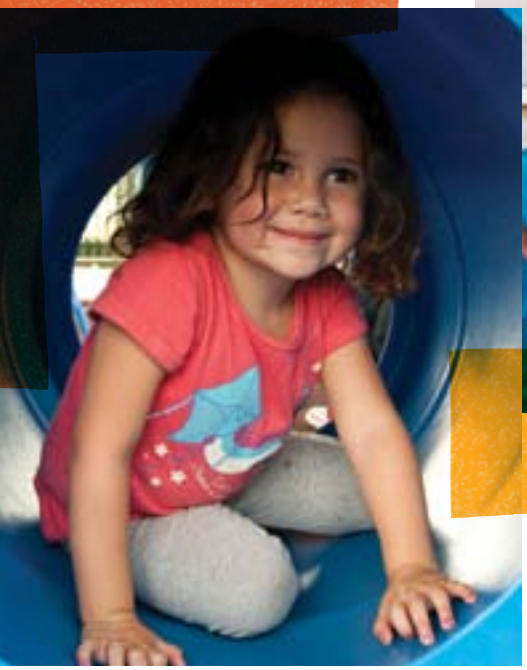
Australian Government

Closing the Gap.

Closing the Gap
Prime Minister's Report 2013



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February 2013

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Please be aware that this report may contain the images and names of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have passed away.

About the photographs

A key to acronyms used to record photo sources is provided below:

ABS—Australian Bureau of Statistics

AEC—Australian Electoral Commission

DAFF—Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

DEEWR—Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

DHS—Department of Human Services

DoHA—Department of Health and Ageing

DRALGAS—Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport

FaHCSIA—Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

IBA—Indigenous Business Australia

ILC—Indigenous Land Corporation

NAQS—Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy

SBS—Special Broadcasting Service

TSRA—Torres Strait Regional Authority

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Chapter 1

The framework for change

When government leaders from across the country met in 2008 to agree to a framework for tackling Indigenous disadvantage, they set ambitious targets to address priority areas for change.

The Closing the Gap framework and the six targets set by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is a national approach to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

It involves unprecedented levels of investment by governments across seven inter-linked areas, known as 'building blocks', which have been underpinned by a series of Indigenous-specific and mainstream National Partnership Agreements between the Australian, State and Territory Governments.

The six Closing the Gap targets relate to life expectancy, child mortality, education and employment.

Governments have agreed to work in partnership—and the approach to Closing the Gap extends beyond governments to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, the private sector and non-government organisations.

The timeframes for the Closing the Gap targets are ambitious and varied. Recognising the significant challenge posed by these targets, all governments have shown the determination—and the will—to meet them.

Much progress has been made to address Indigenous disadvantage in the years since the Closing the Gap framework was agreed to.

This year is a significant year for Closing the Gap. It is the year in which the first of the targets set back in 2008 will be achieved—ensuring all Indigenous four-year-olds living in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years, or by 2013.

It is also the fifth anniversary of the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, in particular the Stolen Generations, and the Parliament will be asked to show its commitment and leadership in progressing constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as it considers the Bill for an *Act of Recognition*.

This year will also mark the 20th anniversary of the *Native Title Act* being passed. Both anniversaries are significant milestones to reflect on as Australia continues to move towards reconciliation and the goal of closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

Closing the Gap targets

COAG is committed to:

- Closing the life expectancy gap within a generation (by 2031)
- Halving the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade (by 2018)
- Ensuring all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years (by 2013)
- Halving the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade (by 2018)
- Halving the gap for Indigenous people aged 20–24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates (by 2020)
- Halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade (by 2018).

Closing the Gap building blocks

Governments are focusing their efforts on seven inter-linked areas:

- Early Childhood
- Schooling
- Health
- Healthy Homes
- Economic Participation
- Safe Communities
- Governance and Leadership.

Constitutional recognition will be another significant step towards building a more reconciled nation based on strong relations and mutual respect which recognises the unique and special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

While local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in remote areas, rural towns and urban centres are helping decide what will work best in their own communities, representative organisations like the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and Reconciliation Australia are helping frame broader policy directions in areas like health, economic development and job creation. A Stolen Generations Working Partnership, established in 2010, is bringing Government, service providers and members of the Stolen Generations together to devise ways to meet the practical needs of those affected by policies of forced removal.

Achieving the Closing the Gap target: early childhood education

The Closing the Gap target for all Indigenous four year olds living in remote communities to have access to early childhood education within five years—or by 2013—will be achieved this year.

Historic levels of investment by governments through the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education have ensured there are now more children than ever before participating in preschool or kindergarten programs.

Children who attend quality preschool programs are more likely to be successful at school, stay in school longer, continue on to further education and training and fully participate in employment and community life as adults.

As early childhood education remains voluntary, the access measure agreed for the target is 95 per cent enrolment.

Data from 2011 reveals that 91 per cent of Indigenous children in remote areas are enrolled in a preschool program. This data, consistent with the governments' commitment regarding delivery, indicates that the target of 95 per cent enrolment will be met this year. The Government is working with Indigenous communities, large and small, to ensure children are enrolled in school and get to school and that the benefits of attendance are realised. Providing access to quality preschool programs is an important basis for better school attendance.

The Government is determined to maintain the advances made in early childhood education to ensure benefits flow through to the other Closing the Gap targets to further address Indigenous disadvantage.

Continued and sustained effort is needed to close the gap, but the achievement of the early childhood education target in 2013 will show substantial progress in a crucial area.

Kuku Yalanji Elder Roy Gibson on the Dreamtime walk, Mossman Gorge Centre. Photo: ILC.

CASE STUDY

Roy's Mossman Gorge dream a tourism reality

For more than 20 years, Kuku Yalanji Elder Roy Gibson has had a dream for his land and his people.

When the new $20 million Mossman Gorge Centre, an Indigenous eco-tourism business in the World Heritage listed Daintree National Park, opened with 90 per cent Indigenous staffing in June 2012, Roy's dream became a reality.

'From when I was young, I was thinking about something that could help my people, one day, to see that there's going to be opportunities for all of us,' Roy said.

The centre was constructed by the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC) in collaboration with Mossman Gorge Aboriginal Community on land purchased through the ILC's Land Acquisition program. The Centre, operated by ILC subsidiary Voyages Indigenous Tourism Australia, provides Indigenous employment and training, including at a residential training facility located at the centre.

Mossman Gorge Centre, officially opened by Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin, is a cultural and tourism hub for the spectacular Mossman Gorge rainforest walk. It provides an official welcome area, a contemporary café, art gallery, gift shop and tour desk. Visitors are offered an array of tours and services to help them experience the Gorge, its Indigenous heritage and pristine environment.

The centre employs up to 70 Indigenous people during the tourism high season. The first month of operation saw Indigenous staff usher 30,000 visitors through the Centre and on to the Gorge.

'There's nothing ever happened like this before, in a small community,' Roy Gibson said.

'I want people to be proud of themselves and get up out of their bed and say I'm going to work, because I've got something to go to—because it's ours to be proud of.'

'That's what I want them to do–to be proud of themselves, for their children.'

Roy and the Mossman Gorge Aboriginal Community worked in collaboration with the ILC to design and build the centre, which incorporates a residential training venue that is equipping young Indigenous people with accredited skills that will see them able to work at the Centre and in the hospitality and tourism industries in the region and across Australia.

Staff were trained in an ILC pre-employment scheme which combined TAFE level study with work at tourism and hospitality businesses in the region.

With the Centre now a living reality, Roy tells young people their future is alive too.

'This is for your children and their children, to protect this beautiful gateway we're actually walking in and sharing now with people, it's a big thing.'

Indigenous-specific National Partnership Agreements

The Australian and state and territory governments have agreed on a number of Indigenous-specific National Partnership Agreements that go towards addressing Indigenous disadvantage.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory (August 2012): $3.4 billion over 10 years

- Schooling
- Health
- Community safety and justice
- Child, youth, family and community wellbeing
- Tackling alcohol abuse
- Housing
- Municipal and essential services
- Alice Springs transformation
- Remote engagement and coordination.

Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory (July 2009): $890.5 million over three years

- Making communities safer
- Helping children and families
- Improving health services and education
- Building Indigenous capacity.

Remote Indigenous Housing (December 2008): $5.5 billion over 10 years

- Building 4200 new houses
- Refurbishing 4876 houses
- Providing Indigenous jobs
- Making sure houses last
- Reforming tenancy arrangements.

Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes (December 2008): $1.6 billion over four years

- Tackling chronic disease and its causes, including smoking
- Expanding health services for Indigenous people
- Strengthening the Indigenous health workforce.

Indigenous Early Childhood Development (July 2009): $564.4 million over six years

- Supporting early learning
- Helping Indigenous families
- Improving the health of mothers, babies and young children.

Indigenous Economic Participation (December 2008): $228.9 million over five years

- Creating jobs in government service delivery
- Helping Indigenous people into jobs
- Helping Indigenous businesses.

Remote Service Delivery (January 2009): $291.2 million over six years

- Working with 29 priority locations
- Coordinating services across government
- Building on Indigenous aspirations
- Monitoring progress through the Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services.

Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access (July 2009): $ 7 million over four years

- Connecting Indigenous Australians in remote areas with telecommunications and training in internet access and basic computer use.

Transparency and accountability

Governments are held accountable for their progress towards the six targets of Closing the Gap. Progress is measured and reported on a regular basis.

The COAG Reform Council reports to COAG annually on progress in relation to the targets and provides objective and independent feedback on areas where work is needed.

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse, a COAG initiative managed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare in collaboration with the Australian Institute of Family Studies, analyses the effectiveness of the approaches taken, so that successes can be shared and lessons learnt.

The Coordinator General for Remote Indigenous Services reports on the implementation of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery in 29 priority communities in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework monitors progress in closing the gap in Indigenous Australians' health outcomes, while for education outcomes annual reporting is carried out on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–14.

Six-monthly reports are also made on deliverables and outcomes under the Northern Territory's Stronger Futures package, including formal reporting by the Northern Territory Government on measures for which it is responsible.

The path to reconciliation and recognition

The National Apology delivered in the Australian Parliament on 13 February 2008 opened a new chapter in Australia's push towards reconciliation.

It was a moment when Australians stood as one to acknowledge the pain inflicted on Indigenous people and in particular, the Stolen Generations, by the policies of past governments.

It was a moment when Australia looked to a future in which Indigenous people would enjoy a standard of living and opportunities comparable to the wider community. A moment which laid the foundations for what would become the Closing the Gap framework.

The day when Australia's Indigenous people are recognised in the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Australia will be another important step in Australia's journey towards a more reconciled nation.

As a step towards that, the Australian Parliament is considering a Bill for an *Act of Recognition* to recognise the unique and special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people of Australia.

The Government introduced a Bill into the Parliament in November last year to establish the *Act of Recognition*. With bipartisan support, the Parliament is set to pass the Bill in early 2013.

This *Act of Recognition* will provide an opportunity for Parliament to show its support and commitment to constitutional recognition of Australia's Indigenous people.

CASE STUDY

Young leaders stand up, talk hard and are heard at the first ever National Indigenous Youth Parliament

Aldene Reuben is a young Bladchula and Muriam man from Bamaga in the Torres Strait. He is well known in his community, workplace and family as an individual who speaks his mind on the need to improve opportunities for Indigenous people, especially those who live in remote and isolated areas.

Jaleesa Donovan from Bankstown in NSW, is a young Gumbaingirr woman who is committed to making positive changes particularly to promote human rights. Her work has been recognised in her community with the Australian Government Closing the Gap community award, presented by her local Member of Parliament.

Aldene and Jaleesa are typical of the 180 high calibre young people, aged 16–25, who applied to attend Australia's first ever National Indigenous Youth Parliament (NIYP) in Canberra in May 2012.

The NIYP was conducted by the Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) and the YMCA to mark the 50th anniversary of Indigenous people winning the right to vote, to support the development of future Indigenous leaders and to promote electoral participation by young people.

Fifty Youth Parliamentarians were selected—six from each state and territory and two from the Torres Strait Islands—based on their achievements, leadership skills and how they would apply their experiences in their communities.

Of the 50, 35 per cent came from remote communities, 45 per cent from regional centres and 20 per cent from urban communities.

Aldene, Jaleesa and their colleagues were welcomed to Canberra by the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs who congratulated them on their achievement in being selected. She stressed the importance of taking a stand on issues that matter to them and their communities, as well as their responsibility in representing people who do not have loud voices.

Minister Macklin's welcome set the scene for a hectic week-long program which provided expert training in how government works, how laws are made, public speaking and dealing with the media. Participants met with and learned from the nation's leaders including the Prime Minister, Opposition Leader, Ministers, Parliamentarians, members of the parliamentary press gallery, Indigenous community leaders, senior public servants and academics.

They experienced the 'cut-and-thrust' of parliamentary practice by observing Question Time, sitting in the Cabinet Room and comparing notes with Parliamentarians who commented on how the experience had re-invigorated their own enthusiasm and idealism.

Ms Malama Gray, the Indigenous Youth Governor General, presents bills passed by the Youth Parliament to the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. Photo: AEC.

The lessons were applied in preparing legislative bills to address the issues they had identified after consultation in their schools, workplaces and communities.

The training ended on Friday evening with a reception at Government House hosted by her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC CVO, Governor-General. Her Excellency urged the Youth Parliamentarians to put forward their views on important issues and to use their skills and experiences to make sure others understand how the electoral system can work for them.

The highlight of the week was the actual Youth Parliament held over a weekend in the Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House.

The symbolism was powerful as Australia's future leaders took their places in the very Chamber where legislation giving Indigenous people the right to vote had been debated 50 years earlier and on the very day when, 45 years ago, Australians voted overwhelmingly to change the Australian Constitution to remove provisions which prevented the Federal Government from making laws for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and excluded them from being counted in the Census.

Over the weekend Aldene and Jaleesa took their turn to argue for or against the bills put forward by the young Parliamentarians.

The bills passed by the Youth Parliament were presented to the Government and Opposition for consideration in developing relevant policies.

Above left: Youth Parliamentarians meet the Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP. Above right: Ready and eager to experience the parliamentary process, Youth Parliamentarians at Australia's Parliament House. Photos: AEC.

It will also help to raise awareness of the importance of constitutional change in the community.

The Bill includes:

- A statement of recognition of the unique and special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that largely reflects the wording suggested by the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
- A sunset date of two years, which sets a clear timeframe to build towards change and ensures the focus remains on the ultimate goal of constitutional recognition.
- A legislative review, to consider levels of community support for amending the Constitution and proposals for constitutional change, which will conclude six months before the sunset date and be tabled in Parliament.

The Government agrees with the findings of the Expert Panel that a referendum should be held at a time when it has the most chance of success.

To continue to build momentum for constitutional change, the Australian Government has invested $10 million to help build public awareness and community support for change. This important work is being led by Reconciliation Australia, supported by a reference group of business and community leaders.

The Government has established a Joint Select Committee to progress Indigenous constitutional recognition and build support across Parliament and the committee is considering the Bill as its first task.

(Left to Right): Tanya Denning, Channel Manager of NITV, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy and Michael Ebeid, Managing Director of the Special Broadcasting Service at the launch of the new free to air NITV channel. Photo: SBS.

CASE STUDY

An historic day for Indigenous broadcasting: Launch of National Indigenous Television (NITV) Free-to-air

At 12 noon on 12 December 2012, the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) made Australian broadcasting history with the launch of the first dedicated Indigenous free-to-air television channel, NITV. All Australians can now access the NITV service on the digital channel, 34/SBS4, and through the Viewer Access Satellite Television service.

Funded through the 2012–13 Budget, the new channel is the result of collaboration between NITV and SBS to develop a national digital free-to-air channel dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. The new channel realises the Australian Government's aims of increasing both the amount and overall quality of original Indigenous content on free-to-air television.

2012 highlights

Progress in education

Results from the 2011 Census show the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Year 12 or equivalent attainment is narrowing. In 2011, the proportion of Indigenous 20-to-24-year-olds with at least Year 12 or Certificate II was 53.9 per cent—a 6.5 percentage point increase on 2006. This means progress against the target of halving the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020 is ahead of schedule.

National Plan for School Improvement

Announced in September 2012, the National Plan for School Improvement is a new national model for school funding that will deliver greater financial support for those students and those schools most in need. The model will provide additional funding to schools for every Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander student enrolled.

Parental and Community Engagement Program

The Parental and Community Engagement Program aims to increase parental engagement in their children's education through participation in educational decision making, developing partnerships with education providers and supporting and reinforcing their children's learning at home. The program has made good progress since it started in 2009, with 495 diverse projects across all states and territories aimed at approximately 53,000 parents and carers.

Trade Training Centres in Schools Program

The Trade Training Centres in Schools Program is providing $2.5 billion over 2008–18 to enable all secondary students to access vocational education through Trade Training Centres. It is a key part of the Australian Government's Education Revolution. A priority of this program is to support secondary school communities with Indigenous students and students from remote, regional and other disadvantaged communities.

The new channel promotes and represents Indigenous people and culture and provides a medium to convey important information about issues affecting the lives of Indigenous people. Through the new channel, NITV will continue to inform, entertain and educate audiences with a range of innovative and unique content.

To celebrate the free-to-air launch, NITV aired a day of special programming live from Uluru in the Northern Territory. The launch began with a welcome to audiences around the nation from the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara traditional owners of the area. Other highlights included an outdoor broadcast *From the Heart of Our Nation*, hosted by Indigenous broadcasters Stan Grant and Rhoda Roberts, along with special editions of *Living Black* and *NITV News* and a two-hour concert featuring some of Australia's best Indigenous talent including Christine Anu, Casey Donovan and Troy Cassar Daley.

'SBS is incredibly proud to be playing a role in delivering content about Indigenous Australians, produced by Indigenous Australians, to every Australian household,' SBS Managing Director Michael Ebeid said.

'With NITV part of SBS, we will reflect Australia's true diversity and enable Indigenous cultures and stories to be captured for future generations, with the availability of NITV to all Australians contributing to reconciliation.'

'NITV plays an important role in creating and delivering innovative content representing the many voices of the country's first Australians,' said Tanya Denning, NITV Channel Manager.

'We remain dedicated to having our unique languages and culture reflected within the media landscape and we're excited to invite Australians of all backgrounds to tune in and join us in celebrating our rich and unique culture.'

The new NITV channel maintains editorial responsibility over delivery of the channel and continues to utilise the talents of Indigenous writers, directors and journalists to produce content covering a variety of genres, from music to health, sport, news, current affairs, culture and children's programs.

More than 370 Trade Training Centre projects have been funded across Australia, benefiting more than 1070 schools. This includes funding for Trade Training Centres that support 18 of the 29 eligible schools that service Remote Service Delivery locations. Five centres, supporting six Remote Service Delivery school communities in New South Wales, the Northern Territory and Queensland have already started. A further centre, supporting another two Remote Service Delivery school communities, has recently been completed in South Australia and is scheduled to start in early 2013. The Trade Training Centres in Schools Program is showing positive engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Since the start of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing in 2009, more than 1550 new homes in remote communities have been built and more than 5156 have been significantly refurbished or rebuilt (as at 31 December 2012), already exceeding the national refurbishment target of 4876 homes by 2014, nearly two years ahead of schedule.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory is a $3.4 billion commitment by the Australian Government to work with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory over the next 10 years to build strong, independent lives, where communities, families and children are safe and healthy. Aboriginal people and local organisations are being supported to take more responsibility for programs and services in their own communities.

This 10-year commitment to address Indigenous disadvantage in the Northern Territory is critical to closing the gap in the jurisdiction where the gap is currently widest.

Legislation supporting the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory measures came into effect on 16 July 2012. *The Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007* was repealed at the same time.

Remote Jobs and Communities Program

The Remote Jobs and Communities Program, announced in April 2012, is designed to transform the way in which employment and community development services are delivered in remote Australia.

Responding to feedback from extensive 2011 consultations with people in remote communities, the program will create a 'one-stop shop' in communities, with a single provider who is also a permanent presence in a remote region and an ongoing source of support.

Since the announcement of the new program in April 2012, about 90 further community information and consultation sessions have been held in remote and regional centres.

The new program will be up and running from 1 July 2013, integrating and building on services currently provided in remote regions by Job Services Australia, Disability Employment Services, the Indigenous Employment Program and the Community Development Employment Projects program. To promote local involvement and community ownership the Government has encouraged local and Indigenous organisations to apply to deliver the new services.

PAW Media developed a series of digital stories as a medium of cultural transmission for Aboriginal people at Yuendumu and the wider Warlpiri region. Using stop motion, as well as claymation, PAW Media staff and community members created an engaging series ranging from stories of the old days through to contemporary stories. The digital stories receive funding through Indigenous Culture Support and the Indigenous Employment Initiative, Office for the Arts. Photo: © PAW Media.

Remote housing

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing is continuing to build momentum in housing construction and refurbishments, helping to tackle the high level of housing need in remote communities across Australia. With the $5.5 billion investment by the Australian Government, ambitious targets have been set to build up to 4200 new houses and rebuild or refurbish another 4876 houses. Since the start of the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing in 2009, more than 1550 new homes in remote communities have been built and more than 5156 have been significantly refurbished or rebuilt (as at 31 December 2012), already exceeding the national refurbishment target of 4876 homes by 2014, nearly two years ahead of schedule.

The houses are being supported by improved property and tenancy management arrangements that will progressively increase the useful life of remote Indigenous housing. The National Partnership Agreement is also providing critical housing-related infrastructure and driving increased Indigenous employment opportunities, with Indigenous employees making up more than 20 per cent of the total new construction workforce for the program and averaging about 30 per cent in South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland.

In addition to the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, the Government is investing $230 million in Indigenous housing through the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package.

Ensuring houses are well built and maintained is essential to protecting children, improving health, education and employment, and closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

Alice Springs Transformation Plan

Work to reduce homelessness and improve living standards for Aboriginal residents and visitors to Alice Springs is continuing under the Alice Springs Transformation Plan. More than 40 projects targeting areas such as alcohol rehabilitation, early childhood activities, family support, family violence, safety and security, tenancy support and life skills have been funded under the Alice Springs Transformation Plan.

In 2012 the Australian Government committed $13.7 million over four years under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package to continue a number of important projects under the Alice Springs Transformation Plan. This is in addition to the $150 million provided since 2009.

To date under the Transformation Plan, 86 new houses have been constructed and 135 existing houses rebuilt or refurbished in Alice Springs town camps. An additional 61 existing houses have been upgraded by Tangentyere Council under a separate funding agreement with the Australian Government.

The 150-bed Apmere Mwerre Visitor Park, Salvation Army Hostel, Aherlkeme Village and Alyerre Hostel are now fully operational. Combined with the new houses built under the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program, these facilities provide more than 500 additional beds in Alice Springs. Regular postal services have also been rolled out to seven town camps—a service that has not previously been delivered in these areas.

Tackling chronic disease

In 2009–10 the Australian Government started implementing the Indigenous Chronic Disease Package as part of its contribution to the Council of Australian Governments' National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes. The package includes improved chronic disease management and follow-up care through Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

The uptake of Medicare Benefits Schedule items by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continued to increase in the latest reporting period. This included the uptake of health assessments—so vital to the prevention and detection of chronic diseases responsible for morbidity and early mortality. In 2011–12, 65,501 health assessments were provided to Indigenous people aged 15 or over, an increase of 33.8 per cent on 2010–11 figures.

Since July 2010 Indigenous patients living with, or at risk of, chronic disease have also been able to access more affordable medicines under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme co-payment assistance measure. Over 99 per cent of community pharmacies nationwide have dispensed prescriptions to eligible Indigenous patients under this scheme. As at 30 November 2012, more than 181,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients had accessed cheaper medicines under the scheme.

Indigenous media

Australia's first dedicated national Indigenous free-to-air television service was launched at Uluru in the Northern Territory on 12 December 2012, with Australian Government funding of $63 million over four years. Australians in every jurisdiction can now access the National Indigenous Television (NITV) service on digital channel SBS4 and through the Viewer Access Satellite Television service.

SBS developed NITV as a national, digital free-to-air channel dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content, in collaboration with the former NITV subscription service.

National Congress of Australia's First Peoples

Work to establish the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples is now complete. An engagement framework between the National Congress and Australian Government agencies was signed on 5 September 2012. This framework aims to facilitate better engagement between the National Congress and the Government's agencies to ensure Indigenous views are fully considered when government policies and programs are being developed and implemented. It also assists in strengthening the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the Government.

The National Congress continues to progress its outcomes through key advisory groups established to work in its priority areas of constitutional recognition, health, justice, education, country and sovereignty(including Constitutional Recognition).

Marking the 50th anniversary of the Indigenous right to vote

2012 marked the 50th anniversary of Indigenous people getting the vote and the occasion was used to promote greater electoral awareness and participation among a new generation of Indigenous electors. A National Indigenous Youth Parliament was held in Canberra in May 2012 involving 50 young Indigenous youth leaders as part of the 50th anniversary commemorations.

Chapter 2

Progress against the targets

Progress to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage is measured against six targets relating to life expectancy, child mortality, education and employment.

For the purposes of this report, the 2011 Census is the primary data source for estimating the size of the Indigenous population. Understanding the age profile of Australia's Indigenous population and using other data from the 2011 Census is also vital to gaining a full picture of how Australia's Indigenous society is changing.

The 2013 Closing the Gap report includes new data from the 2011 Census and provides the most comprehensive assessment to date of progress against all six Closing the Gap targets. A more detailed assessment will be provided by the independent COAG Reform Council in June 2013.

This chapter provides a high-level overview of the key findings, an outline of the 2011 Census and its implications, a summary of the steps that have been taken to improve data collection and a more detailed assessment of progress against each of the six targets.

To assess progress against the targets, actual achievements are compared to agreed progress points (or trajectories) set for the same period. When the specified progress point is met the rate of change observed is consistent with achieving that Closing the Gap target within the specified timeframe.

Student at Derby District High School, Western Australia. Photo: FaHCSIA.

Closing the Gap Clearinghouse

The Closing the Gap Clearinghouse was established to collect, analyse and synthesise research and evaluation evidence on 'what works' to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

Through the Clearinghouse, policy makers, service providers and the public have access to a continually growing and authoritative evidence base about addressing Indigenous disadvantage.

The Clearinghouse website (www.aihw.gov.au/closingthegap) brings together existing knowledge about addressing Indigenous disadvantage and allows searching by specific topics, for example, improving early childhood services, improving school completion for Indigenous students, and access to health and preventative health programs. The website also provides access to collections of government research and evaluations and a general collection of information relevant to the COAG building blocks.

Key findings

- The target for early childhood education will be met this year. Ninety one per cent of Indigenous children living in remote areas were enrolled in preschool programs in the year before full-time school in 2011. This data indicates the target of a 95 per cent enrolment rate will be met this year.
- The target for under-five mortality is on track to be met. Significant progress has been made against the target to halve the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous under-five mortality by 2018. If current trends continue, the target will be met.
- Progress to meet the Year 12 attainment target is ahead of schedule. The proportion of Indigenous 20-to-24-year-olds with a Year 12 or equivalent qualification in 2011 was above the trajectory point for 2011.
- Some progress has been made on the target to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students within a decade. For instance, between 2008 and 2012 the percentage of Indigenous students at or above the National Minimum Standards in Year 3 Reading increased by 5.9 percentage points. However, overall progress is mixed. Of the eight cases where the NAPLAN results in 2012 can be compared to the progress points set for 2012, three results are above or close to the 2012 trajectory points. In the other five cases, progress will need to accelerate if the target is to be met.
- For the target to halve the gap in employment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, the latest data shows that the proportion of Indigenous people of workforce age who are employed in non-CDEP jobs rose by 2.3 percentage points between 2006 and 2011.
- A statistically significant[1] decline in the Indigenous mortality rate of 5 per cent was recorded between 2006 and 2011, but the mortality rate[2] will need to fall even faster than it currently is if the life expectancy target is to be met by 2031.
- There has been a large increase of around 90,000 people who identified as being Indigenous from 2006 to 2011. This occurred both due to improvements to the way the Census was conducted and to a greater propensity of Indigenous people to self-identify as being Indigenous.
- The Indigenous population is considerably younger than the non-Indigenous population but the Indigenous population is gradually ageing.

2011 Census

Every five years the Census of Population and Housing offers a snapshot of the nation, a picture of a moment in time revealing Australian's population, where and how Australian communities live, and family and household characteristics.

The 2011 Census illustrates an important chapter in the story of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is the only comprehensive source of small area data about the Aboriginal and

1 Where the term significant is used in this chapter the term is only used to refer to statistically significant changes which are changes that are not just a reflection of underlying variability in the data.

2 Indigenous age-standardised mortality is used as an annual proxy measure for Indigenous life expectancy.

Torres Strait Islander population, providing a wide range of socioeconomic indicators to support planning, administration, policy development and evaluation in the public and private sectors. This data forms the basis of official Indigenous population estimates, which are critical for measuring Closing the Gap targets on education, health and employment.

Since 2006, there has been a 21 per cent increase in the number of people who identified as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin. The number of Indigenous people included in the Census count rose from 455,000 in 2006 to 548,000 in 2011. Of these 548,000 people in 2011, 90 per cent were of Aboriginal origin only, 6 per cent were of Torres Strait Islander origin only, and 4 per cent identified as being of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin.

The increase in the Indigenous Census count along with the improved collection of Indigenous status in the Census Post Enumeration Survey and population growth means that the estimated size of the Indigenous population in 2011 is 30 per cent higher than the estimate for 2006.

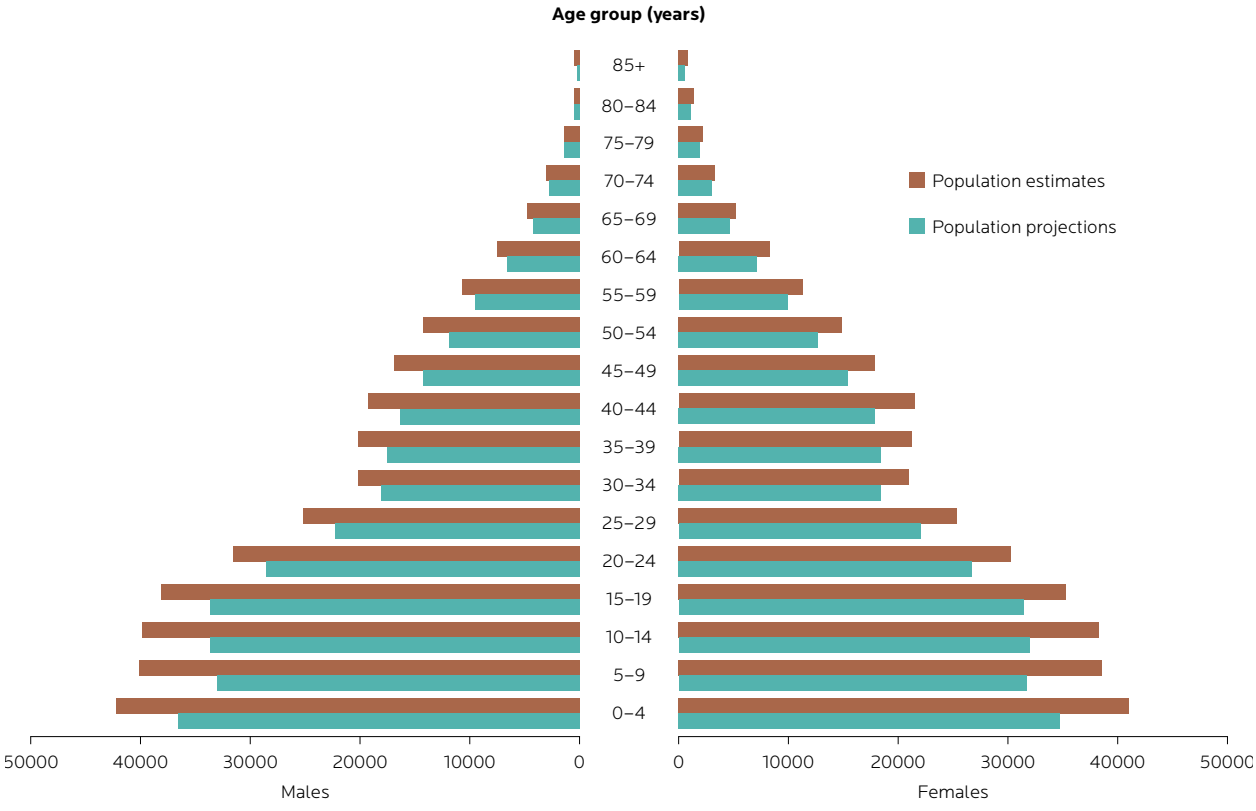
The diagram below shows the difference between the previous official population 'projections' (2006 Census-based) of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population for 2011 and the new 'estimates' based on the 2011 Census[3].

In each of the five-year age groups and for Indigenous men and women, the number of people estimated at 2011 (2011 Census-based), was greater than the number of people projected for 2011 (2006 Census-based). Overall, the new 2011 estimate based on the 2011 Census indicates that the Indigenous population was 94,184 (or 16.4 per cent) higher at 2011 than previously projected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics based on the 2006 Census.

The relative difference between the new estimates and the

3 The preliminary population estimates and the population projections are adjusted for the net undercount in the Census, and so should not be confused with the raw Census count.

Figure 1: Indigenous Population estimates[a] and Population projections[b], Australia, 2011



(a) Population estimates based on 2011 Census.
(b) Population projections based on 2006 Census.
Source: ABS Australian Demographic Statistics, March 2012 (ABS Cat no 3101.0)

projections varies across age groups and between males and females. For Indigenous people under 80 years, the difference between the 2011 population estimates and the projections is greatest for the age groups between five and 14 years, and 40 and 54 years.

Overall, a greater proportion of the Indigenous population is estimated to be in the childhood age groups under 15 years than previously projected. Similarly, in the age groups between 40 and 54 years, the estimated share of the population is also greater than projected. This shift is countered by lesser proportions of people estimated in the age groups between 15 and 34 years than previously projected.

As the 2011 Census data gives the best snapshot of the Indigenous population, it is important to understand the large difference between the previous projections and current population estimates.

The difference results partly from additional Australian Government funding to ensure the Census count more thoroughly captured Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country. The ABS developed and implemented improved engagement and enumeration procedures in regional, remote and urban areas.

Importantly, the Australian Bureau of Statistics worked closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia during the Census because it knew their local knowledge was critical to achieving an accurate count. Sustained and targeted stakeholder engagement and communication activities were critical to the 2011 Census outcomes, and employing people from communities helped to ensure active participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The increase in the estimated Indigenous population can also be attributed to the fact that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are willing to identify their status and their heritage.

Implications for the COAG targets

The new population estimates have implications for the COAG targets. In several instances the size of the population is used, along with other data, to estimate the amount of progress made on the targets. In most instances the data used in this report is still based on population estimates for 2011 based on the 2006 Census—not on the 2011 Census. Based on advice from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, it is not possible to use the new Census data for some indicators until the Bureau generates new consistent time series estimates of the size of the Indigenous population based on the 2011 Census.

Progress against the employment target and the Year 12 or equivalent attainment target has been measured using data from the 2011 Census.

Australia's Indigenous population—young but ageing

The age profile of the Indigenous population is very different to the non-Indigenous population.

Although preliminary estimates of the Indigenous population based on the 2011 Census are now available, final estimates will not be available until August 2013. Updated Australian Bureau of Statistics population projections for the period after 2011 will be released in the first half of 2014.

The preliminary estimated resident Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of Australia as at 30 June 2011 was 670,000 people, or 3 per cent of the total Australian population. This is an increase from 30 June 2006 when the Indigenous population was estimated to account for 2.5 per cent of the total population.

The population pyramid below shows the estimated age structure for the Indigenous and non-Indigenous population in 2011. Figure 2 shows the Indigenous population is considerably younger than the non-Indigenous population. For example in 2011, 46.7 per cent of the Indigenous population was aged under 20 years compared to only 24.7 per cent of the non-Indigenous population. In contrast 25.8 per cent of the non-Indigenous population was aged 55 years and above in 2011 compared to only 8.9 per cent of the Indigenous population of the same age.

The Indigenous population is relatively young, but is gradually ageing. While 46.7 per cent of the Indigenous population was aged under 20 years in 2011, this is down from 48.2 per cent in 2006. The share of the Indigenous population that is of workforce age (15–64 years) has risen from 59.4 per cent in 2006 to 60.9 per cent in 2011. This gradual ageing of the Indigenous population is expected to continue.

Data improvements

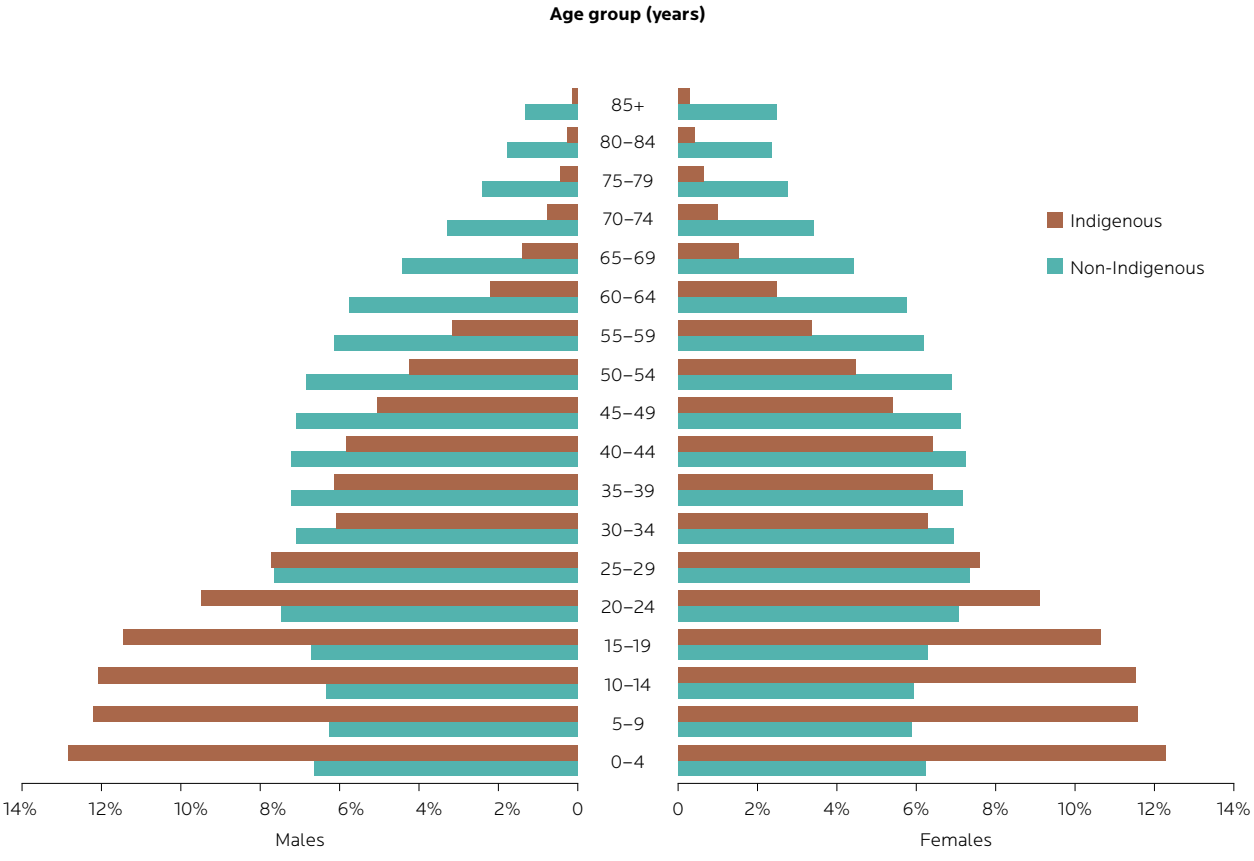
Improving the quality and availability of reliable data remains a priority for all governments and is critical for reliable assessment of progress on Closing the Gap. The 2009–10 Budget provided an additional $46.4 million over four years to address key data gaps with $20.1 million provided to obtain a better Census count of Indigenous Australians in 2011.

Other significant data improvements are enabling nationally consistent reporting of progress against performance indicators under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement. From July 2012 all jurisdictions have been collecting information on the Indigenous status of babies through the Perinatal National Minimum Dataset. As a result of recent improvements, nationally consistent data on antenatal care in the first trimester will be available for reporting from 2013. Nationally consistent data on smoking during pregnancy will be available for all jurisdictions from 2013.

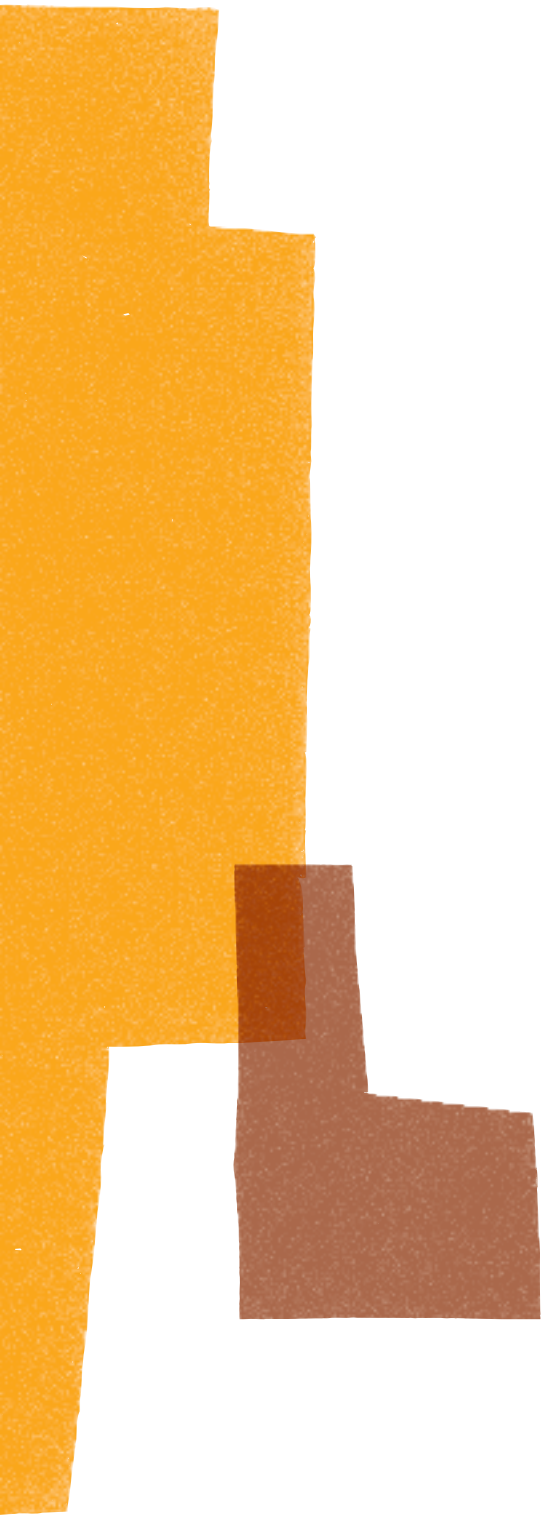
Auditing of Indigenous under-identification in hospital data has been completed, with the results expected to be published in early 2013. This audit will result in hospital data being adjusted for under-identification by jurisdiction and by remoteness area.

The collection of 24 National Key Performance Indicators, which is outlined in the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, will provide improved health information and data to assist in measuring the contribution of Commonwealth, state and territory Indigenous-specific primary health care services in meeting COAG's *Closing Indigenous Data Gaps* under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement. The indicators cover areas such as maternal health, early childhood, and detection and prevention of chronic disease.

Figure 2: Indigenous and non-Indigenous Population estimates, Australia, 2011



Source: ABS 2011 Census Unpublished data



Collection of the first 11 indicators started in July 2012, with the next eight indicators to come online in June 2013 and the remaining five in June 2014. Data is being collected from services every six months. By July 2014, all Commonwealth, state and territory-funded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services will be providing data for the National Key Performance Indicators collections.

The National Key Performance Indicators data will provide improved information about the major health issues affecting Indigenous clients and will help measure the contribution of primary health care services in meeting COAG's two health related targets: to close the gap in life expectancy within a generation and to halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade.

The launch of the MySchool Website in 2010 has also significantly enhanced transparency. Data on the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is available for all Australian schools. Data on average school attendance rates is also available each year for all Australian schools through MySchool.

Obtaining robust and comparable early childhood education data is critical to understanding the trends in attendance and engagement of Indigenous children. Historically, data on early childhood education could not be properly compared across the country, particularly for Indigenous children, which presented significant challenges for measurement and reporting. To address this lack of national consistency, the National Information Agreement on Early Childhood Education and Care was signed by relevant Commonwealth, state and territory authorities in 2010.

The National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection represents a significant improvement in early childhood education data in Australia. In 2013 for the first time, the COAG Reform Council will report on progress against the access to early childhood education target for Indigenous children in remote areas, using this new national collection.

Closing the Gap targets

Target: Close the life expectancy gap within a generation

Life expectancy is a widely used measure of population health. It is affected by socioeconomic factors including education, employment, housing and community functioning. Meeting this target requires sustained effort across all the Closing the Gap building blocks. The current gap in life expectancy is estimated to be 11.5 years for males and 9.7 years for females.

Official life expectancy estimates are available only every five years. Updated estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy are due to be published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in late 2013.

However, mortality rates can be tracked on an annual basis. Mortality rates represent deaths as a proportion of the population. As the Indigenous population is much younger, comparisons of mortality rates with non- Indigenous Australians can be made after adjusting for the different age structures of the two populations.

Mortality rates are continuing to decline for both populations. After adjusting for age, Indigenous mortality rates in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined (the jurisdictions with adequate data for analysis for recent trends) have shown a significant decline of 12 per cent between 1998 and 2011.[4]

There has also been a significant narrowing of the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous mortality rates of 9 per cent over the same period.[5]

The trend between the 2006 baseline and 2011 also shows a significant decline in the Indigenous mortality rate of 5 per cent, although there has been no significant change in the gap as non-Indigenous rates have also declined.[6]

Health outcomes at a population level generally do not significantly improve within short or medium timeframes. There is a time lag between interventions and improvements in outcomes such as mortality.

