

Part A – Introduction

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The COAG Indigenous Reform Agenda

In 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) identified Indigenous reform as a key priority and made a commitment to closing the gap in life outcomes and opportunities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians.

In November 2008, COAG endorsed the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) which has six key targets:

- close the life expectancy gap within a generation
- halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade
- halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade
- halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements within a decade
- ensure all four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years
- at least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

Closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage will require a long-term, generational commitment to direct major effort across a range of strategic areas for action or 'Building Blocks' established under the NIRA. The Building Blocks underpinning COAG reforms are Early Childhood, Schooling, Health, Economic Participation, Healthy Homes, Safe Communities, and Governance and Leadership.

All Australian states and territories have committed to reporting on indicators under each of these Building Blocks. This report presents statistics across each of the NIRA indicators showing the relative disadvantage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as (where possible) changes in disadvantage between time periods.

COAG has also endorsed six Indigenous-specific National Partnership Agreements (NPAs) between the Australian and state governments to help close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage:

- Indigenous Early Childhood Development
- Remote Service Delivery
- Economic Participation
- Remote Indigenous Housing
- Closing the Gap on Indigenous Health Outcomes
- Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access.

The total national funding under the agreements is \$8.121 billion over 10 years (see Table 1).

Investment commenced in the 2008/09 financial year and is being progressively rolled out over a 10 year period. In addition to these Indigenous-specific NPAs, there are several 'mainstream' National Agreements and NPAs that include Indigenous-specific outcomes.

The NIRA also includes a National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy to address Indigenous disadvantage, which responds to the need for a coordinated and targeted approach by all states and territories to programs and funding provided under mainstream and Indigenous specific National Partnerships in the areas of housing and homelessness, early childhood, education, health, and economic participation and employment. As a result, the Queensland Government is developing a **Queensland Urban and Regional Indigenous Strategy**, with a focus on cities and towns which are home to 75 per cent of Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. The Strategy will build on existing evidence and analyse the available data about the gap that exists for Indigenous Queenslanders living in urban and regional locations.



The Queensland Government and Australian Government are developing a **Bilateral Agreement** to jointly monitor, identify and resolve strategic risks and issues that impact on closing the gap efforts across all the Building Blocks, including Indigenous health, housing, schooling and employment. The Bilateral Agreement is expected to be finalised in late 2009 or early 2010. The Queensland implementation plans for each of the NPAs will form schedules to the Bilateral Agreement.

To support the Indigenous reform agenda, COAG agreed to establish a national clearinghouse, jointly funded by the Australian and state governments. It provides the evidence base for 'what works' in closing the gap and informs policy and service delivery to ensure efforts are effective and efficient. This will be the subject of a further NPA.

Table 1. National funding allocated under the agreements.

National Partnership Agreements (NPAs)	
Indigenous Early Childhood Development	\$564 million over six years
Indigenous Remote Service Delivery	\$291.2 million over six years
Indigenous Economic Participation	Up to \$228.8 million over five years (Note: This amount is flexible and subject to the number of Community Development Employment Project positions converted to fully remunerated positions)
Remote Indigenous Housing	\$5.48 billion over 10 years
Closing the Gap on Indigenous Health Outcomes	\$1.58 billion over four years
Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access	\$6.967 million over four years

The Gap in Queensland

Target 1

Close the gap in life expectancy within a generation.

<i>Indicator – Life Expectancy</i>	
Life Expectancy (2005–2007)	
Indigenous males (Queensland)	68.3 years
Non-Indigenous males (Australia)	78.7 years
Indigenous females (Queensland)	73.6 years
Non-Indigenous females (Australia)	82.6 years

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Experimental Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2005–2007, cat. no. 3302.0.55.003. Note that the Australian Bureau of Statistics has introduced a new method to produce the 2005–2007 life expectancy estimates. These estimates cannot be compared with estimates reported in the 2007/08 Queensland Closing the Gap Report.

Target 2

Halve the gap in mortality rates for Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children under five within a decade.

<i>Indicator – Childhood Mortality (children who have died before reaching 5 years old)</i>			
Childhood Mortality	2004–2005	2006–2007	2008
Indigenous children	29.0 per 10,000	21.0 per 10,000	19.3 per 10,000
Non-Indigenous children	11.7 per 10,000	12.9 per 10,000	11.9 per 10,000

Source: Deaths: Child Death Register, 2009, Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian (Queensland); Estimated resident populations: Office of Economic and Statistical Research, 2009.

Target 3

Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Queenslanders within a decade.

<i>Indicator – Unemployment Rate</i>			
Unemployment Rate	2005	2006	2007
Indigenous	14.6%	12.8%	9.8%
Total Queensland	4.8%	4.5%	3.7%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians 2007 and unpublished Labour Force data, Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2007. Notes: (1) No statistically significant change in employment outcomes is detectable between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and the total Queensland population due to the small count of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons in the labour force survey. (2) Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) participants cannot be identified using these data, and thus are included as employed (and not as unemployed) by default. The 2007/08 Queensland Closing the Gap Report used 2006 Census data which does allow CDEP participants to be identified and thereby included in a calculation of the unemployment rate. Consequently, the rates presented here cannot be compared with rates presented in the 2007/08 Queensland Closing the Gap Report.



Target 4

Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children within a decade.

Indicator – Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 Reading, Writing, Numeracy (percentage of students meeting the standard)

Reading (2009)	Year 3	Year 5	Year 7	Year 9
Indigenous	77.1%	65.7%	74.0%	64.5%
Non-Indigenous	93.1%	90.6%	94.2%	91.7%
Writing (2009)				
Indigenous	80.2%	68.9%	71.8%	59.5%
Non-Indigenous	94.8%	91.5%	92.7%	87.1%
Numeracy (2009)				
Indigenous	74.0%	73.9%	78.5%	76.5%
Non-Indigenous	93.6%	94.0%	95.9%	95.7%

Source: Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, 2009, National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy, National Report, Achievement in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy.

Target 5

Ensure all Queensland Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years.³

Indicator – Preschool Enrolments (as a proportion of all enrolments)

Preschool Enrolments of Indigenous Children	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Indigenous enrolment as a proportion of all enrolments	6.1%	7.7%	8.0%
Indigenous children as a proportion of total Queensland child population	7.0%	6.9%	6.8%

Source: Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP), 2009, Report on Government Services 2009, Productivity Commission, Canberra; 2008/09 data: Office for Early Childhood Education and Care, Department of Education and Training, Queensland, sourced from the Early Childhood Education and Care Services Census. Also includes pre-prep enrolments for Bound for Success schools. Note: Data collected in 2008/09 relate to children attending in census week as reported by services that responded to the census (response rate of 93.6 per cent). No attempt has been made to estimate data for services that did not respond to the census. This differs from previous years when enrolment data were available.

³ The national *Children's Services Working Group* have agreed on a range of performance indicators for children's services. The performance indicators for 'Access' refer to Indigenous preschool enrolments as a broad indicator of access to preschool. The current indicator relates to all Indigenous four year olds in Queensland. Data specifically relating to Indigenous four year olds in remote communities will be available for future reports.

The Gap in Queensland

Target 6

Halve the gap for Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

Indicator – Year 12 Attainment or Equivalent

20-24 Year Olds with a Year 12 Certificate or Equivalent (2006)

Indigenous young people	57.9%
Non-Indigenous young people	84.1%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2006.