student engagement, educational attainment and wellbeing in participating schools, make inroads into entrenched disadvantage (including in Indigenous communities, contribute to broader social and economic objectives and improve understanding about effective intervention that can be implemented beyond the schools participating in this Agreement. Smarter Schools - Improving Teacher Quality NP agreement The Agreement is designed to improve teacher and school leader quality to sustain a quality teaching workforce. Smarter Schools - Literacy and Numeracy NP agreement The Agreement focuses on the key areas of teaching, leadership and the effective use of student performance information to deliver sustained improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who are falling behind. Building the Education Revolution As part of the NP agreement on the Nation Building and Jobs Plan this reform provides new facilities and refurbishments in schools.

Closing the gap in Indigenous life outcomes		
Close the life expectancy gap within a generation Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade Ensure all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade At least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020 Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade		
Building Blocks	**COAG Indigenous Specific Outcomes***	**COAG Policy and Reform Directions***
Health	• Indigenous Australians and those living in rural and remote areas or on low incomes achieve health outcomes comparable to the broader population. • Indigenous people have ready access to suitable and culturally inclusive primary health and preventive services • Indigenous people remain healthy and free of preventable disease	Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes NP agreement The Agreement sets out specific action to be taken by the Australian Government and complementary action by State/Territory governments to address the gap in health outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. National Healthcare Agreement The objective of this Agreement is to improve health outcomes for all Australians and the sustainability of the Australian health system. National Disability Agreement The Agreement provides the national framework and key areas of reform for the provision of government support to services for people with disabilities. Hospital and Health Workforce Reform NP agreement To improve health workforce, hospitals and capacity. Preventative Health NP agreement The agreement reforms Australia's efforts in preventing the lifestyle risks that cause chronic disease.
Economic Participation	• The Indigenous working age population has the depth and breadth of skills and capabilities required for the 21st century labour market • Indigenous people of working age participate effectively in all sectors and at all levels of the labour market	Indigenous Economic Participation NP agreement The Indigenous Economic Participation NP will contribute to the Council of Australian Government target to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within a decade. National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development The National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development identifies the long term objectives of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments in the areas of skills and workforce development. Productivity Places Program NP agreement This agreement will increase qualification commencements and course enrolments to reduce skills shortages and increase the productivity of industry and enterprise. NP agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions This agreement will work increase the qualifications and skill levels of young Australians and improve their capacity to make successful transitions from schooling into further education, training or employment. Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access NP Agreement This agreement will improve public access internet facilities and related computer training in remote Indigenous communities.
Healthy Homes	• Indigenous children's living environments are healthy • Indigenous families live in appropriate housing with access to all basic utilities • Indigenous people have improved housing amenity and reduced overcrowding, particularly in remote areas and discrete communities • Indigenous people have the same housing opportunities as other people	Remote Indigenous Housing NP agreement The Agreement aims to facilitate significant reform in the provision of housing for Indigenous people in remote communities and to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing condition and severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities. National Affordable Housing Agreement This Agreement provides a framework within which all tiers of government will work together to improve housing affordability for Australians. Homelessness NP agreement The Agreement aims to facilitate significant reforms to reduce homelessness. Social Housing NP agreement This Agreement facilitates the establishment of a 'Social Housing Growth Fund' that will support reforms to increase the supply of social housing. Social Housing As part of the NP agreement on the Nation Building and Jobs Plan this reform significantly increases the supply of social housing, particularly for Australians who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

Closing the gap in Indigenous life outcomes		
Close the life expectancy gap within a generation Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade Ensure all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade At least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020 Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade		
Building Blocks	**COAG Indigenous Specific Outcomes***	**COAG Policy and Reform Directions***
Safe Communities	• Indigenous children and families are safe and protected from violence and neglect in their home and communities. • Alcohol and other drug abuse among Indigenous people is overcome. • Breaking cycles of criminal behaviour and violence normalisation	<u>National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children</u> The National Framework consists of high-level and supporting outcomes, strategies to be delivered through a series of three-year action plans and indicators of change that can be used to monitor the success of the Framework.
Governance & Leadership	• Indigenous communities are empowered to participate in policy making and program implementation • Indigenous communities are represented through credible consultation/ governance mechanism • Connecting the way government agencies work in remote areas (the governance of governments) and developing community capacity	<u>Remote Service Delivery NP agreement</u> An Agreement to ensure more efficient and effective planning, analysis, coordination, delivery and evaluation of services and better use of resources in selected remote locations.

* NB not all jurisdictions are signatories to all National Partnership agreements.

Service delivery principles for programs and services for Indigenous Australians

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

PRINCIPLES

Purpose

D1   These principles draw upon the National Framework of Principles for Government Service Delivery to Indigenous Australians agreed to by COAG in 2004. These principles are to guide COAG in the:

(a)   design and delivery of Indigenous specific and mainstream government programs and services provided to Indigenous people; and

(b)   development and negotiation of National Partnership agreements, National Agreements and reform proposals.

Principles

D2   *Priority principle*: Programs and services should contribute to Closing the Gap by meeting the targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs.

D3   *Indigenous engagement principle*: Engagement with Indigenous men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services.

D4   *Sustainability principle*: Programs and services should be directed and resourced over an adequate period of time to meet the COAG targets.

D5   *Access Principle*: Programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs.

D6   *Integration principle*: There should be collaboration between and within Governments at all levels and their agencies to effectively coordinate programs and services.

D7   *Accountability principle*: Programs and services should have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation.

Principles in Detail

D8   *Priority principle*: Programs and services should contribute to Closing the Gap by meeting the targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs. The COAG targets are:

   (a)   close the 17 year life expectancy gap within a generation;

   (b)   halve the gap in mortality rates for children under five within a decade;

   (c)   halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade;

   (d)   halve the gap in employment outcomes and opportunities within a decade;

   (e)   at least halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20-24   in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020; and

   (f)   within five years provide access to a quality early childhood education program to all Indigenous four year olds in remote Indigenous communities.

D9   *Indigenous engagement principle:* Engagement with Indigenous men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services. In particular, attention is to be given to:

   (a)   recognising that strong relationships/partnerships between government, community and service providers increase the capacity to achieve identified outcomes and work towards building these relationships;

   (b)   engaging and empowering Indigenous people who use Government services, and the broader Indigenous community in the design and delivery of programs and services as appropriate;

   (c)   recognising local circumstances;

   (d)   ensuring Indigenous representation is appropriate, having regard to local representation as required;

   (e)   being transparent regarding the role and level of Indigenous engagement along a continuum from information sharing to decision-making; and

   (f)   recognising Indigenous culture, language and identity.

D10   *Sustainability principle:* Programs and services should be directed and resourced over an adequate period of time to meet the COAG targets. In particular, attention is to be given to:

   (a)   service system orientation, particularly:

       (i)   using evidence to develop and redesign programs, services and set priorities;

       (ii)   recognising the importance of early intervention; and

       (iii)   including strategies that increase independence, empowerment and self management;

   (b)   ensuring adequate and appropriate resources, particularly:

(i)   setting time-frames for meeting short, medium and longer-term targets and outcomes;

(ii)   considering flexibility in program design to meet local needs;

(iii)   considering workforce supply and future planning;

(iv)   considering sustaining or redesigning services to best use existing resources, as well as the need for programs and services to meet the COAG targets;

(v)   minimising administrative red tape to enable greater integration of program and service delivery;

(vi)   ensuring that programs and services are efficient and fiscally sustainable; and

(vii)   ensuring that infrastructure is appropriate and adequately maintained;

(c)   building the capacity of both Indigenous people and of services to meet the needs of Indigenous people, particularly:

(i)   developing the skills, knowledge and competencies, including independence and empowerment of Indigenous people, communities and organisations;

(ii)   supporting Indigenous communities to harness the engagement of corporate, non-government and philanthropic sectors;

(iii)   building governments' and service delivery organisations' capacity to develop and implement policies, procedures, and protocols that recognise Indigenous people's culture, needs and aspirations;

(iv)   ensuring that programs and services foster and do not erode capacity or capability of clients; and

(v)   recognising when Indigenous delivery is an important contributor to outcomes (direct and indirect), and in those instances fostering opportunities for Indigenous service delivery.

D11   *Access Principle:* Programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs. In particular, attention is to be given to:

(a)   considering appropriate and adequate infrastructure and placement of services (including transport, IT, telecommunications and use of interpreter services);

(b)   minimising administrative red tape that may be a barrier to access; and

(c)   providing adequate information regarding available programs and services.

D12   *Integration principle:* There should be collaboration between and within Governments at all levels, their agencies and funded service providers to effectively coordinate programs and services. In particular attention is to be given to:

(a)   articulating responsibilities between all levels of government;

(b)   identifying and addressing gaps and overlaps in the continuum of service delivery;

(c)   ensuring services and programs are provided in an integrated and collaborative manner both between all levels of governments and between services;

(d)   ensuring services and programs do not set incentives that negatively affect outcomes of other programs and services; and

(e)   recognising that a centrally agreed strategic focus should not inhibit service delivery responses that are sensitive to local contexts.

D13 *Accountability principle:* Programs and services should have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation. In particular, attention is to be given to:

(a)   choosing performance measures based on contribution to the COAG targets and report them publicly;

(b)   ensuring mainstream service delivery agencies have strategies in place to achieve Indigenous outcomes and meet Indigenous needs;

(c)   clearly articulating the service level to be delivered;

(d)   ensuring accountability of organisations for the government funds that they administer on behalf of Indigenous people;

(e)   periodically measuring/reviewing to assess the contribution of programs and services to the above, and adapting programs and services as appropriate;

(f)   clearly defining and agreeing responsibilities of government and communities;

(g)   supporting the capacity of the Indigenous service sector and communities to play a role in delivering services and influencing service delivery systems/organisations to ensure their responsiveness, access and appropriateness to Indigenous people; and

(h)   evaluating programs and services from multiple perspectives including from the client, Indigenous communities and government perspectives and incorporating lessons into future program and services design.

Schedule E

National Investment Principles in Remote Locations
NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

PRINCIPLES

E1   National principles for investment in remote locations include:

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

(b)   Investment decisions should aim to-

   (i)   improve participation in education/training and the market economy on a sustainable basis;

   (ii)   reduce dependence on welfare wherever possible;

   (iii)   promote personal responsibility; and

   (iv)   promote engagement and behaviours consistent with positive social norms.

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

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

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

Schedule F

Agreed data quality improvements

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

F1   In the period up to 30 June 2013, the Commonwealth and States and Territories will undertake the following actions to improve the performance indicator data required under this Agreement.

F2   A schedule to each jurisdiction's Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plan will clearly articulate the activities that jurisdiction will undertake, in the period up to 30 June 2013, against each action for which that jurisdiction is responsible. Plans will need to include concrete, objectively verifiable activities.

F3   Actions will be implemented consistent with the *Closing the Data Gaps* workplans.

Agreed data quality improvements

Agreed action	Responsible jurisdiction/agency
The ABS will implement improvements to Census Indigenous enumeration procedures to improve the quality of the Census count of Indigenous Australians.	Commonwealth Government / Australian Bureau of Statistics
The ABS will expand the scope of the Census Post Enumeration Survey to include very remote areas and discrete Indigenous communities.	Commonwealth Government / Australian Bureau of Statistics
The ABS and AIHW will lead analysis of the level of Indigenous identification in key data sets, including a baseline report and ongoing five-yearly studies to monitor identification levels over time.	The ABS and AIHW will work in partnership with all jurisdictions to assess the extent to which the Indigenous population is accurately identified in key datasets and to develop the evidence base on what strategies are likely to positively impact on the Indigenous population's propensity to identify. The ABS and AIHW will establish governance arrangements to oversee the development of the data quality studies which will include members from appropriate data committees, (e.g. NAGATSIHID), the States and Territories, and other stakeholders.

