



Annual Report on Closing the Gap

Western Australian Government

September 2022



Acknowledgement of Country

The Government of Western Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of Western Australia's Aboriginal Communities and their cultures; and to Elders both past and present.

A note about language

In this document, the term Aboriginal people is used in preference to "Indigenous" or "Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander" people, in recognition that Aboriginal peoples are the original inhabitants of Western Australia.

Together, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders make up the First Nations of Australia; however, Torres Strait Islander people in Western Australia have unique cultures, identities and histories, distinct from those of Aboriginal people. On average, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders have different socioeconomic profiles and face different challenges, despite sharing a number of common experiences, including a history of racial discrimination. Some families have both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, and this rich diversity is acknowledged and celebrated.

This document is primarily about Aboriginal people in Western Australia (including Aboriginal people who also identify as Torres Strait Islanders). We respectfully recognise the valuable contributions of Torres Strait Islanders to Western Australia's society, economy, and communities. We acknowledge that some of the principles and strategic directions outlined in this document may also apply to Torres Strait Islanders.

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1. Minister for Aboriginal Affairs – Opening Statement

Welcome to the Western Australia (WA) Government's first Annual Report on Closing the Gap (Annual Report). The Annual Report is an important measure for reporting on the implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement).

The National Agreement, which came into effect on 27 July 2020, is the first time all governments have developed and negotiated a national agreement in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Unlike earlier agreements on Closing the Gap, this National Agreement includes more ambitious and holistic targets to secure the safety of families and communities; the enjoyment of cultural, physical and spiritual rights to land and waters; and the support and flourishing of culture and languages.

The National Agreement strives not only for equity, but for a future where the custodians of the longest surviving culture in the world thrive and play a central leadership role in shaping Australia's future.

The National Agreement sets out four Priority Reform Areas, which commit governments to transforming their agencies, by ensuring they are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people, including through the services they fund. The Priority Reform Areas provide the foundation to improve the quality of Aboriginal peoples' lives by fundamentally changing the relationship between government institutions and Aboriginal people, their families, and community-controlled services and representative organisations.

In September 2021, the WA Government published the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy (the Strategy); setting out the State's approach to meeting its commitments under the National Agreement and the way we work with Aboriginal people.

The Strategy is aligned to the Priority Reforms Areas in the National Agreement. It sets out important steps that the Government and the broader community must take to address the impacts of past and ongoing injustices, while acknowledging and celebrating the enduring strength, resilience and contribution of Aboriginal people and cultures.

The Strategy, together with our Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, positions closing the gap as everyone's business within WA Government. This Annual Report demonstrates every Minister and their portfolio agency have invested considerable effort over the past twelve months to align their approach with the guiding principles of the Strategy and to identify opportunities to embed the Priority Reform Areas within their policy design and service delivery models.

At the national level key milestones have been reached in the areas of health, early years education and care, housing and justice. The WA Government looks forward to continuing to progress this national partnership work into 2023.

The WA Government has worked to align governance and decision-making structures to streamline whole-of-government coordination and strengthen cross-agency cooperation and partnership arrangements at the State, regional and local level.

The Annual Report provides information on how WA is performing against each of the seventeen socioeconomic outcome areas, including the data provided through the Productivity Commission.

The data confirms areas where WA is making solid progress, such as early childhood education enrolment and the proportion of land mass and sea country subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal interests. It also highlights the areas requiring a systemic targeted approach, such as rates of incarceration, youth justice and children in out of home care.

The Aboriginal Health Council of WA, our Coalition of Peaks partner and our key strategic partner the Aboriginal Advisory Council WA, have confirmed these areas – along with safe and affordable housing – must be prioritised in order to expedite progress against the other socioeconomic targets in the National Agreement.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the outstanding work of local Aboriginal community leaders during the past twelve months, supporting their communities through Covid-19, promoting the importance of vaccination and assisting those most vulnerable to illness.

I look forward to continuing this journey of reform and partnership.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Buti". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

The Honourable Dr Tony Buti MLA
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

2. Aboriginal Advisory Council WA – Opening Statement

The Aboriginal Advisory Council WA (Council) is established by statutory authority (*Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972 (WA)*) and provides advice to the WA Government on matters relating to the interests and wellbeing of Aboriginal people in WA.

Council's role in implementing the National Agreement on Closing the Gap in WA is outlined in Council's Charter; providing stewardship and direction to the Government of Western Australia regarding the Closing the Gap Refresh including its objectives, work plan, and the development of future outcomes, indicators and targets.

Council is cognisant of the history and challenges of achieving the ambitious but necessary outcomes set by the National Agreement. Achieving the outcomes and actioning the commitments will take time.

The scale and significance of the reforms requires incremental and sequential progress to ensure the foundations for reform are properly embedded.

Council acknowledges the significant transformational work that the WA Government has undertaken to strengthen coordination across all government agencies to respond to the work flowing from the National Partnership with the Coalition of Peaks. Council is encouraged by the collaborative co-design partnership approach in implementation efforts to date, in transforming the WA Government's operational system.

Council urges the Closing the Gap Parties to "stay the course" if we are to achieve the agreed outcomes. Council makes this statement based on our observation of the previous decade of Closing the Gap attempts, learning from the past. The current iteration or refresh, has started with "re-arranging the furniture" of the central institutions, with little regard to the end users – people, Communities outside of the centre.

It is also crucial that we recognise that local place based initiatives are a distinct approach separate from the national Closing the Gap initiative, although the approaches are complementary to the success of each other.

A particular area of concern for Council, is the high rates at which our most vulnerable children are coming into contact with the child protection and criminal justice systems in WA. Many children and their families experience multiple and complex challenges that cannot be solved through business-as-usual approaches. These outcomes point to the ongoing and urgent need for system-level reform, designed with and for Aboriginal people.

It is encouraging to see improvements in national data sets reflected through this Annual Report across a number of important areas including life expectancy, early years education enrolments, secondary and higher education, as well as pathways to further education, training and employment for our young people. However, it is critical that a strong focus on place-based outcomes continues.

Nationally, WA is performing strongest in socioeconomic outcomes in relation to rights to land and sea country. This is due to formal Common Law frameworks & independent administrative and judicial entities that oversee, and authorise negotiated or litigated outcomes between Parties.

Similarly, frameworks are required to establish partnerships and strengthen accountability between the WA Government and Aboriginal stakeholders to tackle the most difficult

challenges facing our society: the disproportionate rate of imprisonment of our people; the ongoing removal of our kids into care; the significant harm caused by violence in our communities, fuelled by overcrowded, and inadequate housing.

While the National Agreement was negotiated by all jurisdictions, it is vital that the WA Government meets the unique needs of our people across the whole of WA. For Aboriginal people living in remote areas of WA, limited access and the high cost of essential goods and services creates significant burden on many areas such as health, housing, education, and employment.

We need greater investment in place-based approaches to enable Aboriginal people and their organisations to be empowered to lead and sustain solutions into the future.

Finally, innovative, systems-level reform requires a fundamental shift in the approach to program and service evaluation and data. This lies at the heart of Priority Reform Four of the National Agreement and should be a priority focus for the WA Government over the next twelve months.

Aboriginal people using services need to define measures of success and be actively involved in validating data collected through evaluations of policies, programs and services. Aboriginal communities and organisations also need access to this data to develop tailored solutions for their people. In the words of Council Co-Chair Gail Beck, “Unless we own it, we can’t drive it.”

Council’s aspirations have not changed in the four years since it commenced work with the WA Government on the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy (Strategy). Like the National Agreement, the Strategy commits the WA Government to work together in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people to support healing and put culture at the centre of the design and delivery of programs and services for our communities.

We look forward to continuing to work strategically with the WA Government, its Coalition of Peaks partner, the Aboriginal Health Council of WA, and other Aboriginal community representatives to build on these areas of success and contribute to the updated Implementation Plan in May 2023.



Ms Gail Beck
Co-Chair



Marty Sibosado
Co-Chair

3. Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia – Opening Statement

The Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) is the peak body for 23 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS) in Western Australia (WA), and the sole WA peak body representative on the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (Coalition of Peaks).

AHCWA exists to support and act on behalf of its Member Services, actively representing and responding to their individual and collective needs.

Being the only formal Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCO) Peak and representative on the Coalition of Peaks in Western Australia, AHCWA has been strongly represented in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) negotiations.

As the National Agreement is now well into its implementation phase, it is crucial, that we all deliver on the commitments under the National Agreement to ensure that outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities are improved.

It is important to remember that, the National Agreement, and in particular the Priority Reforms, are a shift in the way that governments work with Aboriginal people and their communities. Aboriginal people need to be included and have a real say in the design and delivery of services that impact them.

Over the last year, genuine partnerships between the WA Government, AHCWA and the broader ACCCO sector have been established, which were a driving factor for planning and implementation activities around the National Agreement in Western Australia.

AHCWA has worked in partnership with the WA Government on strengthening the ACCCO sector in WA, through the establishment of a new WA ACCCO Peak Body; the development of sector strengthening activities through the Sector Strengthening Plans; and the whole-of-government ACCCO Strategy.

However, we believe that to create real change and improvement in the outcomes for Aboriginal people, there is a need for more partnerships with Aboriginal people, their communities and the ACCCO sector.

Those partnerships need to be accountable and representative, with formal agreements in place- and decision-making needs to be shared. Above all, partnerships need to be supported by adequate funding.

Without funding, partnerships and any strategies are unable to reach their true potential for impact and change – funding therefore needs to be specific and multigenerational.

This way it will create the opportunity for innovation and a different way of doing things, ultimately leading to holistic, systemic and sustainable change.

In addition to this, stronger efforts need to be placed on the implementation of all the Priority Reforms - once we change the way that government works with Aboriginal people, improved socio-economic targets will follow.

As a next step, special emphasis should be placed on the implementation of Priority Reform Three. There needs to be a move beyond consultation and co-design, but rather towards the establishment of mechanisms for truth telling, healing and reconciliation.

While we acknowledge, that first steps towards closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Western Australians have been made in the last year, there is still a lot of work to be done, and we would like to see new and innovative actions that enable a fundamental shift into the future. AHCWA is looking forward to continue strengthening the partnership with the WA Government and work towards closing the gap.



Vicki O'Donnell OAM

Chair, Aboriginal Health Council WA

4. Executive Summary

Introduction

This Annual Report provides the first opportunity for the WA Government to demonstrate progress towards improved outcomes for Aboriginal people and their communities since the publication of our jurisdictional Implementation Plan and the launch of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy in September 2021. The Annual Report therefore reports on activities and progress during the period September 2021 - September 2022.

The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy formally recognises the intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal people and their communities because of past government policies and the need for culture, healing, self-determination and inclusion to be at the heart of future policy and practice. Through its commitment to the National Agreement, the WA Government is building on the foundations of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy by working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people to share decision making, drive meaningful reform and deliver outcomes to close the gap.

Over the past twelve months, the WA Government has worked closely with the Aboriginal Advisory Council, its Coalition of Peaks partner AHCWA, and Aboriginal people and their communities to embed the key principles of the National Agreement in policy and practice, and strengthen the foundations for ongoing reform. Achievements detailed in this report are representative of the WA Government's commitment to change the way it works with Aboriginal people, and recognise the diversity and strength of Aboriginal communities and cultures across the state.

The WA Government is required to report on its efforts to implement the four priority reforms of the National Agreement and the 17 socioeconomic targets, by drawing on activity outcomes and data provided by the Productivity Commission. The Annual Report has been prepared in line with guidance provided by the National Agreement and the Partnership Working Group on Closing the Gap, and is intended to be consistent with, and comparable to, reports from other government parties to the National Agreement.

Key achievements

Priority Reforms: Strengthening the foundations for change

The National Agreement's Priority Reforms are recognised as essential for driving the long-term changes required to close the gap in social, economic and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people. Since the release of the jurisdictional Implementation Plan on Closing the Gap in September 2021, the WA Government has continued to prioritise key activities in each of the Priority Reform areas to build a strong foundation for the implementation of the National Agreement into the future.

Priority Reform One: Empowerment through shared decision-making and partnerships

Through its commitment to the National Agreement and the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy, the WA Government clearly recognises the importance of Aboriginal-led, place-based solutions for improving outcomes for Aboriginal people and their communities. Priority Reform One of the National Agreement, requires government agencies and Aboriginal leaders and their communities to work in meaningful partnerships and share decision making on key policies and initiatives to close the gap.

During the reporting period, the WA Government worked with the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, and the Coalition of Peaks to establish formal policy partnerships to drive action on key socioeconomic outcomes relating to adult and youth incarceration, suicide prevention and social and emotional wellbeing, and early childhood care and development. Policy partnerships to be established in the coming year will focus on promoting and safeguarding Aboriginal languages, and improving outcomes in Aboriginal housing.

Building the place-based capacity of Aboriginal communities in partnership with government agencies is another key element of Priority Reform One. In 2021-2022, in partnership with Aboriginal leaders and communities, the WA Government nominated the East Kimberley as its location for a place-based partnership. Further work will progress with community stakeholders, local governments, and the Commonwealth to establish a formal partnership in the coming months.

Shared decision making and genuine partnerships underpin achievements in other government initiatives this year including the Southwest Settlement, Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use, and Gibson Desert Nature Reserve Compensation and Lurrtjurrulu Palakitjalu Settlement Agreements, planning for the Aboriginal Cultural Centre, and the Wadjemup Project.

Priority Reform Two: Building a stronger Aboriginal Community Controlled sector

Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) provide essential, culturally secure services for Aboriginal communities across WA. Being led and delivered by Aboriginal people, for Aboriginal people, ACCOs are recognised as delivering better outcomes. To build on the success of these organisations, the National Agreement requires governments to support a strong and sustainable ACCO sector through sector strengthening policies, actions and plans.

Peak Bodies are identified in the National Agreement as having a central role for supporting the ACCO sector. As AHCWA is the only formal Aboriginal Community Controlled peak body in WA, the WA Government provided AHCWA with \$1.4 million to establishment of a broader ACCO peak body. Work is progressing well, with the new peak body likely to be established in 2023.

The new peak will broaden and diversify the representation of ACCOs to government and other stakeholders, and provide a strong foundation for their participation in the implementation of the National Agreement over the longer term.

Across 2021-2022, the WA Government also worked with Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, and the Coalition of Peaks, to develop sector strengthening plans to support and grow the health, disability, housing, and early childhood care and education ACCO sectors. These plans detail strategic priorities to build the Aboriginal workforce, identify sustainable funding models and capital infrastructure opportunities, and strengthen governance arrangements in each sector.

Strengthening the ACCO sector has also been a key priority of other government initiatives including the establishment of the \$3.4million ACCO Sector Strengthening Grants scheme, development of the Department of Communities' ACCO Strategy, and the forthcoming whole of government ACCO Strategy.

Priority Reform Three: Working towards a culturally safe and responsive government

The WA Government's commitment to transforming the way it works with Aboriginal people and their communities has driven its reform of governance and accountability frameworks across government. Individual agencies have taken significant steps to build the cultural responsiveness of its operations and staff. The Aboriginal Affairs Coordination Committee (AACC) has been significantly expanded to include a majority of public sector agencies and strengthen the WA Government's strategic approach to implementing the National Agreement.

Partnership Planning Groups have been established to bring together government agencies and partners from the community-controlled sector to collaboratively develop targeted strategies to achieve the socioeconomic targets.

Further effort is required to embed institutional reform and cultural safety across government agencies. The WA Government will continue to work with Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, and the Coalition of Peaks, to identify genuine opportunities for change.

Priority Reform Four: Accessing data to drive culturally safe solutions

Aboriginal people require access to locally relevant information and data to support decision making, service planning, and improved outcomes for their communities. Delivering on its National Agreement commitment to establish a data project in WA, the WA Government formally nominated and funded the first stage of a project in the Kimberley in 2021-2022. Working with key ACCO stakeholders in the Kimberley, the data project is expected to improve suicide and self-harm data collection and analysis to inform future, culturally safe approaches to social and emotional wellbeing, and suicide prevention.

The WA Government also commenced a review of expenditure on services for Aboriginal people, as part of a longer-term plan to reprioritise funding for better outcomes. The WA Department of Treasury is working to produce a data resource of Aboriginal expenditure, and a report on total WA Government funding for Aboriginal programs; work which will continue in 2022-2023.

Improving socioeconomic outcomes for Aboriginal people and their communities

Measuring improvements in social, economic and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people and their communities requires updated data from the Productivity Commission's Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report. The most recent report, published in July 2022, provides updated data for nine of the 17 socioeconomic targets detailed in the National Agreement.

WA recorded better outcomes in seven of the nine target areas relating to health, early childhood development and education, justice, and Aboriginal claims to lands and water. Specifically, improvements have been measured in life expectancy, healthy birthweights, preschool program enrolments, the number of adults and young people held in detention, and areas of land and water that are subject to Aboriginal people's legal rights and interests.

While these recorded improvements are a positive start, the WA Government recognises further, significant effort is required to achieve the National Agreement's ambitious socioeconomic targets.

5. Priority Reform Areas

Priority Reform One: Partnership and shared decision-making

Outcome

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are empowered to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap through formal partnership arrangements.

Target

There will be formal partnership arrangements to support Closing the Gap in place between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments in place in each state and territory enshrining agreed joint decision-making roles and responsibilities and where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have chosen their own representatives.

The National Agreement places a strong emphasis on more formal partnerships than those that governments have historically had with Aboriginal people. This includes establishing strong foundations for a sustainable working relationship and providing mechanisms for shared decision-making.

The WA Government is committed to embedding Priority Reform One across all agencies as part of their usual business practice, acknowledging that the socioeconomic outcomes and targets cannot be met without Aboriginal people shaping the policy and service delivery settings.

WA's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy is an integral element supporting public sector agencies to embed partnerships with Aboriginal people and organisations in their business practices and processes.

Alignment to the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy

The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy will support the delivery of structures that enable Aboriginal people to partner with the WA Government to develop and shape policies and programs which affect and support them. The strong message from Aboriginal people to the WA Government has been that outcomes have the best chance of improving when they are informed and driven by Aboriginal perspectives, experiences and ways of working.

Joined up approach to policy priority areas

Across 2021-22, three policy partnerships have been (or are being) established focussing on:

- Justice (August 2021);
- Social and Emotional Wellbeing (August 2022);
- Early childhood care and development (August 2022)

A further two policy partnerships are expected to be established by the end of 2022 across:

- Housing; and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages.

Throughout 2021-22 WA has been actively involved in the Justice Policy Partnership (JPP) and the establishment of its 3-year strategic plan. The strategic plan will consider how active progress can be made to reduce the level of incarceration of Aboriginal people. The WA

Department of Justice (Justice) has been collaborating with other agencies and engaging with key Aboriginal stakeholders, including their Aboriginal Justice Advisory Council (AJAC), to inform the development of the JPP strategic plan.

What is the WA Government doing to implement Priority Reform One?

East Kimberley Early Years – Place-Based Partnership

The WA Government worked closely with Aboriginal organisations, the Shires of Wyndham-East Kimberley, and Halls Creek to explore the potential and gauge community support for a place-based partnership arrangement in the East Kimberley region. In August 2022, the Joint Council on Closing the Gap endorsed the East Kimberley as the location of a place-based partnership in WA, focused on the early years (pre-birth to school transition).

The WA Government is continuing engagement in the East Kimberley to further define the partnership and determine the foundational governance arrangements.

Partnership Stocktake

By December 2022, the WA Government will have completed the stocktake of existing partnerships between the WA Government and Aboriginal people, communities and organisations, building on the work undertaken as part of the development of the first Implementation Plan.

Native title agreements - delivering opportunities through formal partnerships

Southwest Settlement Agreement

The South West Settlement has made great progress in establishing the governance structures which will support its implementation into the future. The South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council has successfully transitioned to become the supporting Central Services Corporation, receiving endorsement from the State and the Trustee in June 2022.

All six Regional Corporations¹ held their General Meetings through June and July 2022, where their member-elected directors and Cultural Advice Committees were endorsed by community.

The Regional Corporations are commencing recruitment of their Expert Directors and Chief Executive Officers, and will likely be operational by October 2022.

At a regional level, Regional Corporations will work with established District Leadership Groups, which include representatives from State and Commonwealth governments, local government, the community services sector, ACCOs and industry.

Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement

The Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use (ILUA) is a comprehensive native title settlement agreement with five native title groups in the Mid West region of WA. The ILUA includes a sustainable benefits package to facilitate self-determination and long-term economic independence for Yamatji people and is the most innovative and diverse native title settlement entered into nationally.

