

Central Group

Food Security in Remote Communities

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Bridgette Bellenger, Group Manager

Key Talking Points

- The Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan identifies improving food security in remote First Nations communities as a national priority.
- As part of the 2025 Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, the Low-Cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme (the Scheme) commenced on 1 July 2025 to reduce the cost of 30 product lines (also known as essential items) in up to 152 remote stores in remote First Nations communities.
- The Scheme reduces the cost of items to be comparable with those in major supermarkets in urban areas. The lower prices will help address cost-of-living pressures and high rates of food insecurity experienced in remote communities.
- The National Code of Practice for Remote Store Operations also commenced on 1 July 2025 to support remote community stores to meet standards aimed at improving health outcomes and protect food security of remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- Registration to the Code is voluntary; however, stores must register with the Code in order to access the Subsidy.
- As of 3 September 2025, 89 Stores have applied to participate in the Scheme and Code. With 68 registered with the Code and 43 approved to participate in the subsidy.
- The 2025 Closing the Gap Implementation Plan establishes an in-store Nutrition Workforce. The Nutrition Workforce is rolling out and will equip over 100 locally engaged workers with the skills to create healthier retail food environments and provide informed advice to customers on healthy food purchases in remote stores.
- On 5 March 2025 the Government announced the Food Security Strategy for Remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities (the Strategy). The Strategy has been developed in partnership with state and territory governments and First Nations health organisations.
- The Commonwealth owned company, Outback Stores, provides retail management and support to 56 First Nations-owned stores across remote Australia. This includes providing financial support to important, but financially unviable, stores.

- The NIAA facilitates a regular industry coordination mechanism, the Remote Food Security Working Group (FSWG), to address issues in the remote supply chain.

Background

National Strategy for Food Security in Remote First Nations Communities

- The Strategy is a recommendation from the 2020 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs Inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Indigenous communities.
- In August 2021, the Indigenous Affairs Taskforce agreed the strategy would be developed by a project reference group supported by NIAA.
- Funding was provided to Aboriginal Medical Services Northern Territory, the peak body for Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations in the NT, to partner with NIAA on the strategy development. \$252,850.00 over 2022-2024.
- From May to August 2024, Yamagigu Consulting (previously Pricewaterhouse Coopers Indigenous Consulting (PIC)), facilitated public consultations in 31 communities and regional centres. The contract was worth \$692,304.10.
- The Strategy has been agreed and signed by the Commonwealth and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), with other relevant jurisdictions and state/territory community-controlled health peak organisations considering signing the agreement document in the near future.
- The NIAA are also funding NACCHO \$1,314,257.50 to develop a National Strategic Roadmap for Establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health Workforce, a key workforce identified under the strategy.

Store Efficiency and Resilience Package

- As at 3 September 2025, funding is committed to 22 stores through the Store Efficiency and Resilience Package.
- These stores were identified as priority stores in consultation with the community-controlled health sector and state and territory governments.
- Funding has included the opportunity for stores to increase their storage capacity, through upgrades such as refrigerators, and infrastructure to ensure greater and more consistent access to food for their communities.

National Code of Practice for Remote Store Operations

- As of 3 September 2025, 89 Stores have applied and 68 have been registered to participate in the Code.

- Monash University has been engaged by the Australian Government to provide stores tools, ideas, and support to build on their ability to deliver a healthy environment for their community and meet the standards of the Code.
- The Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) has been funded to deliver governance support to remote stores.

The Low-cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme

- As of 3 September 2025, 89 Stores have applied to participate in the Subsidy Scheme. Of this, 43 are approved and receiving goods.
- The Scheme is reducing the cost of 30 items. The items were recommended by an expert advisory group with members including representatives from peak Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations, remote store management companies and experts in nutrition.
- To meet customers' needs, the 30 items may be offered in various forms and packaging, such as plain or self-raising flour and 6 or 24 packs of toilet paper. Currently, 63 individual products are subsidised through the Scheme.
- The NIAA administers the Scheme. For delivery of operational aspects of the Scheme, the NIAA is funding the Commonwealth entity, and not-for-profit remote store management company, Outback Stores Pty Ltd. The NIAA has also provided funding for additional distribution facilities to support delivery.
- Some grocery wholesalers have raised concerns about the impact of the Scheme on their business operations. The NIAA continues to engage with stakeholders on their concerns noting:
 - The Scheme addresses feedback consistently received through Strategy consultations that food and groceries in remote communities are too expensive.
 - We know that high prices are a result of the low purchasing power of remote stores and high remote operating costs. To bring prices down, government will need to be involved.
 - Outback Stores is a Government-owned not-for-profit organisation that specialises in remote retail. As such, it is a low risk and efficient mechanism to deliver the Scheme.
 - The design of the Scheme will ensure price savings are passed on to consumers, not absorbed by supply chain participants (which is the case for other subsidy schemes, for example in Canada).
 - The subsidised 30 product groups will be a small proportion of the total number of products typically sold in community stores. Stores will continue to purchase the large majority of products through their usual supplier.

- Research by the Menzies School of Health Research has indicated the money customers save by buying subsidised products will be spent on other products at the store, potentially sourced from the stores' usual wholesalers.
- The NIAA acknowledges concerns from wholesalers and has engaged with the ACCC to ensure both the Code and Scheme are appropriate.
- The NIAA consulted the ACCC during the Scheme's design and implementation phase and continues this engagement. The Scheme was designed to comply with Australian Competition and Consumer Law.

Subsidy trial

- In July 2024, Outback Stores commenced a trial to subsidise the cost of essential items.
- In March 2025, the trial was subsidising 9 essential items (47 choices of products) at 72 remote stores: 55 stores managed by Outback Stores and 17 stores managed by the Arnhem Land Progress Association (ALPA).
- As at 30 June 2025, the trial was subsidising 30 essential items (77 choices of products) at 105 remote stores: Outback Stores (55), ALPA (22), Community Enterprise Queensland (CEQ) (27) and independent (1).

Underpinning fund

- Through Outback Stores, the Commonwealth provides operational and capital underpinning to stores that are unviable, but critical to food security. This allows the stores to continue to trade and maintain store infrastructure.

Warehouse/Distribution Centre

- The Commonwealth agreed to fund a distribution centre when the Low-Cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme was originally designed.
- The NIAA sought legal advice while ensuring it would comply with Australian Competition Law.
- While Outback Stores will own the distribution centre and land, it can only be used as designated by the NIAA for the specified term.

Impact

- Prices are significantly higher in remote communities than in the urban centres. The range of healthy food is much more limited, and supply chains are fragile and regularly disrupted. Geographic remoteness, poor infrastructure, small population sizes and limited buying power all contribute to higher prices.
- Food insecurity is associated with poor nutrition and adverse health outcomes.

Facts and figures

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics shows 41 per cent of First Nations households nationally, and 51 per cent of First Nations households in remote areas, experienced food insecurity due to a lack of money for food at some time over a 12-month period.
- Food security strategy consultations were held in 31 communities and regional centres across New South Wales, Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia, over May to August 2024. Over 500 people participated, and 45 written submissions were received.
- The Commonwealth has committed:
 - \$23.6 million over 4 years from 2025-26 to subsidise the cost of 30 essential items in up to 152 stores in remote First Nations communities
 - \$19.0 million from 2025-26 to establish a distribution centre to support the delivery of the Low-cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme.
 - \$3.0 million in 2025-26 to support capacity building of the subsidy trial.
 - \$2.0 million in 2024-25 to support the delivery of a trial to subsidise the costs of a minimum of 9 essential items.
 - \$3.0 million over 3 years from 2025-26 to create a dedicated governance training and support package for remote stores.
 - \$21.4 million over 3 years from 2025-26 to establish an in-store Nutrition Workforce.
 - \$11.8 million from 2023-24 over two years for the Strategy:
 - \$10.4 million for priority actions, including up to \$9.6 million that has been invested through the Store Efficiency and Resilience Package.
 - \$1.4 million for project management, consultation and evaluation.

Key Dates

- 1 JUL 2025 – National Code Launched
- 1 JUL 2025 – Low-Cost Essentials Subsidy Launched
- 5 MAR 2025 – Release of Food Security Strategy.
- 25 FEB 2025 – Final Strategy endorsement discussed at Indigenous Affairs Ministers Meeting.
- 10 FEB 2025 – Cost of living and nutrition workforce measures announced as part of the 2025 Closing the Gap Implementation Plan to support food security in remote communities.
- 6 NOV 2024 – The NIAA supported Minister McCarthy to host an Industry roundtable with key food and grocery manufacturers and other stakeholders.

- 13 FEB 2023 – Closing the Gap Implementation Plan released, including remote food security for the first time.
- 02 DEC 2021 – Government response to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs Inquiry into food pricing and food security in remote Indigenous communities.

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| Bridgette Bellenger | Central | s22(1) |
| Tom Dyer | NT Strategy and Policy | |
| s22(1) | Food Security Policy Section Food Security Tiger Team | |

Central Group

Operating Environment

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Bridgette Bellenger, Group Manager, Central Group

Key Talking Points

- Through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) and other NIAA funding streams, the NIAA is heavily invested in ensuring positive outcomes for First Nations people in the Northern Territory (NT) – including by reducing the drivers of contact with the criminal justice system.
- As at August 2025, NIAA has \$485.87 million in active grants investments in the NT for 2025-26.
 - Across the life of those activities, this represents a \$2.7 billion investment.
- The Australian Government remains committed to the targets and Priority Reforms agreed by all governments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

Background

- The Productivity Commission's latest update (30 July 2025) on progress towards Closing the Gap shows that outcomes for targets 10 and 11 continue to worsen in many jurisdictions, including the NT.
- In October 2024, the NT Government made a series of legislative amendments, including:
 - Stronger bail and knife crime amendments;
 - Reducing the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 12 to 10 years of age; and
 - Increasing penalties for nuisance public drinking.
- On 1 March 2025, the NT Government repealed the \$1.30 minimum unit price on all alcohol sold in the NT.
- On 30 April 2025, amendments to bail and youth justice laws were made, delivering the strongest bail laws in the country and removing detention as a last resort for youths when considering bail.
- On 27 May 2025, 24-year-old Warlpiri man Kumanyaji White died in police custody in Alice Springs.
- On 7 June 2025, there was a second death in custody of a senior Aboriginal man in the NT.
- These deaths have strengthened calls for an independent investigation which continues to be rejected by the NT Government.
- On 7 July 2025, the findings of the Kumanyaji Walker coronial inquest were handed down, delivering 33 formal recommendations for the NT Government, NT Police Force and NT Health.
- On 27 July 2025, further reforms to the *Youth Justice Act 2005 (NT)* were made including reinstating the use of spit hoods, removing the principle of 'detention as a last resort' for youth and expanding the list of serious offences ineligible for youth diversion.

- Many of these amendments are contrary to the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the NT.
- On 18 August 2025, the NT Government released its three-year Crime Reduction Strategy, which aims to reduce crime through prevention, accountability and consequences.
- On 1 September 2025, the NT became the second jurisdiction in Australia to allow residents to carry Oleoresin Capsicum (OC) spray for personal protection in a 12 month trial by the NT Government.
- On 4 September 2025, the NT Government legislated the Police Public Safety Officer (PPSO) stream which will see up to 56 existing public safety officers retrained and operating under NT Police. PPSOs will wear police uniforms and be able to carry firearms.

Impact

- The NT criminal justice system is currently experiencing extraordinary pressure, contributing to overcrowding and poor conditions in correctional facilities and watch houses.
- As at 30 June 2025:
 - 2,509 First Nations people were in custody, which is equivalent to 3 per cent of the NT's population of Aboriginal men, women and children.
 - Over 88 per cent of people in custody in the NT were First Nations people.
- As at 7 August 2025 there were 60 young people between the ages of 10-17 in detention in the NT, with 95% identifying as First Nations.
 - This is the highest number of youths in detention recorded in the last eight years.
- Concerns about NT prisons and the criminal justice system have been raised by a number of advocates, including Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT (APONT), the Law Society of the NT, the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), and the NT Aboriginal Land Councils.

Facts and figures (Funding)

- In 2024-25, in the NT through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, the Australian Government invested in improving community safety through:
 - \$1.36 million to deliver custody notification services.
 - \$3.88 million to continue to deliver adult and youth through-care services.
 - \$1.90 million for other crime prevention that address the underlying causes of offending.
 - \$2.25 million to deliver youth support and diversion programs.
 - \$25.97 million for community safety patrols.
- Through the Central Australia Plan – a Better, Safer Future for Central Australia Plan (over \$250 million from 2022-23 to 2027-28), the Australian Government is investing:
 - \$30 million for Strengthening Family and Community Partnerships in collaboration with regional and remote Central Australian communities (Department of Social Services);

- An additional \$10 million over 4 years from 2023-24 for Justice Reinvestment initiatives in Central Australia (Attorney-General's Department); and
- \$5.13 million over 4 years from 2023 for Oonchiumpa Cultural Services to deliver a culturally led diversion program for up to 50 at-risk Aboriginal youth in Alice Springs (NIAA).
- Through the NT Remote Aboriginal Investment (NTRAI) 6 year funding agreement, the Commonwealth will invest:
 - \$205.82 million for remote policing; and
 - \$25.91 million for peacemaking and mediation.
- NTRAI is currently under negotiation.

Key Dates

- 4 September 2025 – Police Public Safety Officer (PPSO) stream legislated.
- 1 September 2025 – 12 month OC spray trial commenced.
- 27 July 2025 – urgent reforms made to youth justice laws.
- 7 July 2025 – findings of Kumanjaji Walker coronial inquest handed down.
- 7 June 2025 – death in custody of senior Aboriginal man in the NT.
- 27 May 2025 – death in custody of Kumanyaji White in Alice Springs.
- 30 April 2025 – urgent reforms made to further strengthen bail laws.
- 7-10 October 2024 – legislative amendments made to strengthen bail laws, reduce the minimum age of criminal responsibility and increase penalties for nuisance public drinking.

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| Bridgette Bellenger | Central Group |
| Tom Dyer | NT Strategy and Policy |
| | NT Remote Aboriginal Investment |

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Central Group

Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment (NTRAI)

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Bridgette Bellenger, Group Manager, Central Group

Key Talking Points

- The 2025-26 Budget commits \$842.6 million over 6 years to strengthen remote service delivery in the Northern Territory (NT) through the Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment (NTRAI).
- This funding is supplementary and will support the delivery of essential services in remote Aboriginal communities including:
 - Remote policing
 - Aboriginal interpreter services
 - Early learning and education programs
 - Alcohol harm reduction services
 - Child and family safety services
 - Hearing and oral health services.
- The funding will also support new place-based community and economic development initiatives, Aboriginal Child and Family Centres and peacemaking and mediation activities.
- The NTRAI budget measure includes up to \$79.5 million over 6 years for targeted Aboriginal Community Controlled sector strengthening and to enhance monitoring and evaluation.
- The NTRAI is supported by a Partnership Agreement between the Commonwealth, the Northern Territory Government, and Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APO NT).
- Negotiations of new NTRAI funding agreements with the Northern Territory Government are progressing well.
 - The new funding agreements will include a greatly enhanced focus on transparency and accountability around delivery of the investment.
 - This will be complemented by a new Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning framework. The framework will further strengthen accountability and transparency around the outcomes of NTRAI investment to government and the public, including reports for community.
 - All parties of the NTRAI Joint Steering Committee, including APO NT are committed to ensuring the investment flows to enable outcomes for First Nations in the NT.

If asked - Did the new NTRAI funding commence on 1 July 2025 as announced?

- As planned, the 2024-25 NTRAI agreement expired on 30 June 2025. NIAA is currently developing new funding agreements in partnership with the NT Government and APO NT to deliver the investment.

- While there is no agreement currently in place, remote service delivery arrangements under the 2024-25 NTRAI agreements are continuing while the new agreements are developed.
- The new funding agreements will maintain services funded by the 2024-25 NTRAI and provide for new programs and initiatives.
- The NIAA, NT Government and APO NT have agreed not to compromise the process of partnership design for the 6-year funding commitment.
- Negotiations have progressed slower than expected, due to efforts to embed the spirit of the NTRAI Partnership Agreement within the funding agreements.
- There are no immediate service delivery impacts related to the delay in signing the new funding agreements.
- All parties are committed to expedite negotiations to ensure new funding agreements are in place as soon as practicable, expected in late 2025.

Background

- On 7 February 2025, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, Prime Minister, signed the Partnership Agreement with the NT Government and Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT (APO NT) to strengthen remote service delivery through NTRAI.
- The new 6-year NTRAI will increase funding for a range of essential services and will align investment to the socio-economic outcomes and Priority Reforms under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
- The NTRAI continues some of the investment which commenced under the Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007 and subsequent arrangements, including the National Partnership Agreement on Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory.

Impact

- The NTRAI measure will support continuity for over 570 jobs, of which more than 278 of the jobs are occupied by First Nations people in early learning, family support, and early childhood education services.
- The investment will provide support for up to 12 Aboriginal Community-Controlled Child and Family Centres, which will provide culturally appropriate solutions to complex issues relating to family safety and child development.
- New investment in place-based community development, economic development, peacemaking and mediation initiatives will enable Aboriginal communities to lead in their social and economic development.
- A new Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning framework will measure the outcomes of the investment, enhance accountability around the delivery of investment, and ensure funding remains responsive to emerging evidence and changing community needs and aspirations.

Facts and figures

- The 2025-26 NTRAI budget measure will provide up to \$842.6 million over 6 years, including:

- \$756.7 million over 6 years to the NT Government to deliver and evaluate a range of critical services in remote Aboriginal communities, including payments to non-government schools.
- \$79.5 million over 6 years will be delivered through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) for Aboriginal community-controlled sector strengthening, First Nations participation in the NTRAI partnership, and to support monitoring and evaluation efforts.
- \$6.3 million in departmental funding including:
 - \$4.8 million over 6 years for the National Indigenous Australians Agency.
 - \$1.5 million over 6 years for the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.
- Since 2015-16, the Australian Government has provided the NT Government with more than \$1 billion in supplementary funding to support service delivery in remote Aboriginal communities.

Key Dates

- 11 June 2025 – NTRAI JSC meeting.
 - Members note negotiations have progressed slower than expected and affirm commitment to ensuring shared decision-making is supported in the NTRAI FFA Schedules, in line with the NTRAI Partnership Agreement.
- 5 Mar 2025 – NTRAI JSC meeting.
 - Members acknowledge the announcement of the NTRAI measure and discuss the development of new NTRAI Federation Funding Agreement Schedules.
- 7 Feb 2025 – The 2025-26 NTRAI budget measure is announced.
 - The NTRAI Partnership Agreement is signed in Alice Springs.

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| Bridgette Bellenger | Central Group | s22(1) |
| Tom Dyer | NT Policy and Strategy | |
| s22(1) | Partnership Design | |

Central Group

Garma Festival

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Bridgette Bellenger

Key Talking Points

- The annual Garma Festival was held from 1-4 August 2025 at the Gulkula ceremonial site in North East Arnhem Land. This year marked the 25th anniversary of the Festival.

Total ticket cost to the APS

- In February 2025, NIAA purchased 20 corporate tickets for the APS Delegation, 10 corporate tickets for NIAA senior staff and 20 tickets to support logistics and community engagement.
- The total GST inclusive cost for 2025 Garma Festival APS tickets published on AusTender was \$218,166 (\$198,332 GST exclusive). This includes:
 - 20 Corporate tickets for the APS Delegation totalling \$134,644 (\$122,403 GST exclusive),
 - 10 Corporate tickets for senior NIAA staff, totalling \$67,322 (\$61,202 GST exclusive); and
 - 20 weekend tickets to support logistics and community engagement, totalling \$16,200 (\$14,727 GST exclusive).

Total reimbursement of tickets to NIAA

- NIAA will be reimbursed corporate ticket costs from 19 APS Departments and Agencies for delegates totalling \$127,911 (\$116,283 GST exclusive)

Total cost of Garma Festival to NIAA

- The total GST inclusive costs to NIAA for the 2025 Garma Festival was \$215,408 (\$195,825 GST exclusive) which includes ticket costs, NIAA Staff Flights, Vehicle hire and fuel, NIAA staff accommodation, NIAA staff Meals and Incidentals, General Expenses detailed in the funding break down table below.
- The total ticket cost to NIAA for 2025 Garma Festival tickets was \$90,254 (\$82,049 GST exclusive). This includes:
 - 11 corporate tickets totalling \$74,054 (\$67,322 GST exclusive)
 - 20 weekend tickets totalling \$16,200 (\$14,727 GST exclusive)

Background

- Each year, a delegation of senior APS leaders, hosted by the NIAA, attend the Garma Festival as part of the Government's commitment to Closing the Gap Priority Reform 3: Transforming Government Organisations.
- As part of the delegation experience an optional one-day visit to a remote community before the festival (referred to as community extension visit).

- NIAA has received an abundance of positive feedback from the 2025 delegation, reflecting on their opportunity to engage with remote First Nations communities and to discuss key topics and share experiences across Commonwealth organisations.
- Due to increased staffing levels in the NIAA Nhulunbuy office and limited staff housing availability this year, commercial accommodation was required to support logistics staff and the Prime Minister's advancer. Total costs for accommodation totalled \$21,555 (GST exclusive).
- On 21 August 2024, Mr James Stevens, MP, Federal Member for Sturt, submitted a Freedom of Information (FOI) request to NIAA regarding costs of the Garma Festival 2024.
- NIAA have not received an FOI request for the 2025 Garma Festival to date.

Impact

- Garma provides an opportunity to leverage the NIAA's leadership role across the APS to engage senior Commonwealth officials with First Nations people on key issues that impact them in a forum that celebrates the strength and vitality of Yolŋu and broader First Nations culture.

Facts and figures

| List of NIAA Delegation Garma 2025 Corporate Ticket | | |
|--|--------------|--|
| APS Class | Staff | Job description |
| CEO | 1 | Chief Executive Officer |
| SESB3 | 1 | Chief Operating Officer |
| SESB2 | 3 | Group Manager, Regional Group Manager |
| SESB1 | 3 | Branch Manager, Regional Manager, Chief of Staff |
| EL1 | 1 | CEO Award Winner |
| List of NIAA Logistics Team Garma 2025 Weekend Ticket | | |
| APS Class | Staff | Job description |
| SESB1 | 1 | Logistics Surge Team staff |
| EL2 | 3 | Logistics Surge Team staff |
| EL1 | 9 | Logistics Surge Team staff |
| APS 6 | 6 | Logistics Surge Team staff |
| APS 5 | 1 | Logistics Surge Team staff |
| APS4 | 2 | Logistics Surge Team staff – Yolngu Engagement Officers no ticket required |

- Thirty-two NIAA staff attended Garma in 2025, including 22 support and community engagement staff. Twelve of the 22 support staff work in NIAA's

Arnhem Land and Groote Eylandt region (including 2 Yolngu staff not requiring NIAA funded tickets)

- Staff provided logistical support in several areas across the Festival, including manning NIAA's information stall and engaging with community, supporting an APS delegation promoting cross-agency discussions and increasing cultural capability across the APS.
- Nineteen NIAA staff received travel allowance as per NIAA's travel policy.
- Travel allowance costs for staff travelling to the event largely refer only to periods before and after the festival itself, as the cost of festival ticket includes meals and tent accommodation.
- Twelve of the NIAA staff located in Nhulunbuy did not receive travel allowances.
- Additionally, NIAA invited the First Assistant Commissioner, First Nations Systems Lead, Australian Public Service Commission, to facilitate Priority Reform 3 fireside chat and agreed to fund this corporate ticket.
- One corporate ticket was not utilised due to the decline of invitation from an agency (Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) Attempts were made to invite other departments and agencies however due to the timeframe these were also declined.

Funding breakdown

| Item | Description | Cost (\$) (GST exclusive) |
|-----------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Tickets | 11 Corporate passes at \$6,120 each | \$67,322 |
| | 20 weekend passes at \$736 each for NIAA logistics staff | \$14,727 |
| | Subtotal | \$82,049 |
| Flights | Flights for NIAA Senior Delegation and staff located outside of the Northern Territory to attend Garma Festival and support Community Extension visits. | \$54,320 |
| Vehicles | Hire cars to escort NIAA Senior Delegation, APS delegation, Ministers and the Prime Minister's delegation to and from the airport and to the Garma festival and fuel costs | \$11,785 |
| Accommodation | Commercial accommodation to support logistics staff in Nhulunbuy and NIAA Senior Delegation while in transit | \$21,555 |
| Meals and Incidentals | Meals and incidentals for NIAA and APS Senior Delegates and NIAA logistics staff, including travel allowance, catering and Garma site supplies | \$7,561 |
| General expenses | Equipment, taxi fares, parking, merchandise and communication expenses | \$18,555 |

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| | Total | \$195,825 |
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**Note, the above table reflects expenses acquitted to date. Some expenses are yet to be finalised or correctly allocated.*

2025 NIAA hosted APS delegation

| External APS delegates | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Name | Title and Department/Organisation |
| s47F | Secretary Attorney Generals Department |
| s47F | Secretary, Department of Education |
| s47F | Secretary, Department of Industry, Science and Resources |
| s47F | CEO, Services Australia |
| s47F | CEO, Australian Human Rights |
| s47F | President, Australian Law Reform Commission |
| s47F | Commissioner, Productivity Commission |
| s47F | Deputy Secretary, Department of Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water |
| s47F | Deputy Secretary, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations |
| s47F | General Manager, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet |
| s47F | Deputy Secretary, Department of the Treasury |
| s47F | Deputy Secretary, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry |
| s47F | Chief Operating Officer, National Emergency Management Agency |
| s47F | A/g Deputy Secretary, Department of Social Security |
| s47F | Assistant Secretary, Department of Treasury |
| s47F | First Assistant Secretary, Department of Finance |
| s47F | First Assistant Secretary, Department of Health and Aged Care |
| s47F | First Assistant Secretary, Department of Home Affairs |
| s47F | First Assistant Commissioner, Australian Public Service Commission |
| s47F | Executive General Manager, Tourism Australia |
| NIAA SES delegates | |
| Name | Title |
| Jody Broun | CEO |
| Rachael Jackson | Chief Operating Officer |
| Bridgette Bellenger | Group Manager |
| John Love | Group Manager |
| Jessica Guthrie | Group Manager |
| John Walker | Chief of Staff |
| Gerrit Wanganeen | Regional Manager |
| Erin Selmes | Branch Manager |

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| s22(1) | Assistant Director |
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APS delegations previously hosted by NIAA

| APS Delegation by SES Name and Title, External Agency | | |
|--|---|--|
| 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
| s47F, A/g Deputy Australian Public Service Commissioner | s47F, A/g Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade | s47F, FAS, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet |
| s47F, Deputy Secretary Department Prime Minister and Cabinet | s47F, First Assistant Secretary, Department of the Treasury | s47F, FAS, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations |
| s47F, Deputy Secretary Department Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry | s47F, Acting Director National Museum of Australia | s47F Commissioner Australian Taxation Office |
| s47F Secretary Attorney Generals Department | s47F, Secretary Department of Employment and Workplace Relations | s47F Second Commissioner, Australian Taxation Office |
| s47F, Department of Defence | s47F, Deputy Secretary, Department of Finance | s47F Secretary, Department of Health and Ageing |
| s47F, Deputy Secretary Department of Defence | s47F, CEO National Disability Insurance Scheme | s47F Chief Counsel Department of Social Services |
| s47F, Chief Operating Officer Department of Education | s47F, Secretary Infrastructure, Transport Regional Development and the Arts | s47F Associate Secretary Department of Defence |
| s47F, First Assistant Secretary Department of Finance | s47F CEO, Murray Darling Basin Authority | s47F Deputy Secretary, Department of Education |
| s47F Assistant Secretary Department of Health and the Ageing | s47F Deputy Secretary Department Climate Change Energy, the Environment and Water | s47F Commissioner, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Human Rights Commission |
| s47F Deputy Secretary Department of Home Affairs | s47F Deputy CEO Screen Australia | s47F Deputy Secretary, Department of Science and Resources |
| s47F Group Manager Department Social Services | s47F Deputy Coordinator National Emergency Management Agency | s47F Deputy Secretary Department of The Treasury |

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| s47F Deputy Secretary Department of Veterans Affairs | s47F Deputy Secretary Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry | s47F CEO, National Mental Health Commission |
| s47F Deputy CEO, Services Australia | s47F Commissioner Australian Public Service Commission | s47F Secretary Department of Finance |
| s47F A/g Deputy Secretary Department Foreign Affairs and Trade | s47F Chair, SES Indigenous Network (Services Australia) | s47F Deputy Commissioner Australian Public Service |
| s47F Deputy Secretary Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water | s47F Deputy Secretary Department of Health and Ageing | s47F Deputy Secretary Department Climate Change Energy, the Environment and Water |
| s47F Deputy Secretary Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development Communications and the Arts | s47F Deputy Secretary Department of Education | s47F Associate Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs |
| s47F Senior Advisor Public Sector Reform | s47F First Assistant Secretary, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet | s47F General Manager Operations, Services Australia |
| | s47F Assistant Secretary Employment and Workplace Relations | s47F Social Justice Director Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Human Rights Commission |
| | s47F Regional Controller, NT Government | s47F First Assistant Commissioner Australian Public Service Commission |

NIAA SES – Name and Title

| 2022 | 2023 | 2024 |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Jody Broun, CEO | Jody Broun, CEO | Jody Broun, CEO |
| Letetia Hope, DCEO | Kevin Brahim, DCEO | Kevin Brahim, DCEO |
| Blair Excell, DCEO | Julie-Ann Guivara, DCEO | Rachael Jackson, COO |
| Ben Burdon, Group Manager | Rachael Jackson, COO | Bridgette Bellenger, Group Manager |
| Julie Ann Guivarra, Group Manager | Bridgette Bellenger, Group Manager | Ben Burdon, Group Manager |
| Sam Jeffries, Group Manager | Deb Fulton, Group Manager | Cheryl Smith, Group Manager |
| Deb Fulton, Group Manager | Gerrit Wanganeen, Regional Manager | Gerrit Wanganeen, Regional Manager |

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| Rachael Jackson, NIAA Transition Taskforce | Ameet Jamble, Branch Manager | Rob Blanch, Branch Manager |
| Rob Willmetts, Group Manager | | Ameet Jamble, Branch Manager |
| Jeremy Mickle, Branch Manager | | Susan Kibukamusoke, A/g Branch Manager |
| | | Craig Hendry, Regional Manager |

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| Bridgette Bellenger | Central Group | s22(1) |
| Gerrit Wanganeen | Arnhem Land and Groote Eylandt region | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Regional Strategies and Projects | s22(1) |

Eastern Group

1. Wreck Bay

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Kevin Brahim – Deputy CEO, Operations and Delivery

For broader matters refer to responsible organisations

- Housing repair details refer to the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council (WBACC).
- PFAS refer to either the Department of Defence or Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

Key Talking Points

Repairs and maintenance

- Since 2020, \$8.9 million has been provided by the NIAA to Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council (WBACC) for:
 - upgrades to existing homes including roofing, bathrooms, kitchens and drainage
 - repairs and maintenance to internal and external part of housing including window, doors, exterior cladding and white ant damage/remediation.
 - emergency short term accommodation delivered through the purchase and building of 4 kit homes to be used while upgrades, repairs and maintenance was being completed.
- The total amount of \$8.9 million has been fully expended and the contract ended on 30 June 2025. NIAA completed sites visit and reviewed performance reports evidencing the work completed.
- WBACC maintains a detailed register for all work undertaken including which property, the type of work completed, the cost of the work and the date it was completed.
- The WBACC Board has responsibility for the way in which housing matters are prioritised for residents of the forty-seven houses in Wreck Bay Village.
- WBACC is best placed to answer questions to the details of housing repairs.