Agreed action	Responsible jurisdiction/agency
	The ABS and AIHW will be responsible for the sampling strategies, methodology, and assessment of the level of under-identification in each data set. Timelines: A baseline report will be published in 2010 with recommendations on how to adjust each dataset for more accurate data and on strategies to continue improving identification of Indigenous status through an on-going program of work.
All jurisdictions will adopt the standard ABS Indigenous status question and recording categories on data collection forms and information systems for key data sets.	All jurisdictions.
All jurisdictions will improve procedures for collecting Indigenous status information in health and education data by training staff in key data collection positions about how and why to ask the Indigenous status question and to raise awareness about its importance.	All jurisdictions There will likely be a need for staff in key data collection positions (such as hospital admissions staff and funeral directors) to undergo training which will need to be coordinated by the States and Territories. The scale and form of such a program will be for each State and Territory to determine. Information system changes may also be needed in some jurisdictions. Timelines: Implementation by all jurisdictions of the AIHW's Best Practice Guidelines in the health sector is to be completed by December 2012. After 12 months, it is proposed that the AIHW and ABS would undertake periodic evaluations of how the Guidelines have been implemented in the jurisdictions across the various health data collections. The AIHW and ABS would need to work closely with the states and territories to undertake these evaluations.
All jurisdictions will develop and implement initiatives to raise the Indigenous community's awareness about the importance of identifying as Indigenous when accessing services and to therefore raise the propensity for identification.	All jurisdictions. All jurisdictions will develop and implement a program to raise the Indigenous community's awareness about the importance of identifying as Indigenous when accessing services, with the aim of raising the Indigenous community's propensity to identify. The program could include a variety of measures at the local, regional and/or state level and could build on existing engagement and consultation mechanisms. The scale and form of such a program will be for each State and Territory to determine.
The ABS will link Census records with death registration records to assess under-identification of Indigenous mortality for use in the compilation of Indigenous life expectancy estimates.	The ABS will establish protocols with States and Territories for linking deaths data to Census records.

Agreed action	Responsible jurisdiction/agency
The AIHW and ABS will lead, in partnership with the States and Territories, the development of national best practice guidelines for data linkage and an examination of current and planned data linkage work (Commonwealth and State and Territory) relevant to Indigenous identification.	The ABS and AIHW will work in partnership with all jurisdictions to develop and implement national best practice guidelines for linking data relating to Indigenous people. The guidelines for linking Indigenous data will cover linkage methods and protocols, privacy protocols, quality standards, and procedures. Involvement of jurisdictions, and other stakeholders, in the governance arrangements for overseeing the work will help to ensure a consistent and informed program of data linkage work is carried out across Australia. Input from the Steering Committee will be sought in all phases of the proposed work including the development of agreed procedures, methods and protocols. This will help identify the need for any ongoing data linkage work. This project will need to take into account existing and planned data linkage work across all jurisdictions (including the methods currently being used, and the results from any completed work). This will help inform the development of national guidelines. In addition, the AIHW will build on its Indigenous Mortality Data Linkage Project. Currently, the project is a one-off data linkage process. This work will be continued with the aim of improving the estimates of Indigenous mortality and life expectancy on an ongoing basis. This would require jurisdictions to be prepared to supply relevant data, and to consider streamlining of data access protocols. Timelines: It is estimated that best practice guidelines and a report on current and planned data linkage work relevant to Indigenous identification could be produced by December 2010.
The AIHW will lead the development of an enhanced Perinatal National Minimum Data Set collection to capture data in relation to smoking during pregnancy, child and maternal health and the Indigenous status of the baby.	The AIHW will work with all jurisdictions. Expanding the Perinatal National Minimum Data Set will involve assessing what is currently collected by States and Territories in regards to smoking during pregnancy, child and maternal health and the Indigenous status of the baby; and developing nationally consistent data elements. Once the data elements are included in the PNMDS their collection would be mandatory for all jurisdictions. This process would involve consultation with all jurisdictions, including a stakeholder workshop, drafting of data elements, and approval through the National Health Information Agreement governance process on the data elements. Once the proposed enhanced data elements have been drafted, jurisdictions will need to provide an assessment of the changes required to their processes and information systems. Changes for jurisdictions will be variable depending

Agreed action	Responsible jurisdiction/agency
	on what jurisdictions currently collect.
	Timelines: It is estimated that development of the indicators would take two years, with implementation for national collection in approximately three years. However this timeline will need to be flexible to address any jurisdiction-specific complexities.
The AIHW will, with stakeholders, review jurisdictional practices for collecting pathology information and develop a business case for the implementation of a nationally consistent pathology data collection, including Indigenous status.	The AIHW will work with all jurisdictions to develop a business case with options and costs for a national pathology data collection.
	The AIHW will undertake a review of the national data collections which largely rely on information recorded on pathology forms to obtain information on Indigenous status.
	To oversee the review, a steering committee needs to be established with key stakeholders and representatives from all jurisdictions. The review will involve investigating the pathology testing and notification processes in each State/Territory and the affected stakeholders (such as pathology labs, GPs/specialists, hospitals, software vendors/developers); with a view to understand potential implementation issues for consideration in the business case.
	Timelines: It is estimated that a Business Case which considers the costs and benefits of implementing a national pathology collection could be completed by June 2010, and would be considered by the National Advisory Group on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Information and Data and the National E-Health Information principle Committee.
The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, in partnership with State and Territory health departments and in collaboration with AIHW, will develop national Key Performance Indicators for Indigenous-specific primary health care services: A coordinated data collection is also planned.	All jurisdictions, led by the Commonwealth Government.
	A national Key Performance Indicator (KPI) framework will be developed through consultations with jurisdictions beginning July 2009. Approval of data elements will be sought through the National Health Information Agreement governance process.
	It is intended that a web based reporting system will be progressively developed and provided to Indigenous primary health care services to collect data associated with the national KPI framework.
	Financial support to facilitate the web based reporting system for OATSIH funded Indigenous primary health care services will begin in 2009-10.
	While it is intended that all Indigenous specific primary health care services could use the web based system for annual reporting from 2011–12, this is subject to agreement from States and Territories to meet an agreed share of the cost of implementing changes for State and Territory funded services.

Progress towards the Closing the Gap targets

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

A key part of the NIRA's performance monitoring is the inclusion of trajectories to monitor whether governments are on track to meet the Closing the Gap targets within the specified timeframes. The trajectories are a guide to progress from baseline performance to achievement of the target. They are an indicative path only and are not intended to forecast actual progress at any point. Whilst annual performance reporting will demonstrate progress being made against the Closing the Gap targets, it is important to have an understanding of the indicative rates of progress in order to achieve the targets in the timeframes set by COAG. Progress against the six COAG targets will be determined by using trajectories (between the baseline and the target) for each target and by jurisdiction; this will comprise six national trajectories (one for each target) and trajectories for each jurisdiction where data are available.
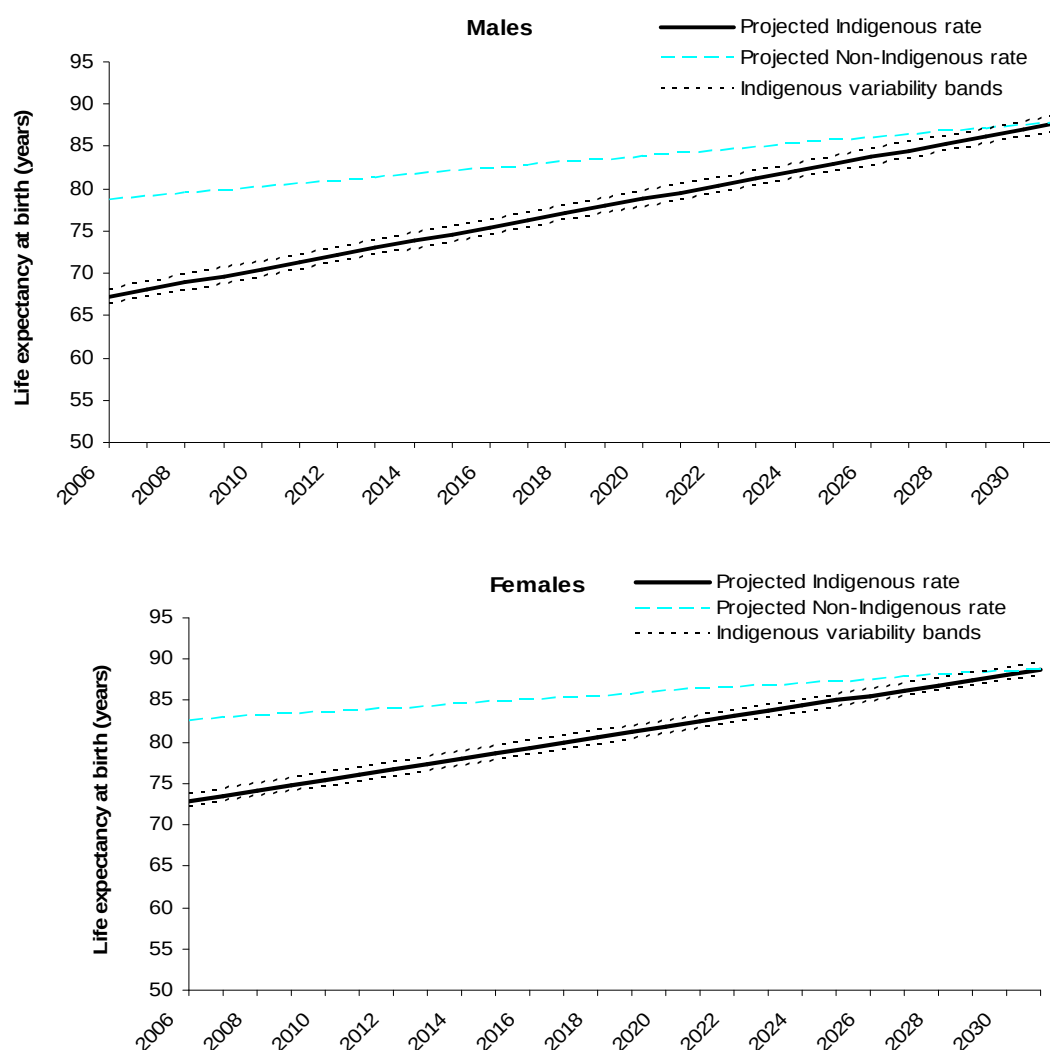
NB The data shown in the charts in this Schedule are statistical estimates modelled from census and survey data. While these estimates are considered reliable, they do contain potential sources of error, including random sampling errors and/or non-sampling errors.

The COAG Reform Council will have regard to advice provided by the NIRA Performance Information Management Group (a sub-committee of the Working Group for Indigenous Reform) on the use of trajectories.

Close the life expectancy gap within a generation

G1   To close the 2005-07 life expectancy gap of 11.5 years for males and 9.7 years for females, Indigenous life expectancy needs to increase over the target period (2006 to 2031) by 20.6 years for males (from 67.2 to 87.8 years) and 15.9 years for females (from 72.9 years to 88.8 years). This is based on the assumption that non-Indigenous life expectancy will continue to increase at the same rate of change as currently observed. This equates to an annual improvement in Indigenous life expectancy of around 0.8 years for males and 0.6 years for females over the target period. Gains in life expectancy of this magnitude have taken around 60 years to achieve in the Australian population as a whole.

Indicative trajectory for closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancy at birth

Males

- Projected Indigenous rate
- Projected Non-Indigenous rate
- Indigenous variability bands

Females

- Projected Indigenous rate
- Projected Non-Indigenous rate
- Indigenous variability bands

Note: Life expectancy estimates for 2006 are those produced by the ABS for the period 2005-2007.

Source: AIHW analysis of ABS data: ABS (2009) Experimental Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2005–2007, Cat. no. 3302.0.55.003; SCRGSP (2009b), Table 4A.1.1; ABS (2009) Deaths Australia 2008.
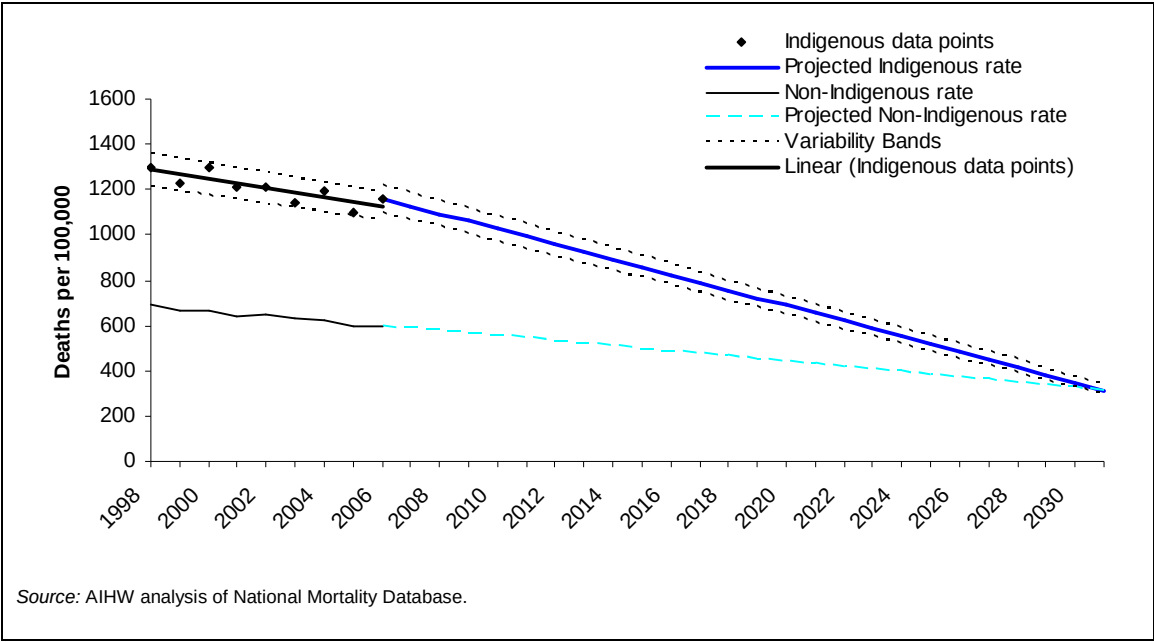
Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancy at birth (projected from 2006 to 2031 to meet Closing the Gap target), Australia