¹ Wagyl Kaip Aboriginal Corporation; Ballardong Aboriginal Corporation; Whadjuk Aboriginal Corporation; Karri Karrak Aboriginal Corporation (formerly known as South West Boojarah); Yued Aboriginal Corporation; Gnaala Karla Booja Aboriginal Corporation.

The ILUA establishes a Government Partnership Committee to foster collaboration between the WA Government and the Yamatji Southern Regional Corporation to progress the implementation of the ILUA and to capitalise on future opportunities in the region. The WA Government is represented by Deputy Director General (or equivalent) of relevant agencies and the Yamatji Nation community is represented by the Directors and CEO of the Yamatji Southern Regional Corporation. This forum provides an opportunity to improve the cultural responsiveness of the public sector and to ensure the Yamatji people are at the forefront of decision making on their country.

The ILUA supports shared decision making through an innovative Joint Trustee model whereby a Licensed Trustee acts and makes decisions jointly with a Yamatji Trustee. The Licensed Trustee must develop the capacity of the Yamatji Trustee over a ten-year period to support the Yamatji Trustee transitioning to the role of sole trustee from 10 years to manage the benefits on behalf of the community.

Gibson Desert Nature Reserve Compensation and Lurtjurrulu Palakitjalu Settlement Agreement

The first section 47C *Native Title Act 1993* Agreement become operative in June 2022. For the first time, traditional owner rights and interests were able to be recognised over a nature reserve, where those rights and interests were previously considered to have been extinguished.

The Agreement will see the Pila Nature Reserve jointly vested and managed by the Warnpurru Aboriginal Corporation and the Conservation and Parks Commission under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act), providing economic, social and cultural benefits for Aboriginal communities in the area.

A settlement package has set aside \$7.5 million over 10 years to support the joint management activities for the Reserve, providing work and training opportunities for the Traditional Owners at Patjarr, Warburton and surrounding communities. In addition, the settlement package will provide funding to improve infrastructure within the Patjarr community to support joint management activities.

Aboriginal leadership in the WA Recovery Plan

Recovery Plan Projects in the South West Settlement Area

The WA Government has a Recovery Plan Program Control Network of senior officers from across the public sector to improve engagement with Aboriginal communities, including sharing examples of best practice engagement.

The WA Government liaised with South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council (SWALSC) and the Noongar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (NCCI) in late 2021, to establish communication channels to progress over \$300 million in Recovery Plan projects in the South West Settlement Area.

Virtual workshops were held with SWALSC and the NCCI and thirteen participating WA Government agencies to identify potential economic development opportunities. SWALSC and the NCCI received a list of the relevant South West area recovery projects including the contact details of each project lead, the estimated project value and the likely project tender timeframes to share and facilitate engagement with their memberships.

The Recovery Team continues to work with senior officers across the WA public sector to share examples of successful engagement with Aboriginal communities across the State.

Building Bidyadanga – Bidyadanga Land Activation Project

The Bidyadanga Land Activation Project (Bidyadanga Project) recognises that economic transformation of remote Aboriginal Communities must be built around the community's own vision for the future and cannot be realised without local leadership and active participation of Native Title holders and community members.

The Bidyadanga Project is an example of how the WA Government can work in partnership with Aboriginal people with a place-based approach to keep culture at the heart of reform. The project embodies the principles of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy which sets out how the WA Government will direct its efforts towards a future in which all Aboriginal people, families and communities are empowered to thrive and choose their own futures from a secure foundation.

The Bidyadanga Project acknowledges Aboriginal values and customary practices are essential to build a sustainable foundation that avoids negative impact on lands, waters and heritage resources, leveraging existing statutory frameworks to support community aspirations.

Karajarri Traditional Owners and representatives from the Juwalinny, Mangala, Nyungamarta and Yulpartja language groups who reside in Bidyadanga have worked with the WA Government on the project since 2020, which is on track to reach an agreement that will deliver a sustainable future for WA's largest remote Aboriginal community.

Cultural Mapping is used to support the co-design of this project. The process is designed to enhance cultural, land, water and environmental resources to develop sustainable growth and livelihoods.

The Bidyadanga Project is an opportunity to:

- confirm the WA Government's commitment to reforming remote communities, while engaging the Australian Government on future investment;
- address the aspirations of the community residents and the Native title holders and build an agreement to deliver a sustainable future for Bidyadanga;
- remove land tenure barriers for future economic activation, business development and regularisation of services; and
- provide resolution of land tenure and the legal status of Bidyadanga, providing a model for land tenure reform across WA.

Bidyadanga community is committed to land tenure reform as the fundamental first step in creating a foundation from which they intend to diversify their economy. Culture remains at the heart and underpins the decision making processes. The importance of community benefit has driven the momentum to date and is fundamentally focused on improved outcomes, sustainable livelihoods and economic growth for current and future generations.

Culture at the heart

Planning for the Aboriginal Cultural Centre



Image approved for use by all participants.

Image credit: © Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Government of Western Australia

Work has commenced on planning for WA's Aboriginal Cultural Centre (ACC), expected to open in 2028. Led by Aboriginal people working in partnership with the State Government, the ACC will recognise and celebrate Aboriginal culture from across WA and contribute to the cultural infrastructure of the State. The ACC will provide spaces for art, performance, education, research, community and commercial activities. It is planned to become a major tourist and events attraction, encouraging visitors to further explore the unique regions of WA.

The WA Government has worked closely with the Whadjuk Noongar community to formalise and establish a partnership to progress the planning phase of the ACC project.

Six Whadjuk elected representatives were appointed to the ACC Steering Committee, making community representation 50 percent of the membership. This reflects the State's commitment to working in partnership with Aboriginal people on projects and services that affect Aboriginal people and communities.

The representatives were elected by a community of their peers, at a gathering of over 80 Whadjuk Male and Female Elders and form the Whadjuk Aboriginal Cultural Centre Cultural Authority for the project.

As members of the ACC Steering Committee, the Whadjuk representatives have an equal decision-making role for the business case phase on all project matters. The cultural

representatives are responsible for providing critical cultural knowledge, guidance, and direction for the business planning phase of the ACC project, including site selection and ongoing Aboriginal engagement.

Wadjemup Project

The WA Government acknowledges the Whadjuk Noongar People as the Traditional Owners of Wadjemup (Rottnest Island) and pay respect to all Aboriginal peoples impacted by the historical use of the Island as a place of Aboriginal incarceration. WA recognises the ongoing pain felt by Aboriginal communities today. The Wadjemup Project is working to deliver truth-telling, ceremony, and commemoration strategies to formally acknowledge and reconcile the Aboriginal prison history on Wadjemup (1838-1931).

The Wadjemup Project aims to be Aboriginal led through an Aboriginal Designed Cultural Authority Framework. The Framework was developed by Whadjuk Elders and leaders, and is being supported by the WA Government. Throughout 2021-2022 the Framework continued to guide Aboriginal consultation, ensuring cultural protocols are observed and Aboriginal people and communities with a connection to Wadjemup are included, and have the opportunity to have their say.

In June 2022, the Wadjemup Project Progress Report was produced in collaboration with the Cultural Authority Group, Rottnest Island Authority and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) to support future planning consultations to ensure that learnings from the past are incorporated into a shared future. This report has been drafted in the spirit of transparency, truth-telling, inclusion and reconciliation. Truth-telling is an ongoing process promoting healing and countering racism.

Working in partnership across WA Government

Aboriginal Water and Environment Advisory Group

In 2019, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) established the Aboriginal Water and Environment Advisory Group to ensure Aboriginal knowledge, values and needs are considered and appropriately addressed across department strategies, policies, programs and planning for the management and regulation of the state's environment and water resources.

The Aboriginal Water and Environment Advisory Group is comprised of Aboriginal members from across the State with skills, knowledge and experience in water and environment. The Aboriginal Water and Environment Advisory Group recently reviewed its Terms of Reference and decided to move to a Co-Chair arrangement.

Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee

Justice has established the AJAC. Comprising nine men and women who reflect the State's diverse Aboriginal communities, AJAC members come from metropolitan, regional and remote areas, bringing knowledge and lived experience of Aboriginal culture in their communities and of justice matters.

The AJAC have identified four strategic areas for future focus:

- Priorities for Young People;
- Safe Housing and Homelessness;
- Workforce Development and Employment; and

- Procurement (strengthening opportunities for ACCOs and businesses in the justice space).

The AJAC has provided advice on a range of significant matters and key strategies, including reconciliation in courts and tribunals, Justice's Aboriginal Cultural Capability Training Strategy, Aboriginal Engagement Plan and Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy.

Aboriginal Police Advisory Forum

Following then-Police Commissioner Chris Dawson's 2018 formal apology for the mistreatment of Aboriginal people at the hands of the WA Police, the Aboriginal Police Advisory Forum (APAF) was established. APAF is comprised of senior executives from the WA Police Force and eleven Aboriginal leaders from across WA. The forum meets to discuss issues of importance and to influence and provide feedback on existing policing programs and contemporary issues.

Priority Reform Two: Building the community-controlled sector

Outcome

There is a strong and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector delivering high quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.

Target

Increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

The WA Government recognises that Aboriginal community-controlled services are often preferred by Aboriginal people, achieving better results for and employing more Aboriginal people. Importantly, the existence of a diverse ACCO sector contributes to communities' broader experiences of empowerment and self-determination.

The WA Government has taken significant steps over the last twelve months to support the development of diversified ACCO peak organisations, which will be vital in providing ACCOs with a representative voice to governments and other funding bodies. The WA Government is also supporting and working alongside the ACCO sector to increase the involvement of ACCOs in the design of services that affect Aboriginal people, and to increase the proportion of services that are delivered by ACCOs, to Aboriginal people.

Alignment to the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy

The WA Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy is aligned with this Priority Reform, recognising that services are more effective when designed and delivered by Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. This is particularly the case for service sectors where effectiveness relies on the client seeing the service provider as trusted, legitimate, culturally secure and able to understand the client's perspective. As the National Agreement expresses, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community control is an act of self-determination.

Partnership Actions

As a Party to the National Agreement, WA has committed to delivering on a joined-up approach to sector-specific actions, through the development of SSPs. The WA Government has actively contributed to the development of four SSPs over the last twelve months.

These SSPs have been developed by dedicated Working Groups, co-chaired by relevant Commonwealth agencies and sectoral Peak bodies, and representatives from all jurisdictions and relevant Coalition of Peaks member organisations. The SSPs are designed to be a resource to guide the prioritisation of investment and effort by all parties and negotiate beneficial sector-strengthening strategies.

A partnership approach between the community-controlled sector and government will be critical to the delivery of the SSPs. Therefore, the SSPs will also provide opportunities to deliver under Priority Reform One.

The Health and ECCD SSPs were agreed by Joint Council in December 2021, and the implementation of these SSPs will be a core focus of the WA Government over the next reporting period. Updates on progress against the key actions outlined within the Health and ECCD SSPs are provided at Attachment A.

The Housing and Disability SSPs have also been developed. The Disability SSP was agreed out-of-session by all Joint Council members, and the Housing SSP will be provided for consideration by Joint Council in August 2022. Updates on key actions against these SSPs will be a focus in the next reporting period.

What is the WA Government doing to implement Priority Reform Two?

The National Agreement sets out a series of actions that jurisdictions should undertake to support the Aboriginal community-controlled sector and peak bodies.

The WA Government made four key commitments towards Priority Reform Two in the State's 2021 Implementation Plan, and progress has been made towards each of these

These commitments were:

1. the development of a whole-of-government ACCO Strategy;
2. supporting the establishment of the WA ACCO Consortium (or ACCO Peak Body);
3. building ACCO capability; and
4. the development of a whole-of-government Commissioning Strategy for Community Services.

Whole-of-Government ACCO Strategy

The WA Government is part-way through the development of a whole-of-government ACCO Strategy to provide guidance on how to meet its commitments under Priority Reform Two. DPC is working with the AHCWA Social Services Committee to lead its development. The ACCO Strategy will be strongly aligned to the State Commissioning Strategy for Community Services (expanded on below) outlining how the WA Government will support human and community services and maximise opportunities for ACCOs to deliver services to Aboriginal people.

To support the development of the ACCO Strategy, on 1 July 2022 the WA Government hosted a workshop with ACCOs from across WA. The workshop was attended by approximately 70 people, including approximately 35 representatives from ACCOs from every region in WA and equal numbers of representatives from 11 government agencies. It was facilitated by Noongar leader, Mr Danny Ford OAM.

The workshop enabled participants to discuss barriers to increasing ACCO service delivery. Key focus areas for the strategy were also considered, including the relationship between Government and ACCOs, making ACCO involvement in service design standard practice, improving government procurement practices for ACCOs and supporting sector capability building. The workshop provided valuable insights that will inform the further development of the ACCO Strategy.

Case Study – Department of Communities ACCO Strategy

In recognition of the unique role that the Department of Communities (Communities) plays in providing services to Aboriginal people in WA, and in addition to the whole-of-government ACCO Strategy outlined above, Communities – through its Aboriginal Outcomes division – has developed its own departmental ACCO Strategy. The aim of this Strategy is to improve the way in which Communities commissions and delivers services to Aboriginal children, families and communities, while supporting the development of ACCOs to increase their capability to deliver place-based and culturally appropriate services across Western Australia.

Communities' ACCO Strategy has been developed through a Project Working Group comprising representatives from 11 ACCOs across WA and Senior Executive level officers from Communities and the Department of Finance (Finance). Communities' ACCO Strategy and its accompanying Implementation Plan was launched on 3 August 2022.

Communities' ACCO Strategy will work on a flexible and phased approach to deliver on actions with Implementation Plan One being the first of three planned. Future implementation plans will ensure that the Strategy remains responsive to new priorities

Building ACCO Capability

Closing the Gap Virtual Pool

The WA Government has allocated \$4.8 million to the Closing the Gap Virtual Pool for strengthening the ACCO sector. This has provided \$1.4 million to establish a Peak Body for ACCOs in WA providing social services. The remaining \$3.4 million has been allocated to ACCO Sector Strengthening Grants.

ACCO Peak Body

The establishment of an ACCO Peak Body representing the broader community services sector will be key for implementing the National Agreement in partnership with Aboriginal parties. The purpose of the ACCO Peak Body is to:

- support capacity building in the ACCO sector;
- advocate for the sector's interests; and
- provide advice to the WA Government and, where appropriate, collaborate or partner with the Government on issues and priorities relevant to the ACCO sector or Aboriginal service-users.

In April 2021, DPC entered into a grant agreement with AHCWA to establish a new social services ACCO peak body (sometimes also referred to as the ACCO Consortium). The new ACCO peak is anticipated to have a key role in supporting ACCOs and working with the WA Government on issues and priorities for the ACCO sector and Aboriginal service-users.

AHCWA — currently the only WA member of the Coalition of Peaks — has established a Social Services Committee with representatives from various sectors to oversee the establishment of the ACCO Peak Body. Key progress in 2021-22 includes:

- completing a scoping study of ACCOs in WA for potential membership of the WA ACCO Peak Body;

- developing a communications strategy to enhance engagement with WA ACCOs about Closing the Gap and the development of the Peak Body;
- developing a draft constitution for the ACCO Peak Body;
- undertaking regional engagement on the strategic vision for the ACCO Peak Body; and
- providing detailed feedback on the Closing the Gap SSPs and the whole-of-government ACCO Strategy.

ACCO Sector Strengthening Grants

The \$3.4 million that the WA Government has committed to the ACCO Sector Strengthening Grants will support sector strengthening in the first four national priority sectors of health, housing, disability and early childhood care and development. Grant allocations will be consistent with those SSPs that have been developed and the *Strategic Plan for Funding the Development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Sector*.

Key progress in 2021-22 includes:

- consideration of the best approach for the administration and management of the ACCO sector strengthening grant allocation;
- identifying Lotterywest as the appropriate organisation empowered by section 6(3)(c) of the *Lotteries Commission Act 1990*, to administer and manage the grants process, given its significant experience in grant making and existing relationships with the ACCO sector; and
- finalising the grant program design, processes, governance structure, communications strategy and grant guidelines and assessment criteria in consultation with key stakeholders, including relevant WA Government line agencies, the AHCWA Social Services Committee and the Aboriginal Advisory Council.

Update on the impact of ACCO Capability Grants Program

The ACCO Capability Grants Program was a partnership between Finance and Communities, supporting and developing the capabilities of ACCOs to enable the delivery of more culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal people. The ACCO Capability Grants Program enabled ACCOs to grow their business skills through training, developing governance and models of delivery and workforce development, which aimed to build their capability to partner with the WA Government in delivering community services and to be more competitive in an open market.

In mid-2021, 19 ACCOs across WA benefitted from a share of \$850,000 in grants. Projects funded included training and development of organisation boards in the Wheatbelt, Metropolitan, Murchison and Kimberley regions, operational planning, strategic communication and upskilling of staff in the Kimberley and metropolitan regions, and development of a cultural governance framework and structure for Aboriginal women in the Kimberley.

The ongoing positive impact of the grants have been felt throughout the annual reporting period, informing the commissioning planning process and has shaped other procurement approaches to engage the ACCO sector. Further, the ACCOs have assisted in shaping the

content of SSPs and have informed the work of the Project Working Group. In addition, the current ACCO out of home care (OOHC) grants are an enactment of the Government's commitment to supporting ACCOs to be more competitive when tendering to deliver critical services, primarily to Aboriginal people and families, as enshrined in the National Agreement, and Communities' ACCO Strategy.

Whole-of-Government State Commissioning Strategy for Community Services

WA's 2021 Implementation Plan highlighted the commitment to a state-wide Commissioning Strategy, to help shape a more coherent, coordinated and holistic approach to delivering sustainable human and community service outcomes, and particularly to increase the proportion of services delivered by ACCOs.

The WA Government's Department of Finance, in partnership with the Departments of the Premier and Cabinet and Treasury, have led the development of the State Commissioning Strategy for Community Services (State Commissioning Strategy) in response to this commitment. The State Commissioning Strategy applies to the 14 government agencies that purchase community services and has key themes and principles in alignment with the National Agreement and the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy, including a commitment and focus on Aboriginal outcomes and partnerships, prioritising Aboriginal empowerment in the delivery of outcomes for Aboriginal people, organisations and communities.

The State Commissioning Strategy requires commissioning agencies to develop commissioning plans which will be reviewed and published. This process will include government agency consideration of the prioritisation of ACCOs and alignment with the whole-of-government ACCO Strategy and the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy. Finance will provide ongoing leadership and guidance to government and the community-controlled sector through the State Commissioning Strategy's implementation.

The WA Government looks forward to providing further updates on this key commitment in future Annual Reports.

Case Study – Ngaanyatjarra Maintenance Contract

In November 2021, the WA Government reaffirmed its commitment to Priority Reform Two, naming an ACCO as the successful proponent to deliver housing services across the remote Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

The northern Goldfields based Ngaanyatjarra Services Aboriginal Corporation (NSAC) will manage housing maintenance on the NG Lands under a pilot head contract arrangement with Communities. Under the agreement, NSAC will manage housing maintenance in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands until 2025.

Communities has been working in partnership with the NSAC for over four years to co-design a new service delivery model to meet specific needs in the Ngaanyatjarra Lands. This contract also provides greater training and employment opportunities for people living in Ngaanyatjarra Lands.

Priority Reform Three: Transforming government organisations

Outcome

Governments, their organisations and their institutions are accountable for Closing the Gap and are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through the services they fund.

Target

Decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experiences of racism.

Introduction

Priority Reform Three is focused on transforming government organisations. The National Agreement identifies the following six transformation elements for creating systemic change:

- Identify and eliminate racism;
- Embed and practice meaningful cultural safety;
- Deliver services in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, communities and people;
- Increase accountability through transparent funding allocations;
- Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and
- Improve engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The WA Government recognises this Priority Reform requires agencies to go on a journey with their Aboriginal public sector officers, especially senior executive leaders, to ensure these transformational elements deliver sustained, positive impact for those staff members and the organisation more broadly.

Progress on this Priority Reform is one of the hardest to measure in a holistic and culturally safe way. Nonetheless, the WA Government is committed to working with the Partnership Working Group on Closing the Gap to develop additional ways of measuring the impact of government efforts to embed the transformational elements within organisations.

Alignment to the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy

The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy focusses on moving toward placing “culture at the heart” of the way government programs, policies and services are designed and delivered by supporting and promoting culture; building the public sector workforce’s cultural responsiveness; and reshaping Government services and systems to work with culture.