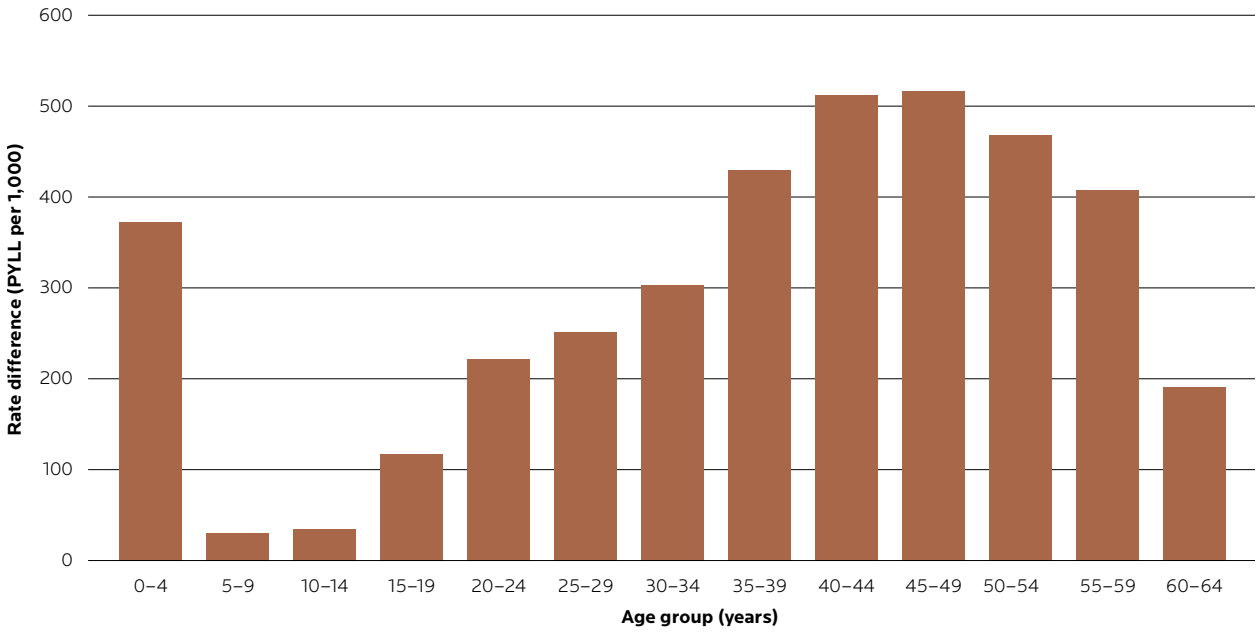
Meeting the life expectancy target remains challenging because, among other things, non-Indigenous life expectancy is expected to rise over the coming years. This means, for example, that Indigenous male life expectancy will probably have to increase by almost 21 years by 2031 to close the gap. To achieve the life expectancy target, average annual Indigenous life expectancy gains of between 0.6 and 0.8 years are needed. These required increases underpin the agreed trajectories for Indigenous mortality rates that are used to assess progress each year. Although the Indigenous mortality rate fell significantly from 2006 to 2011, the latest results indicate the current rate of progress will have to gather pace if the target is to be met by 2031.

4 In last year's report it was not possible to include mortality data for Western Australia for 2007, 2008 and 2009. That report noted that an investigation undertaken by the Western Australian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages and the Australian Bureau of Statistics confirmed that Indigenous mortality data for Western Australia was overstated for 2007, 2008 and to a lesser extent 2009. The Western Australian Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages has now reviewed records from those years and resupplied the ABS with corrected Indigenous data. The ABS has processed these revised records and has published corrected mortality data. The corrected data has been used in this report.

5 AIHW analysis of ABS Mortality Database (unpublished)

6 AIHW analysis of ABS Mortality Database (unpublished)

Figure 3: The gap in potential years of life lost before age 65 years (PYLL) per 1000 population between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, by age for 2007–11.[7, 8]



7 Source: ABS mortality database (unpublished). Data refers to New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Northern Territory combined.

8 Potential years of life lost (PYLL) is an estimate of the number of additional years a person would have lived had they not died before a certain age, such as 65 years. Consequently PYLL gives greater weight to deaths in younger age groups. The impact these early deaths have at the population level can be measured by the PYLL rate per 1000 people, which totals all the potential years of life lost for all the deaths at each age group, divided by the number of people in that age group. The 'gap' is the difference between the PYLL rate for Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australian populations.

The gap in life expectancy reflects differences in the age profile of deaths between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. A very high percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths occur before the age of 65 years. Figure 3 shows the impact of these early deaths compared with the non-Indigenous population. The figure uses estimates of the number of years not lived due to early death if a life expectancy of 65 years is assumed. For example, if a person dies at age 45 then this person would have lost 20 years of potential life. The figure shows the largest gaps between the Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations are in the 0–4 age group and the middle years (35–59 years). An understanding of the impact of age at death can help direct policy to the issues facing the age groups most affected.

If the life expectancy gap is to be closed there has to be a strong focus on the chronic diseases that have a big impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the middle age bracket. The Indigenous Chronic Disease Package, reported under the Health building block, is designed to address this issue.

Figure 4 shows that the leading causes of Indigenous mortality for the period 2006–2010 were:

- circulatory disease (26 per cent)
- cancer (19 per cent)
- injury, particularly suicide and transport accidents (15 per cent)
- endocrine, metabolic and nutritional disorders, including diabetes (9 per cent)
- respiratory disease (8 per cent).

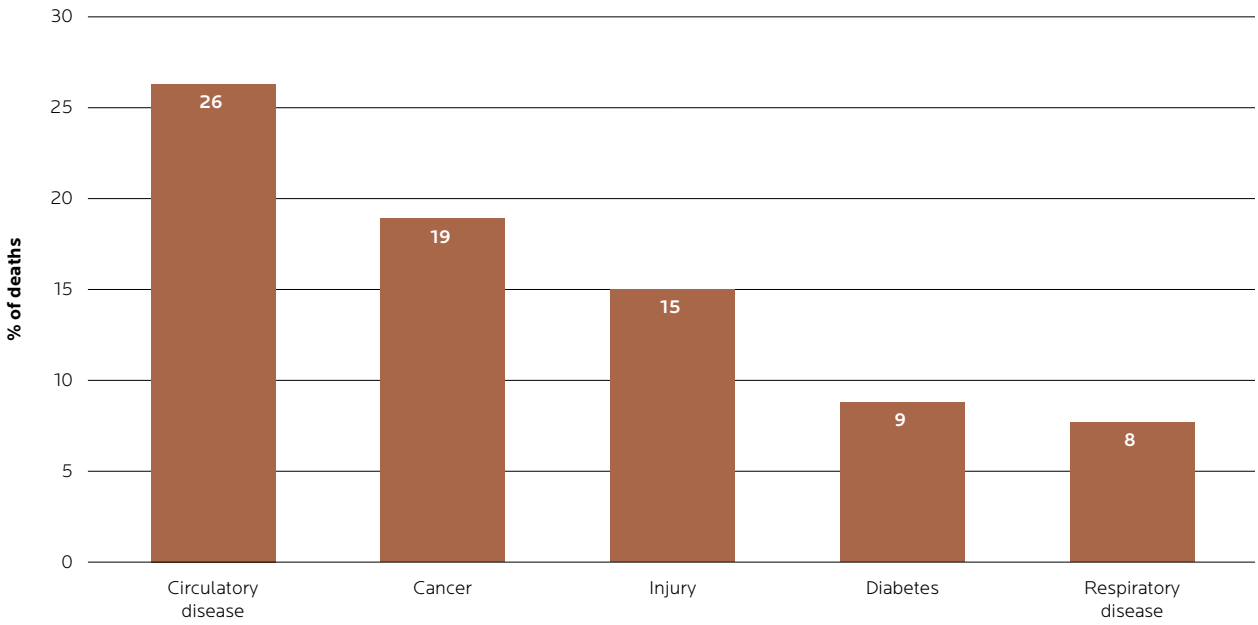
These five leading causes contribute more than three-quarters of the gap in mortality rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians and most of this is due to chronic disease.[10] Deaths from circulatory disease have decreased significantly in both the short term and long term and the gap has narrowed. However, there has been no improvement in the mortality rate due to diabetes and there has been a widening of the gap for deaths related to cancer and kidney disease.[11]

Looking beyond mortality rates, two-thirds of the gap in health outcomes for Indigenous people is due to chronic diseases that tend to have common lifestyle-related risk factors such as smoking, poor nutrition, obesity and low

10 AHMAC 2012, op. cit.

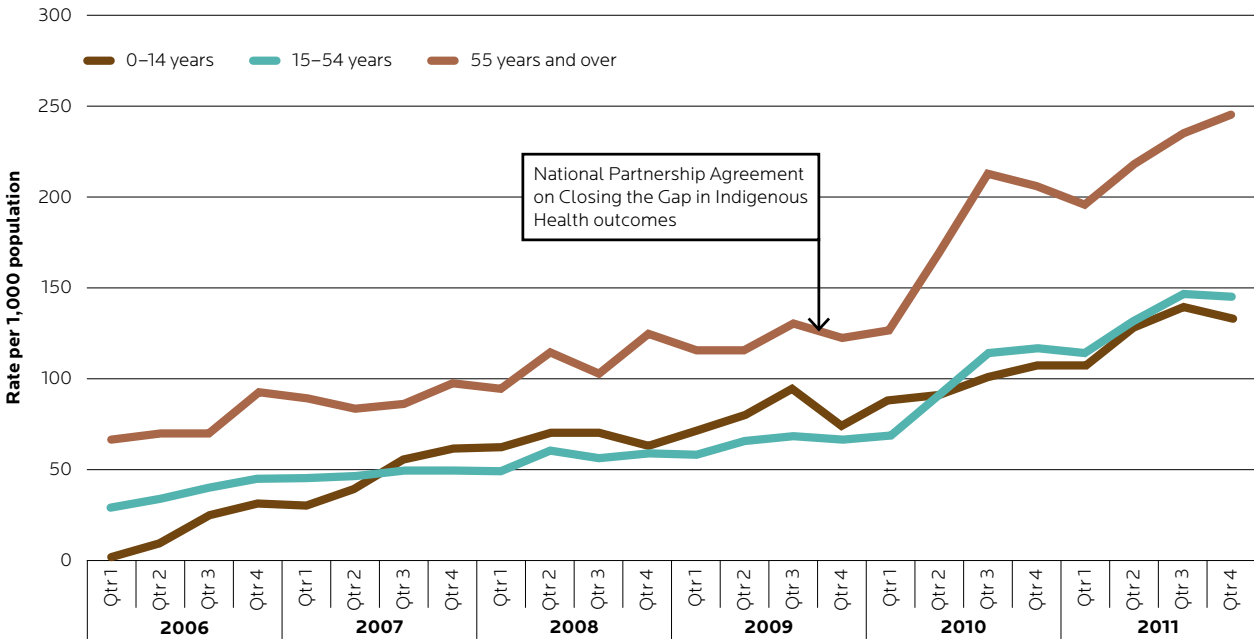
11 AHMAC 2012, op. cit.

Figure 4: Leading causes of Indigenous deaths for the period 2006–10 for New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and Northern Territory combined.[9]



9 Source: Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council 2012, The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2012 Report, AHMAC, Canberra

Figure 5: Rate per 1000 persons receiving Medicare Benefits Schedule Health Assessments, by age group, Indigenous Australians, January–March 2006 to October–December 2011.[14]



levels of physical activity. The interplay between these risk behaviours and other social determinants of health is complex and it is therefore important to address the broader determinants of health as well as focusing efforts on prevention and better management of chronic diseases, such as through the Indigenous Chronic Disease Package.

Figure 5 shows that there has been a significant increase in a range of Medicare Benefits Schedule services claimed by Indigenous people for identifying and managing chronic disease since the Indigenous Chronic Disease Package was introduced in July 2009, under the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes (reported under the Health building block). The number of health assessments provided each year has been increasing. However, this increase is significantly greater since July 2009 than in previous years, ranging from a 128 per cent increase for those aged 15–54 years and a 99 per cent increase for those aged 55 years and over.[12]

There has also been an increase in the number of GP management plans and team care arrangements claimed by Indigenous people through Medicare since 1 July 2009. These plans and arrangements are to support a structured approach to patient care for chronic conditions. Rates are higher for these services for Indigenous Australians than is the case for non-Indigenous Australians. There have also been corresponding increases in allied health care services claimed through Medicare.[13]

12 AHMAC 2012, op. cit.

13 AHMAC 2012, op. cit.

14 AHMAC 2012, op. cit.

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

This target is on track to be met.

Mortality rates for children under five years are an important measure of child health and the overall population. Currently Indigenous children are twice as likely to die before their fifth birthday as non-Indigenous children.

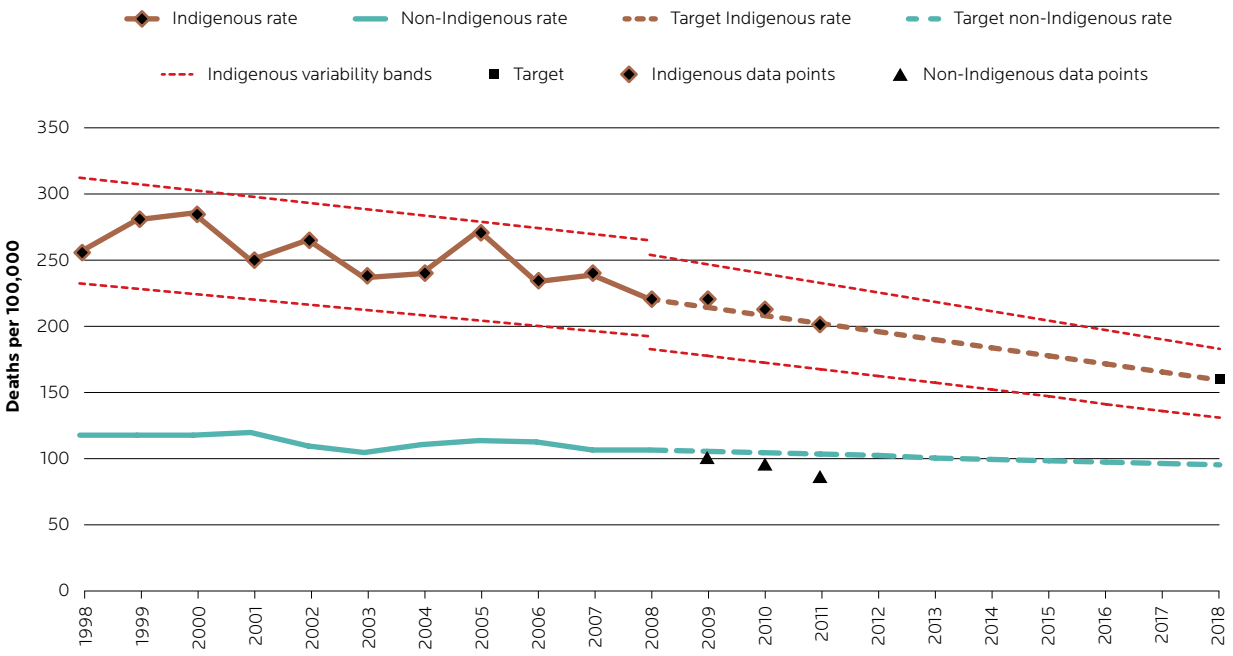
There have been significant improvements in Indigenous child mortality in recent decades and child mortality rates continue to decline. During the period 1998 to 2011 (New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined) the Indigenous child mortality rate declined by 29 per cent, outpacing the decline in non-Indigenous child mortality.

This has led to a significant narrowing of the gap in child mortality between non-Indigenous and Indigenous children over this period (37 per cent). Figure 6 shows this decline and indicates that changes in Indigenous child mortality since the 2008 baseline are within the range required to meet the target by 2018.

However, other issues remain of concern. Around half of Indigenous mothers who gave birth in 2010 smoked during pregnancy, almost four times as high as non-Indigenous mothers.[16] Smoking during pregnancy is a major risk factor for adverse events in pregnancy and is associated with poor perinatal outcomes such as low birth weight, pre-term birth, foetal

16 Age standardised data for all jurisdictions. AIHW, (unpublished) National Perinatal Data Collection.

Figure 6: Indigenous and non-Indigenous child (under 5) mortality rates 1998–2018.[15]



15 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW), analysis (unpublished) of the National Mortality Database from jurisdictions with the best quality Indigenous identification over this time (New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Northern Territory) combined.

growth restriction, congenital anomalies and perinatal death.[17]

In 2010, 12 per cent of babies born to Indigenous mothers[18] were of low birth weight compared to 6 per cent for babies born to non-Indigenous mothers. During the period 2000 to 2009 there was a significant decline of 6 per cent in the rate of low birth weight among all babies born to Indigenous mothers and a significant decline of 7 per cent among single babies born to Indigenous mothers.[19]

Antenatal care has been found to have a positive effect on the health outcomes for both mother and baby.[20] In 2009, Indigenous mothers attending five or more antenatal care sessions had lower rates of low birth weight babies (8 per cent) compared to those who did not access antenatal care (37 per cent). Similar relationships were also found for pre-term births and perinatal mortality.[21]

In 2010, almost all Indigenous mothers (97 per cent) attended at least one antenatal care session during their pregnancy, compared with 99 per cent for non-Indigenous mothers. Over the period 1998–2010, there was a significant increase in Indigenous mothers attending at least one antenatal care session.[22] However, Indigenous mothers are accessing antenatal care later in their pregnancy and less frequently than non-Indigenous mothers. Available data indicates that in 2010 Indigenous mothers were less likely than non-Indigenous mothers to attend during the critical first trimester (52 per cent compared to 69 per cent) or attend five or more antenatal care sessions during their pregnancy (80 per cent compared to 96 per cent).[23] The New Directions Mothers and Babies Services Program, reported under the Early Childhood building block, is extending access to antenatal care.

Maintaining this positive trend requires the continued expansion of preventive care and child and maternal health services, in particular antenatal care, as well as continued efforts to address broader social factors such as socioeconomic status, education, smoking and other behavioural risk factors.

Target: Ensuring all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years

This target will be met in 2013.

Quality early childhood education is critical to ensure young children have opportunities for early learning, development and preparation for their later schooling. All Australian jurisdictions are committed to providing access to early childhood education for all Australian children in the year before full-time school by 2013.

The benchmark for the achievement of this Closing the Gap target is 95 per cent enrolment for Indigenous four-year-old children in remote communities by 2013.[24]

For the first time, it is now possible to report data from the new National Early Childhood Education and Care Collection to assess progress against this target. This data shows that in August 2011, the vast majority, or 91 per cent of Indigenous children in remote areas, were enrolled in preschool programs in the year before full-time schooling. The early childhood education Closing the Gap target will be met in 2013 based on the latest available data and the commitment by state and territory ministers to the target.

Achieving the early childhood education target is not sufficient on its own to ensure Indigenous children living in remote communities have the best start in life. Children need to attend regularly and families need to be engaged to achieve maximum benefits and the programs offered need to be of high quality and culturally relevant.

Children in urban and regional areas also need to have access to and participate in early childhood education. It is therefore critical to continue work in early childhood education and care that looks beyond the Closing the Gap target to improve school readiness and success.

17 World Health Organization, March of Dimes, Partnership for Maternal Newborn and Child Health & Save the Children 2012, Born too soon: *The Global Action Report on Preterm Birth*, WHO, Geneva; Sullivan EA, Laws P & Grayson N, 2006, *Smoking and pregnancy*, Canberra.

18 Li Z, Zeki R, Hilder L & Sullivan EA 2012. *Australia's mothers and babies 2010.* Perinatal statistics series no. 27. Cat. no. PER 57. Canberra: AIHW National Perinatal Epidemiology and Statistics Unit.

19 Data for all jurisdictions excluding Tasmania and Australian Capital Territory. Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council 2012, *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2012 Report*, AHMAC, Canberra.

20 Eades S, 2004, *Maternal and Child Health Care Services: Actions in the Primary Health Care Setting to Improve the Health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women of Childbearing Age, Infants and Young Children*, Casuarina, NT.

21 Age standardised data for Queensland, South Australia and Northern Territory combined. Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council 2012, *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2012 Report*, AHMAC, Canberra.

22 Age standardised data for New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (unpublished) National Perinatal Data Collection.

23 The 2010 antenatal care figures cited in this sentence are derived from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (unpublished) National Perinatal Data Collection. Only data for the jurisdictions for which data were available and of sufficient quality to publish are used. These figures cited should not be generalised to the national (Australia) level. The proportion visiting in the first trimester are age standardised data for all jurisdictions excluding Tasmania. The proportion attending five or more sessions are age standardised data for Queensland, South Australia, Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory combined.

24 The target of 95 per cent, rather than 100 per cent, enrolment reflects the fact that early childhood education is not compulsory.

Target: Halve the gap for Indigenous children in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade

This target is measured using outcomes of the annual National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The gap is measured as the difference between the proportion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students at or above National Minimum Standards in Reading, Writing and Numeracy at Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. After five years of NAPLAN testing, the annual outcomes of these 12 separate assessments provide a clearer picture of trends toward achieving this target.

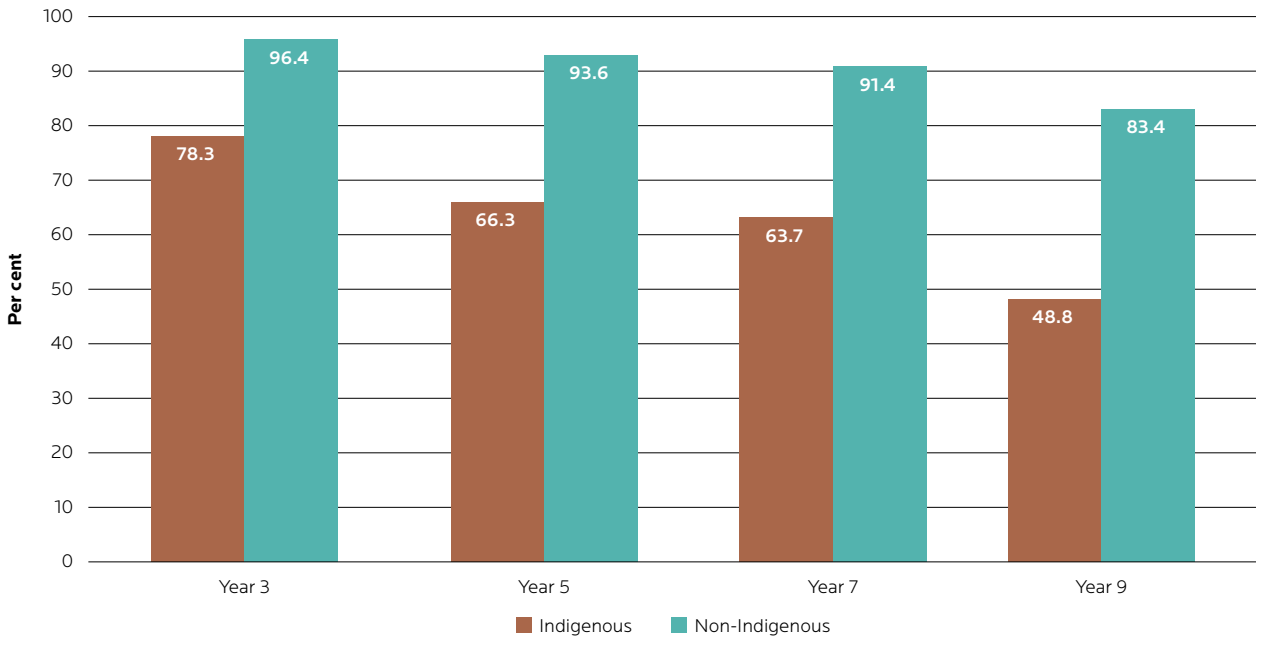
From 2011 the Writing test for all year levels was altered from an assessment of Narrative Writing to Persuasive Writing. This change in the writing test has created a break in the data series over time. Writing results for 2011 and 2012 should not be directly compared to the Writing results from previous years.

2012 NAPLAN results

Nationally, in 2012 across reading and numeracy, the proportion of Indigenous students who are at or above National Minimum Standards ranged from 64.7 per cent for Year 5 Reading to 74.4 per cent for Year 7 Numeracy. In Persuasive Writing the best result was in Year 3 where 78.3 per cent of Indigenous students were at or above National Minimum Standards in 2012, and the poorest result was in Year 9 where only 48.8 percent met the National Minimum Standards.

The 2012 results for Persuasive Writing for Indigenous and non-Indigenous students appear in Figure 7. It shows that the gaps are still quite large, especially in Year 9.

Figure 7: Percentage of students at or above National Minimum Standards for Persuasive Writing in 2012.



Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, NAPLAN National Report, 2012

CASE STUDY

Little Footprints, big impact

The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous children, known as *Footprints in Time*, paints a picture of the early lives of Indigenous children, their families and communities across 11 sites in remote, regional and urban Australia. The study has two groups of children, with the younger children now aged between 4 1/2 and 6 years of age and the older children 7 1/2 to 9 years.

The *Footprints in Time* Community Engagement Manager, Sharon Barnes—a proud Ngunnawal woman who lives on the NSW South Coast—has led the interviewing team since the study was funded ten years ago.

'What I most enjoy about this job is the families, they want this study to happen, they want to see change for the future and the commitment from the families and staff is commendable. There is no better reward than giving Indigenous people a voice,' she says.

Indigenous Affairs Minister, Jenny Macklin, was pleased to release the Key Summary Report from Wave 3 in August 2012. This report highlights the richness of information available to assist governments, researchers, policy advisers and service providers in health, education, employment, housing, parenting, and community safety.

Topics being explored from publicly available data include the significance of culture, land and language for school and later life outcomes, housing circumstances and child health, effects of parenting styles, family life and structure on child development, experiences with racism and discrimination and perceptions of community safety.

Information collected from *Footprints in Time* focuses on strengths and confirms that Indigenous families are determined to improve their children's lives, and build capacity and resilience to promote better health, education and employment outcomes.

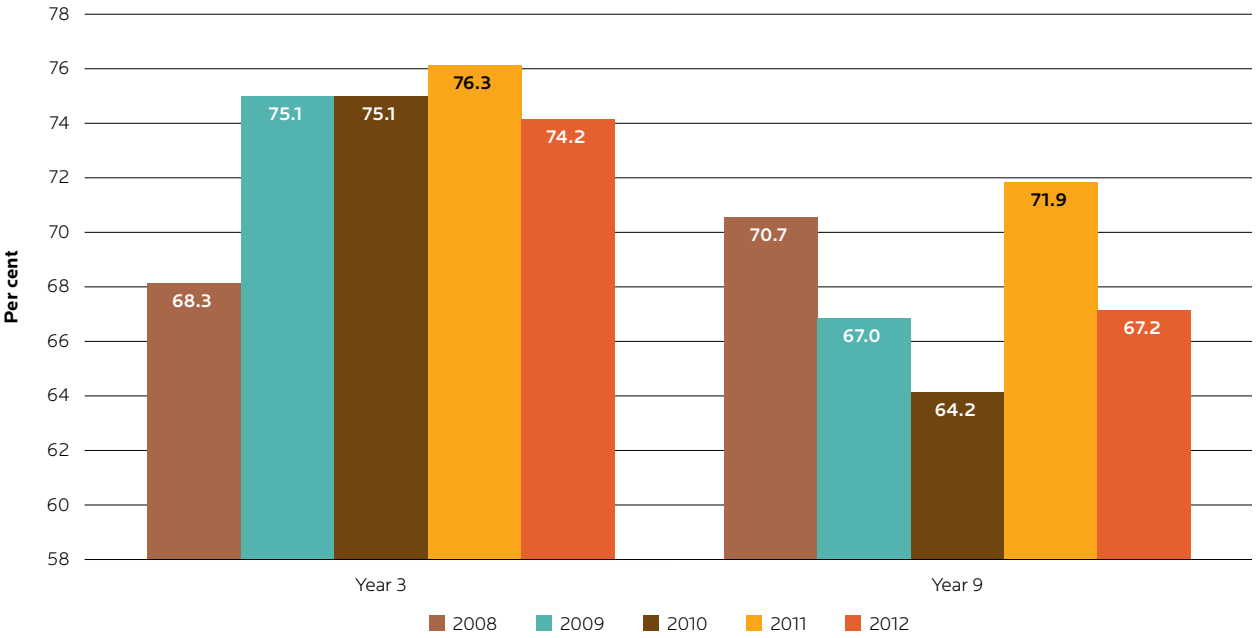
Professor Mick Dodson AM has chaired the *Footprints in Time* Steering Committee since consultations began with Indigenous communities in 2003. He acknowledges that successful outcomes from *Footprints in Time* depend on the dedication and generosity of families who participate in this ground-breaking research, as well as teachers and child care providers who complete questionnaires. Over 1200 children—and their parents or carers—participate each year.

'This year we asked some families "why do you stay in the study"?' Sharon says.

'Families tell us that they stay because they believe it will make a difference for their children and the longer term future of families and communities.'

Top: Research Administration Officer (RAO) Sandra Hooper with two of the *Footprints in Time* study participants in Dubbo.
Below: Community Engagement Manager Sharon Barnes. Photos: FaHCSIA.

Figure 8: Trend in the percentage of Indigenous students at or above National Minimum Standards in Reading for Years 3 and 9, 2008 to 2012.



Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, NAPLAN National Report, 2012.

Without the Writing results there are eight areas (four year levels each across reading and numeracy) against which progress can be assessed over a five-year period. Between 2008 and 2012 the percentage of Indigenous students at or above the National Minimum Standards in reading and numeracy have shown improvement in four out of the eight instances—in Years 3, 5 and 7 in Reading and Year 9 in Numeracy. The greatest improvement from 2008 to 2012 was in the percentage of Indigenous students at or above the National Minimum Standards in Year 3 Reading (up by 5.9 percentage points). Year 7 Reading also increased by 3.5 percentage points. However of the four increases from 2008 to 2012, only the increase in Year 3 Reading is statistically significant.[25]

Figure 8 shows the trend in the percentage of Indigenous students at or above the National Minimum Standards in Reading for each year between 2008 and 2012 for two selected test years—Year 3 and Year 9. The Year 3 results show steady progress between 2008 and 2011, but the 2012 result is slightly lower than in 2011. In Year 9 Reading there is no clear trend with the results fluctuating across the years and showing that the 2012 result has dropped below the 2008 baseline result.

Considering changes in the gap between the proportion of non-Indigenous and Indigenous students meeting National Minimum Standards there have been four out of eight instances (Years 3, 5 and 7 in Reading and Year 9 in Numeracy) where the gap has narrowed. Some falls in the gap have been quite large (for example by 4.7 percentage points in Year 3 Reading). Other falls in the gap have been quite modest (0.6 percentage points in Year 5 Reading). Of the four instances where the gap has increased between 2008 and 2012, the largest increase is in Year 3 Numeracy (5 percentage points).

25 Of the four decreases in NAPLAN performance between 2008 and 2012 two are statistically significant—Year 3 Numeracy and Year 7 Numeracy.

To assess progress each year on this target, agreed trajectories are used. These trajectories allow an assessment to be made about whether efforts are on track to reach the targets. For reading and numeracy, only three of the eight outcomes for Indigenous students in 2012 at the national level were either above the points or very close to the agreed trajectory points for 2012 (Year 3 and 7 in Reading and Year 9 in Numeracy).[26] In the other five instances where the 2012 trajectory points have not been met, the rate of progress needs to accelerate if the targets are to be achieved.

Outcomes by remoteness areas

For Indigenous students there is a consistent pattern of the proportion achieving at or above National Minimum Standards decreasing as the level of remoteness increases. Many of these differences are quite pronounced. For instance, in 2012 only 20.3 per cent of Indigenous Year 5 students in very remote areas achieved at or above National Minimum Standards in Reading compared to 76.0 per cent in metropolitan areas. This shows there are considerable gaps between Indigenous students living in different locations.

For non-Indigenous students, the differences in NAPLAN performance across locations are much smaller. For instance, the proportion of non-Indigenous students achieving at or above the National Minimum Standard in Year 5 Reading in 2012 decreases only modestly to 86.5 per cent in very remote areas compared to 93.6 per cent in metropolitan areas. This pattern leads to a much larger gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in remote and very remote areas than in metropolitan areas.

Figure 9 shows how the results in Numeracy in Years 5 and 7 in 2012 vary by location. The proportion of Indigenous students at or above the National Minimum Standard is around 80 per cent in the metropolitan areas and drops to 42 per cent in very remote locations for Year 7 Numeracy, and to below 30 per cent for Year 5 Numeracy.

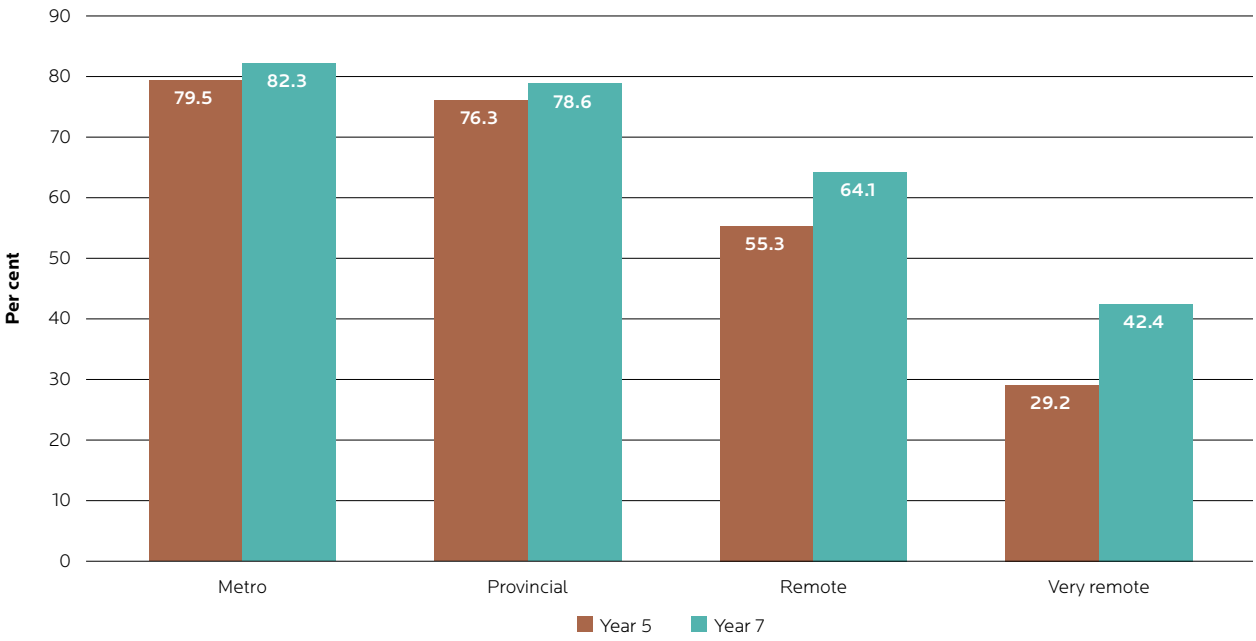
In 2012, Year 9 Numeracy outcomes for Indigenous students increased in all four geo-locations (remote, very remote, provincial and metropolitan) compared to 2011.[27]

A similar pattern of the proportion of Indigenous students at or above National Minimum Standards declining the further away they are from metropolitan areas is also found in the NAPLAN Reading results. For instance, in Year 7 the proportion of Indigenous students at or above National Minimum Standards is relatively high at

26 Year 7 Reading was the only result that was above the trajectory point for 2012. The 2012 result for Year 3 Reading and Year 9 Numeracy were only 0.7 percentage points and 0.5 percentage points, respectively, below the trajectory — these small differences are not statistically significantly different from the trajectory points.

27 None of these increases however were statistically significant.

Figure 9: Percentage of Indigenous students at or above National Minimum Standards in Numeracy by geo-location in 2012



84 per cent in metropolitan areas. This proportion declines steadily to 80.8 percent in provincial areas, to 65.4 percent in remote locations and to 37.6 percent in very remote locations.

Target: Halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20–24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates (by 2020)

Progress to meet this target is ahead of schedule.

Research shows that completing Year 12 (or its equivalent) improves transitions into further study or employment as well as broader opportunities in life.

Educational attainment among Indigenous people has expanded rapidly over the past 30 to 40 years. In 1971 only 3 per cent of Indigenous people aged 20–64 held a post-school qualification. By 2006 this proportion had risen to 25 per cent. The proportion of Indigenous adults who have continued in school beyond Year 10 has also risen sharply. In 1976 less than 5 per cent of all Indigenous adults aged 20–64 had left school at 17 or older (leaving school at 17 or older is equivalent to leaving school in either Year 11 or Year 12). By 2011, 41.5 per cent of Indigenous adults aged 20–64 had completed either Year 11 or Year 12.[28]

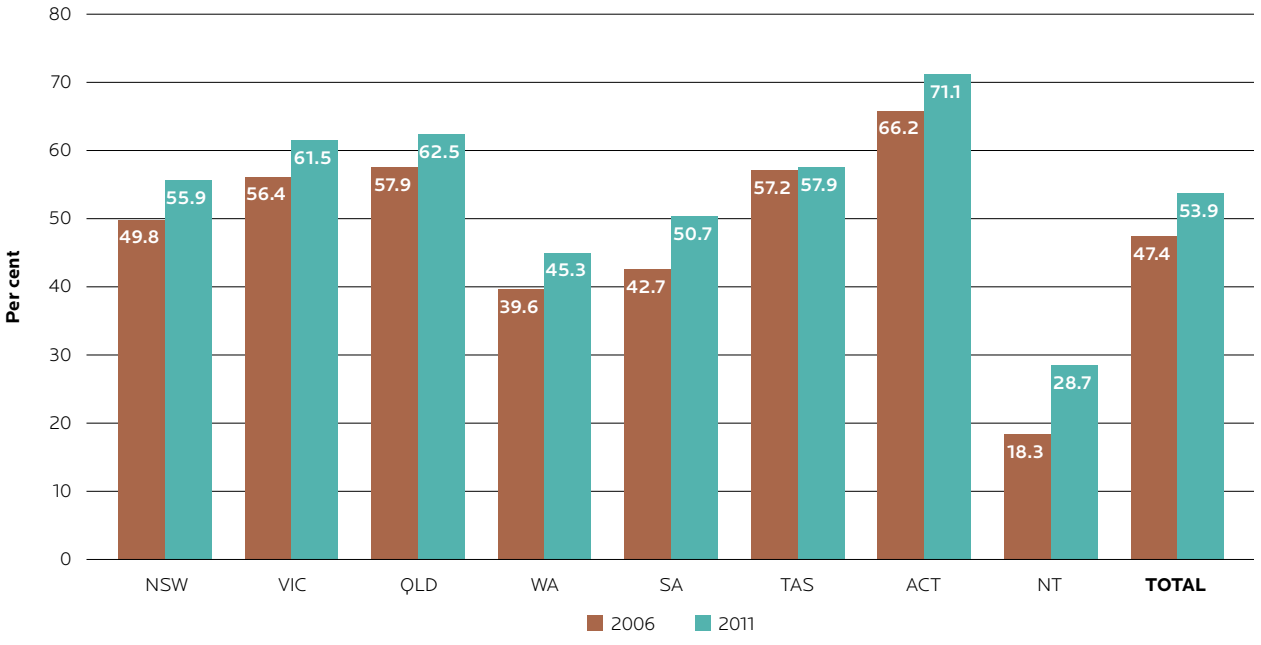
Data from the 2011 Census shows that further progress is being made. According to the Census, in 2011, 53.9 per cent of Indigenous Australians aged between 20 and 24 years had achieved Year 12 or an equivalent qualification compared to 47.4 per cent in 2006. As Figure 10 shows, the greatest gain has occurred in the Northern Territory where in 2006 the rate was 18.3 per cent, increasing to 28.7 per cent in 2011.

28 While leaving school at 17 or older does not necessarily mean that young people completed Year 11 or Year 12 this is the most comparable data available for this long-term comparison. The key point is that Indigenous people have significantly increased their level of educational attainment in the last forty years.

In 2011, 86 per cent of non-Indigenous Australians aged between 20 and 24 years had achieved Year 12 or an equivalent qualification compared to 83.8 per cent in 2006. As the growth in Indigenous Year 12 or equivalent attainment from 2006 to 2011 was faster than for the non-Indigenous population, the Year 12 or equivalent attainment gap fell by 4.3 percentage points from 2006 to 2011.

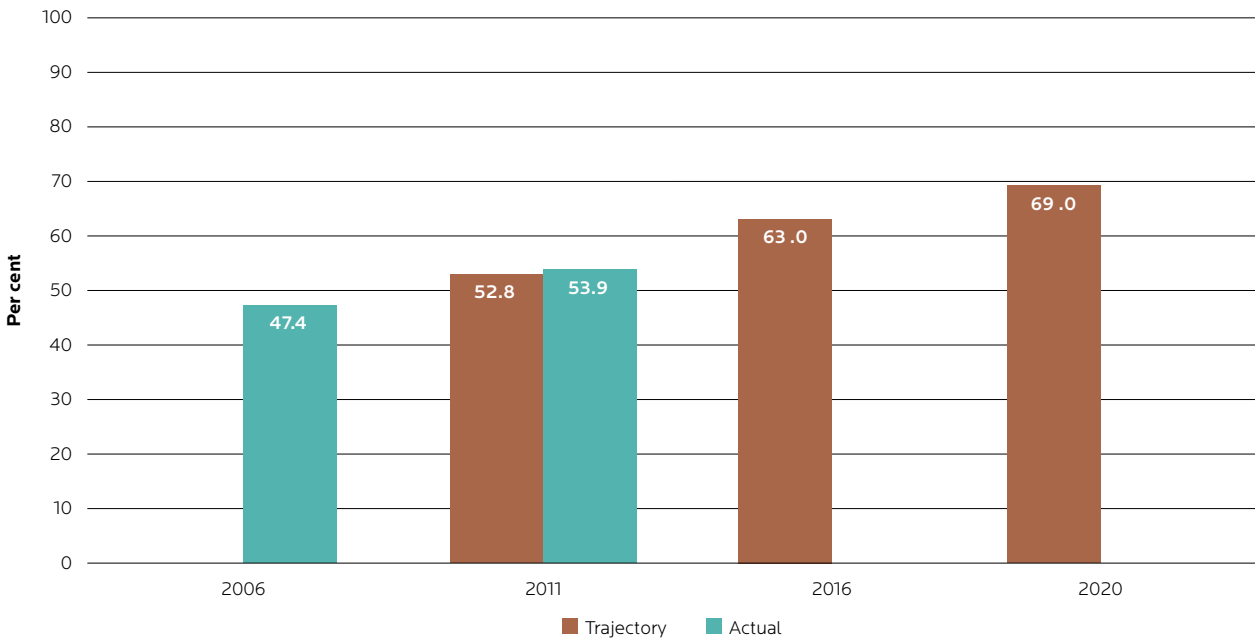
Figure 11 shows the agreed national trajectory for this target. This trajectory will be used by the COAG Reform Council to assess whether the pace of change is sufficient for the target to be met. As the figure shows, at 53.9 per cent in 2011, the actual proportion of Indigenous 20 to 24-year-olds with a Year 12 or equivalent level of qualification is higher than the 2011 trajectory point (52.8 per cent). In other words progress is currently ahead of schedule to meet this target.

Figure 10: Percentage of Indigenous people aged 20–24 with a Year 12 or an equivalent qualification



Source: Unpublished ABS data

Figure 11: Percentage of Indigenous people aged 20–24 with a Year 12 or an equivalent qualification.



Source: Unpublished Census data and agreed trajectory for the target.

Figure 11 also shows that continued rapid improvements will be required from 2011 to 2016 if progress on this target is to remain on track. Increases in attainment are likely to be seen in the 2016 Census, as attainment levels of 18 and 19 year olds in 2011 (who will be the 23 and 24 year olds in the next Census) were 7.8 and 6.9 percentage points higher respectively than 18 and 19 year olds in the 2006 Census.

Census data also shows that education participation rates for Indigenous 15–19 year olds have increased from 56.8 per cent in 2006 to 61.6 per cent in 2011.[29] This increase should also impact on the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates for Indigenous 20–24 year olds in 2016.

Encouragingly, increases in the Indigenous Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate reflect increases in both the school and vocational education and training components.[30]

The Australian Government has made significant investment in a range of initiatives that are working towards greater Year 12 or equivalent attainment. For example, the Youth Attainment and Transitions National Partnership ($706 million) supports all young people to make successful transitions from schooling into further education, training and employment. Further information is provided under the Schooling and Economic Participation building blocks.

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

Working in a meaningful job provides an income as well as increasing a person's self-esteem and opportunities in life. It benefits families and communities as well as the individual.

In late 2012 the Australian Bureau of Statistics released employment data from the 2011 Census. This is the first opportunity to assess changes in employment outcomes since 2008.

The Census shows increases in mainstream employment. The Census data shows that 44.7 per cent of Indigenous people aged between 15 and 64 years were employed in mainstream jobs in 2011, which is up from 42.4 per cent in 2006.

29 Participation rates are lower than attainment rates because they include persons of compulsory and non-compulsory schooling age.

30 The percentage of Indigenous 20–24 year olds with a Certificate II or above qualification (who had not completed Year 12) rose from 9.9 per cent in 2006 to 11.8 per cent in 2011, while the percentage who had completed Year 12 who did not possess a Certificate II or above qualification rose from 25.1 per cent in 2006 to 27.2 per cent in 2011. The percentage of Indigenous 20–24 year olds who had both completed Year 12 and who also possess a Certificate II or above qualification rose from 12.4 per cent in 2006 to 14.9 per cent in 2011. This suggests that alternative and more traditional pathways are both having a positive impact on Indigenous educational attainment.

This does not include Indigenous participants in the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP), as this program is not intended to be a substitute for mainstream employment. There has been a large decline in the number of Indigenous persons who participate in CDEP between 2006 and 2011 due to changes in the operation of the program.

As Figure 12 shows, between 2006 and 2011 there were increases in the non-CDEP employment rate in every jurisdiction (apart from the ACT). The largest increase was in the Northern Territory where the non-CDEP employment rate rose from 21.3 per cent in 2006 to 30.3 per cent in 2011 (a rise of 9 percentage points).