Age standardised mortality

G2   The life expectancy target will not be achieved if the current Indigenous mortality rates continue. Although Indigenous mortality rates have declined during the past two decades, the rate of that decline has not been sufficient to close the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

In order to close the gap in age-standardised mortality, the Indigenous mortality rate would need to fall from its current level of 1,161 deaths per 100,000 population in 2006 to around 316 deaths per 100,000 population in 2031. This equates to an overall reduction in the Indigenous age-standardised mortality rate of 73% over the target period.
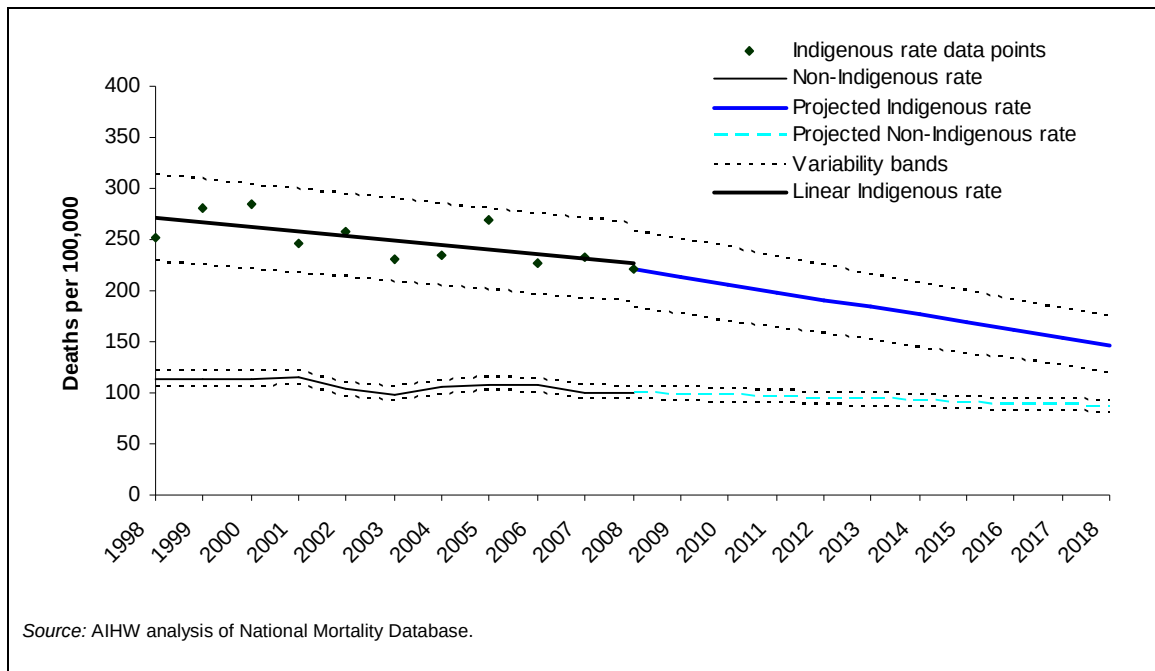
Indigenous and non-Indigenous age-standardised mortality rates: Indicative trajectory to meet Closing the Gap target (actual rates 1998 to 2006; projected rates 2006 to 2031), NSW, Qld, WA, SA & NT combined

Source: AIHW analysis of National Mortality Database.

Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade

G3   To achieve this target, the mortality rate for Indigenous children under five years would need to fall from its baseline level of 221 deaths per 100,000 in 2008 to around 147 deaths per 100,000 in 2018. This equates to an overall reduction in the Indigenous child mortality rate of 33% over the target period.
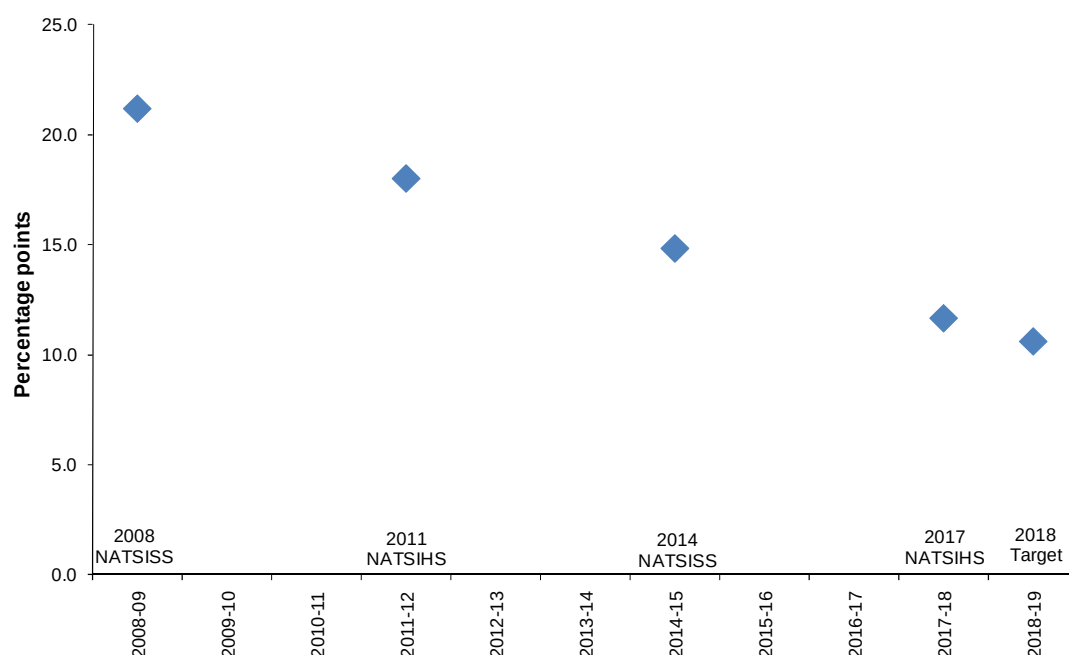
Indigenous and non-Indigenous child 0-4 mortality rates: Indicative trajectory to meet halving the gap target (actual rates 1998 to 2008; projected rates 2008 to 2018), NSW, Qld, WA, SA & NT combined

Source: AIHW analysis of National Mortality Database.

Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade

G4   The gap in workforce-aged (15 to 64 years) employment to population ratio (also known as the employment rate) in 2008-09 was 21.2 percentage points. To halve this gap to 10.6 percentage points by 2018-2019, the level of employment of Indigenous Australians would need to increase by around 100,000 persons. This represents an increase of almost 60 per cent on the number of Indigenous people employed in the base year (2008-09).

Indicative trajectory for halving the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous employment outcomes
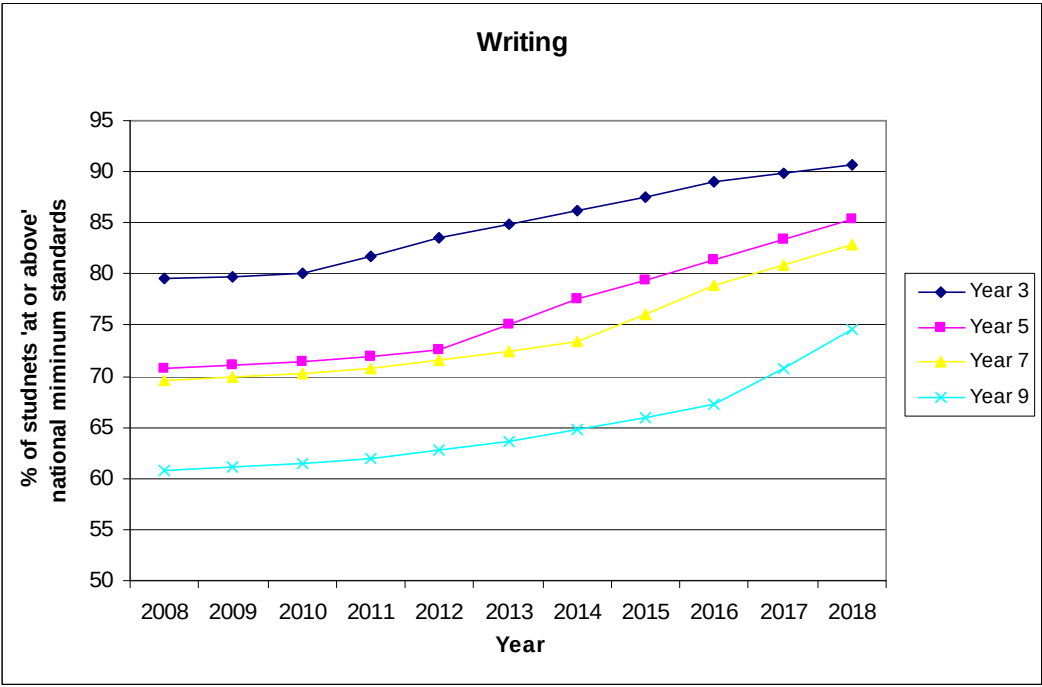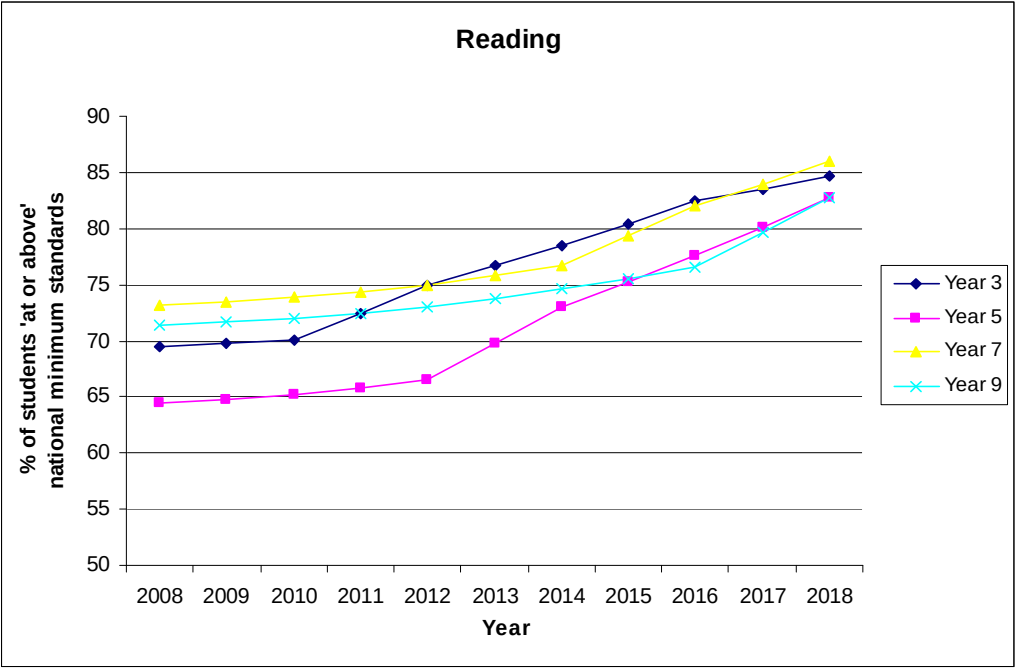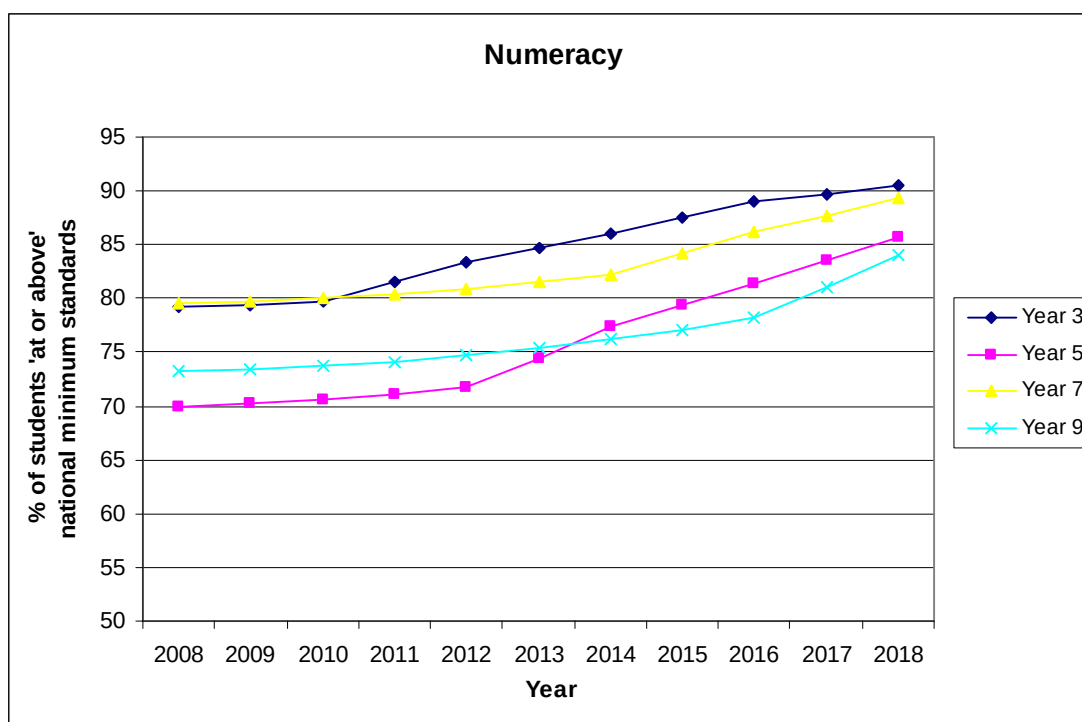

Sources for baseline year of 2008-09: ABS *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2008* (ABS Cat. No. 4714.0) for Indigenous Australians; and ABS *Education and Work, Australia, May 2008* (ABS Cat. No. 6227.0) for non-Indigenous Australians

Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade

G5   The baseline for the measurement of the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous results in reading, writing and numeracy for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 was determined by the national results from 2008 National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The gap is a measure of the difference between the proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students achieving at or above national minimum standards, as defined by NAPLAN.