The strong message from Aboriginal people to the WA Government has been that outcomes have the best chance of improving when they are informed by practices for “walking together” to enable truth-telling, eliminating racism and promoting respect for Aboriginal people.

Partnership Actions

By 2023, the WA Government has committed to identify, develop or strengthen an independent mechanism that will support, monitor, and report on the transformation of mainstream agencies and institutions.

Accountability Framework

The WA Government is in the preliminary stages of scoping a whole-of-government Aboriginal affairs accountability framework, which will draw on existing advisory and independent review mechanisms in the first phase. This approach will be reviewed as new representative bodies currently under development are established over the coming years, such as the new ACCO social services peak body being established by AHCWA.

The WA Government's Implementation Plan also included a commitment to consider both state-wide and regional representation and an aim to maximise alignment with the national Indigenous Voice process, and to work in partnership with Aboriginal people to develop options for a formal system for Aboriginal representation in WA. The Voice is likely to have a practical impact on the design and establishment of governance and accountability settings for WA at the State, regional and local level over the next three years.

Jurisdictional Actions

Embedding the National Agreement across all government agencies

Over the past twelve months, significant focus and effort has been directed at streamlining and strengthening whole-of-government coordination and decision-making mechanisms to support the implementation of the National Agreement over the longer term. This is consistent with the commitment in WA's Implementation Plan, to embed Closing the Gap requirements throughout Government agencies.

An important first step was taken in March 2022 to expand the membership of the Aboriginal Affairs Coordination Committee (AACC), a statutory committee under the *Aboriginal Affairs Planning Act 1972 (WA)*, to include Directors General of most WA Government agencies. The AACC membership also comprises the Co-Chairs of the Aboriginal Advisory Council and a further member of Council, who is also WA's representative on the Coalition of the Peaks. Progress on the implementation of the National Agreement is a key priority and focus for AACC meetings. A new Closing the Gap Deputies Group (Deputies Group), comprising WA Government agencies has been established.

The Deputies Group reports to the AACC and its role is to provide strategic direction and oversight of the WA Government's implementation of the National Agreement, including whole-of-government actions against the Priority Reform Areas.

Embedding partnership in the planning process

Nine Partnership and Planning Groups have been established to implement and report on action against the 17 socioeconomic outcomes and targets under the National Agreement. The Partnership Planning Groups will adopt a collective impact methodology to foster cross-agency collaboration and genuine partnership with Aboriginal people. The Partnership Planning Groups will each be responsible for designated socioeconomic outcomes and targets and actively contribute to delivering against the WA Government's Implementation Plan and Annual Report each year.

The WA Government has committed to moving the update to the Implementation Plan to May each year, to properly align the Closing the Gap annual implementation cycle with the State Budget Cycle. This change will ensure that the Partnership Planning Groups have an opportunity to identify opportunities for reprioritisation of funding and seek new funding for initiatives each year, including for joined-up budget proposals across portfolios.

Aboriginal Expenditure Review

The Department of Treasury (Treasury) has been leading the development of the WA Government's Aboriginal Expenditure Review (AER) of programs and services. The AER is a key reform priority under the National Agreement and will develop an evidence base on State Government spending on programs for Aboriginal peoples and communities. Consistent with the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy, it is critical that the AER is developed in partnership with the Aboriginal community and leadership to ensure the products can be used to support change and improve the transparency of government decisions that affect Aboriginal people. To this end, the Treasury is engaging with Council on the approach and outputs to ensure the collection of data and presentation of findings meets the expectations and needs of Aboriginal people.

The AER will support the WA Government's ongoing implementation of the National Agreement, including the commitment to identify opportunities for the reprioritisation of funding to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. The AER will also provide an opportunity to improve the transparency of the State Government's spending on Aboriginal programs and services by providing reliable and consistently reported information. The WA Government will report on the AER at the December 2022 meeting of Joint Council.

Priority Reform Three in practice

Changing institutions, structures, and practices – the heart of Priority Reform Three – is a shared responsibility across government. To support this, WA Government agencies are taking positive action to create organisational structures and processes to better facilitate the implementation of the National Agreement and Priority Reform Three into their everyday operational environment. Examples of these initiatives are outlined below.

Aboriginal Affairs Coordination Unit in the Department of Treasury

Treasury established the Aboriginal Affairs Coordination Unit (AACU) in 2021 to elevate and consolidate advice to the Government on Aboriginal policy outcomes and priorities, and to provide a central point for collaboration with Treasury's partners and Aboriginal stakeholders.

Working with Treasury's partners, the AACU is supporting an enabling environment for sustainable reforms on Aboriginal outcomes to be considered. This will be done by reviewing investment proposals and policy considerations across government to bring a greater focus on Aboriginal outcomes in decision making to support meeting the socioeconomic targets under the National Agreement.

AACU has developed its cultural competency, and supports growing this more broadly across Treasury, including through the employment and placement of Aboriginal staff in the unit.

There is significantly more work to do to elevate the voice and participation of Aboriginal stakeholders in decision-making on investment and delivery of services that directly impact Aboriginal peoples and communities. To work differently, AACU has established a relationship with Council to consult on priority issues, to better understand and meet the expectations and needs of Aboriginal stakeholders across the state.

Treasury continues to look for opportunities to embed collaboration and engagement with Aboriginal partners and communities. An example of this is the evaluation of a Department of Communities-delivered program – the Aboriginal Community Connectors Program. AACU

has partnered with an Aboriginal consultancy to undertake the evaluation and build capability in reviewing Aboriginal community-focused programs. The team will also be travelling to 13 locations throughout regional and remote WA, to meet with community stakeholders on country and to seek their insights and aspirations for the Program.

More broadly Treasury is working to change the way it works through publication of its first Reconciliation Action Plan and establishing an Aboriginal Graduate Program to support the employment of Aboriginal people in the Department.

Department of Communities - embedding transformational elements across the agency

In 2022, the Department of Communities (Communities) established an Aboriginal Outcomes division, reflecting the critical role and responsibility Communities has to improve partnerships with Aboriginal people and their communities to ensure sustainable outcomes for Aboriginal people in WA.

A key role of the new division is to improve the cultural capability and cultural competency level of Communities by:

- delivering culturally appropriate and culturally responsive advice and services;
- maintaining a strong Aboriginal workforce that is proportionate to the Department's Aboriginal client base; and
- improving outcomes for Aboriginal people in WA.

The Aboriginal Outcomes Division is strongly focussed on the implementation of the National Agreement. The Closing the Gap Program Office has been established to guide implementation of the National Agreement across the agency and align and reform cross-agency initiatives that contribute towards closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Western Australians.

A new Aboriginal Workforce Support workstream has been established within the Aboriginal Outcomes division to position Communities as an employer of choice for Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal Workforce Support workstream is working in partnership with Communities' People Division (human resources) to develop a dedicated focus on Aboriginal employment within broader organisational strategies and plans. This includes development of an Aboriginal Workforce Strategy and establishment of an Aboriginal Employee Network to enable Aboriginal staff to support and connect with one-another and to establish lines of communication between Aboriginal staff and Communities leadership.

Aboriginal Cultural Capability Reform Program

The Aboriginal Cultural Capability Reform Program (ACCRP) is a key flagship initiative that aims to create a culturally respectful and responsive organisation by strengthening the Aboriginal cultural competence of staff and improving organisational cultural capability of Communities systems, policies, and practices.

The ACCRP is responsible for the development and delivery of Communities' Aboriginal Cultural Framework (Framework) and Aboriginal Cultural Learning Program (Learning Program). The Framework will drive Communities' Aboriginal cultural reform agenda through a Statement of Intent – Communities' commitment to improving outcomes for Aboriginal children, people and families and will incorporate Aboriginal culturally-grounded guiding principles, values and definitions that embed Aboriginal ways of working organisation wide. The Learning Program will enable staff in all roles, at all levels Statewide to build and

maintain cultural competence across an Aboriginal Cultural Core Competency Capability Matrix. The Learning Program will include localised and place-based content consistent with learning outcomes of the Matrix for staff working in Communities' regional locations.

Department of Education - Culturally Responsive School Leadership Program

The Department of Education is working at a system level to build the agency's cultural responsiveness in alignment with the State Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy and Closing the Gap Implementation Plan, supporting government reforms to better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Building the cultural responsiveness of staff and schools is essential to creating culturally safe and engaging learning environments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and promoting reconciliation. In 2021, Education commenced the co-design of a new professional learning program for school principals in WA public schools. The program was co-designed in an Aboriginal-led process that included Elders, system leaders, principals, and Department of Education staff.

The Danjoo Koorliny Noongar Elders and staff from the Centre for Social Impact provided advice and guidance on the program design and content. Engaging with Aboriginal Elders and community leaders strengthened the agency's commitment to connecting to and caring for Country and each other. The co-design approach represents a relatively new way of working for the Department.

The new Culturally Responsive School Leadership Program is about creating cultural and systems change. The program aspires to a culturally responsive principal workforce that recognises and respects the knowledge, identities, and worldviews of Aboriginal people to positively impact the cultural safety, wellbeing, and achievement of Aboriginal students in public schools.

The program focuses on developing the cultural responsiveness of school principals in WA public schools and has two broad objectives – promoting reconciliation and strengthening Aboriginal student outcomes. The program privileges Aboriginal voices and builds on the knowledge, histories, experiences and cultures of Aboriginal people.

This program is part of the Department of Education's cultural change agenda to support schools more effectively in strengthening their cultural responsiveness and is aligned to the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework; the Code of Conduct; the Reconciliation project; and leadership development.

Building a culturally responsive police force

Yarning App

The WA Police Force, in partnership with Modis Consulting, Aboriginal Interpreting WA, and Aboriginal Communities and leaders, has designed a real-time translation application 'The Yarning App'.

The app is available on the OneForce mobile phone issued to all police officers and allows police officers' throughout the state to better communicate with Aboriginal people.

The application is the first of its kind in Australia and has won the international 2022 Microsoft Partner of the Year Award (Social Impact Inclusion Change maker Award) in conjunction with Modis Consulting.

Aboriginal Cultural Induction Packages (Regional WA)

In recognition of the diverse nature of Aboriginal communities and cultures throughout WA, the WA Police Force have supported Regional WA Police Stations and their respective Aboriginal communities to create a Cultural Induction package specific to their local area.

The Cultural Inductions have been drafted by the respective Officer-in-Charge of each Sub-District, with content and knowledge provided by Aboriginal Elders and leaders in their communities. The induction is presented to newly arriving officers, and for those undertaking specific investigations and responses in those areas.

Cultural Training and Development within the WA Police Force

Cultural training packages are offered to all new staff and recruits and packages are responsive to community expectations and continually improving. This includes cultural immersion training for 'new to rank' positions and cultural immersion training for Officers-in-Charge in Regional WA. For example, Pathways to Closing the Gap and local Community Action Planning is underway.

The WA Police force in partnership with the Western Australian Aboriginal Leadership Institute provide additional training opportunities for Aboriginal staff.

Case Study - Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative

The WA Government has committed \$14.6 million, as part of the State Budget 2022-23, to ensure developments in Western Australia's resources industry deliver improved outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety will establish an Aboriginal Empowerment Unit to develop and implement its Aboriginal Empowerment Initiative (AEI) program. The AEI will build on existing programs and aims to build capacity to sustainably implement the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy.

The program aims to ensure mining and resources projects and policies are developed in a culturally respectful way. It will improve information access for Aboriginal people related to activities on their lands.

The program will also create new Aboriginal liaison officer roles to meet with Traditional Owners to share information and promote best practice engagement between industry and Aboriginal people.

The AEI will promote and help maintain strong relationships and partnerships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the broader community and the State Government, to create and expand economic opportunities in the resources industry.

The AEI will be delivered through four components, reflecting the elements in the WA State Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy:

- partnerships, shared decision-making, and engagement;
- reshaping government services and systems to work with culture;
- building the cultural responsiveness of the public sector workforce; and
- expanding economic opportunities.

A key part of the AEI is establishing a team that will focus on developing policies, practices and administration of resource development that is appropriate and respectful of Aboriginal people. The AEI will also drive the development of formal pathways for Aboriginal people to contribute to the way that resource development is regulated.

Some of the plans for the Initiative include:

- an Aboriginal Liaison Forum to share information and inform its business;
- improved information access for Aboriginal people related to activities on their lands;
- establish pathways for secondments, placements and, or exchanges between DMIRS and Aboriginal corporations to build understanding, trust and knowledge; and
- appoint Aboriginal empowerment officers to meet with Aboriginal people on Country to share information and inform the business of DMIRS.

These are in addition to the existing programs being delivered across the department.

The first step towards the AEI is the establishment of the DMIRS Aboriginal Empowerment Unit. Recruitment for the unit will be in a phased approach over 3 years and the initial recruitment is underway with positions advertised.

Case Study - Alignment to the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy

Building Safe and Strong Families: Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy

Strength-building, prevention, and earlier intervention form key components of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy. This calls on the Government to invest in initiatives that build strengths, reduce vulnerability through prevention and early intervention, and minimise the need for crisis responses. Government expenditure is currently skewed towards crisis response areas such as children in OOHC.

Since the Building Safe and Strong Families: Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy commenced in 2017, WA has seen the largest reduction of children in care for the last two decades. The total number of children in care dropped by 154 during 2020-21 from 5,498 to 5,344, a reduction of 2.8 percent, and the first reduction since 1997. The number of Aboriginal children in care reduced by 0.8 percent, a reduction of 26 children, and the first reduction since 1996. Non-Aboriginal children in care reduced by 5.3 percent, a reduction of 128 children.

The Earlier Intervention and Family Support Strategy aims to provide culturally responsive, earlier, and targeted intervention. It delivers intensive, effective and coordinated services focussed on reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal families that encounter the WA child protection system. A major component of the strategy is the Aboriginal In-Home Support Service (AISS), which is delivered by an ACCO and operates across the metropolitan area. The AISS provides a trauma informed and culturally safe, intensive in-home support service to Aboriginal families who come into contact with the child protection system, with a focus on keeping children safely at home and reunifying children back to community, country and culture.

Priority Reform Four: Shared access to date and information at a regional level

Outcome

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to, and the capability to use, locally relevant data and information to set and monitor the implementation of efforts to close the gap, their priorities and drive their own development.

Target

Increase the number of regional data projects to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to make decisions about Closing the Gap and their development.

Introduction

Priority Reform Four calls on governments to share access to information and data at a regional level, as well as supporting the capacity of Aboriginal organisations and communities to collect, manage and use data themselves. The Priority Reform recognises , governments have historically held information about Aboriginal people without sharing it and this must change in order to further empower Aboriginal people to make decisions about their own futures.

The WA Government is committed to working with Aboriginal communities and their organisations to identify opportunities to support community-led data development projects and shared access arrangements for government-held data, particularly where that can facilitate increased capacity and capability of ACCOs across WA.

Alignment to the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy

WA's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy requires Government to incorporate aspects of stronger accountability into its work. This includes: making credible commitments; evaluating the effectiveness of Government actions; publicly providing clear, honest, and accessible information about Government actions; and ensuring opportunities exist for outside parties to engage with Government, to ask for explanations and to seek future commitments. Data is a central way this aspect of the Strategy can be achieved. Actively sharing information – including data – and including Aboriginal people in data collection and evaluation processes helps to strengthen accountability, increasing the likelihood of better outcomes. Data can also provide clear insights into what government initiatives are working well, guiding future investment towards the areas of highest need and greatest potential impact.

Partnership Actions

Under the National Agreement, Parties agreed to establish data projects in up to six locations across Australia to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to access and use location-specific data on the Closing the Gap outcome areas.

The purpose of the data projects is to support Aboriginal communities to analyse and use regionally specific data to help drive their own development and discussions with governments on Closing the Gap. The data projects will also enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to collect and access other data which they consider important.

It is envisaged these data projects will be covered by localised agreements, consistent with Priority Reform One, between the governments and participating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations in the region.

In April 2021, the Joint Council confirmed the Kimberley region as one of the initial sites for a data project.

Kimberley Data Project

The WA Country Health Service is leading the development of a Scoping Proposal for a Kimberley Data Project focused on improving the collection of and access to suicide and self-harm data. The work will support governments and service providers to address the high rates of suicide and self-harm more effectively in the Kimberley and help meet the National Agreement's target of a significant and sustained reduction in suicide towards zero.

The Scoping Proposal work is guided by a Project Reference Group, comprising of representatives from AHCWA (who provide a co-chair), ACCOs, and WA Government agencies based in the Kimberley.

The Project Reference Group has representatives from: AHCWA, Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services, Nindilingarri Cultural Health Services, Kimberley Mental Health and Drug Service, Boab Health Services, Binarri-binyja Yarrowoo Aboriginal Corporation, West Kimberley Futures, the Departments of Education, Communities and the Premier and Cabinet, Mental Health Commission, WA Police, National Indigenous Australians Agency, and WA Primary Health Alliance.

Key progress on the Kimberley Data Project in 2021-22 includes:

- commissioning the Kimberley Aboriginal Health Research Alliance (KAHRA) to undertake a desktop research project to consolidate existing knowledge and knowledge gaps as related to "Aboriginal mental health, suicide and self-harm data collection and utilisation". The desktop research project drew from relevant reports and academic journals, including research commissioned as part of the Commonwealth's Suicide Prevention Trial, which ran from 2016-2022. The report made eight recommendations to inform the next stage of the project;
- the Project Reference Group provided feedback on the KAHRA desktop research project and stakeholder mapping, which was provided to WACHS with the purpose of informing the Scoping Proposal;
- undertaking stakeholder mapping of key stakeholders beyond the project reference group who might be engaged in the next stage of the project;
- WACHS has commenced drafting the Scoping Proposal. The draft document will be provided to the Project Reference Group for comment in August 2022 and finalised in late 2022; and
- monthly meetings with representatives from the National Indigenous Australians Agency and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) to receive updates on the development of a Data Portal where national and community data can be uploaded, stored, and shared for the purposes of this data project. This data portal is being developed based on the Regional Insights for Indigenous Communities data portal, which is an existing AIHW project.

What is the WA Government doing to implement Priority Reform Four?

Data Development

National and jurisdictional baseline data already exists for most of the socioeconomic outcome areas under Closing the Gap, but areas for further 'data development' are identified throughout the National Agreement.

Data development refers to those areas that are important or necessary for understanding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes, but cannot yet be measured. The National Agreement commits Parties to the establishment of a national Data Development Plan (DDP), to outline and prioritise data development actions for each of the socioeconomic outcome areas under the National Agreement. The DDP aims to ensure that each socioeconomic outcome has a richer variety of high-quality data sources attached to it over the life of the National Agreement. The final DDP was agreed by Joint Council in August 2022. The WA Government contributed to the development of the DDP over the last 18 months.

Improving the quality and range of data that can be made accessible to Aboriginal communities and their organisations will be a key focus of the WA Government over the next twelve months. This will make an important contribution to Aboriginal empowerment, and will provide WA Government agencies and partners with better tools to evaluate the impact of policies, programs and services on the lives of Aboriginal people, particularly against the socioeconomic outcomes and targets in the National Agreement.

The items identified in the DDP will guide, but not limit, WA's data development actions in the forward-period. The recently established Closing the Gap Deputies Group will be responsible for shaping the development and linkage of WA Government-held data and indicators of progress against the National Agreement, and using that to inform the WA Government's update to the Implementation Plan and our future Annual Reports on Closing the Gap. At the same time, this focus on data development at the State-level will extend to shaping new approaches to sharing access to data at the regional level, with a more local, place-based focus moving forward to ensure that Aboriginal people play a role in the collection, validation and governance of that information.

Case Study – Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing (PRIS) Legislation

The WA Government remains committed to introducing new whole-of-government privacy and responsible information sharing legislation for the WA public sector.

The WA Government announced in August 2019 its intention to introduce new laws to better protect privacy for those whose information is held by the WA public sector, recognising that community concerns about privacy are increasing.

Consultation on an initial discussion paper was open from 5 August to 1 November 2019 and held a range of both open and targeted events to allow stakeholders input on the proposed legislation and to help inform the WA Government in proposing new privacy and responsible information sharing arrangements for WA.

Currently, DPC is conducting a second round of consultation with a wide range of government agencies to finalise the proposed legislative framework. Due to the significant impacts of COVID-19 this process has been delayed and a public announcement cannot be made at this time.

The WA Government remains committed to introducing Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing legislation.

6. Socioeconomic Outcomes

Outcome 1 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long and healthy lives

Target

Close the Gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031.