Housing Project

- The \$45.1 million Housing Project is a major public work so it must go before the Public Works Committee (PWC) for approval to proceed with on the ground construction.
- To date \$2.5 million has been released to Wreck Bay Council as part of Stage 1 of the Housing Project.
 - This funding is to develop the governance frameworks, policies and technical specifications, and to procure project management services to assist with the PWC submissions.

- There are no specified housing deliverables in each financial year and the project is still on track to deliver across the 8-year project.
- Submissions are expected to be referred to the PWC as soon as possible.
- Submissions must include an independent environmental assessment which will address any anticipated PFAS impact on the Wreck Bay housing project.
- Matters relating to PFAS are best addressed to Defence or Health departments.

NIAA support

- WBACC continues to lead on the Housing Project with support from the Executive Steering Committee.
- Members of the Executive Steering Committee are the current WBACC Chair and Deputy Chair, WBACC CEO, two NIAA SES representatives and one SES representative from Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sports and the Arts (DITRDCA).
- This committee last met on 23 September 2025.
- Next meeting is scheduled for 22 October 2025.
- Membership of an Implementation Working Group is being finalised to guide processes and to oversee the work of the Project Management Services.
- Ongoing Fortnightly meetings since 6 January 2025 between NIAA staff and WBACC Chair to progress reports and the identification of current issues.

Background

- In February 2024, advice from the Department of Finance directed that WBACC housing investment must go before the Public Works Committee. This impacted the original timeline for development and execution of a funding agreement.
- A contract executed in September 2024 for Project Management Services to prepare the PWC Submissions was terminated in March 2025 due to a breach of contract.
- GHD Group is now working with WBACC on preparing the PWC submission following an Expression of Interest that was circulated to members of the Department of Defence Project and Contract Management Panel.

Impact

- Anticipated impact of this project completion is the number of new homes; upgrade of the existing forty-seven homes and that housing related infrastructure may address housing shortages.
- That Aboriginal people in Wreck Bay Village may secure appropriate, affordable housing aligned with their priorities and needs.
- That Homeownership style leases will be available to community members living in Wreck Bay Village.
- That with increased housing quality the community may see significantly impact on life expectancy outcomes and may improve health, education, and employment outcomes.

Facts and figures

- WBACC received \$3 million for housing repair and maintenance in 2020.
- A further \$5 million committed in 2022 to continue that work.
- In 2024, a further \$0.87 million was provided for short-term housing where repairs were extensive, or demolition required.

- The NIAA is exploring options to address any gaps in funding for urgent housing repairs prior to release of the first payment for on the ground construction.
- The \$45.1 million announced Wreck Bay Housing Project is composed of \$44.456 million (Administered) and \$0.631 million (Departmental) over the eight years (2023-31).
- In July 2024, the NIAA requested the Department of Finance (Finance) approve the movement of \$2.236 million from 2023-24 to 2024-25 financial years.
- In September 2024, Finance advised they approved the movement of funds (MoF) to re-profile 2023-24 to 2024-25 financial years.
- The MoF was reflected in 2024-25 PAES update.

| Funding amount | Name of activity/grant | Purpose of expenditure | Start date | End date |
|---|--|--|--------------|----------------|
| \$8.87 million (ex GST) | Housing Maintenance and Restoration | For urgent housing repairs and maintenance | 1 July 2020 | 1 October 2024 |
| \$45.1 million (ex GST) \$44.456* million \$0.631 million | Total housing investment <i>Administered</i> <i>Departmental (approx. 0.5 ASL p/a)</i> | A sustainable Housing Plan to include repairs, maintenance & construction of housing | 30 June 2023 | 30 June 2031 |

| Financial Profile | Administered Amount (ex-GST) |
|-------------------|------------------------------|
| 2023-24* | \$3,236,047.00 |
| 2024-25 | \$5,012,723.00 |
| 2025-26 | \$6,665,270.00 |
| 2026-27 | \$8,089,920.00 |
| 2027-28 | \$7,841,660.78 |
| 2028-29 | \$6,189,114.28 |
| 2029-30 | \$4,536,567.78 |
| 2030-31 | \$2,884,021.28 |
| Total | \$44,455,324.12 |

*Noting MoF of \$2.236 million to 2024-25 financial year approved by Finance.

Key Dates

- 23 September 2025 - Executive Steering Committee meeting.
- 22 October 2025 - Executive Steering Committee meeting scheduled.

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| Ameet Jamble | Eastern Group | s22(1) |
| Leon Donovan | Eastern New South Wales Region | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Southeastern New South Wales & ACT Regions | s22(1) |

Central Australia Plan Taskforce

Central Australia Plan

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Selena Pattrick, Central Australia Plan Implementation Lead
- Brendan Bowman, Branch Manager, Central Australia Plan Taskforce

Key Talking Points

- The issues facing Central Australia are complex and have developed over decades. The Australian Government is working in genuine partnership with local communities and the Northern Territory (NT) Government to make the long-term sustained changes that communities have told us they want in Central Australia.
- The Government will invest more than \$350 million through the Central Australia Plan (CAP) over 6 years to June 2028 (FY 2022/23 – FY 2027/28) in addition to investments through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy and other mainstream funding. This funding will deliver additional measures to address community safety issues and overcome social disadvantage in Central Australia.
- As of July 2025, approximately half of the funding has been paid to organisations and Northern Territory Government, with the remaining funding to be distributed over the next three financial years.
- The CAP continues to deliver tangible outcomes to the Central Australia community. Since the last Senate Estimates in February 2025, CAP has supported the delivery of several initiatives including:
 - 20 additional emergency accommodation beds at Apmere Mwere Visitor Park (AMVP) for women and children experiencing domestic violence.
 - Completion of Todd Street Health Hub, expanding Central Australian Aboriginal Congress' service delivery.
 - Central Australian Aboriginal Congress have more than doubled the number of young people being assessed for neurodevelopmental conditions under Child and Youth Assessment and Therapeutic Services (CYATS).
 - The commencement of the Mparntwe Peacemaking Project to support community-led responses to resolving conflict and preventing crime.
 - Delivery of a bespoke leadership program for established leaders in the region, facilitated by a locally based Aboriginal-owned organisation.

Background

Summary of the Central Australia Plan

- The plan for a *Better, Safer Future for Central Australia* commenced in 2023 and is being delivered in partnership with communities, the NT Government, local governments and organisations.

- To date, the total investment under the CAP is over \$350 million, and includes:
 - \$116 million is delivering services to support family and community safety.
 - \$91 million is building better infrastructure for Central Australians.
 - \$85 million is providing people with more education and training opportunities.
 - \$50 million is engaging young people and giving them the support they need.
- Through a dedicated CAP Taskforce, the NIAA is working across the Government to identify opportunities to improve service delivery and expedite the delivery of the announced investments. The Taskforce coordinates an Australian Government interdepartmental committee that meets monthly to share information and enhance delivery effectiveness.

Central Australia Plan Aboriginal Leadership Group

- The Government is committed to doing things differently and to ensuring First Nations people in Central Australia are involved in the decisions that affect them. This means we are listening and creating real solutions with First Nations people.
- The Aboriginal Leadership Group (ALG) was established in June 2023 to provide independent, Aboriginal-led advice on the A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia Plan (CAP). It strengthens existing engagement structures and does not make investment decisions.
- The group includes a diverse mix of members, representing remote communities, Aboriginal service providers, local government, youth, and senior community leaders, with ex-officio members from NIAA and NT Government.
- The ALG has convened 19 meetings in Alice Springs (as of 31 July 2025), offering strategic advice on regional funding equity, infrastructure investment criteria, youth programs, and emergency accommodation priorities.
- The ALG's advice has shaped major initiatives including the Remote Training Hubs Network and Strengthening Families and Communities Partnership and continues to guide the allocation of the remaining \$34.1 million to strengthen Aboriginal leadership and youth services across Central Australia.

Youth Roundtable

- The Youth Roundtable was established to ensure Aboriginal young people's voices inform the design and delivery of services under *A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia*, complementing existing advisory structures like the ALG.
- Membership is open to Aboriginal people aged 16–25 from Central Australia. Initial meetings were held in August and October 2023, with refreshed membership in 2024 to broaden regional representation.
- Five meetings were held in 2024, with five more convened to date in 2025.

Requests from the Northern Territory Government

- The NT Chief Minister wrote to the Minister of Indigenous Australians on 13 December 2025 requesting seven actions by the Australian Government.
- Since December 2024, the Prime Minister, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Minister for Social Services and the Member for Lingjari have met with the NT Chief Minister on several occasions to discuss the seven requested actions.
- On 28 January 2025, Minister McCarthy responded to the Chief Minister advising she would continue to engage with the Chief Minister and Ms Marion Scrymgour MP on the NT Government's requests (MC25-005991 refers).
- Discussion on these matters is ongoing between the Australian Government and the NT Government to ensure the best possible solution is delivered for the residents of Central Australia.

Impact

Because of the CAP, communities in the region have seen:

- Increased funding for every school in Central Australia, so that we can get more kids to school and keep them there
- 20 additional emergency accommodation beds built at Apmere Mwere Visitor Park (AMVP) for women and children experiencing domestic violence.
- The completion of Todd Street Health Hub, expanding Central Australian Aboriginal Congress' health services delivery.
- Central Australian Aboriginal Congress more than double the number of young people being assessed for neurodevelopmental conditions under Child and Youth Assessment and Therapeutic Services (CYATS).
- The commencement of the Mparntwe Peacemaking Project to support community-led responses to resolving conflict and preventing crime.
- More school holiday programs delivered by community organisations and local councils in Alice Springs and surrounding communities.
 - Over the Easter school holiday period, there were more than 3,200 attendances across 240 activities delivered by community organisations and local councils.
 - Over the Winter School holidays, 11 community organisations delivered activities.
- A locally based Aboriginal-owned organisation deliver bespoke leadership program for established leaders in the region.
- Commencement of three new junior ranger programs, engaging young people in school, training and on-Country learning.
- Increased funding for police, domestic violence services and youth services
- More community infrastructure projects completed including oval lights in three remote communities that will allow community members to engage in sport and other recreational activities safely at night.

Under the CAP, the Australian Government will soon be delivering:

- up to seven remote training hubs where people can develop vocational skills in their communities,
- more programs to prevent family and domestic violence through the Strengthening Families and Communities Partnership
- more leadership and governance programs to support people to lead change in their communities, and
- a grants program funding local organisations to deliver more services to help children and young people thrive.

Evaluation

- On 26 September 2024, First Nations owned company, Inside Policy, was contracted to undertake the evaluation of the Plan. Inside Policy brings an experienced First Nations lead, relevant evaluation and remote context experience, clear methodological approach and strong engagement focus and cultural competence.
- The evaluation was finalised September 2025, with the findings to inform NIAA'S place-based approach. Key recommendations include:
 - Develop and implement a comprehensive set of guidelines for “doing things differently”.
 - Continue and strengthen the current CAP governance mechanisms.
 - Continue and strengthen the community of practice for government agencies.
 - Accelerate and strengthen the investments in community safety initiatives.
 - Review and align CAP implementation to the National Agreement Targets.
 - Address misalignments between CAP priorities and relevant NT Government policies.
 - Frequently share information with the Central Australian community about the CAP.

Facts and figures

Community safety in Alice Springs

- NT Police Alice Springs crime statistics show that Property Offences in the first seven months 2025 were 8 per cent lower than the same period in 2024 (2,946 offences compared to 3,165, a decline of 219 offences):
 - House break-ins were 24 per cent lower in January-July 2025 compared to January-July 2024 (494 compared to 653, a decrease of 159 break-ins).
 - Motor vehicle thefts were 24 per cent higher in January-July 2025 compared to January-July 2024 (63 compared to 51, an increase of 12 car thefts).
- The number of offences against the person in Alice Springs for the first seven months of 2025 were 11 per cent lower compared to the same period of 2024 (1,376 compared to 1,544, a decrease of 168 offences).
 - Domestic violence assaults were 14 per cent lower from January-June 2025 compared to January-July 2024 (770 compared to 893 assaults)

Funding Timeline

- **August 2022** - the Government announced \$3 million for expanded domestic and family violence services for Alice Springs.
 - This has been supplemented to \$5.6 million (an increase of \$2.6 million over three years).
- **24 January 2023** - A further \$48.8 million was announced to improve community safety in Alice Springs, along with the joint appointment of the former Central Australian Regional Controller, Ms Dorrelle Anderson.
 - This package has been supplemented to \$67.7 million (a \$18.9 million increase, primarily due to additional funding for high-visibility policing).
- **6 February 2023** - following a report from Ms Anderson, the Prime Minister announced a \$250 million package of investment for Central Australia alongside the NT Government's announcement on a range of alcohol restrictions.
 - \$155.9 million was allocated in the Federal Budget 2023-24 to education, infrastructure, health, youth and community safety, digital connectivity and justice reinvestment.
 - \$60.2 million was allocated in MYEFO for remote training hubs and investing in families.
 - The CAP ALG provided advice on the remaining \$34.1 million in the Contingency Reserve and the Minister announced on 30 January 2025 these funds were to be allocated to youth services and community leadership programs. This funding will support young people and develop future leaders in Alice Springs and remote communities in Central Australia.
 - As part of the 2025-2026 Budget, the Government has committed a further \$3.7 million to extend the governance arrangements for the CAP to 30 June 2026. This includes funding for the CAP ALG, the Central Australia Youth Roundtable and NIAA's CAP Taskforce.

- The Government has also approved the extension of the Strengthening Community Safety measure until 30 June 2027 using the remaining \$4.2 million from the Central Australia Plan Contingency Reserve. The NIAA will seek the advice of the ALG on how these funds can be prioritised.
- This package has been supplemented to \$261.1 million with additional funds provided for the Central Australia Junior Rangers projects (originally \$1.2 million then increased to \$4.3 million), the Strengthening Community Safety measure (including \$4.2 million from the Contingency Reserve) and \$3.7 million to extend the CAP governance arrangements.

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|----------------|---|--------|
| Selena Patrick | Central Australia Plan Implementation Lead | s22(1) |
| Brendan Bowman | Branch Manager, Central Australia Plan Taskforce | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Senior Adviser, Central Australia Plan Implementation | s22(1) |

Country, Culture and Connection Group

1. Makarrata - Truth Telling and Agreement Making

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Selena Pattrick, Acting Group Manager, Country, Culture and Connection

Key Talking Points

- The Australian Government remains supportive of the principles of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.
- The Australian Government recognises the significant truth telling and treaty processes already underway in some states and territories.
- The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) continues to watch and listen to what communities are saying on treaty, reconciliation, and truth-telling, including through the recent Yoorrook Justice Commission.
- Any decisions on the way forward for truth-telling and agreement-making processes are a matter for Government.
- The NIAA will continue its strong focus on its immediate responsibilities – Closing the Gap, self-determination and tangible outcomes, particularly in jobs, housing, education, health and justice.

Background

National

- On 4 July 2024, the Senate referred the Truth and Justice Commission Bill 2024 to the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (JSCATSIA) for inquiry.
 - The Government supported the Truth and Justice Commission Bill going to inquiry.
 - JSCATSIA ceased to exist at the dissolution of the House of Representatives on 28 March 2025.

Progress in Jurisdictions

- *ACT* – the Government has committed to a treaty and truth-telling process but is in very early stages. A \$20 million Healing and Reconciliation Fund was launched in early 2024 and closed in April 2024.
- *NSW* – the Government committed \$5 million for a 12-month consultation process on treaty. They have not committed to a formal truth-telling process.
- *QLD* – the Government has discontinued the treaty and truth-telling process.
- *NT* – the Government has discontinued the treaty process, instead looking to restore local control of communities to Aboriginal people through local government reform. The Government has not committed to a formal truth-telling process.

- SA – the Government is committed to progressing treaty and truth-telling in the order specified in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.
- TAS – in May 2025, the government announced \$880,000 (over 2 years) to appoint independent commissioners to guide a truth-telling process. They will no longer progress a treaty process.
- VIC – the Government has completed state-wide treaty negotiations with the First People’s Assembly of Victoria (FPAV). The Statewide Treaty Bill 2025 was formally tabled in Victorian State Parliament on 9 September 2025.
- WA – the Government has not committed to a formal process of treaty or truth-telling.

Impact

- First Nations peoples’ experiences of colonisation and injustice, as well as their resilience and contribution, have historically been excluded from Australia’s national narrative, resulting in a lack of shared understanding that undermines meaningful reconciliation.
- Truth-telling enables open acknowledgment of this history, while also celebrating First Nations peoples’ strength and deep connection to Country.
- The Australian Government supports and funds a wide array of practical initiatives to progress healing and reconciliation including:
 - Funding **Reconciliation Australia**.
 - The Office for the Arts (OFTA) supports the revival and maintenance of **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and arts**.
 - The **Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme**.
 - Funding **the Healing Foundation** to partner with communities and survivors to address ongoing trauma caused by forced removals.
 - The **Return of Cultural Heritage program**, led by AIATSIS working with communities to return First Nations’ cultural heritage materials.
 - A commitment to establish **Ngurra: The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Precinct** (see CEO brief 2.)

Facts and figures

- In 2022, the Government’s election commitment allocated \$27.7 million to establish a Makarrata Commission.

A large, bold, red graphic consisting of the letters 'S', '3', and '4' in a stylized font, set against a light grey rectangular background.

S34

Key Dates

- N/A

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|----------------|--|--------|
| Selena Patrick | A/g Group Manager, Country, Culture and Connection | s22(1) |
| Deborah Katona | Branch Manager, Culture and Empowerment | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Director, Empowered Communities | s22(1) |

Country, Culture and Connection

2. Ngurra Cultural Precinct ^{s22(1)}

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Selena Patrick, Acting Group Manager, Country, Culture and Connection

Key Talking Points

- The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Precinct (Ngurra) is a key initiative in the Government's reconciliation agenda.
- The project will establish two buildings next to the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' (AIATSIS) 'Maraga' building:
 - a new national institution as a dedicated site for celebration, education and reflection on First Nations cultures and histories; and
 - the National Resting Place to house and care for limited provenance First Nations Ancestors returned from overseas.
- The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) provides advice to the Minister for Indigenous Australians on the project and supports project governance as a member of Ngurra's Senior Steering Committee (SSC) and Ngurra's Interdepartmental Working Group.
- AIATSIS continues to undertake consultations and finalise the Ngurra Detailed Business Case.
- The Detailed Business Case will be considered by Government through standard Budget processes to progress a decision on the allocation of committed indicative funding.
- *NOTE: Questions on consultation, design and governance of Ngurra should be directed to AIATSIS for response.*

Background

- The current Government has committed to establishing the National Resting Place as part of its National Cultural Policy, *Revive*.
- Ngurra was a commitment of the former Morrison Government, which announced a funding provision to the Contingency Reserve of \$316.5 million in January 2022.

Impact

- Ngurra will provide a strong contribution to the ongoing processes of truth-telling and reconciliation:
 - National Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Centre will deliver a modern, fit-for-purpose and world-class facility that:
 - empowers First Nations peoples to tell their own stories; and
 - celebrate the 65,000-year history of this nation; and
 - ensures the protection of AIATSIS' invaluable collections.
 - The National Resting Place will realise a long-held aspiration of First Nations communities by providing a respectful and culturally appropriate facility for unprovenanced repatriated ancestral remains.

Facts and figures

- A total of **\$22.41 million** has been provided to AIATSIS through budget allocations from the Contingency Reserve and the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) to progress Ngurra.

Indigenous Advancement Strategy

- From 2019-2025 the IAS has provided \$9.5 million for the project:
 - a scoping study for a National Resting Place (\$2.6 million; 2019-20);
 - a business case for a National Indigenous Culture and Knowledge Centre (\$0.1 million; 2020-21);
 - a Detailed Business Case for Ngurra (\$4.7 million; 2020-22); and
 - to finalise the Detailed Business Case, including a financial budget and expenditure report (\$2.1 million; 2025-26).



Key dates

- LATE JUL 2024 – Contract for Ngurra design services is awarded to preferred supplier Denton Corker Marshall.
- 6 JUN 2024 – Minister for Indigenous Australians announced the revamped Ngurra to be built at Acton Peninsula.
- 30 MAY 2024 – AIATSIS advised that the outcome of the Ngurra Architectural Design Competition for Commonwealth Place was unable to be used due to the material change in location and scope.
- 5 JAN 2022 – The former Australian Government announced the construction of Ngurra, including \$316.5 million in funding support.

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| Selena Patrick | A/g Group Manager, Country, Culture and Connection | s22(1) |
| Deborah Katona | Branch Manager, Culture and Empowerment | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Director, Capability and Self-Determination | s22(1) |

Country, Culture and Connection Group

3. Confirmation of Indigeneity

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Selena Pattrick, Acting Group Manager, Country, Culture and Connection

Key Talking Points

- The Australian Government does not decide if an individual is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person. This is a matter for First Nations people and their communities to determine.
- However, for the purpose of determining eligibility for First Nations-specific programs or services, the Australian Government generally applies a three-part test of Indigeneity. This three-part test requires that a person:
 - is of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent,
 - identifies as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and
 - is recognised/accepted as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person by the community in which they live or have previously lived.
- This is a widely accepted test used by government agencies, First Nations organisations, and community organisations across various sectors.
- Application of the three-part test in the administration of First Nations services or programs is a matter for the respective organisations. As the test is not prescribed or legislated, organisations may choose to apply their own criteria.
- It is up to each organisation to determine whether sufficient proof of eligibility has been established.
- An individual's Indigeneity can be confirmed by a certified statement from a relevant representative community organisation, such as an Aboriginal Land Council or a community council.
- In Commonwealth legislation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are generally defined by reference solely to their race and descent.
 - When identifying people in the context of those legislative definitions, the Courts have endorsed the use of the three-part test in practice.
 - However, the Courts do not always insist on adherence to the second and third elements of the test.

Use of Statutory Declaration

The Government acknowledges there has been criticism about some organisations or institutions accepting Statutory Declarations as proof of Indigeneity.

- Obtaining formal documentation can be challenging for many Indigenous people. In these circumstances, a Statutory Declaration made by someone of standing within the community may be acceptable.
- When accepting a Statutory Declaration, the onus is on the organisation or institution to consider the risks and the other information provided by the individual.

Suggestions about changing how Indigeneity is determined

- Suggestions are occasionally made in the media or to the Government that using historical records or introducing DNA testing would be appropriate for proving Indigeneity.
- Proving Indigenous ancestry through historical records can be difficult for several reasons, including:
 - A lack of reliable records (or any records);
 - The forced removal of Indigenous children from their families resulted in connections that may be hidden or untraceable;
 - Family members denying Indigenous heritage out of shame or fear; and
 - Past government policies such as assimilation and ‘protection’ may have also removed Indigeneity from official records.
- Genetic testing is also undesirable:
 - There is no reliable database of ‘Aboriginal’ DNA and test results only provide an estimate of a person’s genetic makeup; not a conclusive genetic identity.
 - It would revive outdated and offensive categorisations of Indigenous people based on ‘blood quantum rules,’ causing further trauma to Indigenous Australians who had to comply with similar regimes in the past and introducing new generations to the stigma and trauma of having to prove their Indigeneity.
- If any changes to the method of proving Indigeneity are proposed, they should be led and developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within their communities and institutions and through their consultative processes, not imposed by governments.

Background

- The Australian Government has applied a three-part test of Indigeneity for access to government assistance and services since the 1980s.
- Commonwealth legislation does not usually reference the three-part test. However, matters of identity have been dealt with by the courts in several cases, including *Mabo v Queensland (No. 2)* (1992), *Gibbs v Capewell & Ors* (1995), *Shaw v Wolf* (1998), *Love v Commonwealth of Australia* (2020), *Thoms v Commonwealth of Australia* (2020), and *Thompson v Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs* (2021).
- Under migration law, the courts and the Department of Home Affairs have applied a stricter form of the three-part test. This requires that recognition (the third part of the test) be in accordance with traditional law and custom, which has been observed uninterrupted since sovereignty, and that the recognition be by the same First Nations community from which the person is descended (which may not be the community in which they now live).
 - The colonial history of Australia, which disrupted or destroyed many Indigenous cultural practices, makes it challenging for this requirement to be satisfied.

Impact

- The APS and the Australian Government should not intervene, or be perceived to intervene, in any disputes regarding the identity of Indigenous people or Traditional Owner groups in any jurisdiction.
- These are private matters and an individual's or a group's Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity should be respected.

Facts and figures

- The 2021 Census showed that as of 30 June 2021 the estimated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population was **983,709**, representing **3.8%** of the total Australian population.
 - This is a **23.2% increase** (or 185,344 people) over the estimated residential population in 2016.
 - In 2016, the estimated resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population as of 30 June 2016 was 798,365 people, or 3.3% of the total Australian population.¹
- The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) notes the increase in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population cannot not be explained by demographic factors alone.
 - For example, approximately 13,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were born between 2016 and 2021.²
- Non-demographic factors are hard to quantify but include unexpected changes in age-cohorts, changes in people identifying as Indigenous over time, and changes in Census coverage and responses.
- For the purposes of the Census, a person's Indigeneity is self-reported.
- A person's identification as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander can change throughout his or her life. This may be due to shifting social or personal circumstances, or people making decisions about their lives and how they choose to identify in various contexts.
 - First Nations identity is deeply personal and there are various reasons why someone may choose to identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander where they had not previously.
 - The Government will not speculate on the reasons why people do or do not choose to identify as Indigenous.
 - Care should be taken to not infer any particular motive to a person's decision to self-identify. Claims that people stand to gain substantial financial benefits by identifying as Indigenous are grossly overstated.
- Questions about Census data and any analyses of trends should be directed to the ABS.