G6   The smallest performance gap in 2008 at the national level was 17.4 percentage points for Year 3 numeracy, and the largest gap was 29.2 percentage points for Year 5 reading.

G7   12 separate national trajectories have been developed for Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 reading, writing and numeracy.

Indicative trajectory for improvement for Indigenous students in order to halve the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 for reading, writing and numeracy by 2018

Reading

Writing

Numeracy

G8   In developing the trajectories, static results from 2008 for non-Indigenous students until 2018 was assumed.

G9   States and territories agreed to review the trajectories in 2012 in order to consider the impact of population projections on the trajectories given anticipated growth in the Indigenous student population. The review will also provide an opportunity to test key assumptions underpinning the targets and trajectories, including those associated with the reporting of NAPLAN data.

Ensure all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years
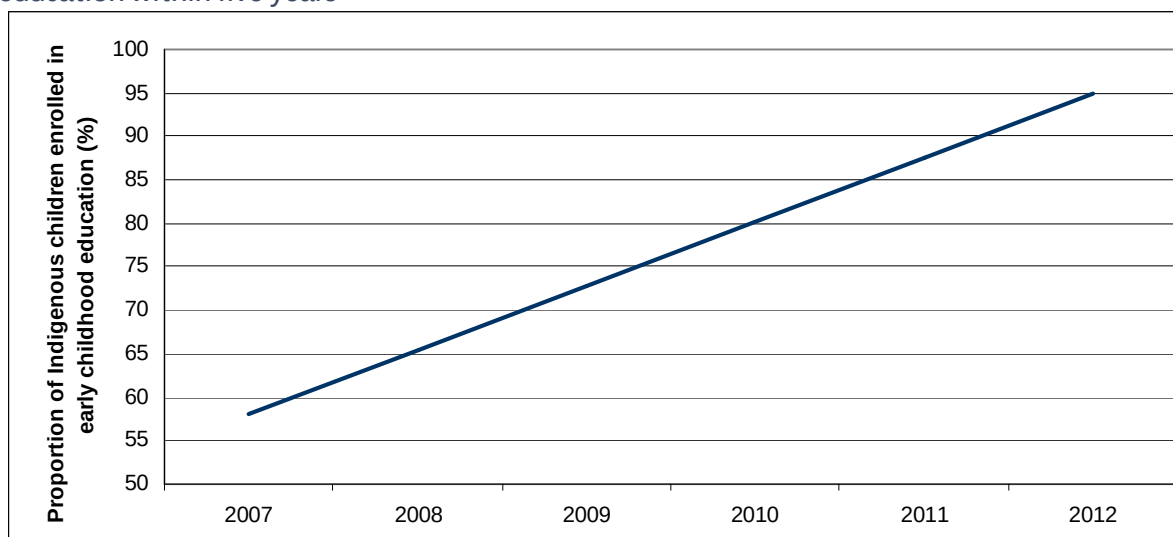
G10   To achieve 95 percent enrolment of Indigenous children in an early childhood education program in the year before formal schooling, it is estimated that the enrolment rate for all Indigenous children will need to increase from approximately 62 per cent in 2008 to 95 per cent by 2013.[25]

G11   There is no single source for data on preschool participation and it is therefore difficult to draw firm conclusions about definitive national participation rates. An agreed measure for this target is still being developed and the trajectory below should only be viewed as indicative.

G12   In the absence of agreed data, the trajectory below draws on data from the National Preschool Census (NPC), as it is the only national source that currently provides data for Indigenous children by age. The NPC excludes children enrolled in preschool programs

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[G25] The performance indicator uses enrolment rate in the year before formal schooling in order to allow comparability across jurisdictions. Not all jurisdictions commence formal schooling at the same age, so using enrolment rates for four year olds would result in inconsistent results between jurisdictions.

delivered in child care settings (for example, long day care services) and, therefore, does not represent participation in all early childhood education programs.

G13 Using the NPC and Indigenous population projections, it has been estimated that in 2009, 64 per cent of Indigenous children were enrolled nationally in preschool in the year before formal schooling. In terms of the remote target, the same data suggests that 87 per cent of Indigenous children in remote areas were enrolled in preschool in the year before formal schooling (compared to 60 per cent for regional and 51 per cent for major cities).
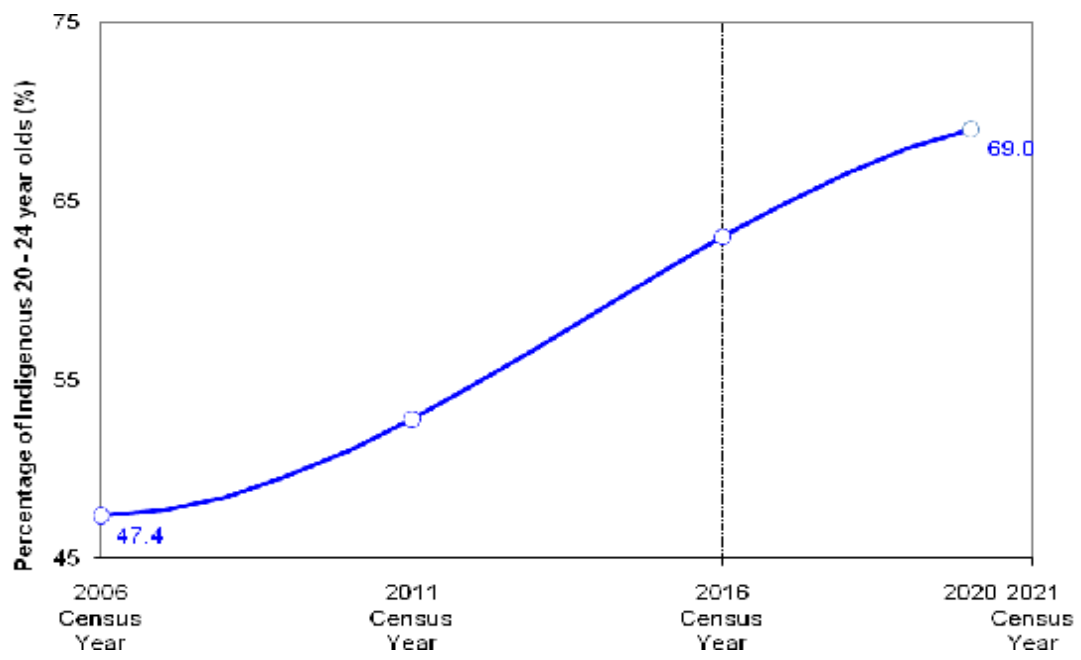
Indicative trajectory for ensuring all Indigenous four year olds have access to early childhood education within five years

The Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) Portfolio Budget Statement http://home.deewr.gov.au/Budget/documents/Outcome1.pdf includes a trajectory for the increase in Indigenous participation in preschools which reflects a slower initial rate of improvement than this linear trajectory. The DEEWR trajectory was developed taking account of advice from jurisdictions and the phasing of funding under the Early Childhood Education National Partnership.

Halve the gap for Indigenous 20-24 year olds in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020

G14 The starting rate for Indigenous 20-24 year old Year 12 attainment was based on the 2006 Census rate of 47.4 per cent, and the target takes into account improvements in overall Year 12 (or equivalent) attainment resulting from the COAG target of 90 per cent attainment by 2015. The target halves the gap between 2006 Indigenous attainment and non-Indigenous attainment in 2020.

G15 National and jurisdiction trajectories have been developed which are a visual guide to the pathway from current to target Indigenous attainment. They provide an indicative path only which is not intended to represent actual progress at any point.

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR FOOD SECURITY IN REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Council of Australian Governments

A Strategy agreed between:

- the Commonwealth of Australia and
- the States and Territories, being:
  - the State of Queensland;
  - the State of Western Australia;
  - the State of South Australia; and
  - the Northern Territory of Australia.

This Strategy will contribute to the Council of Australian Governments' targets for Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage and is a schedule to the *National Indigenous Reform Agreement.*

National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities

NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

DECEMBER 2009

Introduction

In July 2009, COAG requested the development of a National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities (the Strategy). This document sets out the Strategy, which is a schedule to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA).

Improving the food security of Indigenous people living in remote Indigenous communities will require sustained action across all sectors and governments to address the structural and systemic problems that have resulted in poor food security for many remote Indigenous communities.[1]

Specifically, the response will require a coordinated and targeted approach aimed at both providing a secure, sustainable and healthy food supply to remote Indigenous communities, and actions aimed at increasing the purchase and consumption of this healthy food.

This Strategy builds on the experience of all relevant jurisdictions in working with Indigenous people in remote areas, and recognises that approaches to implementation will reflect the different circumstances of Indigenous people and communities in each State or Territory.

Continued consultation and engagement with Indigenous people in remote communities will be fundamental to the success of this Strategy and will inform ongoing implementation of agreed actions.

This Strategy outlines the underlying evidence for action and identifies specific strategic actions that can be taken by all relevant jurisdictions to improve food security in remote Indigenous communities. The focus is on priority areas where the evidence shows a high level of impact can be achieved.

In addition to these actions, it is recognised that a very significant contribution to addressing the needs of Indigenous Australians living in remote Australia has been made through COAG's agreement to a range of Indigenous specific and mainstream COAG National Partnership Agreements in the areas of housing, education, early childhood, economic participation and health.

Drawing upon these agreements will form an important part of the overarching response to improve food security in remote Indigenous communities.

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[1] Remote Indigenous Community is defined as a community located in very remote Australia (consistent with the Australian Standard Geographic Classification) of population greater than 100 people at the 2006 census, inhabited predominantly (greater than 50 per cent) by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people.

What the evidence tells us

Improving food security in remote Indigenous communities would be expected to have far reaching and long-term health and economic benefits for people in these locations. Improving the affordability, quality and availability of healthy foods is likely to increase the consumption of these foods and reduce the diet related burden of disease for Indigenous people in remote Australia and help Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

In particular, increasing the supply and consumption of healthy foods and reducing consumption of products high in fat, sugar and salt would be expected to reduce the current levels of preventable diet related chronic disease among Indigenous people – a major contributor to the gap in life expectancy (see Box 2).

In addition to benefiting individuals, greater food security would be expected to have broader net benefits for communities and the nation, although these are often hard to quantify in advance and may take some time to be realised. In particular, the costs associated with health care and welfare dependency due to disabilities would be expected to fall and productivity and participation in the workforce would be expected to increase.

Achieving these benefits will be challenging. Food security in many remote Indigenous communities is currently poor – the supply of healthy food is often sporadic and of limited choice and low quality and access, through adequate equipment and resources required for safe food storage and preparation, is limited.

The cost of fresh and nutritious food in stores in remote Indigenous communities is consistently found to be significantly higher than that experienced in urban and regional Australia. For instance in the Northern Territory, the cost of food in remote stores in 2008 was found to be, on average, around 23 per cent higher than in Darwin. In Queensland, the cost of food in very remote stores in 2006 was found to be a third higher than Brisbane, while a 2007 survey of prices in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands in South Australia found prices to be around 42 per cent higher than in Adelaide.