Over time, improvements have been achieved in the life expectancy for Aboriginal people in WA. The life expectancy of Aboriginal males increased from 65 to 67 since the baseline data in 2005-07 and Aboriginal females increased from 70 to 72 across the same period. This reflects combined improvements across:

- socioeconomic and environmental factors (such as quality housing and sanitation);
- equity and justice factors;
- health risk behaviours; and
- access to high quality care and services.

Further, in the last decade, the causes of mortality among Aboriginal people have shifted from maternal, perinatal and infectious diseases to chronic diseases, many related to lifestyle and health behaviours. These contributing contextual factors should be considered when analysing this data.

Table 1 Life expectancy in years (baseline years of 2005-07)²

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal males	65	68
Non-Aboriginal males	79	79
Aboriginal females	70	73
Non-Aboriginal females	83	83

² The data for this target comes from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Life Tables and is available five-yearly. The most recent data available is for the period 2015-17.

Table 2 Life expectancy in years (2015-17)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal males	67	72
Non-Aboriginal males	80	80
Aboriginal females	72	76
Non-Aboriginal females	84	83

Improving outcomes in this area

The gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is significantly impacted by the socioeconomic disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people. While it is recognised targeted health initiatives can improve life expectancy, these initiatives are likely to have greater effect when socioeconomic disadvantage is also effectively addressed. To positively impact improvements in the life expectancy of Aboriginal people the increasing rates of suicide in young Aboriginal people must also be kept in mind.

In recognition of these factors, the Department of Health – as the lead Agency for this socioeconomic outcome area – is strongly focussed on:

- evidence based prevention and early intervention that addresses health behaviours;
- initiatives that address socioeconomic disadvantage; and
- robust mental health and social and emotional wellbeing programs that incorporate the cultural determinants of health.

Update on progress against Implementation Plan

WA's 2021 Implementation Plan outlined three key strategies to work towards this socioeconomic target. These were to:

1. build and expand the Aboriginal health workforce, using a variety of career pathways and employment opportunities;
2. embed structures, policies and processes to ensure a culturally respectful and non-discriminatory health system; and
3. improve access to high quality health care and services, while supporting communities to take a preventative approach to optimising health and wellbeing.

The Department of Health has taken steps to actively progress action towards these strategies. For example, in collaboration with AHCWA the WA Government has committed \$3.7 million to a pilot program to implement the Aboriginal Health Practitioner (AHP) role within the WA health system.

Additionally, the Aboriginal Cultural eLearning – Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing (ACeL) course was released in April 2021. The ACeL is a mandatory course that supports the growth of a culturally competent and responsive health system. As of 30 June 2022, 37,741 (64 percent) WA health system employees have completed the course.

Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015-2030

The WA Government has been working to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal people through the ongoing implementation of the WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015-2030 (the Framework). The Framework its supporting policies, programs and strategies that further progress towards this socioeconomic outcome area, and align to Priority Reform Area Three of the National Agreement and the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy include:

- mandatory *Aboriginal health and wellbeing action plans* that outline targeted actions for improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people, which are prepared and implemented by each Health Service Provider in WA;
- increasing the representation of Aboriginal people at all levels of the workforce through the *Aboriginal Workforce Policy*;
- providing guidance for the funding of any community-based health program for Aboriginal people through system-wide implementation of the *Outcomes Framework for Aboriginal Health 2020-2030*;
- application of the *Aboriginal Health Impact Statement and Declaration Policy* to ensure the interests, potential impacts and opportunities for Aboriginal people are appropriately considered and embedded in system-wide policies; and
- investing in the delivery of Aboriginal-specific preventive and early intervention health programs. These include the programs funded under *Strengthening Aboriginal Health Programs* and the *Aboriginal Comprehensive Primary Health Care* programs.

Other key WA strategies that will contribute to improving the life expectancy of Aboriginal people include:

- WA Healthy Weight Action Plan 2019-2024;
- an increased focus and investment for prevention initiatives in the WA health system budget;
- an extensive review of the WA Aboriginal Environmental Health Program³ including recommendations for improvements; and
- the implementation of the recommendations of the [Sustainable Health Review](#)⁴, including Recommendation 3a – Reduce inequity in health outcomes and access to care with focus on Aboriginal people and families in line with the WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015-2030, as well as embedding cultural governance mechanisms across all recommendations.

³ This program focusses on addressing environmental factors that lead to poorer health outcomes, such as living conditions, water supply and other basic facilities like power, drainage, communications and roads.

⁴ The Sustainable Health Review Delivery is an ambitious project of reform focussing on prevention, bringing care closer to home and delivering equity in health outcomes

Case Study – Aboriginal Health Impact Statement and Declarations are transforming WA Health policy to make a real difference

Example One: WA Country Health Service TeleChemotherapy Procedure

With the aim of providing a culturally safe and appropriate service, the TeleChemotherapy Procedure review involved consultation with the WACHS Regional Aboriginal Health Consultants as part of the Aboriginal Health ISD process. The WACHS TeleChemotherapy service aims to provide care closer to home for country patients. The goal is to enable safe and high-quality cancer care to be received locally, on country for all clinically appropriate patients. This ensures the TeleChemotherapy Procedure is not only reflective of culturally responsive care but also results in an improvement in Aboriginal people's experience and outcomes related to cancer. This revised procedure increases the awareness of the need for culturally appropriate care, to support Aboriginal people affected by cancer and their families in feeling safe and supported when accessing TeleChemotherapy. It is hoped this will result in long term benefits, including an increase in rates of treatment uptake and completion with subsequent improvement in cancer outcomes for Aboriginal people.



Example Two: Cultural Perspectives on Carer Informed Consent

The *Aboriginal Health Impact Statement and Declaration Policy* (Aboriginal Health ISD Policy) brings into effect the requirement that – for all WA Health policies – it now must be declared that the interests of, potential impacts on, and opportunities for, Aboriginal people are considered and embedded within the development of WA Health policies.

With the aim of providing a culturally safe and responsive care, the TeleChemotherapy Procedure review involved consultation with the WACHS Regional Aboriginal Health Consultants as part of the Aboriginal Health Impact Statement and Declaration process. The WACHS TeleChemotherapy service aims to provide care closer to home for country patients; the goal is to enable safe and high-quality cancer care to be received locally, on country for all clinically appropriate patients. This ensures that the TeleChemotherapy Procedure is not only reflective of culturally responsive care but also results in an improvement in Aboriginal people’s experience and outcomes related to cancer. This revised procedure aims to increase awareness of the need for culturally appropriate care to support Aboriginal people affected by cancer and their families in feeling safe and supported when accessing TeleChemotherapy. It is hoped this will result in long term benefits, including an increase in rates of treatment uptake and completion with subsequent improvement in cancer outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Case Study – Future Health Research and Innovation Fund

The Future Health Research and Innovation (FHRI) Fund provides a secure source of funding to drive health and medical research, innovation and commercialisation, and through these activities, improve the health and prosperity of all Western Australians. The FHRI Fund is supported by a Strategy that is complemented by Priorities that define an approach, need or opportunity that is critical to achieving the vision of the strategy. One of these Priorities is to address, through research and innovation, key health issues and inequalities for Aboriginal Western Australians.

This has been reflected in two funding programs: Implementation Science Fellowships (2021) and Translation Fellowships (2021). Both programs called for applications that sought to address a challenge or need faced by the WA health system in the area of Aboriginal health or country and regional health. In 2022, eight applicants across the two programs have been awarded over \$4.5 million in funding.

Implementation Science Fellowships

In 2022, the FHRI Fund announced a \$600,000 grant to Dr Ivan Lin of the University of Western Australia through the Implementation Science Fellowships for a program titled Clinical Yarning. This program strives to improve the communication between healthcare clinicians and Aboriginal patients to ensure better access to quality health care. This research program will be trialled initially in the Mid-West region and if successful, will be expanded to other WA country areas.

Translation Science Fellowships

Through the Translation Science Fellowships Dr Timothy Barnett of the Telethon Kids Institute was awarded \$600,000 to address Aboriginal children's skin infections. With half of all Aboriginal children suffering the burden of skin infection which can lead to severe illnesses including blood infections and autoimmune diseases such as rheumatic heart disease, Dr Barnett will develop a rapid point-of-care diagnostic test, to allow for fast treatment that can reduce further harm caused by slow diagnosis of skin infections in Aboriginal children. This test will allow clinicians to identify resistant infections early for alternative antibiotics to be prescribed.

Dr Jonathan Bullen from Curtin University was awarded \$600,000 to address the poorer health outcomes experienced by Aboriginal Australians. The Fellowship will co-design digital technology solutions such as telehealth, that are culturally secure and support Aboriginal people to live healthy lives in their communities.

Emma Jamieson from the University of Western Australia was awarded \$600,000 to co-design a program with Aboriginal communities, highlighting the need for self-management or family support for pregnant Aboriginal women with prediabetes. Using three-way learning between Aboriginal community members, healthcare providers and researchers, management strategies will be co-designed to increase family support and facilitate Aboriginal women's capacity to self-manage hyperglycaemia in pregnancy.

Outcome 2 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong

Target

By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91 percent.

In WA, the proportion of Aboriginal babies born with a healthy birthweight has remained relatively stable in the last five years to 2019. There has been a small increase to 88 percent in 2019 from 86.9 percent in the baseline year of 2017, however it is slightly below the target of 91 percent.

A number of relevant contributing factors should be considered to reach this target by 2031, such as:

- maternal smoking and alcohol consumption during pregnancy;
- a lower rate of attendance at antenatal care (though this has improved over time – in 2019, 53.7 percent of WA Aboriginal women who gave birth had attended antenatal care in their first trimester, which is an improvement from 48.4 percent in 2014);
- the nutritional status of the mother;
- illness during pregnancy; and
- socioeconomic disadvantage.

Additionally, culturally safe antenatal care early and throughout pregnancy has an important influence on this target. Evidence shows that models of care tailored specifically for Aboriginal mothers and babies result in quantifiable improvements in antenatal care attendance, pre-term births, birth outcomes, perinatal and mortality. Further, Aboriginal women’s access to Birthing on Country (BoC) services resulted in less premature births (compared to those receiving standard care), higher attendance (5 times) of antenatal visits, and mothers being more likely to exclusively breastfeed on discharge from hospital.

Table 3 Percentage of babies born at a healthy birthweight (baseline year of 2017)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal children	87	89
Non-Aboriginal children	94	94

Table 4 Percentage of babies born at a healthy birthweight (2019)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal children	88	90
Non-Aboriginal children	94	94

Improving the birth weight of babies

To further progress this target, the WA Government has been working to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal mothers, babies and families, through:

- improving access to culturally secure care for Aboriginal families, for example through the BoC Program, Aboriginal Maternity Group Practice, Aboriginal Family Birthing Program, and the Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service;
- investing in the Aboriginal maternity workforce via employment of Aboriginal grandmothers, Aboriginal Health Workers, and midwives;
- investing in the delivery of Aboriginal-specific preventive health programs and services that improve maternal health outcomes. These include the programs funded under *Strengthening Aboriginal Health Programs*;
- implementing the *WA Health Promotion Strategic Framework* which provides a comprehensive approach to tobacco control and the lowering of Aboriginal smoking rates; and
- investing in state-wide prevention initiatives to reduce prenatal alcohol exposure and the risk of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), including via public education strategies and training for service providers informed by culturally secure ways of working with Aboriginal women and their communities.

A key action undertaken on progressing the strategies in WA's 2021 Implementation Plan – and the broader socioeconomic outcome and target – is the BoC Program.

Birthing on Country Program

The WA Government's BoC Program aims to provide long term direction for the delivery of culturally safe maternal and newborn services for Aboriginal women, newborns and their families in WA. The BoC Program is a collaboration between multiple stakeholders, led by the WA Department of Health (Health) and guided by the project's advisory and reference groups.

In progressing the BoC Program, Health has completed a literature review, identifying several key elements in the delivery of culturally safe, optimal maternity services for Aboriginal women and their families across WA, and initiated a survey study of existing services.

The study is a partnership between the Health Communicable Disease Control Directorate, Health Networks Directorate, and Chief Nursing and Midwifery Office, the Centre for Nursing, Midwifery and Health Services Research, and Kurongkurl Katitjin (Edith Cowan University). Findings from the literature review and the results of the survey study will inform a report outlining the next steps and recommendations to direct action in culturally safe maternal and transition-of-care services.

Outcome 3 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years

Target

By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95 percent.

Early childhood education is crucial to later opportunities, achievements, and educational outcomes. Quality and culturally responsive early childhood education is critical for Aboriginal children’s identity, which encompasses self-esteem, resilience, healthy growth and capacity to learn.

WA has recorded an improvement over time for this target and has met the target of 95 percent set out in the National Agreement.

An increase of 12.4 percent from the baseline year of data (2016) for this target has been achieved in WA, with the percentage of children enrolled in ‘Year Before Fulltime Schooling’ (YBFS) early childhood education increasing from 95 percent to 107 percent⁵ in the latest reporting period (2021)

Table 5 Percentage of children enrolled in YBFS (baseline year of 2016)⁶

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal children	95	77
Non-Aboriginal children	99	92

Table 6 Percentage of children enrolled in YBFS (2021)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal children	107	97
Non-Aboriginal children	96	87

Improving enrolment in year before fulltime schooling

WA Schools continue to use the National Quality Standard and the Early Years Learning Framework to improve the quality of early childhood education offered to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children Kindergarten-Year 2.

Online self-paced professional learning on the seven quality areas of the National Quality Standard has been developed and can be accessed by public school early childhood

⁵ WA’s enrolment proportions exceed 100% due to the numerator and denominator being from different sources.

⁶ The Productivity Commission cautions that the data sources from the Australian Bureau of Statistics do not provide reliable estimates and will need to be reconsidered in relation to Aboriginal children.

educators and school leaders through the Department of Education's internal communication platform.

Enrolment information for public school Kindergarten children is provided at the systemic state level, as well as the local school / community level. Information and support materials to maintain and improve attendance are provided for public schools.

The Kindergarten enrolment and attendance campaign is being revised, updated, and extended. It will include consideration of Aboriginal and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse children, children with disabilities, and children living in communities where there are high levels of vulnerability. This is part of the work being progressed under WA's Preschool Reform Agreement Implementation Plan.

Kimberley Schools Project

The WA Government has allocated \$11.7 million to extend the Kimberley Schools Project to keep young people engaged in the education system. Initially commencing in 2017 and focused on targeted teaching, better early years learning, improving attendance and increased student and community engagement, the program has fostered improvements in educational outcomes for Kimberley students.

Update on progress on the Implementation Plan

The WA 2021 Implementation Plan highlighted commitments under the Early Years Initiative and KindiLink.

KindiLink

The KindiLink program provides six hours per week of high-quality play-and-learn sessions for Aboriginal children not old enough to enrol in Kindergarten, who attend with their parent/carer, at no cost to families. In 2021, KindiLink operated 56 programs in WA.

New KindiLink staff have been trained in the Abecedarian Approach to learning (3a), a set of evidence-based teaching and learning strategies for early childhood educators and parents to use with children from birth to five.

Child and Parent Centres

In WA, 22 Child and Parent Centres operate on or near to public schools, providing support to children to transition into school successfully and to increase the capability of parents to support their children's development.

Outcome 4 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years

Target

By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55 percent.

The impact of transgenerational trauma on Aboriginal people is recognised. Understanding current and historic events that have caused, or continue to cause trauma, including the impacts upon young children aged 0-4 years, is vital to enabling children to thrive in their early years. These impacts include holistic challenges with health, cultural and structural barriers that involve many interrelated issues across the spectrum of community wellbeing.

The early years shape every child's future and lay the foundation for ongoing development and readiness to learn and engage in education.

In the latest reporting period (2021) for this target in WA, 31 percent of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children were assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the AEDC.

Nationally, progress towards the target has also shown a small shift backwards from the baseline year of data (2018). It is possible the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted this target.

Table 7 Percentage of children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (baseline year of 2018)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal children	31	35
Non-Aboriginal children	60	57

Table 8 Percentage of children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census (2021)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal children	31	34
Non-Aboriginal children	60	56

Improving outcomes in this area

The WA Government is working collectively to improve outcomes in this area, with developmental tracking crucial to the uptake and successful engagement in early years education. The KindiLink program referred to in the previous section is an example of this multipronged approach.

Early Years Initiative

The Early Years Initiative (EYI) aims to improve children's wellbeing and school readiness in four WA communities and in doing so learn what it takes to create change for children across WA. The EYI engages community leaders, Government, researchers, business and philanthropic organisations to collaborate and improve learning, health and developmental outcomes for children from conception to the age of four. The EYI is a 10-year collective impact partnership between the WA Government (comprising of Departments of Communities, Health and Education) and Minderoo Foundation. The initiative is supported by Telethon Kids Institute with an evidence and evaluation function.

There are 4 EYI sites in metropolitan, rural, remote and very remote areas. Since September 2021, Derby (remote) and Bidyadanga (very remote) have become identified EYI communities. Each EYI site is in the process of identifying the main enablers and barriers to children and families thriving in their communities, to then co-design agreed and targeted community plans and test, trial and learn from evidence-based solutions. Development of these community plans is overseen by local governance structures developed in each site, comprising government, non-government and community (via community navigators) representatives.

The EYI has a partnership with Badgebup Aboriginal Corporation (Central Great Southern), Ngunga Women's Group (Derby), Bidyadanga Aboriginal Community La Grange (Bidyadanga) and the Armadale Champion Centre who are all represented on local working groups.

All the EYI sites have already identified access and participation in early childhood activities before fulltime schooling as a priority, with work already underway to identify barriers and enablers to achieving this, and some early actions towards this goal in each site.

Aboriginal students with English as an additional language or dialect

In 2022 – 2023, the Department of Education's English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EALD) Early Childhood Progress Map will be reviewed and updated. Schools will continue to use the EALD Progress Map to plan, monitor, and assess Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Kindergarten students who speak English as an additional language or dialect.

Outcome 5 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential

Target

By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20-24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96 percent.

In the baseline year of data (2016) for this target in WA, 57 percent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20-24 had attained a year 12 or equivalent qualification.

It is notable that WA's proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (20-24) attaining year 12 or a qualification at Certificate III or above has steadily increased based on the Census data since 2001. WA's results were 32 percent in 2001 to 37 percent in 2006, 43 percent in 2011 and 57 percent in 2016.

There is no new data on Year 12 (or equivalent) attainment since the baseline year of 2016.⁷ updated data from the 2021 Census was not available at the time of reporting.

Table 9 – Percentage of people aged 20-24 who have attained year 12 or equivalent (baseline year of 2016)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	57	63
Non-Aboriginal people	88	89

Improving outcomes in this area

Education's priority for this socioeconomic outcome area is to support the creation of culturally responsive schools that build on the strengths of Aboriginal students, engage them in their learning, and enable them to thrive academically and socially.

The Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework enables this approach by supporting schools to build and maintain mutually respectful relationships with Aboriginal students and their families, and to draw on the strengths of their local Aboriginal communities to set the directions and priorities for Aboriginal students in the school.

Education provides professional learning, advice and guidance to build the cultural responsiveness of staff at all levels of the organisation, driven by the Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework.

A number of supplementary programs are operating in schools to further support the wellbeing, engagement and achievement of Aboriginal students, including:

- The Follow the Dream program provides enriched educational and experiential opportunities for Aboriginal students in Years 7 to 12. A key priority of the Follow the Dream program is participating students graduating Year 12 with a WA Certificate of Education. As of Term One, 2022, 101 public schools in WA are operating a Follow the Dream program.

⁷ Updated data from the 2021 Census was not available at the time of reporting.

- A range of programs are delivered to enhance the engagement of female Aboriginal students in WA public schools by supporting their social and emotional wellbeing. These programs are delivered by Glass Jar Australia, SHINE Inspire Achieve Belong, the Waalitj Foundation (formerly known as Wirrpanda Foundation), Stephen Michael Foundation, Aurora Education Foundation, Koya Aboriginal Corporation and Stars Foundation.
- Clontarf Foundation Academies program supports male Aboriginal students, with the intention of strengthening students' health and well-being outcomes and building upon their self-esteem, equipping them with skills to increase their employment. At of Term One, 2022, 40 public schools in WA are operating a Clontarf Foundation academy.

In 2021, Education delivered 66 professional learning workshops to 2,651 principals, teachers, Aboriginal and Islander education officers, graduate school psychologists and senior Education staff to support the creation of culturally responsive schools.

Education has established a state government-funded panel of service providers to deliver a range of engagement programs for Aboriginal girls and young women in Years 7 to 12 in WA public schools. The panel consists of service providers who have demonstrated the capacity to deliver engagement programs that support Aboriginal girls and young women to achieve their full learning potential; shape their own futures; and embrace their cultures, languages and identities as Australia's First Nations people.