The key policy goal is to increase the employment of Indigenous Australians in the mainstream economy. It is likely that the improvement in non-CDEP employment for Indigenous Australians has been much greater than that identified through the Census as shown in Figure 12. Using administrative data on CDEP participants with estimates of total employment from the Census, the proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 in non-CDEP employment improved from 37 per cent in 2006 to 44 per cent in 2011.[31] Although these numbers should be seen as approximate, they confirm the general finding that employment in the mainstream economy has been increasing for Indigenous people.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics treats CDEP participants as being employed and the sharp fall in the number of CDEP participants has had a large impact on the employment rate for Indigenous people. The Census recorded 13,996 CDEP participants in 2006 and 4765 CDEP participants in 2011. This represents a decline of 9231 CDEP participants. According to administrative data there were 32,589 CDEP participants aged 15–64 in mid-2006, but by mid-2011 there were only 10,644 CDEP participants. This represents a reduction of nearly 22,000 participants. The Census accounted for less than half the decline in the number of CDEP participants that occurred during this period.[32]

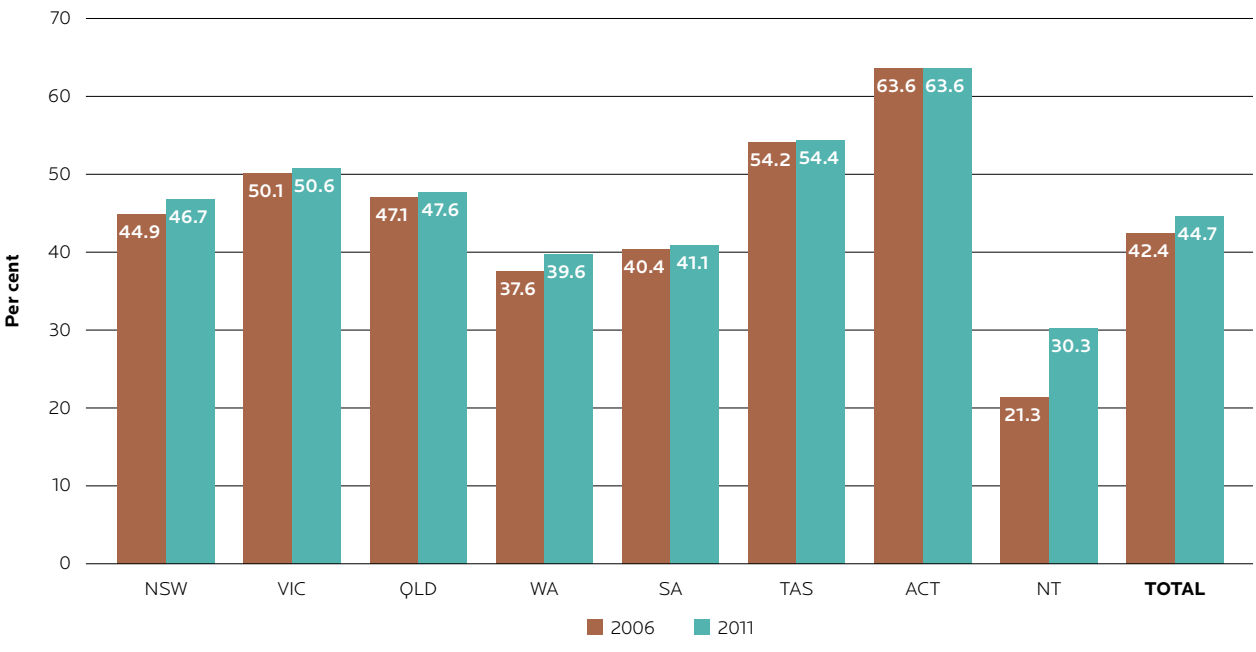
In a recent paper, researchers Matthew Gray, Boyd Hunter and Monica Howlett[33] argue that it is important to look at trends in non-CDEP employment and that a failure to do so can lead to misleading conclusions. They show that non-CDEP employment rates using Census data have risen sharply for both Indigenous men and women from 1996 to 2011. The long-term trends are positive. The researchers also

31 This is an increase of 6.3 percentage points based on unrounded estimates. These estimates should not be compared with data from the NATSISS on non-CDEP employment.

32 The Census is not designed to capture all CDEP participants.

33 Matthew Gray, Boyd Hunter and Monica Howlett, Indigenous employment: A story of continuing growth, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy, ANU, 2013.

Figure 12: Indigenous non-CDEP Employment Rate (age 15–64).



Source: Tabulations from ABS 2011 Census Unpublished data

Early learning fun at La Grange Remote Community School in WA. Photo: DEEWR.

CASE STUDY

Kindergarten attendance and health improve at Bidyadanga community

Extra hours of Government-funded kindergarten for all children in the Bidyadanga community has been good news for La Grange Remote Community School 180 km south of Broome.

Principal Rebecca Robson said prior to the introduction of universal access to early childhood education in 2010, the school offered a kindergarten program four days a week from 8:30am to 12:00pm.

'Not much was achieved by the time the kids actually got to school. Parents were not picking their children up or dropping them off as the start and finish times were inconvenient as they were different to the normal school times and this was affecting attendance,' Ms Robson said.

'Since we have offered a longer kindy day that aligns with the rest of the school times, enrolments have not only increased from 14 to 20 children this year but attendance has also improved and stabilised.'

She said children who attended kindergarten in 2010 and 2011 showed a remarkable increase in performance when they started full-time schooling.

'Increased attendance allows for better pre-literacy and numeracy screening and the ability to collect baseline data. This means we can target individual learning,' she said.

'They are engaged and learning and have more awareness of school behaviours and routines,' she said.

Now that parents are taking their children to and from school they are more involved in the school community. Children too are more engaged if the increased popularity of the 'crunch and sip' healthy lunch program is any guide.

Universal access has given the school more time to work in partnership with the community health service to identify and address health issues earlier.

'We can screen for health problems and catch them early before they become entrenched,' Ms Robson said.

Introducing the extra kindergarten hours followed a consultation process with the Bidyadanga community.

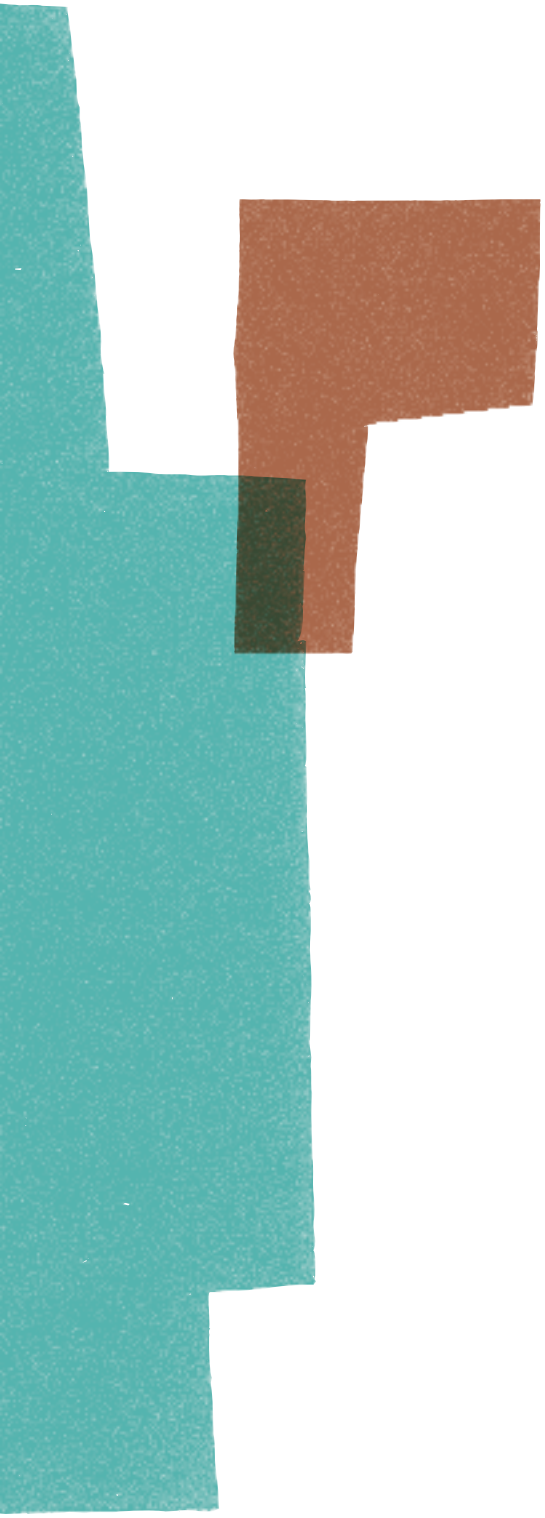
'Before any changes were made we consulted and garnered support for both an increase in hours and a change to morning sessions. The community was 100 per cent supportive as the new hours suited work times and siblings could pick up kindergarten children and take them home.

'It was a seamless transition and very easy when you are supported by the community and it is something they want,' Ms Robson said.

Ms Robson's advice to teachers, services and communities that have yet to increase their kindergarten hours?

'Get the community on board, make it four days a week and keep your expectations really high,' she said.

La Grange is the largest remote community school in Western Australia with classes ranging from kindergarten to Year 12.



show increases in the Indigenous non-CDEP employment rate from 2006 to 2011. They note that non-CDEP employment growth has been stronger in remote areas than in non-remote areas from 2006 to 2011, and that Indigenous employment in mining in remote areas has more than doubled over this period.

Although increases in non-CDEP employment are positive, continued increases in educational attainment and improvements in numeracy and literacy skills for Indigenous Australians will also be essential to meet the employment target.

The Census statistics also show that the gap in total employment outcomes (where CDEP participants are classified as being employed, as specified in the National Indigenous Reform Agreement) widened 2.2 percentage points since the 2006 Census. The gap was 25.9 percentage points in 2011 compared with 23.7 percentage points in 2006. The change in the gap was characterised by a slight decrease in the proportion of Indigenous Australians aged 15–64 in employment, compared with a slight increase for non-Indigenous Australians. The total employment rate for Indigenous Australians decreased from 48.0 per cent in 2006 to 46.2 per cent in 2011. For non-Indigenous Australians the employment rate increased from 71.7 per cent in 2006 to 72.2 per cent in 2011. However, excluding CDEP, the employment gap has narrowed.

Meeting the employment outcomes target will require continued efforts by governments, the private sector and communities to improve the total employment rate for Indigenous people.

Census data should not be directly compared with data from the ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS). Although the NATSISS provides the baseline for the target, different methodologies were used to collect its data compared with the Census.[34]

34 For example, where the Census collects information from all private and non-private dwellings, the NATSISS only collected information from private dwellings.

Chapter 3

Working together

Closing the Gap initiatives are underpinned by trust, respect and goodwill between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

That is why the Australian Government has embraced a partnership approach based on working with Indigenous communities to deliver positive change. The Government engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at all levels—in communities and across regions, states, territories and the nation—to provide opportunities for local people to work on local projects and have more ownership and responsibility for the programs delivered in their communities.

As part of its commitment to building stronger relationships and recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people of Australia, the Government supports constitutional recognition for Indigenous people and believes a referendum to bring about such change should be held when it has the most chance of success.

The Government supports the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples—a representative body that advocates for the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Congress works to secure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a brighter economic, social, cultural and environmental future.

The Government established the First Peoples Education Advisory Group—a group of experts that is helping to put in place policies that will help to achieve three of the six Closing the Gap targets.

Aboriginal Elders Council of Tasmania, St John Street, Launceston. Photo: FaHCSIA.

(Left to Right): Ms Alison Dunling, Port Pirie Aboriginal Health Council, the Hon Warren Snowdon MP, Minister for Indigenous Health and Ms Lucy A Evans, Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia, attend the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan consultation held on 14 November 2012 at Port Augusta. Photo: DoHA.

CASE STUDY

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan

The Australian Government is developing the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan (the Health Plan) in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representatives.

The health plan will support the Government's efforts to close the gap in life expectancy and child mortality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the broader population. It will recognise that health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is more than the physical wellbeing of the individual and also encompasses their social, emotional, spiritual and cultural wellbeing.

To develop a comprehensive health plan in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representatives, the Australian Government is seeking advice and strategic direction on the development of the plan. A Stakeholder Advisory Group has been established to guide its development. The advisory group brings together representatives from state and territory governments and representatives with expertise in Indigenous health, the health sector, and the social determinants of health. The advisory group is co-chaired by Ms Jody Broun, the Co-Chair of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and the National Health Leadership Forum and Mr David Learmonth, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing.

The Australian Government is also working and consulting with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, communities and groups, health service providers, education providers, employment organisations and state, territory and local governments to ensure the health plan meets the varied needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of all ages and from diverse backgrounds and locations. The approach to developing the health plan recognises that constructive engagement will make a valuable contribution to the achievement of positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and increase ownership of outcomes.

The commitment to genuine, inclusive and respectful engagement has been demonstrated through an extensive community consultation process which is occurring prior to the drafting of the health plan. A series of 16 nation-wide community consultations were held in urban, regional and remote locations throughout October to December 2012. A separate consultation was also held at the National Centre of Indigenous Excellence in Redfern, Sydney, from 19–22 September 2012 to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth.

These consultations provided an opportunity for community views to be heard and considered throughout the development process. In total almost 800 individuals, groups and organisations with an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health participated in the consultations.

The Australian Government also invited interested stakeholders and individuals to provide written comments. This submission process provided an opportunity for all points of view in the community to be heard and considered in the development of the health plan, particularly from those Australians who were unable to attend a community consultation.

Summaries from this and other consultations can be found at *www.health.gov.au/natsihp* together with information on the submissions process. The health plan will be drafted for further consultation in the first half of 2013 and is expected to be finalised in the latter half of 2013.

The development of the health plan reflects the Australian Government's commitment to working to build and strengthen existing relationships to better shape policies, programs and services that impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Engaging with Indigenous communities

The Australian Government is working closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across all of the Closing the Gap building blocks. Programs and initiatives are strengthened by consultation and working in partnership with Indigenous people, peak bodies and service providers.

For example, the Australian Government is working closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representatives to develop the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan. The health plan will support closing the gap in life expectancy and child mortality between Indigenous people in Australia and the broader population.

The Australian Government has brought together all levels of government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and key organisations to drive and inform the development of the health plan.

Community consultations have been held across the country and an online submissions process available to all Australians helped to capture a cross section of views and ideas on the health plan. The consultations sought input and advice from stakeholders to ensure the health plan will meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of all ages and from different backgrounds and locations.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have also been heavily involved in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan—from its development to its implementation and monitoring.

The Government understands Indigenous communities and their needs differ across the country and that the most effective way to deliver services is to work with the communities and utilise local service providers wherever possible.

The Government also appreciates that to engage with and understand remote communities, staff should be living and working in these communities. Staff who are aware of local needs, know who's who and can understand their languages and customs.

For this reason, the Government is continuing to build and improve its network of locally-based staff, including Government Engagement Coordinators and Indigenous Engagement Officers (or their equivalents), to provide vital on-the-ground links to local Indigenous communities—and build stronger relationships.

Government Engagement Coordinators are responsible for coordinating government business in the Indigenous communities where they are

located. They work closely with Indigenous Engagement Officers who are drawn from the local communities and understand local culture and languages.

These staff work for Indigenous Coordination Centres and Regional Operations Centres which take a whole-of-government approach to service delivery and feed back local knowledge to inform the development and implementation of policies and programs.

Government staff are continuing to consult with Indigenous people living in remote communities on major initiatives such as Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Remote Jobs and Communities Program, Remote Service Delivery and the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing to hear their views about the programs, how effectively they are being delivered and the outcomes achieved.

Place-based initiatives

The Australian Government is working with state and territory governments to tailor initiatives to meet the needs of local Indigenous communities. This further reflects the Government's partnership approach to delivering programs under the Closing the Gap framework.

Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plans established with each state and territory government under the National Indigenous Reform Agreement outline joint priorities and the contributions each government is making to Closing the Gap.

Through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery, signed in January 2009, governments are working with communities to improve the way services are delivered to 29 priority locations across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia.

A key principle of the National Partnership Agreement was that funding across Australian, State and Northern Territory government programs would be appropriately prioritised and targeted towards Remote Service Delivery locations.

Local Implementation Plans developed with communities identify local priorities and channel resources provided from other National Partnerships and programs in each location. As a result there has been significant new investment in housing, education and health facilities and services across the Remote Service Delivery locations.

In many instances, this level of investment has improved lives in priority communities, particularly in the area of housing where significant capital investments have flowed.

The Fitzroy Crossing community in Western Australia, for example, is benefiting from remote service delivery investment through the provision of a new child and family centre, new and refurbished houses, a new police station, renal dialysis services and additional youth programs.

An Indigenous Remote Service Delivery Special Account has been established to support projects identified through the local planning processes and to date, more than 150 projects have been funded from the account.

On Cape York, the Australian Government is working in partnership with the Queensland Government, Cape York Regional Organisations and the four communities of Aurukun, Coen, Hopevale and Mossman Gorge to trial significant social reforms. The Cape York Welfare Reform Trial is an Indigenous led approach that aims to rebuild social norms, restore Indigenous authority and promote engagement in the economy.

Governments are also working closely with Indigenous communities to address local needs through Regional Partnership Agreements. These agreements target specific locations where more assistance is needed and bring together key parties such as land councils, local shires and other local organisations to deliver a coordinated response aimed at improving the living standards of people living in these Indigenous communities.

Regional Partnership Agreements are delivering real benefits. An independent review of stage two of the Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Agreement in the Northern Territory found it has significantly improved road and housing infrastructure, as well as education, health and sporting facilities in the region.

CASE STUDY

Traditional healing

The Akeyulerre Healing Centre based in Alice Springs was established ten years ago by a group of Arrernte elders who recognised the need for a place of healing in their community. The elders have been a strength that has driven Akeyulerre from the beginning. The centre provides healing for body, mind and spirit, and is a place where community members from Alice Springs and surrounding communities can access traditional healers and bush medicine and rebuild connection to land and country.

In 2010, Akeyulerre secured funding from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation to expand their operations. Healing products, bush medicine rubs, massage oils and soaps are all produced at Akeyulerre, ensuring traditional practices are maintained and traditional knowledge about medicine, plants and healing is passed on to the younger generations. Akeyulerre is also involved in a range of activities that record, promote and support traditional healing methods and Arrernte healing practices.

Through the Angkwerre-iweme project, Akeyulerre regularly conducts bush trips where Aboriginal people are able to hunt and gather bush foods and bush medicines, visit important healing sites with traditional owners, walk on country and gain strength from the land and their ancestors.

Bush trip participants say that it is crucial for their sense of identity to be connected to country. When on country Aboriginal people feel like they fit and have a place within Arrernte lore. Elders feel they are relevant and know what the younger ones need to learn and understand. This gives a sense of pride and strength. Young people learn and expand their knowledge and enjoy feeling a part of cultural traditions such as dancing, song and language and especially the humour that often ensues on camps. Many participants speak of being recharged and cared for by their country and their ancestors, improving their wellbeing and helping them deal with many of the stresses of living in town.

As one senior woman from Santa Teresa commented, 'It's good to have bush medicines, for the kids especially. It keeps them healthy and stops their sores. It's good that all the women are here making it for everyone. I like to see the activity in the community with all the women working together. It makes me feel alive.'

Myra Gorey holding some of the traditional products from the Akeyulerre Healing Centre. Photo: FaHCSIA.

Children outside the Shire building in Hermannsburg/ Ntaria. Photo: FaHCSIA.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory is the Australian Government's 10-year, $3.4 billion commitment to work with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to build strong, independent lives, where communities, families and children are safe and healthy.

Stronger Futures is focused on the Northern Territory because that is where the need is greatest. Nowhere in Australia is the gap in standards of living or health status between Indigenous people and the wider population greater than it is in the Northern Territory.

The Government recognises there is no short-term solution to overcoming the systemic disadvantages Aboriginal Territorians face. This is why the Government has made a 10 year commitment to provide the resources necessary to continue making remote communities safer and healthier places to live.

The Government also understands many Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory were hurt by the way the Northern Territory Emergency Response was initially implemented without consultation. Stronger Futures was developed and is being implemented differently—it is a partnership approach over 10 years that will drive better outcomes for Aboriginal people in the long-term.

Throughout the life of Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Government will continue to work closely with Aboriginal people in remote communities on how Stronger Futures programs and services are delivered.

The Government is talking to local residents to get their views about how they would like Stronger Futures to work in their community. Wherever possible, local Aboriginal organisations will be supported to deliver services and the Government will work with local service providers to build up their capacity over time to take on additional services and deliver them more effectively.

Remote engagement teams—with an increased number of Indigenous Engagement Officers–will help to ensure services are well targeted and working effectively and that communities are better able to engage with government. The Government will also continue to provide funding support for the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service to improve engagement and communication with Aboriginal people.

Stronger Futures builds on the significantly improved services delivered in recent years and provides remote communities in the Northern Territory with reassurance that the Australian Government is committed for the long term to working with Aboriginal people to improve living standards and create healthy strong communities.

Complementing the $3.4 billion investment in programs and services, the Government's Stronger Futures legislation came into effect on 16 July 2012, repealing in full the *Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007*. The *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* applies in full to the new legislation.

To facilitate the implementation of Stronger Futures, the Australian and Northern Territory governments have agreed to the National Partnership Agreement on Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory. This sets out how the two governments will work together and with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory over the next 10 years to improve the living standards and future opportunities for Aboriginal people in the Territory.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory is an integrated package of measures across the following areas:

Education

Stronger Futures will continue to fund an additional 200 teachers in remote Northern Territory schools, build up to 103 new teacher houses, provide nutritious meals on a daily basis to around 5000 students in remote schools, deliver better career opportunities for Aboriginal people in education and help support families to ensure that their children are enrolled in school and attending school every day through the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure.

Health

Stronger Futures funding will continue support for primary health care and short-term placements of health professionals, funding for hearing and dental health services for children, child abuse trauma counselling support, additional alcohol and drug workers, and improvements to community stores.

Community safety and justice

Community safety in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory has improved in recent years. However more needs to be done.

Stronger Futures will continue to fund additional Northern Territory police in remote communities, continue night patrols and support for specialist police units dealing with illicit drugs. Restrictions on having sexually explicit and very violent material in communities are being continued.

Child, youth, family and community wellbeing

Stronger Futures will fund an expanded Communities for Children program and additional Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers. It will continue support for women's safe houses, crèches and playgroups, mobile child protection teams, and services to help young people focus on building themselves a brighter future.

Jobs package

There will be more jobs for Aboriginal people in remote communities across the Northern Territory with employment targets set for all Australian Government-funded services delivered as part of Stronger Futures. The Government is also providing funding to create an extra 50 Aboriginal ranger positions in remote Northern Territory communities, and will provide up to 100 local Indigenous traineeships.

Tackling alcohol abuse

The Stronger Futures package responds to calls for alcohol restrictions to continue, stronger penalties for grog running and support for people with drug and alcohol problems. The Government wants Aboriginal communities to have a greater role in managing alcohol issues and will help them to develop local alcohol management plans, ensuring these plans have a clear focus on harm reduction and the protection of women, children and families.

CASE STUDY

Constitutional recognition

The Australian Government is committed to constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Government is investing $10 million to build a grass roots movement of support for constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This important work is led by Recognise, part of Reconciliation Australia.

On 5 September 2012, using funding and expertise provided by Recognise, the City of Salisbury held a community workshop at the John Harvey Gallery in Salisbury, South Australia. About 70 members of the local community arrived to hear and ask questions from guest speakers including:

- Khatija Thomas—Kokatha woman, and Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement in South Australia.
- The Hon Robyn Layton AO QC—retired judge of the Supreme Court of South Australia and Co-Chair of Reconciliation South Australia.
- Professor Peter Buckskin—Narungga man, inaugural Dean of Indigenous Scholarship, Engagement and Research at the University of South Australia and Convenor of the Government of South Australia's Advisory Committee on the recognition of Aboriginal peoples in the South Australian Constitution.
- Tony Zappia MP—Commonwealth Member of Parliament for Makin.

In addressing the audience, Robyn Layton concluded that 'Constitutional change will reflect Australia's unique history and culture and is essential for fairness, justice and respect for Aboriginal peoples who are the First Nations peoples of Australia and for all other Australians.'

(Left to Right): Khatija Thomas, Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement in South Australia, Councillor Elizabeth 'Betty' Gill, Mayor Gillian Aldridge, The Hon Robyn Ann Layton AO QC and Mr Peter Buckskin, Convenor of the Government of South Australia's Advisory Committee on the recognition of Aboriginal peoples in the South Australian Constitution, at the Constitutional Recognition community workshop in Salisbury, SA. Photo: Reconciliation Australia.

The report of the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples served as the basis of discussions at Salisbury. The Expert Panel was appointed in December 2010 to consider, consult and advise the Government on how best to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution and on possible options for change that would likely get the support of the majority of Australians at a referendum. The Government received the Expert Panel's report in January 2012.

Khatija Thomas stated that constitutional reform is part of the ongoing process of nation building and forging our shared identity and that the Constitution is like the birth certificate of the nation but that it is incomplete. Ms Thomas acknowledged that all can benefit from an enriched national identity that will arise from constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The City of Salisbury has received positive feedback relating to the contribution made to raising awareness of the processes of changing the Constitution and the imperative for the Constitution to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to reflect a modern Australia.

Housing and land reform

Stronger Futures is investing more in Aboriginal housing in the Northern Territory. This is in addition to the Government's funding contribution through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing to build and refurbish houses in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

There will be no more compulsory leases. The Government is working with communities and land owners to negotiate voluntary leases to support service delivery and continue property and tenancy management over public housing.

Municipal and essential services

Stronger Futures provides funding to support municipal and essential services (including power, water, sewerage and roads) in homelands and outstations as well as important municipal services such as garbage collection and dog control programs.

Alice Springs Transformation Plan

Stronger Futures will extend a number of important projects under the Alice Springs Transformation Plan that support alcohol rehabilitation, early childhood and family services, domestic and family violence services , education support and tenancy management.

Remote engagement and coordination

Stronger Futures aims to build strong long-term working relationships with remote communities in the Northern Territory.

Remote engagement teams, with an increased number of Indigenous Engagement Officers, will help to ensure services are well targeted and working effectively and that communities are better able to communicate with government. The Government will also continue to provide funding support for the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service.

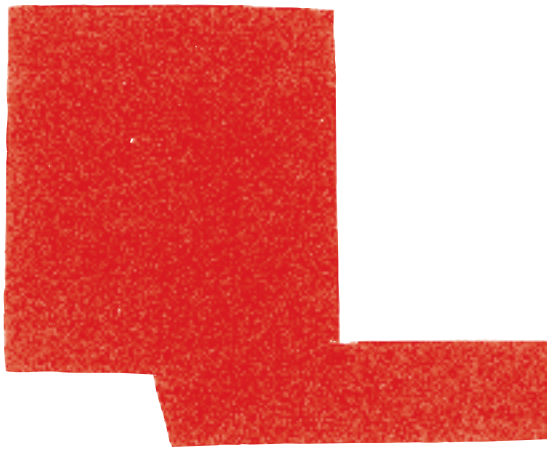
Remote Jobs and Communities Program

A job contributes strongly to personal, social and economic development and is essential to closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage. Supporting Indigenous people to be able to access long-term employment opportunities in remote communities is a key to making these communities stronger and more sustainable. People living in remote Australia, including Indigenous people, have said they want a simple and flexible employment service that is able to respond to their needs—and help them to get real jobs in their local communities.

From 1 July 2013, the Remote Jobs and Communities Program will provide a simpler, more integrated and flexible approach to participation and employment services and help build sustainable communities for people living in remote areas of Australia. It will be put in place in 59 remote regions across Australia. The four main programs currently delivering employment, participation and community development services in remote regions of the country—Job Services Australia, Disability Employment Services, the Community Development Employment Projects program and the Indigenous Employment Program—will be rolled into the new program. The Government will provide $1.5 billion over five years to fund the program.

It is a new approach which follows a comprehensive consultation process in 2011 to seek broad community and stakeholder views on future participation and employment participation arrangements in remote Australia. After the Remote Jobs and Communities Program was announced in April 2012, the Government undertook around 90 information and consultation sessions in remote locations and some major centres to explain and obtain feedback from communities, job seekers, providers of current programs, employers and other stakeholders about how the program will operate on the ground. A key principle underlying the Remote Jobs and Communities Program is that of 'community ownership'. With the assistance of a single provider, remote communities will decide for themselves what activities and services they need to make their communities stronger and give people the skills they need to secure local jobs.

All members of the community will be encouraged to participate in activities and there will be more assistance provided for people to take up work, especially for young people.

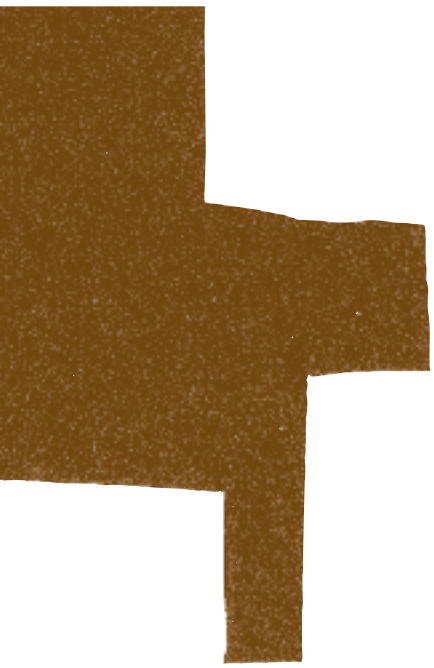


Remote Service Delivery

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery, governments are working with Indigenous communities to improve access to better coordinated services in 29 priority locations across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia.

The National Partnership Agreement requires governments to work closely with communities to determine what services are needed and how best to provide them.

Local Reference Groups (or their equivalent) have been established in all 29 priority locations and Government Engagement Coordinators and Indigenous Engagement Officers operate as the key point of contact between the community and government. Local Implementation Plans have been developed with community members to help guide government investment and services and set out agreed priorities, actions, responsibilities and commitments for each of the communities.



Implementation of the National Partnership Agreement has reached the halfway point and improvements are being seen across the 29 priority locations. There has been a significant increase in the range, standard and accessibility of services across the Closing the Gap building blocks. Education and early childhood facilities and services are being improved with programs in place to support families and school attendance.

New programs are being implemented to address Indigenous health disadvantage and communities are receiving additional assistance through outreach services. There is an increased police presence to support safer communities and significant progress has been made in improving housing with 947 new houses built and 1601 refurbishments completed across the Remote Service Delivery communities to 30 November 2012.

Work is also continuing on increasing economic and social participation and enhancing leadership and governance to build strong communities.

Indigenous Community Links

Across urban and regional Australia a network of providers is working to facilitate Indigenous people's access to community services through Indigenous Community Links (formerly Community Support Service). Indigenous people and their families are linked to a range of mainstream and Indigenous-specific services in areas such as social support, employment, family violence, health (including drug and alcohol services), legal aid, child care and housing. Individual service providers in a particular area are encouraged to develop relationships with other community services to promote access and pathways for Indigenous people. Indigenous Community Links has been extended for three years to 30 June 2015 and currently operates through 65 providers in 88 locations. Since the program was introduced in July 2009, more than 97,000 people have been assisted with information and referrals. The number of individuals assisted has continued to rise with nearly 46,000 people assisted in 2011–12 compared to 35,000 in 2010–11 and 16,000 in 2009–10.

Engagement at the national level

Representation: National Congress of Australia's First Peoples

The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, incorporated in April 2010, is an independent, national representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The priority issues for the Congress are those set by its members including health, education, justice, country and sovereignty (including Constitutional Recognition).

The Australian Government supported the formation of the Congress and its initial operations.

The Congress is working closely with the Australian Government to develop the new 10-year National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan in consultation with Indigenous people around Australia.

As part of the London Natural History Museum's agreement to repatriate over 100 ancestral remains to Torres Strait Island communities, the museum sponsored Torres Strait Islander Emma Loban to work and study at the museum for six months. The Australian Government sponsored Aboriginal woman Carol Christophersen through the Indigenous Repatriation Program (Office of the Arts). Emma and Carol were given a unique opportunity to learn skills from one of the world's leading museums, whilst promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and practices. L-R Carol Christophersen and Emma Loban with The Hon. Simon Crean, Minister for Regional Australia, Regional Development, Local Government and the Arts at Parliament House, Canberra. Photo: DRALGAS.

Reconciliation and recognition

Reconciliation and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first people is an important step towards rebuilding relationships.

The Australian Government is committed to constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and in November 2012 introduced a Bill to Parliament for an Act of Recognition acknowledging the unique and special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the first people of Australia. When passed, the Act will be an important step towards holding a successful referendum to change the Constitution to recognise Australia's Indigenous people. The Bill includes a statement of recognition that largely reflects the wording suggested by the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Expert Panel, co-chaired by Mr Mark Leibler and Professor Patrick Dodson, led a wide-ranging national public consultation and engagement program throughout 2011. It consisted of a range of respected and accomplished individuals, including Indigenous and community leaders, constitutional law experts and parliamentary members. The Australian Human Rights Commission, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and Reconciliation Australia all made a significant contribution to this work.

The Expert Panel talked to more than 4600 people, in more than 250 meetings in 84 locations across the country and received more than 3500 submissions. The Expert Panel also sought extensive advice from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, constitutional experts and gathered data through research and surveys. It helped to build a strong foundation for positive change.

In February 2012, the Government announced $10 million in funding to continue building public awareness and community support for constitutional recognition of Indigenous people. The work is being led by Reconciliation Australia and includes supporting community groups and activities aimed at providing Australians with an opportunity to learn more about constitutional recognition.

The *Act of Recognition* will build on the Australian Government's National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples, in particular the Stolen Generations, which took place in Australia's Parliament five years ago. The 5th anniversary of the National Apology in 2013 will be a significant commemoration of this occasion and an opportunity to recognise the progress that has been made towards reconciliation.

This progress includes the efforts of Reconciliation Australia in promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Reconciliation Australia supports moves to have Australia's first people recognised in the Constitution and is actively working to encourage reconciliation and close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage through initiatives such as the creation of Reconciliation Action Plans. Such plans aim to create respectful relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians.

Over the past six years, more than 300 companies, government departments, educational institutions and community organisations have signed up to Reconciliation Action Plans. Eleven of Australia's largest 20 businesses now have plans. Australian Government departments also have Reconciliation Action Plans in place as well as government-funded entities including Australia Post. The Government encourages all organisations and businesses to work with Reconciliation Australia to develop Reconciliation Action Plans.

As at 30 June 2012, 99 per cent of organisations with an existing Reconciliation Action Plan remained engaged in the Reconciliation Action Plan program.

The Government continues to fund a range of reconciliation activities. For instance, it encouraged people across Australia to take part in National Reconciliation Week activities last year through a $100,000 funding boost shared between Reconciliation Australia and Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation. The theme for the week was 'Let's Talk Recognition'.

The Australian Government also provides funding each year to support National NAIDOC Week activities including funds to local organisations and community groups for local NAIDOC Week activities.

Identity, culture and country

Indigenous people are custodians of one of the world's oldest living cultures, which is an important and celebrated part of Australia's national identity. The Australian Government recognises the importance of Indigenous cultural identity in creating a strong foundation for lasting change and through the closing the gap framework, is working to support Indigenous culture, languages and arts, protect Indigenous heritage and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to care for their land and waters.

Culture

Indigenous culture plays a fundamental role in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Strengthening Indigenous culture has the potential to significantly contribute to achieving positive outcomes in closing the gap.

- In 2013 the Australian Government will finalise its National Cultural Policy establishing a 10-year vision for arts and culture in Australia. The policy will recognise, respect and celebrate the critical role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture plays in giving Australia its unique identity
- The Government's Indigenous Culture Support program helps to maintain and develop Indigenous culture at the community level. In 2011–12 the program provided $7.2 million to support 142 activities across Australia involving over 59,600 people. Around 4450 people received training and skills development, and 82 per cent of activities involved mentoring.
- Almost half of the activities involved members of the Stolen Generations, with estimates of between 900 and more than 1100 Stolen Generations members participating in Indigenous Culture Support activities in 2011–12
- The Indigenous Languages Support program is addressing the erosion and loss of Australia's estimated 250 Indigenous languages by providing financial support for a wide range of activities across the country, including community-run language centres and programs, research projects, the development of language databases and innovative projects that utilise multimedia and new technologies.
- In 2011–12, the Indigenous Languages Support program provided $9.6 million to support 75 activities across Australia involving over 16,900 people and supporting more than 200 Indigenous languages. Around 52 per cent of the activities resulted in reported increases in the number of people who can speak an Indigenous language (either fluently or a few words and sentences). More than 40 per cent of the activities involved members of the Stolen Generations.
- The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies is the leading research, collecting and publishing institution in the field of Australian Indigenous studies. The institute is a Commonwealth statutory authority and works to increase people's awareness of the richness and diversity of Australian Indigenous cultures and histories.

CASE STUDY

Languages—keeping culture alive

Across the remote communities of the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) and Maralinga Tjarutja (MT) Lands, an exciting intergenerational cultural transmission project is under way to save languages and stories from dying out. Elders and parents are passing on traditional children's 'inma' (loosely translated as stories sung and danced) to restore and revitalise language used by young people.

'By teaching the inma, the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara communities are saving their stories and their language from extinction,' said Lee-Ann Buckskin from Carclew Youth Arts, who are working with communities on the *Tjitji Tjuta Inmaku Pakantjaku* project. 'Inma are elaborate. They involve the story, the language, the dance, the body paint and all the associated ceremonies,' Lee-Ann said.

The stories will be published to create engaging high quality language teaching and literacy materials for the people of the APY Lands and other Anangu communities in South Australia. This work is making a valuable contribution to Closing the Gap as the ability to speak words and phrases in Indigenous language is a source of strength, resilience and pride. Connections to languages and culture are also fundamental to Indigenous health and wellbeing.

This community driven project is achieving fantastic outcomes as a result of strong support across the APY Lands. The *Tjitji Tjuta Inmaku Pakantjaku* project has the support of 11 communities and involves 55 Elders, 500 children, community schools, the state government education system and the South Australian Mobile Language Team. The partnerships provide a strong foundation on which to build successful language and culture projects while increasing opportunities for young Anangu to develop their skills and strengthen their connections to languages and culture.

Students from Murpatja Anangu School practice Inma (stories sung and danced) with an Elder, enabling the intergenerational transmission of language and culture. Photo: By Finton Mahony, courtesy of the Office for the Arts.

Significant outcomes of the project include increased language use among younger generations; the transmission of traditional children's stories which Elders believed were nearly lost; the employment of young people and Elders; and digital media skills for young people.

Students were mentored by a professional crew capturing performances during one of the many community culture camps. The students developed skills in film, photography and translation, whilst witnessing cultural stories being performed and passed on across generations.

The partnership with the South Australian Mobile Language Team presents an opportunity for students to gain language worker qualifications through the TAFE SA Cert III course *Learning an Endangered Aboriginal Language* and offers a pathway to employment.

The literacy materials, which include booklets, posters and audio-visual products, will all contribute to keeping the Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara languages alive. These materials will support the continued revitalisation of Pitjantjatjara, which had a 31 per cent increase in speaker numbers between the 2006 and 2011 Census counts and will help to counteract the erosion of the endangered Yankunytjatjara language.

Importantly, the resources produced will be made available online to the broader APY community, expanding the voice and presence of these languages and helping to keep culture strong for future generations.

The *Tjitji Tjuta Inmaku Pakantjaku* project received Indigenous Languages Support and Indigenous Culture Support funding (OFTA).

Repatriation

The return to Indigenous communities of ancestral remains from overseas cultural institutions and secret sacred objects from Australian museums helps to promote healing and reconciliation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Government is taking a holistic approach to repatriation, working collaboratively with all stakeholders, including Indigenous communities, state and territory governments, Australian museums, and overseas governments and cultural institutions.

In May 2012 the Government announced members of the Advisory Committee for Indigenous Repatriation. The all-Indigenous advisory committee provides strategic advice to the Government on policy and program issues relating to Indigenous repatriation.

Country

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have managed the land on which they have lived for tens of thousands of years. Their connection to the land runs deep and exists at different levels, from the physical to the cultural and spiritual.

The Government recognises how important land and water is to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people—and the value of getting their views about how best to manage Australia's delicate environment. Indigenous people participate in advisory forums relating to critical environmental and economic areas, including the Great Barrier Reef and the Murray-Darling Basin.

Almost a third of Australia's National Reserve System is managed through a network of Indigenous Protected Areas. There are now 51 declared Indigenous Protected Areas across Australia covering more than 36 million hectares. The protected areas are managed by their Indigenous owners and administered through Indigenous organisations or land councils.

More than 680 Indigenous rangers are employed in Working on Country projects across Australia. As part of the Government's Stronger Futures package, an additional 50 Indigenous Working on Country rangers will be employed in the Northern Territory.

It is estimated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people own or control 20 per cent of Australia's land under various titles. Commonwealth land rights legislation has returned almost 50 per cent of the Northern Territory to Aboriginal ownership under inalienable freehold title. Smaller tracts of land in the Jervis Bay Territory and western Victoria have also been returned under Commonwealth legislation. Between 2007 and 2012, 18 land grants have been delivered under the *Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act* covering an area of more than 32,000 square kilometres.

State government legislation has also recognised traditional land rights and returned land to its traditional owners.

In its historic Mabo judgment handed down in 1992, the High Court of Australia rejected the doctrine that Australia was *terra nullius* (land belonging to no one) at the time of European settlement, instead recognising Indigenous interests in land at common law. The Australian Parliament passed the *Native Title Act 1993* to codify the High Court decision and establish a framework to recognise and protect native title.

Native title holders and claimants are able to negotiate Indigenous Land Use Agreements about the management of land and water which may deliver substantial packages of benefits.

Native title plays a significant role in Closing the Gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians and in promoting reconciliation. It provides opportunities for Indigenous people to form relationships with governments, the corporate sector and the wider public and gives them a vital stake in developing Australian resources.

The Indigenous Land Corporation, an independent statutory authority of the Australian Government, helps Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to acquire and manage land to achieve economic, environmental, social or cultural benefits.

Chapter 4

The building blocks

The seven inter-linked building blocks are the focus of targeted investment under the Closing the Gap framework. Progress in one often relies on progress across other building blocks.

A mother and daughter at a playgroup in Tamworth, New South Wales. Photo: FaHCSIA.

Early childhood

A child's health and wellbeing, from before they are born through to their preschool years, helps to set them up for life. The environment in which they grow up plays a fundamental role in how they develop as young people. Nurturing environments—including the family home, crèches, preschools and the wider community—can help to instil positive behaviour and values and steer children along a path to success at school and adulthood.

The Closing the Gap target that all Indigenous four-year-olds living in remote communities have access to early childhood education will be achieved in 2013. Unprecedented levels of investment through the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education means there are more children participating in preschool programs than ever before. The Early Childhood building block provides a platform for Indigenous children to be successful at school—and ties in closely with other Closing the Gap building blocks such as Health and Safe Communities to create an environment in which Indigenous children can develop and reach their full potential.

Mainstream initiatives, such as the Australian Government's Communities for Children program, play a significant role in this building block and are continuing to ensure vital services, such as support and outreach services, are delivered to provide assistance to Indigenous families.

Progress against the plan

The Closing the Gap target with the shortest timeframe, that all Indigenous four-year-olds living in remote communities be able to access early childhood education, will be achieved this year.

Meeting the target will be an important milestone, but not an end point. All governments need to work with Indigenous families and children to encourage Indigenous children to attend preschool.

The Government is working with states and territories towards embedding universal access to preschool—including a renewed focus on Indigenous children—through the negotiation of a new agreement intended to follow on from the current National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education when it expires in June 2013.

Maternal and child health

Two of the three elements of the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development relate to maternal and child health:

- Increasing access to and use of, antenatal care by young Indigenous mothers, and supporting young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.
- Expanding access to child and maternal health care within the primary health care system.

Part of the Government's contribution to the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreement is the New Directions Mothers and Babies Services Program. Eighty-five services across the country have been funded to deliver child and maternal health services. The funding is for services including:

- better access to antenatal care
- information and advice about baby care
- practical advice and assistance with breastfeeding, child nutrition and parenting
- monitoring of children's developmental milestones
- checking immunisation status and
- providing health checks for children before they start school.

The states and territories are also developing and delivering a wide range of services, including:

- Increased health promotion and education for adolescents in schools to encourage healthy behaviour and inform decisions around reproductive health.
- Encouraging young people to promote a healthy lifestyle among their peers.
- Increasing access to testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections and blood borne viruses.
- Expanded community midwife services in regional and remote areas.
- Increased community capacity to care for pregnant women and young families, including developing 'grandmother' roles in antenatal and postnatal care.

The Strong Fathers, Strong Families initiative aims to promote the role of male family members, and encourage them to actively participate in their children's and families' lives, particularly in the antenatal period and early childhood development years. The initiative's objectives are to:

- Increase access by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males to culturally appropriate health services and antenatal, parenting and related programs and health messages.
- Help improve the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males to contribute positively to the health and wellbeing of the mother's pregnancy and a nurturing and supportive family environment for the infant.
- Support the developmental needs of children by encouraging fathers, uncles and grandfathers to be healthy role models and engage fully in the child's life as early as possible, within the context of local community needs and cultural practices.

This program is receiving $6.8 million over four years.

CASE STUDY

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service at Mackay

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Health Service (ATSICHS) at Mackay in Queensland has adopted a holistic approach to the care of mothers and babies through their Women's Team.

Since July 2012, the Women's Team has been working to improve the health and wellbeing of pregnant women and their families by providing support and care to prepare women, their partners and families for labour, birth and postnatal baby care.

One young pregnant client said, 'The service has been supportive during my pregnancy and it is nice to know I can get advice and help from the dedicated staff.'

The Women's Team escorts expectant mothers and their partners to the Mackay Base Hospital Midwifery department and helps make them feel comfortable in the hospital environment. The team visits mothers and babies in hospital prior to their discharge and helps them make appointments to visit ATSICHS Mackay for postnatal checks. The team also provides education and information on how to care for newborns and encourages mothers to care for their own health during and after pregnancy.

This personalised approach has seen underweight babies achieve normal weight, increased immunisation rates, increased the number of mothers bringing their children to the centre for hearing and dental checks, and has resulted in more mothers breast feeding.

A mother of nine said, 'I find ATSICHS Mackay very friendly and the immunisation clinic is easy to access as I don't need an appointment. I appreciate the reminder phone calls and I can talk with the registered nurse each time I visit the service.'

ATSICHS Mackay's weekly play group is fully booked with 25 children between the ages of zero to five attending. Around 30 parents (including dads) are attending the group, interacting with other parents and learning positive parenting techniques to deal with challenging behaviours.