In part, higher prices may be attributed to high store costs, particularly with regard to freight and storage, resulting from remoteness, small population size and geographic dispersion – factors common in many small remote locations. For example, Queensland has a supply chain of up to 3,000 kilometres which is impacted by seasonal conditions such as Wet Season road closures requiring expensive air freight. While high prices for fresh healthy food are not unusual outside major metropolitan centres in Australia, the impact on food security is greatly exacerbated in remote Indigenous communities, where household incomes are often very low and there are few or no alternatives to the local store.

Food quality in remote Indigenous stores is also often poor and well below the standard found in urban and regional centres. Similarly, food availability is often limited and variable – some communities have periods when they do not have access to any fresh food. For instance, a 2004 survey of remote Western Australian communities found that respondents in 17 per cent of communities did not have regular access to fruit and vegetables and that 84 per cent of communities had to travel an average of 101 kilometres to access fruit and

vegetables.[2] In remote and very remote Queensland stores, almost one in ten healthy food items in a standard basket were not available for purchase.[3]

Food availability in remote and very remote Indigenous communities may also be severely impacted by the sudden closure of the community store or temporary disruptions to supply.

Box 2: Food Security – Closing the Gap

Improving food security for the more than 80 000 Indigenous people living in very remote Australia would be expected to make a significant contribution to closing the gap in these locations, particularly with regard to life expectancy, infant mortality and educational attainment.

CLOSING THE GAP IN LIFE EXPECTANCY

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2008 suggests that improving the supply and consumption of healthy food in remote Indigenous communities is required to reduce the high levels of preventable diet-related chronic disease suffered by Indigenous Australians in these locations, including renal disease, heart disease and diabetes.4

Ø   It is estimated that up to nineteen per cent of the national Indigenous health gap is attributable to diet related causes, including low fruit and vegetable intake.[5]

Ø   In remote areas, 20 per cent of Indigenous people aged 12 years and over reported no usual daily fruit intake and 15 per cent reported no usual daily intake of vegetables.[6]

Ø   Nationally, Indigenous children aged less than four years suffer from nutritional anaemia and malnutrition at 29.6 times the rate for non-Indigenous children.[7]

CLOSING THE GAP IN CHILD MORTALITY

The youthful demographic profile of the remote Indigenous population, which has a larger percentage of mothers, babies and young children than the non-Indigenous population also highlights the importance of addressing food insecurity.

Ø   Poor diet and nutrition in pregnancy can reduce birth weight and increase the incidence of infant growth retardation, which increases the risk of death in infancy.

Ø   Poor early life nutrition and impaired growth can have life-long consequences for the health of mothers, with flow-on effects to current and future generations, including increased morbidity and mortality.

CLOSING THE GAP IN EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

There are well-recognised links between a healthy diet for infants and brain development and cognitive functioning, which flow on to attainment of literacy and numeracy skills, and school retention rates.[8]

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[2] Environmental Health Needs Coordinating Committee (2005) *2004 Environmental health Needs of Indigenous Communities in Western Australia*

[3] Queensland Health and Treasury. The 2006 Healthy Food Access Basket Survey. Brisbane: Queensland Government, 2006.

[4] Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, 2008, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework Report 2008*, AHMAC, Canberra.

[5] Vos T, Barker B, Stanley L, Lopez AD 2007. *The burden of disease and injury in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. Brisbane: School of Population Health, The University of Queensland, p 6. This figure is comprised of the following: high body mass – 9 per cent; high blood cholesterol – 4 per cent; high blood pressure – 3 per cent; and low fruit and vegetable intake – 3 per cent.

[6] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004– 05. ABS cat. no. 4715.0, ABS, Canberra.

[7] Commonwealth of Australia 2007. *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2007*. Productivity Commission Canberra.

[8] MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education 2001, *Solid Foundations: Health and Education Partnership for Indigenous Children Aged 0 to 8 years.* Discussion Paper June 2001

Strategic Actions

Improving food security and turning around the long-standing poor health outcomes for Indigenous people in remote Indigenous communities will require a multi-faceted and coordinated ongoing approach from all levels of government, Indigenous people and the non-government and private sectors to develop and implement effective and targeted actions.

For most Indigenous people in the remote and very remote parts of Australia, stores and takeaways are the primary sources of food and drink.[9] Improving and maintaining the standard of store and takeaway management, governance and infrastructure within remote Indigenous communities so that they provide a sustainable, affordable and nutritious food supply in an efficient and effective manner is critical to improving food security and is an overarching priority of this strategy.

To this end, it has been agreed that, for the first time, a clear and consistent set of National Standards for stores and takeaways servicing remote Indigenous communities will be developed, with draft Standards to be piloted in 10 remote Indigenous communities by mid-2010 (Action 1). Options to support the effective implementation of these standards, including a National Quality Improvement Scheme, will also be developed (Action 2).

The parties to this strategy also agree that stores that are currently incorporated under State and Territory Associations Incorporations laws will be strongly encouraged to incorporate under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act) (Action 3). This will be an important step in improving the standard of governance and accountability in many stores servicing remote Indigenous communities.

As outlined above, improving the supply of healthy food is only one part of the response required to improve food security. Ultimately, it will be the increased consumption of healthy food and drinks and reduced consumption of energy dense/nutrient poor food and drinks that will deliver the desired health benefits to Indigenous people in remote communities. To help facilitate this, a National Healthy Eating Action Plan for remote Indigenous communities will be developed by mid-2010 (Action 4).

Successfully delivering existing and new actions to improve both the supply and consumption of healthy food depends on an adequately resourced, trained and supported workforce. This will be driven by a National Workforce Action Plan to be developed by mid-2010 (Action 5).

Additional strategies should also be considered to address some of the fundamental issues facing food security in remote communities including freight subsidisation within supply chains and cross subsidisation within stores, and land tenure to enable establishment, upgrade or replacement of stores. This is particularly important as food security is considered to be a basic need.

Action 1: National Standards for stores and takeaways servicing remote Indigenous communities

Store and takeaway management, governance and infrastructure are all critical determinants of store and takeaway sustainability and quality and, in turn, food security. New standards are required to ensure that the services and products (particularly healthy foods and drinks) provided by all stores and takeaways are safe, reliable and of an acceptable quality.

The parties to this strategy will develop National Standards for stores and takeaways servicing remote Indigenous communities in the following areas:

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[9] Most estimates suggest that between 90 and 95 per cent of food eaten in Aboriginal communities is food purchased in the store, with traditional foods now contributing only a small amount to people's dietary intake. Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory 1999. *Inquiry into Food Prices in the Northern Territory, Vol 1, August 1999.* Legislative Assembly, Darwin.

- Retail management;

- Financial management;

- Governance;

- Infrastructure;

- Food and nutrition policy and promotion; and

- Food preparation and safety (using existing regulations already in place).

In developing these National Standards, all parties to this Strategy agree to take into account existing regulatory requirements and avoid duplication. It is further agreed that enforcing compliance with existing requirements, including those relating to food preparation and food safety, and promoting the new standards should be a priority for all levels of Government.

Action 2: National Quality Improvement Scheme for remote community stores and takeaways to support implementation of National Standards

An effective mechanism is required to ensure that stores and takeaways in remote Indigenous communities meet the agreed minimum standards and encourage stores and takeaways to continually strive towards higher standards.

The parties to this strategy will investigate options for achieving this, including a National Quality Improvement Scheme with a presentation of options to COAG in mid-2010.

Each option will clearly outline roles and responsibilities of all levels of Government; the cost of implementation; and the likely effectiveness in improving standards in remote community stores and takeaways.

Consultation will be undertaken with key stakeholders and a Regulation Impact Statement will be prepared if required.

Action 3: Incorporation of stores under the CATSI Act

Ensuring high standards of governance and accountability of stores and takeaways in remote Indigenous communities is critical to improving store sustainability and quality and, in turn, food security.

To achieve this, the parties to this Strategy agree that stores that are currently incorporated under State and Territory Associations Incorporations laws will be strongly encouraged to incorporate under the CATSI Act.

Where applicable, State and Territory signatories to this Strategy agree to facilitate the transfer of stores under the CATSI Act through powers provided by existing State laws. The Commonwealth, through the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations, agree to provide all necessary assistance and support for those stores that request incorporation under the CATSI Act.

Action 4: National 'Healthy Eating Action Plan' for remote Indigenous communities

The impact of improving the supply of healthy food and drinks is greatest when coordinated with actions to promote healthy eating and increase demand for healthy food and drinks. To achieve this, parties to this Strategy will develop a National Healthy Eating Action Plan for remote Indigenous communities that aims to build community capacity to promote healthy eating and specifically targets:

- Research: Investigate the factors that influence purchasing and consumption decisions in remote Indigenous communities, including price, and identify mechanisms to increase consumption of healthy foods;

- Promotion: Including, in-store and in-takeaway promotion of good quality and affordable healthy food and drinks and options to restrict the promotion and availability of energy dense/nutrient poor food and drinks;

- Knowledge and Skills: Build food and nutrition knowledge, skills and attitudes in practices such as budgeting, purchasing, handling and cooking of healthy food, with a particular focus on women and with consideration of the benefits that may come from locally based food production;

- Education: A coordinated Healthy Eating campaign for remote Indigenous communities and consideration of education initiatives focussed on children, including an increased focus on nutrition education at school; and

- Utilization: Build on existing Indigenous housing initiatives to improve community and household food preparation and storage facilities.

This plan will be completed for consideration by COAG by mid-2010.

Action 5: National Workforce Action Plan to improve food security in remote Indigenous communities

The successful implementation of all initiatives aimed at improving food security in remote Indigenous communities requires an appropriately resourced, trained and supported workforce.

The parties to this strategy will develop a National Workforce Action Plan to improve food security in remote Indigenous communities, including the following:

- Identification of a best practice model to build demand for healthy food in remote Indigenous communities.

    Ø The focus will be on increasing the nutrition workforce - nutritionists, community dieticians and advanced health workers (nutrition promotion) - and developing and supporting the capacity of the Indigenous workforce in these areas to promote healthy eating.

- Identification of a best practice model to improve the supply of healthy food in remote Indigenous communities.

    Ø The focus will be on building, training and supporting a sustainable workforce for remote community stores and takeaways, including store managers and store support staff.

This plan will be completed for consideration by COAG by mid-2010.

Reporting and Monitoring

A formal review of the Strategy will be undertaken by December 2012.

More frequent reporting on the Strategy will be included in the Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plans.

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

Next Steps

All parties to this Strategy will nominate officials from their jurisdiction to progress the work outlined above.

All parties agree that the draft Strategy will be piloted in up to 10 remote Indigenous communities, commencing by March 2010.

The pilots will:

1. Test the draft National Standards and effective mechanisms to achieve them (including consideration of the quality areas and principles for a National Quality Improvement Scheme) by mid-2010. Consideration will be given to solutions in all five Actions of the Strategy to improve food security. The context is broad and inclusive of supply chain and other issues which contribute to the cost of and access to food.

2. Inform the final National Workforce Action Plan.

3. Inform the final National Healthy Eating Action Plan.

This work will clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of all levels of Government; the cost of implementation; existing and potential resources and funding required. All Parties will also examine possible sources of Commonwealth Own Purpose Expenditure and State and Territory Own Purpose Expenditure which could be re-prioritised to support solutions to meet or improve standards and other aspects of the Strategy.

The choice of pilot sites as well as the planning, management and oversight of the pilot in each location will be negotiated and implemented bilaterally. This may include the capacity to test a regional or supply line approach to developing the National Standards component of the Strategy.[10]

The pilots will seek to develop a regional food security model to support and coordinate the implementation of the actions outlined in this Strategy along with other initiatives aimed at improving food security. Where possible this could be pursued under the auspices of existing governance forums, including the Board of Management for the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership in selected remote communities.

The development of the final elements of the Strategy will be informed by the outcomes and the solutions identified in the pilot sites.

Coordinated actions, delivered in partnership with local communities and government and non-government sectors, are more likely to be sustainable and effective in improving food security. To achieve this, the parties to this Strategy agree to consult with communities and, using existing mechanisms where possible, establish a forum for ongoing engagement between all levels of government and non-government stakeholders in the further development of the actions outlined in this strategy.

The Strategy proposes reporting to COAG on the development of the Strategy in mid-2010.

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[10] The 'supply line' approach will facilitate the monitoring of the impact of transport and storage arrangements for stores with a view to developing initiatives to address the impacts of these arrangements on the availability, quality and cost of healthy food items.