¹ [Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 30 June 2021 | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

² [2021 Australia, Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people QuickStats | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

Key Dates

- N/A

| | | |
|----------------|--|--------|
| Selena Patrick | A/g Group Manager, Country, Culture and Connection | s22(1) |
| Deborah Katona | Branch Manager, Culture and Empowerment | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Public Law Team, Legal Services Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Policy, Program and Delivery Team | s22(1) |

Country, Culture and Connection

4. Indigenous Rangers Program (IRP)

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Selena Pattick, Acting Group Manager, Country, Culture and Connection

Key Talking Points

- The Indigenous Rangers Program (IRP) is funded through the NIAA to assist Indigenous Australians to manage land and sea Country throughout Australia in line with Traditional Owners' objectives. Projects undertaken by Indigenous rangers combine traditional knowledge, cultural practices and western science. Activities include:
 - habitat and species management, rescue and rehabilitation,
 - cultural burns and fire suppression,
 - controlling weeds and feral animals,
 - biosecurity monitoring,
 - strengthening First Nations language and Culture,
 - cultural heritage protection and maintenance, and
 - visitor education.
- The NIAA is delivering the Government's commitment to double the number of Indigenous rangers to 3,800 by 2030 and work towards gender equality in ranger positions by expanding and diversifying the IRP.
- The expansion of the IRP will be through two competitive grant opportunities, leading to a phased increase in ranger jobs up to 2028.
- Expansion Grant Round 1 was held in 2024 and successful Round 1 applicants were notified in October 2024, with the majority of projects commencing in the first half of 2025.
- There was a high rate of interest in Round 1, with 250 applications received and 111 projects found successful after a robust selection process.
 - All Round 1 expansion funding agreements have been signed, and activities are commencing.
- Round 1 of the expansion was successful in meeting its priorities, creating:
 - up to 560 FTE new ranger positions (equates to up to 1,000 new full-time, part-time and casual positions),
 - 111 new ranger groups, of these 80 organisations are delivering brand new ranger groups,
 - all 111 ranger groups have either dedicated women ranger groups or are employing women rangers,
 - new ranger groups on 18 IPAs without existing IRP rangers.

- IRP Expansion Round 2 opened on Tuesday 1 April 2025 and closed on Friday 5 June 2025, with funding of up to \$165 million available over 3 years from 2025-28.
 - Round 2 is a national open, competitive round and will build on the outcomes of Round 1 of the IRP Expansion. It aims to deliver up to 500 new FTE ranger position (equates to 800 additional ranger jobs).
 - Round 2 builds on the achievements of Round 1 and has been informed by feedback received from Round 1 applicants, Indigenous Rangers sector consultations and targeted workshops with the Indigenous Rangers Reference Group and Empowered Communities.
 - 201 applications were received in Round 2 and the assessment phase is currently being finalised.
 - An announcement of successful applicants is scheduled for the last quarter of 2025.
- The NIAA is working closely with other Commonwealth departments, state governments and sector-based groups on measures to support new organisations receiving funding under the IRP Expansion and support the growth of the sector, including training and the establishment of communities of practice.

Junior Rangers (Program 1.2 – Children & Schooling)

- Through the 2022-23 and 2023-24 Budgets, the Australian Government committed \$49.93 million over 5 financial years (2023-24 to 2027-28) to support the establishment and operation of junior ranger activities at 50 new locations by 2028. Following this, the Government also agreed to expand junior ranger activities to 5 new locations in Central Australia, and a second grant round in 2025 will provide an additional \$6 million over 2.5 years.

Indigenous Rangers Reference Group

- The NIAA has established an IRRG to support expansion of the Indigenous ranger land and water management sector and deliver an Indigenous Ranger Sector Strategy.
 - Current membership includes: 7 First Nations experts in Indigenous land and water management; a representative from DCCEE's Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC); and an adviser from the NIAA.

Impact

- The IRP delivers a broad range of benefits including environmental, cultural, social and economic development outcomes across Australia.
 - Narungaa park rangers work with Point Pearce Aboriginal Community Council (PPAC), the South Australian Department of Environment (DEW) and the South Australian Museum in the repatriation of ancestors to Country.

- Firelore Pty Ltd is an Indigenous owned and operated cultural land management consultancy and training collective that conducts cultural burning, burning workshops, education days and a series of partnered projects. Firelore also works together with Elders in land title areas to train the next generation in heritage practices. Firelore is the first company of its kind to hold public liability and indemnity insurance for cultural burn services and is fully insured for controlled burning.
- Delivery of Indigenous ranger measures will result in increased culturally appropriate training and employment pathways and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially in remote and regional locations and recognising the role women play in caring for Country.
 - The Tjuwanpa Women Rangers look after Country across 5 Northern Territory Aboriginal Lands Trusts, including cultural burning, threatened species management, controlling invasive cat populations, monitoring native flora and looking after rock holes. They are actively working to control Buffel grass, to protect cultural sites and bush foods for future generations.
- The IRP and associated Indigenous land and water sector activities address Closing the Gap Targets 15 and 16 and Priority Reform 2. Junior Rangers addresses Targets 5 and 7 and Priority Reform 2.

Facts and figures

- The Government is funding over \$1.3 billion in IRP and initiatives through the NIAA from 2021 to 2028. This includes \$759.5 million for existing groups (2021-28), \$342.0 million for Round One groups (from 2024-25) and other initiatives.

Existing 2021-28 program:

- \$759.5 million approved for existing IRP activities from 2021 to 2028.
- In 2024-25, the IRP supported 79 existing providers to deliver 128 ranger activities to engage a minimum of 894.75 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) staff, including approx. 770 FTE First Nations people. This represents approx. 1,900 individual rangers engaged in full-time, part-time or casual work.

Expansion program:

- \$636.4 million total funding (\$605.7 million administered, \$30.7 million departmental).
- IRP Expansion Round One is supporting 105 providers to deliver 111 ranger groups and is funding 519 Indigenous ranger FTE, including 353 Indigenous women ranger FTE (\$342.0 million in funding approved to 30 June 2028).
- There is \$165 million per financial year to 30 June 2028 available for the IRP Expansion Round 2.

Other initiatives:

- Up to \$25.7 million to Early Years and Education to strengthen youth education pathways into land and water management through junior ranger initiatives (included in \$49.93 million for new junior ranger sites).

- Up to \$2.8 million to establish an Indigenous-led peak body.
- Up to \$1.8 million for supporting activities including monitoring and evaluation activities and the IRRG.
- The IRP supports equity in remuneration and employment conditions but does not specify ranger conditions or pay rates. Salaries and conditions for NIAA funded rangers should be comparable with those offered by state governments for similar roles. As there is no award for Indigenous rangers, the organisation can choose an appropriate award or a registered enterprise agreement.

Key Dates

- 5 JUN 2025 – IRP Expansion Round 2 Grant Opportunity Guidelines closed.
- 1 APR 2025 – IRP Expansion Round 2 Grant Opportunity Guidelines opened.
- 4 – 5 SEP 2024 – IRP Expansion Round 2 Grant Opportunity National Panel.
- 31 OCT 2024 – IRP Expansion Round 1 results announced by the Minister.
- 26 FEB 2024 – IRP Expansion Round 1 closed.
- 11 DEC 2023 – IRP Expansion Round 1 opened.
- Indigenous Ranger Reference Group meetings - 8 FEB, 25 MAR, 4 JUN, 29 JUL, 23 SEP, 11 NOV 2024, 12 MAY 2025, 28 AUG 2025. Next meeting is proposed for SEP 2025.

| | | |
|-------------------|--|--------|
| Selena Patrick | A/g Group Manager, Country, Culture and Connection | s22(1) |
| Lara Wood Gladwin | Branch Manager, Environment | s22(1) |
| Andrew Cochrane | Branch Manager, Ranger Expansion Implementation | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Indigenous Environment Programs | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Ranger Policy and Sector Support | s22(1) |

Country, Culture and Connection Group

5. Land Council and Native Title Organisations Governance

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Selena Pattrick, Acting Group Manager, Country, Culture and Connection
- Rachel Kerrigan, Branch Manager, Land and Native Title

Key Talking Points

Northern Territory Land Councils – governance

- Functions of Northern Territory (NT) Land Councils are detailed in the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (ALRA) which operate within the parameters of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA Act).
- NT Land Councils are accountable to Aboriginal people in their regions including Traditional Owners. Regular meetings, including of the Full Council, ensure Land Council decisions and actions can be scrutinised by the members and the communities they represent.
- The Government works with and regularly consults with the four Land Councils under the ALRA and other stakeholders in the NT regarding opportunities to improve processes and systems and takes concerns about governance very seriously.

If asked what is the NIAA doing in response to allegations about the conflict of interest of NLC Council members working with Good Advice/the gas industry:

- The NLC has provided information about its management of conflicts of interest for members both in their capacity as NLC members and in external engagements, including specific guidance for members engaged in the oil and gas industry and training provided to support members.
- The NLC advised the NIAA that it requested Beetaloo Energy cease the practice of holding information meetings run by Good Advice consultancy (email received 21 July 2025), and Beetaloo Energy no longer uses Good Advice's services.
- The NLC has an important role under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976* (Land Rights Act) to consult with Traditional Owners and to be satisfied that the Traditional Owners understand the proposed action and as a group consent to it.

Calls for an inquiry into Land Councils

- NT Land Councils and Native Title Representative Bodies/Service Providers (NTRB-SPs) have a range of governance and accountability mechanisms in place and are accountable to their members and constituents. The Northern and Central Land Councils are also NTRBs.

- There are established review and accountability mechanisms in place for Land Councils and other representative bodies.
 - NT Land Councils are Commonwealth statutory authorities subject to regular scrutiny by Parliament including appearance at Senate Estimates and review by the ANAO.
 - Annual reports of the NT Land Councils are tabled in Parliament each year.

If asked whether NIAA has briefed the Minister on these matters:

- The NIAA routinely briefs the Minister in relation to Land Councils' roles and functions under the ALRA, including consideration of the Minister's role and responsibilities under the Act.

Native Title Representative Bodies and Service Providers (NTRB-SPs) – governance

- The *Native Title Act 1993* details the functions of NTRB-SPs and requires NTRB-SPs to have structures and processes that are representative, consultative and fair. In ensuring this, NTRB-SPs must have particular regard to matters including opportunities for Traditional Owners to participate, procedures for making and reviewing decisions, and for reporting back.
- The effective functioning of NTRB-SPs is essential for the provision of support to Native Title claimants and holders.
- The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) funds NTRB-SPs to support their effective functioning, including assisting with Native Title applications, assessment and prioritisation of applications, achievement of positive Native Title outcomes, supporting PBCs working towards self-sufficiency, and planning for post-determination.
- Apart from Central Land Council and Northern Land Council (which are corporate Commonwealth entities), NTRB-SPs are incorporated under the *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act) or the *Corporations Act 2001*.
- All NTRB-SPs are required to provide regular financial and activity reports on their Native Title functions to the NIAA under their funding agreements.
- NIAA also undertakes rolling independent performance reviews of NTRB-SPs – most recently reviews have been conducted over 2017-2021, and 2023-2024. The 2023-2024 process is nearing completion, and arrangements are being made for publication once finalised.
- As well as individual reports, Nous made systemic findings which NIAA is addressing in future policy and program development, including the recently announced further investment in PBCs, while the individual findings will be followed up with each organisation.

If asked *What is the Government doing to ensure accountability of NTRB-SPs?*

- Most NTRBs are incorporated under the CATSI Act and as such regulated by the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations and must provide annual reports and audited accounts to the Registrar. Six providers are companies under the *Corporations Act 2001* and are regulated by the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) and subject to its reporting regime including an annual report with financial statements.
- The Central Land Council and Northern Land Council are which are NTRBs in the Northern Territory, are statutory bodies in their own right and subject to financial reporting obligations under the ALRA and the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* (PGPA).
- In addition, all NTRB-SPs, as recipients of IAS funding, are subject to financial acquittal obligations under their funding agreements.

PBC Governance

- When a Native Title determination is made, Native Title holders must establish a Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) which manages their Native Title rights and interests.
- PBCs are incorporated under the CATSI Act which sets out their corporate responsibilities including obligations to their members.
 - PBCs are regulated by the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations.
 - Corporate responsibilities include the lodgement of General Reports to Office of the Register of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) and, depending on their size and income, Financial Reports.
 - Questions about ORIC's compliance enforcement measures should be addressed to ORIC.
- Under the Native Title Act PBCs also have Native Title responsibilities and obligations to Native Title holders.

If asked: *What is the Government doing to ensure transparency of PBC decision making and trust arrangements?*

- The Government is aware of concerns about the accountability and transparency of some Native Title trust arrangements.
- Issues around how PBCs manage and govern Native Title benefits and trusts are complex.
- How trusts are regulated depends on how the trust is set up. Responsibility for regulation of trusts is split between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments and all jurisdictions have a *Trustees Act* which regulates the trustees and trust property. At the Commonwealth level, the management and regulations of trusts is primarily overseen by the Department of Finance.

- Decisions about agreements and trust arrangements that PBCs enter into, are often commercial-in-confidence or private matters. It is difficult - and in most circumstances not appropriate - for the Commonwealth Government to intervene.
- Native Title monies and benefits are a matter for the Native Title group, represented by the PBC. Native Title holders should be able to make decisions about how their income is invested and distributed.
- The Government funds governance and capability training for PBCs, including a focus on transparency and accountability to Native Title holders.
- Strong transparency and accountability has been a principle of the work developed by the PBC Steering Group and is an important consideration in the detailed design for implementation of the additional \$75 million announced by the Prime Minister at Garna.
 - The Steering Group have developed principles on transparency and accountability to promote improved governance of PBC funding and operations.
 - This includes improved transparency of PBCs to their Native Title holders, and of NTRB-SPs around the support they provide to PBCs.
 - Government will continue to work with the Steering Group, NTRB-SPs and the broader sector on how transparency and accountability principles inform PBC reform.

Background

Northern Land Council Conflict of Interest

- The Minister responded to two OPDs (13 August and 1 September) relating to NLC Council members and their role working with Good Advice, a consultancy organisation working with industry to engage Traditional Owners about mining/gas projects.
- In December 2024, the NLC Full Council proposed updated Meeting Rules and Code of Conduct, that address recommendations of the 2023 Australian National Audit Office's (ANAO) audit, including on managing conflicts of interest. The Minister approved the Meeting Rules on 27 March 2025.
- The updated Code of Conduct includes a specific statement that NLC Members employed on behalf of oil and gas companies to consult with Traditional Owners must manage their conflict or face potential disciplinary action.

ANAO audits of NT Land Councils

- The ANAO completed scheduled performance audits of the four NT Land Councils in 2023.
 - The NIAA is supporting the Land Councils as they continue to work through recommendations.
- The focus of the ANAO audits was to identify:
 - Is the Land Council effectively governing its legislative functions under the ALRA?
 - Is the accountable authority effectively governing its legislative functions under the PGPA Act?

Impact

- N/A

Facts and figures

- There are 286 PBCs.
- There are 4 NT Land Councils
 - Funding from the Aboriginals Benefit Account (ABA) for the operations of the NT Land Councils in 2024-25 totals \$165.8 million (as at 30 June 2025).
- There are 14 NTRB-SPs (two are also NT Land Councils)
 - Funding from the IAS for the 14 NTRB-SPs in 2025-26, including PBC basic support, totals \$136.09 million (as at 31 July 2025).
 - Total IAS funding available for the Native Title sector for 2025-26 is approximately \$180 million, including PBC capacity building and other activities to support the sector including training.

Key Dates*Anindilyakwa Land Council*

- 20-21 AUG 2025 – s47F [REDACTED] appointed as new CEO by Board.
- 7 JUL 2025 – s47F [REDACTED] resigns as CEO.
- 19 MAR 2025 – ALC Board appoints s47F [REDACTED] as new CEO.
- 16 OCT 2024 – The ALC Board terminated the employment of CEO s47F [REDACTED] and appointed Chief Financial Officer s47F [REDACTED] as interim CEO, pending recruitment of a new CEO.
- 29 AUG 2024 – Bellchambers Barrett report into the ALC's response to the ANAO recommendations published on NIAA website.

Central Land Council

- 21 JAN 2025 – Question on Notice NIAA078 published containing criminal history check of the current Chair s47F [REDACTED]
- 17 SEP 2024 – CLC Full Council special meeting resolved to remove former Chair s47F [REDACTED] and elect a new Chair and Deputy Chair.
- 28 AUG 2024 – CLC Full Council special meeting to consider the Chair's conduct, no decisions were taken at this meeting.

| | | |
|-------------------|--|-------------------|
| Selena Patrick | A/g Group Manager, Country, Culture and Connection | s22(1) [REDACTED] |
| Rachel Kerrigan | Branch Manager, Land and Native Title | s22(1) [REDACTED] |
| s22(1) [REDACTED] | NT Land Operations Section | s22(1) [REDACTED] |
| s22(1) [REDACTED] | Native Title Policy Section | s22(1) [REDACTED] |

Country, Culture and Connection Group

6. Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC) Reform

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Selena Pattrick, Acting Group Manager, Country, Connection and Culture
- Rachel Kerrigan, Branch Manager, Land and Native Title

Key Talking Points

- The Australian Government recognises the essential role PBCs play in supporting Native Title holders to take advantage of social, cultural and economic opportunities arising from their Native Title rights and interests.
- This is why, in his 2025 Garma speech, the Prime Minister announced an additional \$75 million for PBCs (over three years). This brings total investment in PBCs through the IAS to \$200 million over the next 3 years.
- The Prime Minister has stated that a first priority for the First Nations Economic Partnership will be to provide advice to Government on a funding model for PBCs to ensure they can capitalise on economic opportunities through this new investment.
- Their advice, along with advice from the PBC Steering Group and other First Nations stakeholders in the sector, will inform how this funding will be delivered from 1 July 2026.
- This investment means PBCs will be equipped to partner with industry and Government and can generate economic benefits for their communities.

If asked: about the PBC Steering Group

- The NIAA and the National Native Title Council (NNTC) established a PBC Steering Group to ensure PBCs have greater influence on Native Title policy.
- Establishing the PBC Steering Group was part of the Government's response to Recommendations 7 and 8 of the *A Way Forward* report of the Juukan Gorge Inquiry. The Government also provided in-principle support for considering options for PBC funding reform and transparency and accountability as part of this response.
- The Steering Group has 26 members from PBCs of various sizes, maturity and locations.
- The PBC Steering Group has provided advice on PBC funding reforms to the Minister, and the NIAA continues to work with the Group on the detail of design.
- The new funding and involvement of the Partnership provides opportunity to support the development of the PBC Steering Group's advice for stage one of reforms, and also direct longer term reform.

If asked *What is the role of the First Nations Economic Partnership in this funding?*

- The First Nations Economic Partnership will provide advice on how this additional investment for PBCs can best leverage economic opportunities, and ensure investment complements other work underway.

If asked *Is the Government considering further reforms for the PBC sector?*

- Yes. This new funding is a first step to broader reform of the PBC sector.
- The Australian Government will continue to work with the sector on further reforms, acknowledging that there have been a number of reviews and inquiries, including the Juukan Gorge Inquiry, and the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) review of the future acts regime of the Native Title Act which is still underway.

If asked *Will operational funding for PBCs increase?*

- Operational funding is important to ensure PBCs have the base operations to engage with proponents and progress their economic, environmental and other aspirations.
- Ensuring PBCs are positioned to operate and negotiate with industry and progress their aspirations will be an important part of the new investment.

Background

- The current [PBC Capacity Building Grant Opportunity Guidelines \(GoGs\)](#) and the Performance of Representative Body Functions GoGs expire 30 June 2025, and steps are being taken by the NIAA to renew them, with further funding forecast beyond 2027-2028.
- In response to the Juukan Gorge Parliamentary Inquiry, the Minister for Indigenous Australians has responsibility for 2 recommendations concerning PBCs, both of which were agreed to in-principle:
 - Recommendation 7 – relating to funding for PBCs
 - Recommendation 8 – relating to transparency requirements on PBCs to demonstrate adequate consultation.
- A number of other recent reviews and reports that have called for increased funding for PBCs including, for example:
 - Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs *Inquiry into economic self-determination and opportunities for First Nations Australians* (March 2024)
 - Australian Human Rights Commission's *Women in Native Title* (March 2024)
 - Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Trade and Investment Growth, *Inquiry into Australia's transition to a green energy superpower* (October 2023)
 - Productivity Commission's *Study Report on Resources Sector Regulation* (November 2020)

Impact

- The Government has committed an additional \$75 million to PBCs, over three years from July 2026. This brings total investment in PBCs to \$200 million over the next 3 years.
- This funding supports 286 PBCs across the country to realise, and capitalise, on their Native Title rights and interests.

Facts and figures

- There are currently 286 PBCs.
 - Many operate with little to no resourcing with over half having income under \$100,000 and over 40% having no employees in 2023-24.
- The Government has committed an additional \$75 million to PBCs, over three years from July 2026. This brings total investment in PBCs to \$200 million through the IAS over the next 3 years.
 - The \$200 million is made up of the \$75 million in new money as well as existing funding provided through Native Title Representative Bodies and Service Providers and the PBC Capacity Building program.
- The PBC Capacity Building Program provides direct funding to PBCs to support them to build capacity and realise economic opportunities. The Program is ongoing, with \$32.11 million available in 2025-2026.

Key Dates

- 11 DEC 2024 – PBC Steering Group provided advice to Minister on PBC funding model options.
- 18 FEB 2025 – PBC Steering Group met with the Minister’s office to discuss their advice.
- 2 AUG 2025 – the Prime Minister announced \$75 million in new funding for PBCs.
- 7 AUG 2025 – the Minister met with the PBC Steering Group to discuss the new funding and progress of PBC reforms.

| | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------------------|--------|
| Selena Patrick | Country, Culture and Connection Group | s22(1) |
| Rachel Kerrigan | Land and Native Title Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | PBC Support | s22(1) |

Jobs and Economic Development Group

1. Remote Jobs and Economic Development program (RJED)

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Jessica Guthrie, Group Manager, Jobs & Economic Development Group

Key Talking Points

- To replace the Community Development Program (CDP), communities told us they wanted help funding jobs that were with local organisations and that were of benefit to the whole community.
- On 13 February 2024, the Government announced the RJED program by investing \$707 million to support remote job seekers to create real jobs for locals, with good pay and conditions, like superannuation and leave.
- The RJED program aims to create 3,000 new jobs to build people's skills and give them work experience that will help them transition into other employment opportunities in the future.
- Once people have gained experience, there may be further opportunities to connect them with jobs in the public or private sectors.
- There was a projected regional allocation of jobs for the first two RJED grant rounds that was based on the size of the CDP caseload in each region.
- It assumes 20% of jobs are full-time and 80% are part-time.
- The projected allocations also took into account around 280 jobs from the New Jobs Program Trial (NJPT) that transitioned into RJED after the NJPT wrapped up on 30 June 2025.
- Interested organisations can apply for funding through a grants process to create new jobs and pay for:
 - An employee's wages, up to the relevant award or minimum wage rate (whichever is applicable), plus relevant conditions, such as superannuation and leave.
 - Equipment, infrastructure, capacity building, on-costs and overheads (e.g. uniforms, a shed, on-the-job training, insurances or operating expenses).

Background

- The CDP is being replaced by both RJED and the Remote Australian Employment Service (RAES).
- Both programs were developed in partnership with remote communities and First Nations peoples.
- They are based on the learnings and successes of the previous CDP job trials and what we heard through consultations. They have also been informed by previous Parliamentary inquiries and lessons learned from CDP trials.

Impact

- To date there have been 2 RJED grant rounds.
- NIAA received around 650 applications and has funded 1,450 jobs with around 250 employers in remote communities across Australia.
- Jobs approved reflect a mix of part-time, full-time and casual roles in a variety of sectors, including tourism, agriculture, health care, retail, administration, community services and maintenance, culture and the arts.
- These jobs are in addition to the approximately 280 NJPT jobs.
- There is a high demand for RJED funding and we are on track to meet the job creation targets set out in the first two financial years of the program.
- A third grant round will be held in 2025-26.

Facts and figures

- From **RJED Round 1 and 2**, over 1450 jobs have been approved for around 250 employers in remote communities across Australia.
- An approximate breakdown of approved jobs by NIAA Region is:

| Region | Round 1 jobs | Round 2 jobs | Total (approx.) |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------|
| Arnhem Land & Groote Eylandt | 140 | 100 | 240 |
| Central Australia | 100 | 150 | 250 |
| Greater Western Australia | 80 | 130 | 210 |
| Kimberley | 50 | 100 | 150 |
| North Queensland | 130 | 150 | 280 |
| South Australia | 30 | 25 | 55 |
| South Queensland | 20 | 5 | 25 |
| Top End & Tiwi Islands | 100 | 130 | 230 |
| Western New South Wales | 10 | 10 | 20 |
| If quoting total (approx.) | 650 | 800 | 1,450 |

Budget and Policy commitments

| RJED* | 2023-24 | 2024-25 | 2025-26 | 2026-27 | 2027-28 | Total |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| \$ million | 3.942 | 83.935 | 145.527 | 219.621 | 255.534 | 707.6 |

*Includes all costs for NIAA, DSS, DEWR and Services Australia

Key Dates

- 1 NOV 2025: RAES commences.
- 31 OCT 2025: CDP closure.
- 30 JUN 2025 – the New Jobs Program Trial ends.
- 12 APR 2025: RJED Round 1 outcomes announced by the Minister.
- 7 APR 2025: Second RJED grant round closes.
- 4 FEB 2025: Second RJED grant round opened.

- 3 FEB 2025: First RJED grant round closed for applications.
- 11 DEC 2024: RJED program open for first grant round.
- 22 OCT 2024: The updated GOGs were published on GrantConnect to extend NJPT to 30 JUN 2025.
- 10 to 31 JUL 2024 – draft Grant Opportunity Guidelines (GOGs) for the RJED program published and promoted online for public consultation/comment.
- APR to JUL 2024 – second round of community consultations.
- 7 MAR 2024 – First Nations Reference Group established.
- FEB to JUN 2023 – first round of consultations.
- 18 SEP 2023 – New Jobs Program Trial Grant Opportunity opens.

| | | |
|-----------------|--|--------|
| Jessica Guthrie | Jobs and Economic Development Group | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Remote Jobs and Employment Programs Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Remote Employment Governance | s22(1) |

Jobs and Economic Development Group

Remote Australia Employment Service

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

Jessica Guthrie, Group Manager, Jobs & Economic Development Group

Elizabeth Crombie, A/g Branch Manager, RAES and Policy Branch

Key Talking Points

- The Australian Government is investing \$1.9 billion over 5 years for the new Remote Australia Employment Service (RAES) to replace the Community Development Program (CDP) on 1 November 2025.
- RAES will support around 40,000 job seekers across 1,200 remote communities in 60 remote regions where Workforce Australia does not operate.
- RAES will support job seekers with the skills, mentoring and training they need to take up job opportunities, including those created through the Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program.
- The design of RAES has been informed by three remote employment trials, and feedback received through two phases of public consultation across remote communities in 2023 and 2024.
- Compared to CDP, RAES has:
 - A focus on job seeker engagement rather than compliance and will have stronger engagement with job seekers – providers will have more flexibility about how they engage with job seekers (for example in person, phone or outreach servicing) to tailor services to individual job seekers
 - Co-designed Community Projects embedded to support local priorities and aspirations and support local workforce development
 - 52 weeks of Employment Placement Support
 - A focus on improving Literacy and Numeracy through pilots in a small number of regions
 - A focus on improving the job seeker assessment process in a small number of regions
 - Increased investment in building provider capability.
- Current CDP services have been extended until 31 October 2025 to continue to support remote job seekers and ensure a smooth transition to RAES.
- RAES is on track to commence on 1 November 2025.