Parents comment to staff that they bring their children to the play group because the teacher is Aboriginal and the children can learn about their culture, sing traditional songs, and interact with other families.

'I bring my daughter to playgroup because being a dad I want to interact with her,' one father says.

'I work away and don't get the opportunity to see her socialise with other kids. It makes me proud to be a dad.'

Kyleesha Boah receives a dental check at ATSICHS Mackay from Dentist Dr Chauhan and Dental Assistant Ms Chopra. Photo: DoHA.

From left to right: Roberta Kalinic, daughter Curtisha, son Develliers and Bertha 'Birdie' Cochran, Crèche Coordinator for the Robinson River Crèche.

The Robinson River Crèche, operated by Mungoorbada Aboriginal Corporation, was established as part of the Government's early childhood services measures and is changing the lives of families in the remote Indigenous community.

Roberta says she owes a lot to Birdie and the staff at the crèche. 'I did not have the opportunity to go to school or college,' she says. 'This chance starts at birth and the Robinson River Crèche is a very important part of providing my children the opportunity to do their best.'

Photo: Kirsty Kelly, courtesy of the Mungoorbada Aboriginal Corporation.

Better early childhood services

Quality services and their availability to families are critical to supporting families with the early stages of their child's life. There are 38 Children and Family Centres funded under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development. These centres provide access to integrated early childhood services—including child care, early learning and support for parents and families. The centres also provide support to children and families at risk by linking them to other services and providing tailored support to families.

As at 4 January 2013, centres in Belconnen (ACT), Whittlesea (Vic), Halls Creek (WA), Fitzroy Crossing (WA), Bridgewater (Tas), Pukatja (SA), Mornington Island (Qld), Doomadgee (Qld) and Mareeba (Qld) are completed and fully operational. Twenty-two other centres are in various stages of construction. The remaining seven centres are in the planning stages. All the centres are on track to be completed by the end of the National Partnership Agreement in 2014. While the centres are being constructed, the states and territories are providing services from interim premises in 22 locations.

The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care, which came into operation on 1 January 2012, aims to raise quality and drive continuous improvement and consistency in early childhood education and care.

The central focus of the National Quality Framework is on outcomes for children. Education and care services must provide a program that is based on an approved learning framework which considers the developmental needs, interests and experiences of each child and takes into account the individual differences of each child. Programs such as Belonging, Being and Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia and My Time, Our Place—Framework for School Age Care in Australia outline practices to support and promote children's learning.

Inclusion, diversity and recognition of cultural competence underpin the National Quality Framework. Through the National Quality Standard, educators understand that families are children's first and most influential teachers and take into account the histories, cultures, languages, traditions and child-rearing practices of families so they can better support children in their care.

To support staff in remote Indigenous early childhood services to operate under the Early Years Learning Framework, the Australian Government has funded the development and roll out of the Remote Indigenous Professional Development Package, which provides a detailed interpretation of the framework as it applies to the remote Indigenous context. The package is targeted at locally engaged Indigenous staff with English as a second

Keisha (back right) and her daughters, Aleisha, Lacey and Shayla with Queensland Youth Services Young Parents Program Coordinator, Ruth Martin. Photo: Queensland Youth Services Inc.

CASE STUDY

Family Support Program—Keisha's story

Life's journey has not always been an easy one for Keisha, partner Shane and her three daughters, Aleisha, Lacey and Shayla. In the latter part of 2009, they decided to relocate from Brisbane to Townsville, hoping to create a more stable future for the family, with better employment opportunities.

The early days were tough, as they had moved away from the support of friends and family and were struggling financially. Keisha was a stay at home mother at this time, but found a new direction when the family attended some of the Young Parents Programs offered by Queensland Youth Services Inc. (QYS).

QYS supports parents who are under 25 years old, their partners and children through various programs, outreach, support, information and referral. Although a mainstream service, the Young Parents Program consistently supports a high number of Indigenous parents and their children. In the 2011–12 year 45 per cent of clients were from Indigenous families. The service proactively seeks collaborative partnerships with other services and organisations and that has led to excellent outcomes for Indigenous parents and their young children.

With the support of Young Parents Coordinator Ruth Martin, Keisha joined a playgroup (funded by DEEWR) and signed up for the Young Parents Program (funded through FaHCSIA's Family Support Program).

Keisha quickly made friends with other young mothers and found the confidence to get her licence, learn about budgeting and finances and complete a Certificate III in Aged Care.

Since completing the program in January 2012, Keisha has gained employment as an Assistant in Nursing at an aged care facility and volunteers at Aleisha's school once a week.

Keisha is keen to explore her Aboriginal heritage more fully and has recently joined the school's Indigenous committee which aims to integrate Indigenous cultural practices within the school and look at ways to help Indigenous children who may be experiencing learning difficulties.

Whilst Keisha is very proud of her achievements to date, she is not going to rest on her laurels and plans to undertake further study to become an Enrolled and/or Registered Nurse. Her ultimate aspiration is to one day work in child health and become known as 'the lady that gives the needles'.

CASE STUDY

All ready for preschool in Central Australia

The Central Australian Aboriginal Congress is the largest and oldest Aboriginal community controlled health service in the Northern Territory and is located in Alice Springs. The organisation provides a range of health and support services to the area, including the successful Preschool Readiness Program, which is funded through the Alice Springs Transformation Plan.

Judith Ansell is one of two Aboriginal Family Support Workers on the Preschool Readiness Program team, which also includes a Psychologist, a Case Manager and a Registered Nurse, and is passionate about her job.

'The families we connect with want the best for their kids, but many face challenges that limit their ability to get the children off to a good start. We focus on making sure we offer the right type of support for the right families,' Judith says.

'Some families need no help, while some might need help completing enrolment forms and finding the right schools. Other families struggle a lot with behavioural or emotional problems, and our program has been developed specifically for these families. When I see the happy faces of these children and the proud faces of the parents who have gone through our program, I have a lot of hope for their future.'

The program includes home visits to talk to families about school options, offer transition support and connect families with their local school communities. These visits also help families organise comprehensive health and developmental screening for their children so that health issues, such as skin conditions or hearing problems, are identified and treated before they start school to help get kids off to a good start.

Theadora Nelson regularly reads with her daughter Cheyenne to help her get ready for pre-school. Photo: Central Australian Aboriginal Congress.

Theadora Nelson has two children in the program and is pleased with the results.

'I think it's really good that my kids are going to Teppa Hill Preschool with the help of the Congress Preschool Readiness Team. They get along with other kids really well, they enjoy the activities, they are learning and having lots of fun. They go home and tell other little kids what they do at school. I think it's going to help them with their future,' she says.

After only two years of operation, the Preschool Readiness Program has helped increase the number of at-risk Aboriginal children in Alice Springs who attend preschool and recently received an award for 'promoting healthy childhood and preventing chronic disease' at the 2012 Chronic Disease Network Recognition Awards.

or third language and limited knowledge of early childhood theory and practice. The package successfully commenced in mid-2012 in Western Australia and Queensland and delivery will start in early 2013 in the Northern Territory.

Dedicated funding of $59.4 million has been made available under the 2010 budget measure Budget Based Funding Child Care Services—improved standards to upgrade buildings and facilities, improve governance and administration and raise the qualifications of staff for around 140 government funded child care services, most of which have an Indigenous focus. The funding will help these centres to meet the key aspects of National Quality Standard for Early Childhood Education and Care.

As at 18 December 2012, under this measure, the first nine infrastructure projects across Queensland and the Northern Territory have been completed, with contracts and funding agreements now in place for work on an additional 31 sites across Queensland and the Northern Territory. Training brokers have also been engaged to provide services across South Australia, the Northern Territory, New South Wales and Western Australia. Separate tailored strategies are being implemented in Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania.

Universal access to preschool

Through the $970 million National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education, the Australian Government, in partnership with the states and territories, has committed that by 2013 every Australian child will have access to a quality preschool program, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year, delivered by degree qualified early childhood teachers in the year before full time schooling.

In 2011, more than 10,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged four and five years were enrolled in preschool programs nationally and the Closing the Gap target of universal access to early childhood education for Indigenous children in remote areas by 2013 will be achieved.

Family Support Program

The Family Support Program funds non-government organisations to provide early intervention services for families and children. In July 2011, the Government introduced new arrangements to ensure Family Support Program services actively assist the most vulnerable and disadvantaged families to access relevant services, with a particular focus on service delivery for Indigenous people.

All Family Support Program service providers, with only a few exceptions, are now required under their funding agreements to complete an Indigenous Access Plan. The Indigenous Access Plans require organisations to demonstrate they have an understanding of the barriers faced by Indigenous families in accessing mainstream services and take practical steps to offer a culturally safe environment for Indigenous families. They must also commit to a target for increasing their Indigenous client numbers and report on their progress at the end of each financial year. This means that, for the first time, all non-government organisations that provide family support services, including family law services, are accountable for ensuring their services are appropriate and accessible to Indigenous families in the communities where they work, and in turn, accountable for their contributions to Closing the Gap.

An analysis published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies in October 2012 of the Indigenous Plans[35] found good examples of Family Support Program services meeting the needs of Indigenous clients. Examples included strategies to improve recruitment and retention of Indigenous staff members, greater collaboration and coordination of services with local Indigenous organisations, cultural awareness training for staff, development of mobile and outreach services and culturally appropriate resources and education programs.

Under the Family Support Program, there are 95 Communities for Children Indigenous Parenting Support providers currently operating in 281 outlets across Australia. There are 52 Communities for Children Facilitating Partner Activities sites operating in 910 outlets around Australia that are addressing the risk factors for child abuse and neglect before they escalate. During the 2011–12 financial year, these services assisted 62,216 Indigenous clients, which was approximately 23 per cent of the total clients assisted by these services.

35 Elly Robinson, Debbie Scott, Veronica Meredith, Lalitha Nair & Daryl Higgins, *Good and innovative practice in service delivery to vulnerable and disadvantaged families and children*, Child Family Community Australia Paper No. 09, published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies, October 2012, http://www.aifs.gov.au/cfca/pubs/papers/a142861/index.html

CASE STUDY

Tagari lia—A new Children and Family Centre in Tasmania

On 6th July 2012, the Tagari lia Children and Family Centre officially opened in Tasmania during NAIDOC week celebrations. 'Tagari lia' is the Tasmanian Aboriginal word for family and is one of two Children and Family Centres being established in Tasmania under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development.

Local Aboriginal elder, Ms Jo James delivered the welcome to Country and a dance group performed songs and traditional 'cleansing' dances to an audience of more than 250 people. The local community contributed to the opening by sharing their stories and paintings at the event. Traditional foods including mutton birds and wallaby patties were shared amongst the families in attendance.

One attendee noted: 'It was a truly moving opening. There were very strong images of children and their parents at the centre in the sandpit—a reminder of who this centre is for—the Aboriginal dancers and the didgeridoo player, the Aboriginal and community team that ran the whole day, the three flags flying in the breeze, the strong connection to country through the naming, knitting and images on the glass. I look forward to the concepts of collaboration and integration continuing to grow and develop'.

The centre—designed in consultation with the local community—is bright and modern and features a sculpture by artist Tim Whiteley. The steel oxidised Family Tree sculpture is intended to reflect the connection with the earth and the ochres used by traditional people and stands proudly at the entrance of the centre.

Premier of Tasmania, the Hon Lara Giddings MP and member for Lyons, the Hon Dick Adams MP, at the opening of the Targari Lia Child and Family Centre on 6 July 2012, accompanied by Mathew Salter and Riley Brockman. Photo: DEEWR.

Tagari lia prides itself on meeting the needs of the local community and is constantly evaluating the success of its services. The centre has adopted an Aboriginal Elder who works very closely with staff to provide cultural advice and support and is considered one of their most important volunteers.

The centre is making a real difference to the lives of children and their families and staff have received really positive feedback from the community.

A local Aboriginal volunteer and parent of one of the children stated, 'My son loves to come to Tagari lia—to play and interact. Also I get to have some me time.'

The Australian Government is investing over $292 million to help fund the construction of 38 Children and Family Centres across Australia. The centres will offer a dynamic mix of services, responsive to community needs and include child care, early learning, parent and family support services.

Northern Territory

Under Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Australian Government is investing $442.4 million over 10 years to strengthen the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children, youth and their families in the Northern Territory. This funding will support families through continued provision of playgroups, crèches, home and parenting services, youth workers and safe houses over the next decade.

As part of this measure, the Government will be improving the existing Communities for Children program. This new model will be expanded into an additional 15 remote communities, with the first five new sites to be up and running from 1 July 2013. The new model will deliver extra support services to families and enable communities to have a say in the way services are delivered so they best meet their children and young people's needs.

Under Stronger Futures, the Government is also continuing to provide funding for nine crèches in the communities of Milikapiti, Timber Creek, Peppimenarti, Robinson River, Areyonga, Docker River, Papunya, Lajamanu and Yarralin. These crèches provide opportunities for children in the local communities to access early childhood education and care. As well as early learning and care, crèches offer a good base to deliver programs to get children ready for school and support children's health, safety and early development.

Stronger Futures is also continuing to provide funding for playgroups in eight locations—Borroloola, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Gunbalanya, Lajamanu, Milingimbi, Numbulwar and Yuendumu. Stronger Futures is also continuing to provide support for the School Nutrition Program that provides nutritious meals to around 5000 students every day in schools across the Northern Territory.

Intensive Family Support Service

The Intensive Family Support Service was announced in October 2010 as part of the Australian Government's response to the NT child protection inquiry, *Growing Them Strong, Together*. The Intensive Family Support Service is funded by the Australian Government to enable non-government organisations to provide intensive parenting support services for high need families who are in the child protection system, or where this is at high risk of occurring.

In South Australia, the Intensive Family Support Service is being implemented as part of a $2.82 million package of improved support for families, mental health and financial management service in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, as announced by the Australian and South Australian Governments in May 2012.

The Intensive Family Support Service is also part of the Stronger Futures package. As part of this package, $99 million will extend the Intensive Family Support Service to 2021–22 to ensure continuing practical parenting support for existing locations and up to an additional 15 locations as part of the Stronger Futures Communities for Children sites.

The Intensive Family Support Service is a flexible, practical, intensive and outcomes-based service tailored to the needs of each family. Family support workers provide parenting education and support to parents and caregivers in their communities and homes for up to 12 months. The service provides support to parents and caregivers of children where neglect has been substantiated, or where it is at a high risk of occurring. The program supports families with children aged between 0–12 years where the child protection authority has made a referral to Child Protection Income Management and the Intensive Family Support Service to improve the safety and wellbeing of the child (or children) within the family and their community. Currently there are 18 Intensive Family Support Service locations across the Northern Territory and APY Lands.

The Parenting Research Centre is engaged as the Intensive Family Support Service implementation partner and is responsible for developing practice model, providing training and coaching for workers, developing resources to support service practitioners and developing an evidence-based program.

The Australian Government is also providing funding through the Intensive Family Support Workforce Development Strategy to support the skill development pathways and competencies of workers employed within the Intensive Family Support Service. The key component of the strategy is that all family support workers who do not have appropriate qualifications are supported to undertake a Certificate IV in Family, Youth and Child Intervention (Family Support).

Welfare reform

The Australian Government's agenda for welfare reform is improving the wellbeing of children. Income management helps families, including parents referred by child-protection workers, ensure welfare payments are spent in the best interests of their children and money is available to pay for essential

household items and expenses such as food, shelter and clothing. Through income management, participants are learning how to better manage their finances to achieve long term goals.

Income management currently operates in selected locations around Australia, including the Northern Territory, the Kimberley region and metropolitan Perth in Western Australia and Cape York in Queensland. At 28 December 2012, 19,596 people were being income-managed across the Northern Territory, Western Australia and Cape York in Queensland. Of those, 90 per cent in the Northern Territory were Indigenous, 67 per cent in Western Australia were and all in Cape York were. On 1 July 2012, income management was introduced as part of the Building Australia's Future Workforce package in five additional trial locations: Bankstown (NSW), Playford (SA), Greater Shepparton (Vic), and Logan and Rockhampton (Qld). Across these place-based sites, 15 per cent of people on income management are Indigenous.

Income management was also introduced to the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in South Australia last year. The scheme was well received by the community, with more than 250 people voluntarily signing up to income management within the first 12 weeks of it becoming available in the APY Lands. In Western Australia, 1159 people have volunteered for income management as at 28 December 2012, along with 3848 people in the Northern Territory.

Schooling

A school education provides a springboard for much that follows later in life. It can increase a person's employment options and open doors to a tertiary education. The level of education achieved can also play a significant role in determining a person's health and general life opportunities.

Through the Council of Australian Governments, governments across the country have invested heavily in schooling reforms and the education system to ensure Australia achieves the highest international standards. The Government wants all Indigenous Australian children to enjoy the benefits that flow from the school education reforms—irrespective of where they live.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–14 has been endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments. The action plan provides a framework to coordinate mainstream education reforms with supplementary targeted activity to deliver benefits to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Education reform

Every Australian child has the right to a world class education, no matter where they live, the school they attend or their family background. The Australian Government announced the National Plan for School Improvement on 3 September 2012 to help every student get a high quality education and the skills to secure a fulfilling job when they leave school. The aim of the National Plan for School Improvement is to have Australia in the top five countries in the world in reading, science and mathematics by 2025.

The plan introduces a new national school funding model and increased funding, tied to concrete improvements, in all schools across Australia. The key improvements will include:

- lifting teacher quality
- more power for principals and
- more information for parents to help them support their child's education.

Under the National Plan for School Improvement schools will be expected to form strong partnerships with parents and their local community and report on how they achieve those partnerships. The key features of the new funding system include:

- a benchmark amount per student, based on the costs of schools that are already achieving great results.
- extra publicly-funded money, called 'loadings', which will be available to support the schools and students who need it most, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students with a disability, rural and remote students, students at small schools and students with limited English skills.

Progress against the plan

All governments have agreed to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–14 which focuses on:

- readiness for school
- engagement and connections
- attendance
- literacy and numeracy
- leadership quality teaching and workforce development and
- pathways to real post-school options.

Although the Action Plan seeks to lift outcomes for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, a select number of actions concentrate activity in around 900 focus schools identified by government and non-government education providers. Reform activity and outcomes in these schools are being closely monitored by the Government because progress in these schools will make the greatest difference in Closing the Gap. About half of all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in primary school attend these focus schools. The schools account for more than a third of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student enrolments.

The accountability framework in the Action Plan allows governments, communities and schools to assess progress. Annual reporting indicates more than 90 per cent of focus schools now have an evidence-based attendance strategy in place and 58 per cent currently have a whole-of-school approach to teaching English literacy and numeracy. The 2011 Action Plan annual report has also reported on the number of personalised learning strategies in place for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across all schools as well as the number of school and community partnerships in each focus school. These are growing areas of activity under the Action Plan and the implementation of these commitments will be monitored closely.

Building on national collaboration in 2010 and 2011 under the Action Plan, there has also been progress on a number of other agreed actions during 2012. These include:

- The establishment of the Teach Learn Share website containing case studies on approaches to the teaching of English literacy and numeracy strategies.
- The completion of a feasibility study into a searchable database on attendance strategies proving successful for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- The start of work on an equivalent action plan by the Standing Council of Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment covering the training, higher education and employment support sector.
- Commencement of the development of resources aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to assist new and existing teachers to be adequately prepared to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, history and perspectives to promote reconciliation.
- The University of South Australia has been progressing the Australian Government funded More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative which will contribute to the development of a national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator Workforce Strategy under the Action Plan.

The Australian Government commitment to the Action Plan exceeds $128 million over the life of the plan. In addition to many of the initiatives already outlined in this chapter, this investment includes:

- Support for the Focus School Next Steps initiative and the national Project Agreement: Investing in Focus Schools to assist around 380 participating focus schools to accelerate the implementation of evidence-based activities.
- The Teach Remote initiative, managed by National Alliance of Remote Indigenous Schools (NARIS), is assisting with recruitment, training, and support for teachers working in around 200 schools servicing remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Up to 200 teachers from NARIS schools will be eligible to participate in a new teacher incentive package under Teach Remote Stage Two.

CASE STUDY

Find Your Science Hero

The Find Your Science Hero project was developed in 2012 by the Questacon ScienceLines Indigenous Outreach Program (ScienceLines) to complement and work with the ACT Department of Education and Training Indigenous Student Aspirations program. The Indigenous Student Aspirations program began in Canberra in 2009 and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island students who demonstrate current or future potential to succeed at tertiary level education and training.

After experiencing the Find Your Science Hero project, 16 Year 5 and 6 Canberra students had a very different view of science. Before the project, one young girl said, 'I thought science was for nerds and was all about experiments.'

After writing a presentation on her science hero—her grandfather, who she chose for his knowledge of the seasons and a passion for vegetable growing—she realised science was about 'a whole lot of other stuff like gardening and mechanics.'

'You can learn a lot when you are doing science,' she says.

Another young girl's hero was her brother, who builds intricate technical structures with Lego.

'Now I know science is a thing that you do on an everyday basis and I've learnt that science doesn't have to be boring, it can be fun,' she says.

The Find Your Science Hero project was developed by ScienceLines, in response to lower levels of engagement with the sciences amongst young Indigenous students. The project challenged the students' notions about what science is, and who uses science. With the help of the ScienceLines team, students made a personal connection to science by identifying a 'science hero' from within their own family or community.

'By showing them that people they know and admire use science every day, we are encouraging students to think differently about what science is and to see it as an area they can engage with.' says ScienceLines Operations Manager, Mia Thurgate.

The ScienceLines team offered the students who participated in Find Your Science Hero the opportunity to present their projects at a public event held at Questacon during National Reconciliation Week 2012. Six of the students made presentations at the event, while several other students had posters on display.

'The students made a huge impression on everyone present,' says Mia.

'The presentations were inspirational, and many people in the audience said that this was one of the best events held in Canberra during National Reconciliation Week.'

Kiara Barker was one of six students to present her Find Your Science Hero project to the public at Questacon as part of National Reconciliation Week 2012. Photo: Questacon —the National Science and Technology Centre.

Mainstream measures: the Education Revolution

An investment of approximately $2.5 billion under the Smarter Schools National Partnership Agreements is being directed to disadvantaged students through the wider education system. There is a particular focus on disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The National Partnership Agreement for Improving Teacher Quality which includes a funding commitment from the Australian Government of $550 million, is delivering system-wide reforms over five years from 2008–09 to 2012–13, and aims to improve the quality of the Australian teaching workforce. The areas for reform under this National Partnership include:

- Attracting the best graduates to teaching through additional pathways into teaching.
- Improving the quality and consistency of teacher training in partnership with universities.
- Developing national professional standards for teachers.
- Ensuring national consistency in the registration of teachers.
- Developing and enhancing the skills and knowledge of teachers and school leaders.
- Increasing retention through improved in-school support and rewarding quality teachers and school leaders in rural, remote and hard to staff schools.
- Improving the quality and availability of teacher workforce data.

A range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher-focused initiatives are under way in all jurisdictions to improve Indigenous teacher retention and professional development. This includes the:

- 200 Indigenous Teachers initiative in the Northern Territory
- Remote Area Teacher Education Program in Queensland
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student Scholarship Program in the Australian Capital Territory
- Aboriginal Leadership Program in Western Australia and
- Indigenous Education Workers Career Enhancement Program in Victoria.

Through the National Partnership Agreement for Literacy and Numeracy, the Australian Government has provided funding of $540 million over four years to facilitate and reward the implementation of evidence-based strategies that improve student literacy and numeracy skills. The areas for reform under this National Partnership included:

- quality teaching of literacy and numeracy
- strong school leadership and
- the effective use of student performance.

A range of reform strategies were implemented across jurisdictions to support students in developing strong and effective literacy and numeracy skills. These include:

- Providing teachers with the skills and strategies to teach the key concepts in literacy and numeracy across all year levels.
- Providing access to professional development for teachers to deliver consistent, high quality literacy and numeracy teaching.
- Identifying additional specialised classroom support to assist school leaders and teachers to improve student outcomes.
- Building up the capacity of principals and school leaders to drive continuous improvement.
- Supporting schools to share practice and performance outcomes with other schools.

Through the National Partnership Agreement for Low Socio-economic Status School Communities, the Australian Government is providing funding of $1.5 billion over seven years to support education reform activities in approximately 1700 low socio-economic status schools around the country. The areas for reform under this National Partnership include:

- Incentives to attract high-performing principals and teachers.
- Adoption of best practice performance management and staffing arrangements.
- Innovative and flexible school operational arrangements.
- Tailored learning opportunities for students.
- Strengthened school accountability to parents and the community.
- External partnerships with parents, schools, businesses and local communities.

A range of reform strategies are being implemented across jurisdictions to support students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These include:

- Providing incentives for experienced teachers and principals to move to disadvantaged schools, especially in remote areas.

- Providing support structures, coaches and mentors to teachers and principals in disadvantaged schools.
- Implementing programs to support student wellbeing and promote their social-emotional development.
- Adopting case management approaches to support 'at risk' students.
- Involving parents and the broader community in school governance.
- Investigating models to increase leadership diversity and capability.
- Providing services after school hours in response to community needs.
- Developing partnerships with neighbouring schools.
- Mentoring students to support retention and school completion.

The latest progress reports from the states and territories, released in January 2012, show that targets and milestones are being reached or good progress is being made, resulting in extra funding of more than $260 million from the Australian Government.

Achievements reported include improved attendance through wellbeing schemes and cultural programs, and improvements in the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results as a result of the initiation of, literacy, tuition and numeracy programs.

Through Building the Education Revolution there has been an investment of $98.5 million for school projects in the 29 Remote Service Delivery locations.

In the Northern Territory, $7 million of the Territory's allocation has been directed towards new classrooms in communities.

In addition the Northern Territory has received funding for:

- a Community Education Centre in Yirrkala for building refurbishments, a sporting facility and construction of a new early learning centre
- a manual arts work area, community hall and science centre at Shepherdson College in Galiwin'ku and
- a library, science centre and outdoor learning centre at the Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrur Catholic School in Wadeye.

Through the Trade Training Centres in Schools program more than 370 trade training centre projects have been funded across Australia, benefiting more than 1070 schools. Trade Training Centres are located in 18 of the 29 schools supporting Remote Service Delivery communities of which five have commenced operations. The Trade Training Centres in Schools program has shown some positive results across the country, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students making up approximately 7.5 per cent of all Trade Training Centre enrolments.

The program is a key part of the Government's Education Revolution and is funded until 2018 to enable all secondary students to access vocational education through Trade Training Centres.

Literacy and numeracy

Ensuring all children have the English literacy and numeracy skills that will give them the best chance to get a job is a key priority of the Government. The Government is supporting positive outcomes in literacy and numeracy through a wide range of programs. This funding aims in particular to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through the Focus School initiatives and Closing the Gap—Expansion of Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Programs projects.

The Australian Government's Closing the Gap—Expansion of Intensive Literacy and Numeracy Programs and Personalised Learning Plans initiative is receiving $56.4 million over four years from 2008-09 to 2012-13. A total of 35 projects have been funded under the intensive literacy and numeracy initiative across Australia over 2009-12, engaging more than 20,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in more than 670 schools and communities. Focus schools identified under the action plan are a particular target for this initiative.

In the Northern Territory, the Australian Government also committed $44.3 million over three years to June 2012 under the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement for education providers to improve student literacy and numeracy outcomes and upskill local Indigenous Education Workers in targeted remote communities.

CASE STUDY:

A community approach to school attendance

Mornington Island in the Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland is one of the 29 priority locations under the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership. A key principle of the National Partnership is that funding across Commonwealth, State and Northern Territory Government programs is appropriately prioritised and targeted towards Remote Service Delivery locations with the tailoring of programs to the individual needs of each priority community as identified in the local plans.

When negotiating their local implementation plan, the Mornington Island community made it very clear to the Government that closing the gap in education is a high priority, stating:

'Our children need to be educated to the same quality standards as mainstream schooling. They need to understand the importance of learning, the options available to them and we will encourage them to take up opportunities presented to them. Our culture needs to be respected and embedded in the curriculum of the school and the community will support and encourage children to attend school and show interest in what they are learning and achieving.'

Getting children to stay in school is the first step in closing the gap in educational outcomes but in 2008, the Mornington Island State School was struggling with an attendance rate of 57 per cent.

The school, community and other local service delivery organisations have been putting their efforts into making school a fun and rewarding experience for children. Enrolments have steadily increased and while average attendance rates across the State have remained relatively static, attendance rates on Mornington Island have also increased steadily to 70 per cent in 2011. School NAPLAN results have shown a significant and sustained increase in each of the areas of reading, writing and numeracy.

Left to Right: Frank Watt, Cajun Darby, Nanette Wilson-Watt at Mornington Island State School. Photo: Brad Newton, courtesy of FaHCSIA.

A partnership with the Mirndiyan Gununa Arts Centre supports community elders to teach culture and language in the school. Together, elders, the centre and school are also developing a set of local language readers in both the traditional languages of the Lardil and Kaiadilt groups of the region. Students also regularly perform with the internationally recognised Mornington Island dancers.

A school incentive and rewards based program is in place to reward excellent attendance, achievement, and behaviour. The local Police Liaison Officers of the Mornington Island Police-Citizens Youth Club also work closely with the school providing mentoring support and regularly delivering programs to support positive behaviour.

In September 2012, the Mornington Shire Council and other local service delivery organisations provided work experience opportunities for high school aged students, to give them a taste of future job opportunities from mechanical and construction trades, child care and health services, to working for a government agency in a remote community. The program was considered a great success by students, the school and partner organisations alike.

Mornington Island State School has received additional support through the Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership Agreement that has enabled the School to recruit and engage staff with specialist skills to address the needs of the students and in particular support the increased focus on literacy and numeracy.

Northern Territory schools

Since 2007, investments have been made to expand the capacity of remote schools in the Northern Territory under the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement. Over four years to December 2012, $107.8 million has been provided to recruit, train and deploy up to 200 extra teachers. As at September 2012, a total of 196 full-time equivalent teachers were in place. Under this initiative and its predecessor, the Australian Government has funded construction of teacher houses to help accommodate and retain these teachers. To date 51 houses have been constructed.

Evidence shows that good nutrition impacts on learning outcomes. The School Nutrition Program provides meals to around 5,000 children daily. The program also provides training in food preparation skills and employment opportunities for local community members. Around 200 jobs have been created for local people across the Northern Territory, including an additional 40 jobs in 2012.

Under Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Australian Government is investing $583 million over 10 years to continue to fund 200 additional teachers and to build up to 103 teacher houses in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. The Government is also continuing to support the School Nutrition Program and will fund the expansion of the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure in the Northern Territory, including employment of additional social workers to assist parents meet their responsibilities to get their children to school.

Engagement with school

The Australian Government is continuing its work to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are engaging with and enjoying the full benefits of the Australian education system, while recognising that cultural and historical impacts continue to discourage some Indigenous families from engaging with school.

As a part of these continued efforts, the Parental and Community Engagement Program is assisting families and communities to 'reach in' to schools and other educational settings. The program aims to increase parental engagement in their children's education through participation in educational decision making, developing partnerships with education providers, and supporting and reinforcing their children's learning at home. The program has made good progress since it started in 2009, with 495 diverse projects across all states and territories aimed at approximately 53,000 parents and carers and a further 28,000 community members.

The Sporting Chance Program is encouraging positive educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by using sport and recreation as a motivation tool. The program currently supports 70 projects

Liam, an 18 year old student from South Australia, was disengaged with school and skipping class. With the help of his school and Mission Australia he was placed on the Flexible Learning Option, which allowed him to start a school-based traineeship through the Indigenous Youth Careers Pathways program.

Since Liam began his traineeship with T-shirt City in November 2011 he has gained confidence and motivation. He is studying for his Certificate III in Graphic Pre-press and will be eligible to attain his South Australian Certificate of Education once his traineeship is complete. Photo: DEEWR.

across all mainland States and the Northern Territory, with approximately 13,500 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students participating. Approximately 70 per cent of participants are boys, however, new girls-only projects will be established in 2013, supporting an additional 604 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female students.

The Australian Government is also encouraging and supporting young Indigenous people to stay at school through the Learn Earn Legend! initiative. Learn Earn Legend! is delivered by community leaders, sport stars and everyday 'local legends' and encourages young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to stay in school, get a job and be a legend for themselves, their family and their community. Learn Earn Legend! also supports events and programs throughout Australia, including the National Rugby League Indigenous All Stars matches, Former Origin Greats Employment and Careers Expos, and associated Australian Football League matches.

Expanding access for remote students

Indigenous students living in remote and very remote areas often require tailored assistance to help ensure they can access the same quality educational opportunities as those living in regional areas and capital cities.

To support these students the Australian Government funds the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation to provide scholarships to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students for up to six years while they complete their studies away from home.

The Government has provided $28.9 million for the construction and operation of three new boarding facilities in the Northern Territory to assist students from remote communities in completing Year 12. The Indigenous Land Corporation has committed a further $15 million in capital funding, bringing the total investment to $43.9 million. In many remote communities in the Northern Territory, students do not have access to a secondary school or are unable to continue beyond Year 10 without leaving their families and communities to live in a major regional area or city. The Government acknowledges this and is working to provide facilities to ensure students can receive a quality secondary education closer to home.

The boarding facilities are being developed in partnership with the Aboriginal communities and outstations they will service. The Wadeye Boarding Facility has been completed and is taking enrolments for 2013. There is strong community support for a facility in Garrthalala to service East Arnhem communities and planning for construction is well advanced. Discussions are continuing with communities and other stakeholders about a proposed facility to service secondary students from the Warlpiri Triangle in Central Australia. The Western Cape Residential Campus in Weipa, Queensland was officially opened in June 2012. The Australian Government provided over $26 million for the 120-bed facility constructed by the Indigenous Land Corporation which will assist Indigenous children from remote and isolated communities in Far North Queensland to attend the state-run Western Cape College in Weipa. The facility not only provides a place for the students to sleep and eat, but it also engages children before and after school. In addition, the care provided is responsive to the needs of the children and the wishes of their parents and communities.

School Enrolment and Attendance Measure

The Australian Government is working with parents in the Northern Territory to ensure their children are enrolled and attend school every day. It is something Aboriginal people have said is important to them to improve educational outcomes and employment prospects for children in the Northern Territory.

As part of Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Government is expanding an improved School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) into an additional 16 Northern Territory communities that have low levels of school attendance, poor educational outcomes and high welfare dependence. This is on top of the six locations in the Northern Territory where the measure was trialled from 2009 to 30 June 2012. The School Enrolment and Attendance Measure will apply to all parents on income support in these areas.

An evaluation of the measure in 2010 found that school attendance in SEAM trial locations in the Northern Territory improved by more than 5 percentage points, from 74.4 to 79.9 per cent since 2009.

The Australian Government held information sessions in Katherine and the Katherine Town Camps late last year to explain how the measure will help parents ensure their children attend school every day. Additional information sessions are planned for early 2013 in other communities.

Yanna Ross shares her career aspirations at the Black and Deadly Workshops. Photo: Photo courtesy of Yallburru (Gold Coast Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Community Consultation).

CASE STUDY

Black and Deadly and staying in school

Black and Deadly is a series of regular workshops and gatherings for Indigenous female students aged 13 to 18 who are at risk of disengaging from Queensland Gold Coast schools. It provides them a forum to develop life skills and social networks, and supports them to complete their schooling. The life skills include self-esteem, leadership, resilience, better decision-making, goal setting, time management, anger management, advocacy, confidence and effective study skills. Black and Deadly received $50,000 in 2011–12 under the Indigenous Women's Program.

Black and Deadly is notable for its popularity. With a target of 25 participants, it has successfully engaged with over 150 female students, drawn from 14 Gold Coast Schools. These sessions have included visits to universities, dance classes, a Murri carnival, interview training, cultural lessons among a range of other activities. It is also notable for the involvement of over 20 adult women volunteers, including community Elders and past 'graduates' of the program who now act as mentors and allies to the younger women. Between the scheduled gatherings, one-on-one support is provided to individual students by these women on an as needed basis.

Black and Deadly has attracted broad based respect and support from other community organisations and from participating schools. It involves an alliance with the Gold Coast Titans rugby league team, which has assisted with and hosted some of the activities under this program.

An overarching objective of Black and Deadly is to provide opportunities for young women to connect to the Elders who are the caretakers of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. This program provides pathways to assist young women to take on leadership and mentoring roles as they mature and supports them to understand what it means to be a strong Indigenous woman in the community. In 2012, Black and Deadly has also begun engaging with Indigenous boys and now includes some 50 boys with whom it conducts activities.

Black and Deadly is delivered by Yallburru (*Gold Coast Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Community Consultation*), which is itself auspiced by Wesley Mission. President of Yallburru is Aunty Pat Leavy, a passionate and highly active advocate for Indigenous youth in a geographic area with high needs for the support that Black and Deadly offers. There is strong anecdotal evidence that Black and Deadly has assisted in encouraging particular Indigenous students to remain in schooling, thus assisting with closing the gap in educational outcomes.

The Black and Deadly workshops will continue in 2013 with Yallburru securing $64,279 under FaHCSIA's 2012-13 Indigenous Women's Program.

Linking education to jobs

The National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions has made significant contributions toward improving school-to-work transitions for Indigenous young people. The second interim evaluation of the National Partnership indicates that participation and attainment rates have increased since the National Partnership commenced.[36] This is likely to have a positive impact on the target to halve the gap for Indigenous 20-to-24-year olds in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

Through the National Partnership Agreement, project funding is provided to states and territories to support the implementation of reforms in the areas of multiple learning pathways, career development and mentoring. Some of the programs implemented focus on Indigenous young people or have elements that address the needs of Indigenous young people.

For those young people most at risk of disengaging from education, Youth Connections provides a national, individualised and responsive case management service. Although a mainstream program, 10,500 Indigenous young people (19 per cent of the Youth Connections caseload) participated in the Youth Connections program since it began in January 2010. More than 50 per cent of Indigenous participants during that period re-engaged or improved their engagement with education, training or employment. A further 22 per cent were assessed as making significant progress in addressing their barriers to full engagement in education. Evidence suggests program demand is far exceeding capacity.[37]

In areas with significant Indigenous populations, Partnership Brokers are helping to build the capacity of communities to support Indigenous young people to engage in their learning and make a successful transition through school to further education or training and work. Approximately 21 per cent of the partnerships supported by Partnership Brokers have an Indigenous focus.

In 2012, Indigenous Ranger Cadetships were piloted in ten schools, with another two schools joining in 2013. The program assists young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to complete school and acquire skills that are culturally relevant and linked to employment opportunities available in the broader natural resource management sector.

36 Dandolo Partners 2012, Second interim evaluation of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Canberra.

37 ibid.

CASE STUDY

PaCE has helped me and my family

Mary tells how the Parental and Community Engagement Program helped her and her family.

'My name is Mary and I've lived in the Logan area for the past 17 years with my husband and five children. I'm originally from Swan Hill in Victoria.

Since being in Logan, my children have gone to Logan schools and they had a good primary start but when they hit high school they struggled. Reflecting back I don't think the education system was geared up to meet my children's individual needs.

My husband and I have tried to work with schools in trying to help keep our children engage with education. But to no avail, our children became more disengaged and it discouraged us as parents because we didn't know what to do or where to turn.

Then I heard about PaCE [Parental and Community Engagement] workshops and decided to go along and see what it was all about. The first workshop I attended I was shy and scared to talk, but the way in which the workshop was run, it was about keeping us safe and doing yarning circles, which gave me the courage to speak up and tell them about the barriers I face as a parent and the struggles I have with my children. One thing that I wanted was to get my youngest child engaged in education at a very early age and not leave it till she started kindy.

With the help of a PaCE coordinator who approached the Browns Plain Early Learning Centre, a playgroup was set up on Wednesdays with an Indigenous teacher. The playgroup started on the 9th of March with two other parents and me. To this day we have eight parents and 15 children and we are going strong with a Friday playgroup now offered.

Even though we got our youngest daughter settled, the two middle daughters were still unsettled in primary and high school and the two older ones who never finished high school were still giving us grief.

Our two middle daughters had already attended three different schools in the one year, and were eventually settled into a high school and a primary school in two different suburbs. This caused us as a family to stress about the drop off and pick up situation as both schools had different starting and finishing times. This also caused my daughters to stress and eventually they again became unsettled and disengaged.

My husband and I were back at square one.

I finally decided to ring PaCE and have a yarn with the coordinator. The coordinator let me know that she was running PaCE family camps, and she invited me and my family along. We attended the camp and the camp allowed us to have family time as well as alone time. In the program we did family activities together and parents' teambuilding activities and then we had parent discussion time with other parents from the camp where we discovered we were not alone.

The PaCE coordinator was very helpful and knowledgeable about schools and other educational services which are in the surrounding areas. This helped us with making the decision to put our two daughters in the same high school and same primary school.

Both daughters are now attending a high and primary school and the wonderful thing is that they are right next door to each other and they have the same starting and finishing time. Also as a bonus, both schools have Indigenous Teacher Aides and their own room for our daughters to access as well as the parents. The PaCE coordinator also runs workshops from both these schools. Our girls are finally settled now.

Our two eldest ones, who didn't finish high school have gone back and completed their year 11 and 12 in six months. They are now both on the JSA [Job Services Australia] program and are doing fine.

As for myself, I just finished the Triple P Program [Positive Parenting Program] and CLS [Community Leadership Solutions] workshops and I'm looking forward to the Art Workshops at BoysTown [a non-government community services organisation] at the end of the year.

PaCE has helped me and my family and I'm very grateful for this program.'

Health

Good health is fundamental to living a productive, fulfilling life, from birth through to old age. The health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is improving in many areas, but there are still areas of concern.

Broader determinants of health such as environmental and socio-economic factors impact on health outcomes and influence how people access health care. Improving the health of Indigenous Australians through targeted investment across the building blocks is a key to Closing the Gap. The Australian Government is working in partnership with Indigenous people and providing funding to Indigenous community-controlled health organisations that deliver comprehensive, culturally appropriate health care services. Building on this network of health organisations and strengthening its capacity to deliver services remains a high priority.

The Australian Government has committed $805.5 million over four years from 2009–10 to 2012–13 under the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes. The National Partnership Agreement aims to address targets set by the Council of Australian Governments to close the gap in health outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

The Government is working in partnership with organisations such as the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and state and territory governments to develop a new 10-year National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan. The plan will provide a blueprint for governments, Indigenous communities and health care and service organisations to work together to close the gap in life expectancy and child mortality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the broader population.

Progress against the plan

Indigenous Chronic Disease Package

Chronic disease is estimated to contribute around 70 per cent of the gap in Indigenous health outcomes. People with chronic diseases tend to have common lifestyle related risk factors such as smoking, poor nutrition, obesity and low levels of physical activity. The Government's contribution to the National Partnership is the Indigenous Chronic Disease Package that aims to reduce key risk factors for chronic disease such as smoking, improve early detection of chronic disease and chronic disease management, and increase the capacity of the primary care workforce to deliver effective care to Indigenous people with chronic diseases.

A comprehensive approach to chronic disease management is being undertaken throughout local health services, encouraging people in communities to undergo health checks and ensuring systematic follow-ups to the

An optometrist testing a patient at the Great Southern Aboriginal Health Clinic, Albany, Western Australia. Photo: FaHCSIA.

A health worker handing out quit-smoking materials in Coonamble, New South Wales. Photo: FaHCSIA.

health checks are in place. In 2011-12, 65,501 health assessments were provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 and over, an increase of 33.8 per cent over the 2010-11 figure of 48,954 assessments.

Training for health workers to deliver chronic disease self management programs has been progressively rolled out from 1 July 2010. At 1 December 2012, this training had provided more than 660 workers with competency based skills to support lifestyle change and self management skills in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have established chronic diseases or are at risk of developing a chronic disease.

Chronically ill patients are also getting more support from general practitioners. More than 3,100 practices are now signed up to the Practice Incentives Program—Indigenous Health Incentive and around 47,000 Indigenous patients have registered for chronic disease care in 2012. Indigenous patients living with, or at risk of, chronic disease are also able to access more affordable medicines under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme Co-payment measure which began in July 2010. As at 30 November 2012, more than 181,700 patients are benefiting with more than 99 per cent of community pharmacies having dispensed a Closing the Gap prescription. Closing the Gap prescriptions enable eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have an existing, or are at risk of, chronic disease, access to more affordable medicines through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

The package is delivering community education to address chronic disease risk factors—in particular, the high smoking rates in Indigenous communities. Smoking is a major threat to the health of Indigenous people.

Almost half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over smoke, more than double the rate for the wider Australian population. The Australian Government is rolling out a national network of Regional Tackling Smoking and Healthy Lifestyle Teams across Australia to reduce major risk factors for chronic disease in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. As the National Coordinator for Tackling Indigenous Smoking, Dr Tom Calma AO is leading and mentoring the national network of Regional Tackling Smoking and Healthy Lifestyle Teams.

At the end of 2012–13, it is expected that the Regional Teams will have national coverage across 57 regions including the Australian Capital Territory, raising awareness of the harms of tobacco and encouraging healthy living choices and positive and lasting change. The third National Networking and Development Workshop for the Regional Teams was held in Canberra during December 2012 with more than 220 participants. The workshop included opportunities for the Regional Teams to share their experiences and to speak about their effective programs and activities, including highlighting a range of community-based health promotion and social marketing activities to address smoking, nutrition, alcohol and physical activity. Nationally more than 200 health workers and community educators have been trained in smoking cessation. Quitlines have been enhanced to provide accessible and appropriate services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including specific Indigenous positions and cultural awareness training for staff.

These anti-smoking measures are building on the Indigenous Tobacco Control Initiative, funded for four years from 2008–09, which supported 18 different projects to help prevent and stop smoking among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to provide training to staff working in Indigenous health.

The Government also funded the 'Break the Chain' anti-smoking advertisements, the first national Indigenous anti-smoking campaign (television, radio, print advertising and posters) and the new 'Quit for you Quit for 2' advertisements and iPhone applications specifically aimed at encouraging pregnant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to quit smoking.

Following the first phase of the Government's Local Community Campaigns Grants program, the Government supported the establishment of an additional 37 health promotion projects in 2012 aimed at increasing awareness of chronic disease and promoting better health in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The capacity of the primary care workforce is being expanded in Indigenous and mainstream health services to increase the uptake of health services by Indigenous people. Additional workers have been funded and recruited, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach Workers, health professionals and practice managers. Extra professional development and clinical placement scholarships are also being provided to nurses.