NATIONAL STRATEGY FOR FOOD SECURITY IN REMOTE INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

NATIONAL HEALTHY EATING ACTION PLAN

Council of Australian Governments

An Action Plan agreed between

the Commonwealth of Australia and
the States and Territories, being:

- t **the State of Queensland;**
- t **the State of Western Australia;**
- t **the State of South Australia; and**
- t **the Northern Territory of Australia.**

This action plan will contribute to the Council of Australian Governments' targets for Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage, and is Strategic Action 4 in the *National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities*, agreed to in December 2009.

Introduction

In December 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed on a *National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities* as a schedule to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement. This document outlines the National Healthy Eating Action Plan for remote Indigenous communities (the plan), which is Strategic Action no.4 of the Strategy.

The plan builds on the experience of all relevant jurisdictions in working with remote Indigenous communities to increase the supply and consumption of healthy foods and reduce the consumption of products high in saturated fat, sugar and salt. It outlines the underlying evidence for action and presents a comprehensive integrated healthy eating framework. Specifically, the plan identifies 17 actions in the following priority areas:

- Increasing demand for healthy food through effective social marketing and promotion strategies; and nutrition and health education;
- Facilitating access to healthy food and building the capacity of local Indigenous people through food and financial literacy programs; and consideration of targeted fiscal incentives;
- Improving the supply of healthy food through the trialling of a voluntary quality improvement scheme for remote stores and takeaways; facilitating more efficient supply chain arrangements; and supporting alternative non-store food sources;
- Building and supporting a sustainable and quality nutrition and stores sector workforce in remote Indigenous regions; and
- Supporting the monitoring of sales, price, quality and availability of healthy foods in remote Indigenous communities; and health outcomes, particularly for children, in these locations.

All parties to this plan are committed to working together to effectively implement all 17 actions as a key component of the overarching implementation of the *National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities* between now and December 2012. Together, these actions are expected to play an important part in improving food security and help to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage in remote Indigenous communities - particularly in life expectancy and infant mortality.

Continued consultation and engagement with Indigenous people in remote communities will be fundamental to the success of this plan and will inform ongoing implementation of agreed actions.

What the evidence tells us

The poor health outcomes for Indigenous Australians are well documented. On average, Indigenous people, particularly those living in remote Australia, have significantly higher rates of preventable diet-related conditions (including diabetes, renal disease, heart disease and high blood pressure) than non-Indigenous Australians. For instance, in 2004-05 Indigenous people were more than three times as likely as non-Indigenous people to report some form of diabetes (Figure 1), while the gap in average life expectancy is around 11 years between Indigenous and non-Indigenous men and 10 years between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women.[11]

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[11] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008. *Deaths*, ABS cat. no. 3302.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

Poor health outcomes and the incidence of the conditions outlined above tend to be more prevalent among Indigenous people living in remote and very remote areas of Australia. Diabetes was almost twice as prevalent among Indigenous people living in remote areas as it was for those living in non-remote areas[12] (Figure 2). Similarly, rates for heart disease and circulatory conditions in 2004-05 were higher in remote areas (15 per cent) than in the major cities (11 per cent).[13]

Poor diet, including consuming lower than the recommended levels of healthy foods and over consumption of products high in saturated fat, sugar and salt is a major contributor to the current high levels of preventable diet related chronic disease among Indigenous people – a major contributor to the gap in life expectancy. Specifically, it is estimated that up to 19 per cent of the National Indigenous health gap is attributable to diet-related causes, including low fruit and vegetable intake[14].

Particularly confronting is the impact of food insecurity on the health of Indigenous children. Indigenous families living in isolated areas face particular challenges in providing their children with fresh, affordable food on a regular basis. Nationally, Indigenous children under four years of age suffer from nutritional anaemia and malnutrition at 29.6 times the rate for non-Indigenous children. In addition, while the proportion of children in remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory who are 'failing to thrive' (underweight, stunted or wasted) or who suffer from anaemia is trending down, the prevalence of these problems remains unacceptably high (Figure 3).[15]

Figure 1 Diabetes Prevalence: Indigenous and non-Indigenous
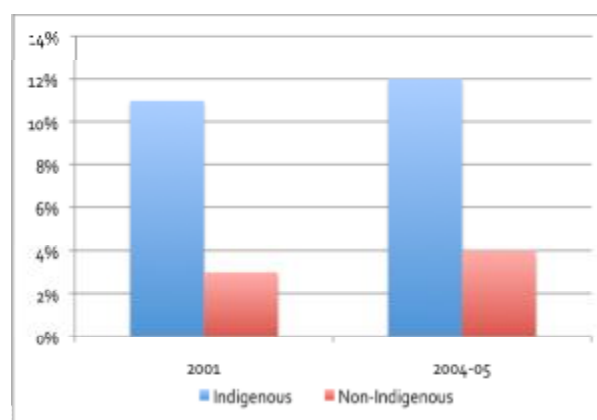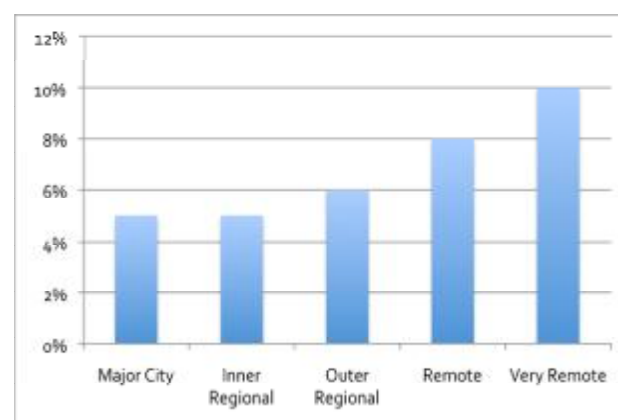
Figure 2 Indigenous diabetes prevalence by remoteness

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[12] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006a. *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004-05*, ABS cat. no. 4715.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

[13] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006a. *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004-05*, ABS cat. no. 4715.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

[14] Vos T, Barker B, Stanley L, Lopez AD 2007. *The burden of disease and injury in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.* Brisbane: School of Population Health, The University of Queensland p 6. This figure is comprised of the following: high body mass – 9 per cent; high blood cholesterol – 4 per cent; high blood pressure – 3 per cent; and low fruit and vegetable intake – 3 per cent.

[15] Northern Territory Government 2009. *Healthy Under Five Kids Data Collection (GAA) Program: NT Annual Report 2009 – second release.* Northern Territory Department of Health and Families.

Several factors have been found to contribute to these outcomes, including acute and chronic infections, parasitic diseases and poor nutrition. [16]

Poor nutrition is not isolated to young children. The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004-05 identified a considerable number of Indigenous people aged 12 years and older reporting a failure to eat fruit and vegetables on a regular basis – low consumption was also found to increase with remoteness (Figure 4).

In addition, the poor nutritional status of pregnant mothers is an important factor impacting on low birth weight in babies. Poor diet and nutrition in pregnancy can also increase the incidence of infant growth retardation, which increases the risk of death in infancy.

Given the reality that many diet-related diseases tend to form over the course of a lifetime - generally manifesting after 35 years of age for Indigenous Australians (and around 10 years later for non-Indigenous Australians)[17] - the critical need to intervene with healthy eating initiatives aimed at children, and indeed pregnant mothers, is essential to the overall food security response by government.

Figure 3 Results from 2009 Northern Territory Growth Assessment and Action survey [18]
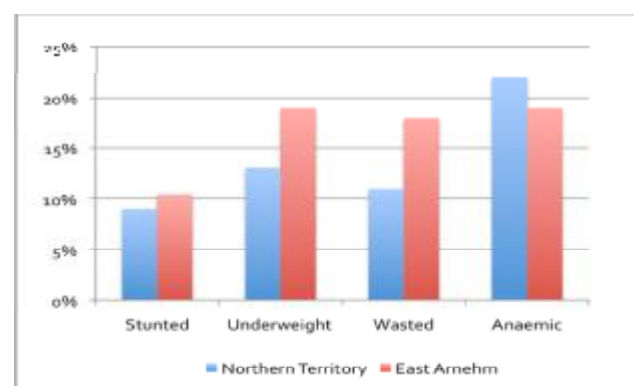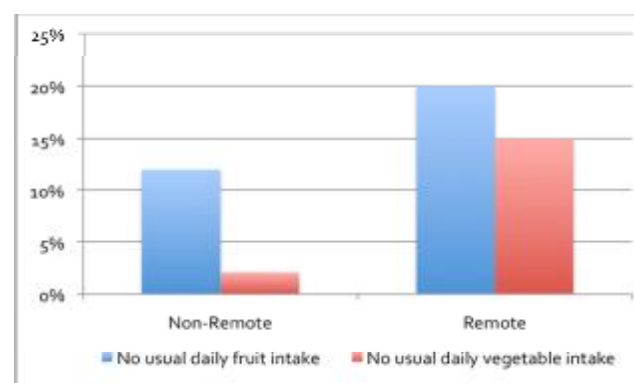
Figure 4 Indigenous people aged 12 years and over reporting no usual daily fruit and vegetable intake [19]

Poor diet and nutrition in the early years of life can affect childhood development, growth, functioning and health. There are well-recognised links between a healthy diet for infants and brain development and cognitive functioning. Importantly, a child's health also has a powerful impact on whether or not they attend school and on their ability to learn and participate in school activities – this is likely to impact on their level of education attainment and future employment prospects. [20]

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[16] McDonald, E.L., Baillie, R.S., Rumbold, A.R., and Morris, P.S. 2008. Preventing growth faltering among Australian Indigenous Children: Implications for policy and practice, *MJA,* 188 (8 Suppl): S84-S86.

[17] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006a, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004-05. ABS cat. no. 4715.0, Australian Bureau of statistics, Canberra

[18] Northern Territory Government 2009. *Healthy Under Five Kids Data Collection (GAA) Program: NT Annual Report 2009 – second release.* Northern Territory Department of Health and Families.
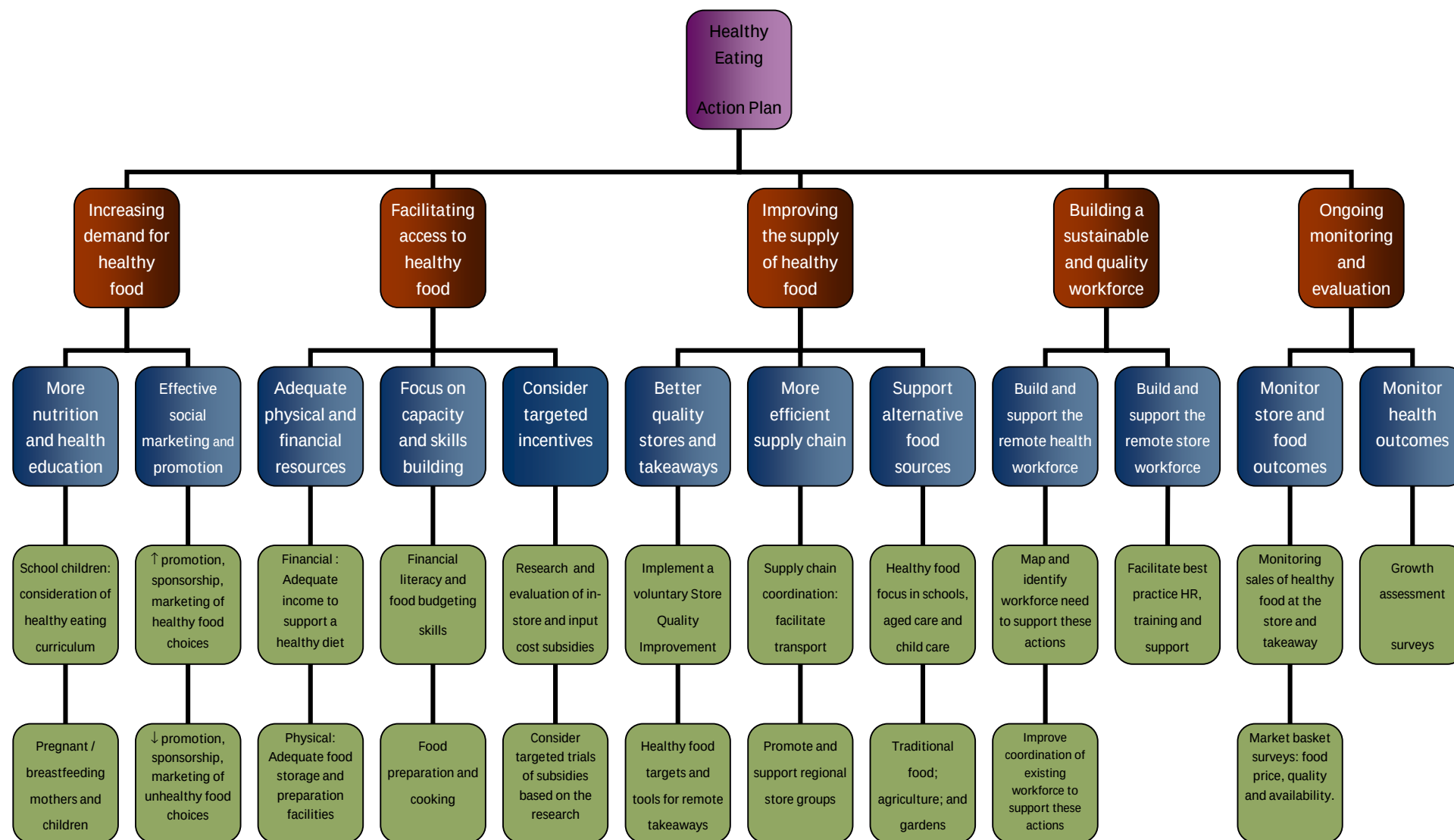
[19] Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006a, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2004-05. ABS cat. no. 4715.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra

[20] MCEETYA Taskforce on Indigenous Education 2001, *Solid Foundations: Health and Education Partnership for Indigenous Children Aged 0 to 8 years.* Discussion Paper June 2001

National Healthy Eating Action Plan Framework

Achieving the overarching objective of significantly increasing the consumption of healthy foods and reducing the consumption of foods high in saturated fat, sugar and salt in remote Indigenous communities will require a multi-faceted and coordinated approach from all stakeholders. The National Healthy Eating Action Plan framework (the framework – see Figure 5) presents an agreed model for achieving this.