Legislative instruments

- Work is progressing to update relevant legislative instruments to reflect the change from CDP to RAES. Two sunseting legislative instruments have been

re-made by the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and came into effect on 1 October 2025:

- Social Security (Administration) (Persistent Non-compliance) Determination 2025
- Social Security (Administration) (Penalty Amount) Determination 2025.
- We are working with the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to remake and update the following legislative instruments:
 - Social Security (Declared Program Participant) Determination 2018
 - this instrument is required to be remade to ensure RAES participants remain subject to compliance under the Job Seeker Compliance Framework.
 - Social Security (Streamlined Participation Requirements) Instrument 2022
 - updates to this instrument are required to add 'Work Skills and Projects' as an Approved Program of Work (APW) and support participants to continue to receive the APW supplement payment under the RAES program.
 - the APW supplement payment is a \$20.80 fortnightly payment on top of primary income support payments.
 - 'Work Skills and Projects' are projects and participation options that offer work-like experiences, aimed to equip remote job seekers with skills to move into work and provide opportunities to contribute to their community.
- We are working with the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing to remake the:
 - Australian Hearing (Declared Hearing Services) Determination 2019
 - this instrument will be remade to update CDP references to RAES so Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders who are participants in RAES are eligible to receive hearing services from the Authority, known as Australian Hearing Services.

RAES grant round

- A competitive grant round opened on 30 June and closed on 28 July 2025.
- We received 196 applications through the open-competitive process.
 - *If Asked:* There were 5 applications received after the closing time/date of the grant opportunity. The decision maker considered justification commentary and evidence on a case-by-case basis and all proceeded through the assessment process.
- Following the assessment process, applicants were informed of their outcomes in mid-September 2025.

- As the execution of RAES contracts is still underway, we are unable to release further details about the future RAES providers (including organisation names, locations and ownership structure) as these are not yet final.
- A list of the RAES providers will be published on the NIAA website this month (before 1 November 2025).
 - *If Pressed:* We can take on notice your request for more information about the outcomes of the RAES assessment process.
- To ensure the smooth transition to RAES, incoming providers will be supported through a series of training events including face-to-face induction sessions, webinars and access to the Provider Portal and Learning Centre (hosted by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)).

Background

- The CDP is the employment service that operates in remote regions of Australia, while Workforce Australia and the Disability Employment Services Program are the employment services programs that operate in non-remote regions of Australia.

Mutual obligations under RAES

- The current mutual obligations arrangements in place for CDP will remain in place for RAES and RAES participants will be required to meet mutual obligations by agreeing to a Job Plan, attending regular appointments and job interviews, meeting job search requirements (depending on the strength of the local labour market) and accepting suitable paid work.
- Participation in activities to meet mutual obligations will remain voluntary in RAES.
- To support the transition, mutual obligation requirements for participants have been paused while they move from the CDP to RAES.
- The pause is in effect from Wednesday 1 October 2025 until Monday 5 January 2026, resuming on Tuesday 6 January 2026. This is broadly consistent with the mutual obligations pause that will apply for the transition from the Disability Employment Service to Inclusive Employment Australia.
- While participants will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions during the pause, they will still be encouraged to:
 - Meet with their RAES provider when they are contacted after 1 November 2025 and
 - Discuss and agree to a new Job Plan at the appointment.
- When mutual obligations resume on Tuesday 6 January 2026, RAES participants will be required to agree a job plan, attend regular appointments and job interviews, meet job search requirements (dependent on the strength of the local labour market) and accept suitable paid work.
- RAES will differ from CDP by leading with a strengths-based approach, supporting providers to work collaboratively within the remote communities they operate in.

- In practice, this means that there will be less of a focus on compliance activities and more focus on engagement with participants, on the projects that are designed for their communities.
- Compliance of mutual obligations for remote regions is administered through the Job Seeker Compliance Framework (JSCF). The Targeted Compliance Framework (TCF) operates in employment services programs in non-remote regions of Australia.
- The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) hold policy responsibility for mutual obligations and compliance.

Impact

- The RAES will support around 40,000 job seekers across 60 RAES regions (currently CDP regions).
- It will support job seekers with the skills, training and mentoring they need to become job ready and connect with work opportunities – including those created through the RJED program [see RJED]. Around 86 per cent of job seekers in remote Australia identify as First Nations people.

Facts and figures

- As part of the 2024-25 MYEFO process, the Government committed \$1.5 billion over four years to deliver RAES and to provide extensions to other employment programs. Of this, \$1.4 billion over four years to 2027-28 will be invested in RAES, plus a further \$448.8 million in 2028–29 **bringing the total figure to \$1.9 billion.**
 - The \$1.4 billion figure includes \$939 million of existing CDP funding to partially offset RAES and \$461.4 million in new funding for the NIAA, DEWR, Services Australia and DSS to deliver RAES.
- Additional items comprising the \$1.5 billion include:
 - \$15.0 million over two years from 2024–25 to extend the Tailored Assistance Employment Grant program to 31 December 2025.
 - \$14.3 million in 2024–25 to extend the New Jobs Program trial to 30 June 2025 to support a smooth transition of jobs to the Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program. Note: this has been offset by a \$10.3 million reduction in RJED program spending. The IAS will be required to absorb the remaining \$3.9 million.
- Approximately \$1.7 billion or 98 per cent of funding is administered and \$36 million or 2 per cent is departmental.
- The costs for NIAA are for service payments for RAES providers, supporting RAES provider capability uplift, and to implement the Language Literacy and Numeracy and Job Seeker Assessment pilots.
- DEWR's costs largely relate to implementing enhancements to the RAES ICT platform and the RAES transition line and National Customer Service Line.
- DSS costs relate to forecast changes associated with income support payments, including an increase of Jobseeker customers being moved to the

higher paying Disability Support Pension due to improved job seeker assessment processes.

| \$m | 2024-25 | 2025-26 | 2026-27 | 2027-28 | 2028-29 | Total |
|--------------|---------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| NIAA | 7.36 | 460.652 | 444.934 | 435.615 | 445.635 | 1794.196 |
| DSS | 0 | 15.329 | 17.001 | 2.610 | 2.667 | 37.607 |
| SA | -1.541 | 28.58 | 2.31 | 0.563 | 0.481 | 30.393 |
| DEWR | 7.737 | 5.890 | 0.935 | 1.656 | 0 | 16.218 |
| Total | 13.556 | 510.451 | 465.18 | 440.444 | 448.783 | 1878.414 |

Key Dates

- 1 November 2025 – RAES service commences
- 31 October 2025 – CDP ceases
- Mid-October 2025 – RAES funding agreement expected to be executed
- 17 September 2025– Successful organisations notified about outcome of application
- August 2025– Assessment of applications
- 28 July 2025 – RAES grant round closed
- 30 June 2025 – RAES grant opportunity opened
- 27 March 2025 – RAES GOGs released for Exposure Draft
- 14 February 2025: Government announces extension of CDP agreements to 31 October 2025 and timeline to transition to new remote employment service
- 13 December 2024: Government announces the new remote employment service to replace the CDP
- 31 October 2024: CDP agreements extended to 30 June 2025.

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Jessica Guthrie | Jobs and Economic Development Group | s22(1) |
| Elizabeth Crombie | RAES and Policy Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Remote Employment Policy | s22(1) |

Jobs and Economic Development Group

3. Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP)

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Ms Jessica Guthrie, Group Manager, Jobs and Economic Development; or
- Mr Shane Dexter, Branch Manager, Business and Economic Policy.

Key Talking Points

Overarching

- The IPP has driven behavioural change across the Australian Public Service and is influencing the supply chains and workforces of our major suppliers.
- Since the IPP started in 2015, over 80,000 contracts with a total value of over \$12.6 billion have been awarded to over 4,500 Indigenous businesses.
- In February 2025, the Government announced changes to the IPP to provide more opportunities to First Nations businesses and to advance First Nations economic empowerment.
- The Government has heard the calls to increase the ambition of the policy and ensure economic benefits of the IPP are genuinely flowing to First Nations people as intended.
- The changes address feedback from the First Nations business sector and a variety of stakeholders during public consultations. It also aligns to findings made by the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (JSCATSIA) 2024 inquiry into First Nations economic self-determination and opportunities.
- The changes include the following:
 - The IPP eligibility criteria will be strengthened to require First Nations businesses be 51% or more First Nations owned and controlled (or registered with ORIC) to access the IPP.
 - This will ensure First Nations business owners accessing the IPP are empowered to run their businesses and exercise their rights as majority owners.
 - Transition to the new criteria will begin from 1 July 2026, with further details of the transitional arrangements to be determined.
 - The target for Commonwealth procurement from First Nations businesses has been increased to 3% in 2025-2026, with incremental increases of 0.25% each year to reach 4% by 2029-2030.
 - The NIAA will explore opportunities to increase transparency of suppliers' performance against Indigenous participation targets contained in high value contracts (Mandatory Minimum Indigenous Participation Requirements).

- The NIAA will work with relevant regulators and support services to identify opportunities to improve reporting pathways for First Nations people to report black cladding that might amount to unlawful conduct and provide targeted education, guidance and support for First Nations business owners.
- As we implement the reforms and recommendations from the recent ANAO report, the NIAA will further strengthen the IPP and has committed to updating existing guidance, conducting additional training, exploring ICT enhancements and developing stronger processes for Government agencies and Indigenous businesses looking to tender for procurement contracts.
- These improvements, together with the reforms to strengthen and increase the ambition of the IPP, will drive better outcomes for First Nations businesses.

Supply Nation Complaint – Indigeneity

- The NIAA is aware that Supply Nation has received and is handling a complaint alleging false Indigeneity claims involving a Supply Nation registered business.
- The NIAA and this Government takes the claims of ‘black cladding’ very seriously and has a zero tolerance for any disingenuous behaviours in Indigenous procurement.
- The Government has announced a number of reforms to strengthen the IPP which includes exploring options to tackle ‘black cladding’. The NIAA is engaging with relevant regulators and support services to identify opportunities to make it easier for First Nations people to report black cladding that might amount to unlawful conduct and provide targeted education, guidance and support for First Nations business owners.
- The Australian Government, through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy, funds Supply Nation to maintain a database of businesses satisfying the definition of a First Nations business in accordance with the Indigenous Procurement Policy (currently, this is at least 50% First Nations owned; from 1 July 2026 we’ll commence transition to a strengthened criteria of 51% owned and controlled).
- Supply Nation has been funded **s47** over 4 years ending in 2026 to deliver this service and handle complaints.
- The NIAA has processes in place to handle allegations of fraudulent conduct including referral to the relevant law enforcement bodies where appropriate.
- The NIAA does not provide comment on allegations or complaints made in relation to specific matters.
- Questions about the complaint should be directed to Supply Nation.

*Indigeneity Complaint***If asked – Why is the Government not doing more to check Indigeneity of Indigenous suppliers under the IPP?**

- The Australian Government does not decide who is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. This is a matter for First Nations people to determine within their own communities and in accordance with their own processes.
- The NIAA funds Supply Nation to verify Indigenous businesses for the IPP. Supply Nation's proof of Aboriginality process uses the three-part test, which requires a person to:
 - be of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander descent,
 - identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and
 - be recognised as such by his or her community.
- To meet these criteria, applicants must submit the following to Supply Nation:
 - a confirmation letter from a recognised institution, e.g. a land council, or
 - a statutory declaration supported by two referees from a recognised Indigenous organisation or another organisation that is deemed by Supply Nation to have the public standing and credibility to attest to an individual's claim of Aboriginality.
- Supply Nation maintains rigorous processes related to the registration and certification of Indigenous owned businesses. Their approach to verifying Indigeneity and handling complaints is published on their website.
- Supply Nation relies on third party documents to verify Indigeneity, such as Certificates of Aboriginality. Issuing organisations have the authority, under local governance structures and policies, to determine who is accepted by Community. In the rare circumstances that Supply Nation is unable to verify the authenticity of these documents, it can and will refer the matter to the appropriate authorities to investigate.

*ANAO Report - Targets for minimum Indigenous employment or supply use in major Australian Government procurements follow up***If asked - What is the NIAA's response to the ANAO's findings on the IPP?**

- The NIAA welcomes the ANAO's report.
- The NIAA has agreed to implement 6 recommendations and the majority of the 7th recommendation made by the ANAO.
- As these recommendations are implemented over the coming months, the NIAA will further strengthen the IPP and has committed to updating existing guidance, conducting additional training, implementing ICT enhancements and developing stronger processes for Government agencies.
- These improvements, together with the recently announced reforms to strengthen and increase the ambition of the IPP, will drive better outcomes for First Nations businesses.
- See [Attachment A](#) of this brief for the complete list of ANAO recommendations and the NIAA's formal response.

If asked - Is it true that \$70 billion in Commonwealth contracts have not had Mandatory Minimum Indigenous Participation Requirements (MMRs) applied?

- The ANAO found that the majority of contracts that did not have MMRs applied were noted to be exempted by the contracting entity because the contract was outside the scope of the IPP.
- MMRs apply Commonwealth to contracts with an initial contract value of over \$7.5 million in 19 Industry categories.
- Exemptions are applied to high value contracts when the MMR does not apply. The MMR does not apply to:
 - contracts with an initial value of less than \$7.5 million.
 - contracts that are subject to paragraph 2.6 of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules.
 - Paragraph 2.6 deals with activities relating to international peace and security, human health, essential security interests and national treasures.
 - several sub-industry category exclusions like building leases where there is little to no employment or supply chain involvement.
 - contracts that are part of an approach to market (ATM) that was established prior to the MMR industry category being subject to MMR.
 - contracts delivered overseas in whole or in part.
- MMR exemptions have been a part of the IPP since the MMR policy element began in 2016.

Supply Nation Leadership Roundtables

If asked - Why Supply Nation's "Leadership Roundtables" do not include First Nations representation?

- The Australian Government does not fund or have any oversight or control over Supply Nation's Leadership Roundtable.
- As it is an initiative fully conceived and run by Supply Nation, all queries regarding the Leadership Roundtable should be directed to Supply Nation.

If pressed further on Leadership Roundtables

- From what we understand, it is a long-standing initiative bringing together representatives of Supply Nation's member organisations (corporate, government and non-profit).
- The initiative provides an opportunity for these organisations to collaborate on matters relevant to their continued commitment to supplier diversity and Indigenous procurement.
- We understand the intent of the Roundtables is not to act as a forum for issues of importance to the Indigenous business sector as a whole or provide advocacy or policy advice. It is a forum for corporate and government members to share experience, best practice to grow procurement and commercial collaboration with Indigenous-owned businesses.

Background

- The IPP involves three key components:
 - Annual Commonwealth procurement targets for the value and volume of contracts to be awarded to First Nations businesses.
 - A Mandatory Set Aside (MSA) requiring First Nations businesses to be given an opportunity to demonstrate value for money before a general approach to market for procurements between \$80 – \$200k and in remote areas.
 - Participation targets apply to certain high value contracts over \$7.5 million – known as Mandatory Minimum Indigenous Participation Requirements.

Impact

- The IPP is a key policy initiative designed to stimulate Indigenous entrepreneurship, business and economic development by significantly increasing the rate of purchasing from Indigenous businesses when undertaking a Commonwealth procurement.
- In 2024-25:
 - Over 1,200 First Nations businesses won almost \$1.6 billion in Commonwealth contracts.
 - All Commonwealth portfolios met their targets for the number and value of contracts awarded to First Nations businesses (3% of the number of contracts and 2.25% of addressable spend).
- The following points highlight the importance and impact of the IPP to driving a flourishing Indigenous business sector.
 - The latest Indigenous business snapshot by Dilin Duwa Centre for Indigenous leadership at the Melbourne University, shows Indigenous businesses contribute more than \$16 billion to the economy, employ 116,795 people (both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people) and pay \$4.2 billion in wages.
 - In addition to the direct benefits of wealth creation for Indigenous business owners, Indigenous businesses have been shown to deliver broader community benefits. First Nations businesses employ, train, mentor, and create culturally safe, respectful, and inclusive workplaces for First Nations people. They provide an avenue for showcasing, and economically valuing, the unique knowledge, skills, and cultural expertise of First Nations people. Many Indigenous businesses make significant contributions to their community including pro bono advice, support and sponsorship of local sports teams and cultural events.

Facts and figures

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- As at 31 July 2025, 5,876 First Nations businesses were registered on Supply Nation's Indigenous Business Direct.

- Of these the majority are 51% or more Indigenous owned: 25% are certified, 63% are 51% owned but not certified.

Key Dates

- 1 JUL 2026 – New IPP eligibility criteria (at least 51% Indigenous owned and controlled) due to commence.
- 1 JUL 2025 – Increased Indigenous procurement targets for the Commonwealth, portfolios and entities (3% value and volume of contracts, increasing by 0.25% each year until it reaches 4% in 2029-30).
- 3 JUN 2025 – The Australian National Audit Office tabled its “Targets for Minimum Indigenous Employment or Supply Use in Major Australian Government Procurements — Follow-up” performance audit report.
- 13 FEB 2025 – Minister McCarthy announced the package of IPP changes including strengthening the IPP eligibility criteria, increasing the Commonwealth and Portfolio targets, exploring ways to increase transparency of suppliers’ performance against Indigenous participation targets in large scale contracts and working with regulators to tackle black cladding through business and regulatory support.
- 10 FEB 2025 – The Prime Minister in his Closing the Gap speech announced strengthening the IPP eligibility criteria to 51% First Nations owned and controlled.
- 26 NOV 2024 – JSCATSIA tabled in Parliament its inquiry into economic self-determination and opportunities for First Nations Australians which made 22 recommendations in total. 2 recommendations were IPP specific:
 - Rec 3 – the Australian Government, in its review of the IPP, consider:
 - an increase to the procurement target
 - the definition of an Indigenous business, and mechanisms to identify and recognise businesses who exceed the targets (e.g. through tiered criteria).
 - Rec 4 – the Australian Government investigate the practice of black cladding and policies to combat it.
- 18 DEC 2023 – 8 March 2024 - IPP consultations occurred.
- AUG 2021 – The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Indigenous Affairs tabled its “Report on Indigenous Participation in Employment and Business”. There were in total 17 recommendations, with five (5) recommendations relating to IPP. These recommendations called on the Government to review the current definition of First Nations business to ensure that IPP contracts benefits First Nations communities and to improve performance monitoring amongst other policy and procedural enhancements.
- 20 FEB 2020 - The ANAO tabled its “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Participation Targets in Major Procurements” performance audit report.

- 1 JUL 2019 - Introduction of IPP value targets, in addition to the volume target. The value target commenced at 1% for the 2019-20 financial year, rising incrementally by 0.25% each year to reach a target of 3% by 2027-28.
- 1 JUL 2016 - MMR came into effect and initially applied to 8 industry categories. The IPP volume target was raised to 3% due to the success of the policy.
- 1 JUL 2015 - IPP commenced with a volume target of 1% (of Commonwealth procurement). MSA also commenced at this time.

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Jessica Guthrie | Jobs and Economic Development Group | s22(1) |
| Shane Dexter | Business and Economic Policy Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | IPP and GCP Team | s22(1) |

Attachment A

ANAO recommendations and the NIAA response

Full report is available at the following link:

<https://www.anao.gov.au/work/performance-audit/targets-minimum-indigenous-employment-or-supply-use-major-australian-government-procurements>

| | ANAO Recommendation | NIAA Formal Response | Progress to date |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1 | To support Australian Government entities and contractors to comply with the mandatory minimum MMRs, in consultation with entities and contractors, the NIAA review and update MMR guidance material to ensure that it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) accurately reflects the current process for managing MMR reporting in the Indigenous Procurement Policy Reporting Solution and provides guidance on appropriate reporting timeframes; b) provides sufficient information to support entities to implement risk-based assurance activities for MMR contracts; and c) provides sufficient information for entities and contractors on suitable evidence to support performance reporting. | Agreed The NIAA will review and update its MMR guidance material. | The NIAA through the IPP Cross Agency Working Group (CAWG) will work further with the entities to develop and make available information to enable risk-based assurance activities for MMR contracts. |
| 2 | The NIAA establish a process to ensure it meets Australian Government requirements placed on policy owners of procurement-connected policies, including reapplication for recognition as a procurement-connected policy. | Agreed | We have embedded processes to review the requirements placed on policy owners of Procurement Connected Policies to each year and have embed briefing the NIAA's Policy, Program & Evaluation Committee into the IPP outcomes reporting cycle, commencing with 2024-25 performance. |
| 3 | The NIAA: | Agreed | The Agency has agreed to fund enhancements to the IPP Reporting |

| | ANAO Recommendation | NIAA Formal Response | Progress to date |
|---|--|--|---|
| | <p>a) complete and publish an evaluation of the effectiveness of the mandatory minimum requirements in contributing to meeting the objectives of the Indigenous Procurement Policy; and</p> <p>b) develop mandatory minimum requirements performance measures to enable ongoing monitoring.</p> | <p>a) The IPP reforms recently announced by Government includes funding to undertake an evaluation to measure the impact of the policy and the changes. The NIAA will ensure the evaluation includes measuring the effectiveness of MMRs in contributing to meeting the objectives of the IPP.</p> <p>b) The NIAA will develop internal MMR performance measures to enable ongoing monitoring.</p> | <p>Solution to enable improved ongoing monitoring of the MMR performance measures, including non-compliance of MMRs.</p> |
| 4 | <p>To ensure exemptions are accurately recorded in the Indigenous Procurement Policy Reporting Solution, non-compliance with the Indigenous Procurement Policy can be appropriately identified, all applicable contracts are subject to the mandatory minimum requirements reporting and assessment process, and the Indigenous Procurement Policy is achieving its policy objectives, the NIAA should:</p> <p>a) amend its protocols to ensure that it is not treating non-compliance with mandatory minimum requirements as an exemption or exclusion;</p> <p>b) consider what scenarios that are consistent with allowable exclusions and exceptions within the Indigenous Procurement Policy are not covered by existing categories in the Indigenous Procurement Policy Reporting Solution and therefore whether the 'other' category is still justified and required;</p> <p>c) when implementing recommendation 1, provide additional guidance to Australian Government entities on the use of exemption categories, which includes</p> | <p>Recommendation Parts a, b, and c. Agreed</p> <p>The NIAA will amend its protocols, review the use of the "other" exemption category, and include specific guidance on the use of MMR exemptions in its guidance updates developed for non-corporate Commonwealth entities.</p> <p>Recommendation Part d). Not Agreed</p> <p>The NIAA does not believe it is appropriate for it to be assuring the implementation of elements of the devolved Commonwealth procurement framework by Commonwealth entities.</p> <p>The NIAA maintains that it is the responsibility each Commonwealth entity to ensure it meets its own</p> | <p>We are finalising work on an IPP assurance framework, which is expected to be circulated to agencies soon. This is designed to improve guidance for how agencies manage their own assurance processes to ensure compliance with the IPP, including accurate entries into the IPP Reporting Solution.</p> |

| | ANAO Recommendation | NIAA Formal Response | Progress to date |
|---|--|---|--|
| | <p>information on when it is appropriate to classify a contract as an 'exemption', and when it is appropriate and inappropriate to use the exemption category of 'other'; and</p> <p>d) implement a risk-based assurance process to ensure that reported exemptions or exclusions are legitimate.</p> | <p>obligations under Government legislation and guidance, including the Commonwealth Procurement Framework.</p> | |
| 5 | <p>The NIAA and Department of Employment and Workplace Relations update internal procurement guidance to better support procuring officers undertaking major procurements that trigger the mandatory minimum requirements to comply with required steps in the procurement process.</p> | <p>Agreed</p> <p>The NIAA will work with stakeholders to update and improve guidance of the Indigenous Procurement Policy.</p> | <p>The NIAA Procurement Team is reviewing internal guidance available to procuring officials to ensure officials are familiar with, and understand the steps required to properly comply with all aspects of the IPP.</p> |
| 6 | <p>Department of Home Affairs strengthen controls to ensure compliance with the mandatory minimum requirements at the approach to market, tender evaluation and contract management phases of major procurements.</p> | <p>No response required, this recommendation is not directed to the NIAA and is included here for completeness.</p> | <p>No response required, this recommendation is not directed to the NIAA and is included here for completeness.</p> |
| 7 | <p>The NIAA; Department of Employment and Workplace Relations; and Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications, Sport and the Arts establish, strengthen or update guidance to ensure contract managers and contractors appropriately use the Indigenous Procurement Policy Reporting Solution for mandatory minimum requirements reporting.</p> | <p>Agreed</p> <p>The NIAA will strengthen guidance to assist contract managers in meeting their obligations under the Indigenous Procurement Policy.</p> | <p>The NIAA Procurement Team is in the process of drafting a standard operating procedure (SOP) to assist Contract Managers in understanding their requirements when managing a contract that is subject to the Mandatory Minimum Requirements (MMRs).</p> |
| 8 | <p>All audited entities meet their responsibility under the Indigenous Procurement Policy to establish or strengthen processes to ensure contract managers undertake appropriate activities to ensure contractors' compliance with MMR targets and verify that reported MMR performance information is accurate.</p> | <p>Agreed</p> <p>The NIAA will establish appropriate processes to ensure that activities are undertaken by contract managers to identity compliance and accuracy in reports submitted by contractors.</p> | <p>The NIAA Procurement Team is leveraging the SOP created in response to recommendation 7 and ensuring that it contains relevant provisions to effectively measure and verify suppliers' compliance with the MMRs.</p> |

Jobs and Economic Development Group

Economic Empowerment

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Shane Dexter, Business and Economic Policy Branch Manager

Key Talking Points

- The Government is working with Indigenous people, communities, and enterprises to drive economic self-determination for First Nations people.
- The Government recognises that First Nations enterprises (be it private businesses, organisations or traditional owner groups) play a critical role in creating new jobs; and that these jobs are more likely to be filled by First Nations people.
- To strengthen First Nations enterprises, the Government provides access to tailored business support, governance training and capability support. For example, the Government is progressing work on Prescribed Body Corporate (PBC) funding reform that would support greater engagement in clean energy projects that have the potential to create jobs on Native Title land.
- To help grow First Nations enterprises, the Government provides access to capital and assistance to break into domestic and international markets including through preferential policies such as the Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP), and considerations of First Nations opportunities in trade agreements such as the Australia-United Arab Emirates Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement that has a dedicated chapter for First Nations Trade and Investment Economic Cooperation.
- The Government is supporting First Nations job seekers to better connect with jobs.
- On 1 November 2025, the Community Development Program (CDP) will be replaced by the new Remote Australia Employment Service (RAES). RAES will support job seekers in remote Australia to get the skills and resources they need to become job ready.
- Remote Jobs and Economic Development program is creating 3,000 jobs over three years to 2027.
- The Government is committed to sharing decision making and delivering better outcomes for First Nations peoples. Aligned with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, the Government has **established a First Nations Economic Partnership**. This has committed the Government to shared decision making on reforms to First Nations economic policy and provided a mechanism through which to do so.
- The Treasury is leading this work in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks and the First Nations Economic Alliance.

- The Partnership will focus on the full range of policy levers available to the Government however, the immediate actions announced by the Prime Minister at Garma are:
 - developing an improved funding package for PBCs.
 - exploring the creation of a First Nations led Investment and Finance Council to improve access to capital and strengthen specialist investment vehicles.
 - exploring the establishment of Economic Inclusion Zones led by First Nations organisations.
- Additional immediate actions are outlined in the Partnership Agreement. In addition to the items listed above, this includes:
 - Developing a First Nations Economic Framework through inclusive and transparent engagement with First Nations people and organisations and mainstream financial institutions and businesses.
 - supporting capacity building of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations through improved data governance practices and supports to grow secure employment and career pathways.
 - strengthening the outcomes and accountability of the IPP.
- The NIAA is working with our Partnership partners to establish the necessary governance arrangements. This includes:
 - settling funding arrangements to ensure our First Nations Partners are resourced to engage with the Partnership;
 - the development of an annual workplan; and
 - the development of a mechanism to identify and engage additional Partners, members and experts to ensure the Partnership can leverage subject matter expertise to deliver on this workplan.

Background

- The Government has worked with the First Nations Reference Group on the redesign of the CDP.
- The Government is focussed on policy solutions to advance economic empowerment, financial independence, and improve the long-term economic security of First Nations peoples, communities, businesses and organisations.
- Chapter 17 of the Australia-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement commits both parties to promoting inclusive trade, protection of cultural heritage, digital inclusion, investment engagement and environmental stewardship. This encourages the exchange of best practices in relation to policies, programs and practices that enhance First Nation trade and investment outcomes, prevent the trade of counterfeit goods and that support resale of royalty rights of artists. The agreement also aims to strengthen business-to-business networks.