At the commencement of Term One, 2022, 16 schools in WA are providing an engagement program for Aboriginal girls and young women, selected from the panel arrangement and assisted with state funding.

Outcome 6 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways

Target

By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70 percent.

Like all young people, Aboriginal students need to be able to access multiple pathways to further education to help them reach their full potential.

Ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reach their full potential through the pursuit of further education pathways is a priority for the WA Government.

Table 10 People aged 25 to 34 years old who have completed AQF Certificate level III or above as a percentage (baseline year of 2016)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	34	42
Non-Aboriginal people	70	72

A particular challenge for this socioeconomic outcome area is that while the State bears responsibility for getting students accepted into further education pathways, the Commonwealth bears responsibility for the completion of these further education pathways.

While the WA Government therefore does not have direct responsibility for students completing a university education, the Government continues to provide support and encourage this pathway for Aboriginal students who wish to pursue the option, putting the mechanisms in place for the target to eventually be reached.

WA acknowledges it has consistently had the second lowest proportion of Aboriginal students attaining non-school qualifications at Certificate III or above. For Aboriginal students, the gap between WA and the national average has worsened over time, from 5.3 percent in 2001 to 8.5 percent in 2016. WA's size and its remoteness present particular challenges for service delivery to Aboriginal students and are contributing factors to this result.

Whilst there is no new data since the baseline year of 2016⁸ the 2020 national Total Vocational Education Training (VET) Activity data shows just under a third (31 percent) of all enrolments by Aboriginal students in WA were undertaken by students living in remote or very remote regions, second only to the NT (63 percent). Moreover, the latest WA VET enrolment data, highlights Aboriginal student enrolments in WA's publicly funded VET sector has been improving over time.

There were almost 12,900 publicly funded VET course enrolments by Aboriginal students in 2021, an increase of 23.2 percent (or more than 2,400 additional enrolments) on 2020.

The proportion of enrolments undertaken by Aboriginal students in WA has continued to increase in recent years, from 7.5 percent in 2006 to 8.6 percent last year.

⁸ Updated 2021 Census data was not available at the time of reporting.

Importantly, of those Aboriginal people who are undertaking VET, proportionally more students have shifted into higher-level (Certificate III and above) VET qualifications, from 31.6 percent of enrolments in 2006 to 44.9 percent in 2021.

Improving outcomes in this area

Two-way Science initiative

The Department of Education's Two-way Science initiative is a culturally responsive model of education that connects local Aboriginal knowledge to the science curriculum in an integrated learning program. Career pathways and employment opportunities in remote Aboriginal communities are being developed as a result of the Two-way Science Initiative through local partnerships with Indigenous Ranger Programs.

Outcome 7 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment and education

Target

By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-25 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67 percent.

All students in WA have access to Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs and workplace learning in their school. The Department of Education provides the policy settings to support the VET delivery and related activities, particularly to keep students safe in their workplace learning. VET qualifications are offered to Years 10 to 12 students, which contribute to the attainment of the Western Australian Certificate of Education.

The data for this target comes from the ABS Census. The most recent data available is for 2016 and there is no new data available since the National Agreement was signed. WA's proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training has steadily increased based on the 5 yearly Census data from 41.2 percent in 2001 to 51.5 percent in 2016.

Nationally, the proportion of Aboriginal youth (age 15-24) engaged in employment, education or training increased from 47.5 percent in 2001 to 57.2 percent in 2016.

The data for this target comes from the ABS Census. The most recent data available is for 2016.⁹

Table 11 People aged 15 to 24 years who are fully engaged in employment, education or training as a percentage (baseline year of 2016)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	52	57
Non-Aboriginal people	78	80

Improving outcomes in this area

Aboriginal School Based Training Program

The Aboriginal School Based Training (ASBT) program, funded by the Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD), is a VET program specific to Aboriginal students. This program and its related funding are available to all education systems and sectors. The ASBT program supports Aboriginal secondary students in Years 10, 11 and 12 to commence training that leads to post school opportunities, including employment or further education pathways.

The ASBT program includes approximately \$2 million to support schools students. Over 450 ASBT student applications have been received in 2022, compared to 321 in 2020.

There are ongoing discussions and reviews between DTWD and all education systems/sectors regarding strategies to improve completions in the qualifications, whether

⁹ Updated 2021 Census data was not available at the time of reporting.

the qualifications on offer are attractive to schools and students, and if they lead to employment and/or further training post-school.

Driving Access and Equity Program

The WA Government increased its investment in 2022 to expand the Driving Access and Equity Program, providing important additional support to assist disadvantaged young people, particularly those from regional and remote areas, to obtain their driver's licence and open up job opportunities. The total investment in this program is now more than \$10 million.

During the past 12 months, a pilot of the program has awarded \$3.4 million in grants to 12 organisations in the Kimberley and Pilbara to deliver initiatives that improve access to driving services, instructors, and suitable vehicles. The additional State Budget funding will enable the WA Government to provide up to \$3.7 million in further grants.

The program has already helped establish and expand three Regional Youth Driver Education (RYDE) programs to help learners complete their required 50 hours of supervised driving. It has assisted with the purchase of new vehicles for driver training and with the employment of an additional five new remote services officers - enabling the delivery of an additional 130 driving assessments this year.

Thirty people are also undertaking their Certificate IV in Transport and Logistics Training (Road Transport - Car Driving Instruction), which will help further boost the number of available driving instructors around the State.

Work continues on other program initiatives, including the production of publications for learner drivers who speak English as a second language or for whom literacy is a barrier, as well as increasing the number of theory testing providers. Consultation with community organisations and local government will take place in the coming months to identify priority regions to be included in the program extension.

Outcome 8 – Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

Target

By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed to 62 percent.

Since the early 2000s, the proportion of WA's working age Aboriginal people in employment has been static, leading to a widening of the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in terms of economic participation. It is important to note, that solely measuring economic participation does not provide a holistic understanding of the structural barriers Aboriginal people encounter in securing employment or the differing regional and economic conditions across in WA.

Table 12 Employment rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25 to 64 years as a percentage (baseline year of 2016)¹⁰

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	45	51
Non-Aboriginal people	77	76

Improving outcomes in this area

The WA Government is working to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in employment through a range of initiatives.

The Aboriginal Procurement Policy¹¹ came into effect in July 2018. The first three years of the policy has seen a total of 692 contracts awarded to Aboriginal businesses, with a total value of more than \$475 million dollars.

The introduction of new participation requirements to the policy on 1 July 2022 means that suppliers on certain government contracts must meet Aboriginal employment and Aboriginal business subcontracting targets. The Aboriginal Procurement Policy is an important initiative in addressing this outcome area, because Aboriginal businesses have an employment rate for Aboriginal people that is 60 percent higher than other businesses.

Aboriginal Procurement Advisory Service

The Aboriginal Procurement Advisory Service (APAS) has been provided by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) since 2017. The objective of APAS is to assist Aboriginal businesses to secure contracting opportunities with government and private sector opportunities across the regions.

Over the 12-month period from February 2021 to 2022, 211 Aboriginal businesses accessed the APAS and \$8.4 million in contracts were awarded to Aboriginal businesses.

¹⁰ The most recent data available is for 2016, updated 2021 Census data was not available at the time of reporting.

¹¹ The Aboriginal Procurement Policy mandates progressive targets for the award of contracts to Aboriginal businesses by WA Government agencies.

Case Study – Meet the Buyer and Supplier Forum

On 20 October 2021, the Transport Portfolio hosted its inaugural Meet the Buyer and Supplier Forum, bringing together Aboriginal businesses and major contractors and Aboriginal businesses operating across the transport construction and maintenance sector.

The idea to hold a meet and greet event was first proposed by Main Roads' Aboriginal Employment Initiatives Taskforce after consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders. Anecdotal feedback also suggested both Aboriginal businesses and contractors were finding it difficult to connect and form business relationships. This was confirmed in the findings of a survey that was sent out to Aboriginal businesses and major contractors in early 2021. The survey was also used to capture valuable insights into what information should be presented and how the Forum should be run.

Following the survey, a workshop was held with key internal stakeholders from across the Transport Portfolio, including the Main Roads Aboriginal Engagement and Participation team, to review the survey feedback and develop a draft agenda and format for the Forum. This was then presented to the Portfolio's Aboriginal Advisory Group for final comment and endorsement.

The Portfolio engaged Known Associates, a 100 percent Aboriginal owned event management company, and worked closely with them to develop the Forum and manage the event on the day.

Prior to the event, the Forum was widely promoted through existing committees, organisations, bulletins, electronic direct mail and social media. As a result, just over 30 buyers registered to host a booth including major road and rail construction and maintenance contractors, and support organisations such as Supply Nation, Aboriginal Business Directory WA and Wirra Hub. Over 200 representatives from Aboriginal businesses across the State registered to attend.

The WA Government has been working alongside all Australian Governments as a member of the Indigenous Affairs Task Force, on a number of priority areas for cross-jurisdictional work. These priority areas include the Australian Government's substitute program for the Community Development Program, refining the definition of an Aboriginal business and issues associated with 'black cladding'¹², and capacity building opportunities for Aboriginal businesses.

The WA Government is also implementing a number of initiatives to increase the proportion of Aboriginal people who are employed in the WA public service, working towards meeting a target of 3.7 percent employment. These initiatives include an Aboriginal traineeship program and other recruitment and development practices, to proactively identify and support the talent of Aboriginal people in the public service.

¹² Black Cladding is described as the practice of a non-Indigenous business entity or individual taking unfair advantage of an Indigenous business entity or individual for the purpose of gaining access to otherwise inaccessible Indigenous procurement policies or contracts (source: <https://supplynation.org.au/about-us/black-cladding/>).

Initiatives to strengthen regional Aboriginal economic participation

The Aboriginal Economic Development unit within DPIRD drives economic outcomes for Aboriginal people in primary industry land and sea enterprises through:

- delivering the Aboriginal Governance and Leadership Development Program which provides business leadership, procurement advisory and governance support services to Aboriginal businesses;
- working with Traditional Owners to develop and implement native title settlements and agreements featuring economic development commitments and initiatives;
- increasing Aboriginal representation in targeted primary industries such as carbon farming, fishing and regenerative agriculture industries;
- implementing the Aboriginal Pastoral Program to increase the independence, capability, profitability and sustainability of Aboriginal Pastoralists;
- supporting divestment of the Aboriginal Lands Trust pastoral estate by working collaboratively with Aboriginal Corporations to engage in strategic and business planning to create new business and employment opportunities; and
- implementing workforce development and capacity building projects to support greater Aboriginal representation in primary industries such as the Aboriginal Pastoral Academy and Sheep Shearing and Wool Handling Schools.

The WA Government also delivers Aboriginal economic activities through nine Regional Development Commissions across the State.

This includes:

- the delivery of the Regional Economic Development (RED) Grants that invest in community-driven projects that support efforts to create long-term economic growth and job sustainability in the regions;
- strategic business planning, capacity building and funding support for Aboriginal businesses in tourism, restoration and a range of priority industries;
- supporting Aboriginal Business Chambers such as the Goldfields Aboriginal Business Chamber;
- supporting Aboriginal traineeships at a regional shire through an Aboriginal Traineeship and Mentoring program; and
- generating positive Aboriginal employment outcomes on key strategic projects such as the Dampier Peninsula Activation Project; and
- partnering with DPIRD to deliver the regionally based Local Content Advisor Network providing support for local businesses to maximise local content opportunities, including goods, services and jobs, for State Government funded projects.

Noongar Economic Participation Framework

The Noongar Economic Participation Framework (the Framework) within the South-West Settlement aims to grow Noongar owned businesses, increase the knowledge and skills of the Noongar community in the areas of Government procurement, tendering and contracting,

increase Noongar participation and representation in employment and the broader economy, and develop a Noongar entrepreneurial culture.

Led by DPIRD, key agencies have begun work to review existing programs and initiatives that support Aboriginal economic development across the South-West Settlement area, opportunities for collaboration and cultural learning and other planning activities in preparation for the Noongar Regional Corporations to join the Noongar Economic Participation Steering Group that will lead implementation of the Framework.

Once the Noongar Regional Corporations are operational (later in 2022) they will have a seat at the table with key agencies and a forum to work together on their economic development priorities.

Yamatji Business Development Unit

Since the release of the Implementation Plan in September 2021, the WA Government has supported the establishment of a \$5 million dollar Business Development Unit (the Unit) for Yamatji businesses through the Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement). The Unit will provide business incubation support for Yamatji businesses and entities, support existing Yamatji businesses to leverage and access finance, and link to regional procurement and partnership opportunities.

Jina: Western Australian Aboriginal Action Plan

The *Jina: Western Australian Aboriginal Action Plan 2021 – 2025* (Jina Plan) is a whole-of-government approach to grow economic, job and social outcomes for Aboriginal peoples and communities through tourism. It was developed through a cross-government initiative led by Tourism WA, in consultation with the WA Indigenous Tourism Operators Council.

The Jina Plan incorporates three main focus areas: positioning WA as the premier Aboriginal tourism destination in Australia; building capacity for Aboriginal people to enter the tourism sector; and facilitating the development of Aboriginal cultural experiences.

Some of the key achievements delivered by the WA Government over the past year include:

- jobs and skills training programs delivering Aboriginal hospitality employment outcomes including a workforce training project in Kununurra and the commencement of a youth taste of industry initiative focused on encouraging young people into tourism;
- the opening of WA's sixth Camping with Custodians campground, and an expression of interest process to identify additional campground opportunities around WA; and
- an infrastructure and capacity building support program targeted at enhancing and expanding Aboriginal tourism businesses on the Dampier Peninsula.

Case Study – Green Jobs Plan

Green Jobs is a flagship program as part of the WA Recovery Plan to support the state's economic recovery from COVID-19. The Plan is a \$60.3 million commitment to create jobs in revegetation and conservation. The Plan is designed to maximise opportunities for people who face barriers to employment, including youth, Aboriginal people, residents in regional areas and people with disability. There is a focus on skills development across projects including plant identification, seed collection, horticultural practices, propagation, retail nursery operations and installation of nesting boxes.

The projects have a strong emphasis on incorporating local Aboriginal knowledge into the process and supporting Aboriginal communities in maintaining connection to Country. Projects in the Green Jobs Plan are using the WA State Government Aboriginal Procurement Policy to direct commercial supply contracts to Aboriginal businesses wherever possible. Some contracts for future work on the Green Jobs Plan have been let with not-for-profit organisations, and the contracts contain clauses that require at least 20 percent of the project budget to be delivered by Aboriginal participants. In subsequent years this minimum percentage will be increased.

Outcome 9 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need

Target

By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal people living in appropriately sized (no overcrowded) housing to 88 percent.

Connecting Aboriginal people to safe, stable, and sustainable homes, while improving housing choice and outcomes for Aboriginal households and communities is critically important for supporting a thriving life, good health, wellbeing, education, and employment outcomes. A safe, secure home with working facilities is fundamental to achieving many of the Socioeconomic Outcomes within the National Agreement. Good environmental health influences life expectancy, child mortality, disability, chronic disease, and family and community violence.

WA has been making steady progress towards this target. However, WA is still performing below the national average. Progress will need to accelerate in order to meet this target by 2031, both at a jurisdictional and a national level.

Higher rates of overcrowding in remote areas – nation-wide – are a partial contributing factor to the data for this outcome area, and this is of particular relevance to WA.

Table 13 Percentage of people living in appropriately sized housed (baseline year of 2016)¹³

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	75	79
Non-Aboriginal people	96	93

Improving outcomes in this area

Social Housing Recovery Economic Package

The lack of housing availability and options is a core issue for Aboriginal people living in remote, regional, and metropolitan locations. In 2020, the WA Government announced the \$319 million Social Housing Recovery Economic Package (SHERP). The SHERP aims to enable community housing providers to improve the liveability and lifespan of existing social housing assets across WA. Of the \$319 million, \$92.8 million was allocated for a SHERP Grants Program for community housing providers, including:

- \$33 million for New builds (Workstream 1);
- \$46.5 million for Refurbishments (Workstream 2); and
- \$13.3 million for Remote Aboriginal Communities maintenance (Workstream 3).

The purpose of the SHERP Grants Program is to provide new and upgraded community housing for hundreds of WA's most vulnerable people. This includes new housing construction projects and refurbishment works, which will increase the supply of social

¹³ Data for this target comes from the ABS Census, and updated data from the 2021 Census data is not yet reflected on the Productivity Commission's Data Dashboard.

housing stock and extend the useful life of existing homes; helping address the State's increasing social housing demands, along with specific funding for maintenance works in remote Aboriginal communities.

Through Workstream 2, 805 applications totalling \$57,531,017 were awarded refurbishment funding across 47 organisations and 11 regions, and so far, 366 projects totalling approximately \$27 million have been funded through the refurbishment grants program to assist tenancy cohorts that includes many Aboriginal families.

In addition, through Workstream 3 – Remote Aboriginal Communities maintenance funding - of the \$13.3 million a total of \$8.2 million has been awarded to four remote Aboriginal communities grants which will provide for maintenance on 101 properties. Eligible grant applications will continue to be accepted until funds have been exhausted.

Short Stay Accommodations

The WA Government is delivering three new Aboriginal Short Stays to meet the need for culturally appropriate and affordable accommodation for Aboriginal people travelling to regional and metropolitan centres for a range of reasons. The lack of affordable and culturally appropriate temporary accommodation options in metropolitan and regional centres means visiting Aboriginal people may, in some instances, sleep rough and face the risk of temporary homelessness.

North-West Aboriginal Housing Fund

The North-West Aboriginal Housing Fund, (NWAHF), established in 2016 as part of regional services reform, was formed to support the innovative use of housing to build opportunity, prosperity and wellbeing, with a strong focus on education and employment for Aboriginal people in the Kimberley and Pilbara. Of the \$200 million committed to this cross-government initiative, the NWAHF (by the end of February 2022) has invested \$82.1 million; of which \$50 million was invested in Aboriginal organisations. Additional projects across the Pilbara and the Kimberley are being developed in collaboration with Aboriginal organisations and communities, which will result in the investment of a further \$107 million.

It is anticipated that NWAHF investments will result in 282 homes being made available for affordable rental and/or home ownership by Aboriginal families across the North-West. In addition to culturally appropriate housing and support services, the investments will create employment for 335 Aboriginal people and support over 80 apprenticeships for Aboriginal people.

Remote Communities Fund

WA recognises that too many Aboriginal people living in remote communities experience poorer health and wellbeing, and the WA Government is committed to developing new approaches guided by the Priority Reform areas within the National Agreement. This includes exploring all available funding solutions, and engaging more appropriately by prioritising the needs of these diverse groups of people that experience extreme hardships every day. In the 2021-22 WA State Budget, the Government committed \$350 million to establish the Remote Communities Fund to improve power, water, wastewater, municipal services and housing availability in remote Aboriginal communities and town-based Aboriginal communities in regional WA.

Addressing Homelessness

People experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness can face multiple difficulties and often require access to a wide range of supports and services. The complexity of the issue means that it cannot be solved by one agency or organisation working alone. *All Paths Lead to a Home: Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020–2030* is a whole-of-community plan, setting the direction for all levels of government, business and the community sector in responding to and preventing homelessness in WA.

The WA Government committed \$7.3 million over 3 years to provide immediate and culturally appropriate, safe, low-barrier accommodation in response to rough sleeping in the Perth CBD. The Boorloo Bidee Mia homelessness facility opened in August 2021, offering culturally appropriate support and transitional accommodation for community members with the most complex needs, many of whom have experienced long-term homelessness. Wungening Aboriginal Corporation and Noongar Mia Mia have jointly been awarded a \$6.7 million grant until mid-2024 to lead the design of facilities and services, including culturally informed and targeted support services, tenancy management and lodging. Since commencing in August 2021, a total of 60 referrals to Boorloo Bidee Mia have been assessed. As of 29 April 2022, there were 50 residents at Boorloo Bidee Mia.

Aboriginal people are disproportionately represented amongst people experiencing homelessness, with 34 percent of people living in improvised dwellings, tents, or sleeping out (rough sleepers) identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians on census night in 2016 in WA. To connect people who are sleeping rough to long-term housing, the WA State Government is investing \$73.5 million to develop two Common Ground facilities in East Perth and Mandurah, including \$8 million through the Perth City Deal. Common Ground will apply a housing-first philosophy, connecting people who have experienced homelessness or earning a low income to supportive housing with flexible and tailored supports. Collectively the Common Grounds will provide up to 162 homes for some of the State's most vulnerable people.