Figure 5: Healthy Eating Action Plan Framework

Healthy Eating Action Plan

- **Increasing demand for healthy food**
  - More nutrition and health education
    - School children: consideration of healthy eating curriculum
    - Pregnant / breastfeeding mothers and children
  - Effective social marketing and promotion
    - ↑ promotion, sponsorship, marketing of healthy food choices
    - ↓ promotion, sponsorship, marketing of unhealthy food choices

- **Facilitating access to healthy food**
  - Adequate physical and financial resources
    - Financial : Adequate income to support a healthy diet
    - Physical: Adequate food storage and preparation facilities
  - Focus on capacity and skills building
    - Financial literacy and food budgeting skills
    - Food preparation and cooking
  - Consider targeted incentives
    - Research and evaluation of in-store and input cost subsidies
    - Consider targeted trials of subsidies based on the research

- **Improving the supply of healthy food**
  - Better quality stores and takeaways
    - Implement a voluntary Store Quality Improvement
    - Healthy food targets and tools for remote takeaways
  - More efficient supply chain
    - Supply chain coordination: facilitate transport
    - Promote and support regional store groups
  - Support alternative food sources
    - Healthy food focus in schools, aged care and child care
    - Traditional food; agriculture; and gardens

- **Building a sustainable and quality workforce**
  - Build and support the remote health workforce
    - Map and identify workforce need to support these actions
    - Improve coordination of existing workforce to support these actions
  - Build and support the remote store workforce
    - Facilitate best practice HR, training and support

- **Ongoing monitoring and evaluation**
  - Monitor store and food outcomes
    - Monitoring sales of healthy food at the store and takeaway
    - Market basket surveys: food price, quality and availability.
  - Monitor health outcomes
    - Growth assessment surveys

The Healthy Eating Action Plan framework outlines five priority areas for action:

1.   *Increasing demand for healthy food;*

The average diet of Indigenous Australians in remote areas typically does not align with the recommendations contained in the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Australian Dietary Guidelines (see Box 1). Increasing fruit and vegetable consumption and reducing consumption of sugar-sweetened soft drinks are priorities. Actions 1 to 4 are explicitly aimed at shifting eating patterns so that they are more consistent with these guidelines.

2.   *Facilitating access to healthy food;*

Purchase and consumption of healthy foods in remote Indigenous communities is constrained by inadequate financial and physical resources required to buy, store and prepare the selection of foods required for a balanced and healthy diet.[1]   High food prices and relatively low incomes in remote Indigenous communities reduce healthy food affordability, while inadequate kitchen storage and preparation facilities encourage a dependence on processed and takeaway foods.

In addition, many Indigenous people in remote communities have relatively low levels of financial management skills and food literacy and more needs to be done to build capacity in the critical areas of food budgeting, purchasing, preparation and cooking. Action 5 seeks to achieve this in a coordinated and integrated fashion. Action 6 outlines consideration of targeted fiscal incentives to improve financial access to healthy food.

3.   *Improving the supply of healthy food;*

The quality and availability of healthy food (particularly fresh fruit and vegetables) in remote Indigenous communities is often poor and well below the standard found in urban and regional centres.[2] Addressing this problem and improving the food security of remote Indigenous communities is a key component of this plan. Actions 7 to 12 outline a comprehensive approach to: improve the quality and sustainability of remote community stores; improve the nutritional value of takeaway food in remote Indigenous communities; facilitate a more efficient remote supply chain; and support non-store sources of food, including from gardens, traditional food and local agriculture and horticulture.

4.   *Building a sustainable and quality workforce;*

The successful implementation of all of the actions outlined in this plan requires an appropriately resourced, trained and supported workforce in two broad areas:

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[1] Commonwealth of Australia 2009. *Everybody's Business: Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Community Stores,* House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee, November 2009, Canberra.

[2] Commonwealth of Australia 2009. *Everybody's Business: Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Community Stores,* House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee, November 2009, Canberra.

- nutrition – including public health nutritionists, community dietitians/nutritionists and advanced health workers (nutrition promotion) – to build demand for, and consumption of healthy food; and

- the stores sector – including staff in remote community stores and takeaways, those involved in the supply chain, and those who provide specialist expertise in areas such as governance, retail management and financial management.

Actions 13 and 14 outline a strategy for building and supporting the nutrition and stores sector workforce in remote Indigenous communities.

5. *Ensuring effective ongoing monitoring and evaluation*

Progress on implementing all actions within this plan will be monitored and evaluated in line with reporting requirements specified in the *National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities.* In addition, Actions 15 to 17 outline a commitment to support the ongoing monitoring of healthy food sales, price, quality and availability of healthy foods in remote Indigenous communities; and health outcomes, particularly for children, in these locations.

These five priority areas and the 17 actions outlined in the following section have been identified as areas of need where the greatest positive impact on healthy eating in remote Indigenous communities can be made. Importantly, all action areas are evidence based and build on past successes (see Box 2) and previous work undertaken by participating jurisdictions, including:

- the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nutrition Strategy and Action Plan 2000-2010* (NATSINSAP) and the various outputs produced as a result of this plan, including the *Remote Indigenous Stores and Takeaway* (RIST) tools and guidelines.

- the 2009 Commonwealth of Australia report *Everybody's Business: Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Community Stores* from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs inquiry into remote community stores; and

- the 2003 report *Foodnorth: Food for health in north Australia,* an initiative of the Nutrition Working Group for the North Australian Health Ministers (Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland).

Where appropriate, priority for implementation of the 17 actions will be given to the COAG food security pilot communities of Djarindjin; Lombadina; Beagle Bay; Ardyaloon (Bardi); Indulkana (Iwantja); Mimili; Kaltjiti (Fregon); Amata; Kanypi; Pipalyatjara; Pukatja (Ernabella); and Watarru (the pilot communities). More generally, a place based approach to implementation of the plan will be adopted - implementation of specific actions in remote Indigenous communities other than the pilot communities will be agreed bilaterally.

All parties also acknowledge that effective implementation of several of the actions in this plan will be subject to adequate available funding and resources. All parties agree to examine existing sources of funding which could be re-prioritised to support implementation of actions where this is feasible and appropriate, while acknowledging that this may not be possible in some instances.

It is further recognised that implementation of all actions will require a strong level of overarching coordination to ensure their effective implementation. This will be the role of a dedicated healthy eating working group to be made up of representatives from key agencies in the participating jurisdictions, as well as experts from outside of government, including from academic and research institutions and remote store groups. This group will report back on progress to COAG in December 2011 and provide a final report in December 2012.

> **Box 2 Learning from past success – reducing soft-drink consumption in Amata**
>
> In 2008, Amata Community Council, operating within the framework of the *Mai Wiru Regional Stores Policy*, directed their store manager to remove Coke, Passiona and Powerade from the Amata Store. As a result of this community led initiative, in the following year, sales of sugar sweetened soft drinks in the community were reduced by around $55 000 – this equated to a 2 tonne reduction in sugar sales from the Amata store.
>
> The project involved extensive consultation and the gradual removal of Coke, Passiona and Powerade. The involvement and support of the community council and store committee were integral to the success of the project. Intensive community education and ongoing support, led by the nutritionist employed to support implementation of the *Mai Wiru Regional Stores Policy* was also a critical element in the success of the policy.

Strategic Actions

1. Increasing demand for healthy food

Action 1 (i): Form agreements with major food and drink suppliers on the supply and promotion of healthy food in remote stores

All parties to work with major food and drink suppliers and store groups to develop store procurement policies and formal agreements with store operators that:

- adopt marketing practices that promote healthier food and beverage choices in line with the NHMRC dietary guidelines, including:
  - point of sale identification of healthier choices;
  - placement of healthier options to optimise their promotion, with a particular focus on core foods, particularly fruit and vegetables; and
  - ensuring that healthy options cost no more than standard and less healthy options.

- significantly reduce marketing practices that promote products that are high in sugar, saturated fat and salt, including a particular focus on soft drinks, including:
  - reducing advertising of these products in the community;
  - reducing the incidence of super-sizing or 'combos' (unhealthy items packaged and sold together); and
  - reducing point of sale merchandising.
- Increase the proportion of healthy alternatives, consistent with the dietary guidelines, supplied to remote stores.

All parties agree that priority will be given to implementing this action in stores that are located in pilot communities or are members of remote store groups.

Action 1 (ii): Form agreements with store managers, store committees, health services and the community around the supply and promotion of healthy food in remote stores

Facilitate agreements between stores managers, store committees, health services and the community around strategies to increase the supply and promotion of healthy food and reduce the supply and promotion of unhealthy food in the store. The agreements should:

- be reached through community consultation and the community should be made aware of any decisions made that affect supply and promotion in the store, as well as information on the effects of diet on health;

- consider the financial and staffing needs of the store, including any staffing needs required to implement the strategies; and

- consider systems for measures for monitoring the effectiveness of the strategies, including through point of sales systems.

All parties agree that priority will be given to implementing this action in stores that are located in pilot communities or are members of remote store groups.

Action 2: Increased focus on nutrition education

All parties agree to increase the focus on nutrition education, particularly targeted at children, including through:

- where appropriate, increased school-based nutrition education and food literacy development integrated throughout the school curriculum, including specific materials for remote Indigenous communities, and involvement of health services where possible;

- support for, and coordination of, innovative nutrition education programs that engage children in health and nutrition education; and

- support for effective breakfast and lunch programs, where appropriate.

Action 3: Deliver Programs for Pregnant and Breastfeeding mothers and newborn babies

All parties recognise the importance of improving the nutritional status of pregnant and breastfeeding mothers and infants and agree to:

- review and build on existing ante-natal and postnatal programs to ensure the inclusion of effective strategies that support good nutrition for mothers and babies, including breastfeeding;

- ensure, where appropriate, that new initiatives implemented through COAG agreements are implemented in remote Indigenous communities and complement existing initiatives; and

- develop, subject to available funding, targeted initiatives that would reduce the cost of healthy food for pregnant and breastfeeding mothers in remote Indigenous communities; and

- promote breastfeeding within remote Indigenous communities as a preventative health measure.

Action 4: Promote attitudes and beliefs that encourage healthy eating

All parties recognise the importance of facilitating and supporting behaviours that promote health and nutrition. To achieve this, all parties agree to continue support for relevant social marketing campaigns and programs (for example, the *Measure Up* campaign's Indigenous strategy) which are focussed on:

- eating at least five serves of vegetables and two serves of fruit each day;

- limiting fat intake, particularly from saturated fats; and

- taking care with portion sizes, especially for energy dense food.

Strategies could also focus on:

- increasing breastfeeding and appropriate weaning practices in remote indigenous communities; and

- encouraging greater personal hygiene, particularly hand washing.

2. Facilitating access to healthy food

Action 5: Deliver integrated and coordinated food literacy and financial management programs

All parties agree to work together, in cooperation with Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), service providers, health services and remote store organisations to build the capacity of Indigenous people in remote communities to access healthy food through:

- ongoing support of existing food literacy and financial management programs in remote Indigenous communities with an identified need and consideration of whether further development of these programs is required;

- supporting the coordinated implementation of food literacy and financial management programs, including with income management services where appropriate; and

- further development of an integrated package of food literacy and financial management programs which will include budgeting skills, food literacy skills (including menu planning, shopping and food storage) and food preparation and cooking skills.

The financial and workforce requirements for the effective implementation of this integrated package will be clearly identified as part of this process. Consideration will be given to the possible trialling of the integrated package in pilot communities by July 2012, subject to available funding.