Since the Indigenous Chronic Disease Package was implemented in 2009–10, 143 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Outreach Workers, 31 Practice Managers, 22 health professionals and 94 Indigenous Health Project Officers have been funded in locations across the country. In the 2011 training year, 138 registrars undertook a training post in an Indigenous health setting, with 37 of these posts were funded through the Indigenous Chronic Disease Package. In 2012, 61 clinical placement scholarships and 75 professional development scholarships were awarded to nurses.

Expanding primary health care

Australia's primary health care system provides a range of frontline services to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people manage their health needs and reduce the burden on hospitals.

The Establishing Quality Health Standards initiative is providing $35 million over four years (from 2011–12 to 2014–15) to help eligible Indigenous health organisations obtain clinical and organisational accreditation for the first time and to maintain organisational accreditation under mainstream Australian health care standards.

At 30 June 2012, the initiative had helped 103 organisations achieve clinical accreditation and 40 achieve organisational accreditation from bodies such as the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and the International Organisation for Standardization.

The Quality Assurance for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Services Pathology Program helps Aboriginal health services provide a more flexible model for pathology service access for diabetes monitoring tests. As at 30 June 2012, the program was operating in 161 sites across Australia. The aim of this program is to reach a goal of 170 participating sites by the end of the 2012–13 financial year.

Funding of $1.8 billion (over six years from 2011–12) was provided for strategic Health and Hospitals Fund projects across regional Australia. This includes 21 Indigenous-specific projects that will expand primary care facilities for Indigenous people in places such as Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, Halls Creek and Cape York as well as well as provide accommodation to attract health staff and support the delivery of health care to Indigenous communities. This funding will also provide 17 renal dialysis chairs in Western Australia enabling renal services to be accessed closer to home.

Since 2010–11, the Government has allocated $6.46 million for nine projects with Indigenous organisations to provide essential health infrastructure and training in Indigenous communities. A further $4.08 million has also been allocated to 11 Indigenous primary health care clinic projects funded through the Primary Care Infrastructure Grants initiative to:

- upgrade and expand accommodation for general practitioners and other health professionals
- improve access to integrated general practitioner and primary health care services and
- offer extended hours of opening and clinical training facilities.

Funding of $1.45 billion from 2011–12 to 2014–15 has been allocated to Medicare Locals and the Australian Medicare Local Alliance. The national network of 61 Medicare Locals has been established to improve the coordination and integration of primary health care in local communities, address service gaps and make it easier for patients to navigate their local health care system. Medicare Locals are primary health care organisations that are working with local primary health care providers, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, Local Hospital Networks and communities to ensure that patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time.

Northern Territory health services

Improving health outcomes is a major component of the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory initiative with $713.5 million to be provided over 10 years to continue to support primary health care through some 80 clinics across the Northern Territory, as well as short-term placements of health professionals, hearing and dental health services for children, child abuse trauma counselling support, additional alcohol and drug workers.

Since 2009–10 the Expanding Health Service Delivery Initiative in the Northern Territory has been providing additional health and care services across 14 Health Service Delivery Areas in remote locations. Through this initiative, up to 145,000 additional medical, nursing and allied health service events have been delivered annually by the primary health care service positions. Continuous Quality Improvement positions provide leadership and skills across the 14 Health Service Delivery Areas to improve the quality of primary health care services.

The Remote Area Health Corps successfully placed 598 health professionals from across Australia to work on short-term placements in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory in 2011–12. A total of 546 deployments were made: 115 general practitioners, 264 registered nurses, 30 allied health professionals and 137 dental staff.

Since 2007, the following services have been provided to Indigenous children: 17,169 dental services delivered to 9,281 children, 9,238 audiology checks delivered to 5,739 children and 3,789 ear, nose and throat services delivered to 2,643 children. In 2011–12, 3,842 dental services were delivered to 2,810 children and 1,386 audiology checks were delivered to 1228 children.

These services have led to improvements in oral and hearing health. For children who had more than one course of dental care, the overall prevalence for children with at least one oral health problem fell by 12 per cent. Among children who had two or more audiology checks, the prevalence of hearing loss fell by 10 per cent.

The Government will continue oral and hearing health funding through the Stronger Futures package. These funds aim to build integrated programs with a focus on prevention. Fluoride varnish and fissure sealants will be part of the oral health program, and an education program for families about how to prevent and manage ear disease will be a feature of the hearing health program.

The Mobile Outreach Service Plus provides counselling and support for trauma related to any form of child abuse including sexual assault for Aboriginal children and their families and communities in remote Northern Territory. In 2011–12, 448 visits were made to 76 remote communities to deliver 1,181 case-related services and 1,731 non-case-related services such as community education and external professional development.

Ardyaloon Community Store worker, Cora Sampi. Photo: FaHCSIA.

The Satellite Renal Dialysis in Remote NT Communities Project established satellite renal dialysis facilities across remote Northern Territory communities. A mobile dialysis bus, launched in March 2011, undertook 15 trips to communities in the central Australian region, including some communities in northern South Australia, throughout 2011–12.

Food security

Ensuring people living in remote Indigenous communities have access to a secure and healthy food supply is a key priority for the Australian Government. The lack of competition in the marketplace and retail management expertise have often meant there has been little for people to buy in community stores, goods and food have often been of poor quality and lacking nutrition, and basic consumer protection has been inadequate. Increased costs due to the remote location of community stores and disruption to supply caused by weather have added to these problems.

The Australian Government's licensing scheme for community stores in the Northern Territory has made substantial progress to improving the food security for Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory. More will be done, however, under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package. Important changes include significantly expanding the area of the Northern Territory in which stores are covered by licensing arrangements. Under Stronger Futures, the store licensing scheme now includes all stores in the Northern Territory outside of major centres that are an important source of food, drink or grocery items for Aboriginal communities, not just stores located in or close to Aboriginal communities. The Government has committed $40.9 million over 10 years to support the operation of the community stores licensing scheme.

As at 1 December 2012, 92 community stores were licensed. An independent evaluation of community stores by the Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia in May 2011 found that licensing of community stores has resulted in marked improvements not just in food quality but in management practices, hygiene and the employment of Indigenous staff. Additional funding for stores infrastructure, such as point-of-sale systems, takeaway upgrades, shelving or new generators, is also available to support stores to meet licensing requirements.

Front Row: Harrison Smith, Branton 'BJ' Keyes, Sherri-Lynn Smith. Back Row: Amy Neal, Kerry-Anne Yeatman, Sue Edwards, Colin Fourmile and Lenore Moooman. All have now completed a Certificate III in Aged Care with the assistance of Sue Edwards the TAFE Coordinator. Photo: DoHA.

CASE STUDY

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rural and remote aged care training project—BJ's Story

Branton Keyes (or BJ as he is known) is a 23 year old Aboriginal man from Yarrabah, Far North Queensland. Two years ago BJ wasn't working and wasn't sure what he wanted to do with his life. His cousins were working at the Yarrabah Aged Person's Hostel, so he started doing some volunteer work there, and also attended some of the in-service training available.

BJ found he really liked working with the older people. When he was offered an Aged Care worker position through the National Jobs Creation Program in March 2011, he accepted and became a willing and enthusiastic participant.

When BJ first started working at the Aged Person's Hostel, he wasn't thinking of a career—he simply liked looking after the older people. However, as a result of his passion the Tropical North Queensland Institute of TAFE offered him training under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Rural and Remote Aged Care Training Project (funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing).

The training is culturally appropriate, accredited and targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander aged care workers in eligible communities in rural and remote regions of Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia.

As a result of the training project BJ realised that he wanted to 'get qualified' as he recognised this would give him a pathway towards developing a career in aged care.

BJ enrolled in the Certificate III in Aged Care as well as the Medication Skill Set course. He was a keen and committed student, and worked hard to gain the skills and knowledge he needed to become a qualified Aged Care Worker.

BJ found the training very interesting. He is now enjoying the responsibility of assisting older people with their medications. He says that achieving the Certificate III in Aged Care and completing the Medication Skill Set course has made him 'feel good, and very proud of myself'.

BJ's family are also very proud of his achievements. He is now in a better position to support his three year old daughter, Ruchantai. BJ plans to continue his training and is now in the process of completing the Certificate III in Home and Community Care.

Eighteen community store managers and staff have now completed a Certificate IV in Retail Management, and other selected staff and board members are scheduled to receive similar training. Funding has also been provided to deliver governance mentoring and support to build the capacity of store boards.

More broadly across Australia, regulation of community stores and other issues related to community food security are largely the responsibility of State governments. The Australian Government works with State jurisdictions to help community-owned stores operate more sustainably and provide a reasonable range of fresh and healthy food. To support this, the Commonwealth Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations provides assistance to stores to deal with short-term financial and management problems. In addition, Outback Stores Pty Ltd, a wholly-owned Commonwealth company, is available to assist in the management of remote stores. In the 2012 calendar year, Outback Stores provided management services to 28 stores in total—21 stores in the Northern Territory, two key remote stores in South Australia and five stores in Western Australia.

The Australian Government continues to work with the state and territory governments through the National Strategy for Food Security in Remote Indigenous Communities to improve the affordability, accessibility and demand for healthy food.

Oral health

In August 2012, the Government announced funding of $4.1 billion over six years to address increasingly poor oral health among Australians—in particular, among low and middle income families and Australians living in rural and remote areas. This package builds on $515.3 million in dental measures announced in the 2012–13 Budget which included funding to alleviate pressure on public dental waiting lists, and a range of workforce measures.

The Government is implementing a pilot program to deliver dental treatment and preventative services to Indigenous people in rural and regional areas to address the high incidence of untreated tooth decay and gum disease experienced by Indigenous people. Seventeen priority sites for dental care that can be provided by mobile dental infrastructure were funded on 30 June 2012. These included 10 projects (two in New South Wales, three in Queensland, three in the Northern Territory and two in South Australia) through agreements with the relevant governments under the National Partnership Agreement on Health Infrastructure, and a further seven projects (two in South Australia, three in Western Australia and two in Queensland) through agreements with Aboriginal Medical Services.

The Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement includes the delivery of an integrated oral health program for Indigenous children across the Northern Territory with a focus on remote areas. The oral health element includes an increased focus on prevention to reduce the high burden of dental disease.

Eye and ear health

In 2009, the Australian Government committed funding of $58.3 million over four years to expand the provision of eye and ear health services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to reduce avoidable vision and hearing loss and help meet the Closing the Gap targets for education and employment.

As a result, there has been a significant expansion of trachoma-control activities in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia—the three jurisdictions where this disease is endemic. Indigenous children aged five to nine in 150 communities across 16 rural and remote regions have been screened and, if necessary, treated. Analysis of data shows a decline in trachoma in Western Australia and the Northern Territory as a result of the increased screening and treatment activity. In addition, a mapping exercise was undertaken in Queensland in 2012 to identify the prevalence of trachoma in that state. Although trachoma was not determined to be a public health issue in Queensland, monitoring will be ongoing. A similar mapping exercise will be undertaken in New South Wales in mid-2013.

Key achievements in eye and ear health to date include:

- A total of 260 procedures were completed during eye surgery 'blitzes' in Alice Springs, Derby, Bourke, Kununurra and Karratha.
- The purchase of more than 820 pieces of ear health testing and treatment equipment for distribution to 164 community-controlled health services nationally.
- Training of 200 Aboriginal Health Workers in the use of ear equipment.

- The National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation developing and implementing an accredited training program for Aboriginal health workers in ear and hearing health.
- Additional ear, nose and throat outreach services and surgery.
- Clinical leadership positions to support primary healthcare services to prevent, detect, treat and manage ear disease.
- Updating and promoting the Recommendations for Clinical Care Guidelines on the Management of Otitis Media in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Populations.

Acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease

The Australian Government is supporting efforts to control acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease through the Rheumatic Fever Strategy which is a significant issue for Indigenous people living in remote areas. The Australian Government continues to collaborate with the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australian governments to expand register and control programs and improve detection, monitoring and management of acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease. RHD Australia, a national coordination unit at the Menzies School of Health Research, is establishing a data collection system and continues to provide support to State-based register and control programs and best practice advice and national education and training materials to all jurisdictions.

Substance misuse

The continuation and expansion of Australian Government-funded rehabilitation and treatment services has increased access to substance-misuse services for Indigenous people in all states and territories. These services include residential rehabilitation, non-resident transitional aftercare and wellbeing centres. More than 30 services have been expanded or enhanced since the commencement of the Indigenous Drug and Alcohol Services measure in 2007.

In the Northern Territory, aftercare services are provided in the Katherine, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, Nhulunbuy and Darwin regions. In Queensland, four wellbeing centres are fully operational in Cape York (Aurukun, Coen, Mossman Gorge and Hope Vale) and the wellbeing centres in Mornington Island and Doomadgee are providing interim services in the Gulf of Carpentaria. A new substance misuse facility at Normanton, including residential rehabilitation, is expected to be constructed in late 2013.

The Government's Petrol Sniffing Strategy is seeking to reduce the harm from petrol sniffing across wide areas of remote Australia in the Northern Territory, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia. Low aromatic fuel has been rolled out in 127 sites in regional and remote Australia. The rollout has been supported by a range of communication activities, including the targeted sponsorship of local events, community information sessions, local print and radio advertising and newspaper editorials which aim to reinforce to residents and stakeholders that low aromatic fuel has helped to reduce petrol sniffing in communities.

In 2012, the Government established new arrangements for the production and storage of low aromatic fuel to facilitate expanding the rollout in northern Australia during 2013–14. Under the new arrangements BP Australia will continue to supply low aromatic fuel across the southern and central regions of Australia with Shell Australia expected to commence as a new supplier of low aromatic fuel for the northern Australian regions from late 2013.

Other aspects of the Petrol Sniffing Strategy are reducing the trafficking of petrol, illicit substances and alcohol, and providing youth services, activities and infrastructure, including diversionary programs to provide pathways back to school, training and employment.

Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders

The Government has invested almost $5 million to better address the impacts and further understand Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and increase public awareness of the risk of consuming alcohol during pregnancy and while breastfeeding including:

- The Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Program in the Barkly, Darwin, Palmerston, Tiwi Islands, Victoria Daly and Belyuen regions.
- Developing a diagnostic tool, ready for trial this year.
- Developing awareness and education material specific to Indigenous communities to improve understanding of the risks of consuming alcohol during pregnancy.

CASE STUDY

Care Coordination and Supplementary Services Program

Ed (not his real name), lives in Sydney, NSW and has type one diabetes and paraplegia. His lack of mobility prevented him from accessing the care he needed, which left him feeling isolated and depressed.

Ed was in need of an electric wheelchair in order to attend appointments with his GP for regular dressing changes, to do his shopping, and to socialise with his family and friends. Through the funding provided under the Care Coordination and Supplementary Services Program, one of Ed's carers arranged physiotherapy and occupational therapy assessments to determine the most appropriate wheelchair to meet his needs.

Since regaining his independence through the provision of an electric wheelchair, Ed has the mobility to do all the things he needs to do. He is able to independently attend appointments and says his feelings of isolation and anxiety have been reduced. More importantly for Ed, he now has the means to socialise and spend more time with his friends and family which is making him feel great.

The Care Coordination and Supplementary Services Program provides assistance to Indigenous patients at risk of experiencing otherwise avoidable hospital admissions because of barriers to accessing health services. The program is part of the Australian Government's Indigenous Chronic Disease Package, which aims to reduce chronic disease factors, encourage earlier detection and better manage chronic disease in primary care services.

- promoting guidelines to health professionals and consumers around reducing the health risks of drinking alcohol, including information that it is not safe to consume alcohol when pregnant
- supporting the peak body representing individuals and families affected by Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders and related disorders
- funding research and community-led projects to reduce consumption of alcohol during pregnancy, which have shown positive results.

On 29 November 2012, the House of Representatives Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee tabled its report into Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders. Australian Government agencies will work together to coordinate the Government's response to the report.

In addition, the Government has invested $1.9 million from 2009–10 to 2012–13 for the study of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders being undertaken by the George Institute of Global Health in the Fitzroy Valley community, also known as the Marulu Liliwan Project. The findings of the study are expected to be released mid-2013 and will help to inform how the sufferers of Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders can be supported and prevent further children being affected in the future.

The Government has also committed $1 billion to support the first stage of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. People with significant and permanent disabilities who have care and support needs arising from their disabilities will be eligible for support under the scheme. It is proposed that support provided under the National Disability Insurance Scheme will be based on a functional assessment of how severely a person's disability affects their ability to do normal day-to-day activities. This means that people with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders who have significantly reduced functional capacity will be eligible for care and support based on their reasonable and necessary needs.

Elsie Barry participates participates in netball, one of the programs run by the Cathy Freeman Foundation on Palm Island. Photo: Ross Bird.

CASE STUDY

Cathy Freeman Foundation Activities Program

Supported by the Australian Government—receiving $128,000 funding under the Indigenous Sport and Active Recreation program in 2011–12.

The young people on Queensland's Palm Island have the opportunity of a brighter future thanks to five programs run by the Cathy Freeman Foundation encouraging them to go to school and to choose a healthy, fit lifestyle.

While school attendance and academic achievement is the key objective of all five programs, the young participants are enjoying the sporting and recreational activities that are the program's hook to get them to school—netball, rugby, football, boxing and martial arts.

As well as the enhanced opportunities that an education affords, the students are benefiting from the program's other objectives of promoting sport participation, social behaviour and a healthy lifestyle.

Since the Cathy Freeman Foundation Activities Program started in July 2009, it has attracted more than 500 students from the two Palm Island schools. Numbers of those taking part doubled in 2012 over 2011. Students must attend school that day to qualify—so the Activities Program, along with the other Cathy Freeman Foundation programs, is successfully tackling truancy. One program requiring 90 per cent attendance at school has contributed to a 61 per cent increase in the numbers from 2011 to 2012.

As a nation, all are inspired by Cathy Freeman, who regularly visits the island. Through the activities, the young people also meet other role models and the professional sporting heroes who deliver some of the clinics.

The Cathy Freeman Foundation is also creating jobs, with a policy of employing locals. The number of jobs is growing along with the program. Two more staff were employed in 2011, when the number of sporting and recreational activities tripled because of the program's success.

The enthusiasm of the participants has spread beyond those kicking the balls or practising their uppercuts. The program is actively supported by key community organisations including the Palm Island Aboriginal Shire Council, Police Citizens Youth Club, Palm Island Ambulance Service and the Australian Red Cross, as well as principals, teaching and administrative staff at the schools.

By embracing the program, the broader Palm Island community is recognising the benefits for the up and coming generation—and for the island as a whole.

Indigenous sexual health

Bacterial sexually transmissible infections continue to be reported at much higher rates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people compared with non-Indigenous people.

Australia's response to improving the sexual health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is guided by the Third National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Blood Borne Viruses and Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy. The key goals of the strategy are to reduce the transmission of, and morbidity and mortality caused by, blood borne viruses and sexually transmissible infections and to minimise the personal and social impact of these infections in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Priorities include increasing the level of systematic testing and treatment of sexually active 15 to 30-year-olds, improving young people's knowledge of sexually transmissible infections and blood-borne viruses, and increasing the number of people receiving treatment.

The Government continues to work in partnership with other jurisdictions and community-based organisations to progress these goals and improve the health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Mental health

The Australian Government has made addressing mental health issues a key priority and has outlined a vision for reforming the mental health system. Investment will total $2.2 billion over five years from 2011–12, including $1.5 billion in new initiatives. The reforms are focused on improving the lives of thousands of Australians, including Indigenous people, affected by mental illness.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will benefit from the Government's investments in mental health. Out of $205.9 million in funding over five years for the Access to Allied Psychological Services Program, $36.5 million has been earmarked to increase Indigenous people's access to these services. Around 18,000 additional Indigenous people are expected to benefit over five years.

Sixty-one Medicare Locals have been funded to enhance and/or establish mental health and suicide prevention services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Delivery of cultural competency training workshops commenced in October 2012 to ensure that services are delivered in a culturally safe manner and operational guidelines have been provided to Medicare Locals to inform service design and delivery.

A total of $32 million has been provided to establish the National Mental Health Commission. The Commission developed Australia's first National Report Card on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention, released on 27 November 2012. The report highlights Indigenous mental health and wellbeing as a priority for all levels of government.

An investment of $269.3 million was made to expand the Targeted Community Care (Mental Health) Program. The expansion is progressing well and is on track for all services to be rolled out by June 2015.

Through the Targeted Community Care Program, the Government funds a number of community mental health services that contribute to the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous people. Nationally, in 2011–12, 8 per cent (or 9921) of Targeted Community Care participants identified as being Indigenous. Under the Targeted Community Care Program, two new Personal Helpers and Mentors services and two new Family Mental Health Support Services in the Northern Territory will be rolled out from 2012–2014 and implemented as part of the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package. New Family Mental Health Support Services are being established on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands and in the Lower Gulf Region of Queensland.

The Bringing Them Home and Link-Up services for the Stolen Generations initiative provides counselling, family tracing and reunion services to Indigenous communities, including the Stolen Generations, and consolidates services under a cohesive Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program in a flexible package of service delivery with national coordination and support.

Eight Link-Up services are operating nationally across jurisdictions (with the exception of the Australian Capital Territory and Tasmania) to provide a range of services to members of the Stolen Generations and their families, including researching family and personal records, providing emotional support when accessing family and personal records, finding family members, and providing support and counselling before, during and after family reunions. In June 2012, the first Social and Emotional Wellbeing Program national conference was held in Adelaide with around 250 participants including Link-Up services, counsellors and workplace support workers. The aim of the conference was to encourage good practice and develop better linkages across the program.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation, established with Australian Government support of $26.6 million in 2009, plays a major role in helping to heal the emotional trauma experienced by Indigenous Australians caused by past policies. The Healing Foundation aims to build the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by funding culturally strong community healing programs. It also funds education and training programs to build the leadership and capacity of communities and workers to deal with trauma and its intergenerational impacts, in addition to funding research and evaluation projects to build the knowledge base on culturally appropriate healing models.

Aged care

The Quality Framework for aged care services funded under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program was finalised in July 2011.

The aim of the framework is to improve the quality of care provided by services funded under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care program by setting culturally appropriate standards for care delivery, information, governance, management and accountability.

There are currently 675 places in the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care program. The Living Longer Living Better aged care reform package provides $43.1 million to expand this program by an additional 200 aged care places to allow more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with complex high care needs to stay close to their home and country in culturally appropriate care

A quality review team was established in February 2012 and is responsible for the ongoing assessment and monitoring of services' performance against the framework. The quality review team has completed the first round of reviews and has commenced the second round of assessment and monitoring reviews.

The Remote and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Service Development Assistance Panel, established in October 2010, delivers professional support to Indigenous aged-care providers in remote and very remote areas. In 2011–12, 15 assignments were allocated to panel members to assist aged-care service providers deliver services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In 2011–12, 12 projects were funded to provide emergency assistance to residential aged-care services to improve the quality of care and to ensure the continuity of care provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Sport and recreation

The Indigenous Sport and Active Recreation Program funds sport and physical recreation activities, recognising their contribution to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people. It covers a wide range of programs, services and initiatives. Projects that increase the active participation of able and disabled Indigenous people in sport and active recreation are funded through an annual funding round.

Subsidies are also provided for the employment of Indigenous people in the sports and recreation sector. In 2011–12 multi-year funding agreements were offered to organisations to provide continuity of funding to maintain program momentum and to continue to employ staff on a long-term basis.

The Indigenous Sport and Active Recreation Program also provides funding for a network of Indigenous Sport Development Officers, administered by the Office for Sport, which aims to create sustainable sporting capacity with Indigenous communities.

A gym in Pascoe Vale, Victoria.
Photo: FaHCSIA

Additionally, the Australian Sports Commission receives funding for the Elite Indigenous Travel and Accommodation Assistance Program which assists Indigenous sportspeople participating in official national championships and international sporting competitions, including coaches, trainers and officials. This program helped 733 individualsattend recognised national and international competitions in 2011-12.

Culture and health

The Australian Government recognises that strong cultural identity is fundamental to Indigenous health and social and emotional wellbeing. In 2011-12, the Government provided around $49.5 million to support Indigenous culture, languages, visual arts and repatriation activities, including support for around 600 jobs in the Indigenous arts and cultural sectors. Connections to culture, including through language and the arts, can have significant healing and rehabilitative effects and contribute to improved health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Most Indigenous art centres are community hubs that support better health outcomes through increased income, employment, engagement, strong culture, and through practical initiatives such as nutrition education, bush-tucker gardens and providing meals.

Remote airstrips

The Australian Government's Regional Aviation Access Program is providing vital aerodrome safety upgrades and essential air services for remote and isolated communities, including remote Indigenous communities. This program provides aerodrome technical services and related training to Indigenous communities responsible for the operation of 59 aerodromes in northern Australia, capital funding for airstrip safety and access upgrades as well as a subsidy for regular air services to 83 Indigenous communities or airstrips servicing these communities.

During 2011–12, funding was approved for 53 safety and access projects and 59 aerodrome safety inspections at remote community aerodromes across Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia, New South Wales and Tasmania. This program has enabled safer and more reliable air access for passengers and medical evacuations as well as the delivery of essential goods and services such as food and medical supplies.

Road safety

Indigenous people have three times the rate of road death compared with non-Indigenous road users. A complex range of causes underlie this statistic. Indigenous people are less likely to wear seatbelts and more likely to drive on lower-standard remote roads in vehicles with lower safety standards. Alcohol is also often a factor in crashes. Many Indigenous people have poor access to licensing services and other support systems.

The National Road Safety Strategy 2011–2020, released in May 2011 by the then Australian Transport Council, sets out a 10-year plan to reduce the numbers of deaths and serious injuries on Australian roads by at least 30 per cent, focusing on four key areas: Safe Roads, Safe Speeds, Safe Vehicles and Safe People. The strategy addresses the special needs of Indigenous communities, including implementing programs to increase opportunities for disadvantaged learner drivers to practise their driving. It also highlights the need for locally relevant and culturally appropriate Indigenous community education campaigns promoting road-safety messages. The strategy aims to make substantial improvements by 2020 in Indigenous access to graduated licensing and to vehicles with higher safety ratings.

Healthy homes

Ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can live in safe, properly constructed and well maintained homes is fundamental to Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage. Decent housing is critical for protecting children, improving health, education and employment and rebuilding positive community norms.

As this building block is fundamental to efforts in Closing the Gap, the Australian Government has made the delivery of Indigenous housing reforms a national priority, so that Indigenous people can access the same housing options and opportunities as other Australians, wherever they live.

Closing the Gap is improving housing by:

- building new houses, especially in remote communities where overcrowding has been worst
- improving the condition of many existing houses
- making sure new houses are designed and built for the conditions where they are located
- ensuring arrangements are in place so that homes can be properly maintained, now and into the future. This includes secure land tenure arrangements to support government investment, ongoing repairs and maintenance and tenancy management and support.

At the centre of these reforms are the Indigenous people and organisations helping to build, manage and maintain healthy home environments for current and future generations.

Progress against the plan

The Australian Government's investments and reforms over the past five years have seen, for the first time, an effective and coordinated effort to improve housing for Indigenous people. Work is under way to address decades of underinvestment in Indigenous housing, particularly in remote communities where few houses were built.

In addition, remote communities continue to face problems with a lack of municipal and essential services, and infrastructure.

A healthy home provides the basis for a healthy life. The Government has invested in housing under a number of Indigenous-specific and mainstream initiatives across all states and territories. These investments are targeted to increase the volume and quality of housing stock and infrastructure, reform property management, expand and improve access to temporary accommodation services, and provide help for tenants and aspiring home owners right across Australia.

Urban and regional support

In urban and regional areas, Indigenous people are among the many Australians benefiting from broader investments under the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the Social Housing initiative. Through the National Affordable Housing Specific Purpose Payment, the Australian Government provides $1.2 billion to the states and territories annually for housing programs to address supply and affordability issues for all Australians, with a focus on disadvantaged citizens.

Under the Social Housing Initiative, $5.6 billion was provided from 2008–09 to 2011–12 to increase the supply of social housing for vulnerable

CASE STUDY

A home away from home in South Hedland

Opened in May 2012, the South Hedland Hostel in Western Australia is a state of the art, purpose built hostel which provides 40 beds to help Indigenous Australians to access medical services, with a priority for renal outpatients.

South Hedland's first resident was Mr Watson from Jigalong Community near Newman in Western Australia. He had previously been a resident in other AHL hostels, including Derbal Bidjar and Allawah Grove Hostels in Perth. At that time, he needed to make the long journey to Perth in order to access medical treatment at the Royal Perth Hospital. Now, he can stay at the South Hedland Hostel while receiving treatment at the local hospital.

Mr Watson explained that he is 'so happy to be the hostel's first resident and to be so close to his Homelands and Country', as this is important. He believes that other residents who come from nearby communities will benefit greatly from the new hostel location and facilities.

Ms Katrina Khan was the first pregnant resident at South Hedland Hostel. The staff and Mr Watson welcomed her into the hostel as an expectant mother. All were delighted when she gave birth to a healthy baby boy at Hedland Health Campus. Katrina was very appreciative of the extra attention and helpful assistance given by hostel staff. Katrina explained that she was 'very happy that AHLprovided accommodation in South Hedland because it is within walking distance to the local hospital and the hostel facilities are great'.

Both Mr Watson and Katrina were impressed with the new hostel facilities, rooms, buildings and landscaped gardens, and the fact that they feel that the hostel is a safe and secure environment for all residents. AHL has been supported in the development of this $11 million facility by the Western Australian Government through the contribution of land, and capital funding from the Australian Government.

The South Hedland Hostel.
Photo: Aboriginal Hostels Limited.

The local community has shown keen interest in supporting the hostel. AHL is working to form partnerships with Hedland Health Campus, Wirraka Maya Health Service and the WA Country Health Service. In developing these partnerships, AHL has been able to better understand the high need for supported accommodation for people with medical problems who have to travel to Port Hedland to access appointments and treatment.

The local hospital is conveniently located directly across the road from the hostel and both staff and residents can feel confident in obtaining immediate medical attention if required. It is also within walking distance to a number of community facilities including the Aboriginal Medical Services, Aboriginal Language Centre, the local swimming pool and library. Hostel staff assist residents to access medical services and renal dialysis routines.

Since opening, the hostel has welcomed several long-term dialysis patients who formerly had to travel to Perth to access accommodation and services closer to home.

AHL also provides supported accommodation to renal patients on short term or periodic renal programs through its network of multipurpose hostels.

For further details on other AHL hostels, please visit www.ahl.gov.au

Australians. This is the single largest investment in social housing ever undertaken by an Australian Government. With the assistance of the not-for-profit sector, the Social Housing Initiative will see around 19,700 new public and community housing dwellings built. All new housing dwellings have commenced construction, including over 19,400 that have been completed. As at 31 August 2012, of the almost 17,000 homes for which tenant details had been reported, 2200 or 13 per cent identified as homes where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live.

Around 80,000 homes have benefited from repairs and maintenance works, including approximately 12,000 social housing dwellings that were vacant or would have become uninhabitable without this work.

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and related arrangements, more than $400 million has also been provided to support Indigenous Community Housing and related organisations in urban and regional areas to transition to State community housing frameworks in order to provide better outcomes for tenants. As of 30 November 2012, 106 (or 33 per cent of) Indigenous Community Housing Organisations with around 2500 houses have transitioned to the new arrangements and can now access more than $300 million in funding to upgrade properties. State governments are supporting these organisations to meet new requirements and progressively refurbishing houses to public housing standards.

Remote communities

In remote areas, more direct action is needed to address issues such as poor construction and a lack of maintenance of both houses and essential services.

The Australian Government invested more than $43 million in the 2012–13 Budget to support the delivery of municipal and essential services to about 340 remote Indigenous communities in Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria.

In addition, through Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Government has committed $206 million over 10 years for municipal and essential services for homelands and outstations. The Northern Territory Government will provide $15 million towards these services in 2012–13.

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, the Australian, State and the Northern Territory governments have commenced work towards improved and revised arrangements for the funding and delivery of municipal and essential services in remote Indigenous communities.

The Australian Government is also supporting the work between Indigenous Land Councils and local and state and territory governments to reform land tenure and administration on land owned by Aboriginal land trusts or held in trust by State governments. These reforms help to break down barriers to individuals and governments wanting to secure an interest in land for purposes such as accessing private sector finance, home ownership, business development and service delivery including social housing.

A key part of the land tenure and administration reforms includes defining responsibilities for ongoing management and maintenance of land and assets, so that the houses are kept in good condition, rents are fair, and people understand their rights and responsibilities as tenants.

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing

In November 2008, governments agreed to work together to tackle the very poor housing conditions in many remote areas, signing up to the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing. The unprecedented investment by the Australian Government of $5.5 billion over 10 years (2009–18) is provided to the States and the Northern Territory to deliver:

- up to 4200 new houses to help reduce severe overcrowding and risk of homelessness
- more than 4876 refurbishments or rebuilds to existing houses that are in disrepair or uninhabitable.

These houses will be made available to more than 9000 Indigenous families.

To make sure the Australian Government's housing investment provides ongoing benefits to Indigenous people, the program provides training and employment opportunities for local Indigenous people and puts in place robust and standardised property and tenancy management arrangements.

As is required under the Closing the Gap framework, the agreement includes strict accountability for outcomes. When construction first started, progress was slow, with some jurisdictions failing to reach their targets. The National Partnership Agreement was renegotiated in late 2009, with

financial incentives built in to help drive performance.

Houses are being delivered sooner than anticipated with most jurisdictions ahead of schedule and the national target is on track to meet the ambitious targets set in 2008. Since this time, as at 31 December 2012, remote communities have received 1550 new houses and 5156 refurbishments. This means the Australian Government has exceeded the national target of 4876 refurbished homes by 2014 nearly two years ahead of schedule. This is the result of some jurisdictions delivering more refurbishments than the original targets and others delivering the works at a quicker pace against the original targets.

Indigenous employment in housing construction and housing related jobs is also making progress. State and territory governments must ensure at least 20 per cent of the housing construction workforce is made up of local Indigenous people, and all states and territories report they have either met or exceeded the 20 per cent target. In 2011–12, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland all reported the Indigenous employment rate under the National Partnership Agreement was more than 30 per cent. Jurisdictions are also reporting employment on housing-related property and tenancy management services. In the Northern Territory, for example, 62 per cent of positions in Indigenous property service delivery were held by Indigenous people.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing is also expanding support accommodation in regional and remote locations through the Employment Related Accommodation program, which helps Indigenous people from remote areas to access services, training, education and employment. In New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland and Western Australia, the Employment Related Accommodation program has delivered 84 houses and four hostels.

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing is having a positive impact on reducing overcrowding in remote Indigenous communities. From 2006–2011 overcrowding rates have decreased nationally as well as in the Northern Territory. This decrease has been achieved during a time of significant growth in the Indigenous population of more than 20 per cent.

Property and tenancy management

Through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, standardised property and tenancy arrangements are being implemented to enable tenancy agreements and rent collection, housing management and repairs and maintenance for remote Indigenous housing to be consistent with public housing arrangements. These are helping to maintain and improve the quality of remote Indigenous houses and ensuring the houses last longer.

The property and tenancy management changes are also providing a safer and more secure living environment for Indigenous families and individuals.

Support is being provided to assist Indigenous people to adjust to the property and tenancy management changes. Housing officers are available in many communities to assist people by providing local and accessible information, advice and support.

Improvements to the management of property and tenant information is also making it easier to keep tenant information up to date and is helping to speed up repairs and maintenance on tenants' homes.

Northern Territory housing

The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing is building new houses at a scale and pace almost five times greater than any previous housing program. In the Northern Territory, 356 new houses were built in 2011–12, compared to an annual average of around 75 new houses under previous programs.

As at 31 December 2012, the housing program has built 769 new houses and refurbished or rebuilt 2612 existing houses across 91 communities, town camps and community Living Areas, and the program is on track to deliver its 30 June 2013 target of 934 new houses and 2915 refurbishments and rebuilds.

Houses are repaired and maintained more regularly and will last longer and are supported through better tenancy management.

Refurbishments are prioritised on fixing those parts of the house that have the most impact on people's wellbeing and safety—such as making sure that bathrooms, toilets and kitchens are working properly.

As part of Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, an additional $230.4 million over six years will be provided to continue to improve remote housing. Much of this effort will be directed to smaller communities where housing need remains high to help ensure that all existing houses are made safe, have an increased life-span and provide improved amenities for residents.

In addition, a further $53.1 million over four years is being provided under Stronger Futures for asbestos removal from remote public housing, houses scheduled for demolition under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing and other community buildings.

With Australian Government support, the Northern Territory Government is implementing improved tenancy support arrangements, which include participation in the Living Skills program, quarterly visits to households and on-site presence in communities so that tenants can receive advice face to face about repairs and maintenance requirements and changes to their circumstances.

The skills and experience acquired by Indigenous people as part of the construction workforce will be transferable into potential ongoing local business opportunities such as property maintenance and management. In order to provide skills training to local people, minimum Indigenous employment requirements were included in all service delivery contracts between the Northern Territory Government and the shires. As a result, 62 per cent of the labour employed in property management is provided by local Indigenous residents (compared with a minimum requirement of 40 per cent), and local people provide 80 per cent of the labour in tenancy management (compared with a minimum requirement of 50 per cent).

Alice Springs Transformation Plan

In Alice Springs, the Australian and Northern Territory Governments have embarked on a major program to upgrade housing, infrastructure and social services for residents of town camps and the many visitors to the town from remote areas. Under Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, $13.7 million over four years has been committed to continue a number of important projects associated with the Alice Springs Transformation Plan. Over $150 million has been invested since 2009, including $34 million to strengthen social services.

The plan is integrating the town camps into the wider Alice Springs town, with improved roads and infrastructure, weekly garbage collections, expanded bus services and dog control services. Town camp streets are being named and houses numbered, enabling a regular postal service and better access for emergency services. Postal services are being progressively rolled out across the town camps with services running at seven camps and the remaining camps to receive services in 2013.

More than 500 additional beds have been provided through the construction of 86 new houses and the construction and upgrading of four short-term accommodation facilities. A total of 135 housing rebuilds and refurbishments have been completed, with a further 61 houses upgraded by Tangentyere Council. The housing and other accommodation is being managed on the same principles as all Closing the Gap housing programs where people are being assisted to be good tenants and more vulnerable people are being helped to move into public housing in the future to break the cycle of homelessness.

Improved social support services are targeting a number of issues: alcohol rehabilitation, help for families, early learning and schooling, activities for young people and tenancy support for families at risk of eviction.

Land tenure reform

Secure tenure underpins housing investment and ensures appropriate use and managements of assets into the future by creating clear responsibility and accountability for the standard and maintenance of assets. Land tenure reforms are progressively being implemented across all jurisdictions to facilitate economic development opportunities and begin the process for people to own their own home. Good progress is being made in all States and the Northern Territory in securing long term leasing to support the Government's National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing investment.

The Government is committed to negotiating voluntary leases over public housing and government assets. This respects the rights of Traditional Owners and preserves underlying communal title.

Forty-four communities in the Northern Territory, including 40 of the 64 communities formerly under a five-year lease, have agreed to voluntary long-term leasing over social housing. Where there are ongoing lease negotiations, interim arrangements have been agreed to ensure residents continue to receive property and tenancy management services with minimal disruptions.

(Left to Right): Christine Lilly, Keang Heng, Dominic Dangawarra, Trina Galkulukpuy, Rachel Gayul participating in a safety talk as part of New Future Alliance's Milingimbi School Safety Awareness program. Photo: Courtesy of New Future Alliance.

CASE STUDY

Safe as Houses

New Future Alliance is one of two construction consortia delivering housing in the Northern Territory under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing.

As well as providing much needed housing and housing repairs in remote communities, the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing helps create employment and training opportunities. Under the agreement at least 20 per cent of the construction workforce must be made up of Indigenous people, although the national average has been much higher; around 30 per cent since construction started in 2009.

In remote locations unfamiliar with large-scale capital works there are safety risks to the broader community, due to the challenges of site security and increased vehicle movements. However, warning people about dangerous areas, and explaining safety regulations, risk assessment requirements and trade terminology can be tricky, as in many remote communities English is often a third, fourth or fifth language, and English literacy is generally low.

To break down these barriers, New Future Alliance set up an education program to make risk-assessment processes more user friendly and discuss word selection and meanings with employees. The education program extended to the broader community and included inviting children to take part in safety talks at school and become 'safety' teachers at home. The program also encouraged elders to deliver culturally–specific awareness programs to the non-Indigenous workforce to build better community relationships.

Using this innovative but common-sense approach, New Future Alliance achieved over 1.5 million man-hours of work without a single lost-time injury and no reported injuries to members of the communities. Work safety is a big issue in the construction industry, with an average of around 7 injuries for every million hours worked. In recognition of this exemplary safety record and highly effective education program, New Future Alliance received the 2012 National Safety Council of Australia award for 'Best Solution of an OHS Workplace Risk' for medium to large businesses.

In the three years since May 2009, New Future Alliance has built, rebuilt or refurbished more than 1,500 homes in 48 remote communities and is working to deliver another 209 new houses and 226 refurbishments across a further five communities. Each house means a family with a roof over their heads, a place to call home and a place for children to grow up safely.

Township leases are in place for six Northern Territory communities. Under this form of leasing, traditional owners, represented by land councils, can negotiate to enter a head lease with the Executive Director of Township Leasing who then sub-leases to other parties wanting to use the land. The Government is committed to negotiating township leases in the Northern Territory where traditional owners express an interest to do so. In 2011, the Government finalised a township lease over the communities of Milikapiti and Ranku on the Tiwi Islands.

Voluntary long-term leases are also agreed for 32 Commonwealth-owned and occupied assets in communities previously under a five-year lease. Work is progressing to secure arrangements for the 27 remaining assets. The Government is working closely with the Land Councils to finalise arrangements in the remaining communities.

The Government has provided $7 million in funding to the Northern Territory Government to conduct cadastral surveys of approximately 50 remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. Once these communities are surveyed, processes to obtain development approval will be considerably easier for all parties.

The Australian Government held five-year leases over 64 communities in the Northern Territory acquired under the Northern Territory *National Emergency Response Act 2007*. The five-year leases enabled the Government to provide prompt access for the delivery of services, repair of buildings and development of infrastructure in communities as part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response.

The Government paid rent for the five-year leases and is close to finalising settlement and final payment with the Land Councils. Traditional owners will be receiving significant funds with the payment for the five-year leases and this will provide opportunities for economic development through investment in projects for the long term benefit of communities.

Home ownership

The Australian Government is committed to maximising opportunities for Indigenous people to own their homes.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people share the dream of owning a home where they can create a secure and stable environment to raise and nurture their families. They face affordability and other barriers to home ownership such as low income and savings, inadequate credit history and limited experience with loan repayments. In remote areas there are additional barriers to home ownership including tenure complexities, high construction costs and limited housing markets. The 2011 Census data shows that compared to non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous people were twice as likely to be renting (61.8 per cent compared to 29.5 per cent) and just over half as likely to own or be purchasing their own homes (37.4 per cent compared to 69.6 per cent).

Indigenous Business Australia is a key partner in the Government's efforts to help Indigenous people become home owners. To help meet the demand for Indigenous Business Australia's Indigenous home loans, the Government merged its home ownership programs to form a single Indigenous Home Ownership program. These changes will help an additional 275 Indigenous families to purchase their own homes this financial year, and a total of up to 545 additional home loans will be provided over the next four years.

Priority of access will be given to applicants on Indigenous land. The Australian Government is encouraging state and territory governments to progress as a matter of priority the reforms needed to resolve land tenure and land administration barriers, as they are necessary prerequisites to home ownership on Indigenous land .

In 2011–12, 404 new loans were approved, assisting 1114 Indigenous people to enjoy the social and economic benefits of home ownership. At June 2012, the home loan portfolio stood at 3858 loans.

The Australian Government supports home ownership for Indigenous people through the significant funds it has allocated towards building financial literacy. The Financial Management Program aims to build financial resilience and wellbeing for vulnerable people and those most at risk of financial and social exclusion and disadvantage. It helps people across a range of income and financial literacy levels to overcome financial adversity, manage their money, participate in their communities and plan for the medium to long term. One of the financial education programs offered under the Financial Management Program is the Home Ownership on Indigenous Lands Structured Education Program. This is an education program designed by the Australian Government and Indigenous Business Australia specifically focused on home ownership for Indigenous people living on Indigenous land. In 2012, nine people were trained under the program.

New houses at Beagle Bay, Western Australia. Photo: FaHCSIA.

Indigenous Business Australia may refer home loan applicants to the Home Ownership on Indigenous Lands Structured Education Program as part of the loan application process. In such cases, people need to successfully complete the education program before they can be approved for an Indigenous Business Australia loan for a home on Indigenous land. Indigenous Business Australia may also assess a client as needing basic financial literacy skills and refer them to a Money Management Service, which provides practical support to help people increase their ability to effectively manage their money and to increase financial resilience. If clients require assistance with complex financial or legal issues, Money Management workers will facilitate access to financial counsellors and other relevant services as appropriate.

Other remote housing programs

Since 1997 the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program has improved living conditions and environmental health in remote communities across Australia. For each annual project the Australian Government provides up to $6 million and the significant resources of the Australian Army. The 2012 project has been delivered to the communities of Djarindjin, Lombadina, Ardyaloon and Beagle Bay on the Dampier Peninsula in Western Australia, providing housing and infrastructure upgrades as well as capacity building.

Works completed through this project include:

- a family and early learning centre
- a new four-bedroom house
- community basketball courts
- a rebuild of service provider accommodation
- surveying and marking of house boundaries
- minor road works
- a 13-lot subdivision in Djarindjin.

The new subdivision currently holds the family and early learning centre and the new house and will also allow for an additional 10 houses to be constructed for families in Dajarindjin. The new family and early learning centre will provide much needed childcare service and parenting support programs for local families. Extensive storm-water diversion works were also completed next to the new subdivision to prevent Djarindjin and Lombadina from damaging flooding in the wet season, which has been a major problem for these communities. In addition, 43 health professionals, including dentists, doctors, veterinarians, environmental health staff, a radiographer and a psychologist provided primary health treatment and training to the community. The dental team examined and treated over 120 adults and over 360 children during the project, the health team delivered over 40 health workshops and the veterinary team conducted over 530 examinations.