Outcome 10 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system

Target

By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15 percent.

The WA Government is continuing to work to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system and deliver sustained, structural reductions to the adult prisoner population.

Over the latest reporting period activity has focused on improving the effectiveness of rehabilitation and reintegration activities, diverting offenders away from custodial sentences, and enhancing the measurement and evaluation of Aboriginal outcomes.

The most recent data (2021) for this target in WA shows there were 3,449 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander adults held in prison per 100,000 of the adult population. This is a decrease, from the baseline year of data, of 133 adults in prison per 100,000 of the adult population.

While WA has recorded an improvement for this target, the figures do not take into account the impact of COVID-19 and the general decrease in the prisoner population in WA since the start of the pandemic.

Table 14 Imprisonment rate per 100,000 of the adult population (baseline year of 2019)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	3,582	2,143
Non-Aboriginal people	230	171

Table 15 Imprisonment rate per 100,000 of the adult population (2021)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	3,449	2,223
Non-Aboriginal people	216	164

Improving outcomes in this area

Since 2020, a range of projects have been trialling ways to divert offenders away from custodial sentences. For example, the Department of Justice has partnered with the Aboriginal Legal Service WA and Legal Aid WA to establish Bail Support Services and Prison In-reach Legal Services at Perth Magistrates Court and in the Kimberley, servicing Broome and Derby Magistrates Courts. These services identify opportunities to overcome barriers to bail and reduce avoidable remand.

The Department of Justice also continues to strengthen efforts to break the cycle of alcohol and other drug-related crime and support the WA Government's Methamphetamine Action Plan. This includes delivery of alcohol and other drug programs at two dedicated rehabilitation facilities at Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison for women and the Mallee Unit at

Casuarina Prison. Planning has also commenced for a new alcohol and other drug unit at Bunbury Regional Prison.

In 2019-20, the WA Government undertook significant reform to the State's fines enforcement regime. As part of the amendments to the *Fines, Penalties and Infringements Notices Enforcement Act 1994 (WA)*, imprisonment for non-payment of fines was restricted so that it could only be ordered by a Magistrate, and even then, only as a sanction of last resort. As a result of these amendments, no person has been imprisoned in Western Australia for fine default during the reporting period.

'Work and Development Permits' were included as an option for expiation of court fines as part of this suite of reform. The Work and Development Permit Scheme (WDPS), delivered by the Department of Justice, in partnership with Legal Aid WA and the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia, is an initiative to help people who are experiencing difficulty paying court fines due to hardship. During the reporting period, the WDPS has successfully enabled Aboriginal participants to expiate their outstanding court fines by undertaking activities or treatment programs, specific to their needs, for example, drug or alcohol treatment, voluntary unpaid work or educational, vocational or life skills courses.

An independent review of the Department of Justice adult prison and community corrections criminogenic treatment programs made 20 recommendations across a range of areas, including data, evaluation, governance, staffing, mode of program delivery and identification of programs. A program of works is being developed to prioritise and update these programs in accordance with the review outcomes.

Legislative reform is also being explored to determine whether this is required to address structural barriers to the achievement of this target and a statutory review of the *Sentencing Act 1995* has been commenced.

Western Australian Office of Crime Statistics and Research

The Western Australian Office of Crime Statistics and Research (WACSAR), established in 2020, is providing a cross-agency, evidence-based approach to criminal justice decision-making, policy development and evaluation of strategic initiatives.

WACSAR evaluates outcomes against four key WA Government objectives, including reducing Aboriginal over-representation in the justice system. Aboriginal communities and organisations will be engaged to define and measure outcomes that have value to their own communities to be integrated into evaluation frameworks. For all evaluations WACSAR undertakes, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal outcomes are evaluated separately.

The WACSAR data and information website is in the final stage of development before going live. Interactive court data will be included on the website, with Aboriginal outcomes separated from non-Aboriginal data and further broken down by region where possible.

De-identified, aggregate data will be made publicly available via the website.

WACSAR Criminal Justice Research Fund

WACSAR has established an Advisory Board including representatives from the justice sector and university partners to provide strategic advice and support the administration of a research grant fund. An Aboriginal university representative has recently been appointed as a member of the Advisory Board to ensure that WACSAR considers Aboriginal outcomes in all areas of its work.

Seven research projects were recently awarded WACSAR Criminal Justice Research Fund grants to examine ways to improve the criminal justice system. Two of the successful projects explore issues affecting Aboriginal people – reducing the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the justice system through enhanced social and emotional wellbeing, and an evaluation of Aboriginal cultural training and education in the justice sector.

Outcome 11 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system

Target

By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by 30 percent

While the youth detention rate has decreased, WA continues to have the highest rate of young people in detention when compared to all other Australian jurisdictions.

To address this, WA continues to work in partnership with Aboriginal young people, their families and communities, government and non-government agencies, to reduce the risk of reoffending and improve outcomes for Aboriginal young people.

In 2020-21, WA's rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention was 41 per 10,000 young people in the population. This is an improvement compared to the detention rate in 2019-20 (42.6).

Nationally, this target was assessed as on track to be met with most jurisdictions, including WA, recording improvements in 2020-21.

For the period of 2018-19 to 2020-21, the detention rate in WA on an average day decreased by 26 percent. However, the notable decline is likely the result of a reduction in youth offending attributed to the impact of COVID-19 restrictions.

Table 16 Young people in detention per 10,000 young people (baseline year of 2018-19)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	55	32
Non-Aboriginal people	1	1

Table 17 Young people in detention per 10,000 young people (2020-21)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	41	23
Non-Aboriginal people	1	1

Improving outcomes in this area

Engaging with young people in the Kimberley

The Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy (KJJS) delivers place-based initiatives in Broome, Derby, Fitzroy Crossing, Halls Creek, Kununurra and Wyndham to divert young people away from the criminal justice system, with over 80 percent of its partners being Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs). These initiatives include night patrols, structured activities, alternative education and skills programs, cultural camps, back to country healing trips, after-school and school holiday activities.

The Youth Engagement Program in the Kimberley (YEP-K), part of the KJJS, provides culturally competent, holistic, individualised and flexible assistance to young people, supporting them to meet the conditions of their bail and court orders. These supports aim to

reduce offending behaviour and recidivism, as well as improving young people's wellbeing and prospects.

YEP-K is delivered through the Aboriginal Legal Services WA by Aboriginal diversion officers and currently operates in the West Kimberley region, specifically for Aboriginal young people who are appearing in the Broome and Derby Children's Court. The WA Office of Crime Statistics and Research (WAC SAR), in collaboration with a culturally safe partner organisation, will undertake an evaluation in 2022-23 and 2023-24.

In 2022, the Department of Justice engaged with the Australian Government to secure additional funding to expand the YEP-K, with one new location in the Kimberley and the other in the Pilbara.

Legislative reform is also being explored to determine whether this is required to address structural barriers to the achievement of this target and a statutory review of the *Young Offenders Act 1994* (WA) has commenced.

Banksia Hill Juvenile Detention Centre

The Department of Justice is working to improve security and service delivery at Banksia Hill Detention Centre. This includes a \$25 million investment in infrastructure and developing a contemporary model of care to better respond to the complex support needs of young detainees and enhance the care and rehabilitation of young people.

A new \$7.5 million Crisis Care Unit will be built at Banksia Hill to provide a safe and therapeutic environment to support vulnerable, at-risk young people, which is expected to be completed in 2026-27. A further \$3.5 million will staff an Aboriginal Services Unit to provide cultural support and services to address the over-representation of Aboriginal young people at Banksia Hill, including those from regional WA. New staff positions will be created, including additional Aboriginal welfare officers and Aboriginal medical and mental health workers.

Targeted community-based support for young people

The 2022-23 State Budget included \$40.4 million funding for initiatives to support at-risk young people and reduce their contact with the criminal justice system.

Expansion of Target 120 Program

This package included \$11.1 million to expand the Target 120 program to nine locations of Broome, Halls Creek, Fitzroy Crossing, Derby, Karratha, Newman, Carnarvon, Mandurah and Ellenbrook. This early intervention program engages with at-risk youth and their families providing tailored support to address factors contributing to offending and antisocial behaviour, and support improved outcomes. It is a cross-agency initiative led by the Department of Communities and partners with ACCO providers wherever possible.

Kimberley on-country residential facility

The funding package included a \$15 million provision towards an on-country residential facility for young offenders and planning and development of other safe place residential accommodation proposals. The Kimberley Development Commission, in consultation with the Department of Justice, is leading the development of options and a business case for Government consideration.

Engagement is continuing with the Aboriginal community to ensure the proposed on-country residential facility provides culturally appropriate and safe interventions to support youth rehabilitation.

A further \$250,000 has been committed to the development of Aboriginal-led priority initiatives to support improved youth justice outcomes in the Kimberley region.

Education initiatives

The Budget package also allocated \$11.7 million to extend the Kimberley Schools Project to keep young people engaged in the education system and \$1 million to develop a business case to assess the feasibility of establishing a WA College of Agriculture in the Kimberley.

Case Study – Olabud Doogethu

Olabud Doogethu is an Aboriginal-designed justice reinvestment initiative in the Shire of Halls Creek, co-led by 11 Aboriginal communities with strong support from the Shire of Halls Creek and Social Reinvestment WA. The Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy supports the delivery of Olabud Doogethu's Youth Engagement Night Officer (YENO) Program.

The YENO team engage with street present young people and encourage them to return home or to a safe place, patrol the streets and liaise with the police to diffuse difficult situations. The 'On-Track' program delivers on the 2021 election commitment for the Olabud Doogethu Halls Creek Justice Reinvestment Project. As part of the 2021-22 State Budget, \$1.5 million was allocated to the program. 'On-Track' is comprised of an intergenerational Aboriginal community education program (Certificate II in Mibala Learning Country), culturally appropriate drug and alcohol services, and the development of diversionary options in Court sanctions for young people, in partnership with the Department of Justice.



Figure 1 - Arron Little, Olabud Doogethu Aboriginal Corporation's Alternative Education Coordinator, on Country identifying a Boomerang Tree.

Outcome 12 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not overrepresented in the child protection system

Target

By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out of home care by 45 percent.

A whole of community and government approach is critical to addressing the key drivers that contribute to Aboriginal children coming into contact with WA's child protection system.

The reasons a child may come into contact with the child protection system are often complex and multifaceted, and include family and domestic violence, substance abuse and unmanaged parental mental health. For many Aboriginal children intergenerational trauma often has an impact and is further compounded by contact with the child protection system.

In the latest reporting period (2021) for this target in WA, there were 65 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children in OOHC per 1,000 children.

This is an increase, from the baseline year of data, of 1 child in OOHC per 1,000 children. Nationally, progress towards this target has worsened over time.

Table 18 Rate of children in out of home care per 1,000 children (baseline year of 2019)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	64	54
Non-Aboriginal people	4	5

Table 19 Rate of children in out of home care per 1,000 children (2021)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	65	58
Non-Aboriginal people	3	5

Improving outcomes in this area

WA recognises it has one of the highest rates of Aboriginal children in OOHC and is committed to addressing this. A large number of projects to improve child protection practice, systems and outcomes are being delivered. These consolidate the work already undertaken to strengthen family, culture and Country for Aboriginal children in care and at risk of entering care, including significant legislative reforms.

Implementing the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 (National Framework), and its Action Plans that are applicable to every jurisdiction, mark a fundamental shift and a new approach to developing policies related to child protection. The National Framework is critical to achieving Socio-economic Target 12. It recognises the right to self-determination of Aboriginal peoples and was developed through a co-design process with SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (SNAICC), and a national leadership group of Aboriginal child and family sector experts. SNAICC led extensive consultations with

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations across the country to inform the framework. Over 200 people took part in workshops, with 890 people providing input through an online survey.

The Department of Communities is currently partnering with SNAICC on the development of a 10-year Roadmap and Action Plan to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care, to build on existing work and identify new opportunities to prevent Aboriginal children from entering the child protection system. The Roadmap will bring together WA's responses to Socioeconomic Outcome 12 and the Safe and Supported National Framework and associated action plans. The Roadmap and Action Plan will incorporate Aboriginal-led solutions for culturally responsive and accessible service design and delivery, through improved engagement with local Aboriginal organisations, community members, children and families. The Roadmap is due to be completed by mid-2023.

Intensive Family Support Service

The Intensive Family Support Service is a state-wide place-based service that is led by either an ACCO or a Community Service Organisation in partnership with an ACCO. The program prioritises working with Aboriginal families whose children are at imminent risk of coming into care, and Aboriginal families who are working towards reunification with their children.

Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making

Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making (AFLDM) provides families with a culturally safe space in which meetings are facilitated by an Aboriginal convenor and families are supported to make culturally based and family-driven decisions. The process supports the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to make decisions about how to keep their child or young person safe and connected to their family, culture, Country and community. A pilot has commenced in two locations, Mirrabooka and Midwest Gascoyne, led by two ACCOs contracted to facilitate AFLDM meetings via independent Aboriginal convenors. The program will be evaluated to support future enhancements to the program. An external Aboriginal implementation group has been established to guide and make decisions on the pilot.

Appointment of Chief Practitioner, Specialist Child Protection Unit (SCPU)

The Specialist Child Protection Unit (SCPU) was established in October 2020. The SCPU provides a leading voice on child protection matters, both within Communities and across the sector. The SCPU is using a system stewardship approach to adopting best practice, embracing culturally responsive services and embedding sector-wide continuous improvement, with the aim to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families.

A new position, Chief Practitioner, Specialist Child Protection, has been created to lead the SCPU. An appointment to the position will be made in 2022 and will support and enable child protection staff and other stakeholders to deliver consistent, high quality professional practice across the child protection system, with a strong focus on addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal children in OOHC.

Outcome 13 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe

Target

A significant and sustained reduction in violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children towards zero.

Family violence disproportionately affects Aboriginal families and communities, where Aboriginal women are 32 times as likely to be hospitalised for family violence than non-Aboriginal women.¹⁴

Family violence can also be both an outcome and a driver of poor or inadequate housing, barriers to accessing services, high rates of imprisonment, unemployment and alcohol and other substance abuse. Addressing this target, therefore, will contribute to improvements against the other Closing the Gap socioeconomic outcome areas.

In the latest reporting period (2018-19) for this target in WA, 9 percent of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander females (15 and older) reported an experience of physical harm – domestic or threatened – in the last twelve months.

Table 20 Percentage of women experiencing physical harm (domestic or threatened) in the last twelve months (baseline year of 2018-19)¹⁵

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal females (15+)	9	8

Improving outcomes in this area

Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy

The Department of Communities (Communities) has led the WA Government’s work on the development and co-design of a culturally considered and Aboriginal-led Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy provides an overarching framework to support Aboriginal family safety through coordinated effort, led by Aboriginal people and communities and in partnership with government and the sector, and drive action to improve safety for Aboriginal women and children over a ten-year period to 2032.

The Strategy is a Priority Action under Focus Area 1: *Path to Safety: Western Australia’s strategy to reduce family and domestic violence 2020-2030*. A comprehensive community and stakeholder engagement process was completed to inform the Strategy, in line with the principles of the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy, with over 1,000 people across the State contributing to its development. A consultation draft of the Strategy was recently released for public comment and feedback received from the open consultation is currently being collated, themed, analysed and will be integrated into a final version of the Strategy for consideration by the Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence. Next steps include the public release of the Strategy, which is anticipated late 2022. An approach to implementation will be developed in close partnership with Aboriginal community.

¹⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2018. Family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia 2018. Cat. no. FDV 2. Canberra: AIHW, p.xii.

¹⁵ There is no new data since the baseline year of 2018-19.

The WA Government, through Communities, is implementing a number of initiatives, these are either underway or in their planning stages, to assist in delivering the strategic intent of the Strategy and support Aboriginal family safety more broadly. This includes:

- \$14.7 million to create WA's third one-stop family and domestic violence hub in Armadale and a fourth hub in Broome;
- \$4.5 million for the Derby Family Violence Service and the Change Em Ways Kimberley Project; and
- \$5.6 million to establish a Broome Aboriginal-led specialist family violence court based on the Barndimalgu Court in Geraldton, including a Family Violence Intervention Service for those who have been referred to the court.

Further, funding commitments of \$4.172 million have been made to deliver the election commitment to boost family and domestic violence prevention services through the development of a primary prevention framework for WA. The framework is being co-designed with Aboriginal stakeholders. This commitment includes a primary prevention grants program. The Grants program aims to build partnerships across sectors, specialist violence prevention organisations and ACCOs for a more planned and integrated approach to activities focused on preventing violence against women and family and domestic violence in WA.

The WA Government will implement a redesign of the Family and Domestic Violence Response Teams to include more culturally informed practice.

The National Partnership Agreement on family, domestic and sexual violence responses, which totals \$30.14 million, will include a range of initiatives to support the Strategy and Aboriginal family safety more broadly.

Case Study – Addressing Family Violence in the Kimberley Grants Program

The Addressing Family Violence in the Kimberley Grants Program was established to procure place-based, locally informed and family led violence interventions that are flexible, culturally responsive, culturally secure, informed by local requirements and designed by, or in partnership with, ACCOs. Under this program, over \$7.1 million has been awarded for two grants until 2025-26.

1. The Derby Family Violence Service (the Service) is run by Anglicare WA, in partnership with Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation. The Service provides integrated wrap around supports to clients to address family violence in Derby and Mowanjum Aboriginal Community (located 10km southeast of Derby). The Service has engaged with the community to increase education and awareness of family and domestic violence in the Derby region and will deliver the Not Our Way Program in partnership with the Department of Justice for both mandated and non-mandated Aboriginal perpetrators.

2. The Men's Outreach Service Aboriginal Corporation will adapt and pilot the Change Em Ways Aboriginal men's behaviour change program in the following three communities across the Kimberley region: Bidyadanga (Broome Local Government Authority), Fitzroy Crossing (Derby/West Kimberley Local Government Authority) and Balgo/Kutjungka (Halls Creek Local Government Authority).

Case Study – Aboriginal Family Safety Project

Langford Aboriginal Association, in partnership with Relationships Australia WA, has been funded to provide the Aboriginal Family Safety Project, which involves the development of a culturally appropriate program to improve the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal women experiencing family violence and to expand the availability of targeted support for Aboriginal victim/survivors. The Project is a four-phase project which includes establishing a Community Reverence Group to run community workshops, designing culturally appropriate risk assessment and safety planning tools, and then the implementation and evaluation of these resources.

Outcome 14 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing

Target

Significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero.

Promisingly, the data for this target highlights that there were fewer deaths by suicide in the latest reporting period than there were in the baseline year of data. However, over this latest reporting period, WA continues to have the highest rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander suicide deaths in Australia, far above the national average.

The data for this target comes from the ABS Causes of Death, and the most recent data available is for the period 2016-20.

Table 21 Rate of suicide deaths (5 year aggregate) per 100,000 of the population (baseline years of 2014-18)

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	38	24

Table 22 Rate of suicide deaths (5 year aggregate) per 100,000 of the population (2016-20)

	Western Australia	Australia ¹⁶
Aboriginal people	33	26

Improving outcomes in this area

The WA Government is continuing to work in partnership with local communities to strengthen the support available, build capacity of communities to support those in distress and reform the way services that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people operate.

Regional Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Plans

In July 2020, as part of the Aboriginal people stream of the Suicide Prevention Framework 2025, funding was announced to develop region specific Aboriginal Suicide Prevention plans that prioritise a culturally secure social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) approach to suicide prevention.

This recognises the importance for Aboriginal people to connect an individual's health and wellbeing to the health and wellbeing of their family, kin, community, and connections to Country, culture, spirituality and ancestry. The concept of SEWB is a deep-rooted, more collective and holistic concept of health than approaches used in mainstream health settings. The Mental Health Commission commissioned an ACCO in each of 10 Health Regions in WA to lead the development and implementation of these regional plans. The development of the regional plans is guided by the three principles: Nothing for Aboriginal people without Aboriginal people; Aboriginal-led solutions; and cultural understanding and respect.

¹⁶ Excluding Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory.

The Regional Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Plans and the activities proposed within them differ depending on local experience, existing resources, priorities, and community preferences, as determined through a culturally secure community engagement process conducted continually within each region. The responsibility for implementation of these activities lies with the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer role (CLO), and the funding (activity seed funding) required to undertake the relevant activities.