Action 6: Research and possible trials of subsidies

All parties recognise the need for a coordinated program of research and evaluation into the potential cost-effectiveness of subsidies in increasing consumption of healthy food in remote Indigenous communities. This research will be completed by June 2011 and will include:

- analysis of the comparative effectiveness, in terms of impact on sales of healthy foods, of different direct subsidisation models, including subsidisation of store overheads, selected healthy foods, or freight costs; and

- development of options for monitoring regimes to measure the impact that subsidies have on prices for consumers and on purchasing patterns

Based on the outcomes of research and subject to available funding, all parties agree to consider targeted trials of subsidies that are identified as being cost effective and sustainable in a small number of remote Indigenous communities. If agreed, an evaluation of these trials will be completed by December 2012.

3. Improving the supply of healthy food

Action 7: Trialling of Voluntary Quality Improvement Schemes

All parties agree to work with remote community stores and takeaways and store groups to improve the quality of store management, infrastructure and governance through the trial of voluntary quality improvement schemes (QIS) in up to 15 COAG pilot communities.

- The pilots will involve an independent assessment of the store and takeaway in the areas of retail management, financial management, governance, infrastructure and nutrition and food safety - a comprehensive store assessment report will be provided to the store owner and manager and made available to interested community members;

- Based on the outcomes of the pilot and subject to available funding all parties agree to: develop criteria representing varying store quality (e.g. 'unacceptable', 'minimum acceptable' and 'good practice') in all of the areas mentioned above; address any issues identified through the implementation of Actions 1-17 outlined in this document in pilot locations; and consider the expansion of voluntary QIS to other remote communities with an identified need and the capacity and willingness to participate.

Action 8: Action on Takeaways

All parties recognise the importance of ensuring access to a range of healthy takeaway food in remote community stores, given the reliance on takeaway foods in many communities. Parties to work towards a target of 50 per cent healthy food available through takeaway, including through:

- providing further support for the targeted implementation of Remote Indigenous Stores and Takeaways (RIST) tools;

- trialling the development and implementation of the 50 per cent healthy takeaway target in pilot communities, including through the development of a store policy to this effect; and

- considering further support for the physical resources (such as combi ovens) and nutrition workforce required to assist stores to successfully meet this target.

All parties agree that priority will be given to implementing this action in stores that are located in pilot communities or are members of remote store groups.

Action 9: Improving infrastructure in remote stores

All parties recognise the importance of safe and adequate store infrastructure for the sustainable provision of good quality healthy food, particularly fresh fruit and vegetables and water, in remote Indigenous communities. To achieve this all parties agree to:

- undertake a comprehensive assessment of the internal and external store infrastructure as part of the voluntary quality improvement scheme – this will be trialled in 15 remote Indigenous communities across Australia during 2010-11;

- work together to develop partnerships with Indigenous communities, regional store corporations, Outback Stores, and other organisations, such as the Northern Territory

Aboriginal Benefits Account Advisory Committee and relevant Aboriginal Land Councils, to address identified infrastructure needs; and

- consider the establishment of a remote stores infrastructure fund to support this work, subject to available funding.

Action 10: Improve supply models

All parties agree to work with: appropriate government departments; major transport and logistics companies; food and beverage manufacturers; food retailers, wholesalers and distributors; store owners and managers; and non government organisations, to develop innovative and sustainable supply models.

A transport logistics forum, building on previous forums and focused on improving freight transport of healthy foods, particularly fresh fruit and vegetables, to remote Indigenous communities, will be held by December 2011.

Action 11: Promoting Regionalisation

All parties agree to work with store owners and managers in remote Indigenous communities to promote and facilitate the voluntary establishment of regional store corporations where they don't currently exist:

- The Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations will provide all necessary assistance and support for groups of stores that request the establishment of a regional stores corporation, incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act).

- The Commonwealth will provide technical advice to new regional store corporations and will facilitate knowledge transfer between the newly established regional corporations and existing regional store corporations such as the Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation and Mai Wiru Regional Stores Council Aboriginal Corporation.

- Where appropriate, all parties will work with new regional store corporations to develop and support a sustainable and cost-effective regional stores unit that will provide quality and cost-effective regional retail, financial and human resource management and supply chain logistics support.

- All parties also agree to provide ongoing support for existing regional store corporations where appropriate.

Action 12: Agriculture and Local Food Supply Development

All parties recognise the role of local traditional food and local agricultural and horticultural projects and, in some circumstances, community and school gardens, in supporting food security in remote Indigenous communities and agree to:

- work with relevant government departments and the agriculture and horticulture industry to support the development of sustainable and economically viable agricultural and horticultural projects on Indigenous land in remote Australia; and

- support community and school gardens where a need is identified and community capacity and willingness to support the sustainable implementation of a garden project are

demonstrated. Support for projects satisfying these criteria will be sought in partnership with local community organisations, the non-government sector and Indigenous organisations such as the Indigenous Land Corporation.

4. Building and supporting a sustainable and quality workforce

Action 13: The nutrition workforce

All parties recognise the critical role of the nutrition workforce in the successful implementation of the actions contained in this plan. Noting this, parties agree to:

- work together to map the current nutrition workforce against the required nutrition workforce using the methodology outlined in Attachment A to this document.
    - This will include mapping of all aspects of the nutrition workforce, including public health nutritionists, community dieticians/nutritionists and advanced health workers (nutrition promotion).
    - Mapping of at least two priority remote regional areas is to be completed by December 2011, with the remainder of workforce mapping to be completed by December 2012 in other remote regional areas that have been agreed bilaterally.

- where a need is identified, develop long-term goals and strategies to meet identified workforce requirements.
    - These are to be informed by the outcomes of the workforce mapping and will consider appropriate roles and responsibilities for building and supporting the workforce, clearly outline resource requirements, and identify specific actions to increase Indigenous workforce participation.
    - Strategies are to look at all aspects of the workforce continuum, including: staff recruitment, staff retainment, workforce support and development (including workplace orientation, training/training providers, mentoring and multiple career pathways and entry points to those pathways), and efficient human resource systems; and

- improve coordination of the existing nutrition workforce across all levels of government and the community sector to reduce any identified duplication and increase cost-effectiveness.

These actions will be informed by, and consistent with, the national health workforce planning underway through COAG, including: improving clinical training, facilitating more efficient workforce utilisation, improving international recruitment efforts, and effective and accurate planning of health workforce requirements. These actions will also be informed by, where appropriate, the workforce audit being conducted under the National Public Health Partnership on Preventative Health, which will assess the preventative workforce requirements for Partnership initiatives. Allied health professionals may be included in this assessment.

Action 14: The stores sector workforce

All parties recognise the importance of building, training and supporting a sustainable and skilled workforce for remote community stores and takeaways, including store managers and store support staff, in order to improve the supply of healthy food in remote Indigenous communities. Noting this, parties agree to:

- consider the development and certification of a specialist remote stores training program, including: retail management, small business management, financial management, nutrition management and health promotion, basic training in ancillary trades required to effectively manage a remote store, and cultural awareness;

- consider providing targeted on-site support and training in stores with a high identified need;

- identify barriers to the recruitment and retainment of suitable skilled and qualified store managers and, subject to available funding, develop targeted strategies for addressing these; and

- identify employment and training opportunities in ancillary and support services for stores and consider programs to support employment and training of local Indigenous people.

Increasing Indigenous participation in the store sector workforce, including through the above measures, is an agreed priority for all parties.

5. Supporting Monitoring and Evaluation

Action 15: Monitor health outcomes (noting that nutrition is one of many factors that influence health)

All parties agree to monitor health outcomes where this is practical and possible through such things as:

- undertaking routine on-going growth assessments for children aged 0-5 years; exploring the technology and workforce implications of these; examining means for providing useful information on outcomes back to communities and health services; and examining means for addressing issues associated with indications of failure to thrive in assessed children; and

- working with local health services, nutritionists, public health experts and communities to develop community level nutrition outcome measures.

All parties note that the Indigenous component of the Australian Health Survey (commencing in November 2011 – October 2012, and reporting in July 2013) will help identify the proportion of children two years and over requiring nutrition interventions.

Action 16: Monitoring Food Access and Pricing Surveys

All parties agree to continue to support tools to monitor the cost of, and access to, food in remote Indigenous communities, through:

- implementation of jurisdictional Market Basket surveys in all remote Indigenous communities (including comparison with regional and metropolitan cities) and ensuring that the results are publicly available; and

- developing a harmonised Food Access and Pricing Survey that enables comparison of food access and pricing across jurisdictions.

Action 17: Implement Point of Sales Monitoring Tools
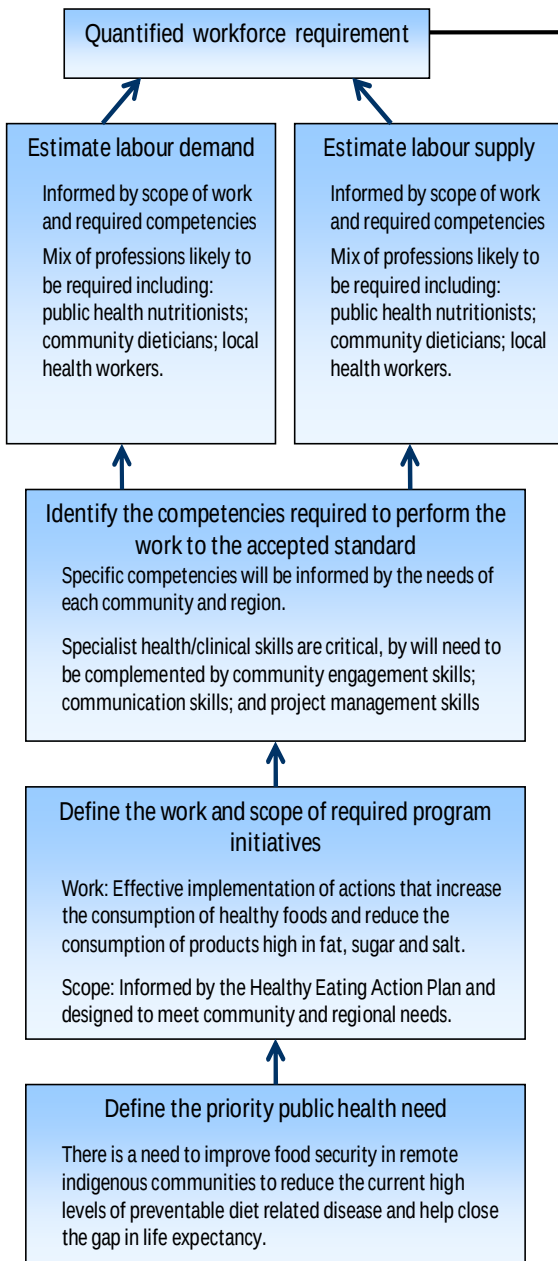
All parties recognise the importance of monitoring sales data in remote community stores and agree to support the implementation of Point of Sales (POS) monitoring tools in COAG pilot communities, where a

need is identified. All parties will work together with stores in those communities to monitor sales and turnover of key foods and, where required, provide support for a public health nutritionist to analyse the data and develop plans with the community to improve the nutritional quality of the community food supply.

Based on outcomes of the trials, all parties agree to consider the need for further roll out of POS, or other systems, for monitoring sales data in stores in remote Indigenous communities and the necessary nutritionist support.

Attachment A: Mapping framework for developing a best practice model for the remote nutrition workforce

Stage 1: Mapping the workforce requirement

Stage 2: Developing and supporting the workforce

Quantified workforce requirement

Estimate labour demand

Informed by scope of work and required competencies

Mix of professions likely to be required including: public health nutritionists; community dieticians; local health workers.

Estimate labour supply

Informed by scope of work and required competencies

Mix of professions likely to be required including: public health nutritionists; community dieticians; local health workers.

Identify the competencies required to perform the work to the accepted standard

Specific competencies will be informed by the needs of each community and region.

Specialist health/clinical skills are critical, by will need to be complemented by community engagement skills; communication skills; and project management skills

Define the work and scope of required program initiatives

Work: Effective implementation of actions that increase the consumption of healthy foods and reduce the consumption of products high in fat, sugar and salt.

Scope: Informed by the Healthy Eating Action Plan and designed to meet community and regional needs.

Define the priority public health need

There is a need to improve food security in remote indigenous communities to reduce the current high levels of preventable diet related disease and help close the gap in life expectancy.

Targeted initiatives at each stage of the workforce continuum

Actions are required across the workforce continuum – focus areas are pre-recruitment; recruitment; and retention, support and development.

Pre-recruitment
- Education and VET
- Job readiness

Recruitment
- Targeted and well-designed HR systems and processes
- Attractive work conditions

Retention, support and development
- Mentoring and on the job training and support
- Capacity building