Relevant vocational training was offered during the project with great success, delivering practical training in short courses that were convenient and easy for residents to attend. The courses offered were:

- Small engine maintenance and repair
- Fire and Emergency Services Authority Volunteer Service
- Heavy rigid driving training
- Restricted Coxwain and Recreational Skippers ticket
- Music
- Welding
- St John's First Aid.

Christopher Williams and Hayley Besic received the 15,000th home loan approved by Indigenous Business Australia under the Home Ownership Program. Photo: IBA.

CASE STUDY

IBA's 15,000th Home Loan

Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) achieved a significant milestone in June 2012: it approved its 15,000th home loan.

The lucky recipients were Hayley Besic and Christopher Williams from the Northern Territory, who were thrilled to have secured a loan to buy a home for their family.

When they approached the major banks for a home loan, they were told they needed a $60,000 deposit. They knew they would never be able to save that amount.

'As a family of five with three young children, we are really happy to have been given the opportunity to buy our own home,' says Hayley.

Through IBA's Home Ownership Program they were able to buy a three-bedroom house in Mataranka, a small community about 420 kilometres south-east of Darwin.

The 2011 Australian Census shows that Indigenous home ownership participation rate rose from 35.9 per cent in 2006 to 37.4 per cent in 2011—but is still below the 69.6 per cent rate of other Australian households. IBA provides a range of housing loan products to address affordability and other barriers to home ownership faced by Indigenous Australians, such as low incomes and savings, credit impairment and limited experience with loan repayments.

Hayley and Christopher were particularly impressed with IBA's home lending process and sing the praises of the Home Ownership Program.

'We had a great experience dealing with IBA and the level of professional service has been helpful and really appreciated,' they say.

After years of renting and constantly having to move, Christopher feels he can finally build a decent future for his family. 'Now I come home to my own place,' he says.

As part of the Clean Energy Future package, the Government has maintained its commitment to remote renewable energy through the $40 million four-year Remote Indigenous Energy Program. The program will support remote Indigenous communities to make the adjustment to a clean energy future and will provide them with access to a reliable power supply. In early 2013, service providers will visit communities to start design and planning work for the installation of up to 50 renewable energy generation systems across Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Communities will also receive energy efficiency education and training in basic system maintenance. The program will also provide regular maintenance to more than 240 existing renewable energy systems in more than 200 communities.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited

Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) was established in 1973 as a national network of hostels providing safe, comfortable, culturally appropriate and affordable accommodation for Indigenous Australians who must live away from home to access services and economic opportunity.

As it approaches its 40th year milestone, Aboriginal Hostels Limited continues to assist individuals to improve their lives and change their futures, with an increased emphasis on supporting Indigenous Australians to achieve better economic and social outcomes for themselves and their families. Aboriginal Hostels Limited's key purpose is to improve Indigenous quality of life through the delivery of accommodation and wrap-around support services that give clients access to education, employment, health and other services. Some of Australia's finest Indigenous doctors, university graduates, tradesmen and women, dancers, artists and sports men and women have benefited at some stage or another on their life journey through the support received by staying at one of Aboriginal Hostels many hostels.

This Commonwealth-owned company provides short term accommodation for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people needing to live away from home to access economic opportunity or services including medical treatment (including renal dialysis), education, training and employment, and for those needing to be in town for other appointments or waiting for permanent housing. Longer term accommodation is also provided for residents completing their education, receiving treatment for a long-term medical condition and as an enabling service for transitioning out of homelessness into more permanent housing. Through its Community and Corporate Partnerships Program, AHL also supports facilities for vulnerable people attending substance abuse and rehabilitation programs.

At 30 June 2012, Aboriginal Hostels Limited directly operated and administered 68 hostels and houses, and provided additional grant funding for 46 community operated hostels, providing more than 500,000 person nights of accommodation to people living away from home. Aboriginal Hostels Limited also provides three meals a day to most of its customers in safe, secure accommodation where positive behaviour in a social and learning environment is encouraged. Hostels are able to provide access to interpreter services where necessary, including for residents who need information about their rights and responsibilities while staying in one of the hostels. Hostel staff work closely with community service providers at the local level to provide support for residents to make contact or engage with the services they need.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited has a diverse portfolio of accommodation facilities. While the more traditional hostels of around 30 temporary beds for people in transition makes up the core of facilities, Aboriginal Hostels Limited operates a range of models—from households little different from student shared housing, to the Apmere Mwerre Visitor Park which operates in a similar way to a caravan park, through to those providing more formal care and support like the new South Hedland Hostel which is dedicated to supporting residents needing access to renal dialysis appointments and treatments.

Key achievements of Aboriginal Hostels Limited in 2012 included the construction of the Kardu Darrikardu Numida facility in Wadeye NT, which is part of the Commonwealth's commitment to providing quality educational opportunities for Indigenous students. The Australian Government provided approximately $15 million dollars over the last three years for this new facility. It is the first large scale facility that Aboriginal Hostels Limited will operate located within a remote Indigenous community and the first for Aboriginal Hostels Limited to run as a large scale boarding facility. Enrolments for 2013 have commenced.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited oversaw the construction of the Indigenous Mothers Accommodation Facility adjacent to the Royal Darwin Hospital, and subsequently commenced operations in July 2012. The Australian Government provided over $4.4 million dollars for the construction of the 16 bed facility. The facility gives Indigenous mothers from remote communities access to antenatal and postnatal obstetric services at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

Economic participation

Economic participation provides a pathway for Indigenous people to enjoy the same opportunities as all other Australians. Economic independence and security are critical for individual and community wellbeing, with jobs and economic development delivering a wide range of benefits for the current and future generations. It integrates a wide range of initiatives across urban, regional and remote areas so that communities across Australia are part of the national approach .

Achieving real change in economic outcomes for Indigenous Australians requires all governments, the private sector and the broader community to work in partnership to improve access to economic opportunities for Indigenous Australians and provide the support required to ensure Indigenous Australians have the skills and ability to take up the opportunities available.

The Australian Government is investing in partnerships and programs to ensure that Indigenous Australians have the right skills and experience to participate in the workforce, employers are engaged and supported to build their Indigenous workforce and the right economic conditions are created to support the development and ongoing viability of Indigenous businesses.

The foundations for increased economic participation are being laid through improvements in early childhood education, schooling, skills and training and tertiary education. Supporting Indigenous people to continue in further education and providing pathways that support effective transition into the workplace or business, especially for Indigenous young people, is essential to addressing disadvantage and improving social and economic outcomes.

From Left to Right: Peta Dahlstrom, Anna Lazar, Tegan Kent and Jamie Louise Spratt are all successful students under the Indigenous Remote Service Delivery Traineeship Program which provides job opportunities and career pathways for Indigenous Australians in business and management. Photo: DoHA.

Progress against the Plan

The Government's plan for increasing Indigenous economic development is mapped out in the Indigenous Economic Development Strategy 2011-2018. Launched in October 2011, the Strategy outlines a long-term policy framework for ensuring that the Australian Government continues to create job opportunities, connect Indigenous Australians with jobs, strengthen links between education, training and jobs, and drive demand for Indigenous employment. It integrates a wide range of existing initiatives across urban, regional and remote areas so that communities across Australia are part of the national approach.

Examples of recent Australian Government initiatives that have been guided by the Strategy to date include:

- $1.5 billion Remote Jobs and Communities Program, which will commence on 1 July 2013, and provide a more integrated and flexible approach to employment and participation services for people living in remote areas of Australia and will help more people get into jobs and participate in their community
- Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Jobs Package, which was announced in November 2011 and includes:
  - 50 new ranger positions in the Northern Territory for the Working on Country program
  - 'Local Jobs for Local People' Indigenous traineeships
  - increased opportunities for young people in Territory Growth Towns who stay at school and finish Year 12
  - additional support to identify and develop business ideas
- The Indigenous Youth Careers Pathways Program, which commenced at the beginning of the 2012 school year, and which will deliver 6,400 school based traineeships to Indigenous students
- A $1.8 million funding over three years from 2012-13 for the Australian Public Service Employment and Capability Strategy for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Employees, which will provide employment pathways for Indigenous Australians into the Australian Public Service and help achieve the Government's commitment to 2.7 per cent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment by 2015.

Skills Development and Jobs

Building the skills, knowledge and capacity of Indigenous Australians to compete for jobs in the labour market, including overcoming individual barriers to employment, is a key element of the Government's strategy for closing the gap on employment outcomes. Assistance to build foundation and vocational skills, become job ready and embark on a career is delivered through a range of mainstream and Indigenous specific programs along with mentoring support to assist the transition into the workplace. Many of these programs work with employers to ensure that training is tailored to workplace needs, meaningful and sustainable employment opportunities are offered and that workplaces are supportive, inclusive and encourage diversity.

Job Services Australia

Job Services Australia is the Australian Government's national employment services system which works to the needs of the individual jobseekers. The Government launched Job Services Australia on 1 July 2009 with the aim of increasing employment participation, building skills in demand and helping individual jobseekers, particularly disadvantaged participants, find sustainable employment. Job Services Australia providers work with local communities to develop jobs and training opportunities.

Jobs Services Australia is the main provider of employment services for Indigenous jobseekers. In the 12 months to October 2012, 85,624 initial commencements in Job Services Australia were for Indigenous jobseekers. This brings the total number of initial commencements of Indigenous jobseekers since Job Services Australia began in July 2009 to 327,483 (16.1 per cent of all commencements).

Indigenous jobseekers on the Job Services Australia caseload face greater levels of labour market disadvantage than non-Indigenous Australians. As at 31 October 2012, of the 90,429 Indigenous jobseekers on the caseload, 77 per cent were in Streams 3 and 4 (the most disadvantaged streams in Job Services Australia) compared to 43 per cent for all other jobseekers.

To help more Indigenous jobseekers into work, Job Services Australia works collaboratively with the Community Development and Employment Program, the Indigenous Employment program, and other training and service organisations focused on helping Indigenous Australians. Job Services Australia will similarly work with the forthcoming Remote Jobs and Communities Program when it commences on 1 July 2013.

In the 12 months to October 2012, Job Services Australia has achieved:

- 42,332 job placements for Indigenous jobseekers. This brings the total number of placements for Indigenous jobseekers since Job Services Australia commenced on 1 July 2009 to 137,902.
- 20,351 13 week outcomes have been achieved for Indigenous jobseekers. This brings the total number of 13 week outcomes for Indigenous jobseekers since Job Services Australia commenced on 1 July 2009 to 58,582.
- 12,939 26 week outcomes have been achieved for Indigenous jobseekers. This brings the total number of 26 week outcomes for Indigenous jobseekers since Job Services Australia commenced on 1 July 2009 to 33,607.

The Government's Post Program Monitoring survey shows that the employment outcome rate for the most disadvantaged Indigenous jobseekers (those in Stream 4) has more than doubled when compared with the Personal Support Program, the previous service available for these individuals. The employment rate has increased from 10.4 per cent under Personal Support Programme in the 12 months to June 2009 to 22.2 per cent in Job Services Australia Stream 4 in the twelve months to June 2012.

The employment outcome rate for Indigenous jobseekers in Streams 1 to 3 is slightly higher when compared to Job Network, the previous service. In the 12 months to June 2012, 38.5 per cent of Indigenous jobseekers achieved an outcome compared with 35.6 per cent under Job Network in the 12 months to June 2009.

To further enhance Job Services Australia achievements for Indigenous jobseekers, the Government has put in place various measures which commenced in 2012.

The Government provided $6.1 million for the Indigenous Mentoring Pilot in the 2011–12 budget to fund selected high-performing Job Services Australia providers to deliver culturally appropriate mentoring support for Indigenous workers. The Pilot commenced on 1 July 2012 and aims to determine if ongoing culturally appropriate mentoring support will assist in improving retention rates for Indigenous jobseekers.

The Government has developed an online cultural awareness training package for providers to further strengthen the performance of Job Services Australia and Disability Employment Services for Indigenous jobseekers.

The contracts for Australian Government employment services delivered through Job Services Australia and Disability Management Services (part of Disability Employment Services) will expire on 30 June 2015. The Government has released an issues paper, Employment Services—building on success, to start a public consultation process, so that it can put in place the most effective employment services possible from July 2015. The new model will have employment services that are flexible enough to provide assistance to people with a diverse range of needs and circumstances. It is expected that stakeholders will provide their ideas about how this can be achieved for all jobseekers, including Indigenous jobseekers. The consultations will run until 15 March 2013 and will include meetings early in 2013 with jobseekers, employers and employment service providers.

CASE STUDY

Apprenticeships—Josh's Story

Joshua Toomey joined Ausgrid in 2006 through its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pre-Apprenticeship Program. With focus, dedication and commitment he gained a highly sought after Australian Apprenticeship with the company. In 2010, he completed his apprenticeship and was awarded a Certificate III in Electricity Supply Industry—Distribution (Power Line). Josh is now enjoying his career as a fully qualified Electrical Linesman.

'Over the four years of my apprenticeship I had challenging times. I find now, being a tradesman, it was one of the best decisions I ever made,' Josh says.

'Doing an apprenticeship brought a sense of direction with my income and having that piece of paper that says I am qualified, I am a tradesman, assures me that there is some sort of direction in my life,

'Probably the best aspect of my apprenticeship has been the self-belief I built inside. Also, the income. I can now support my family and go out and get nice things and live a lifestyle that I've always hoped for.'

Joshua's achievements throughout his training reflect his determination to succeed, particularly as he began his pre-apprenticeship course with only basic literacy and numeracy skills after dropping out of school.

'Before I had never committed to finishing anything, but I worked hard and kept it simple. I found extra help and just kept coming back. My teachers and employers walked with me every step of the way.'

Joshua has not only transformed his own life but also the lives of many other young Indigenous Australians. With an understanding of the barriers that face many Indigenous people both during and after their schooling, Josh is now strongly involved in Ausgrid's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Pre-Apprenticeship Program, where he actively mentors and supports new apprentices. Being involved in the delivery of the program that was the catalyst for his own life changes, Josh is enjoying assisting others who are taking their first steps towards a career in the electricity industry.

Josh was the winner of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Award at the 2011 Australian Training Awards.

Joshua Toomey, winner of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year Award at the 2011 Australian Training Awards. Photo: DEEWR.

Adeah Kabai is the first student from Saibai Island in the Torres Strait to transition directly from Year 12 to university. Photo: DEEWR.

CASE STUDY

Adeah Kabai's higher aspirations

The Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People report was released by the Minister for Tertiary Education, Senator the Hon Chris Evans, on 14 September 2012. A number of students told the story of their path to university as part of the information gathered to inform the Review.

One of the students, 21 year old Adeah Kabai from Saibai Island in the Torres Strait, told a story that highlighted the important role support from family and Government initiatives have played in helping him through university. Adeah is the first student from Saibai Island to transition directly from Year 12 to university.

Adeah is in his fourth year studying Civil Engineering at Central Queensland University in Rockhampton. Through the Indigenous Cadetship Support Program, Adeah has a cadetship with Rio Tinto. While Adeah notes his engineering degree means he can work anywhere in Australia, he is hoping to gain full time employment with Rio Tinto in Weipa once he graduates in June. The Indigenous Cadetship Support Program links full-time Indigenous students undertaking a diploma, an advanced diploma or their first undergraduate degree with employers who can give them work placements and ongoing employment once they finish their studies. Adeah has also been gaining valuable work experience in the industry by working for Rio Tinto in the university holidays.

Adeah told the Review that higher education wasn't part of his plan when he first started at boarding school. He talked about the significance of a Summer School he attended when he was 15 which opened his eyes to the possibilities of higher education. With 19 other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander science students, he was selected to attend the Indigenous Australian Engineering Summer School at the University of New South Wales. This experience gave him an understanding of and interest in engineering, and how it could help him and his community. Adeah noted that 'engineering could benefit the Islands, especially Saibai Island which is constantly getting inundated with water. Using civil engineering, I can design sea walls and future projects that would hopefully help the Island and I could give back to the community'.

'Before I left the Islands the Elders explained to me ... when you leave the Island you take with you a garden basket...education is the garden, it gives you fruit, it gives you food. So with that garden basket you go down south and fill it up with food which is education and knowledge and you bring it back to feed the community. That's one of my motivations to do well'.

Throughout his degree Adeah has also been supported by the Nulloo Yumbah Centre, the Indigenous Education Unit at Central Queensland University. The Nulloo Yumbah Centre offers a number of support mechanisms for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including assistance through the Australian Governments' Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme program. Tutorial assistance has aided Adeah with his subjects at university and this has helped him through his first four years. The Centre is supported by the Commonwealth's Indigenous Support Program.

'At uni I'm not only representing me, I'm representing the whole of the Torres Strait. My future aspiration is I want to bring back my gained knowledge and develop my Island and hopefully be a good ambassador and role model to the younger students, who heavily look up to me.'

Disability Employment Services

Disability Employment Services providers have a specialist role in assisting people with disability, injury, or a health condition to find and maintain sustainable employment. Disability Employment Services is uncapped, meaning that every eligible job seeker can have immediate access to services to help them get and maintain a job. As at 30 November 2012, almost 7,500 Indigenous jobseekers were engaged with Disability Employment Services providers, representing 4.9 per cent of the Disability Employment Services jobseeker caseload.

The performance of Disability Employment Services in assisting Indigenous jobseekers has improved in 2011-12 compared to 2010-11, with 2960 job placements for Indigenous jobseekers in 2011-12, a 35 per cent rise from 2010-11. The longer term employment outcomes for Indigenous jobseekers in Disability Employment Services were 39 per cent higher over 13 weeks in 2011-12 than in 2010-11.

Indigenous Employment Program—Employment Support

The Indigenous Employment Program complements the employment services offered under Jobs Services Australia and Disability Employment Services by providing innovative targeted assistance to help employers to provide sustainable employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The program also assists Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take up training and employment opportunities, stay in jobs and improve their future employment prospects.

In 2011-12, the Indigenous Employment Program exceeded its targets and its performance in 2010-11 for both commencements and employment placements. It delivered 35,591 commencements, representing a 13 per cent increase over 2010-11, and 16,879 employment placements, representing a 17 per cent increase over 2010-11, in a broad range of industries and businesses across urban, regional and remote areas.

The flexibility of the Indigenous Employment Program enables industry demand to be met through targeted projects that develop appropriately skilled Indigenous people to fill available jobs. Projects that have succeeded for Indigenous participants are those that have a strong focus on ensuring that the employer's workplace is inclusive and culturally responsive, participants are trained in skills that are linked to specific jobs and career pathways and mentoring is provided to support transition into the workplace and retention of Indigenous employees.

Indigenous Youth Careers Pathways Program

The Indigenous Youth Careers Pathways Program introduced in 2011-12 provides $50.7 million over four years for school-based traineeships for up to 6,400 Indigenous students. The aim of this assistance is help young people make a successful transition from school to further education and work. The Indigenous Youth Careers Pathways Program has supported 1,060 commencements into school-based traineeships in 2012.

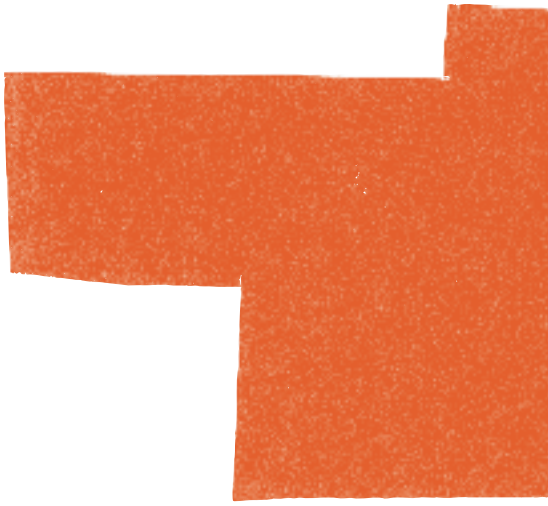
Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Crucial to closing the gap is having more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals in decision-making roles across professions, government and industry. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander professionals can respond to the high priority needs of their own communities and make contributions to the wellbeing and prosperity of the nation as a whole.

To date, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are over represented in sub-professional roles and underrepresented in higher education and professions.

There have been some recent improvements - for example preliminary evidence shows that the intake of first-year Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander medical students in Australian universities has reached a new high of 2.5 per cent, exceeding the percentage of Australia's working age Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people across the country are increasingly aspiring to get an education, go to university and take up professional and leadership positions. But there is still a long way to go.



In 2012, the Australian Government released the report of the Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, which identified the barriers to increased participation in higher education.

Ultimately, change will require concerted efforts by Government, schools and their communities, universities, professions and employers. The result will be significant though - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander graduates across the spectrum of academic disciplines who are equipped to enter professional practice, build the capacity of their communities and enhance professions through their involvement.

Remote Jobs and Communities Program

From 1 July 2013, the Remote Jobs and Communities Program will provide a simpler, more integrated and flexible approach to employment and participation services for people living in 59 remote regions across Australia. The four main programs currently delivering employment and participation services and community development in remote Australia—Job Services Australia, Disability Employment Services, the Community Development Employment Projects program and the Indigenous Employment Program—will be rolled into the new program. The Remote Jobs and Communities Program will build community capacity and will contribute to the economy in remote areas to support sustainable long-term development.

Community Development and Employment Projects

The new Remote Jobs and Communities Program builds on lessons learned from the current employment and participation services including reformed Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) scheme, launched on 1 July 2009. CDEP promotes economic and social development in remote communities around Australia through projects to engage participants in meaningful activities including employment, training and skills development, work experience, study and community development. A work readiness stream assists CDEP participants to progress into the broader workforce, with 1,999 people obtaining employment outcomes in 2011-12 outside the CDEP program. A community development stream funds projects to strengthen communities and meet local needs under action plans, with 688 projects completed in 2011-12.

Australian Government Skills Connect

Australian Government Skills Connect is a service designed to provide businesses, large and small, with access to the right sort of Australian Government assistance, resources and funding for maximising their most valuable resource—their workforce.

For example, under Skills Connect, the Government will provide $669 million over five years through the National Workforce Development Fund to industry to support training and workforce development in areas of current and future skills need. Organisations can identify their current and future business and workforce development needs and apply for funding to support the training of existing workers and new workers in areas of shortages.

There are a number of these projects supporting the training of Indigenous people and as at 30 June 2012, 2.7 per cent of all learners participating in training identified as an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person.

Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program

The Australian Government Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program is providing language, literacy and numeracy training in the Northern Territory for eligible jobseekers whose skills are below the level considered necessary to secure sustainable employment or pursue further education and training. The initiative has been very successful with the targeted 162 places being achieved in the first two years of the three year initiative. From 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2012 there were 1208 Indigenous clients referred to the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program. Of those referrals, 326 eligible jobseekers have commenced training. This represented a 27 per cent engagement rate, an increase from 14 per cent in 2009.

CASE STUDY

Pride In My Home Program—Geraldine's Story

Geraldine Thimble has become the first member of the remote community of Mornington Island in Queensland to gain employment in the Pride in My Home Program with Save the Children, Australia's leading independent emergency relief and development organisation for children.

Working in the position since July 2012, Geraldine is primarily responsible for local implementation of the Pride in My Home Program—an initiative led by the Australian Government Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs.

With the support of Save the Children, Geraldine works to increase the community's awareness and understanding of health and safety issues in the home, economic issues such as household budgeting and meeting tenancy responsibilities, and improving the home environment for families to ensure a safe and happy upbringing for children.

Geraldine was assisted into employment with the help of Tracey Phillips, an Indigenous Employment and Training Advisor from Job Services Australia provider, Jobfind. Given the sensitivity of many of the issues this position is required to broach with community members, Tracey knew that she would need to put forward a candidate who not only had appropriate communication skills, but was also well-respected within the community. After assessing Geraldine's strengths and observing her abilities, it was clear that Geraldine was perfect for the position.

Above: Geraldine Thimble, who runs the Pride in My Home program on Mornington Island. Photo: DEEWR.

The only thing Geraldine did not possess, which was required for the role, was a current driver's licence due to a suspension. With the help of Tracey, Geraldine lodged an application with the local Police to have the suspension lifted and was successful.

Geraldine is enjoying the role.

'Pride in my home really says it all,' she says.'

'I love being able to share my skills and knowledge with others in the community, to help them keep their homes safe and clean for their children. Together with youth in the community, we work as a team to clean their yards for the elders. This is the job for me. I wouldn't want to do anything else.'

Artists from the Amata community in South Australia with artworks created as part of the NPY Women's Council's Deadly Award winning *Tjanpi Desert Weavers* project.

Tjanpi Desert Weavers are the sole provider of specialised support for fibre artists in the Ngaanyatjarra, Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara region, and provide employment and career pathways to Aboriginal people living in remote communities where few job opportunities exist.

The project receives triennial funding through Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support and the Indigenous Employment Initiative (Office for the Arts).

L-R Nyurpaya Kaika-Burton, Yaritji Young, Paniny Mick (hidden), Ilawanti Ungkutjuru Ken and Naomi Kantjuri. Photo: By Jo Foster courtesy of the Office for the Arts.

Workplace English Language and Literacy Program

Recognising the importance of literacy and numeracy in finding and keeping a job, the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program provided additional funding of $18.1 million over four years from July 2009 for participants enrolled on projects funded by the Indigenous Employment Program. Workplace English Language and Literacy was made available to Indigenous Employment Program participants who were employed or expected to be placed into employment to increase access to intensive vocationally oriented language, literacy and numeracy assistance to meet the requirements of particular workplaces. By 30 June 2012, 3050 participants had commenced training. These are people who would not otherwise have been eligible for the Workplace English Language and Literacy Program. Some may not have been registered as unemployed and would therefore also have been ineligible for language, literacy and numeracy support through the Language Literacy and Numeracy Program.

Projects that have succeeded for Indigenous participants have done so through a strong positive focus, with skills building clearly linked to immediate education and employment

opportunities. An example of success is the Australian Defence Force's Indigenous Development course. The Defence Indigenous Development Program provides young Indigenous adults from remote communities with the education, training, life skills, confidence and opportunities to secure and sustain ongoing full-time employment of their choice. The program is focused on developing language, literacy and numeracy skills for Indigenous Australians in an Australian Defence Force setting. The program runs in the Northern Territory and North Queensland. In 2012, 44 participants graduated with vocational qualifications and skills for employment in the Australian Defence Force and wider community.

Supporting financial independence

Strong financial management skills are essential to ensure that Indigenous people are able to maximize the use of their income and assets to prosper now and into the future. The Government provides a number of financial literacy support programs to Indigenous people to help them manage their income and improve their own and their family's economic circumstances.

Financial and money management

The Financial Management Program aims to build financial resilience and wellbeing for vulnerable people and those most at risk of financial and social exclusion and disadvantage. It helps people across a range of income and financial literacy levels to overcome financial adversity, manage their money, participate in their communities and plan for the medium to long term.

Money management services are being delivered in remote locations with high Indigenous populations. Education and intensive coaching are available so people can make more informed financial decisions, budget for their families' needs and use technology such as automatic teller machines and internet banking. Supplementing the network of money management service providers, MoneyMob Talkabout is a mobile service operating in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia that tells the 'story of money' in an educational and entertaining way. To 30 June 2012, a total of 1008 participants had taken part in activities delivered through visits to 29 remote Indigenous communities, including 39 schools, in the Northern Territory and Western Australia. MoneyMob Talkabout provides financial wellbeing services in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatara Lands of South Australia through a combination of mobile education servicing and walk-in services located in Amata, Mimili and Pukatja.

Increasing economic opportunities through Government investment

The Australian, state and territory governments are working together to ensure employment and economic opportunities are made available to Indigenous Australians through government investment. Governments are large employers and significant purchasers of services across the country. Governments are well placed to create job opportunities, strengthen local labour markets and drive Indigenous business opportunities through government funded service delivery.

CASE STUDY

Partnerships for Jobs—Wilson Transformer Company

Recognising the barriers that young Indigenous jobseekers faced in his community of Wodonga, Jon Retford, General Manager of the Wilson Transformer Company decided to form a partnership with government agencies and community organisations to help local Aboriginal youth (aged 16–22) to find work and gain qualifications in the engineering and manufacturing industry.

Twenty-six young Indigenous Australians have gone through the program since it started in June 2011. Of these, 17 have gone on to become valued employees at the Wilson Transformer Company, and others have moved on to work with different companies.

The success of the program is in part due to the passion of the people involved. Previous employment programs in the area had struggled due to lack of personal support for participants in navigating the "employment system".

In the Wilson Transformer Company Aboriginal Youth Development Program, participants receive plenty of encouragement and support from the program partners, including Department of Human Services officers Wendy Williamson and Judy Brooke.

One of the young women who participated in the program said 'Prior to the project, I had no motivation, no goals in life and everyday was the same. Wendy contacted me and explained the project. At first I didn't want to do it. Wendy was persistent and picked me up and took me to an information session. I was at the shed for six weeks before I started as a casual at Wilsons, then they offered me an apprenticeship in engineering steel fabrication.

'Since I started work I have a house and a car... The brilliant social atmosphere of this workplace is amazing. I love my job! I love my life! Thank you to everyone. I am drug free and working for a living and finally have my life back.'

Jon arranged for cultural awareness training, so staff at the Wilson Transformer Company have a better understanding of Aboriginal culture. Jon believes the program is not only good for community spirit but good business sense, and says he and his staff develop a great sense of satisfaction from helping young people make a positive transition into the work environment.

Jon Retford, General Manager of the Wilson Transformer Company (right), and Clint Johnson (left), who was one of the first to complete the Wilson Transformer Company Aboriginal Youth Development Program. Photo: DHS.

Government Partnerships to increase employment

National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation

The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation provides for joint action by the Australian Government and state and territory governments to help halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

The National Partnership provides $172.7 million in Commonwealth funding and $56.2 million in state and territory funding over five years from 2008 for action to create jobs in government service delivery, help Indigenous people into employment and create business opportunities for Indigenous people.

The Australian, state and territory governments have created up to 2000 sustainable jobs in government service delivery previously supported by the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) program.

The National Partnership commits jurisdictions to developing Indigenous workforce strategies in all major Council of Australian Governments reforms contributing to the Closing the Gap targets. Workforce strategies are having an impact in the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, as reported under the Healthy Homes building block.

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation, targets have also been set by all jurisdictions for public sector employment of Indigenous people. All government have put in place recruitment and career development strategies to raise public sector employment to 2.6 per cent nationally, reflecting Indigenous people's proportion of the total population. The Australian Government has committed to increase Indigenous employment across the Australian Government public sector—including the Australian Public Service—to at least 2.7 per cent by 2015.

The Australian Public Service Diversity Council was established in February 2012. The Council provides Secretary-level, visible, strategic leadership on diversity issues, in relation to employment of Indigenous Australians and people with disabilities.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations' Indigenous Australian Government Diploma Program is an example of cross agency collaboration, providing an alternative pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into the Australian Public Service. In 2010-11 this program saw 68 participants in 10 different agencies successfully complete the Diploma and in 2012 the program has seen 55 participants commence across nine agencies.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited also has a strong track record in the employment and development of Indigenous Australians. Over the past five years, Aboriginal Hostels has averaged 76 per cent Indigenous employment. This represents the highest proportion of Indigenous employees across the Commonwealth. Aboriginal Hostels works in partnership with the Australian Public Service Commission and other Australian Government agencies to improve the recruitment of Indigenous entry-level trainees.

Supporting Indigenous business

Government is the largest purchaser of goods and services in the Australian economy. By ensuring that Indigenous businesses have access to commercial opportunities arising from public expenditure and procurement, government can support the growth of Indigenous businesses and the benefits that will flow from this.

Indigenous Opportunities Policy

There are opportunities for Indigenous businesses to connect with corporate Australia to become part of the supply chain to deliver government services, particularly in regional and remote areas with high Indigenous populations. The Indigenous Opportunities Policy applies to Australian Government procurement processes worth more than $5 million (or $6 million for construction) where the main activity occurs in regions with a significant Indigenous population. The Indigenous Opportunities Policy encourages supplier diversity and forms a key part of the Australian Government's strategy to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. In 2012, over 90 Indigenous Opportunities Policy Plans were approved. A number of industries and sectors are represented among those organisations with approved Plans, including construction, employment services, information technology and project management.

Commonwealth procurement rules

The Government is making it easier for its agencies to procure services from small to medium enterprises that are at lest 50 per cent Indigenous owned through an exemption to the Commonwealth Procurement Rules. The exemption allows Government agencies to contract directly with Indigenous organisations without the need to conduct a full tender process, on the condition that the procurement represents value for money. The exemption can be applied to any procurement over $80,000.

Supporting Indigenous business development

Business ownership allows direct participation in the Australian economy which can create a flow-on of wealth to others, contributing to intergenerational asset accumulation in Indigenous communities. Indigenous entrepreneurs are often leading employers of Indigenous Australians, and can be influential role models for other Indigenous Australians.

The Government directly supports Indigenous businesses through programs delivered by Indigenous Business Australia and through the Indigenous Employment Program.

Indigenous Employment Program—Business Develoment

The Indigenous Employment Program can help Indigenous Australians to develop sustainable businesses and economic opportunities across Australia. Of the 658 Indigenous Employment Program Tailored Assistance projects approved in 2011–12, 233 focused on economic development and business support with a contracted value of just over $19.9 million.

From 1 July 2013, the Remote Jobs and Communities Program will replace the Indigenous Employment Program in remote parts of Australia. Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs will continue to be supported under the new arrangements.

Owning and managing a business is one of the paths to prosperity for many Australians. The Government encourages and supports Indigenous Australians to take this path where economic-development opportunities exist.

Indigenous Business Australia

Indigenous Business Australia is the Australian Government's lead agency in helping Indigenous businesses start and prosper. Indigenous Business Australia provides small business loans at concessional rates as well as business advice and mentoring to Indigenous Australians starting, acquiring or growing a viable business. During 2011–12, Indigenous Business Australia approved the 500th business loan through the Business Development and Assistance Program. Indigenous Business Australia had a business loan portfolio of 289 active loans valued at $50.7 million. Eighty-five new business loans were approved in 2011–12 with $17.3 million. This activity created or supported 176 jobs for Indigenous Australians. From July 2007 to June 2012, Indigenous Business Australia approved 413 business loans.

Understanding that starting and owning a small business is difficult, Indigenous Business Australia provides professional assistance and guidance throughout the life cycle of a business. Across Australia, 1844 participants attended 461 Into Business workshops

designed to build the business skills of aspiring Indigenous Australians who are new to business. During 2011–12, Indigenous Business Australia provided 234 customers with pre-business assistance services, such as strategic business planning, marketing, branding, website creation, business growth and cash flow management. It provided 200 people with financial skills development, completed 69 feasibility studies and finalised 215 business plans.

Indigenous Business Australia's Equity and Investments Program supports joint ventures between Indigenous people and industry partners. At June 2012, the Indigenous Business Australia investment portfolio comprised of 26 active investments and was valued at $192 million with Indigenous investors owning equity interests of $64.3 million. Investments are located across Australia in the retail, commercial property, mining, manufacturing, primary industry, tourism and hotel sectors. At June 2012, they employed 263 Indigenous Australians, provided more than $18 million in training and wages and purchased more than $4.2 million worth of services from approximately 140 Indigenous-owned suppliers.

Indigenous Business Policy Advisory Group

The Australian Government is also committed to engaging Indigenous people in the creation of policies that support Indigenous businesses. As part of the Australian Government's actions under the Indigenous Economic Development Strategy 2011–2018 an Indigenous Business Policy Advisory Group was established in September 2011. The members of this Advisory Group have a broad range of experience, whether as business

Deb Malseed is one of seven Budj Bim Rangers helping to manage the Budj Bim National Heritage Landscape in the Lake Condah lava flow region in Victoria's south-west. Sacred to the Gunditjmara people, the area shows evidence of an aquaculture system that is thousands of years old, including stone huts and eel traps.

Deb became a ranger after a 17-year career as a cook, some-time cleaner, and kindergarten assistant. As her knowledge of her traditional country has grown, so has her confidence.

Photo: ILC.

The Indigenous Land Corporation acquired five small grazing properties under its Land Acquisition Program to secure unprotected sites that are culturally significant to Gunditjmara people. The latest property, Bryant, was acquired in May 2012. In addition to enabling land management and eco-tourism employment, training and business development opportunities, the land acquisitions support access to traditional country, helping to preserve and revive Gunditjmara cultural practices.

owners themselves, working in Indigenous organisations, working in corporate Australia or working in research and advocacy roles. Throughout 2012 this Advisory Group provided a direct, independent voice to the Australian Government on the provision of Indigenous business support and the policies needed to support growth in the Indigenous business sector. The Advisory Group has identified it's three priority areas for attention in its first term as capability building, accessing finance and the implementation of government policy to support the Indigenous business sector and it is building a strong base of evidence on ways that the Government can have the most significant impact in supporting Indigenous businesses to grow.

Supply Nation

An Indigenous supplier network, Supply Nation (formerly known as the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council) was established by the Australian Government in 2009. The role of Supply Nation is to encourage the growth of Indigenous businesses by linking corporate and government purchasers with certified Indigenous suppliers of goods and services. At 30 September 2012, Supply Nation had certified 157 Indigenous suppliers and attracted 178 corporate and government members. In 2011-12, it had generated $7 million in contracts and over $21.7 million in transactions between suppliers and members. Supply Nation certified suppliers employed around 450 Indigenous full-time equivalent staff. The Government will continue to support Supply Nation with funding of up to $7.5 million over three years from 2012-13.

Business and Government Partnerships

Connections with the wider business community are essential if Indigenous business is to thrive and Indigenous employment is to grow. The corporate sector plays a key role in helping to close the gap, both through philanthropic activity and helping to build Indigenous economic engagement. The Government has been working in partnership with corporations through a number of initiatives to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people get the skills they need to be ready for work, support school to work transitions, and support the growth of Indigenous businesses.

Reconciliation Australia

Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) contain actions to drive equality through sustainable employment and business opportunities. Many RAPs include a commitment to employ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Reconciliation Australia reported in the 2012 RAP Impact Measurement Report that RAP organisations have committed 25,044 jobs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and filled 18,972 jobs.

In addition, RAP organisations are committed to providing 2,027 apprenticeships and/or traineeships, 220 cadetships and 150 internships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and have filled 1,707 apprenticeships/traineeships, 136 cadetships and 136 internships.

The Australian Government has partnered with Reconciliation Australia to deliver the Workplace Ready Program. This is a practical program for managers and supervisors who are on the frontline of hiring and retaining staff. The program supports these organisations to create an internal culture that embraces diversity, through both their workforce and their supply chain. The Workplace Ready Program includes the development and delivery of a series of six workshops; a Toolkit resource; and 16 best practice case studies from an employer's perspective.

Sodexo's Reconciliation Action Plan builds on its existing commitment to developing social and environmental sustainability in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and follows extensive consultation with employees, communities and clients. They have a commitment to the development of training and employment opportunities at all levels and across all occupations within the organisation and with local communities. Sodexo have committed to 175 general employment and 12 apprentices for Indigenous people. They currently have 83 employment and 91 training commencements as part of their Indigenous employment project.

Transfield Services are continuing to improve upon their employment project successes through a current project which aims to attract, retain and support Indigenous people, businesses and communities. The project includes pre-employment training to Indigenous Australians and cultural awareness training to their own staff. As part of this project Transfield have commitments to employ 5 Indigenous apprentices, 5 Indigenous trainees, 75 Indigenous full-time and 10 Indigenous part-time employees and 3 Indigenous cadets. Further demonstrating their commitment to Indigenous training, employment and growth of the Indigenous business sector, Transfield Services have implemented an Indigenous Opportunities Policy Plan. In

CASE STUDY

Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS)—Stan's Story

The Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF), through its Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy (NAQS) delivers biosecurity services in Torres Strait, and animal and plant health surveillance across northern Australia. This is an area of strategic importance to national biosecurity due to its close proximity to our northern neighbours and vulnerability to unique exotic disease, pest and weed risks.

DAFF's work in helping the career aspirations of Indigenous Australians are typified by biosecurity officer Stan Banu.

Stan joined DAFF in 2006 after accepting a biosecurity officer role on his home community of Boigu Island in the Top Western region of Torres Strait. Boigu's close proximity to Papua New Guinea (PNG), and regular visitors from PNG make it an area of high strategic importance to Australia's biosecurity status. As part of a network of predominantly Indigenous staff based throughout Torres Strait, Stan and other team members delivered a range of biosecurity services to help manage the biosecurity risks associated with people, cargo, vessel and aircraft movements through the Torres Strait pathway.

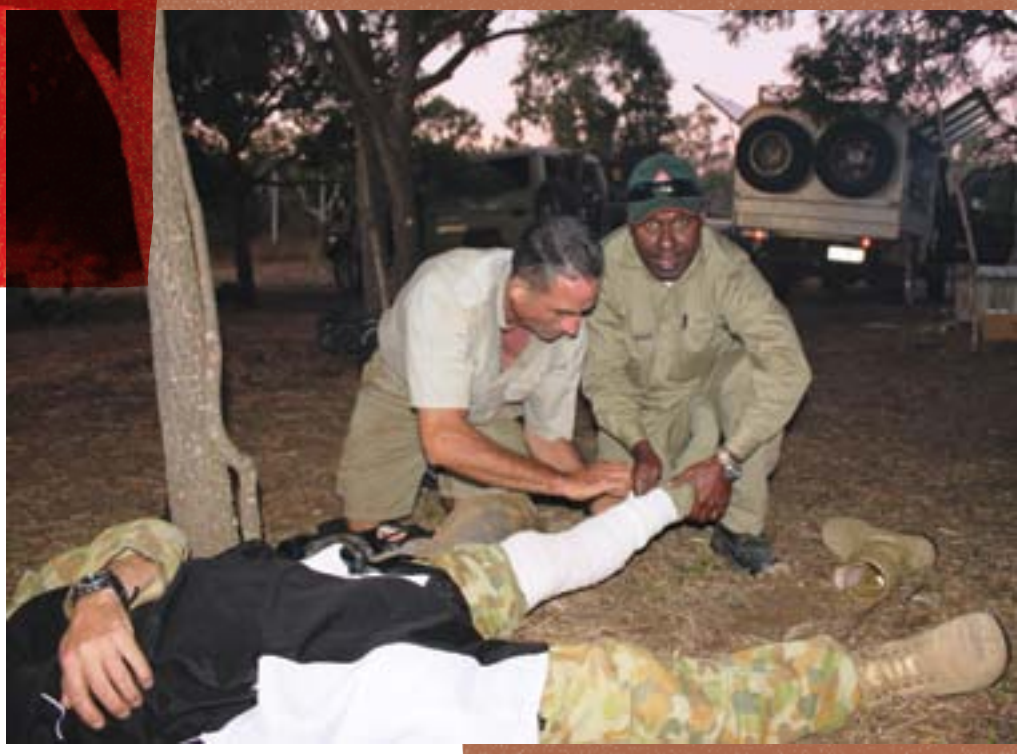
'I enjoyed the camaraderie of working with fellow officers from Torres Strait on important work for Australia's biosecurity,' Stan says.

'We provided front line biosecurity services that not only help to manage the risk of exotic pests, weeds and diseases that jeopardise Australia's agricultural industries, but also safeguard our community's unique natural environment—something that is so critical to our traditional lifestyle and cultural heritage.'

In 2010, Stan enrolled in the Indigenous Traineeship Program through the National Indigenous Entry Level Recruitment Pathways Program. The program supported Stan's relocation to Cairns to develop his role as a biosecurity officer through various rotations within NAQS operations and scientific areas, Cairns cargo and airport programs, human resources, and learning and development areas.

Stan's successful completion of the Indigenous Traineeship Program has helped him secure a permanent placement in the Cairns cargo team. The move has also provided expanded educational and career opportunities for Stan's wider family.

'This traineeship has not only helped in my career progression, but has also created opportunities for my family to pursue their academic careers and widen their job options for the future,' he says.



Right: NAQS Officer Stan Banu (right) and DAFF colleague Richard Davis (left) practicing first aid as part of their remote fieldwork training in Northern Australia. Photo: DAFF.

Ingan Tours is a 100 per cent Aboriginal owned and operated tourism business based in Tully Far North Queensland, which established a reputation for delivering excellent tourism and cultural education programs for school children and university groups.

Ingan Tours was selected to participate in the Indigenous Tourism Champions Program, a joint initiative between Indigenous Business Australia and Tourism Australia, with the support of the Australian Government and state and territory employment and tourism agencies. Under the program the recipients receive mentoring in marketing and distribution specific to Indigenous owned tourism operations. Photo: Ingan Tours.

addition, to strengthen the procurement goals of their Reconciliation Action Plan, Transfield Services are also now a Supply Nation member.

Minerals Council of Australia

The Australian Government has a longstanding memorandum of understanding with the Minerals Council to boost Indigenous employment and enterprise development, especially as the mining industry operates in many areas with relatively high populations of Indigenous people.

The Minerals Council of Australia announced the Minerals Industry: Indigenous Economic Development Strategy on 19 October 2011. The Minerals Council's strategy identifies the same five priorities as the Australian Government's *Indigenous Economic Development Strategy 2011-2018* and focuses on improving socioeconomic outcomes through employment and enterprise development.

Australian Employment Covenant

The Australian Employment Covenant is a private sector-led initiative through which employers commit to provide jobs (including apprenticeships) for Indigenous people. Over 330 employers in a variety of industry sectors across Australia have signed up to more than 60,000 job commitments. Many of these are large employers with commercial activity in multiple locations.

Since 1 July 2009, Covenant employers have been allocated total funding of nearly $151 million in direct assistance through the Indigenous Employment Program to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander jobseekers into employment, in addition to services provided by Job Services Australia to help these employers to find and train Indigenous jobseekers to fill the jobs as they become available.

Jawun Indigenous Corporate Partnerships

Across Australia, Jawun Indigenous Corporate Partnerships is forging corporate and philanthropic partnerships to support innovative programs. From its beginnings in Cape York, Jawun has expanded across five other regions: Goulburn-Murray, Inner Sydney, the Kimberley and since 2012, the Central Coast and North East Arnhem Land. Jawun has engaged 21 partners across the financial, legal, construction and retail sectors, generating $6.9 million in in-kind contributions and $1.2 million in financial contributions. The Australian Government is currently providing funding of $3.09 million over three years to 2015, to Jawun. For every dollar of government funding , the organisation has generated 17 times that amount from its partners. Jawun has demonstrated that building individual capabilities and local partnerships between private-sector employers and Indigenous communities and organisations helps to foster economic development.

Business Council of Australia

The Australian Government continues to build its relationships with the Business Council of Australia (BCA). In 2012 it worked on a collaborative project with BCA to identify key elements of successful Indigenous initiatives occurring with Australian businesses.