Impact

- In 2024 the University of Melbourne estimated that First Nations businesses contributed:
 - \$16 billion in revenue.
 - \$4.2 billion in wages.
 - Almost 117,000 employed.
 - Almost 14,000 active businesses.

Facts and figures

- RAES - \$1.9 billion over 5 years.
- Economic Partnership - \$16.9 million over 5 years
 - The National Native Title Council (NNTC) and the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) were funded to engage the Alliance and the Coalition of Peaks to participate in negotiations. This included supporting research, travel and meetings. Contracts were each valued at \$175,000 GST exclusive.
- In 2023–24, IBA (one of the key Government agencies that provide business support and access to capital for First Nations businesses) received \$262.2 million in receipts. This is comprised of:
 - \$28.4 million in grants (\$27.5 million for the Business Solutions Program);
 - \$9.4 million in a direct appropriation for the IHOP; and
 - \$224.4 million from other revenue (mostly interest earned on loans and investments and dividend and rental receipts from investments).

Key Dates

- 1 November 2025 – commencement of RAES
- 28-30 October 2025 – World Indigenous Business Forum will be held in Naarm (Melbourne)
- 2 August 2025 – Prime Minister announced the First Nations Economic Partnership at Garma
- 6 November 2024 – Australia-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement signed
- 26 November 2024 – Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs tabled the report into Economic self-determination and opportunities for First Nations Australians

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Jessica Guthrie | Jobs and Economic Development Group | s22(1) |
| Shane Dexter | Business and Economic Policy | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Economic Policy | s22(1) |

Social Policy Group

1. Education

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Ms Ali Jenkins | Group Manager, Social Policy Group

Key Talking Points

Questions on mainstream education should be referred to:

- Department of Education (early years, schooling and higher education).
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (vocational education and training).

NIAA's Role in Education and Training

- The NIAA works with mainstream agencies and First Nations partners to secure early years and education outcomes for First Nations children and students. A key focus is advocating to ensure Closing the Gap Priority Reforms are embedded in new policy and implementing programs.
- As outlined in the NIAA Corporate Plan 2025-2029, we are prioritising those Targets that are off-track or worsening through targeted programs.
- For the Indigenous Advancement Strategy Children and Schooling 1.2 Program, this means we are funding activities that:
 - support early childhood development through investments that aim to ensure healthy development of children in their earlier years, in line with Target 3 which is on track and Target 4 which is not on track;
 - support increasing school engagement and improving educational outcomes that lead to employment in line with Targets 5, 6 and 7, all of which are improving but are not on track to be met.
- In 2025-26, the NIAA will invest around \$339.8 million through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) 1.2 Children and Schooling Program for activities across early childhood, schooling and tertiary support.
- Investments complement state, territory and Australian Government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and students particularly in remote and very remote locations. IAS Program 1.2 investments are place-based, fill service delivery gaps, reflect community needs and extend the range of education options available locally.
- As an example, Girls Academies support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls and young women to stay engaged in school and complete Year 12. In 2024, NIAA funded over 20 providers supporting over 10,000 First Nations students.

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

There is mixed progress on education Closing the Gap Targets.

- Target 3 (by 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Full-time Schooling early childhood education to 95%) shows good improvement and is on track.
- Target 4 (by 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census to 55%) is worsening.
- Target 5 (by 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20-24 attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%) shows improvement but is not on track.
- Target 6 (by 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%) shows improvement but is not on track.
- Target 7 (by 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth aged 15-24 years who are in employment, education or training to 67%) shows improvement but is not on track.

Background

Early Years

- Important considerations for First Nations children and families include prioritising cultural safety, study pathways for First Nations ECEC workers, childcare safety, market and funding structures that support ACCOs and appropriate activity test arrangements for First Nations families.
- Mainstream reforms announced to help build a universal early education and care system that will support First Nations children and families announced in 2024-25 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) include:
 - childcare subsidy activity test reforms from January 2026, with a greater entitlement of 100 hours for families with First Nations children, regardless of their activity levels (up from current 36 hours per fortnight).
 - 15% wage increase for ECEC workers through a worker retention payment.
 - establishing the \$1 billion Building Early Education Fund. This will include targeted \$529.6 million for capital grant rounds to establish new services and increase the capacity of existing services, with prioritising services in regional and remote locations and First Nations services.
- Education Ministers have agreed reforms to strengthen child safety in early childhood education and care settings including establishing a National Educator Register, mandatory national child safety training for staff in ECEC, a national CCTV assessment in up to 300 services, a ban of mobile phones or digital devices in ECEC settings, and improved transparency for parents about conditions imposed on centres and regulatory visits.
- Legislative reforms are also focused on making the safety, rights and best interests of children the paramount consideration under National Law.

Schooling

- During the development of the new Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (BFSA), the NIAA advocated for reforms that prioritise support for First Nations students and teachers.
- On 24 January 2025, the Prime Minister announced the BFSA – Full and Fair Funding 2025–2034. This will lift the Commonwealth’s contribution to school funding from 20 per cent to 25 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) by 2034. In the Northern Territory the Commonwealth SRS contribution is 40 per cent, recognising the unique delivery context.
- The BFSA Full and Fair Funding 2025-2034:
 - recognises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and knowledge as fundamental to improving education systems.
 - reinforces the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and commits parties of the agreement to work in partnership with First Nations education stakeholders, including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation (NATSIEC).
 - commits parties to Priority Reform 4, data sovereignty and Priority Reform 2, developing the Community Controlled Sector to deliver culturally safe and appropriate services to support First Nations students and workforce.
 - commits to increased funding transparency and to continue to prioritise funding towards supporting First Nations students.
- First Nations students are a priority cohort for all measures of the BFSA. The BFSA includes some First Nations specific reform and improvement measures. These are:
 - increasing the First Nations teaching workforce
 - alignment with Closing the Gap Target 5 - year 12 attainment.
 - commitments to increasing student attendance rates and NAPLAN results for all priority equity cohorts.
- The BFSA also commits the Commonwealth to developing a First Nations Education Policy.
 - The NIAA is working with the Department of Education (lead agency) and First Nations partners during 2025 to develop this policy.

Boarding

- The First Nations Boarding Design Review was undertaken in 2023 and 2024. NIAA led the review in partnership with the Department of Education, Department of Social Services and Services Australia, to identify systemic reform options to support access to education for rural and remote First Nations students through the provision of boarding. The findings of the review are with Government to consider next steps.

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

- Through the National Skills Agreement (NSA), the Government is reforming skills and training. The NSA includes an allocation of \$214 million over 5 years to Closing the Gap, which includes \$166.4 million as a contribution to jurisdictions to also be matched by them.
 - States and territories are ultimately responsible for decisions on funding to Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to deliver VET activities. The design of the NSA reflects this principle.
 - The jurisdictions will develop bilateral implementation plans in partnership with First Nations communities and organisations to contribute to CtG targets and implementing priority reforms, including activities to:
 - expand investment in the capability, sustainability, and growth of the Aboriginal Community Controlled and First Nations owned training sector, and
 - grow the First Nations VET workforce and boost cultural competency of mainstream RTOs.
 - \$36 million is to progress a nationally networked VET Policy Partnership.
 - Residual funding is held by the Commonwealth to support delivery of the NSA and support shared access to data and information at the regional level.
 - Further questions should be directed to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.

Universities

- As part of the 2024-25 MYEFO announcements, the Government announced measures which respond to recommendations of the Universities Accord (The Accord). This includes a Needs-based Funding System, a racism study and the establishment of an Australian Tertiary Education Commission.
 - The Accord recommended responsibility for the Indigenous Student Success Program (ISSP) be transferred to the Department of Education. As part of the Government's response, the administration of ISSP transferred to the Department of Education on 1 July 2025.

Impact

- Through IAS 1.2, the NIAA is funding more than 580 organisations to deliver over 1000 projects (activities). Delivery of these activities include for example:
 - Funding for more than 190 providers to deliver quality, culturally safe early childhood development and enabling activities
 - Providing scholarships to more than 2,000 First Nations students to support their education
 - Extending the Indigenous Boarding Provider grant program for 2 years which supports around 2,500 remote and very remote First Nations students in 2025 and 2026.

Facts and figures

Early Years

- Around \$42.5 million will be invested through IAS Program 1.2 in 2025-26 for First Nations children's early childhood development and enabling activities.

Schooling

- Around \$241.4 million will be delivered through IAS Program 1.2 in 2025-26 to improve schooling outcomes for First Nations students. This includes:
 - Schooling Projects (Target cohort - Primary and Secondary) – \$58.0 million
 - Outside of School Hours Care (Target cohort - Primary and Secondary) – \$12.2 million
 - Schooling Nutrition Projects (Target cohort - Primary and Secondary in the NT) – \$9.0 million
 - Academies and Mentoring (Target cohort - Secondary) – \$13.8 million
 - Girls Academies (Target cohort - Secondary) – \$32.1 million
 - Education Engagement and Attainment Initiatives (Target cohort - Secondary) – \$28.6 million
 - Junior Rangers (Target cohort – Secondary and VET) – \$25.2 million
 - Scholarships (Target cohort - Secondary and some Tertiary) – \$24.0 million
 - Boarding and Residential Services (Target cohort - Secondary and some Tertiary) – \$38.4 million (note this includes Department of Education Indigenous Boarding Provider Grant funding delivered through the IAS).
 - As part of MYEFO 2024-25, \$44.2 million was committed to extend the Indigenous Boarding Provider grant program for 2 years. This will continue support for around 2,500 remote and very remote First Nations students in 2025 and 2026.
 - \$18 million over 2 years from 2024-25 is being provided for the Central Australia Boarding Response Fund, with the aim of increasing boarding accommodation places for secondary students in remote communities.

Tertiary

- NIAA funds a small number of training organisations delivering vocational education and training. In 2025, \$1.6 million from IAS 1.2 was allocated to 4 organisations to support around 300 First Nations students.
- In 2025, ISSP is providing \$84.8 million to 40 universities to support around 23,300 First Nations students. This is funded through the Higher Education Support Act 2003 (not the IAS).

Key Dates

- 22 AUG 2025 – Special Purpose Education Ministers Meeting on child safety in ECEC
- JAN – MAR 2025 - All jurisdictions have signed the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement (BFSA) Full and Fair Funding Agreement 2025 – 2034 Heads of Agreement apart from the Northern Territory which remains on the initial BFSA.
 - BFSA Full and Fair Funding Agreement 2025 - 2034 Bilateral Agreements signed:
 - 31 JAN 2025 – Western Australia
 - 6 MAR 2025 - Australian Capital Territory
 - 11 MAR 2025 - New South Wales
 - 11 MAR 2025 - South Australia
 - 11 MAR 2025 – Northern Territory
 - 24 MAR 2025 – Queensland
 - Initial BFSA 2025 - 2034 Heads of Agreement and Bilateral Agreement signed:
 - 31 JUL 2024 - Northern Territory

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|--------|
| Ali Jenkins | Social Policy Group | s22(1) |
| Megan Chisholm A/g | Education and Early Years Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Education Policy Section | s22(1) |

Social Policy Group

2. First Nations Justice (including deaths in custody and youth justice)

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Ms Ali Jenkins | Group Manager, Social Policy
- Ms Priya Powell | Branch Manager, Families and Safety

Key Talking Points

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

- The Productivity Commission's latest update on progress towards Closing the Gap shows that outcomes for adult incarceration (Target 10) and youth detention (Target 11) continue to worsen.
- First Nations people continue to be over-represented in custodial settings:
 - Target 10 (to reduce the rate of First Nations adults held in incarceration by at least 15 per cent by 2031) is **not on track**. Rates of adult incarceration are increasing.
 - Target 11 (to reduce the rate of First Nations young people in detention by at least 30 per cent by 2031) is **not on track**.

Australian Government Initiatives

- Delivering First Nations-led justice reinvestment initiatives nationally (\$69 million over 4 years from 2022-23) and establishing an independent National Justice Reinvestment Unit (\$12.5 million) to support up to 30 community-led justice reinvestment activities.
- Supporting the Justice Policy Partnership (JPP) (\$10.7 million over 4 years from 2024-25), led by the Commonwealth and the Coalition of the Peaks, to bring together all levels of government, peak organisations and First Nations representatives to improve justice outcomes for First Nations people.
- Delivering \$3.9 billion (over 5 years from 2025-26) through the National Access to Justice Partnership (NAJP) towards vital legal assistance, including an \$800 million uplift for the legal assistance sector, which includes funding to provide more frontline assistance for First Nations people.
- Working with jurisdictions to address the underlying socio-economic drivers of contact with the criminal justice system, including housing, employment and health and education for First Nations people.
- Establishing the National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, to protect and promote the rights, interests and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people including the overrepresentation of First Nations children in out-of-home care and youth detention.

- Adjunct Professor Sue-Anne Hunter commenced in the role on 1 September 2025.

Preventing Deaths in Custody

- Sincere condolences to all families and communities who have had a loved one die in custody. I acknowledge the ongoing grief in these communities.
- Reducing First Nations incarceration and detention rates is the best way to prevent deaths in custody.
- All jurisdictions are signatories to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (CtG) and have committed to the targets to reduce incarceration and detention rates for First Nations people.
- Justice reforms in some jurisdictions towards ‘tough on crime’ approaches will have disproportionate impacts on First Nations people.
- The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) is working across the Australian Government, including with the Attorney-General’s Department (AGD) to develop and implement coordinated and practical actions that are community-led and self-determined.
 - Including to address the drivers of contact with the justice system such as health, education, housing, jobs and economic empowerment to address the over-incarceration of First Nations people.

If asked: About the implementation of the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody:

- The key finding of the 1987-1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (Royal Commission) was that reducing First Nations incarceration rates is the best way of reducing deaths in custody.
- While the context has evolved, the findings of the report continue to inform the work of the Commonwealth and jurisdictions
- Since the Royal Commission, all governments have undertaken substantial policy and legislative action to address the report’s recommendations
- The Commonwealth continues to work with State and Territory Governments and other stakeholders on a range of actions to reduce the number of First Nations deaths in custody, including working through the Joint Council on Closing the Gap (Joint Council), the Justice Policy Partnership (JPP), and the Standing Council of Attorneys-General (SCAG).
- The Commonwealth remains committed to actions focused on addressing the drivers of contact with the justice system through community-led and self-determined policies and programs and coordinated whole of government investments in economic empowerment and jobs, health, education, housing and family and domestic violence.

- The Commonwealth is also investing in early intervention and prevention supports to address over-incarceration and prevent deaths in custody including through justice reinvestment initiatives, the National Access to Justice Partnership that includes funding for vital legal services and the Custody Notification Service, and the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS).

If asked: About removal of Hanging Points in places of custody

- The Royal Commission recommended that police and corrective authorities carefully scrutinise equipment and facilities provided at institutions with a view to eliminating and/or reducing the potential for harm, and steps should be taken to screen hanging points in police and prison cells.
- State and Territory governments have responsibility for ensuring safety and wellbeing of people in places of custody.
- NIAA understands that on 3 April 2025, Health Ministers jointly wrote to their counterparts in corrections and youth justice to seek agreement to collaborate on developing the approach to implementation of removal of hanging points from places of custody.
- NIAA understands that responses received to date have expressed strong commitment to working in partnership to progress the issues. There is also active work underway among Health Ministers to respond to the 2024 National Review of First Nations Health Care in Prisons.
- Further questions should be referred to the Department of Health, Disability and Aged Care.

If asked: What is the Australian Government doing about funding to states and territories that are failing to meet Targets 10 and 11, including the Northern Territory Government?

- State and Territory Governments, including the Northern Territory (NT) Government have responsibility for their criminal justice and policing systems.
- While the Australian Government has powers to make laws in relation to the NT, the Government's general approach is to not intervene in affairs that are primarily the responsibility of self-governing territories.
- We are continuing to work through national mechanisms such as the Joint Council, and in collaboration with the AGD's SCAG on practical reforms and increased accountability.

Youth Justice

- Addressing First Nations youth justice outcomes is a regular focus of discussion at national forums such as Joint Council, Indigenous Affairs Minister's Meeting (IAMM), the JPP and Policy Partnership Co-Chairs Forum and SCAG.

If asked: about Stakeholder calls for Commonwealth intervention to protect First Nations children in the justice system.

- I acknowledge stakeholders are calling for Australian Government intervention to protect First Nations children in the justice system, including improved access to trauma informed and culturally safe care for children and justice system reforms.
- The Minister for Indigenous Australians has been meeting with the NT Chief Minister, state and territory Attorney-Generals, Indigenous Affairs Ministers to seek better outcomes on youth justice. This has been a consistent effort, noting this is everyone's responsibility, not just the Minister for Indigenous Australians or the NIAA's.
- The NIAA is working across the Australian Government, including with the AGD to develop and implement coordinated and practical actions that are community-led and self-determined including the provision of culturally safe supports to prevent and divert children and young people away from the justice system. This includes:
 - Delivering through the IAS approximately \$84 million in 2025-26 in programs that will have a focus on justice, health and wellbeing for First Nations children and young people. This includes approximately \$52 million in 2025-26 for a range of prevention and diversion activities for young people. This also includes youth through care to support young people to transition from detention back to communities.
 - Investing \$27.1 million in Justice Reinvestment programs for youth, with 13 initiatives funded to date.
 - Investing \$12.5 million in a Justice Reinvestment Unit to deliver capability building and measurement and evaluation support to communities funded under the justice reinvestment programs.
 - Investing in \$3.9 billion in the National Access to Justice Partnership, including \$800 million uplift for the legal assistance sector to provide frontline legal assistance to First Nations people including children and families impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence.
 - Investing \$9.2 million for Strengthening Community Safety through the Central Australia – A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia, including approximately \$1.9 million for Oonchiumpa Consultancy and Services to deliver a new culturally-led diversion program for up to 50 at risk Aboriginal youth.
 - Investing \$367.6 million through the NT Remote Aboriginal Investment for remote policing and peacekeeping, mediation and law and justice groups and child and family safety support services.

- Working through ministerial bodies such as the SCAG and Joint Council to progress shared priorities such as bail and remand reform.

Background

- Target 10 (to reduce the rate of First Nations adults held in incarceration by at least 15 per cent by 2031) is worsening and not on track.
 - New South Wales (NSW) – worsening
 - Victoria (VIC) – improving
 - Queensland (QLD) – worsening
 - Western Australia (WA) – worsening
 - South Australia (SA) – worsening
 - Tasmania (TAS) – worsening
 - Australian Capital Territory (ACT) – no change
 - Northern Territory (NT) – worsening
- Target 11 (to reduce the rate of First Nations young people in detention by at least 30 per cent by 2031) has shown no change from baseline and is not on track.
 - NSW – no change
 - VIC – improving
 - QLD – worsening
 - WA – improving
 - SA – improving
 - TAS – no change
 - ACT – worsening
 - NT – worsening

Justice Reinvestment

- Justice Reinvestment is a long-term, community-led approach that aims to prevent crime, address the drivers of contact and improve justice outcomes for First Nations people.
- To date, 28 initiatives across NSW, NT, QLD, VIC, SA and WA have been selected for funding under the program.
- Of the 28 justice reinvestment initiatives funded to date, \$27.1 million has been invested in 13 projects that have a specific focus on youth.
 - Five of these projects are located in the NT, 5 in WA, one NSW, one in SA and one in QLD.

- The interim National Justice Reinvestment Unit was established in February 2025 within AGD and has commenced working with communities funded under the National Justice Reinvestment Programs to understand their preliminary support needs.
- The interim unit will deliver capability building and develop a strong measurement and evaluation framework and lead an ongoing process to design the final unit in partnership with First Nations people.
- Subject to the design process, it is anticipated the interim unit will deliver these priority functions for a period of 12-18 months before transitioning to an independent Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation or an Indigenous-led organisation.
- Further questions should be referred to the AGD.

Deaths in Custody

- On 19 September 2024, the Senate passed a motion introduced by Senator Thrope requiring the Government to table documents regarding deaths in custody of continuing effect. Available information was tabled on 10 October 2024. A second response was tabled on 16 January 2025 and included aggregate data on deaths in custody for the most recent period available at the time of tabling.
- Recent incidents of deaths in custody in the NT have drawn significant media attention, and many stakeholders have expressed strong concerns regarding the over-representation of First Nations people and detention in the NT as a result of the 'tough on crime' policies.
- Further questions should be referred to the AGD.

Youth Justice

- The interim report of the Senate Inquiry into Australia's youth justice and incarceration system was handed down in February 2025 and the final report in June 2025.
 - The final report made one recommendation – that the Senate takes note of the final report and the Committee's interim report tabled on 28 February 2025, which included a recommendation to refer to the 48th Parliament an inquiry into Australia's child justice and detention system.
 - A Government response to the report is not planned at this time.
- Punitive approaches to youth crime being pursued across many jurisdictions have a disproportionate impact on First Nations children and young people, including:
 - Reversing the minimum age of criminal responsibility in the NT and VIC,
 - Removing detention as the last resort,
 - Re-introducing spit hoods, and
 - Imposing harsher penalties.

- The minimum age of criminal responsibility (MACR) is 10 years old in all states and territories with the exception of ACT (raised to 14 years from 1 July 2025) and VIC (currently at 12 years old).

If asked: About the Government's response to inquiries and reports recommending reforms to the Youth Justice system:

- Stakeholders have called on all governments to take more coordinated action and demonstrate accountability for youth justice outcomes, including through representations made to:
 - The Senate Inquiry into Australia's Youth Justice and Incarceration System.
 - The 2025 Annual Review by Human Rights Watch that found Australia's human rights record is marred by maltreatment of children in the criminal justice system.
 - The Australian Human Rights Commission 'Help Way Earlier!' Report of 2024 which called for reform of punitive approaches to child justice and to address the underlying causes of offending through coordinated actions across governments.
- The findings from the Senate Inquiry and the 'Help Way Earlier! Report are informing the work of Government.

Meetings:

- At the Joint Council meeting of 15 November 2024, it was agreed that Target 11 is an urgent priority requiring collective action across multiple governments and that Joint Council Co-Chairs would write to First Ministers to seek details on steps they are taking to meet Target 11.
 - Joint Council Chairs wrote to First Ministers on 22 January 2025.
- At the 20 June 2025 Joint Council, it was agreed Joint Co-Chairs would meet with all Attorneys-General, Minister for Indigenous Affairs and other relevant Ministers from each state and territory governments to discuss priority national and jurisdictional actions to drive progress towards Target 11 in 2025.
 - Meetings with New South Wales (3 September 2025), Victoria (4 September 2025), Australian Capital Territory (8 September 2025), Western Australia (15 September 2025) and South Australia (24 September 2025) have taken place.
 - Meetings with Queensland and Tasmania have been confirmed.
 - The NT has not been confirmed yet. However, Minister McCarthy has been meeting with the NT Chief Minister to remind NTG of their responsibilities to CtG outcomes.
- On 15 August 2025, Minister McCarthy spoke at SCAG and reiterated the need for all jurisdictions to meet their obligations under Closing the Gap to address drivers of contact with the youth justice system, including the impact that

addressing bail and remand would have on reducing First Nations incarceration rates and deaths in custody.

- The third Closing the Gap Policy Partnership Co-Chair Forum was held on 6 August 2025 to discuss immediate actions to accelerate progress towards Target 11. All Policy Partnerships are now considering what the Commonwealth can do to drive progress towards Target 11 and present that to the Joint Council November meeting.
- At the 9 September 2025 IAMM meeting, Ministers discussed youth justice and acknowledged the need for increased action to reduce the overrepresentation of First Nations young people in the criminal justice system.
- At the 29 September 2025 CtG Ministerial Working Group, Minister McCarthy requested members come back in November with proposed Commonwealth levers that could drive outcomes for Targets 10 and 11, including specific levers to boost state and territory effort and accountability.

Impact

- The NIAA's focus is on prevention and diversion to keep First Nations people, particularly children, out of the criminal justice system and improve their post-release outcomes:
- In 2025-26, the IAS is estimated to invest \$61 million in:
 - Through-care (\$10.8 million):
 - \$5.3 million is estimated for youth specific through care programs.
 - Throughout 2024-25, IAS funded through-care services provided support to 571 First Nations people to reduce their risk of reoffending.
 - An independent evaluation of IAS funded through-care activities found that IAS funded through-care services are strengths-based and client centred, culturally respectful and safe. Clients reported a high degree of satisfaction with the service.
 - Community Safety Patrols (\$30 million):
 - Throughout 2024-25, community patrols collectively conducted 227,035 hours of active patrol work and provided culturally sensitive assistance for 77,253 safety issues (approximately 3 issues every hour) across 90 communities throughout the NT and SA.
 - Outcomes of patrols include positive employment outcomes, improving public perceptions of safety, and a possible correlation with decreased incidences of minor policing events such as young people engaging in anti-social behaviour and property damage.
 - Youth support and diversion (\$17.2 million):
 - Through-out 2024-25, over 12,200 young people received support to reduce their risk of contact with the justice system in 59 communities across all states and territories.
 - Other Crime Prevention Activities (\$3.1 million).

- Outputs through-out 2024-25 from the peacemaking projects included delivering 100 mediation sessions, running and delivering 8 community events run and 39 group activities and making 80 referrals to other services.

Funding

| Title | Amount & Duration | Description |
|---|--|---|
| First Nations Justice Package (AGD led) | \$81.5 million | \$69 million for the National Justice Reinvestment Program to support up to 30 community-led justice reinvestment initiatives nationally. There is ongoing funding of \$20 million per year from 2026-27. |
| | | \$12.5 million to design and establish an independent National Justice reinvestment Unit to deliver community capability building and measurement and evaluation support to communities funded under the Justice Reinvestment programs. |
| A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia – Justice Reinvestment | \$10 million over 4 years from 2023-24 to 2026-27 (AGD led) | Justice Reinvestment in Central Australia. |
| | \$9.2 million to strengthen community safety in Central Australia (NIAA led) | Oonchiumpa Cultural Services was funded (\$1.9 million over 2 years 2023-25) to deliver a new culturally led diversion program for up to 50 at-risk Aboriginal youth. |
| | | Funding for school holiday activities (2024-26). |
| National Access to Justice Partnership 2025-2030 (AGD led) | \$3.9 billion over 5 years | Towards vital legal assistance, including \$800 million uplift for the legal assistance sector to provide frontline legal assistance for First Nations people. |

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|---|---|---|
| <p>Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment (NTRAI) (NIAA, NTG and Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT (APONT) led)</p> | <p>\$842.6 million over 6 years (\$367.6 million for remote policing, peacekeeping, mediation and child and family safety support services)</p> | <p>This will ensure remote First Nations communities have access to the essential services and opportunities they need to Close the Gap in life outcomes in the NT: \$205.8 million for remote policing \$25.9 million for placed-based mediation and peacemaking \$135.9 million for child and family safety and support services</p> |
| <p>Closing the Gap Justice Policy Partnership (AGD led)</p> | <p>\$10.7 million for 4 years from 2024-25</p> | <p>To implement the JPP's Strategic Framework.</p> |
| <p>Reconnection, Employment and Learning (REAL) (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) led)</p> | <p>\$72.6 million over 5 years</p> | <p>To improve how First Nations people aged 15 years and older who are incarcerated to transition out of the justice system and into employment.</p> |
| <p>Indigenous Advancement Strategy</p> | <p>\$61 million in 2025-26</p> | <p>\$10.8 million in adult and youth through-care programs which provide intensive case management to First Nations people to help them transition from prison or detention back into their communities and avoid reoffending.</p> |
| | | <p>\$30 million in community safety patrols which employ First Nations peoples to patrol their local communities and offer culturally sensitive assistance and transportation to a safe place for those at risk of harm.</p> |
| | | <p>\$17.2 million in youth support and diversion activities to provide intensive case management approaches</p> |

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|--|--|--|
| | | that address the underlying drivers of crime by providing holistic wrap around support and practical strategies for First Nations young people to help them re-engage with education or employment; improve health and wellbeing and reconnect with community. |
| | | \$3.1 million for other crime prevention projects addressing the underlying causes of offending and anti-social behaviour to assist people to make positive life decisions, build pro-social behaviours and reduce their risk of offending and re-offending. |

• **Total IAS funding directed towards CTG Targets 10 and 11 in 2025-26**

| | IAS Funding 2025-26 CtG Target 10 (Adults in custody) | IAS Funding 2025-26 CtG Target 11 (Youth in Custody) | Total by State |
|--------------|--|---|-------------------------------|
| ACT | ACT covered by NSW project | ACT covered by NSW project | ACT covered by NSW project |
| NSW | \$1,352,150.50 | \$5,047,464.07 | \$6,399,614.57 |
| NT | \$3,274,403.48 | \$32,957,774.02 | \$36,232,177.50 |
| QLD | \$2,741,935.25 | \$3,416,927.08 | \$6,158,862.33 |
| SA | \$286,547.70 | \$3,379,567.25 | \$3,666,114.95 |
| TAS | \$289,668.40 | \$152,692.38 | \$442,360.78 |
| VIC | \$0 | \$2,141,558.30 | \$2,141,558.30 |
| WA | \$748,744.18 | \$5,681,311.88 | \$6,429,897.46 |
| TOTAL | \$8,693,449.50 | \$52,777,136.38 | \$61,470,585.88 |

- **Total Justice Reinvestment funding allocated to date:**

| Jurisdiction | Justice Reinvestment funding to date | |
|--------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| ACT | Nil | Adult \$24,187,364 Youth \$27,194,907 |
| NSW | \$2,791,572 | |
| NT | \$16,886,293 | |
| QLD | \$12,117,478 | |
| SA | \$3,090,127 | |
| TAS | Nil | |
| VIC | \$1,342,993 | |
| WA | \$15,053,790 | |
| TOTAL | \$51,382,253 | |

Facts and figures

- Since the 1991 Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, 608 First Nations people have died in prison and police custody (at 4 September 2025; Australian Institute of Criminology).
- Nationally, there have been 23 First Nations deaths in custody since 1 January 2025.
- First Nations people account for 36 per cent of all adult prisoners. From 30 June 2023 to 30 June 2024, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander imprisonment rate increased by 15 per cent (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2024).
- As of 30 June 2025, more than 2500 First Nations people were in custody, which is equivalent of 3 per cent of the Territory's population of Aboriginal men, women and children.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children aged 10-13 are 47 times more likely to be in detention than non-Indigenous children (Australian Institute of Health and Wellbeing (AIHW), 2024).
- First Nations young people are 28 times as likely as non-Indigenous young people to be in youth detention and make up 63 per cent of young people in youth detention (AIHW, 2024).
- The majority of children and young people in detention have not been sentenced. On an average day in 2023-24, 83 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people aged 10-17 years in detention were unsentenced, and this was 75 per cent for non-Indigenous children and young people (AIHW, 2025).