Implementation of the Regional Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Plans commenced in July 2021.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Model of Service Pilot Program

The regional SEWB Model of Service Pilot Program (the Pilot) aims to increase access to social and emotional wellbeing and healthcare services for Aboriginal people of all ages in the five pilot sites in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Mid-West, Goldfields and South-West Health Regions of WA. Local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services will run the program in their communities.

The Mental Health Commission has awarded AHCWA a Service Agreement for the delivery of the Pilot (\$17.6 million). The Pilot has been developed by AHCWA, in consultation with its member services and identified the five pilot site locations to subcontract delivery:

- Bega Garnbirringu Health Service in Kalgoorlie;
- Derby Aboriginal Health Service in Derby;
- Wirraka Maya Health Service Aboriginal Corporation in South Hedland;
- Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service in Geraldton; and
- South West Aboriginal Medical Service in Bunbury.

The University of Western Australia (UWA) School of Indigenous Studies, led by Professor Pat Dudgeon, will conduct the evaluation of the Pilot assessing the effectiveness. The Mental Health Commission will continue to engage with AHCWA and UWA to support the governance and evaluation mechanisms of the Pilot.

The SEWB Pilot demonstrates empowerment of community through strengthening ACCOs, that is furthermore established with development and strengthening of partnerships with other key Aboriginal stakeholders. Through culturally secure prevention and community development, psychosocial support, targeted interventions and coordinated care by multidisciplinary teams, the Pilot is expected to improve quality of life for Aboriginal people.

Expansion of Strong Spirit Strong Mind Metro Project

Since 2012, the Mental Health Commission has delivered the Strong Spirit Strong Mind Metro Project, a culturally secure AOD prevention project for young Aboriginal people (12-25 years) living in the Perth metropolitan area. As a 2021-22 Election Commitment, the state government committed \$9.204 million over four years to expand the project state wide.

This Project will provide a culturally secure public education media campaign targeting Aboriginal youth aiming to improve social and emotional wellbeing. Research is currently underway to inform the development of the campaign and associated evaluation design.

Outcome 15 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their lands and waters

Target 15a

By 2030, a 15 percent increase in Australia’s landmass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s legal rights or interests.

Target 15b

By 2030, a 15 percent increase in areas covered by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people’s legal rights or interests in the sea.

In the latest reporting period (2021) for this target¹⁷ in WA, there was an increase, from the baseline year of data, of 59,180 square kilometres of land mass subject to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people’s legal rights or interests. For sea mass subject to Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people’s legal rights or interests there was an increase, from the baseline year of data, of 69 square kilometres. WA has recorded an improvement over time for both aspects of this target.

Table 23 Square kilometres of land and sea mass subject to Aboriginal people’s legal rights or interest (baseline year of 2020)

	Western Australia	Australia
Land Mass	1,654,747	3,015,122
Sea Mass	40,076	90,252

Table 24 Square kilometres of land and sea mass subject to Aboriginal people’s legal rights or interest (2021)

	Western Australia	Australia
Land Mass	1,713,927	3,130,852
Sea Mass	40,145	90,555

Improving outcomes in this area

The WA Government – through the Department of Planning Lands and Heritage (DPLH) is working closely with a number of Aboriginal corporations to facilitate requests for land over exclusive possession Native Title areas, including Wilinggin Aboriginal Corporation, Tjiwarl (Aboriginal Corporation) RNTBC and Midwest Wakamuru (Aboriginal Corporation) RNTBC.

Additionally, DPLH are exploring opportunities for the grant of tenure to Exclusive Possession Native Title (EPNT) holders over large tracts of land being considered for current renewable energy projects. Large tracts of land are required for these broadscale renewable energy projects, however the grant of exclusive tenure over these areas, and associated

¹⁷ The data for this target comes from the National Native Title Tribunal and is updated annually.

requirements to surrender or suppress Native Title rights and interests, can prevent access and continued use and enjoyment of the land by the Native Title holders.

DPLH considers that there is scope to facilitate these projects while also, in these particular circumstances, acknowledging EPNT rights and interests through tenure change. Beyond a complementary acknowledgement of EPNT rights and interests, tenure change would provide a platform to enable native title holders to realise opportunities for social, cultural, and economic outcomes.

While the recognition of native title provides one layer of legal rights and interests, the WA Government, via the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), is continuing to embed formal partnerships and shared decision making over the conservation estate in WA, through statutory joint management arrangements under the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984 (WA)* (CALM Act). This provides an additional and strengthened layer of legal rights and interests.

These joint management arrangements provide direct, tangible, and meaningful enhancement of the cultural, spiritual, physical, and economic relationship with their land and sea country and the protection of cultural heritage values, including a formal legal role in the governance and decision-making over conservation estate, through the statutory management objective to conserve and protect the value of the land to the culture and heritage of Aboriginal persons under the CALM Act. This also enables Aboriginal people to continue to access country for Aboriginal customary purposes under the Act.

Supported joint management arrangements under the CALM Act provides for joint and cooperative management bodies to have a formal role in shared decision-making over conservation estate. It also enables the joint vesting of conservation estate with Aboriginal bodies corporate, to recognise rights and interests in country on the land title and also to provide a formal role in developing the statutory management plans that provide the management priorities and strategies for conservation estate.

Formal joint management arrangements are in place with 16 groups across WA, covering approximately 22 percent of the State's conservation reserve system. Partners are:

- Balanggarra Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
- Bardi Jawi Niimidiman Aboriginal Corporation
- Bunuba Dawangarri Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
- Dambimangari Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
- Gooniyandi Aboriginal Corporation
- Karajarri Traditional Lands Association RNTBC
- Mayala Aboriginal Corporation
- Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
- Nganhurra Thanardi Garrbu AC (Ningaloo)
- Nyangumarta Karajarri AC RNTBC
- Nyangumarta Warrarn AC RNTBC
- Wanparta Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC

- Warnpurru Aboriginal Corporation RNTBC
- Yamatji Nation RNTBC
- Yawoorroong Miriuwung Gajerrong Yirrggeb Noong Dawang (MG) Corporation
- Yawuru Native Title Holders Aboriginal Corporation

South-West Native Title Settlement – Noongar Land Estate:

In 2021, three freehold properties were handed over to the Noongar Boodja Land Sub Pty Ltd (Land Sub) by the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority. These properties are located in the Perth Metropolitan Region and have a cumulative value of approximately \$5 million.

In addition, 89 parcels of unallocated Crown land (UCL) and unmanaged reserves (UMR) were transferred to the Land Sub, being 66 land parcels transferred freehold and 23 land parcels handed over as reserve under management order.

The cumulative area of land handed over to date is 1,016.55 hectares and includes a mix of land with economic potential and / or cultural value.

As of 29 March 2022, an additional approximately 97,000 hectares of predominantly UCL and UMR has been offered to the Trustee for the Noongar Boodja Trust for handover in a mix of freehold and reserve tenure.

There have been delays in acceptance and handover of offered land. The rate of offers being accepted, and land being handed over is expected to increase in late 2022 and early 2023 after establishment of the Noongar Regional Corporations, a key component of the governance structure.

Yamatji Nation Agreement

Yamatji Conservation Estate

In late 2021, the State created the Mungada Ridge National Park in accordance with the Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement. The Mungada Ridge National Park is 1,030 hectares and is jointly vested and jointly managed by DBCA and the Bundi Yamatji Aboriginal Corporation (BYAC).

Yamatji Land Estate

Since the Conclusive Registration of the Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement on 26 October 2020, the State has worked closely with BYAC, the Joint Trustees and the Yamatji Southern Regional Corporation (YSRC) to formally offer over 150,000 hectares of predominantly UCL and UMR for handover, being 14,650 hectares for transfer in freehold, and 134,440 hectares for handover as reserve under management order.

The acceptance of offered land is expected to occur over the next 6-18 months. Following acceptance, the State will work closely with BYAC, the Joint Trustees and the YSRC to plan and deliver the first land handovers for the Yamatji Land Estate.

Plan for Our Parks

Plan for Our Parks sets up a new era of joint land and sea management with traditional owners based on shared planning, co-design and joint decision-making, through the addition of five million hectares of land and water to the conservation estate between 2019–24.

It is empowering Aboriginal communities and delivering jobs for Aboriginal people to participate in joint management of their country. It is an ambitious program involving voluntary native title agreement making with native title groups across the State to implement the program.

Under Plan for Our Parks, ILUAs have been negotiated and registered with five groups to date, including with Gooniyandi (Warlibirri National Park), Bardi Jawi, Mayala and Dambeemangarddee (Buccaneer Archipelago marine parks), and Nganhurra Thanardi Barrbu (Nyinggulu Coastal Reserves). Negotiations are being progressed with another 15 groups across the State to deliver the program.

Upon the successful completion of the Plan for Our Parks initiative DBCA will continue to increase the proportion of conservation estate jointly managed with Prescribed Body Corporates in accordance with native title agreements and statutory and policy commitments under the CALM Act.

Under the Plan for Our Parks initiative, the WA Government announced in July 2022 that three new Kimberley marine parks in the Buccaneer Archipelago would be established. The parks consist of the Bardi Jawi Gaarra, Mayala and Maiyalam marine parks, which together total more than 600,000 hectares. Traditional Owners have been living in these regions for tens of thousands of years, with the islands, reefs and intertidal systems home to many culturally important sites, and significant subsistence foraging and hunting habitats. All three parks have been codesigned and will be jointly managed by Traditional Owners and the WA Government.

Outcome 16 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing

Target

By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken.

The data for this target comes from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies' (AIATSIS) National Indigenous Languages Survey, and the most recent data available is from 2018-19. Data for this target is not available at a jurisdictional level, only at the national level.

Table 24 Total number of languages spoken nationwide (baseline year of 2018-19)

	Australia
Languages	123
Strong Languages	14

Improving outcomes in this area

Aboriginal Ranger Program – working on country

The WA Government recognises that on country services are often more effective when designed and delivered by ACCOs. The State Aboriginal Ranger Program (ARP) has been co-designed with an ARP Reference Group comprising members from Aboriginal organisations, each selected based on their experience with the Aboriginal ranger sector and programs. The program is delivering jobs, training and community development opportunities for Aboriginal people across a range of tenures in regional and remote communities across Western Australia. This investment into Aboriginal organisations is helping to build and expand the Aboriginal land management sector.

In 2017 the WA Government committed \$20 million to the initial program. These funds resulted in an investment in 35 projects run by 28 Aboriginal organisations delivering 435 jobs. Due to its successes, the WA Government invested a further \$66.5 million in 2021 over five years. The first four-year phase of the program has already awarded \$22 million to Aboriginal ranger groups through the Expansion fund to support established ranger programs. The Development fund of \$14 million is available for new and emerging ranger programs, to be awarded later this year. Additionally, an Innovation fund will provide \$7 million to Aboriginal organisations to explore innovative ways to maximise outcomes of the ARP. Currently the ARP is delivering 800 jobs across WA with over half being provided for women.

Importantly the ARP program operates across all land tenures, including Aboriginal owned land, unallocated Crown land, pastoral leases and reserved lands and will leverage contributory funds from other sources to facilitate employment and cultural connection to country.

Culture

The WA Government has provided support to two major language projects in the Kimberley region that contribute to progressing this target. The Kimberley Aboriginal Language and Culture Centre Julurru Junba Project (\$500,000) is a complex and long-term project

documenting and reinvigorating a major song and ceremony cycle, which was traded through Aboriginal language groups in the Pilbara, Kimberley and Northern Territory.

The Kimberley Aboriginal Language Resource Centre language scoping project (\$200,000) will form the foundation of future language work in this region. This project is supported by the Kimberley Aboriginal Regional Reference Group and the approach may become a model for other regions. Additionally, the Connecting to Culture program, which runs annually, offers up to \$25,000 for projects to enable WA Aboriginal people and organisations to undertake on Country trips that foster the intergenerational transfer of knowledge, preservation of culture and strengthening of communities. Eligible activities include those providing participants with the opportunity to engage with language and preserve language and stories.

Murujuga Rock Art Monitoring Program

Murujuga (the Burrup Peninsula and surrounding islands) lies 25 km west of Karratha and is home to one of the largest and most diverse collections of rock art in the world. The petroglyphs are of immense cultural and spiritual significance to local Aboriginal people, and of state, national and international importance. Murujuga is also home to industry that contributes significantly to the local, state and national economy.

Representatives of the Traditional Owners and custodians of the rock art, the Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation (MAC), and the WA Government have worked together to develop a monitoring studies plan to protect the rock art. The plan was reviewed by the Murujuga Circle of Elders to ensure sites were culturally appropriate. MAC Rangers are working alongside scientists on Country to undertake monitoring. This will help MAC transition to a central role in managing the Murujuga Rock Art Monitoring Program and support local jobs for Aboriginal people.

The monitoring program now covers an area of more than 50,000 hectares, including islands of the Dampier Archipelago. It is funded by industry operating on Murujuga through a Memorandum of Understanding with the State Government.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Legislation

The Government is working to implement WA's new Aboriginal cultural heritage (ACH) legislation, which will be a major contributor to improving and supporting strong cultural outcomes by ensuring Aboriginal Australians have a direct say in decisions impacting their cultural heritage.

The State's current co-design process is an indicator of this, giving Aboriginal people a key role in the development of regulations and guidelines that are required to implement the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021* (the Act). Under the Act, Aboriginal people are specifically recognised as the custodians of their cultural heritage. There is now a requirement for any person holding Aboriginal Ancestral Remains to return these to the traditional custodians. There is also the requirement for any person holding Secret and Sacred objects to report these to the ACH Council, to be established under the Act, and for any government body holding such objects to return these to their custodians.

The Act supports culture by including a new broadened definition of ACH that extends beyond archaeological and anthropological concepts by recognising ACH is a living entity that changes over time. Under the Act decisions as to what ACH is protected under the Act

is made by Aboriginal people, providing the Aboriginal community confidence that this aspect of their culture is protected.

- The Act's creation of Local ACH Services (LACHS) is specifically identified in WA's Implementation Plan as a mechanism that ensures Aboriginal people have a voice in decision-making. Importantly, this new legislative framework provides a voice for LACHS that ensures: Aboriginal people, whose heritage it is, determines what ACH is protected by the Act rather than such decisions being made by a centralised Minister-appointed statutory body; and
- There is a legislative requirement for Aboriginal people to be consulted and engaged in negotiations to make decisions on how activities which may harm ACH. These activities will be managed in a manner that avoids or minimises harm to ACH, as opposed to the approvals process in the 1972 Act that does not require consultation with Aboriginal people.

The appointment of LACHS will deliver opportunities for employment within these organisations for Aboriginal people to play an important role in how their ACH is being managed and protected. The Government has already committed \$10 million toward capacity building of organisations intending to be a LACHS.

Languages

Aboriginal languages in schools

WA is also using the public education system to work towards progressing this target. Aboriginal languages have been taught in WA's public schools since 1992 and are embedded within the languages learning area of the WA Curriculum.

In 2021, there were 24 Aboriginal languages being taught in 67 WA public schools. Within these schools, 9,617 students in Kindergarten to Year 12 studied an Aboriginal language. The significant increase in the number of students learning Noongar language supports observations that more schools are teaching Noongar across whole school not just in Years 3-6.

The Department of Education's (the Department) 2022 Student Census indicated that Aboriginal English, though not traditional, is an Aboriginal language. Aboriginal English is the most common language spoken by students other than Standard Australian English. 6,439 students were identified as speakers of Aboriginal English. Aboriginal English is an Aboriginal language, any lack of recognition of the extent to which this dialect is used risks social division, exclusion and, in educational contexts, disengagement.

In 2021, there were 24 Aboriginal languages being taught in 67 WA public schools. Within these schools, 9,617 students in Kindergarten to Year 12 studied an Aboriginal language. The significant increase in the number of students learning Noongar language supports observations that more schools are teaching Noongar across the whole school not just in Years 3-6.

The WA model for Aboriginal language teaching and learning and training is held in high regard nationally. The national body, First Languages Australia, has advocated for the WA model for training Aboriginal languages teachers to be adopted nationally in the Nintiringanyi: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Language Teaching and Employment Strategy.

The Department's Tracks to Two-Way Learning Program is informed by 25 years of collaborative research between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educators, researchers and community members across the State. It supports educators to develop recognition and acceptance of Aboriginal people's language backgrounds and the effects of language difference on cross cultural communication. In 2021 and 2022, nine Tracks to Two-Way Learning professional learning workshops were delivered to 309 participants. 35 Aboriginal staff members participated in a two-day professional learning workshop to harness local Aboriginal knowledge of culture and language. This resulted in the co-design and co-delivery in 2021, by EALD consultants and local Aboriginal staff, of two Tracks to Two-Way Learning workshops to over 120 participants.

The EAL/D Hub is an online professional learning course designed to equip educators with the understandings and expertise necessary to support recognition and valuing of Aboriginal languages and two-way learning through 29 self-paced learning modules, with \$1.6 million funded through the Department of Education for the period 2019-2025.

As of 12 July 2022, the EAL/D Hub had 1,148 active users; 6,858 staff completed eBooks and 160 users have completed the course. The associated EAL/D Hub Champion School project has 33 champion staff, including Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal educational leaders across 14 schools from a range of regions and contexts who are tasked with providing explicit language system support.

Outcome 17 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives

Target

By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion.

The National Agreement recognises that digital inclusion is increasingly required to enable Aboriginal people to participate in informed decision-making regarding their own lives. As essential services and public information increasingly move online, digital inclusion becomes an important contributing factor to improving many of the other socioeconomic outcomes and targets under the National Agreement, such as health and mental health, education, economic participation, and the maintenance of strong relationships and connections to land, waters and languages.

A combination of factors impact a person’s ability to access digital technologies: internet connectivity; affordability; digital literacy and accessible and culturally inclusive design. The WA Government recognises these factors can have a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal people, particularly those living and working in regional and remote parts of WA.

Table 26 Proportion of people aged 15 years and over accessed the internet in their home (baseline year of 2014-15)¹⁸

	Western Australia	Australia
Aboriginal people	66	74

Comparable data on non-Indigenous people are currently not available, which means there is no target or indicative trajectory to achieve parity.

There is currently a lack of available data to meaningfully measure progress against this target, highlighting a greater need for data development.

Priority for data development

The Data Development Plan – created to improve the quality of data relevant to the National Agreement – identifies several additional data items relevant to Outcome 17 as high priorities for development over 2022-24, including:

- the proportion of regional and remote communities with access to infrastructure to enable broadcast and telecommunication services;
- measures relating to proportion of Government communications material produced and distributed by First Nations media organisations (media buying agencies);
- ongoing development of regional and remote reporting of the Australian Digital Inclusion Index;
- the percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with access to home phone, mobile and/or internet; and

¹⁸ This data is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, which was most recently conducted in 2014-15.

- progress towards parity.

Improving outcomes in this area

Improving and expanding digital connectivity in regional and remote WA to support people living and working in our regions is a priority for the WA Government.

The WA Government's investment into regional connectivity, under the Regional Telecommunications Project, has ensured that WA has secured the State's share of Commonwealth funding through various Commonwealth programs. This includes the Mobile Black Spot Program and the Regional Connectivity Program. The WA Government is currently expanding provision of high-speed broadband internet and data services via a carrier grade fixed wireless multipoint network to regional and remote WA and improving access to fixed and mobile broadband in remote communities in WA.

The WA Government is investing in a fixed wireless network which will deliver reliable residential and business grade services including public Wi-Fi to the remote Aboriginal communities of Balgo (Wirrimanu), Billiluna (Mindibungu), Mulan and Ringer Soak (Kundat Djaru) in the East Kimberley Shire of Halls Creek which when completed will deliver economic, social and safety benefits to these communities.

\$25.5 million has been committed under State, Commonwealth, and industry programs to deliver new and improved connectivity at 55 locations across the Kimberley, Pilbara, Goldfields Esperance, and Mid-West regions. These fixed and mobile broadband connections will be delivered between 2022 and 2024.

The WA Government is also improving connectivity for regional businesses with \$51.6 million committed under State, Commonwealth, and industry programs to improve connectivity for farm businesses, transport corridors, campgrounds, and popular tourist sites.

Case Study – Remote Community Wi-Fi

A pilot community Wi-Fi Project in Tjuntjuntjara, 686 kms northeast of Kalgoorlie has become a model for equitable, affordable, and convenient internet access to remote Aboriginal communities. Completed in May 2019, the project delivers voice and data connectivity to the whole community, supporting business opportunities in the tourism sector and access to essential services such as telehealth, education, government services, and COVID and emergency response delivery.