The project consisted of four case studies that considered the role of pre-employment programs for long term Indigenous jobseekers; business mentoring; strategic partnerships between corporate sector, government and Indigenous communities; and maintaining the socio-economic legacy when a regional investment phases down. The final report was released on the BCA website in November 2012.

Land-based jobs and businesses

As an important economic asset, the Australian Government recognises that supporting Indigenous people to get the most out of their land assets can greatly enhance the prosperity of Indigenous communities now and into the future.

Australian Government initiatives are seeking to involve Indigenous people in rural industries across the agricultural, pastoral, forestry and fisheries sectors.

The Indigenous Land Corporation

The Indigenous Land Corporation is an independent statutory authority of the Government and was established in 1995. The Corporation plays a key role in Indigenous economic participation by acquiring and managing Indigenous-held land sustainably to provide cultural, social, economic or environmental benefits for indigenous people and their future generations.

In 2011–12, the Corporation acquired four properties bringing its total property holdings to 240. A further two land acquisitions were awaiting settlement as at 30 June 2012. Over the financial year, four properties were granted to Indigenous organisations, increasing the total number of granted properties to 167. A further three properties were approved for granting and awaiting settlement. During 2011–12, 1612 Indigenous jobs were created through land acquisition and land management.

The Indigenous Land Corporation continued to foster collaborative approaches with government agencies, industry and non-government organisations, resulting in 87 per cent of Indigenous Land Corporation projects being collaboratively based in 2012.

These collaborations have brought technical skills, funding and human capacity to deliver greater benefits for Indigenous people. The partnership with the Mossman Gorge Aboriginal Community to construct the $20 million Mossman Gorge eco-tourism business has created 66 new jobs with a 90 per cent Indigenous employment rate on opening day. Since then, more than 115,000 people have visited the centre, which is providing a growing income base for Indigenous people.

Through its regional land management projects, the corporation helped to improve the land management of 135 Indigenous-held properties. In 2011–12, the Indigenous Pastoral program saw the completion of infrastructure development on four properties, the start of negotiations for five new grazing licences, provision of extension services to eight Indigenous-held properties, the creation of 219 training positions, and natural resource management works on five properties. Across Australia, the Indigenous Land Corporation supports businesses that also train and employ Indigenous people. In 2011–12, 5456 Indigenous training outcomes were enabled through land acquisition and land management projects.

In addition to newly-created positions, Indigenous Land Corporation assistance saw 979 existing Indigenous jobs retained on an ongoing basis, most of which were a result of the Land Management Program where 800 positions were sustained from the previous year. Employment outcomes were secured through 34 land

management projects. The acquisition of Ayers Rock Resort achieved a major milestone in December 2012 with more than 150 Indigenous workers and trainees employed at the resort. In 2012 the Indigenous Land Corporation operated 14 agricultural businesses, running 110,000 head of livestock (predominantly cattle) and providing direct employment to 133 Indigenous people, including four Indigenous station managers.

In June 2012, the Indigenous Land Corporation released a draft native title policy. This policy sets out the ILC's commitment to contribute to the constructive and flexible settlement of Native Title claims, and the achievement of social, cultural, environmental or economic benefits for Indigenous Australians, consistent with its statutory responsibilities. The policy provides that the ILC will consider providing land acquisition and/or land management assistance where a proposed Native Title settlement will facilitate a full and final resolution of claims and improve the quality of native title outcomes for Indigenous parties. The ILC Board's review of the National Indigenous Land Strategy (NILS), which describes the ILC's strategic direction, policies, priorities and program structures, provided the opportunity during 2012 for Commonwealth, state and territory Governments, Native Title Representative bodies, Indigenous organisations and other relevant stakeholders to provide input to the draft native title policy.

Climate Change

Last year also saw Australia's first savannah burning project, the Fish River Fire Project, approved under the Australian Government's Carbon Farming Initiative. As a result of this project, the Indigenous Land Corporation will be eligible to earn an estimated 20,000 Australian Carbon Credit Units a year for strategic fire management on Fish River, a property 200km south of Darwin. The resulting income will help fund land management work on the property, protect its conservation and heritage values and support Indigenous employment and training on the property. Fish River will also act as a demonstration project for other Indigenous land management groups across northern Australia to develop their own carbon based enterprises.

Through the Aboriginals Benefit Account (ABA) a number of land and sea management projects have been funded which enhance the ability of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to engage with new markets including carbon farming. In addition, the ABA has supported the Aboriginal Carbon Fund to prepare for a role in supporting carbon farming on Aboriginal Land.

Working on Country Indigenous Ranger Program

The Working on Country Indigenous Ranger Program assists Indigenous people to care for country and helps the Australian Government meet its environmental responsibilities. More than 680 rangers are currently employed in paid positions across 90 ranger teams located in all States and the Northern Territory. The Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory jobs package will add a further 50 Indigenous Ranger positions. This program provides real employment and training opportunities for some of the most remote and economically marginalised communities in Australia. It recognises the cultural relationships and connections between Indigenous people and their country and supports the aspirations and ambitions of Indigenous people who want to care for their country. The social outcomes from the program are diverse and interconnected, relating to health and wellbeing, economic, cultural and educational outcomes for the individual rangers, their families and communities. The rangers are often important role models and leaders in their communities. They work with elders and young people to share and pass on traditional knowledge.

Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy

Indigenous people currently make up nearly half of the 71 staff employed to deliver the Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy. The Strategy provides quarantine services in Torres Strait and animal and plant health surveillance in coastal areas of northern Australia between Cairns and Broome—areas that are particularly vulnerable to exotic disease, pest and weed risks. Indigenous employees deliver services critical to Australia's biosecurity status, including quarantine inspections, facilitating scientific surveys and traditional land access, coordinating monitoring services delivered by Indigenous rangers under fee for service arrangements and educating communities about biosecurity and compliance with quarantine laws.

NORFORCE

NORFORCE is the largest of the three Regional Force Surveillance Units of the Australian Army, consisting of approximately 70 regular and 600 reserve soldiers. It conducts surveillance, reconnaissance, and community engagement throughout regional and remote Australia. This area

The Kalan Rangers are fulfilling their aspirations to care for country by managing ecosystems and habitats, controlling weeds and feral animals, managing fire, testing soil and supporting the cultural heritage of their people. Photo: Kalan Rangers.

is considered one of the largest military areas of operations in the world and includes the entire Northern Territory, the Kimberley region of Western Australia and areas of northern South Australia. This unique and diverse unit is able to achieve this by employing Indigenous soldiers from the more than 1200 communities throughout the area. Their local knowledge of the terrain, culture and peoples of the land allows the military patrols to not only access and manoeuvre in the harsh and demanding environment, it also allows NORFORCE to develop and utilise an information network based around the communities and agencies that inhabit the land. Through this NORFORCE provides training and part-time employment opportunities for Indigenous people from these communities. It also provides a progressive pathway for broader employment into the Australian Defence Force and access to further education and development, in particular the Defence Indigenous Development Program. It is well respected by many communities and leaders as it has been operating in the area for over 30 years and its history is linked to World War II. The unit's mission of "protecting country" aligns with the traditional values of the Indigenous culture. Importantly, the current policies and training systems used by NORFORCE allow individuals regardless of their education levels, health standards and personal history to be enlisted, trained and employed in military duties. Many of these soldiers remain or return to community with improved personal qualities and new skills. To further support NORFORCE, Army is currently developing trade policy to provide increased employment opportunities to Indigenous women.

Native title

Native title holders and claimants are leveraging their legal rights to create opportunities for economic participation. At times the native title system has struggled to cope with the volume of claims and negotiations and the complex interplay of interests involved. For these reasons, the Australian Government has been advancing a process of native title reform aimed at quicker resolution of claims, facilitating alternative means of settling claims, and making sure that Indigenous people get longer-term benefits from the agreements negotiated under the system.

These important reforms are part of the Indigenous Economic Development Strategy's systemic priority to assist individuals and communities to achieve financial security and independence.

A significant injection of funds over four years from the 2009–10 Budget boosted the capacity of native title representative bodies and service providers to represent native title parties, and helped streamline the operation of the native title system and improve claim resolution.

The Government also engages regularly with a range of native title stakeholders, including the states and territories, Indigenous organisations and industry bodies, to seek input on the efficient and effective operation of the native title system.

In 2009 and July 2012, the Government implemented successive institutional reforms to the operation of the Federal Court and the National Native Title Tribunal to help accelerate the resolution of claims.

There has been a significant increase in the number of claims resolved as a result of these reforms. As at 30 September 2012, the court has finalised 99 priority cases (about 70 per cent of these by consent) and is on track to resolve almost one-third of claims that were in the system as at July 2010 by May 2013. Significantly, since the Government's 2009 reforms, the rate of consent determinations has increased almost fourfold—rising from just nine consent determinations in 2009-10 to 34 in 2011-12. National Native Title Tribunal figures show that in the first 13 years the *Native Title Act* was in operation, or up until May 2007, 99 determinations had been registered. As of May 2012, there had been 183 determinations—a rise of 84 over the past five years.

In November 2012, the Government introduced the *Native Title Amendment Bill 2012* into Parliament, to help further improve the operation of the native title system. The Bill makes a number of amendments to the *Native Title Act 1993* relating to historical extinguishment of native title, 'good faith' negotiations, and processes for Indigenous Land Use Agreements. These reforms are intended to increase flexibility in claims resolution, improve the quality of native title agreement making and promote sustainable economic outcomes for Indigenous people.

The Government also introduced legislation into Parliament on 29 November 2012 to clarify that the native title benefits are not subject to income tax (which includes capital gains tax). Clarifying the tax treatment of native title benefits will provide certainty to Indigenous communities when they are negotiating native title agreements.

The additional resources provided to representative bodies have enabled them to better represent their clients within a more streamlined system. The Government is addressing a critical shortage of experienced anthropologists who assist claimants in identifying traditional ties to land claimed. A grant program has been supporting the training and placement of anthropologists to undertake native title field work and strengthening links with academic anthropology. As the native title system matures, anthropologists are increasingly involved in negotiation of complex native title agreements. The Australian Government has also established a scholarship to benefit researchers engaged in native title-related research. Currently three scholars are pursuing higher degrees under this scholarship.

The Government initiated a review of the role and functions of native title representative bodies and native title service providers to ensure that they continue to meet the evolving needs of the system, and particularly the needs of native title holders after claims have been resolved. The reviewer will report back to Government by the end of 2013.

Negotiated agreements, including consent determinations, open more opportunities for economic development.

In 2012, the number of registered Indigenous Land Use Agreements surpassed 600. This number is indicative of the increasing ability of governments, industry and others to negotiate land use and management with Indigenous people across Australia.

Several major agreements were finalised over 2011 and 2012 that are likely to provide substantial benefits to affected communities. These include an agreement finalised in June 2011 between Rio Tinto and four traditional owner groups in the Pilbara represented by the Yamatji Marlpa Aboriginal Corporation. The agreement gives Rio Tinto access to traditional lands to mine and explore for minerals. In exchange, traditional owners will be given employment opportunities and compensation estimated at $2 billion over the next 30 to 40 years. A further significant agreement in the Pilbara was finalised in June 2012 between the Nyiyaparli people and BHP Billiton Iron Ore. The agreement covers BHP's current and future operations and will deliver financial and non-financial benefits to the Nyiyaparli people, including employment, training, contracting, education and health, and support for environmental and heritage activities.

Given significant increases in the number and value of native title agreements, the Government wants to promote best practice in agreement making. Agreements need to be workable, sustainable and more transparent. In November 2012, the Government released the Indigenous Land Use Agreement Policy Principles. The principles amount to a formal statement of the Government's agreed policy in native title dealings. They represent the basis upon which the Government operates when engaging in Indigenous Land Use Agreement negotiations and are part of a broader Government objective to enhance the ability of Indigenous communities to leverage economic development opportunities from their native title rights and interests.

From left to right: Redfern Police Superintendent Luke Freudenstein, Kurt Devetak, Minister Julie Collins, Julian Vanslambrouck, Ashley Lee Gordon at Redfern Police Station, Sydney NSW. Kurt, Julian and Ashley participated in the 2012 Indigenous Police Recruitment Our Way Delivery (IPROWD) program. Photo: DEEWR.

Cultural enterprises

Indigenous people are producing some of the most critically acclaimed contemporary art in Australia, much of it originating in Indigenous-owned art centres in remote areas. As well as producing and marketing some of Australia's most dynamic visual art, art centres help to maintain and transmit culture and generate income and employment opportunities for Indigenous artists.

Through Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support funding in 2011–12, the Government provided $10.9 million to Indigenous art centres and allied industry support organisations to help build a stronger Indigenous visual arts industry. Around 90 Indigenous art centres were supported, which delivered more than 550 workshops and artist residencies and more than 650 professional development or training opportunities. The industry support organisations delivered around 140 activities (industry advocacy assistance, training or other services) to around 1370 organisations and individuals.

More than 6500 artists are involved in Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support-funded art centres, including more than 3670 'core' artists regularly attending an art centre. The majority (57 per cent) of core artists are women, and 11 per cent of core artists are women aged over 61. In 2011–12, the most common percentage of art sales paid to Indigenous artists in Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support funded art centres was 60 per cent. The aim is to build a sustainable and high-quality Indigenous visual arts sector on a base of stable and profitable Indigenous art centres. Approximately 77 per cent of the art centres funded through Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support in 2008–09 were still funded in 2011–12.

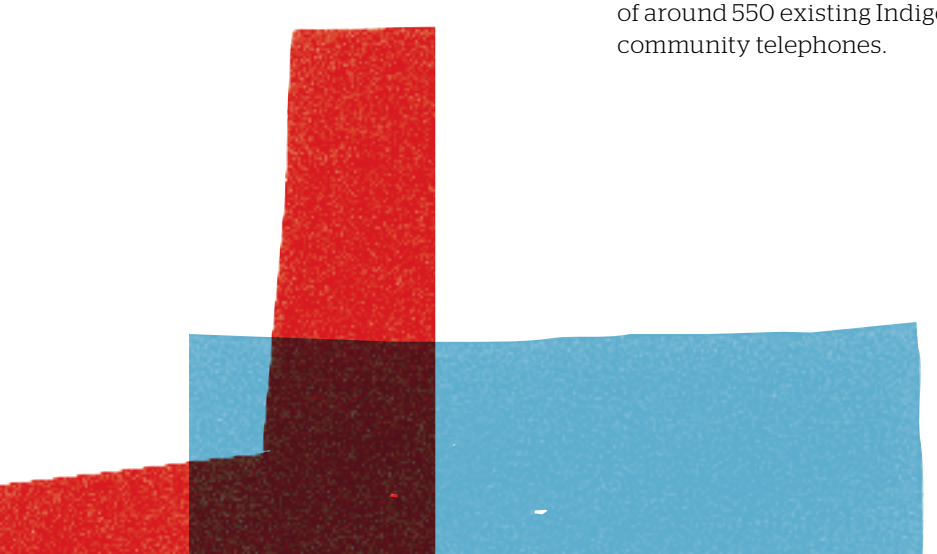
To ensure that artists and their families can benefit from the strong commercial demand for Indigenous art, the Australian Government facilitated the development of an Indigenous Art Code. The need for a commercial code of conduct was one of the central recommendations of the 2007 Senate inquiry report, Indigenous Art—Securing the Future. The code was developed consultatively, and agreed to in August 2009. A public company, Indigenous Art Code Limited, has been set up to administer the code, with operational funding and secretariat support from the Government.

Indigenous artists continue to benefit from the resale royalty scheme for visual artists that began in June 2010. The scheme ensures that, following eligible commercial resales, Australian visual artists receive a direct financial benefit of 5 per cent of the resale price of their work when resold for $1000 or more. As of 30 November 2012, the scheme had generated royalties totalling more than $1.2 million from resales for more than 520 artists of which more than 60 per cent were Indigenous. In May 2012, the Government announced funding of $700,000 over two years to support the continued delivery of the resale royalty scheme by the collecting society, Copyright Agency Limited, and a post implementation review of the scheme which is due to commence by June 2013.

Breakthrough is a pilot initiative that provides funding to emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander musicians and bands to produce a high quality recording of original tracks. The program aims to provide greater exposure for the talent and creativity of Indigenous musicians and to increase national and international audiences for Australian Indigenous contemporary music. Breakthrough, which provides funding of up to $25,000 per

successful applicant, is one of the outcomes of the Indigenous Contemporary Music Action Plan.

The Indigenous Employment Initiative is providing around $20 million annually to support jobs in Indigenous arts, culture, language and broadcasting organisations in regional and remote areas. Employees are engaged in a range of roles—for example, community media officers, arts workers, gallery assistants, broadcasting technicians and language assistants. These jobs provide important social and economic benefits to individuals and communities in a culturally meaningful way. This is an example of the conversion of Community Development Employment Projects positions to real jobs. The roll out of the jobs has been highly successful, with the number of funded arts and culture positions increasing from 82 in 2007–08 to more than 600 in 2011–12. The number of full-time positions is continuing to increase, with opportunities to transition from part-time to full-time employment in some organisations. In 2011–12, the program supported 310 jobs in Indigenous art centres, 161 jobs in the broadcasting sector, 97 positions working on Indigenous culture projects, and 39 positions working on Indigenous languages activities.



Digital connections

Digital access is fundamental to the future of economic development. A range of government programs is assisting Indigenous people to take advantage of the opportunities that are available through improving access and providing training in digital communication. The National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access is increasing internet connections across remote Australia as well as training people to use online technology. The current four year agreement, which is due to cease on 30 June 2013, has a target of new or improved access for 100 communities, of which 77 had been connected by June 2012. Training had been provided in 69 communities in 2011–12, well over the target of 50 over the life of the agreement. Future funding is targeted at the ongoing operation and maintenance of installed facilities, and additional online technology training in the relevant communities. The telephones element of the Indigenous Communications Program is helping to ensure people in remote communities have access to a telephone. The program is providing fixed satellite community phones or mobile satellite handsets to around 300 remote Indigenous communities that do not currently have access to a public telephone, along with ongoing maintenance of around 550 existing Indigenous community telephones.

Broadcasting and media

The Indigenous Broadcasting Program provides an important service to Indigenous communities around Australia and is a key part of the communications infrastructure, particularly in regional and remote locations. Support is provided to five urban and 23 regional radio stations, seven Remote Indigenous Media Organisations and 124 Remote Indigenous Broadcasting Services to deliver key health, education and employment service delivery messages which are broadcasted in a culturally appropriate way. In 2012–13 the Indigenous Broadcasting Program funded more than 70 projects which employed 116 full-time and 49 part-time positions in Indigenous broadcasting as well as enabling 112 entry level positions through the Indigenous Employment Initiative arrangements with the Office for the Arts.

The Government provided funding to the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) to develop a new, national digital free-to-air channel dedicated to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content. The new channel was developed in collaboration with the former National Indigenous Television (NITV) service and was launched on 12 December 2012 on SBS4. SBS assumed management responsibility for NITV's operations on 1 July 2012 and has ensured that the channel employs a majority of Indigenous employees. Thirty six out of the channel's 48 employees are Indigenous and are engaged as Indigenous writers, directors, producers, journalists and in other media roles.

Safe communities

The safety and wellbeing of families, particularly women and children, is fundamental to any healthy, functioning community. All Australians, no matter their background or where they live, have a right to live without the fear of violence. Family violence is a national problem that exists in all tiers of society. However, statistics show that Indigenous Australians, particularly children, are more likely to be the victims of violence and abuse than other Australians.

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring Indigenous families, particularly women and children, are able to live in safety—in their homes and out in their communities.

Initiatives to protect Indigenous families, including Alcohol Management Plans, night patrols, safe houses, and the provision of child-protection workers and violence counselling services, are key components of the Government's 10-year Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package.

The Government's policies are responding to calls from Indigenous Australians to help them tackle alcohol abuse, provide more support for vulnerable families and children and invest in the leadership skills of local Indigenous residents who are working to stamp out violence.

The Government is continuing to work with state and territory governments to develop an overarching policy framework under the Safe Communities Building Block. A stocktake is currently being conducted across jurisdictions of existing community safety activity with a view to developing advice to Council of Australian Governments, including next steps on Indigenous community safety later in 2013.

Significant progress continues to be made to improve Indigenous community safety levels through national initiatives including the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children, the National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework (which is addressing the serious and complex issues that exist for Indigenous Australians in interacting with the criminal justice system) and the National Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children.

Progress against the plan

Expanded services

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children is an ambitious, long-term approach to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Australia's children. A key priority of the framework is to ensure that Indigenous families and communities are in a position to provide their children with the safe and supportive environments they need to reach their full potential. The First Action Plan 2009–2012 established a firm foundation for the framework. The Australian Government provided more than $60 million to improve outcomes for vulnerable children under the First Action Plan. This investment has helped to deliver significant achievements for Indigenous children including:

- the development and agreement of a Priorities Plan for Indigenous Children, which prioritises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in all future national priority projects under the framework
- the establishment of 50 new Indigenous Parenting Support Services to promote positive outcomes for vulnerable Indigenous families with young children
- the development and production of the Winangay Indigenous kinship care resource to support carers and staff working in the field.

Building on the success of the First Action Plan, the Second Action Plan is focused on close collaboration between governments, the non-government sector and the community to reduce child abuse and neglect. Work will be undertaken to:

- explore collaborative approaches to child safety and wellbeing where children and families move between jurisdictions, particularly in Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory
- build the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations through partnerships with mainstream providers
- work towards building a community development approach to child protection in remote Indigenous communities
- develop strategies to encourage Indigenous people to work in child protection and family support.

Bomaventure Timaepatua, team leader of the Wurrumiyanga Night Patrol, Northern Territory. Photo: FaHCSIA.

On 4 May 2012, the Government announced a number of initiatives aimed at improving the safety and wellbeing of Anangu women and children and to help ensure they have support to provide a safe home environment for children. This included $100,000 to ensure South Australian child protection workers on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Lands are trained in forensic investigations to increase their capacity to respond to incidents of child abuse and neglect in the region; more than $890,000 over three years towards an Intensive Family Support Service; up to $500,000 per year for a new Family Mental Health Support Service; and $1.22 million over three years for a Financial Wellbeing Service in Amata and Mimili.

In May 2012, the Australian Government invested $600,000 to establish a Cross Border Family Violence Information and Intelligence Unit based in Alice Springs. The Unit's main objective is to improve the safety, health and wellbeing of families and children in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands through improved intelligence and information sharing among South Australia, Western Australian, and Northern Territory police forces and service providers in the region.

CASE STUDY

Community strengthened by culture

The Ba-ra Boolarng Dance and Culture program is reconnecting marginalised and disadvantaged Aboriginal children and their families with their culture to promote strength, resilience and positive futures.

For four years the Port Stephens Family Support Service has received Australian Government Indigenous Culture Support funding to deliver this diverse and engaging program in a number of towns and communities across the Port Stephens area in the Hunter Valley, NSW.

The program responds to community need by giving children and families who experience various levels of disadvantage regular opportunities to get involved in activities that strengthen their ties to culture, heritage and land.

Activities include groups where children learn, sing and perform traditional and contemporary songs and dances; cultural camps; and opportunities to showcase their culture in performances at significant events such as National Sorry Day and the anniversary of the National Apology. It's great fun and bonding for kids and parents alike. Recently the Ba-ra Boolarng group created a new group called Who We Are which was developed to address the negative impact of the Stolen Generations on Aboriginal communities.

'My boy is so proud of being part of all this. It's all he talks about on Tuesday nights [after his dance group]' says one parent.

'He's always asking us questions about what we did when we were young but we never know what to say cause we never had this. It's good cause our family can come and watch him, his nan and aunties and uncles –they've come.'

School teachers are also seeing the positive effects of Ba-ra Boolarng; noticing that children in the program are happier in school and have improved attendance.

'I see that the kids really feel they belong now—they have a real belonging.' Says one teacher.

'It seems to bring them in... before many of them were out of school, on the streets, at the shops.'

A key factor in Ba-ra Boolarng's success is the partnership with the Worimi community, who are involved in running the dance and culture groups and ensure the programs and activities are culturally appropriate.

The organisation also supports accredited training for young Aboriginal men and women in the community who gain enormous benefits from learning about their culture, and who share these benefits with their networks, their families and communities.

(Left to Right): Ben Apps, Jayden Ballengarry, Blake Green and Tosh Ballengarry performing at the Worimi Land Council's NAIDOC Day celebrations. Photo: Susan Pollock, courtesy of the Office for the Arts, DRALGAS.

The Indigenous Family Safety Program aims to raise awareness and reduce acceptance of family violence, assist Indigenous communities to deal with violence, and expand access to support services. In 2011–12, the program funded 32 projects in regional, urban and remote communities across the country. These projects delivered a range of activities to promote family and community safety, including healing services, victim support groups, community engagement activities and education programs.

The Borroloola Safe House in the Northern Territory is an example of a locally developed and delivered Indigenous Family Safety project that has become a vital part of the community. The safe house provides crisis accommodation for women and children experiencing violence. It employs local women and in doing so has gained the trust and respect of the community. The centre also provides workshops and activities to help support victims of family violence and raise community awareness.

In 2011–12, around 233 men were helped by the Indigenous Men's Outreach Service, which provides men's group programs and individual counselling. Around 567 women and 608 children came into contact with the Indigenous Women's Outreach Service in 2011–12, via phone, SMS, home visits or participation in programs and workshops. The service delivers case-management support and educational programs focused on life skills, good decision making and raising healthy children. The organisation reports that past clients are now settled into homes and using the problem-solving skills they have gained to deal with the issues and pressures they are facing.

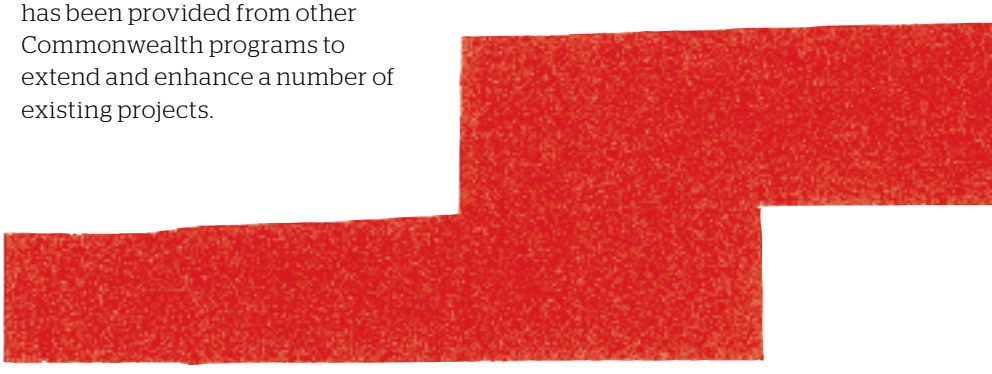
In the Northern Territory the Family Support Package has provided a coordinated response to Indigenous family violence across a number of remote communities. The package funded 22 safe places in 15 communities, as well as Darwin and Alice Springs, two Mobile Child Protection Teams and Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers in 13 remote communities. The latter provide a culturally appropriate liaison point with the child-protection system and other support services. Under Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Australian Government is continuing to fund the delivery of women's safe houses, mobile child protection teams and Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers by the Northern Territory Government. The Australian Government is also extending a number of important projects to support alcohol rehabilitation, early childhood and family services, and domestic and family violence services.

Measures to reduce violence and dysfunction are a key part of the Alice Springs Transformation Plan. As at December 2012, $25 million has been allocated for 38 projects to strengthen, expand and improve the capacity of local support services in Alice Springs, giving particular focus to alcohol rehabilitation, family support, family violence services, safety and security, early childhood, tenancy management, life skills and intensive case management. An additional $8.9 million has been provided from other Commonwealth programs to extend and enhance a number of existing projects.

Child protection income management is encouraging responsible behaviour by parents to enhance the wellbeing of their children in place across the Northern Territory, Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands, metropolitan Perth and the Kimberley in Western Australia and five additional trial locations around Australia. The measure was extended to the whole of the Northern Territory in 2010 as part of the Australian Government's response to the *Growing Them Strong, Together* report, which highlighted deficiencies in the Territory's child-protection system.

In 2011–12, the Government provided $11.4 million in funding through the Indigenous Justice Program to support safer communities by reducing Indigenous offending, and through that, reducing Indigenous victimisation and incarceration.

The Government also continues to provide family violence prevention legal services to Indigenous people in regional and remote communities across Australia. Services currently operate through 14 providers across 31 locations. The aim of the program is to ensure legal services are available to Indigenous people in situations of family violence and to reduce the likelihood of ongoing issues in the future.



CASE STUDY

North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency helps Rebecca beat the odds

When Rebecca (not her real name) was released from prison in the Northern Territory, she was determined not to go back again.

The odds aren't in her favour—ABS statistics show that more than 75 per cent of Indigenous Australians released from prison are returned within a year. However, the results of the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) Throughcare Service show that—with a little support—those odds can be beaten.

NAAJA's Indigenous Throughcare Service provides strength-based individual case management and referral services to help people rebuild their lives when they are released from prison or juvenile detention. Throughcare workers help their clients access the services they need, such as rehabilitation, accommodation, employment, education, training, health, life skills, and reconnection to family and community.

In Rebecca's case, a NAAJA Throughcare Worker met with her while she was in prison. Rebecca had high needs as she had been evicted from her home by her family. She had not finished high school but was keen to turn her life around. The Throughcare worker helped Rebecca to develop a post-release plan that included help with completing her high-school education, as Rebecca wanted to pursue further vocational opportunities.

(Left to Right): Matthew McCormack, Samantha Taylor-Hunt (Prisoner Throughcare Project Coordinator), Ellouise Davis and Terry Byrne from the North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency Throughcare Service. Photo: Anthony Heiser.

Upon her release from prison, Rebecca started and soon completed her schooling. Her Throughcare Worker kept in touch with Rebecca, giving her advice when she faced set-backs, and helping her with referrals for legal and counselling services. Rebecca is now enrolled in a government employment program and her Throughcare Worker is confident she will find employment when she completes the program.

Since the NAAJA Indigenous Throughcare Service commenced in February 2010, only 13 per cent (22 out of 168) of Throughcare clients were returned to prison while under the supervision of the Throughcare Workers. The success of NAAJA's Indigenous Throughcare Service was recognised when it won an Australian Crime and Violence Prevention Award from the Australian Institute of Criminology in 2012.

The NAAJA Indigenous Throughcare Service is funded by the Attorney-General's Department under the Indigenous Justice Program.

CASE STUDY

Male Behaviour Change Program: Aaron's Healing Journey

One 26 year old man's struggles with violent behaviour and substance abuse cost him the custody of his children, and landed him in the courts on more than one occasion. Aaron (not his real name) is now walking the hard road to healing the hurt he has done to himself and his loved ones, through the support of the Central Queensland (CQ) Healing Centre—Helem Yumba, and the Gatharr Weyebe Banabe Program.

The CQ Healing Centre—Helem Yumba, is a community organisation in Rockhampton, Queensland, which has developed a close and respectful relationship with local traditional owners, elders and many of the community families. Gatharr Weyebe Banabe means Aboriginal man's life change in Darumbal language, and is funded through the Indigenous Family Safety Program.

Psychologist, Therapeutic Team leader, and Male Behaviour Change program facilitator, Edward Mosby, at the Helem Yumba Central Queensland Healing Centre. Photo: Helem Yumba Central Queensland Healing Centre.

The Gatharr Weyebe Banabe program is built on culturally appropriate and respectful engagement practices. There is also an emphasis on helping clients address important needs such as housing, connections with family, financial situation, experienced racism and legal matters.

When Aaron was referred to the program following his second breach of his Domestic Violence Order, he was unemployed and showed signs of poor health. His accommodation was unstable, he had a record for being aggressive towards family and community members and had trouble following probationary orders.

Like many men, Aaron didn't like the idea of counselling or case management, and was unwilling to admit he had a problem.

Helem Yumba welcomed Aaron to several irregular yarning sessions. After a while, staff noticed he showed up more regularly and got more involved in his formal counselling sessions. When he was ready, Aaron attended the program's four-day Intensive Healing Retreat with several other Indigenous men who were facing similar family and domestic violence related matters in court.

During those four days, Aaron developed his understanding about his violence and anger. He openly accepted responsibility for his actions and made a commitment to change his behaviour. By the end of the retreat, Aaron had developed his own ongoing healing pathway, involving regular formal counselling sessions, and working with his case manager to find a job and improve his relationships.

Past experiences of grief and loss were a key factor in Aaron's violent behaviour but he has put a stop to it and is on the road to kicking his substance abuse problem for good. Most importantly for Aaron, he is reconnecting with his children and other significant family members. His journey isn't over, but he's on the right path.

Expanded in July 2011, DV-alert provides free, accredited training for health and allied health workers including practice nurses, Indigenous health workers , registered nurses, enrolled nurses, midwives, general practitioners, psychologists, practice managers, psychiatrists, pharmacists, physiotherapists, social workers, counsellors and mental health workers. It equips participants with the skills to recognise, respond and refer people experiencing domestic or family violence. Training is also available online.

The training program was recently reviewed to ensure cultural appropriateness content and presentation for Indigenous workers. Following trials of the new DV-Alert Indigenous focused training material in Kempsey, Mt Isa and Doomadgee, the new material was launched in July 2012. The new program has been provided at Broome in Western Australia, Bourke in New South Wales, Smithon in Tasmania, and Ceduna in South Australia. Further Indigenous specific training sessions are schedule during 2013.

Better law enforcement

The National Indigenous Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force, led by the Australian Crime Commission, works to collect and analyse intelligence from Indigenous communities to increase the understanding of the nature and extent of crime, including violence and child abuse. During 2011–2012, the task force conducted 18 field visits and 42 examinations, and issued 93 notices to produce documents. This intelligence is shared with law enforcement agencies and government departments to better coordinate efforts to protect vulnerable people. Under Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Government will continue to fund the operation of the task force for a further two years.

The Australian Government's Petrol Sniffing Strategy is working in regions of remote Australia to reduce the incidence and impact of petrol sniffing. The strategy includes:

- providing diversionary education activities by delivering accredited learning programs in non-school settings
- developing life and employability skills
- providing training and individual support
- supporting young people to re-engage with school or other mainstream activities when they are able.

Substance Abuse Intelligence Desks located in Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin in the Northern Territory and Marla in South Australia have been complemented by the establishment of a Substance Abuse Intelligence Desk in Kalgoorlie in Western Australia. The units collect intelligence and share information that enables them to target and disrupt the trafficking of both legal and illegal substances to remote Indigenous communities. Dog Operations Units are located in Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin and work collaboratively with the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desks teams, targeting areas and individuals in cross border and local operations. In the 18 months to December 2012, the teams laid 143 charges or summonses for drug, alcohol and kava offences, and executed 289 search warrants. As a result 1754.7 kilograms of cannabis and 1710.3 kilograms of kava were seized, along with 20 vehicles and significant amounts of cash. Under Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Government is continuing to support the operation of the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desk and Dog Operations Units for the next 10 years.

Policing presence has increased significantly in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in north-west South Australia. As part of the Australian Government's response to the Mullighan Inquiry into child sexual abuse on the Lands, three new police stations have been opened on the APY Lands—at Amata, Mimili and Pukatja (Ernabella). With the opening of these stations, staff numbers to the APY Lands have increased to 19 sworn police officers, three community constables and one police Aboriginal liaison officer.

Since 2009, the Government has funded 60 extra Northern Territory police in a number of remote communities across the Northern Territory to better support community safety. A new permanent police station was built in Yarralin in 2011, police stations have been upgraded in five communities, and 18 'Themis' stations are now operational. Under Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Government is continuing to support the Northern Territory with ongoing funding for the 60 additional police, and will fund the building of four additional remote police complexes.

The Northern Territory Emergency Response Evaluation Report 2011 shows that the increased police presence has resulted in more incidents being reported and increased numbers of subsequent convictions. However, while recorded crime has gone up, community survey results show that people in communities are feeling safer than they did previously. Sizeable proportions of both community members and service providers surveyed for the evaluation said that their communities have become safer.

The Government continues to fund community night patrols across the Northern Territory as part of the Stronger Futures package. The patrols are community-based services that assist people at risk of either causing harm or becoming the victims of harm, to help break the cycle of violence and crime in remote communities. Patrols operate across 80 communities, employing more than 350 local Aboriginal people.

Community night patrols promote Indigenous leadership, governance and ownership of community safety. Both the Northern Territory Emergency Response Evaluation Report 2011 and the Stronger Futures consultations indicated that local people supported the patrolling service in their communities. The Government also continues to support the Nyoongar Patrol in Perth and the Kullarri Patrol in Broome in Western Australia.

The Government provides funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services to provide high quality, culturally sensitive and accessible legal assistance services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, to ensure that they can fully exercise their legal rights as Australian citizens. There are eight Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services across Australia, one in each state and territory, with two in the Northern Territory and one in New South Wales/ACT. Indigenous legal services provide advice, duty lawyers and case work services in criminal, family and civil law. Legal assistance in criminal matters continues to be the area of highest demand. Services are delivered from a number of permanent locations, as well as court circuits, bush courts and outreach locations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services also deliver services at Indigenous-specific courts.

Under the Stronger Futures package announced in 2012, continued additional funding of $3.5 millon per year was made available to the Northern Territory Legal Aid Commission, three Community Legal Centres and two Aboriginal Legal Services to deliver additional legal assistance services. Assistance is provided in criminal matters, child protection, welfare rights and tenancy. Legal assistance providers are also required to work in partnership to ensure legal assistance is provided on an outreach basis to remote communities.

Tackling alcohol abuse

Alcohol and drug abuse is devastating the lives of too many Aboriginal families and their communities. The Government has implemented measures to address problem drinking and is working with Aboriginal communities to reduce the harm caused by alcohol to build safer, stronger communities. Under Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory, the Australian Government committed $76 million over 10 years to respond directly to what Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory said was most important to them—more help to respond to alcohol abuse.

Alcohol abuse is a major contributing factor to the high levels of Indigenous disadvantage, including low life expectancy, poor health, poor education and poor employment outcomes. The evidence shows a clear link between excessive alcohol consumption and violence and abuse.

Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory have said consistently in consultations with the Australian Government since 2008 that they are concerned about the devastating effects alcohol abuse is having on families including deaths, ill-health, family violence and low school attendance.

Working with Aboriginal communities to develop an Alcohol Management Plan is one way that Government is supporting community owned and driven reform. Alcohol Management Plans are a way for communities to talk about the harm that too much alcohol can cause people, to reduce the amount of alcohol consumed, help problem drinkers to change their behaviour and minimise the harm caused by alcohol abuse in the community—especially to women, children and families.

Community members at the alcohol management meeting in Adelaide River, Northern Territory. Photo: FaHCSIA.

This includes activities such as rehabilitation services for people returning to their community to stop drinking, or education about the harm that drinking has on people's health. There are currently 23 communities and a number of town camps in Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs developing Alcohol Management Plans.

The Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory legislation which came into effect in July 2012 continues alcohol restrictions in remote communities in the Northern Territory and strengthens alcohol management planning arrangements at the local community level. Taking into account feedback from community consultations, the Government will introduce minimum standards for Alcohol Management Plans that are focused on reducing alcohol-related harm and ensuring the safety of community members—particularly women, children and families.

These new minimum standards will provide extra protection to communities in an effort to tackle alcohol abuse and related harm. The minimum standards let people know what needs to be in an Alcohol Management Plan, who needs to be involved and included and how to ensure Alcohol Management Plans are effectively evaluated. Alcohol Management Plans are not about reducing or lifting restrictions in Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory, but are intended to assist Aboriginal communities to reduce the harm caused by alcohol.

Government representatives sat down with community leaders, women's groups and others including police, health workers, domestic violence workers and alcohol reference groups in the Northern Territory to hear what people thought should be included in the draft minimum standards.

Once finalised, the minimum standards will be tabled in Parliament and form part of Stronger Futures legislation. The Government will continue to support Aboriginal communities who choose to develop an Alcohol Management Plan and ensure that they address the new minimum standards.

Significant investment has also been applied to support the reduction in alcohol-related harm in the Northern Territory, including:

- the Darwin Watch House Pickup and Diversionary Program for people released from protective custody
- the Back to Bush Indigenous Youth Extension Program
- the Save a Mate Our Way in Tiwi and Daly Program run by young people with an emphasis on youth health issues such as alcohol and drug use and mental health. The program includes the employment of six part-time youth program community workers
- the Katherine Aboriginal Alcohol and Other Drugs Management Program and the employment of one project/training officer, one senior project officer and seven Aboriginal alcohol and drug workers.

Australian Government investment has also seen:

- the installation of additional street lighting in hot spots in the Alice Springs central business district to reduce crime and antisocial behaviour
- the employment of an Alice Springs senior community worker through the Alice Springs Transformation Plan to engage town camp residents, government agencies, community organisations and businesses to help address the long-term problems contributing to antisocial behaviour and disadvantage in the town camps
- the employment of a clinical supervisor, an alcohol and drugs nurse and two outreach workers to deliver educational and awareness programs relating to alcohol and other drugs in the Palmerston and Darwin regions.

The Australian Government continues to support increased liquor licensing compliance activity in the Northern Territory, and is consulted on applications for liquor licence variations. The Government committed significant funding on a number of supply control initiatives, in particular the successful buyback of two takeaway liquor licences in Alice Springs.

Funding has also been applied to build on the evidence base in this area of work. This includes funding for a longitudinal study on the correlation between price, patterns of consumption and related harm in the Alice Springs region, completed by Curtin University; a Sentinel Reporting Project on measuring significant change in a community through the implementation of Alcohol Management Plans in remote communities being undertaken by Little Fish Pty Ltd., and Licensed Social Clubs research in the Northern Territory being undertaken by Bowchung Pty Ltd Consultants.

In November 2011, the Government released a new study that showed controls on alcohol supply in Central Australia have helped to combat rising levels of alcohol abuse and violence. The longitudinal study, conducted by the National Drug Research Institute during the period prior to and following the introduction of alcohol controls into the Northern Territory, found that the number of people presenting at the Alice Springs Hospital Emergency Department was significantly lower than those predicted on the basis of prior trends, especially from 2008 onwards.

Reports are contributing to the evidence base that helps inform future policy development aimed at tackling alcohol abuse in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and also informing policy makers about what works.

Research published in 2011 shows an association between alcohol restrictions and falling rates of serious injury in Aboriginal communities in Cape York. The absolute and proportional rates of serious injury retrievals by the Royal Flying Doctor Service fell significantly as restrictions on legal access to alcohol increased, with the researchers reporting that "they are now at their lowest recorded level in 15 years".

The Australian Government is providing a further $20 million over three years from 2011-12 to 2013-14 through the Breaking the Cycle of Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Indigenous Communities program to tackle alcohol and substance abuse in targeted Indigenous communities across the country. The program will assist Indigenous communities to work with government and non-government organisations to develop and implement Community Alcohol and Substance Abuse Plans that are community owned and driven. The Program will also provide prevention programs to tackle youth substance abuse.

Youth in Communities

Diversionary programs play an important role in improving community safety and helping children to take control of their lives. Through the Youth in Communities program, the Government is delivering a wider range of initiatives in the Northern Territory that divert young people from risky behaviours and promote pathways to better health, personal wellbeing and participation in school and work.

Youth in Communities services are delivered in more than 50 community locations in the Northern Territory. In 2011-12 the program received $9.1 million in funding. Under Stronger Futures, the Australian Government will provide increased support for the Youth in Communities program, with a greater focus on minimising youth suicide.

Over the period January 2012 to June 2012, around 80 youth workers (including Indigenous youth work trainees) were employed in full-time or part-time positions though Youth in Communities service activities.

A range of programs and activities are being delivered by service providers, including case management, youth camps, peer mentoring, music, art, sport and cultural activities and alternative education programs. Over the period January 2012 to June 2012, 11,837 attendees participated in Youth In Communities activities, with an additional 1152 attendees taking part in suicide prevention activities/services.

The Line

Launched 20 June 2010, The Line is an innovative social marketing campaign developed to encourage respectful relationships and change the attitudes and behaviours that contribute to violence. The campaign targets the 12 to 20 year old age group, as this is when young people first become interested in relationships and are forming their attitudes. The campaign also seeks to engage parents, teachers, youth workers, counsellors and sports coaches, as young people are likely to be influenced by adults around them.

Complementing the campaign are educational resources specifically designed for young Indigenous Australians. The Line—Respect Each Other, Serpent Tales resources released in May 2011, encourage Indigenous children, teachers and communities to discuss and promote healthy respectful relationships. The resources cover themes such as bullying, spreading rumours via text and abuse. Materials have been provided to around 800 Australian schools with high Indigenous student numbers and Indigenous community organisations.

In response to feedback from Indigenous communities who used the Serpent Tales resources, resources addressing the issue of jealousy were developed and launched in July 2012.

CASE STUDY

Titans Achievement Program—an all star experience

At the annual National Rugby League (NRL) Indigenous All Stars game in February, Jetstar Gold Coast Titans player, Preston Campbell, gave a big shout out to the kids from Mornington Island and Doomadgee who were on the trip of a lifetime. The kids were participating in a new program designed at getting them to engage with their community and reach their full potential —and it's working.

The Jetstar Gold Coast Titans have teamed up with the Mount Isa Regional Operations Centre and the communities of Mornington Island and Doomadgee to deliver a youth achievement program.

The Titans Achievement Program is being delivered to Indigenous youth, aged 14–24 years across four youth transition points: learning after primary school age, starting a productive working life, adopting a healthy lifestyle and exercising citizenship. As a reward for their effort in working toward their career goals, in February 2012, 30 young people

(Left to Right: Titans Achievement Program participants Rachel Escott, Hazel Douglas, Shanelle Doomadgee and Tony Douglas. Photo: Jetstar Gold Coast Titans.

Governance and leadership

Governance is about decision-making structures and management at the organisational, community and government levels. It is about how people organise themselves as a group to manage their affairs and achieve things that matter to them. Strong leadership is vital to the process of building governance because leaders take responsibility, harness and mobilise communities, mediate and lead strategic thinking. Strong leadership is critical to addressing Indigenous disadvantage across the building blocks.

The Governance and Leadership Building Block seeks to ensure:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people actively participate in policy-making, program implementation, and democratic and electoral processes
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are represented through credible governance mechanisms
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and governmental governance and leadership are strengthened.

The Australian Government is continuing to invest in Indigenous governance and leadership at the individual, community, organisational and national level.