Key Dates

- 9 September 2025 – Indigenous Affairs Ministers Meeting
- 15 August 2025 – Standing Council of Attorneys-General Meeting
- 1 July 2025 – National Access to Justice Partnership commenced
- 20 June 2025 – Joint Council on Closing the Gap
- 1 June 2025 – Reporting on Senate Inquiry into Australia’s Youth Justice and Incarceration System
- 20 August 2024 – The National Children’s Commissioner Anne Hollands, Help Way Earlier! How Australia can transform child justice to improve safety and wellbeing Report tabled in Federal Parliament
- September 2023 – Age of Criminal Responsibility Working Group Report delivered by the Standing Council of Attorneys General
- 1991 – Final Report on the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody

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|--------------|--|--------|
| Ali Jenkins | Social Policy Group Manager | s22(1) |
| Priya Powell | Families and Safety Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Director – Justice Policy and Partnerships Section | s22(1) |

Social Policy Group

Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Ms Ali Jenkins | Group Manager, Social Policy
- Ms Priya Powell | Branch Manager, Families and Safety

Key Talking Points

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

- First Nations women and children continue to experience unacceptably high rates of family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV).
- The Productivity Commission's latest update on progress towards Target 13 (by 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced by at least 50 per cent, as progress towards zero) **has insufficient data and cannot be assessed**.
- Experiences of FDSV are a key factor driving the contact of First Nations children with the child protection system.
- The Productivity Commission's latest update on progress towards Target 12 (by 2031, reduce the rate of over-representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent) **is not on track**.

Australian Government initiatives

- On 6 September 2024, National Cabinet announced a \$4.7 billion investment in practical measures to address family, domestic and sexual violence.
- This includes \$3.9 billion over 5 years (from 2025-26) to support frontline legal assistance services, delivered through a new National Access to Justice Partnership (NAJP) which commenced 1 July 2025. The NAJP includes:
 - A 112 per cent funding uplift for Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services (FVPLS).
 - Administration of FVPLS transitioned from the NIAA to the Attorney-General's Department (AGD) from 1 July 2025. Administration of these services under one national funding agreement will provide long term funding certainty from the Commonwealth, provide proper indexation, reduce pay disparity and reduce fragmentation of funding arrangements and reporting obligations.
- Detailed questions should be referred to AGD.
- In addition to funding for the NAJP, National Cabinet also agreed to the following measures to address gender-based violence:
 - \$700 million in new matched investments from the Commonwealth and states and territories for a renewed, -year National Partnership

Agreement on Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Responses, to commence on 1 July 2025.

- \$80 million boost to enhance and expand child-centric trauma-informed supports for children and young people, with a specific focus on First Nations children and young people to identify gaps in support and design new or revised initiatives.

National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032

- In 2022, the Government launched the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032* (National Plan), alongside state and territory governments.
- The National Plan is supported by a dedicated *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-2025* to address violence against First Nations women and children.
- In the 2023-24 Budget, \$194 million was allocated to support the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-25*, including \$40.8 million to the NIAA for community-led family safety initiatives.

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices

- *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic, and Sexual Violence 2025-2035* (Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices) will set the long term policy reform agenda to address the alarmingly high rates of family, domestic and sexual violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices is expected to be finalised by December 2025.
- Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Care– National Voice for our Children (SNAICC) was engaged to provide Secretariat support to the Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices Steering Committee and to undertake the public engagement.
 - An online public submission process ran from 5 September 2024 to 4 November 2024 with further community, sector and government consultations continuing until March 2025.
 - On 15 January 2024, the Government appointed 24 members to the Our Ways Steering Committee, to lead the development of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices.
- Detailed questions should be referred to the Department of Social Services.

Child Safety

- On 13 January 2025 the Australian Government established a National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children. The National Commissioner's role is to protect and promote the rights, interests and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, including addressing the overrepresentation of First Nations children in out-of-home care and youth detention.

- Adjunct Professor Sue-Anne Hunter commenced in the role on 1 September 2025. Ms Lil Gordon was initially appointed as the Acting National Commissioner.
- The Australian Human Rights Commission's 'Help Way Earlier!' Report released June 2024, called for reform of the child justice system and related systems including child protection.
- The Australian Government is working with jurisdictions to ensure that children who are at risk of interacting with the child protection system due to family violence are Safe and Supported through the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031, and the National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021-2030. Detailed questions should be referred to the Department of Social Services.

NIAA works with First Nations communities and providers to fund critical supports for First Nations children experiencing, or at-risk of experiencing family violence, or victim-survivors of child abuse including healing programs for victim and survivors of child sexual abuse in 5 locations (Alice Springs, Northern Territory; Derby, Western Australia; Inner Gippsland, Victoria; Western Adelaide, South Australia; and Townsville, Queensland).

If asked about 'NT man jailed for impregnating 13 year-old 'partner' given to him under traditional law' NT News article, 10 September 2025

- The offence referred to in the 10 September 2025 *NT News* article, is a serious criminal offence. A 13-year-old cannot legally or ethically be in a relationship with an adult.
- This case is a stark reminder that all children must be protected from harm, always.
- Generally, criminal offences such as in this matter are covered by State or Territory law. This was an offence committed under NT Law.

Senate Inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children (Senate Inquiry)

- National Cabinet committed to maintaining a central focus on missing and murdered First Nations women and children and agreed that all government commitments on gender-based violence must explicitly consider the needs and experiences of First Nations people and be delivered in genuine partnership with First Nations communities.
- The Australian Government Response to the Senate Inquiry report was tabled on 25 November 2024.
- The NIAA worked across Government to review the key recommendations of the Senate Inquiry and to coordinate the Government's response.
- The NIAA will continue to work across governments to shape policy responses to support First Nations child and family safety through the National Plan including the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-25*; *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031*; the *National Strategy to End Child Sexual Abuse 2021-30*; and development of *Our Ways - Strong Ways - Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence*.

Background

- On 30 July 2025 the Productivity Commission released its fifth Annual Data Compilation Report.
- Closing the Gap Target 12 (by 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent) continues to worsen and is not on track.
- Closing the Gap Target 13 (by 3031, reduce the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children by at least 50 per cent) cannot be assessed due to lack of available data.
 - In November 2023, the Australian Government announced \$15 million over 5 years to develop a First Nations data set and improved evidence framework to measure progress against Target 13.

Impact

- In 2025-2026 the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) will invest \$42.29 million in initiatives that address family, domestic and sexual violence including:
- Family safety initiatives under the Third and Fourth Action Plan of the previous National Plan 2010-2022 (\$13.8 million):
 - To continue funding for frontline FDSV services providing therapeutic care, intensive family case management, and men's behaviour change programs.
 - In 2024-25, providers delivered services to at least 2,764 First Nations peoples impacted by FDSV.
- Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment (NTRAI) Child and Family Schedule (\$18.12 million):
 - This includes funding for 19 remote women's safe houses (\$12.75 million) and funding for remote family support services (\$5.37 million) in at least 23 communities in the Northern Territory.
 - Two further women's safe houses in Darwin and Alice Springs are partially funded by NTRAI, assisting women and children who leave their community.
- Central Australia Plan (\$1.7 million):
 - To deliver funding to Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) and Women's Safety Services of Central Australia (WOSSCA) for emergency accommodation and safe spaces to support young people and women experiencing domestic violence.
- Healing for Strong Families Program (\$6.157 million):
 - To deliver trauma-aware, place-based healing programs for First Nations peoples impacted by family violence or the child protection system. Place-based co-design is complete and funding applications to deliver services have been assessed. Delivery has commenced in 2 locations out of a total of 7 in the last quarter of 2024.

- Supporting Healing for Families (\$1.664 million):
 - To support the place-based co-design and delivery of culturally safe healing initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and survivors of child sexual abuse and their families in 5 locations across Australia (Derby, Alice Springs, Townsville, Inner Gippsland, Western Adelaide).
- Project BIRD (Believe, Inquire, Respond and Disclose) (\$0.852 million)
 - National training package for mainstream and First Nations frontline health workers to provide trauma-informed and culturally safe responses to child sexual abuse, delivered by SNAICC – in 5 locations across Australia (Canberra, Melbourne, Thursday Island, Hobart and Broome).

Funding

| Title | Amount | Duration | Description |
|---|--|--|--|
| Women’s Safety – First Nations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan activities) | \$215.6 million | Over 5 years (from 2023-24 to 2028-29) | <p>This funding includes \$194 million from 2023-24 for activities under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan, including \$40.8 million to NIAA for community-led family safety initiatives.</p> <p>An additional \$21.6 million from 2025-26 for NIAA to continue the delivery of prevention, early intervention, and response services to address family, domestic and sexual violence in high needs First Nations communities.</p> |
| Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment (NTRAI) | \$135.9 million for Child and Family safety and support services | Over 6 years (from 2025-26 to 2031-32) | The Government has committed \$842.6 million over 6 years through NTRAI. This commitment will ensure remote First Nations communities have access to the essential services and opportunities they need to Close the Gap in life outcomes in the Northern Territory. |
| National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People | \$5.9 million (\$2.95 from NIAA) | Over 2 years (from 2024-25 to 2025-26) | To support the Acting National Commissioner to establish an Office and to consult First Nations stakeholders to shape the National Commissioner’s ongoing statutory role and functions. |
| Central Australia Plan | \$9 million | Over 4 years (from 2023-24 to 2026-27) | To deliver funding to AHL and WOSSCA for emergency accommodation and safe spaces |

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| | <p>Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) \$4.9 million</p> <p>Women's Safety Services of Central Australia (WOSSCA) \$4.1million</p> | <p>AHL: 2023-24 to 2025-25</p> <p>WOSSCA: 2023-24 to 2026-27</p> | <p>to support young people and women experiencing domestic violence.</p> |
| <p>Healing for Strong Families</p> | <p>\$23.2 million</p> | <p>Over 4 years (from 2023-24 to 2027-28)</p> | <p>Under the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-32, which includes the dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan, the Healing for Strong Families program will support families impacted by violence and at risk of engaging in the child protection system, through delivery of 7 place-based, trauma-aware and culturally responsive healing programs aimed at early intervention, recovery and supporting families</p> |
| <p>Supporting Healing for Families</p> | <p>\$12.9 million (respectively \$10.9 million over 4 years and \$2.021 million over 1 year)</p> | <p>Over 5 years (from 2021-22 to 2025-26)</p> | <p>To deliver culturally safe, trauma informed healing for First Nations children who are impacted by child sexual abuse and their families in 5 locations.</p> |
| <p>Project BIRD</p> | <p>\$3.8 million</p> | <p>Over 5 years (from 2021-22 to 2025-26)</p> | <p>Project BIRD delivers a trauma-aware, healing-informed and culturally appropriate training package for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and mainstream health care workers to improve early disclosure conversations and access to specialist services for victim-survivors in 5 locations across Australia.</p> |

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| <p>Central Australia Plan - A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia (\$350 million package)</p> | <p>\$30 million for Strengthening Family and Community Partnerships</p> | <p>Over 5 years (from 2023-24 to 2027-28)</p> | <p>Funding announced 5 December 2023 to support place-based initiatives in Regional and Remote Central Australia, targeted at strengthening family and community safety delivered by DSS. This project is being developed by in collaboration with communities.</p> |
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Facts and figures

- First Nations women are 34 times more likely to be hospitalised and up to 7 times more likely to be homicide victims than non-Indigenous women in Australia, with almost three quarters killed by their current or former intimate partner (AIHW 2022, AIC 2024).
- The rates of domestic violence in the Northern Territory (NT) are 18 times higher than in other jurisdictions, with 89 per cent of victims identified as First Nations (Senate Inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children).
- First Nations children are 12 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children (AIHW, 2025), making up 44.5 per cent of all children in out-of-home care (Productivity Commission, 2025).
- The total number of First Nations children in out-of-home care increased from 19,803 in June 2023 to 19,985 in June 2024 (AIHW, 2025).
- A 2023-24 report by the Victorian Commission for Children and Young People found that Aboriginal children continue to be over-represented in incidents of alleged child abuse. The report outlined 1,892 notifications of reportable allegations, representing a 30 per cent increase on the number of notifications received in 2022–23, and a 136 per cent increase on the number received in 2017–18.
- In 2022-23, of substantiated notifications primary types of abuse for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were: emotional (51.2 per cent, 7,145), neglect (28 per cent, 3,920), physical (11.3 per cent, 1,588), sexual (6.8 per cent, 954). (source: Productivity Commission Dashboard, 12 March 2025 update)
 - Primary types of abuse for non-Indigenous children were - emotional (59.5 per cent, 18,052), neglect (16.8 per cent, 5,094), physical (13.5 per cent, 4,080), sexual (9.5 per cent, 2,884).

Key Dates

- March 2026 – Family Domestic and Sexual Violence Peak Body launched.
- 15 July 2025 – National Access to Justice Partnership to commence.
- December 2025 – Our Ways - Strong Ways - Our Voices is finalised.

- 1 September-2025 – Ms Sue-Anne Hunter commences in role of National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People.
- 1 July 2025 – National Access to Justice Partnership commenced.
- 13 January 2025 – National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s and Young people is established and Acting Commissioner appointed.
- 25 November 2024 – Australian Government Response to the Senate Inquiry into missing and murdered First Nations women and children tabled.
- 6 September 2024 – National Cabinet meeting and funding announcement to address the national crisis of Gender-Based Violence.
- 23 August 2024 – final report of the Rapid Review into Prevention Approaches.
- 15 August 2024 – final report of the Senate Inquiry into missing and murdered First Nations women and children.
- 1 May 2024 – National Cabinet meeting on the national crisis of gender-based violence.

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| Ali Jenkins | Social Policy Group | s22(1) |
| Priya Powell | Families and Safety Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Gender Policy and Sector Strengthening | s22(1) |

Social Policy Group

First Nations Children's Commissioner

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Ms Ali Jenkins | Group Manager, Social Policy
- Ms Priya Powell | Branch Manager, Families and Safety

Key Talking Points

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

- The Productivity Commission's latest update on progress towards Closing the Gap shows that outcomes for youth justice (Target 11) and out-of-home care (Target 12) continue to worsen.
- First Nations children and young people continue to be over-represented in the youth justice and child protection systems.
- Establishing the National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and Young People is a key step in the Commonwealth's commitment to listen to and meaningfully engage with First Nations people to promote systemic change and further embed the partnership elements of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People (National Commissioner)

- On 13 January 2025, the Australian Government established a National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People.
 - Ms Lil Gordon was initially appointed as the Acting National Commissioner.
 - Adjunct Professor Sue-Anne Hunter, a Wurundjeri and Ngurai Illum Wurrung woman from Victoria, commenced in the role on 1 September 2025.
 - Adjunct Professor Hunter has had an extensive career in the family services sector, including senior roles at SNAICC and the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA). More recently, she was a Commissioner and Deputy Chair of the Yoorrook Justice Commission.
- The National Commissioner's role is to protect and promote the rights, interests and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, including addressing the overrepresentation of First Nations children in out-of-home care and youth detention.

If asked: When will the Government pass enabling legislation on the National Commissioner?

- Establishing the National Commissioner under the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* is the first step towards the establishment of the ongoing, fully legislated and empowered National Commissioner.

- The National Commissioner is undertaking targeted engagement and consultation with First Nations people, government and non-government stakeholders to shape the policy settings that will inform the enabling legislation.
- The National Commission was established as an executive agency within the Social Services portfolio. Detailed questions should be referred to the Department of Social Services (DSS).

If asked: Will the National Commissioner have independence and be effectively empowered to conduct their role?

- Minimum requirements for National, State and Territory Commissioners for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People or similar roles are being developed under Action 7a of the *Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026*.
- Questions on the powers of the National Commissioner should be referred to DSS.

If asked: How will the National Commissioner's formal establishment and operations be funded?

- The 2024-25 Budget committed \$5.9 million over 2 years to support the establishment of the National Commissioner's Office, with the cost of this measure being equally met from within the existing resourcing of DSS and NIAA.
- This funding was for the 'interim phase' and enabled the Acting Commissioner to establish an Office and to consult First Nations stakeholders to shape the Commission's ongoing statutory role and functions.
- Funding for the formal establishment and ongoing operations of the National Commissioner is a decision for Government.

Background

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

- On 30 July 2025 the Productivity Commission released its fifth Annual Data Compilation Report.
- Target 11 (to reduce the rate of First Nations young people in detention by at least 30 per cent by 2031) has shown no change from baseline and is not on track. State and territory progress is assessed from the baseline year:
 - New South Wales (NSW) – no change
 - Victoria (VIC) – improving
 - Queensland (QLD) – worsening
 - Western Australia (WA) – improving
 - South Australia (SA) – improving
 - Tasmania (TAS) – no change
 - Australian Capital Territory (ACT) – worsening
 - Northern Territory (NT) – worsening.

- Target 12 (to reduce the rate of over-representation of First Nations children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent by 2031) continues to worsen and is not on track. State and territory progress is assessed from the baseline year:
 - New South Wales (NSW) – no change
 - Victoria (VIC) – improving
 - Queensland (QLD) – worsening
 - Western Australia (WA) – improving
 - South Australia (SA) – improving
 - Tasmania (TAS) – no change
 - Australian Capital Territory (ACT) – worsening
 - Northern Territory (NT) – worsening.
- The Closing the Gap Targets related to healthy children and safe families, and their latest assessments of progress are in the table below:

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|---|-----------------------------|
| First Nations children thrive in their early years (Target 4) | Worsening, not on track |
| First Nations young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system (Target 11) | No change from the baseline |
| First Nations children are not overrepresented in the child protection system (Target 12) | Worsening, not on track |
| First Nations families and households are safe (Target 13) | No assessment available |
| First Nations people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing (Target 14) | Worsening, not on track |

- These targets, while tracked independently, are interlinked and require a coordinated approach, owned and led by First Nations communities, to get their trajectory back on track. The National Commissioner will play an important role in ensuring coordinated and practical action across jurisdictions.

Impact

- Establishing a legislated, independent and empowered National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People (\$5.9 million over 2 years from 2024-25).
- This funding is for the interim phase and is enabling the National Commissioner to lead the establishment of the National Commission and consult First Nations stakeholders to shape the Commission's ongoing statutory role and functions, which will be formalised in legislation.
- The National Commissioner is working directly with First Nations children and young people to listen to and champion their voices, sense of hope and ideas for change, along with the broader community.

- The National Commissioner is enhancing coordination and working alongside First Nations leaders, state and territory Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates, as well as the National Children's Commissioner, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, and the Family Domestic and Sexual Violence Commissioner.
- Policy advice is provided from the Commissioner to governments to assist in the implementation of key policy frameworks and coordination.

Facts and figures

- First Nations children are 12 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-Indigenous children and 27 times more likely to be in youth detention.
- First Nations children make up 44.5 per cent of all children aged 0-17 in out-of-home care and 65 per cent of young people aged 10-17 in youth detention. First Nations children aged 0-17 are only 7 per cent of the total child population in Australia.
- A significant proportion of these young people, commonly referred to as 'crossover' or 'dual-order' kids, experience involvement in both out-of-home care and youth justice systems and face complex and interconnected challenges, including a heightened risk of negative life outcomes due to their involvement in both systems.
- Across Australia, First Nations children in youth justice supervision are more likely to have had substantiated child protection notifications, care and protection orders, and multiple out-of-home care placements. Those who have experienced 5 or more placements are particularly at risk of later incarceration. A longer time in care and higher placement instability are also directly correlated with increased justice system contact for all children, but this is disproportionately so for First Nations children.
- Of First Nations children who were 10 years old at their first youth justice supervision order, 94 per cent had previously interacted with the child protection system.

Key Dates

- 1 September 2025 - Adjunct Professor Sue-Anne Hunter commenced as the ongoing National Commissioner.
- 13 January 2025 – The National Commission formally commenced. Ms Lil Gordon was appointed as the Acting National Commissioner.
- 5 December 2024 - The Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014 was amended to prescribe the National Commission as a listed entity.
- 26 September 2024 – The Executive Order was published in the Commonwealth Government Gazette, establishing the Commission as an Executive Agency under the *Public Service Act 1999*.
- 14 May 2024 – Funding to establish the National Commission announced in the 2024-25 Budget.
- 13 February 2024 – The Hon. Anthony Albanese MP, Prime Minister announced the National Commission would be established.

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| Ali Jenkins | Social Policy Group Manager | s22(1) |
| Priya Powell | Families and Safety Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Director - Child Protection, Safety and Healing | s22(1) |

Social Policy Group

5. Health and Wellbeing

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Ms Ali Jenkins, Group Manager, Social Policy
- Ms Catherine Orchard, Branch Manager, Health and Wellbeing

Key Talking Points

National Agreement on Closing the Gap (CtG)

- The Productivity Commission's latest update on CtG health related targets shows that life expectancy (Target 1) and healthy birthweight (Target 2) are improving but not on track, and suicide outcomes (Target 14) continue to worsen.
- This highlights the need for our ongoing partnerships with the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (DoHDA) and the First Nations health sector.
- The National Indigenous Australians Agency's (NIAA) health and wellbeing activities seek to have a positive impact on the health related CtG targets.
- NIAA also has strong relationships with DoHDA on addressing CtG cross-cutting outcomes of disability and ageing.

Commonwealth responsibilities

- DoHDA has primary responsibility for First Nations health, disability and ageing policy and programs.
- The NIAA's health and wellbeing focus, which complements DoHDA's efforts, includes contributing to policy outcomes and program delivery across:
 - First Nations health, including the social and cultural determinants and sector strengthening.
 - Social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB), noting the NIAA has Commonwealth lead on First Nations SEWB.
 - Mental health and suicide prevention.
 - Harmful substance use, including alcohol and other drugs (AOD) and volatile substance use involving petrol.
 - Disability, aged care and youth diversionary activities.

NIAA's key investment to deliver better wellbeing outcomes

- The NIAA is focussed on supporting local solutions co-designed with First Nations communities; investing in addressing risk and protective factors to prevent suicide; and contributing to the evidence base for future reforms and influencing other Commonwealth and state and territory agencies.
- The NIAA is forecast to provide approximately \$84 million in 2025-26 to First Nations mental health, suicide prevention, and SEWB activities (see facts and figures for further detail).

- On 10 February 2025, the Australian Government announced \$23.8 million over 4 years from 2025-26 to improve First Nations SEWB and mental health, supporting progress towards Outcome 14 of the National Agreement on CtG. The package includes:
 - \$11.5 million to establish a flexible funding pool to enable short term, place-based SEWB supports for First Nations families and communities to manage significant trauma.
 - \$4.0 million to develop, update and disseminate First Nations-led SEWB assessment tools and processes, enabling services to measure impact and inform improved service design.
 - \$8.3 million to support the higher education costs of up to 150 First Nations psychology students to increase the availability of culturally safe and appropriately qualified First Nations psychologists.
- *If Asked: What are the plans for the future of suicide postvention services?*
 - Current significant funding from DoDHA and the NIAA for First Nations mental health and suicide prevention is due to cease on 30 June 2026.
 - The Government is considering options for the future of mental health and suicide prevention funding, including postvention services.

Alcohol and other drugs

- DoHDA has lead policy and program responsibility for AOD. However, the NIAA works collaboratively with DoHDA, state and territory governments and other stakeholders to ensure First Nations voices are included in the development of AOD policies and programs.
- The NIAA contributes IAS funding for First Nations AOD treatment services:
 - Over \$70 million is provided from the IAS for around 70 AOD services annually to deliver 87 activities; and
 - Over \$16 million funding is being provided in 2025-26 under the Commonwealth's CtG Implementation Plan for the *Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander AOD Treatment Services Initiative*.
 - NIAA provides approximately 30% of the overall Commonwealth funding for First Nations AOD treatment services.

First Nations Disability

- The Disability Royal Commission (DRC) and National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) Review found that policy frameworks and service delivery often fail to recognise and respond to the distinct needs of First Nations people with disability.
- The NIAA is working closely with the DoHDA, the National Disability Insurance Agency and First Nations disability stakeholders to address the recommendations from the NDIS Review and the DRC. This includes consultations to develop options for a First Nations Disability Forum.

- The NIAA is providing approximately \$12.3 million between 2021-22 and 2025-26 to the First Peoples Disability Network, the First Nations disability peak body, to build capability across the community-controlled disability sector.
- Questions relating to the DRC and the NDIS Review should be directed to the DoHDA as the Commonwealth lead department for disability policy.

Remote Community Laundries

- On 10 February 2025, the Australian Government announced \$11.4 million over 4 years (2025-26 to 2028-29) for the Remote Community Laundries Project.
- An open competitive grant opportunity will be released in November 2025 to engage suitable organisations to establish or upgrade community laundries and maintain and operate them in up to 12 remote and very remote First Nations communities across northern and central Australia.
- The grant opportunity is being informed by targeted consultation with First Nations health sector stakeholders and existing laundry providers.
- A separate consultant will be engaged to undertake an independent evaluation to understand the health, social and economic impacts of the remote community laundries operated through this Project.

Aged Care

- Questions relating to ageing populations and aged care should be directed to the DoHDA as the Commonwealth lead for ageing and aged care policy.
- The NIAA does not have specific programs concerning aged care however we work with other government agencies, particularly DoHDA, on:
 - responding to findings of the Aged Care Royal Commission to strengthen safe and culturally appropriate care for First Nations older people;
 - the First Nations Aged Care Framework, which includes outcomes regarding cultural safety of care and assessment within community, growing the community-controlled sector and First Nations workforce; and
 - the Integrated Care and Commissioning initiative (led by DoHDA), to trial integrated delivery of aged care, disability and veterans' services in 4 sites.

SEWB Policy Partnership (the Partnership)

- Approved by the Joint Council in August 2022, the Partnership aims to reduce suicide rates and improve the social and emotional wellbeing and mental health of First Nations people (addressing CtG Outcome 14).
- The Partnership's current priorities include:
 - A refresh of the *National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing*, and development of an implementation plan.
 - Establishing a Commissioning Framework.