Two further Community Wi-Fi Projects are now being funded in the remote Aboriginal communities of Kalumburu and Jigalong. These projects will deploy fully managed public satellite Wi-Fi and VoIP telephone solutions and pay-as-you-go data and voice connectivity.

Community Wi-Fi Projects are an important part of the WA Government's Closing the Gap commitment to improving access to the internet for rural, regional, and remote Western Australia.

Attachment A – Delivery on the Key Areas for Action Identified in the Sector Strengthening Plans

Priority Reform Two: Building the community-controlled sector

Jurisdictional Actions

National Agreement Clause 47: Government Parties will include in their Jurisdictional annual reports information on action taken to strengthen the community-controlled sector based on the elements of a strong sector, as outlined in Clauses 118 and 119.

In their annual reports, jurisdictions, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, may prioritise implementation of different Sector Strengthening Plan actions at different times, depending on the requirements of the sector in a particular jurisdiction. Progress on implementing Sector Strengthening Plans for Health and Early Childhood Development Care, agreed in-principle by Joint Council in December 2021, is outlined below. Ongoing annual reporting will also provide progress updates on jurisdiction's actions to implement the Housing and Disability Sector Strengthening Plans, which have not yet been agreed by Joint Council, as well as additional Sector Strengthening Plans as they are developed.

Progress on WA's key actions from the Early Childhood Care and Development and Health Sector Strengthening Plans is outlined below.

Action Table Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Sector Strengthening Plan

A. Workforce

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
A1	Examine 2021 National ECEC Workforce Census data to develop an accurate picture of the current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC workforce across Australia, and the workforce for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC services	Australian Government In collaboration with state and territory governments and sector representatives	Existing or to be determined by the parties	As of 30 June 2022, there were 18 pre-primary or pre-school teachers who identified as being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. A further 12 Early Childhood Education teachers also identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, noting that Early Childhood Education teachers also typically teach in lower primary classes.

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
A2	Support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander career development through secondary school career engagement, preparation of the workforce, on the job staff development, mentoring, career development and progression	All governments and sector representatives	Existing or to be determined by the parties	<p>On Country Teacher Education pilot program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education has partnered with Curtin University to develop and pilot a program to support its Aboriginal employees to become teachers through a Bachelor of Education (Primary). The program commenced in 2020. Participating employees study part-time, primarily online, while continuing to work in their existing roles and communities. They receive tailored and multi-pronged support. Participants are employed in a range of allied professional positions in schools across the State. Most are Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers. <p>Djiral-ak-djinda bidi – North Star program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This program is a co-designed professional learning program supporting Aboriginal teachers and leaders in their leadership journey. A Steering Group, made up of experienced Aboriginal educators and Leadership Institute staff, continues to refine the program. <p>Aboriginal Language teacher training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aboriginal staff and community members with a level of oral Aboriginal language skills can apply to undertake an in-house two-year training program to achieve certification to teach Aboriginal language in schools. Once an employee has completed the first year of the course and has been granted limited authority to teach by the Teachers' Registration Board, they are paid as an unqualified teacher. Ongoing professional learning has been developed for the graduates of the training.

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
A3	Support for tertiary qualification pathway programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early educators in line with promising practice	All governments and sector representatives	Existing or to be determined by the parties	<p>Aboriginal Employee Professional Learning program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Education has recently completed a one-year pilot program in partnership with North Metropolitan TAFE to deliver customised Certificates III and IV in education support to Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In addition to the regular content of the Certificates, the health unit that 'Provide[s] information and strategies in health care' was included to equip participants to contribute to the Department's Healthy Ear and Eye program, particularly for Aboriginal students. It is anticipated Certificate graduates will be encouraged to undertake further study, to achieve a teaching qualification. Procurement processes are currently underway to implement this program on a longer-term basis. Outside of the pilot program, the Department of Education also provides funding to assist permanent Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers, Aboriginal education assistants and Aboriginal Language teachers to undertake a course that provides a pathway to enrolment in an initial teacher education university qualification.
A4	Development of long-term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development plan that identifies priorities and actions for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce development, in conjunction with the implementation of the National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	The Department of Education's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Plan 2021-2025 includes the two focus areas 'attract a diverse workforce' and 'retain a diverse workforce'. Strategies and initiatives to attract, develop and retain Aboriginal employees are also identified in the plan.
A5	Support, develop and resource community-based workforce development initiatives led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care services	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
A6	Scope current Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and community-controlled child protection and family support workforce and projected workforce development needs in line with sector growth under Priority Reform 2 of the Closing the Gap Agreement	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Department of Communities (Communities) recently finalised its Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (ACCO) Strategy and is looking forward to its implementation that aims to increase the level of cultural safety in service delivery and increasing the number of early years services being delivered by community-controlled organisations. Communities is also working closely with SNAICC to establish culturally relevant policies and procedures that will increase the quality of education and address the specific needs of Aboriginal children living in communities based on known, or yet unknown, challenges.

A7

Develop and implement strategies for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and community-controlled sector workforce development

All governments and sector representatives

To be determined by the parties

- The Early Years Initiative (EYI) aims to improve children's wellbeing and school readiness in four WA communities and in doing so learn what it takes to create change for children across WA. The EYI engages community leaders, Government, researchers, business and philanthropic organisations to collaborate and improve learning, health and developmental outcomes for children from conception to the age of four. The EYI is a 10-year collective impact partnership between the WA Government (comprising of the Departments of Communities, Health, and Education, with Communities as the lead government agency) and Minderoo Foundation. The initiative is supported by Telethon Kids Institute with an evidence and evaluation function.
- In October 2021, the WA Parliament passed the *Children and Community Services Amendment Act 2021*, which includes provisions for Aboriginal Representative Organisations (ARO) to ensure that they are:
 - consulted before a placement arrangement is made for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in care; and
 - provided the opportunity to participate in the preparation and review of cultural support plans for an Aboriginal child.
- These amendments will strengthen the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle and help Aboriginal children in care maintain close connection to family, culture, and Country, which is fundamental to achieving sustainable whole-of-life outcomes.
- The introduction of AROs is part of a suite of reforms underway to enable and support child protection processes and decisions that are culturally informed and culturally safe for Aboriginal people. It is critical that decisions about Aboriginal children and their care arrangements are informed by robust cultural consultation.
- The State Government has committed \$1.3 million to support the implementation of a 12-month ARO Pilot in Armadale and the Kimberley region.
- The pilot locations are scheduled to commence operationalising the ARO service model in November 2022, following a two-month pre-implementation phase that will focus on working locally with ARO and district staff to embed the service model in practice.

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following conclusion on the Pilot in October 2023, a significant amount of work will be required to transition from pilot phase to state-wide ARO service delivery. • To ensure Aboriginal children and families have continuity of service during this transition phase, funding of \$1.337 million has been secured through the 2022-2023 State Budget process to extend ARO service delivery in Pilot locations for 12 months. • The introduction of AROs in legislation will support the empowerment of ACCOs through creating opportunities to deliver place-based culturally appropriate services across Western Australia. • Critical to the success of this will be to work alongside ACCOs to promote strong relationships and capacity building.
A8	Develop the cultural competency and trauma responsiveness of the child and family sector workforce engaged through DSS grant funding	Australian Government In collaboration with state and territory governments and sector representatives	\$7.7 million over 3 years	
A9	Assess the needs of and increase the involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in the child and family sector (specific initiative led by DSS)	Australian Government In collaboration with state and territory governments and sector representatives	\$3.2 million over two years	
A10	Priorities for action under Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 to be developed	Community Services Ministers	To be determined by the parties	

B. Capital Infrastructure

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
B1	Identify capital infrastructure gaps for community-controlled ECEC services and support capital infrastructure development through relevant programs to address gaps			
B2	Scope service gaps to inform roll out of future community-controlled integrated early years' services in locations of high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and high child vulnerability			
B3	Identify and plan for opportunities to transfer land and building ownership to community-controlled early years services to support their long-term sustainability and security			
B5	Map and review existing infrastructure for multi-functional community hubs that can address the multiple psychosocial needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children delivered through community-controlled organisations. Consider opportunities to address infrastructure gaps and needs			

C. Service Delivery

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
C1	Undertake an assessment of the supporting materials and resources, and Authorised Officer training under the NQF and NQS to address gaps and ensure they provide quality, culturally appropriate and accessible supports to Authorised Officers and services for the regulation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector	All governments and sector representatives. ACECQA, in collaboration with all governments and sector representatives, for elements of the action within their areas of responsibility		
C2	Provide support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to operate within the scope of the NQF, where appropriate, and to meet and exceed standards against the NQS	All governments and sector representatives, in collaboration with ACECQA		
C3	Support for the Aboriginal community-controlled ECEC sector through expansion of existing programs and services (Note: Action overlaps significantly with E3 below)	All governments in consultation with sector representatives		
C4	Develop and implement strategies to build community-controlled sectors to respond to child and family needs at levels aligned to engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with child protection systems	State and territory governments		

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
C5	Identify opportunities to progressively transfer authority in child protection to community-controlled organisations	State and territory departments with responsibility for child protection and family support		
C6	Improve multidisciplinary responses to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families with multiple and complex needs	Commonwealth Department of Social Services and state and territory governments and sector		

D. Governance

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
D1	Investigate mechanisms to consolidate and streamline reporting and compliance requirements for community-controlled integrated early years services	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	
D2	National, state and territory community-controlled peak organisations provide direct supports for quality governance development, with government resources and support	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	
D3	Governance measures under Safe and Supported: National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031	Community Services Ministers	To be determined by the parties	Communities is currently partnering with SNAICC on the development of a 10-year Roadmap and Action Plan to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in care and to build on existing work and identify new opportunities to prevent Aboriginal children from entering the child protection system. The Roadmap will bring together WA's responses to Target 12 and the Safe and Supported National Framework and associated action plans. The Roadmap and Action Plan will incorporate Aboriginal-led solutions for culturally responsive and accessible service design and delivery, through improved engagement with local Aboriginal organisations, community members, children and families. The Roadmap is due to be completed by mid-2023.
D4	Investigate mechanisms to consolidate and streamline reporting and compliance requirements for community-controlled child protection and family support services	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
D5	Investigate the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led standards for the community-controlled sector in each state and territory	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	

E. Consistent Funding Model

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
E1	Review early childhood education and care program and funding arrangements, including in Implementation Plans, to determine and implement changes needed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled ECEC services	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	
E2	Increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled service delivery	All governments and sector representatives	Connected Beginnings \$81.8 million CCCFR \$29.9 million State and territory led efforts to be identified	The Connected Beginnings program is expanding into Geraldton – site/s to be determined.
E3	Develop an agreed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early childhood education and care sector definition and scope to inform efforts to build and strengthen the sector	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	
E4	Reduce service gaps and establish new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled integrated early years' services in locations of high Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and high child vulnerability	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
E5	Develop jurisdictional plans for developing and resourcing community-controlled organisation functions aligned to the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle	State and territory child protection departments		WA's Specialist Child Protection Unit (SCPU) was established in October 2020. The SCPU provides a leading voice on child protection matters, both within Communities and across the sector. The SCPU is using a system stewardship approach to adopting best practice, embracing culturally responsive services and embedding sector-wide continuous improvement, with the aim to improve outcomes for children, young people and their families. A new position – Chief Practitioner, Specialist Child Protection – has been created to lead the SCPU. An appointment to the position will be made in 2022 and will support and enable child protection staff and other stakeholders to deliver consistent, high quality professional practice across the child protection system, with a strong focus on addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal children.
E7	In line with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, increase the proportion services delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations	All governments		

F. Peak Body

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
F1	Develop a national and state/territory intermediary model to strengthen and represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ECEC community-controlled services	Sector-led action in collaboration with: National Indigenous Australians Agency Commonwealth Department of Education, Skills and Employment State and Territory Governments	Sector Strengthening Joint Funding Pool (pilot establishment and evaluation) to be supplemented by additional investment by other relevant portfolios and philanthropy Australian Government, state and territory Departments of Education	
F2	Develop a plan to support and enable community-led development of a peak body in each state and territory	State and Territory Governments where peaks are not yet established or in development (Western Australia, Northern Territory, Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations	To be determined by the parties	
F3	Support adequate and sustainable funding for existing peak bodies	All governments in consultation with sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
F4	Develop a strong evidence base for best practice in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled service delivery through peak bodies	All governments and sector representatives	To be determined by the parties	

Action Table Health Sector Strengthening Plan

A. Consistent Funding Model

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
A1	Develop a needs-based funding model in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector	NACCHO Australian Government State and Territory Governments	Nil additional financial cost to develop the model	The WA Department of Health (Health) has provided feedback and endorsed the Department of Finance's State-wide Commissioning Strategy.

A2

Re-prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health program funds being directed to mainstream non-government organisations, towards the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector. This includes current and new investments in mental health, drug and alcohol, aged care and emerging health priorities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Australian Government

State and Territory Governments

Nil additional financial cost

- Ongoing system-wide implementation of the Outcomes Framework for Aboriginal Health 2020-2030 (Outcomes Framework), an outcomes focused approach to funding community-based healthcare services, in which ACCHO are engaged as the preferred service provider where possible.
- Redirection of mainstream funds to ACCHOs under the National Partnership Agreement, to support, expand and enhance the COVID-19 response for Aboriginal communities, recognising the need for a more cultural model of care.
- Transition of Dampier Peninsula Clinics and Establishment of Fitzroy Valley ACCHO Health Innovation Fund (HIF) Stage 1 Project Agreement to re-purpose the funding for the transition of two Dampier Peninsula clinics to community controlled, and preliminary work to develop a Fitzroy Valley ACCHO. The two WA Country Health Service (WACHS) clinics on the Dampier Peninsula identified for transition to Aboriginal community control are Lombadina-Djarandjin and Ardyaloon.
- Progress made toward the project includes:
 - Confirmed assurance of the community's support for the projects.
 - Kimberley Aboriginal Medical Services (KAMS) and WACHS support of the Project Proposal.
 - KAMS agreement to auspice the Peninsula clinics' transition and to manage the clinics whilst an ACCHO is being established.
 - WACHS agreement to:
 - re-allocate Commonwealth and State funding for Peninsula clinics to KAMS during the transition
 - infrastructure transferred to KAMS being fit for purpose, and infrastructure leased to KAMS including an appropriate maintenance schedule.
 - All parties acknowledging the funding of \$935,000 is the total of the Commonwealth's commitment to these projects.
 - Establishment of the Fitzroy Valley Health and Wellbeing Project Working Group to oversee

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
				<p>creation of a dedicated ACCHO to deliver primary health care services in Fitzroy Crossing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In July 2022, the Department received a draft revised Health Innovation Fund Stage 1 Project Agreement from the Commonwealth. Once the Agreement is executed, the Department will have the authority to commence the process to provide project funds to KAMS and WACHS as previously agreed. ● Funding for Aboriginal Transition Care Programs (TCP), short-term care for older people to help them recover after a hospital stay, to be delivered by Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS). TCP are currently being run by Broome Regional AMS, South-West AMS and Geraldton AMS.

B. Workforce

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
B1	Invest in a permanent, highly skilled, and nationally credentialed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Environmental Health workforce	<p>NACCHO</p> <p>Sector Support Organisations</p> <p>Australian Government</p> <p>State and Territory Governments</p>	To be determined	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health contracts Regional Service Providers who employ 55 Environmental Health Workers of which over 80% identify as Aboriginal. Health recently conducted an extensive review of the WA Aboriginal Environmental Health (AEH) Program. Recommendations from this review include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finance: WA Health commits to sustained investment for ongoing funding of the AEH Program, with increased funding to strengthen current program activities and Aboriginal leadership, encourage emerging best practice uptake and address needs outside the scope of the current AEH Program. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WA Health assures continued funding, long term procurement and support for the AEH Program with a formal commitment for sustained investment Increase investment to expand the AEH program to additional regions (e.g. South West, Wheatbelt, Great Southern and greater Perth Metropolitan areas), with specific targets (determined through co-design with the ACCO sector) based on need, population size, service access levels, health status and environmental health conditions. Workforce Support and Training: Innovate and expand AEH workforce training, including strategic planning and funding for employing community-based workers. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue collaborating with accredited training organisations and AHCWA to co-design AEH course content and delivery of appropriate and accessible training options for AEH and community-based workers. In partnership with service-based experts, update the enHealth Environmental Health Practitioner Manual (2010) to reflect and promote nationally agreed best practices including Healthy Living Practices, integration of the program with primary care and the ACCHO sector and aligned with Certificate II curriculum.

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
B2	Build community-controlled RTO capacity and improve the quality of RTO training within or linked to community-controlled health organisations	Australian Government State and Territory Governments NACCHO Workforce peak bodies	To be determined	Health has extended the Health Pathways grant agreements with two Aboriginal RTOs until 31 December 2024. These grant agreements are designed to support delivery of training initiatives for Aboriginal people in health-related courses.

B3

Resource permanent health career pathways co-designed in jurisdictions through partnerships between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector, its Sector Support Organisation, relevant national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce peak bodies, governments, the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, and vocational training/tertiary institutions.

Australian Government
To be determined
State and Territory Governments
NACCHO
Sector Support Organisations
Member services and partners as negotiated

Partnerships and collaboration with ACCHOs

- Health has established the Health Pathways (June 2019 - 31 December 2024) grant agreements with two Aboriginal RTOs and five WA universities. These grant agreements are designed to support training initiatives for Aboriginal people in health-related courses and provide employment pathways into the WA health system.
- WA Health Aboriginal Cadets are placed in an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service (ACCHS) to broaden their experience and encourage mobility across government and community sector.
- Establishment of an Aboriginal workforce partnership working group between Health and AHCWA to collaborate on strategic workforce initiatives.
- Health sponsors two Aboriginal employees from the community-controlled health sector to participate in the WA Aboriginal Leadership Excellence and Development Program (LEAD) each year.

Internal pathways

- The Aboriginal Workforce Policy supports a number of mandatory policy strategies for the WA health system to comply with to build a skilled and growing Aboriginal health workforce. These include:
 - Leadership opportunities for Aboriginal staff through the Aboriginal LEAD and First Steps for Aboriginal Leaders. 30 Aboriginal staff completed leadership programs from 2021-2022.
 - The WA Health Aboriginal Cadetship Program and Graduate Development Program (Aboriginal stream) offers clear employment development pathways for Aboriginal students into the health system. In 2021/22 FY there were 36 Aboriginal cadets and graduates employed across Health.
 - The graduate program for nurses and midwives (GradConnect) has achieved a 100% recruitment rate for Aboriginal applicants in the last two rounds of recruitment, using a culturally tailored recruitment model.
 - The WA health system has mandated the application of Section 51 of the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* as a key employment strategy to provide and prioritise equitable

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
				<p>employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. It is applied to vacant positions at all levels in both clinical and non-clinical roles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Aboriginal Employment Dashboard indicated 926 Aboriginal people are employed across the WA health system (as of May 2022), equating to 1.6% of 57 041 health employees. This represents a growth of 86% since 2013 when Aboriginal headcount data was first collected and recorded. <p>New initiatives</p> <p>Establishment of the Aboriginal Health Practitioner (AHP) role within the WA health system. This is currently being progressed under the Sustainable Health Review in collaboration with AHCWA. A budget submission of \$3.7 million to support a pilot program for the implementation of AHP has been supported by the Expenditure Review Committee. A whole of health implementation workshop was held on 9 August 2022.</p>

C. Capital Infrastructure

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
C1	Fund major and medium-size capital and physical infrastructure including permanent clinic builds and large-scale renovations, mobile clinics, maintenance, repairs and extensions to ensure facilities meet building codes and accreditation standards	Australian Government State and Territory Governments	\$254.4 million over four years (as announced)	
C2	Fund staff accommodation required to ensure regional and remote communities have the stable health workforce they require with equitable access to staff accommodation for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workforce	Australian Government Department of Health WA Government	\$254.4 million over four years includes funds for clinical staff accommodation only (see A8) Non-clinical staff – to be determined	

D. Service Delivery

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
D1	Rectify overburden of activity reporting to governments to allow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health sector to focus on outcomes while maintaining accountability.	All jurisdictions	Nil additional financial costs (and release of resources currently diverted to unnecessary reporting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creation of a head service agreement between Health and AHCWA to consolidate their reporting requirements. <p>A review was conducted of all service agreements under the Strengthening Aboriginal Health Programs (formerly known as Footprints to Better Health). As part of the review new agreements were designed using the Outcomes Framework, including simplification of the reporting templates and requirements.</p>

E. Governance

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
	n/a			

F. Peak Body

No.	Action	Responsibilities	Resources	Report on progress to date
	n/a			