Progress against the plan

National Indigenous Governance and Leadership Framework

The Government is leading the development of a National Indigenous Governance and Leadership Framework in partnership with state and territory governments. The framework will provide strategic direction for governments and recognise and promote best practice across urban, regional and remote locations. The National Indigenous Reform Agreement states that strong leadership is needed to champion and demonstrate ownership of reform. Effective governance arrangements in communities and organisations as well as strong

from Mornington Island and Doomadgee were provided with the opportunity to attend a week long residential camp at the Gold Coast, during NRL Indigenous All Stars week.

Apart from being able to mingle with their favourite NRL stars, being part of the NRL All Stars week and being special guests at the Preston Campbell Testimonial Dinner, the young people attended workshops presented by the Aboriginal Centre for the Performing Arts, Healing Foundation, Griffith University, and the All Stars Learn Earn Legend! Job Expo. The experience provided opportunities for young people to build on job skills, learn new skills, network with employers and improve their chances of finding a job.

The week-long program kept both participants and facilitators on the go from sunup until sundown and was thoroughly appreciated by all who attended. Comments from the young participants included: 'it was amazing just being there; it was a proud moment for me,'; 'I enjoyed what life has to offer young people'; 'we got to experience something we could never have expected'; and "I enjoyed that they encouraged us to follow our dream'.

The young people have returned from their experience to continue working toward their career goals with stronger relationships, more self-confidence and self-esteem. Those engaged with the young people have identified a 'positive vibe in the community' and that the 'young people have come back with a great buzz about their future'.

The next stage of the program is to build on the momentum gained. Facilitators Clinton Toopi and Preston Campbell have said that 'young people have a lot on their minds and have a lot to talk about and we are looking forward to continuing to listen to what they have to say'.

From left to right: Titans Achievement Program participants Mark Hill, Christyles Jacobs, Rebecca Diamond, Tyrone Watt and Wesley McDinny. Photo: Jetstar Gold Coast Titans.

engagement by governments at all levels are essential to long-term sustainable outcomes.

Consultation has been undertaken with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, governance and leadership experts and academics, Australian Government agencies and state and territory governments. The Framework is being undertaken in conjunction with the Council of Australian Government's Select Council on Women's Issues project on developing a national approach to promoting the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Islander women in governance and decision-making within communities.

Developing individuals

The Australian Government's Indigenous Leadership Program directly responds to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement's governance and leadership building block. The program is focused on strengthening the leadership capacity of Indigenous men, women and young people aged 18 years and over. Strengthening the leadership and governance skills of individuals and communities will lead to more effective participation in decision making, stronger families and communities and improved services.

Since 2004, more than 8000 Indigenous people have taken part in supported leadership activities under the program. These participants have embarked on a personal leadership journey and developed the skills necessary to take on leadership roles within their families and communities.

Recognising the importance of leadership for communities, the Indigenous Leadership Program is being used to strengthen leadership as a foundation for effective governance and collective decision making at a community level. Leadership and governance, coupled with strong engagement from government, helps to ensure that Indigenous people are engaged in the development of reforms that will impact on them.

Adding to the work being done under the Indigenous Leadership Program, the Government will continue to provide funding support to the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre until 2014–15. This ongoing relationship will see 96 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people participate in accredited Certificate II and IV Indigenous Leadership programs each year, providing an extension to their leadership journeys.

Indigenous Women's Grants provide small grants to eligible organisations across Australia that work to enhance the leadership skills of Indigenous women. These organisations provide development in areas such as parenting skills, living skills, pathways to educational and employment opportunities, personal development, social and networking opportunities, and local leadership and governance issues.

The Australian Government has also provided $150,000 to assist the recently-established Australian Indigenous Governance Institute with the development of a detailed business plan. The Institute is being established to connect Indigenous groups, communities and organisations to best-practice, expertise and knowledge on governance with a focus on building sustainable, effective and legitimate Indigenous governance on the ground.

These actions aim to improve outcomes across the Council of Australian Governments' building blocks and targets to overcome Indigenous disadvantage, in line with identified local needs and priorities.

Local capacity building

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery, the Australian Government has committed $187.7 million over six years to improve the delivery of services and support Indigenous community governance and leadership within 29 remote priority locations across the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales and South Australia. In 2011–12, 13 leadership and governance activities were delivered across 16 Remote Service Delivery communities.

The Government is supporting these communities and Indigenous organisations to undertake community capacity building and leadership initiatives including engagement workshops, leadership development workshops and community development training.

Under the National Partnership Agreement, local capacity is also being supported by strengthening interpreter and translation services. For example, in Amata and Mimili in South Australia, efforts to increase local governance capacity development have been successful through integrating Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara language in community meetings and government exchanges by using interpreters and offering language courses to government employees.

CASE STUDY

The 2012 Reconciliation Australia and BHP Billiton Indigenous Governance Awards

The 2012 Reconciliation Australia and BHP Billiton Indigenous Governance Awards were the best ever, with the largest and highest quality field of applicants in the Awards' seven year history.

The ways in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people effectively weave together their values, culture and systems into Western governance frameworks is the focus of the Awards. The best Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are using governance to forge a path for the future success of their children, their families and their communities.

The 2012 winners, Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council and the Yiriman Project are both examples of organisations and initiatives that are taking the lead in tackling important issues and making key decisions about their futures. Awards judge and outgoing Productivity Commission chairman Gary Banks says of the two organisations:

'These organisations and initiatives serve as models not only for other Indigenous organisations, but for mainstream organisations as well. They are responsive and innovative, as well as well-structured and accountable. They typically operate on small budgets, but leverage what resources they have to achieve laudable results, often in areas where others have struggled.

'We know from the difficulties so many communities face that solutions to the issues confronting them are not easy and not just a matter of money or government will. Community leadership and the legitimacy of this leadership are absolutely essential. How leaders marshal resources, engage partners, mobilise assets and generate support to enact their vision is at the heart of effective governance.'

NPY Women's Council chairperson Yanyi Bandicha (centre), and coordinator Andrea Mason (right) share a proud moment with Indigenous Governance Awards Chair Professor Mick Dodson AM (left). Photo: Wayne Quilliam Photography, courtesy of Reconciliation Australia.

NPY Women's Council, the 2012 winner in Category A—incorporated organisations—has been a powerful voice for Central Australian women for over 30 years. As a service delivery and advocacy organisation they represent some of the most remote and disadvantaged communities in the country and they have an impressive track record of achievements. Awards judge and Business Council of Australia CEO Jennifer Westacott notes:

'NPY is driven by culture, by values, by principles. This drives services, advocacy and is evident in everything they do. They are innovative; time and time again they have found ways of working through challenges that are creative and clever.

'They have courageously tackled issues, but it's their governance, their clarity and their unambiguous accountability that allows them to take on tough issues. Without them, communities and families in their regions would be more vulnerable and at-risk.

'NPY puts women's law and culture at the centre of everything they do, and that has given them the strength to stand up for important issues. They count among their big wins the ban of take-away alcohol sales at Curtin Springs roadhouse and the introduction of non-sniffable Opal fuel in Central Australia.'

The Yiriman Project, winner in Category B for an unincorporated project or initiative, exemplifies how strong leadership and effective governance can combine to produce good outcomes. Frustrated and upset by the suicides, self-harm and substance abuse that have blighted young Aboriginal lives, the group of cultural leaders from the central and south-west Kimberley region decided to address what they saw as (and what scholarly research has confirmed to be) one of the root causes of the problem. Yiriman, which has been running since 2001, helps young Aboriginal men and women from the townships build a strong and resilient sense of identity and purpose by taking them on expeditions back to Country in the company of elders and family members. The elders are leveraging their resources—their cultural knowledge and bush skills—to save the lives of their young people. And it's working. Previously high suicide rates have decreased, and Yiriman 'graduates' are taking local leadership roles throughout the region. One Yiriman graduate now works as the Indigenous Engagement Officer in Fitzroy Crossing, others are engaged as rangers, youth workers and as mentors for other at-risk youth.

BHP Billiton CEO Marius Kloppers, speaking at the Awards ceremony in Melbourne, acknowledged the leadership role of the Indigenous Governance Awards finalists.

'Not only are your organisations participating in and contributing to society as thriving enterprises and community organisations,' he said.

'You are also demonstrating the courage to lead the way for others.''

Elder, Peter Hunter, Ardyaloon Community, Western Australia. Photo: FaHCSIA.

Support for Indigenous interpreters will continue to be sustained under a National Indigenous Interpreters Framework which is currently being developed by the Australian Government and the states and territories.

To increase Indigenous research and planning capability at the community level, 22 Community Planning, Research and Development Projects have commenced in Remote Service Delivery communities with 20 projects completed to date. Further projects are due to be delivered through to 2014. These projects help communities to identify local research and planning priorities in a culturally informed way, enabling the Government to be provided with advice at the local level.

The Local Community Awareness Program is being delivered in Remote Service Delivery communities. Four pilot programs were run during 2011–12, with the program being delivered to remaining Remote Service Delivery sites during 2012–13 and 2013–14.

The Local Community Awareness Program has been developed so that Indigenous people take a leadership role in sharing their local knowledge and experiences through a series of discussion groups involving community

leaders and government staff. This provides an opportunity for government staff to develop relationships with local Indigenous people and build an understanding of their history, issues and culture. Participants are encouraged to use this knowledge as a foundation for delivering services and programs that meet the needs of the local community.

Local capacity building has been one of the priorities of Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory, and governance was one of the key topics for discussion in the Stronger Futures consultations. There was a strong call in many communities to be more involved in decision making, for people in communities to work better together and for each community to speak with one voice about their concerns and needs. The Resetting the Relationship initiative helped to address this by strengthening the leadership and governance capacity of Indigenous community members and organisations in the Northern Territory.

In 2011–12, 37 Resetting the Relationship projects were delivered across the Northern Territory, including initiatives in 23 individual communities and 10 community stores, as well as Territory-wide or regionally-based activities.

Under Stronger Futures, the Government is continuing the work started under Resetting the Relationship by strengthening its investment to:

- build the capacity of local Indigenous organisations that will be involved in delivering important community services and
- provide increased opportunities to develop personal, family and community leadership.

This activity reflects the Government's commitment to work with Indigenous people in the Northern Territory to address the unacceptable levels of disadvantage still faced by too many people and to build stronger futures together.

Corporate governance

The Registrar of Indigenous Corporations is an independent statutory office holder who administers *the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* (CATSI Act). The Registrar addresses corporate governance issues by providing training and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations to ensure they comply with the law.

During 2011–12 the Registrar provided corporate governance training to 629 people from 154 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations across Australia—a total of 500 corporations since 2010.

The Registrar delivers the corporate governance training program Managing in Two Worlds which saw 13 Introduction to Corporate Governance workshops held across Australia and one Building Strong Stores workshop in the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands. Three Certificate IV in Business (Governance) courses were also presented as well as corporation-specific training workshops for corporations with specific needs.

In 2011–12, the Registrar conducted 61 formal examinations of corporations to check their financial and governance standards.

During 2011–12, 173 new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander corporations registered under the CATSI Act. More than 2440 corporations are currently registered under the CATSI Act. Reporting compliance rates reached 96.2 per cent in 2011–12 (compared to 52 per cent in 2006–07).

National Compact: working together

Indigenous not-for-profit organisations play a key role in delivering government services. The National Compact: *working together* outlines the aspirations and principles which form a framework for new ways of governing, including through forming innovative partnerships with the not-for-profit sector.

The Compact is supported by overarching principles and eight priority action areas. These are to:

- document and promote the value and contribution of the not-for-profit sector
- protect the not-for-profit sector's right to advocacy irrespective of any funding relationship that might exist
- recognise not-for-profit sector diversity in consultation processes and sector development initiatives
- improve information sharing, including greater access to publicly-funded research and data
- reduce red tape and streamline reporting
- simplify and improve consistency of financial arrangements including across state and federal jurisdictions
- act to improve paid and unpaid workforce issues
- improve funding and procurement processes.

The Government is committed to supporting the principles of the National Compact. Significant progress continues to be made to reduce the administrative burden on organisations so that they can more easily deliver services. On 3 December 2012 the Australian Charities and Notforprofit Commission was established to further support the reduction of red tape.

National Congress of Australia's First Peoples

The National Congress of Australia's First Peoples' focus for 2012–13 is to continue to draw on the diverse expertise of its members to drive solutions and innovation. The Congress has developed working groups to access the expertise and views of members on the key policy issues of health, education, justice and country, and from that develop statements of Congress's policies and intended actions. This has included the Congress providing a response to the Gonski review of school funding and a submission to the parliamentary committee inquiry on protecting and maintaining Aboriginal languages. The Congress has also supported the Justice Reinvestment Campaign for Aboriginal Young People.

Recognising that the Congress is still in the early stages, there has been significant work undertaken to grow its membership resulting in it currently having more than 130 organisational members and 4600 individual members.

A key achievement in 2012 was the negotiation and finalisation of an engagement framework between the Congress and Australian Government agencies, which was signed in September 2012. This framework aims to facilitate the engagement between the Congress and Government agencies to ensure Indigenous views are considered in Government policies and programs. It also assists in resetting the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the Government. Implementation of the framework has commenced and will continue to be a focus for 2013.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance has been running since March 2010. Now into its third year, the Alliance is focusing on increasing the public and political participation of Indigenous women by:

- lodging a submission to the review of the Australian Constitution to include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- producing a report on the issues addressed by government relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women in the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women report
- producing a report card on how government is delivering strategy 3.3 of the National Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and their Children, which aims to improve access to appropriate services for Indigenous women and children
- producing a report on Indigenous women and superannuation.

Burraluba Yura Ngurra Halls Creek Workers Hostel, Western Australia. Photo: FaHCSIA.

Leona Yunkaporta, Indigenous Engagement Officer (IEO) for the Western Cape community of Aurukun. Photo: Ray Wallis, FaHCSIA.

CASE STUDY

Young traditional leader joins Cairns Regional Operations Centre (ROC)

Leona Yunkaporta joined the Cairns ROC in May 2012 as the Indigenous Engagement Officer (IEO) for the Western Cape community of Aurukun. Leona is from the Wanum Clan on her father's side and Apalech Clan on her mother's side. Leona speaks fluent Wik Mungkan and is much attuned to her cultural obligations in her community.

Leona has completed two years of her teaching degree and has put her studies on hold due to family commitments. She has a keen interest in youth engagement in her community and recently participated in the inaugural Eric Deeral Indigenous Youth Leadership Program in Brisbane.

Leona sees her role as an IEO as critical to her community. She interfaces with her community about what government is doing to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage as well as progress on the Cape York Welfare Reform Trial.

Leona believes that education is key to the development of her community, as this leads to informed choices for employment and career paths.

Leona hopes that her contribution to her community as an IEO is valuable and rewarding and feels she has a lot to learn from being a public servant. She also feels that government can benefit from her knowledge as a community member.

Commission on the Status of Women

In Australia's preparations for the annual sessions of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), the Office for Women consults with Indigenous women, particularly through National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance. The Australian Government has also supported the participation of Indigenous women on Government delegations to the Commission on the Status of Women since 2009.

At the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, Australia co-sponsored the first stand-alone resolution on Indigenous issues agreed at the Commission. This resolution stressed the importance of recognising the distinct and crucial contribution Indigenous women make, through their knowledge and vital role in diverse local economies, in poverty eradication, food security and sustainable development.

National approach to promote the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

One of the key reform tasks for the Select Council on Women's Issues is to develop a national approach to promote the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in governance and decision-making within communities and organisations.

Electoral participation

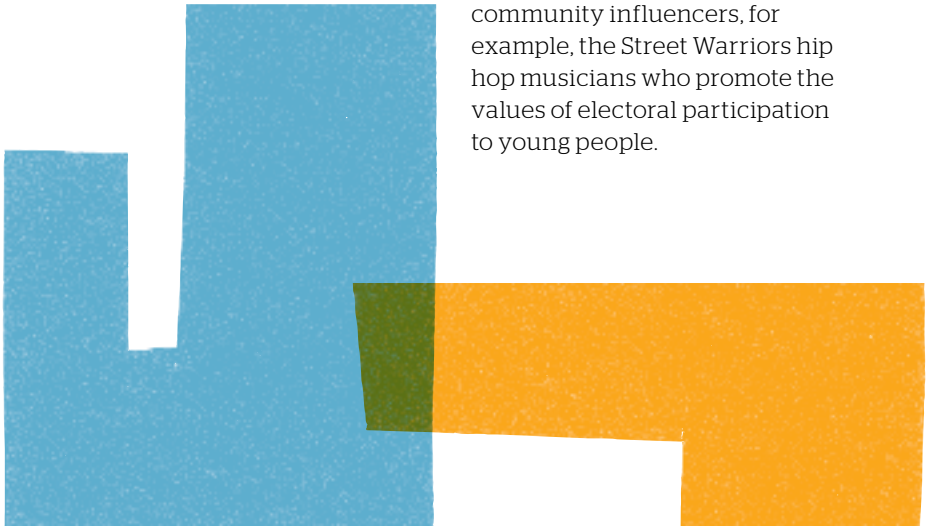
Last year was the 50th anniversary of the passage of legislation giving Indigenous people the right to vote in federal elections. Although this was a very important anniversary, 50 years on, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to be less likely to enrol to vote, less likely to vote, and more likely to vote informally than other Australians.

In an effort to increase electoral participation among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in remote areas of Australia, the Australian Government, through the Australian Electoral Commission, has allocated $3.6 million a year for the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program. This includes placing 20 field officers across Australia, of whom the majority are Indigenous, to undertake face-to-face education about electoral matters. They are supported by Indigenous Electoral Awareness Officers who assist in delivering electoral education. The aim of the program is to improve Indigenous people's knowledge of electoral matters, increase enrolment levels, and reduce informal voting. Positive Indigenous participation in democratic processes is particularly important as Australia considers amendments to the Constitution to recognise Indigenous people.

Outreach activities include delivering education sessions in schools and TAFEs, providing electoral information at events such as football carnivals, music festivals, NAIDOC events and employment expos.

In addition to the field officer program, the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program activities in 2011–12 included:

- initiatives to mark the 50th anniversary and to promote Indigenous electoral participation, including the 2012 'Louder than one voice' calendar featuring Indigenous community leaders and cultural identities the Louder than one voice' DVD documenting the history of the Indigenous vote and including interviews with Indigenous people about the value of voting, and the week-long National Indigenous Youth Parliament in Canberra in May for 50 young Indigenous youth leaders
- communications and media activities to promote electoral participation and raise awareness of the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program
- co-sponsorships and collaborations with non-government organisations, for example, with the National Rugby League to promote electoral participation at the nationally-televised Indigenous All Stars rugby league game in February
- an ambassador program of community influencers, for example, the Street Warriors hip hop musicians who promote the values of electoral participation to young people.



CASE STUDY

Future Leadership in the Torres Strait

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) provides opportunities for 18 to 25 year olds to experience a challenging leadership and self-development experience through the Torres Strait Youth Leadership Program. The Torres Strait Youth Leadership Program is one component of a suite of regional capacity building initiatives available to Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal people residing in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula Area.

The TSRA provides five Torres Strait Youth Leadership Program scholarships each year. The Scholarship involves a 17 day residential course delivered by the Australian Rural Leadership Foundation. The program covers leadership development, inter-personal skills, confidence building and networking. Participants are challenged personally and professionally in a safe, physically demanding learning environment.

Rellis Petrou from Thursday Island is a recent graduate from the program. Rellis was motivated to undertake the program by her desire to seek clarity about her future and the need to set herself some realistic and achievable goals. She was exposed to a number of outdoor challenges designed to increase her self-confidence, planning abilities, team work, networking, trust and resilience. The course also included a visit to Parliament House and the Australian War Memorial.

Rellis Petrou from Thursday Island is a recent graduate from the Torres Strait Youth Leadership Program. Photo: Torres Strait Regional Authority.

Rellis completed all activities and rose to the challenges put before her.

'The course pushed me out of my comfort zone and was very beneficial for me to help define my future goals,' she says.

'I discovered that nothing is ever too hard to do and that I should never give up on trying'.

The Australian Rural Leadership Foundation and the TSRA have a long partnership in developing the capacity for future leaders in the Torres Strait region.

Promoting electoral participation at a community event. Photo: AEC.

In 2011–12 the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program sought to work more closely with the Australian Electoral Commission's jurisdictional counterparts and other Australian Government agencies, for example, to share resources particularly in remote areas and reduce the incidence of multiple agency visits to remote communities, as well as applying a whole-of-government approach. Indigenous Electoral Participation Program field staff in New South Wales established a working partnership with the New South Wales Electoral Commission to develop common educational materials and combine forces to deliver outreach services.

A review of the Indigenous Electoral Participation Program, completed in July 2012, has confirmed that the program is continuing to achieve its objectives. The assessment has indicated increased levels of enrolment and turnout to elections, and identified new directions to increase the impact of the program. This includes a greater focus on collaboration with other agencies, an increased use of Electoral Awareness Officers, expanded use of the media and enhancements to data management systems. The focus in 2013 will be to implement the new directions identified in the evaluation. This program is being implemented by the Australian Electoral Commission.

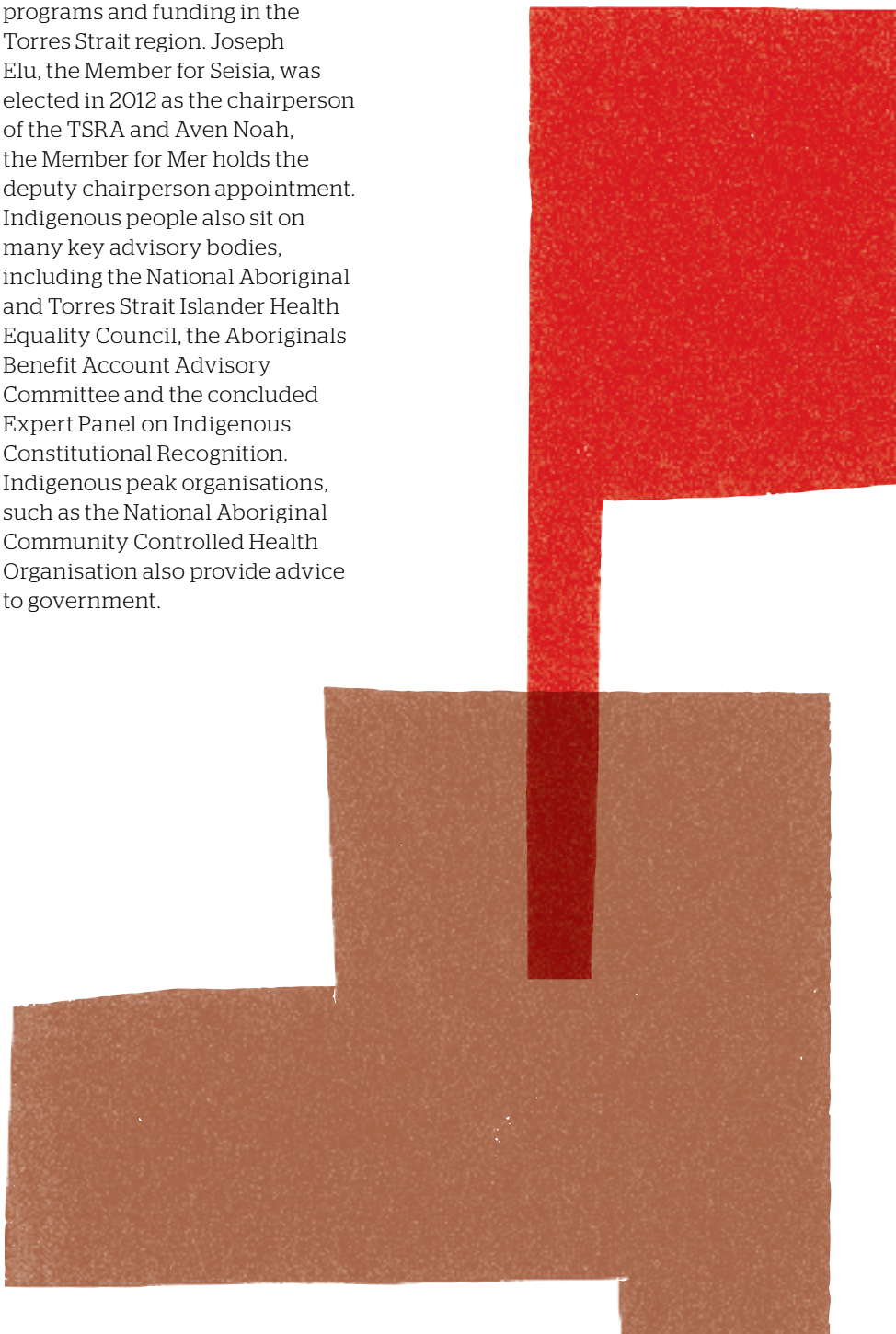
Portfolio bodies

This report has highlighted the contribution of statutory authorities or Commonwealth companies that have been established for the benefit of Indigenous people and allow Indigenous board members and others to have input to government decisions. They manage important services and programs.

Dr Dawn Casey chairs the boards of both Indigenous Business Australia and the Indigenous Land Corporation. The deputy chair on both boards is Mr Ian Trust, chair of the Wunan Foundation in the East Kimberley in Western Australia. There are seven other Indigenous board members across these two bodies and five non-Indigenous board members. Indigenous people are also serving on the governing council of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and on the board of Aboriginal Hostels Limited.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited's approach to governance, leadership and management is unparalleled. It is a Commonwealth Company, governed by a majority non-executive Indigenous Board and 50 per cent Indigenous Senior Executive. Aboriginal Hostels Limited continues to maintain the highest level of Indigenous employment across the Australian Public Service. Over the past five years, Aboriginal Hostels Limited has averaged 76 per cent in Indigenous employment. This level of employment leads to the attraction and support for more Indigenous Australians willing to take responsibility and be exemplary leaders in their communities of interest.

The Torres Strait Regional Authority (TSRA) has a board of 20 Indigenous people elected by their communities every four years. This board sets priorities for all Australian Government programs and funding in the Torres Strait region. Joseph Elu, the Member for Seisia, was elected in 2012 as the chairperson of the TSRA and Aven Noah, the Member for Mer holds the deputy chairperson appointment. Indigenous people also sit on many key advisory bodies, including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Equality Council, the Aboriginals Benefit Account Advisory Committee and the concluded Expert Panel on Indigenous Constitutional Recognition. Indigenous peak organisations, such as the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation also provide advice to government.



Chapter 5

Looking forward

The concerted efforts of governments, Indigenous people and the wider community have resulted in significant progress being made in relation to a number of Closing the Gap targets over the past five years.

There is, of course, plenty still to be done before the nation can be confident of meeting the longer-term targets. However, the successes of these early years are laying good foundations for systemic change. None of these targets sit in isolation. Secure and appropriate housing improves the likelihood that a child will attend school regularly. Addressing preventable childhood ailments can boost school performance. Education opens the door to secure and skilled employment. By their nature, the investments made as part of Closing the Gap over the past five years are investments whose full benefits will flow many years from now. Their effect will be seen when the four-year-olds setting off for preschool in their remote community in 2013 become the teenagers finishing high school and setting their sights on higher education or successfully competing for a local job in a new, sustainable industry sector.

In 2013 Australian governments will continue to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, industry and the broader community to drive further progress on the Closing the Gap targets. Parallel with these efforts, the Australian Government is pursuing a number of major, once-in-a-generation reforms in areas such as disability services and schooling, which will add momentum to the gains being delivered under Closing the Gap.

One of the fencing crew for Ngukurr Community's new cattle enterprise. Photo: FaHCSIA.

Some of these reforms are briefly described below.

While the focus of the early years of Closing the Gap has been and will continue to be schooling and health, 2013 will see a renewed focus on jobs and employment, with the roll-out of the Remote Jobs and Communities Program and a major public consultation starting this year, looking at the future of employment services after 2015.

Remote Jobs and Communities Program

The $1.5 billion Remote Jobs and Communities Program comes into effect on 1 July 2013, creating simpler and more integrated employment services for job seekers in remote communities.

To ensure that these local services are delivered, wherever possible, by locals themselves, the Australian Government is providing $15 million to help local and Indigenous organisations build up their capacity to deliver employment services and activities.

As part of the expression-of-interest process, potential service providers must demonstrate connections to, or acceptance by, communities within a remote region and their ability to deliver activities in such communities.

Employment Services beyond July 2015

On 11 December 2012 the Australian Government released the Employment Services—building on success: issues paper and embarked on a major public consultation on the future of employment services beyond July 2015.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations are encouraged to contribute their views on how employment services can be improved to better help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into employment.

A copy of the issues paper and further details on the consultation can be obtained at: *http://deewr.gov.au/employment-services-beyond-2015*.

Economic development

Empowering Indigenous people to enjoy the benefits that flow from working in a meaningful job will remain a priority in 2013. Under the Indigenous Economic Development Strategy 2011–18 governments, businesses, non-government organisations and Indigenous people are working together to encourage greater participation in the economic life of the community.

One sector where significant inroads have been made is the mining sector, which is increasingly providing economic opportunities and direct employment for Indigenous men and women. For example, mining companies are seeing the mutual benefits of employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their operations in the Pilbara region of Western Australia and Indigenous entrepreneurs have successfully tendered for business worth hundreds of millions of dollars in the region. The number of Indigenous Australians employed in the mining industry has more than doubled between 2006 and 2011.

Improving access to local employment opportunities is also central to the Stronger Futures package of initiatives in the Northern Territory.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory

The $3.4 billion 10-year Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package is focused on improving essential infrastructure and services in Indigenous communities, and improving access to local employment for Aboriginal people in these communities.

There is no quick-fix to addressing Indigenous disadvantage in the Northern Territory. That is why the Government has made a long-term commitment through the Stronger Futures package to work with Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory to build strong, independent lives, where communities, families and children are safe and healthy.

To facilitate this, the Australian and Northern Territory governments have agreed to the National Partnership Agreement on Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory. This sets out how the two governments will work together and with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory over the next 10 years to improve their living standards and future opportunities.

Next steps in education

Achieving the Closing the Gap target on access to early childhood education is an important first step towards closing the gap in educational attainment between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The challenge now is to ensure that access translates into attendance, so that the learning habits of a lifetime can be instilled at the earliest possible opportunity.

The Australian Government will negotiate the National Plan for School Improvement with state, territory and non-government

CASE STUDY

Savanna Burning— A cleaner future

Jeff Long, along with other Traditional Owners, has a burning desire to see Fish River in the Northern Territory become a showcase for cutting edge fire and land management techniques and provide jobs for his people.

Fish River is the first savanna burning project in Australia approved by the Clean Energy Regulator under the Carbon Farming Initiative to earn carbon credits.

The management of its significant natural and cultural heritage values is creating training and employment opportunities for local Indigenous people.

While Jeff, a Larbaganyan man, sits on the Fish River Indigenous Advisory Group which provides advice and direction for the management of the property, he has also worked as a ranger on Fish River and understands the power of fire.

"The rangers are already doing land management work such as weed and feral animal control," Jeff said. "Under the savanna burning project, rangers carry out controlled early season 'cool' burns-offs so you don't get huge uncontrolled hot fires coming through in the late season".

The end result is that thousands of tonnes of carbon are prevented from being released into the atmosphere.

The Indigenous Land Corporation acquired Fish River, a perpetual crown lease of 182,500ha in the Daly River region, in 2010, in a ground-breaking collaboration with the Australian Government's Caring for Our Country program, The Nature Conservancy and Pew Environment Group.

Central to the future of Fish River is the implementation of the Carbon Farming Initiative approved savannah burning methodology. This will secure an ongoing income stream to support Indigenous employment and training and management of the property into the future.

By using methods that draw on Indigenous pattern burning and science, the Indigenous Land Corporation savanna burning regime has dramatically reduced the intense, destructive late season fires on Fish River. The area that had been historically burned by wildfires each year has been reduced from 69 per cent to around 50 per cent. Importantly, the area burnt by destructive, late season fires has been reduced from 35 per cent to less than 3 per cent.

Fish River also acts as a demonstration burning project. In association with the Northern Australia Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance, the lessons learned at Fish River will be passed on to assist many other Indigenous groups across northern Australia to set up accredited savanna burning projects under the Carbon Farming Initiative, to establish sustainable income streams and increase Indigenous employment in land management.

Larbagayan traditional owner Darren Sambono carrying out a controlled cool season burn on Fish River, Northern Territory. Photo: TNC © Ted Wood.

Lower Murray Medicare Local (North West Victoria and South West NSW) has teamed up with the Royal Flying Doctor Service to offer a new patient transport and support service. Photo: Royal Flying Doctor Service Victoria Patient Transport Program, courtesy of DoHA.

education providers in 2013. This new work will see greater resources flow to those students and those schools in greatest need. The national plan will provide resources and the drive for school improvement to assist education providers to progress and build upon the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan.

Supporting regular school attendance will be one of the priorities in 2013. Another will be the development of strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to complete Year 12 or pursue vocational education and training opportunities.

In addition, the Stronger Futures program in the Northern Territory will continue to support teacher training and teacher retention, and look at ways of improving school engagement and attendance by children.

Importantly, the gains achieved in early childhood will not be confined to remote areas. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander pre-schoolers in urban and regional areas, where the Indigenous population is growing most quickly, will benefit from the mainstream focus on universal access to early childhood education over the coming period.

Next steps in Remote Service Delivery

In 2013 the Australian Government will continue to work with state and territory governments to address Indigenous disadvantage in priority locations, including in the 29 locations covered by the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery.

Early gains have been made in many of these communities. Overcrowding rates have fallen, school attainment rates are rising and employment has increased. Governments will keep the focus on these priority locations in 2013 to ensure these gains are maintained.

Priorities under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery for 2013 will include the delivery of community leadership skills programs, strengthening interpretation and translation services, improving cultural awareness levels for Government staff and working with communities to increase economic and social participation.

This work will be supported by significant investment, including new youth hubs, children and family centres, upgrades to health and school facilities, development of retail and tourism infrastructure and the construction of wellbeing centres.

Next steps in housing

The $5.5 billion National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing will continue to deliver unprecedented investment to improve housing stock in remote Indigenous communities to address overcrowding, homelessness and housing shortages. Preliminary figures for 2012–13 reveal that all jurisdictions are on track to meet or exceed their targets for the construction of new houses and the refurbishment of existing houses. This would be the third consecutive year in which all jurisdictions have met the targets set out in the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing.

CASE STUDY

Jaanimili—a new way of working for UnitingCare

New South Wales has the highest Indigenous population in Australia. As one of the state's largest providers of support for children and families, UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families recognised there was a pressing need to make their services more accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Five years ago, the organisation committed to develop specific services for Aboriginal children, families and communities. Since 2011, all of this work has been guided by the Jaanimili Unit, a network of the Aboriginal staff employed by UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families.

Jaanimili means 'gather together' in the language of the Gumbaynggirr Aboriginal people of North Coast NSW. Since Jaanimili began, access to mainstream and Indigenous-specific services by Aboriginal clients has increased by 70 per cent.

Jaanimili Manager, Servena McIntyre says 'UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families recognises that Aboriginal people are best placed to deliver Aboriginal business and in turn have fully resourced Jaanimili's evolution'.

In addition to managing the organisation's Aboriginal specific programs, the Jaanimili Unit holds regional yarn ups and all-staff gatherings to offer support and give staff the opportunity to provide their collective input into the agency's programs. Jaanimili also provides individual staff coaching and mentoring, cultural guidance for programs and staff and creates partnership opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander agencies and community groups.

Jaanimili is having a big impact on the success of the organisation's Indigenous Employment Strategy. When the strategy was introduced in 2008, UnitingCare had nine Aboriginal staff. Today there are 84 Aboriginal people employed across the organisation.

Servena McIntyre sees the Indigenous Employment Strategy as the most important component of their work.

'Jaanimili engages our Aboriginal staff in influencing change for our people and communities.'

'We are recognised in the community as a trusted employer. Our employment strategies have led to a change in service delivery and we have made our services more culturally inclusive.'

Jaanimili Unit Manager, Servena McIntyre (centre) with colleagues Jody South (left) and Amanda Roa (right). Photo: UnitingCare Children, Young People and Families.

Next steps in health

In 2013 the Government will continue working to finalise a new 10-year National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan. The plan, being developed in partnership with the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and with assistance from other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, will form a strategic framework to guide activity and investment by governments, service providers and Indigenous communities, leading to positive health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme

The Australian Government announced in 2012 that it was committed to the introduction of a National Disability Insurance Scheme. The scheme will ensure that Australians—including Indigenous people—living with serious disability get the care and support they need, no matter where they live or how they acquired their disability.

The Government has committed an initial $1 billion to launch the scheme from mid-2013. The first stage will benefit more than 20,000 people ahead of a national roll-out.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme has the potential to greatly improve the welfare of Indigenous people, who endure a higher prevalence of disability than the general population. The scheme also has the potential to remove barriers Indigenous people may face in accessing disability support services.

Mainstream services

Mainstream programs will continue to play a crucial role in the provision of essential services to Indigenous people in 2013. Currently, 78 per cent of expenditure on Indigenous Australians by all levels of government is in the form of mainstream programs and services.

Particular challenges still exist when it comes to the provision of mainstream services into remote communities. The Australian Government will continue to work with state, territory and local Governments in 2013 to support the delivery of these services to Indigenous communities.

Recent regulatory reforms are driving improvements. In 2011 changes were made to the Australian Government's Family Support Program to make mainstream service providers more accountable for the delivery of services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Most non-Indigenous organisations providing services under the Family Support Program are now required to set targets to increase the number of Indigenous clients accessing their services. The organisations also need to have strategies in place to offer a culturally safe environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In 2013 the Government will continue to collect data to check that service providers have met their targets and monitor their commitments under their Indigenous Access Plans.

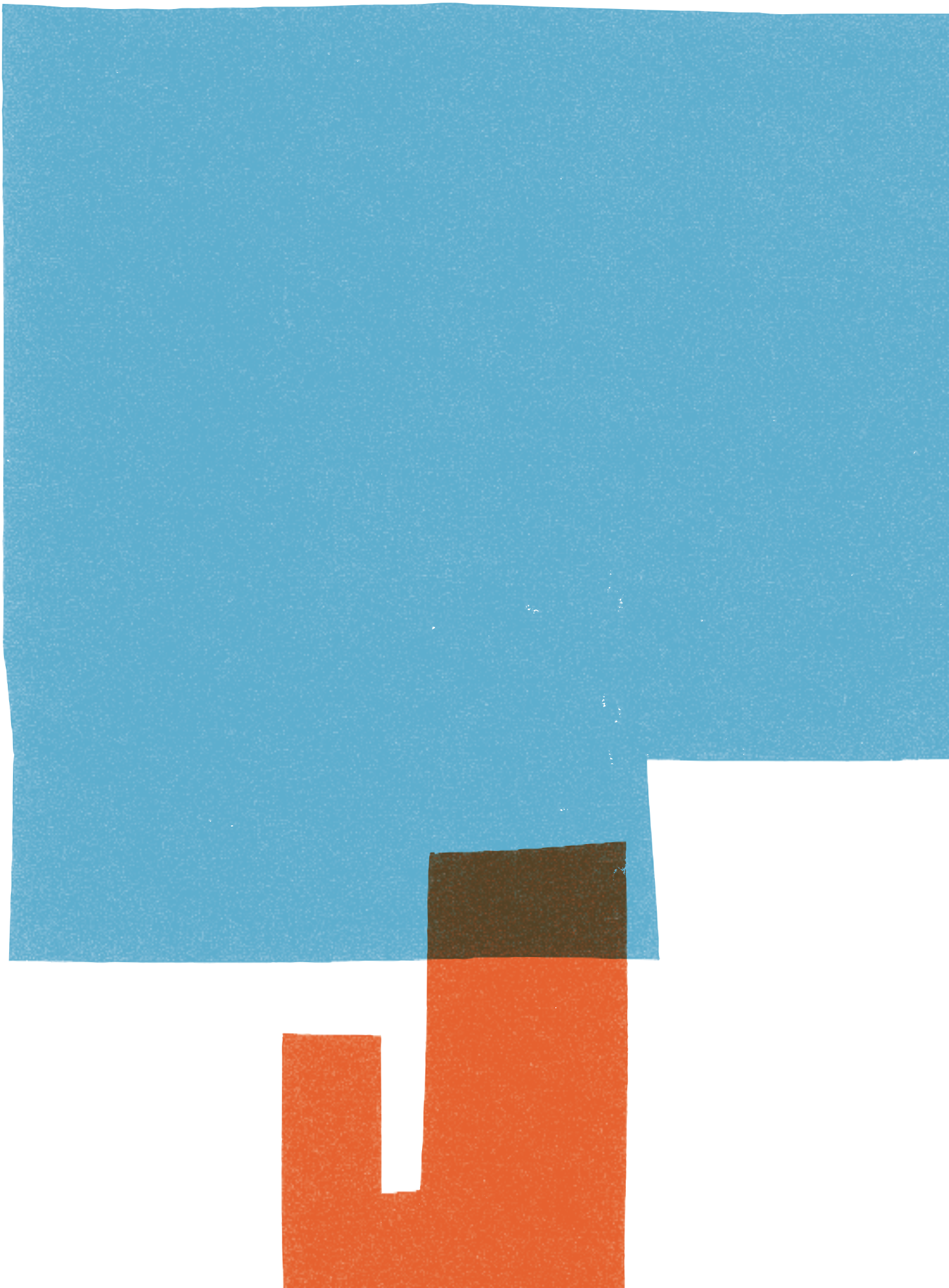
Next steps towards constitutional recognition

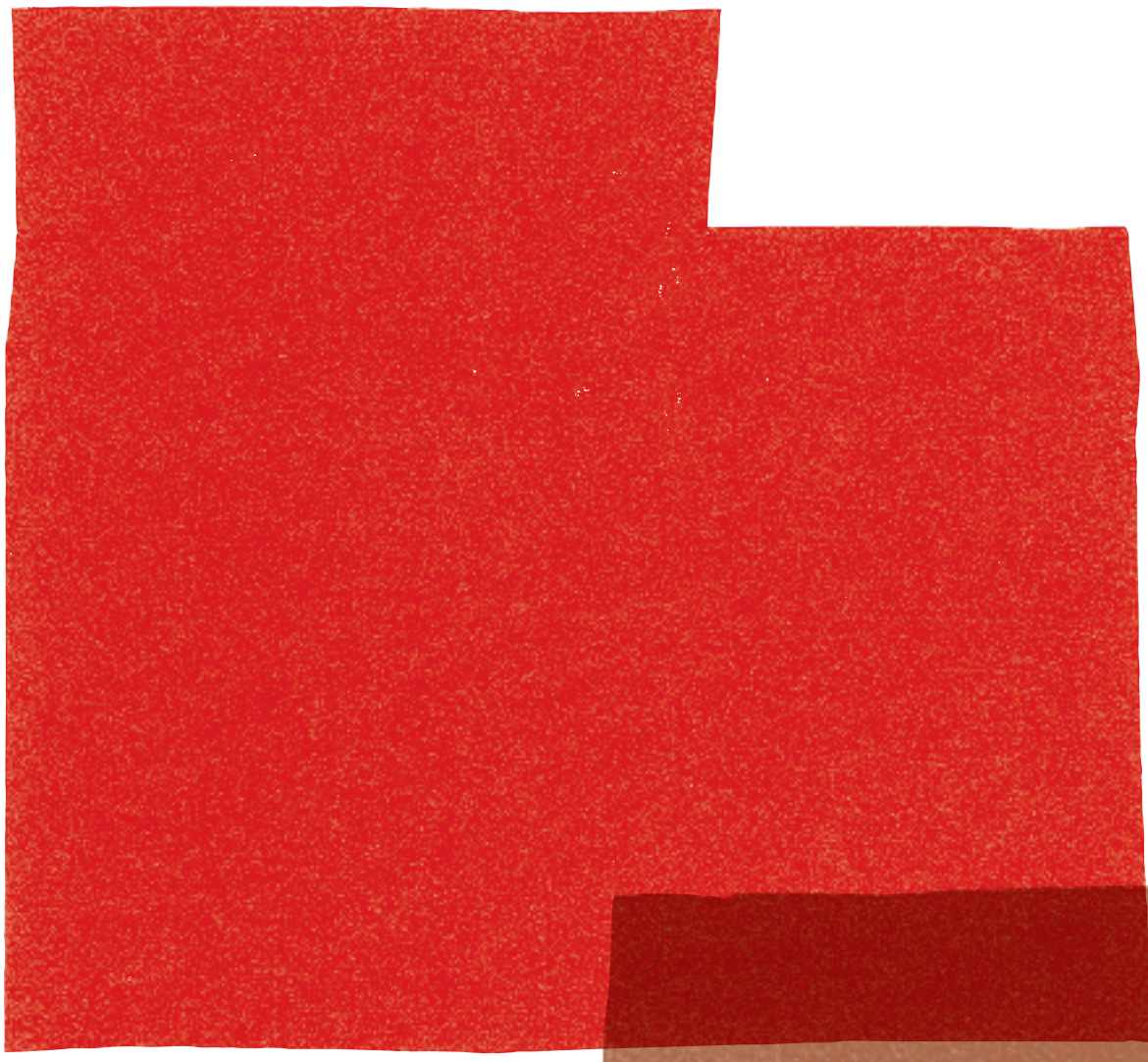
In 2013 the Government will continue building the case and raising awareness of the need for constitutional recognition of Australia's first people. For constitutional recognition to occur, a successful referendum is needed, meaning a majority of voters in a majority of states would need to support the change to the Constitution.

Successful constitutional change will not occur without the support of the majority of Australians. More time is needed to build the necessary support for a successful referendum.

The Government is investing $10 million towards a campaign being led by Reconciliation Australia to continue to build support for constitutional change. The funding is providing support to community groups and activities across the country, giving Australians an opportunity to learn more about constitutional recognition.

To build the momentum needed for successful constitutional change, the Government introduced into Parliament a bill for an *Act of Recognition* acknowledging the unique and special place of our First Peoples. The introduction of the Bill is an important step towards achieving constitutional change to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.





Front cover photography
(Top) Indigenous Engagement Officer Edward Rontji gives a talk to school children at Hermannsburg/Ntaria. Photo: FaHCSIA.
(Bottom) Child playing at Ooranga Wandarrah Aboriginal Child Care Centre. Photo: FaHCSIA.

Back cover photograph
Sports day in Hermannsburg/Ntaria. Photo: FAHCSIA.

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