- Establishing national workforce accreditation standards across the SEWB workforce.
- Building a stronger evidence base.
- Better use of current data to support the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty.
- *If Asked: Why hasn't the SEWB Policy Partnership met since February 2025?*
 - The SEWB Policy Partnership Co-chairs, DoHDA and Gayaa Dhuwi, advised members (in August) that meetings are on pause while the Partnership's scope is reviewed.
 - The Co-chairs are expected to engage with members over the coming months to re-focus the SEWB Policy Partnership's work to strengthen attention on key strategic priorities, deepen participation from jurisdictions and develop shared reporting arrangements.
 - The timing of the Partnership's next meeting will be determined by the Co-chairs.
 - Further questions should be directed to the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing.

Impact

- **SEWB and mental health investment** seeks to:
 - address CtG Target 14 – reduce suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to zero and improve their social and emotional wellbeing; and
 - support outcomes under Priority Reform 1 - Strengthen and establish formal partnerships and shared decision-making, and Priority Reform 2 - Building the community-controlled sector.
- **Suicide postvention supports:** Thirrili Ltd, NIAA funded provider of suicide postvention services nationally, in 2024-25 supported families and communities in relation to close to 200 cases and over 900 calls to their 24/7 support line.
- **Mental Health First Aid training:** Over 740 workshops delivered from July 2022 to June 2025 to approximately 9,300 participants including 2,200 youth.
- **Indigenous Youth Culture Connect (IYCC):** IYCC has helped reduce the risk of youth suicide in communities by diverting participants towards culturally safe learning activities; increasing confidence and hope; and bolstering social cohesion in a way not supported through other services and programs. Over 2,400 Indigenous participants in 2024-25, across over 200 cultural activities. Of the sample surveyed, 100% of IYCC participants (against an 80% target) reported that the IYCC activities increased their knowledge and understanding of First Nations cultures.

- **AOD investment:** Directly contributes to improving CtG Outcomes 1 (life expectancy) and 14 (social and emotional wellbeing), as well as indirectly to a range of other targets including health, youth and children, justice and family safety outcomes. 87 activities delivered across 180 locations, supporting over 20,000 clients in 2023-24 and employing over 400 workers in direct service delivery.
- **Social and emotional wellbeing:** in 2025-26, the IAS is providing funding to 120 SEWB activities which together service 177 Indigenous locations.
- **Youth engagement (sport and recreation):** in 2025-26, the IAS is providing funding to 48 youth engagement sport and recreation activities which together service 171 Indigenous locations.

Facts and figures

CtG Tracking:

- **Target 1:** life expectancy: improvement but not on track with life expectancy of people born in 2020-22 ranging from 71.9 years for males and 75.6 years for females compared to non-Indigenous males and females' life expectancy of 80.6 years and 83.8 years respectively.
- **Target 2:** healthy birthweight: improvement but not on track with 89.2 per cent of babies born with a healthy birthweight in 2022.
- **Target 14:** suicide reduction: not on track and worsening. Nearly 31 people per 100,000 took their own life in 2023. This is above the rate for the previous 2 years and above the baseline in 2018.

Funding:

- In 2025-26, the NIAA is forecast to invest approximately **\$200 million in First Nations health and wellbeing**, including:
 - **\$39.5 million** to over 100 providers to deliver holistic, culturally safe and trauma-informed SEWB supports.
 - **\$23.7 million** for family Link-Up, Redress and healing supports for survivors of the Stolen Generations.
 - **\$5.8 million** for 6 Workforce Development Support Units to provide training and professional development support to the SEWB workforce nationally.
 - **\$3 million** in 2025-26 as part of \$12.8 million over 4 years (2023-24-2027-28) to continue piloting Indigenous Youth Connection to Culture program in 12 locations, to support First Nations youth to engage with their culture, families and Elders).
 - **\$5 million** to Thirrili Ltd for national delivery of suicide postvention services.
 - **\$5 million** to National Wellbeing Alliance to deliver Indigenous mental health first-aid training.
 - **\$2 million** to provide activities in support of suicide prevention in the Kimberley, WA.

- **\$72 million** (approx) for close to 70 AOD treatment services to deliver around 87 activities nationally.
- **\$16 million** is expected to be provided in 2025-26 as part of the \$173 million of additional administered funding under the *Strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Alcohol and Other Drugs Treatment Services Initiative* (2021-22 to 2030-31), of which approximately \$112 million has been provisioned.
- **\$8.2 million** for production, storage and distribution of low aromatic fuel.
- **\$2.7 million** for volatile substance use diversionary activities.
- **\$16.8 million** for youth engagement (sport and recreation) activities.

Data & Evidence:

- Disability Data
 - First Nations people are 1.5 times as likely as non-Indigenous Australians to have a disability, and almost 2.5 times as likely to have a profound disability requiring support for day-to-day living (2018-19 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey).
 - At 30 June 2024, 7.9% (or 46,000) NDIS participants identified as First Nations people.
- Ageing Data
 - The First Nations population is ageing. It is expected that by 2031, 20% of First Nations people will be aged 50 or over (AIHW, 2021).
- AOD Data
 - In 2022-23, 18% of people who received treatment or support for their own or someone else’s AOD use were First Nations. First Nations people were more than 6 times as likely to receive treatment for AOD use as non-Indigenous Australians, after adjusting for differences in age structure (AIHW, 2024).
- Pathogen Data
 - Scabies is endemic in remote northern Australia and found in up to 35 per cent of children and 25 per cent of adults.
 - In 2023, the incidence rate of Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) among First Nations people was 56.3 per 100, 000 representing 282 new RHD diagnoses among First Nations people.

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|-------------------|--|--------|
| Ali Jenkins | Group Manager | s22(1) |
| Catherine Orchard | Branch Manager | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Director, Strategic Health and Disability Policy | s22(1) |

Social Policy Group

6. Housing Overview

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Ms Ali Jenkins Group Manager, Social Policy
- Ms Simone Persson Branch Manager, Housing and Infrastructure

Key Talking Points

- Access to suitable, appropriate and affordable housing is fundamental to improving the lives of First Nations people.
- To address housing needs across the country, the Australian Government has committed \$43 billion in new housing initiatives through the Homes for Australia Plan.

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

- The National Agreement on Closing the Gap includes Outcome 9: *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need.*
- Outcome 9 is comprised of Targets 9a and 9b:
 - **Target 9a** (By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88%) **is improving but not on track, at 81.4% in 2021.**
 - **Target 9b** (By 2031, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households: within discrete Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard in or near to a town receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town (including if the household might be classified for other purposes as a part of a discrete settlement such as a “town camp” or “town based reserve”)) **does not have assessment currently available.**

NIAA's Role

- Supports the Government to influence and implement policy decisions of mainstream agencies to deliver better outcomes for First Nations people, as well as administering our own funded activities.
- Administers the Partnership Agreement for Remote Housing and Homelands, the NT Remote Housing Federation Funding Agreement (FFA) and Restoring Funding for NT Homelands FFA.
- Leads the implementation of the Housing Australia Future Fund's (HAFF) Acute Housing Measure - \$200 million over 5 years from 2024-25 for the repairs, maintenance and improvements of housing in remote Indigenous communities.

Northern Territory

\$4 billion Remote Housing and Homelands commitment

- The Australian Government's NT Remote Housing investment includes:
 - \$2 billion over 10-years from 2024-25, matched by the NT Government, to build up to 2,700 houses to remote NT communities to halve overcrowding, and deliver a comprehensive repairs and maintenance program.
 - \$120 million extension over 3 years from 2024-25 for urgent repairs and upgrades to housing and essential infrastructure on NT Homelands.
 - \$1 million to Aboriginal Housing NT over 2 years from 2024-25 to develop a plan to transition to a Community Controlled Housing Model.

Partnership Agreement for NT Remote Housing and Homelands

- The Australian Government has a Partnership Agreement with the NT Government, the 4 NT Land Councils and Aboriginal Housing NT to guide delivery of the NT remote housing package.
- Signed on 1 July 2024, this Agreement embeds shared decision making and ensures Aboriginal voices are heard.

If asked: Why does the Northern Territory receive a large amount of funding for remote housing compared to other jurisdictions?

- The NT has the highest levels of overcrowding in the country.
 - In 2021, only 43.4% of First Nations people in the NT were appropriately housed. For comparison, this is 78.8% in WA, 81.2% in Qld and 81.4% nationally (2021 Census).
- The Commonwealth has leasing liability for a number of remote communities and Town Camps.

If asked: Why didn't the \$4 billion agreement meet the target of 270 houses 2024-25?

- 222 houses were built in 2024-25, against a target of 270 houses.
 - The remaining 48 houses were under construction but not completed by 30 June 2025. The 48 houses are expected to be completed by the end of 2025.
- Construction has been impacted by weather events, particularly the prolonged wet season in the North, and challenges accessing some communities.

HAFF Acute Housing Measure

- \$200 million in investment returns from the HAFF over 5 years from 2024-25 is being provided for the repairs, maintenance and improvements of housing in remote Indigenous communities in WA, SA, Qld and the NT.
- The Commonwealth has agreed the implementation plans for WA, SA and Qld and these jurisdictions have received their first payment of \$25 million each.
- The NIAA is working closely with the NT Government to finalise their implementation plan to enable works to commence.

National Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Housing Association (NATSIHA)

- The NIAA provided NATSIHA with a one-off \$5.3 million (GST exclusive) grant agreement for seed funding to strengthen its capability and capacity which expired 30 June 2025.

If asked: All deliverable documentation has been provided and a formal assessment process is being undertaken by the NIAA.

- The NIAA works with NATSIHA on a range of measures, including the grant agreement, Housing Policy Partnership and other housing issues identified by the sector.

Housing Policy Partnership (HPP)

- The HPP is a forum for First Nations people to have a genuine say in the design and delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing services.
- The HPP is a partnership between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, Coalition of Peaks and independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.
 - The NIAA is a member of the HPP.
 - Treasury and NATSIHA co-chair the HPP.
- The HPP has met 9 times. The 10th meeting is scheduled for November 2025.
- Any questions on the HPP should be directed to Treasury.

National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness (NASHH)

- The NASHH is a 5-year agreement of \$9.3 billion to states and territories for homelessness crisis support, and to build and repair social housing.
- First Nations people are the only priority homelessness cohort specified in the NASHH, which aims to address the disproportionate housing inequality that continues to affect First Nations people.
- Any questions on the NASHH should be directed to Treasury.

Impact

- NT Remote Housing: In 2024-25, 222 houses were built in NT remote communities. This builds on the 206 houses completed in 2023-24, under the 1-year NT Remote Housing Agreement 2023-24.
- HAFF Acute Housing Measure: Jurisdictions are prioritising funding for First Nations organisations where possible, place-based approaches, and working with communities to ensure their needs are met. This will ensure the measure maximises the impact on-the-ground for communities.

Facts and figures

Closing the Gap: Target 9a - 88% of First Nations people to be in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing by 2031.

- Nationally, 81.4% of First Nations people were living in appropriately sized housing (2021 Census). This is an improvement from 78.9% at 2016 Census.
- Certain states have met Target 9a, including Victoria (88.8%), Tasmania (88.8%) and the ACT (90.7%).

Expenditure to date (NIAA-led Measures):

- 10-year NT Remote Housing Agreement 2024-25 to 2033-34: \$61.3 million.
- Restoring Funding for NT Homelands Agreement 2022-23 to 2026-27: \$60 million.
- 1-year NT Remote Housing Agreement 2023-24: \$74.3 million.
- HAFF Acute Housing Measure: \$75 million in 2024-25.

Key Dates

- 19 JUN 2025 –Qld’s implementation plan for the HAFF Acute Housing Measure agreed.
- 19 MAY 2025 –WA and SA’s implementation plans for the HAFF Acute Housing Measure agreed.
- 1 JUL 2024 – Partnership Agreement, 10-year NT Remote Housing FFA, NASHH and amended NT Homelands FFA commenced.
- 30 JUN 2024 – End of agreements: NT Homelands, 1-year NT Remote Housing, the National Housing and Homelessness Agreement (NHHA).
- 6 APR 2023 – Restoring Funding for NT Homelands agreement commenced.

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|----------------|-----------------------------------|--------|
| Ali Jenkins | Social Policy Group | s22(1) |
| Simone Persson | Housing and Infrastructure Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | National Housing Policy | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | NT Housing Policy | s22(1) |

Strategy Group

1. Closing the Gap

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Dr Simon Gordon, Group Manager, Strategy Group
- Erin Selmes, Branch Manager, Closing the Gap Branch

Key Talking Points

- The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) is a long-term collective effort with shared accountability across all governments and the Coalition of the Peaks to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
 - Implementation of this agreement is a high priority for the Commonwealth Government and NIAA is firmly committed to the partnership with the Coalition of the Peaks.
- The objectives of the National Agreement are:
 - Stronger partnerships and shared decision-making between all governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations.
 - A strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector.
 - All governments are accountable, culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to data and information relevant to their communities and regions.
- While the Australian Government is a key signatory, responsibility for delivering the National Agreement's outcomes is shared across state and territory governments, local councils, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community partners.
- The NIAA plays a central role in influencing and supporting the implementation of the National Agreement.
- A key aspect of the NIAA's role is working closely with the Coalition of Peaks and other Commonwealth agencies to identify opportunities for improvement, deliver tangible outcomes and monitor progress.
 - The NIAA plays a lead role in supporting colleagues across the Commonwealth to embed the 4 Priority Reforms.
 - Through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) the NIAA delivers programs in line with the Closing the Gap targets and Priority Reforms.
- Of the 19 socio-economic Closing the Gap targets with reliable data, 4 are on track and a further 6 are improving but require greater attention to get back on track, over half the targets are heading in the right direction.

- Unacceptably, 4 targets are regressing – early childhood development is slowing (Target 4), and the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration (Target 10), children in out-of-home care (Target 12), and the suicide rate (Target 14) are all increasing.
- Additionally, youth detention (Target 11) is unchanged from the baseline.
- Progress on the Closing the Gap Targets is the collective responsibility of all parties to the National Agreement. State and territories hold many of the policy levers to meet these targets. At the Commonwealth level, responsibility is shared across Commonwealth Ministers.
- Across 2025/26 the NIAA will continue to work with Commonwealth departments and entities to prioritise actions that address these targets. Additionally, we will continue to influence our colleagues across jurisdictions by leveraging mainstream policies and programs and developing new agreements where appropriate.

Impact

- The National Agreement outlines a roadmap for Governments and partners to work together on policy and programs impacting First Nations people. The 4 Priority Reforms underpin this.
- By its nature, this is a long-term transformation plan. The impact of change will take time to flow through to the targets, but the commitment is there.
- There are many examples of how this transformation is happening in practice:
 - The Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment (NTRAI) partnership agreement to strengthen service delivery in remote communities in the Northern Territory, with the Commonwealth Government providing \$842.6 million over six years to support delivery of services including, remote policing; child and family services; Aboriginal interpreter services; alcohol harm reduction services; education programs; and hearing and oral health services. For more information see the [NTRAI CEO Brief](#).
 - The swift establishment of the Data Policy Partnership (DPP), co-chaired by the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations, which will support implementation of Priority Reform Four and further build the evidence base required for development of policies and programs.
 - Ensuring the inclusion of First Nations issues in mainstream National Agreements (for example, the National Skills Agreement including specific First Nations funding);
 - Establishment of a National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People;
 - Transformation of the Australian Public Service through initiatives such as SES 100 and the Framework for the Governance of Indigenous Data; and

- Working in partnership with Northern Territory Land Councils and Aboriginal Housing NT to implement the \$4 billion ten-year commitment to NT remote communities and town camps – sharing decision making and developing improved approaches to delivery.
- More information on specific actions, priorities and progress is reported publicly in a combined Closing the Gap Annual Report and Implementation Plan.
 - The combined 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Implementation Plan was tabled in Parliament and published on 10 February 2025.
 - Preparations for the 2025 Annual Report and 2026 Implementation Plan are now underway.
- The Commonwealth's 2025 Implementation Plan prioritises food security, remote employment, housing and health and wellbeing. It includes targeted investments aimed at enabling economic self-determination, bettering outcomes for children and families and delivering for people in remote Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led Review

- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led Review (the Review) was delivered on 21 June 2025 by the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, who were contracted by the Coalition of Peaks through an open tender.
- The Review drew on discussions at the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Assembly (held over 1-3 April 2025 in Canberra).
- The Review offers a balanced perspective, acknowledging implementation gaps while also highlighting promising practices. The Review:
 - provides forward-looking recommendations for both governments and the Aboriginal community-controlled organisation (ACCO) sector.
 - has similar findings to and builds on the Productivity Commission Review of the National Agreement 2024.
 - identifies three core themes of self-determination, capability building, and governance frameworks.
 - has 9 Recommendations and 12 findings.
 - Refer to GM Closing the Gap Brief, Attachment A for further breakdown.
- The Commonwealth welcomes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Review and its recommendations. It presents a strong opportunity for transformation and reform, and we look forward to working with all partners to consider next steps.
- The Coalition of Peaks are leading development of the Joint Council response to the Review in partnership with all National Agreement Partners. The proposed approach, which the Commonwealth supports, is a holistic, strategic Joint Council response, focussed on system-level reform, rather than a recommendation-by-recommendation reply.

- Through this process, the parties are considering new partnership actions for each of the Priority Reforms. This is an existing commitment for 2025 under the National Agreement.

Closing the Gap Facts and Figures

- Of the 19 targets across the 17 socioeconomic outcome areas of the Agreement, there are now 15 targets with data beyond the baseline year.
 - 4 targets are on track.
 - 6 targets are improving but not on track.
 - 4 targets are not on track and worsening.
 - Target 4: Early childhood development.
 - Target 10: Indigenous adults held in incarceration.
 - Target 12: Indigenous children aged up to 17 years held in out-of-home care.
 - Target 14: Indigenous suicide rate
 - 1 target has not changed since the baseline year.
 - 4 targets have no data beyond the baseline year.
- The Productivity Commission is responsible for collating and updating Closing the Gap data through the Closing the Gap Information Repository.
 - The last update was on 30 July 2025.
- In addition to updating progress on targets, the Productivity Commission provides data on 54 supporting indicators.
 - This includes school attendance data and data on prevalence of health risk factors (smoking, alcohol, drug use, etc.).
- Data is not available for four socio-economic outcome areas (9B, 13, 16 & 17). Collaboration across jurisdictions is necessary to make progress. The newly established a Data Policy Partnership will play a leadership role to improve First Nations data, and through the Department of Social Services, the government is investing \$15 million in First Nations-led research to capture the data needed to report against Target 13 (family safety).

Funding the National Agreement

- Commonwealth funding since 2020 is approximately \$156 million since 2020 to support the architecture and partnership commitments under the Agreement (excluding funding for service delivery).
 - \$13.9 million (2022–26) supporting Coalition of Peaks participation in the Partnership.
 - An additional \$1.9 million was allocated to the Coalition of Peaks for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Led Review and Assembly
 - \$10.1 million to Productivity Commission (PC) over 2020–24 and \$2.6 million ongoing from 2024–25.

- \$46.5 million through the Virtual Funding Pool for developing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Sector.
- \$500,000 to shared resourcing pool for training, capability and research to benefit all Parties.
- \$80.52 million for all five Policy Partnerships.
 - An additional Data Policy Partnership will be established and funding is yet to be allocated.
- Approximately \$90,000 in annual costs for governance meetings.

Key Dates

- 30 June 2025 – Joint Council response to the PC Review published.
- 21 June 2025 – Public release of Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led Review.
- 20 June 2025 – Joint Council meeting.
- 10 February 2025 – Prime Minister’s Closing the Gap speech, tabling of the 2024 Annual Report and 2025 Implementation Plan.
- 15 November 2024 – Joint Council meeting.
- 05 July 2024 – Joint Council meeting and communique on the PC Review.
- 07 February 2024 – Public release of the PC Review.

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| Simon Gordon | Group Manager, Strategy Group | s22(1) |
| Erin Selmes | Branch Manager, Closing the Gap Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Director, Closing the Gap Strategy | s22(1) |

Grants and Finance Group

1. Budget 2025-26 - IAS Position

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Jeremy Mickle, A/g Group Manager Grants and Finance

Key Talking Points

- The Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS) budget through the 2025-26 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS) is \$8.15 billion over the forward years.
- Expenditure forecast, as at 31 August 2025, is as follows:
 - \$2.63 billion (32%) of funds are legally committed or reserved for demand driven activities across the forward estimates.
 - \$5.52 billion (68%) of funds are for planned investments for critical and in many cases essential services, placed based targeted investment, ongoing community services or statutory requirements.
 - Planned investments include \$129.51 million which has been approved, by either the Minister or an NIAA delegate, but are yet to be legally committed.
- For 2025-26, the Agency is forecasting for the IAS appropriation (\$2.16 billion) to be fully utilised. Of this, \$1.44 billion (66%) is legally committed as at 31 August 2025.
- Of the remaining \$724.35 million in funding:
 - \$61.66 million has been approved for spending, by either the Minister or an NIAA delegate, but is yet to be legally committed; and
 - \$662.69 million is for planned investments that have not yet been approved for spending by the Minister or an NIAA delegate.

Facts and figures

- The table below outlines the IAS funding and commitments as at 31 August 2025.

| Indigenous Advancement Strategy | 2025-26 | 2026-27 | 2027-28 | 2028-29 | Total |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| | \$m | \$m | \$m | \$m | \$m |
| Total Appropriation | 2,163.37 | 2,049.91 | 2,070.46 | 1,869.47 | 8,153.20 |
| Legally committed funding | 1,439.02 | 702.66 | 481.54 | 2.69 | 2,625.91 |
| Planned Investments | 724.35 | 1,347.25 | 1,588.92 | 1,866.78 | 5,527.30 |
| 1.1 Jobs, Land and Economy | 1,143.53 | 1,184.30 | 1,288.35 | 1,145.89 | 4,762.07 |
| Legally committed funding | 694.19 | 358.34 | 332.53 | 0.00 | 1,385.06 |
| Planned Investments | 449.34 | 825.96 | 955.82 | 1,145.89 | 3,377.01 |
| 1.2 Children and Schooling | 339.76 | 305.33 | 282.73 | 279.73 | 1,207.54 |
| Legally committed funding | 256.80 | 111.09 | 16.80 | 2.45 | 387.13 |
| Planned Investments | 82.96 | 194.24 | 265.93 | 277.28 | 820.41 |
| 1.3 Safety and Wellbeing | 477.51 | 410.37 | 333.47 | 309.30 | 1,530.66 |
| Legally committed funding | 376.95 | 159.90 | 82.38 | 0.24 | 619.47 |
| Planned Investments | 100.56 | 250.47 | 251.09 | 309.06 | 911.18 |
| 1.4 Culture and Capability | 86.65 | 81.18 | 78.52 | 60.13 | 306.48 |
| Legally committed funding | 53.87 | 39.43 | 36.14 | 0.00 | 129.44 |
| Planned Investments | 32.78 | 41.75 | 42.39 | 60.13 | 177.05 |
| 1.5 Remote Australia Strategy | 104.70 | 57.28 | 75.72 | 62.49 | 300.19 |
| Legally committed funding | 54.26 | 32.72 | 13.68 | 0.00 | 100.67 |
| Planned Investments | 50.44 | 24.55 | 62.04 | 62.49 | 199.53 |
| 1.6 Evaluation and Research | 11.21 | 11.46 | 11.67 | 11.92 | 46.27 |
| Legally committed funding | 2.95 | 1.18 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 4.14 |
| Planned Investments | 8.27 | 10.28 | 11.66 | 11.92 | 42.13 |

Key Dates

- Forecast expenditure data is as at 31 August 2025.

Definition of Funding Categories

- Legally committed funds have been committed under a legal contract or reserved for outcome payments for demand driven activities.
- Planned Activities includes those that are in train but yet to have an executed agreement. Activities captured include:
 - Delegate approved activities without an executed legal contract.
 - Activities allocated to Government commitments and measures.
 - Approved planned programs and activities progressing through planning, consultation and negotiation phases.

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| Jeremy Mickle | A/g Group Manager Grants and Finance | s22(1) |
| Maria Babler | Deputy CFO, Finance Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Director, Finance Branch | s22(1) |

Grants and Finance Group

2. Budget 2025-26 – Measures and Variations

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Jeremy Mickle, A/g Group Manager, Grants and Finance

Key Talking Points

- As at the 2025-26 Portfolio Budget Statement (PBS), funding for the NIAA is \$2.5 billion in 2025-26 and \$9.4 billion over the forward estimates comprising:
 - Departmental operating: \$317.9 million in 2025-26 and \$1.2 billion over forward estimates;
 - Departmental Capital Budget: \$9.0 million in 2025-26 and \$36.8 million over the forward estimates; and
 - Administered operating (IAS): \$2.2 billion in 2025-26 and \$8.2 billion over the forward estimates.

| | 25-26 \$'m | 26-27 \$'m | 27-28 \$'m | 28-29 \$'m | Total \$'m |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Departmental operating funding | 317.9 | 310.9 | 294.4 | 281.4 | 1,204.6 |
| Departmental capital funding | 9.0 | 9.1 | 9.2 | 9.4 | 36.8 |
| Administered operating funding | 2,163.4 | 2,049.9 | 2,070.5 | 1,869.5 | 8,153.2 |
| Total NIAA funding at Budget | 2,490.3 | 2,369.9 | 2,374.1 | 2,160.2 | 9,394.6 |
| Budgeted ASL | 1,520 | 1,506 | | | |

- The actual Average Staffing Level (ASL) for NIAA in 2024-25 is 1,359. The actual ASL in 2023-24 was 1,428.
- There were 4 measures announced since the 2024-25 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook (MYEFO) and reported in the 2025-26 Portfolio Budget Statements (PBS).
 - The measures result in a net reduction to NIAA funding of \$28.1 million over five years from 2024-25 (increase of \$12.3 million departmental and \$40.4 million decrease for administered).
- There was a net reduction since the 2024-25 MYEFO of \$4.2 million over five years from 2024-25, from other variations, \$1.7 million administered and \$2.5 million departmental.

Background

- The Budget Measures with financial impacts for NIAA are as follows:
- **Closing the Gap - further investments:** A cross-portfolio package which includes the following NIAA measures:
 - \$137.3 million over three years from 2024–25 to support the transition between the Community Development Program and the new remote employment service for a four-month period to 31 October 2025.
 - \$70.9 million over two years from 2025–26 to increase opportunities for First Nations people, and particularly single carer families, to buy their own home and build intergenerational wealth through a boost to Indigenous Business Australia’s Home Loan Capital Fund.
 - \$50.0 million over four years from 2025–26 to provide access to low-cost products for remote stores, ease cost of living pressures and improve food security in remote communities.
 - \$36.7 million over four years from 2025–26 (and an additional \$4.5 million in 2029–30) for Stage 7 of the Major Infrastructure Program, to construct and upgrade infrastructure for essential services in remote First Nations communities across the Torres Strait region, subject to joint investment with the Queensland Government.
 - \$28.4 million over four years from 2025–26 (and an additional \$7.8 million in 2029–30) for Stage 3 of the Seawalls Program, to construct urgent additional coastal defences on three low-lying islands to protect vulnerable communities and infrastructure against climate-related flooding and erosion, subject to joint investment with the Queensland Government.
 - \$24.7 million over four years from 2025–26 to improve access to culturally safe and qualified mental health support including scholarships for up to 150 First Nations psychology students to boost the First Nations health care workforce.
 - \$23.9 million over five years from 2024–25 to strengthen the Indigenous Procurement Policy to boost opportunities for First Nations businesses to grow and create jobs.
 - \$21.8 million over two years from 2025–26 to continue to provide family, domestic and sexual violence services to First Nations women, children and communities.
 - \$21.4 million over three years from 2025–26 to build a nutrition workforce in remote communities through upskilling store-based First Nations staff.
 - \$11.0 million over three years from 2025–26 to continue the First Nations Languages Policy Partnership program.

- \$11.4 million over four years from 2025–26 to establish or upgrade up to 12 community laundries and maintain and operate them in remote First Nations communities across northern and central Australia, to reduce the prevalence of skin infections that can lead to serious secondary illnesses.
- \$6.0 million over two years from 2024–25 as part of a three-year investment with the South Australia Government to establish a Partnership Agreement to support the safety and wellbeing of people in Port Augusta.
- \$4.5 million in 2025–26 to support the Coalition of Peaks secretariat function and its ongoing work relating to the implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap
- \$3.7 million in 2025–26 to support coordination of implementation and monitoring of the Central Australia Plan.
- \$3.6 million over two years from 2025–26 to continue digitisation of at-risk audio and video collections held by First Nations broadcasters and community organisations by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies.
- \$3.4 million over three years from 2025–26 to increase the participation rate of First Nations women in business through a place-based business mentoring and coaching program, co-designed and delivered by First Nations businesses and organisations.
- Extending the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme by two years to 30 June 2028 to support Stolen Generations survivors.
- **Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment – future arrangements: \$842.6 million over six years** from 2025–26 for a six-year National Partnership on Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment (Partnership) with the Northern Territory Government and Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory. The Partnership will support design and delivery of essential services for remote communities including policing, women’s safety, health and education.
- **National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse – continuation: \$21.2 million in 2025–26** to continue initiatives to prevent, disrupt and combat child sexual abuse, and maintain support services for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse.
 - This includes funding of \$2.0 million to the National Indigenous Australians Agency.
- **Savings on External Labour – further extension:** \$3.0 reduction to departmental funding in 2028-29 through a one year extension of the 2022-23 October Budget measure, *Savings from External Labour*.

Facts and Figures

- Departmental operating funding changes since the 2024-25 Budget:

| | 24-25 \$'m | 25-26 \$'m | 26-27 \$'m | 27-28 \$'m | 28-29 \$'m | 5 Years \$'m |
|-----------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 2024-25 PAES | 353.9 | 316.6 | 299.1 | 283.9 | 281.9 | 1,535.3 |
| New Measures | (13.4) | 2.2 | 12.7 | 10.9 | (0.2) | 12.3 |
| Other Variations | - | (0.9) | (0.9) | (0.3) | (0.4) | (2.5) |
| 2025-26 Budget | 340.5 | 317.9 | 310.9 | 294.4 | 281.4 | 1,545.2 |

- Administered operating funding changes since the 2024-25 Budget:

| | 24-25 \$'m | 25-26 \$'m | 26-27 \$'m | 27-28 \$'m | 28-29 \$'m | 5 Years \$'m |
|-----------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| 2024-25 PAES | 2,137.8 | 2,103.5 | 1,972.3 | 2,084.0 | 1,948.8 | 10,246.4 |
| New Measures | (86.7) | 62.0 | 75.4 | (13.6) | (77.4) | (40.4) |
| Other Variations | - | (2.1) | 2.2 | 0.0 | (1.9) | (1.7) |
| 2025-26 Budget | 2,051.1 | 2,163.4 | 2,049.9 | 2,070.5 | 1,869.5 | 10,204.3 |

Key Dates

- The 2024-25 MYEFO was released on 18 December 2024.
- The 2024-25 PAES was tabled on 4 February 2025.
- The 2025-26 Budget was tabled on 25 March 2025.

| | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------|
| Jeremy Mickle | Grants and Finance | s22(1) |
| Maria Babler | Deputy CFO | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Director, Finance Branch | s22(1) |

Integrity Group

1. Audit of Indigenous Expenditure

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Sam White, Acting Group Manager Integrity

Key Talking Points

- The NIAA has strong accountability measures and processes in place to ensure that outcomes are achieved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and that expenditure is used appropriately.
- Expenditure accountability measures and processes include:
 - A range of robust processes and controls to manage provider compliance and delivery under its grant agreements, including performance reports, site visits, financial reports and, where the risk assessment requires, audited financial statements. Risk assessments determine the frequency and scale of these controls,
 - An internal assurance function that assures that grants are administered by NIAA staff in line with policies,
 - A branch dedicated to serious grant non-compliance or fraud issues,
 - An independent internal auditor (Bellchambers Barrett) that independently reviews and assesses the effectiveness of NIAA operations in a broad range of areas, including policy design and fraud risk management, and
 - The Audit and Risk Committee which provides independent advice to the CEO and NIAA Executive on the appropriateness of NIAA's financial and performance reporting responsibilities, risk oversight and management, and system of internal control.
- There are also a range of external scrutiny and accountability measures that ensure targeted expenditure is used appropriately. These include:
 - the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) who is responsible for independently auditing Australian Government entities:
 - the NIAA and Indigenous portfolio bodies are subject to annual audits of financial statements, including assets, liabilities, income and expenditure,
 - The ANAO has tabled over 20 performance audits in the last 10 years focused on NIAA programs or processes.
 - NIAA funding recipients have mandatory reporting requirements under corporate regulator arrangements including:
 - The *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act) administered by the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC), including the lodgement of annual financial statements,

- The *Corporations Act 2001* administered by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), including the lodgement of financial reports, and
 - The *Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission Act 2012* (ACNC Act) administered by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC), including annual information statements.
- Expenditure on grants awarded by the NIAA to recipients is reported transparently with the value of awarded grants to organisations published on GrantsConnect, similarly procurements above \$10,000 are published on Austender, in line with whole of government rules.

Background

- There have been recurring calls in the media from political parties for an audit of Australian Government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander targeted expenditure. These calls assert that there is a need for a review into the way the Australian Government funds are spent on targeted programs.
- These calls do not appear to recognise the wide range of government and NIAA-specific accountability measures and processes already in place that ensure that outcomes are achieved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and that targeted expenditure is used appropriately.
- While regularly updated figures are not available, to provide an indication of amounts spent on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander targeted programs—the Parliamentary library estimated in a 2025 report the figure to be \$6 billion (*Parliamentary Library 2024-25 Budget Review*) which equates to 0.81% of the Australian Government's total budget.
- NIAA Administered funding is estimated to be \$2.7 billion (*PMC PBS 2025-26*).
- Further controls specific to NIAA grant management and expenditure include:
 - The controls incorporated in grant funding agreements reflect the results of an Activity Risk Assessment, an Organisation Risk Profile for the applicant or grantee, the value of the grant, and whether the grant will make a direct or indirect impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
 - For example, higher Activity Risk Assessment ratings will result in additional controls such as additional performance reporting, more regular site visit assessments, or audited financial reporting, and
 - The NIAA may also impose additional short or long-term conditions on grantees, including restrictions on expenditure or on the appointment of certain persons to positions of authority.
 - Issues with an organisation's governance, financial management or service delivery performance after funding has been granted will trigger an immediate risk review.

- The NIAA's risk management for grants administration is supported by several internal grants policies and frameworks, including:
 - NIAA Grant Risk Management Guidelines,
 - NIAA Integrated Program Compliance and Fraud Management Framework, and
 - NIAA Grant Assurance Framework.
- Payments made by the NIAA to organisations can be withheld if a performance requirement or milestone is not met by the grantee.
- The NIAA's head agreement contains clauses requiring grantees to comply with all Commonwealth, state and territory laws, and to keep records documenting compliance with selected laws (for example, working with vulnerable people, including children).
- Additional to the measures above, further accountability measures to note:
 - The ANAO is currently undertaking a performance audit in the NIAA on Closing the Gap in early childhood development and schooling.
 - The NIAA has also been included from 2024-25 in the ANAO's Annual Performance Statements Audit Program, whereby the Agency's performance statement in its annual report is subject to further external scrutiny and assessment. This will drive improvements in the transparency and quality of performance reporting and, in turn, increase accountability to the Parliament and public.
 - The implementation of ANAO Audit recommendations directed to NIAA are monitored by the Audit and Risk Committee, with updates provided quarterly.
- In relation mandatory reporting arrangements which may apply to NIAA funding recipients:
 - Under the CATSI Act, Indigenous corporations are generally required to report annually, potentially including:
 - a general report on the corporation, its people and its financial information,
 - a financial report on the corporation's financial performance and position,
 - an audit report which is an independent evaluation of the corporation's financial report, and
 - a directors' report which helps members understand the corporation's business.
 - Under the Corporations Act, corporations are generally required to prepare audited annual financial statements.
 - Under the ACNC Act, charitable organisations are required to prepare an annual information statement which reports on its operations and finances, and may be required to submit an annual financial report.

Impact

- The NIAA and the Australian Government have robust processes and accountability mechanisms in place to ensure the achievement of outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and that public funds are used appropriately.

Facts and figures

| ANAO audits examining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander targeted administration | Tabled |
|--|--------|
| Targets for Minimum Indigenous Employment or Supply Use in Major Australian Government Procurements — Follow-up | 2025 |
| Ministerial Statements of Expectations and Responding Statements of Intent | 2025 |
| Management of Conflicts of Interest by Aboriginal Hostels Limited, Aboriginal Investment NT and Outback Stores Pty Ltd | 2024 |
| Implementation of Parliamentary Committee and Auditor-General Recommendations — Indigenous Affairs Portfolio | 2024 |
| Remote Employment Programs | 2024 |
| Governance of NT Land Councils (Central Land Council, Northern Land Council, Anindilyakwa Land Council, Tiwi Land Council) | 2023 |
| Management of Staff Leave in the Australian Public Service | 2023 |
| NIAA’s Management of Provider Fraud and Non-compliance | 2023 |
| Remote Housing in the Northern Territory | 2022 |
| Cyber Security Strategies of Non-Corporate Commonwealth Entities | 2021 |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation targets in intergovernmental agreements | 2020 |
| Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Participation Targets in Major Procurements | 2020 |
| Indigenous Advancement Strategy — Children and Schooling Program and Safety and Wellbeing Program | 2020 |
| Closing the Gap | 2019 |
| Evaluating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Programs | 2019 |
| Management of the Regional Network | 2018 |
| Effectiveness of the Governance of the Northern Land Council | 2017 |
| Indigenous Advancement Strategy | 2017 |
| Supporting Good Governance in Indigenous Corporations | 2017 |
| The Design and Implementation of the Community Development Program | 2017 |
| Delivery of the Petrol Sniffing Strategy in Remote Indigenous Communities | 2015 |
| Procurement Initiatives to Support Outcomes for Indigenous Australians | 2015 |

| | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|
| Sam White | Integrity | s22(1) |
| Elizabeth Tsitsikronis | Governance Assurance and Risk | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Audit and Assurance | s22(1) |

Jobs and Economic Development

Remote Employment Legal Matters

Appropriate SES to come forward to support response:

- Jess Guthrie - Group Manager, Jobs and Economic Development Group
- Brendan Jacomb - Branch Manager, Legal Services Branch

Key Talking Points

CDP Class Action

- The NIAA is aware of Maurice Blackburn filing a CDP Class Action *Bonson v Commonwealth* in the Federal Court on 29 September 2025.
- As the matter is before the Court it is not appropriate for the NIAA to provide further comment at this time.

If asked for further information

- The Class Action relates to the period 2015 to May 2021.

Design of programs to replace CDP

- In 2022, the Government committed to replacing CDP with a program with real jobs, proper wages and decent conditions.
- The Government has committed to replace the CDP in two stages.
- The first stage, announced in February 2024, is the new Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program to create 3,000 new jobs over three years to support income support recipients move into paid employment.
- Two grant rounds have been held resulting in funding for 1,450 jobs with around 250 employers in remote communities across Australia.
- The second stage is a \$1.9 billion investment over 5 years for the new Remote Australia Employment Service (RAES) to replace CDP on 1 November 2025.
- RAES will support around 40,000 job seekers across 1,200 remote communities in 60 remote regions where Workforce Australia does not operate.
- RAES will support job seekers with the skills, mentoring and training they need to take up job opportunities, including those created through the Remote Jobs and Economic Development (RJED) program.
- Compared to CDP, RAES has:
 - A focus on job seeker engagement rather than compliance
 - Increased investment in building provider capability

- Co-designed Community Projects embedded to support local priorities and aspirations and support local workforce development
 - 52 weeks of Employment Placement Support
 - A focus on improving Literacy and Numeracy through pilots in a small number of regions
 - A focus on improving the job seeker assessment process in a small number of regions.
- The design of RAES has been informed by three remote employment trials, and feedback received through two phases of public consultation with thousands of people across hundreds of remote communities in 2023 and 2024.

If Asked: Is the current program legal?

- As there is currently a matter filed in the Federal Court, we are happy to take questions on notice and respond with what we can given the matter is currently before the court.

If Asked: Are both RJED and RAES legal?

- In line with Budget Process Operational Rules 1.16, the NIAA sought legal advice for both the RJED program and RAES about whether legislative change is required to lawfully implement the programs.
- Consistent with advice provided in Supplementary Budget Estimates 2024-25 Question on Notice NIAA0322:
 - the Commonwealth has sought legal advice from the Australian Government Solicitor on whether the design of the new programs complies with the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975*.
 - the design of the programs take into account the job trials, extensive consultation and the advice received from the Australian Government Solicitor, including in the development of Grant Opportunity Guidelines for both the RJED program and the RAES.

If Asked: Why did you “turn off” mutual obligations in remote Australia in May 2021?

- The decision to make participation in CDP activities voluntary was a decision of a previous government.
- There’s currently a matter lodged in the Federal Court that relates to this time period and we are happy to take questions on notice and respond with what we can given the matter is currently before the court.

If Asked: Is the recent announcement of mutual obligations being paused from 1 October 2025 to 5 January 2026 because of the CDP class action?

- No.

- Mutual obligation requirements for participants have been paused to support the transition from CDP to RAES.
- The pause is in effect from 1 October 2025 to 5 January 2026 (inclusive), resuming on Tuesday 6 January 2026.
- While participants will not be subject to compliance action or payment suspensions during the pause, they will still be encouraged to:
 - meet with their RAES provider when they are contacted after 1 November, and
 - discuss and agree to a new Job Plan at the appointment.

If Asked: Why hasn't compliance been turned back on?

- Mutual obligations still exist and will remain the same in RAES.
- Mutual obligations continue to apply in remote regions, including agreeing to a Job Plan, attending regular appointments and job interviews, meeting job search requirements (dependent on the strength of local labour market) and accepting suitable paid work.
- These requirements were (and still are) subject to compliance consequences, with financial penalties or payment suspensions able to be applied where a participant fails to comply and does not have a valid reason.
- The change to make activities voluntary in May 2021 has resulted in a 99 per cent reduction of financial penalties imposed on CDP participants (from around 30,000 in the March 2021 quarter to less than 20 penalties in the June 2025 quarter) (further detail at **Attachment A**). There has also been a 91 per cent reduction in participant attendance in CDP activities from May 2021 to September 2025.
- The change of government in May 2022 saw a shift in policy focus towards real jobs, rather than a sole focus on pre-employment support, and the trialling of innovative approaches such as Community Projects where around 25 per cent of CDP providers funding was redirected to work with remote communities to support CDP participants into jobs.

If Asked: Do the issues that apply to the Targeted Compliance Framework apply to this program?

- The Targeted Compliance Framework is the mutual obligations compliance framework that operates in non-remote regions and the Job Seeker Compliance Framework applies in remote regions where the CDP/RAES operate.
- We are aware DEWR are working to address issues that apply to the Targeted Compliance Framework.
- We are working with DEWR to understand and seek assurance that the same issues that apply to the TCF do not apply to the JSCF.

If Asked: What is the role of NIAA and other agencies in remote employment services?

- NIAA is responsible for the overall administration of the CDP, including policy advice, and program design and management.
- The CDP sits within broader whole-of-government policy and legislative frameworks and a number of other Australian Government entities (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), Department of Social Services (DSS), and Services Australia (SA) administer relevant legislation and aspects to support CDP delivery (further detail on the respective roles of all other agencies is at **Attachment B**).
- DEWR owns the IT system used to manage CDP and has policy responsibility for mutual obligations and the Job Seeker Compliance Framework that applies to CDP.
- Services Australia has responsibility for administering income support payments and the Job Seeker Compliance Framework.

If Asked: How does compliance work for participants?

- The CDP and RAES operate using the Job Seeker Compliance Framework (JSCF), whereas the Targeted Compliance Framework (TCF) applies to all other employment services programs.

| Workforce Australia (Targeted Compliance Framework) | CDP (Job Seeker Compliance Framework) |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter Job Plan • Meet mandatory job search monthly (if appropriate - maximum 4 per month, can be adjusted by providers or the Digital Services Contact Centre for online participants) • Accept any offer of a suitable job and not voluntarily leave a suitable job without good reason • Participate in appointments (frequency determined by the provider), job interviews, and act on job referrals if applicable. • Comply with the requirements of the Points Based Activation System (PBAS) PBAS requirements include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selecting activities to contribute towards a points target each month • Meeting a points target monthly through undertaking the selected | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enter Job Plan • Meet mandatory job search monthly where work is available (maximum of 20 per month, but in practice usually much lower) • Accept any offer of a suitable job and not voluntarily leave a suitable job without good reason • Participate in appointments (at least monthly) and job interviews (if applicable) |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>activities, including a minimum job search requirement (if appropriate), with points targets adjusted to personal circumstances (maximum of 100 points).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in a Mandatory Activity (for a minimum of 8 weeks) at various activation points | |
|---|--|

If Asked: How does the program work from a legal perspective?

- The CDP is the employment service program available for all job seekers in remote Australia. It operates where Workforce Australia and Disability Employment Services do not.
- Employment services programs sit within the Social Security Act 1991 and are designed to support participants to meet their mutual obligation requirements in return for income support.
- The Secretary of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations is the relevant delegate under Social Security Law for mutual obligations and compliance and delegates their powers for mutual obligations and compliance through legislative instrument directly to organisations who have entered into a Head Agreement with the Commonwealth for the CDP/RAES programs.
- The RJED program is about real jobs and was established in line with the Fair Work Act 2009.

Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) CDP complaint

- The NIAA is aware of a matter being terminated by the Australian human Rights Commission in August 2025 (refer Integrity GM brief 17 – Litigated matters).
- The matter remains confidential despite being terminated by the Commission and the NIAA is unable to provide further detail.

Dawson

- The *Dawson & Ors v Commonwealth* matter was settled between the parties and settlement was approved by the Federal Court of Australia on 13 December 2021 (refer Integrity GM brief 17 – Litigated matters).
- As part of the settlement, the Government tested and trialled new approaches to remote employment services, such as through the Ngaanyatjarra Lands Trials (see 4. Remote Employment Trials).

Ngaanyatjarra Engagement and Employment (NEE) Trial

- Following an extended period of co-design, the implementation of the Ngaanyatjarra Engagement and Employment (NEE) Trial began on 1 July 2024 in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

- The NEE Trial is a place-based approach co-designed with community that supports meaningful engagement and employment of CDP participants in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands.
- As at 31 March 2025:
 - 769 CDP participants have taken part in the NEE Trial,
 - 33 participants have been placed in employment, and
 - 72 participants have successfully completed training in preparation of employment
- Of these, just under 35 participants have received paid work opportunities, working an average of over 100 hours each between July 2024 and March 2025.

Background

- The Dawson Terms of Settlement comprised the following:
 - The Commonwealth intends to take all necessary or appropriate legislative and administrative action to design, implement and evaluate in the Shire (of Ngaanyatjarraku) a pilot program for a more appropriate CDP scheme.
 - The Commonwealth will grant \$2 million to the Ngaanyatjarra Council.
 - The Commonwealth pay the applicant’s costs and disbursements of the proceedings and of the complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), in the sum of \$278,897.19.
 - The applicant releases and acknowledges that the Commonwealth makes no admission or concession of legal liability, and consent to the dismissal of the proceedings.

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|--------|
| Jessica Guthrie | Jobs and Economic Development Group | s22(1) |
| Elizabeth Crombie | RAES and Policy Branch | s22(1) |
| Brendan Jacomb | Legal Services Branch | s22(1) |
| s22(1) | Remote Employment Policy | s22(1) |

Attachment A

| Community Development Program – Job Seeker Compliance Framework – Payment Suspensions and Financial Penalties | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Non-compliance trigger/type | Mutual obligation | Suspension/Financial penalty | Data/Frequency |
| Connection failure | <p>CDP participant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to attend an appointment booked by the provider with a third party, or refuses to enter into a Job Plan, or fails to provide sufficient job search efforts (max. 20 per month) | <p>Payment is automatically suspended</p> <p>When the CDP job seeker engages with Services Australia for the connection failure to be discussed and investigated, payment is restored</p> <p>A job seeker’s payment can remain suspended for 28 days after which the payment is cancelled.</p> | <p>The number of CDP participants with a Participation Failure applied in the 2024-25 financial year was 22.</p> <p>This includes Connection, Reconnection, No Show No Pay Failures, Non-Attendance Failures, and Serious Failures for persistent non-compliance or failing to accept or commence in a suitable job.</p> |
| No Show No Pay failure | <p>CDP participant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fails to attend a job interview, or behaves inappropriately at a job interview | <p>Payment is not suspended</p> <p>If Services Australia is not satisfied there is a valid reason for non-compliance, the failure is applied</p> <p>Penalty is loss of 1 day’s payment for the day of the non-compliance event. This equates to the loss of 1/10th of the job seeker’s fortnightly income support payment for every day they do not participate and for which they did not have a reasonable excuse</p> | <p>No Show No Pay Failure: <20</p> |
| Serious Failure | <p>CDP participant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> refuses a suitable job offer, or fails to commence suitable work | <p>Payment is not suspended</p> <p>If Services Australia is not satisfied there is a valid reason for non-compliance, the failure is applied</p> <p>Penalty is 8-week serious failure period, which can be waived by Services Australia if the participant attends a re-engagement appointment</p> | <p>Serious Failure: <20</p> |
| Failure to attend a compulsory provider appointment | <p>CDP participant does not attend a compulsory provider appointment (either regular or reconnection) without a valid reason</p> | <p>If the provider decides to submit a Non-Attendance Report, payment is automatically suspended</p> <p>Payment restored if CDP participant contacts the Provider. The provider either:</p> <p>a) lifts the Non-Attendance Report (which automatically restores payment) once the job seeker has contacted them, or</p> <p>b) if the provider decides the job seeker should re-engage via a new appointment, they schedule a new appointment and lift the Non-Attendance Report (which restores payment) once the job seeker attends the new appointment.</p> <p>If the provider decides the job seeker did not have a valid reason for missing the appointment, they can also decide to submit a Provider Appointment Report, which triggers a failure investigation.</p> <p>Where a provider asks Services Australia to investigate and Services Australia is not satisfied there is a valid reason for non-compliance, the failure is applied</p> <p>Penalty is loss of 1 business day’s payment for each day in the Non-attendance or Reconnection failure penalty period</p> | <p>Participation Failures are applied where Services Australia has assessed a Participation Report or a Provider Appointment Report and has determined under social security law that the job seeker did not have a reasonable excuse. Services Australia then records the Participation Failure on the job seeker’s record and this may or may not result in the application of a financial penalty, depending on the failure type.</p> <p>128,465 Non-Attendance at Appointment Payment Suspensions were incurred to 37,856 CDP participants in the 2024-25 financial year.</p> |
| Unemployment Non-Payment Period | <p>CDP participant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> leaves a job voluntarily, or is dismissed due to misconduct | <p>Payment is not suspended</p> <p>If Services Australia determines the CDP participant left their employment voluntarily without a valid reason or were dismissed for misconduct, the failure is applied.</p> <p>Penalty is 8-week unemployment non-payment period</p> <p>Decision is appellable. Penalty can be waived by Services Australia under hardship provisions</p> | <p>The number of CDP participants with an Unemployment Non-Payment Period applied in the 2024-25 financial year was 24.</p> <p>This includes all eight-week non-payment penalties including, Serious Failures - Persistent non-compliance, Serious Failures – Did not commence suitable work, Serious Failures – Refused a suitable job, Unemployment Non-Payment Period – left job voluntarily, and Unemployment Non-Payment Period – dismissed due to misconduct.</p> |

| Community Development Program – Job Seeker Compliance Framework – Payment Suspensions and Financial Penalties | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Non-compliance trigger/type | Mutual obligation | Suspension/Financial penalty | Data/Frequency |
| Comprehensive Compliance Assessment (CCA) | CDP participant has had 3 failures of the same type applied in the last 6 months or since their most recent CCA | Services Australia verifies validity of CCA and a specialist conducts assessment If Services Australia determines the CDP participant has been persistently non-compliant, a Serious Failure is applied Penalty is 8-week serious failure period CDP participant can agree to attend a waiver re-engagement appointment in lieu of serving the serious failure period | 8-Week Serious Failure periods are included in the Participation Failures reported above. There were 0 Persistent Non-Compliance (Serious Failure) CCA Outcomes in the 2024-25 financial year. This has remained low since the changes to Mutual Obligation Requirements changes in May 2021. |

Attachment B

Table: Administrative Arrangements to support the delivery of remote employment services

| Function | NIAA Senator The Hon Malarndirri McCarthy | Provider | Services Australia Senator the Hon Katy Gallagher | DEWR The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP | DSS The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------------|---|--|--|
| Legislation | N/A <i>* in so far as it relates to Social Security Legislative Amendment (Remote Engagement Program) Act 2021</i> | | | <i>Social Security (Administration) Act 1999—in so far as it relates to activity test requirements and compliance obligations for participation payment recipients.</i> | <i>Social Security (Administration) Act 1999 — in so far as it relates to capacity assessments and income support payments</i> |
| Policy | NIAA is responsible for remote employment policy and programs | | Deliver on behalf of Employment Job Seeker Compliance Framework. Employment Services Assessment (policy responsibility shared between the departments of Social Services, the NIAA and Employment). | DEWR is responsible for mainstream employment services policy, including Workforce Australia. DEWR is responsible for mutual obligations and compliance policy. DEWR is responsible for Closing the Gap targets 7 and 8. | Income support payments. Job Capacity Assessments. Employment Services Assessment (policy responsibility shared between the departments of Social Services, the NIAA and Employment). |
| Program Management | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIAA is responsible for CDP operational policy • NIAA selects and contract manages CDP provider • NIAA responsible (calculates and makes) for provider payments | | | Assess financial viability of CDP providers, as per the Memorandum of Understanding with the NIAA | DSS produces and maintains Guides on behalf of DSS, the Department of Education, and DEWR - Content is provided by DSS, Department of Education, DEWR |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NIAA responsible for insurance for the CDP program • NIAA produces documentation/guidance for CDP • NIAA assesses provider performance and compliance | | | | |
| <p>Job seeker case management including Support Tools for Case Management</p> | <p>CDP Employment Services Assessment (policy responsibility shared between the departments of Social Services, the NIAA and Employment).</p> <p>Monitor provider use of tools (e.g. Job Seeker Classification Instrument) and links to other programs.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider case manages job seekers • Provider runs and places job seekers into activities • Provider manages job seeker attendance • Provider places job seekers into employment vacancies and provides post placement support to both the job seeker and the employer. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centrelink assesses job seeker for income support • Centrelink refers job seeker to employment services • Centrelink manage jobseekers on the CDP caseload on DEWR systems including Employment Services System. • Employment Services Assessment (delivery). Job Capacity Assessments (delivery). Job Seeker Classification Instrument (delivery). | <p>Job Seeker Classification Instrument (policy owner).</p> | <p>Employment Services Assessment (policy owner).</p> |
| <p>Compliance Action</p> | | <p>CDP providers report jobseeker non-compliance (discretionary) to the SA (which triggers initial payment suspension and jobseeker contact)</p> | <p>SA investigates non-compliance and decides whether the non-compliance applied, with any penalties applied as prescribed by legislation.</p> | <p>n/a</p> | <p>n/a</p> |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|---|---|
| Feedback, review and appeal | n/a | | Jobseeker (JS) review and appeal. | Complaints (National Customer Service Line). | n/a |
| Income support payments | | | JS income support delivery including Jobseekers' income support payments. Calculates rates of payments based on policies set by DSS. | JS income support payment data partly from DEWR and Services Aust systems | Sets rates of payment including income testing and associated taper rates |
| Systems (IT) and Data | NIAA project agreements with providers facilitate provider access DEWR systems. | CDP providers manage their caseload on DEWR systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SA systems for administering income support • SA lead agency for system business rules vis-à-vis the Social Security Act (Administration) 1999 • Centrelink job seeker Privacy provisions. | DEWR administers the following systems for use by the CDP program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Contract Administration system (CAS) - Employment Services System (ESS)- the CDP IT system - ESS Web - Provider Portal - Employment Business Intelligence Warehouse | n/a |
| Data Ownership | Related to the administration of the CDP (primarily as it relates to employment services delivered by service providers) Freedom Of Information requests for job seeker data managed through NIAA | | n/a | Verifying and releasing data related to the Job Seeker Compliance Framework. | Income support payments/recipient circumstances. |

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| Reporting | CDP outcomes and performance, including evaluation | | n/a | n/a Monthly Report | Income support |
|------------------|--|--|-----|-----------------------|----------------|