



ANNUAL REPORT

Closing the Gap 2023

Western Australian Government



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.

DISCLAIMER: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this document may contain images of people who are deceased.



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Mal-ga

Gard-i-ma-nha

Malga Garrimanha

Standing Strong



This painting is about teaching our future kids about their Culture before they take the path of Education, Employment, Lifestyle and fitting into Community.

This painting also represents going back to bush, On Country and practising our culture. It's about taking our kids back to the rivers on a fishing trip and having a big cook-up together as a family.

It's important for us as families to go bush to connect with the land, it means gathering bush tucker and hunting kangaroo and other animals for food.

In the past the women gathered plant foods and the men hunted animals for meat. Our families ate healthy bush tucker and didn't have diseases such as diabetes.

Having strong family connections and strong support from our Elders leading the way for our kids is important.

This painting also represents having strong connections to our communities and teaching our future kids as our ancestors taught us.

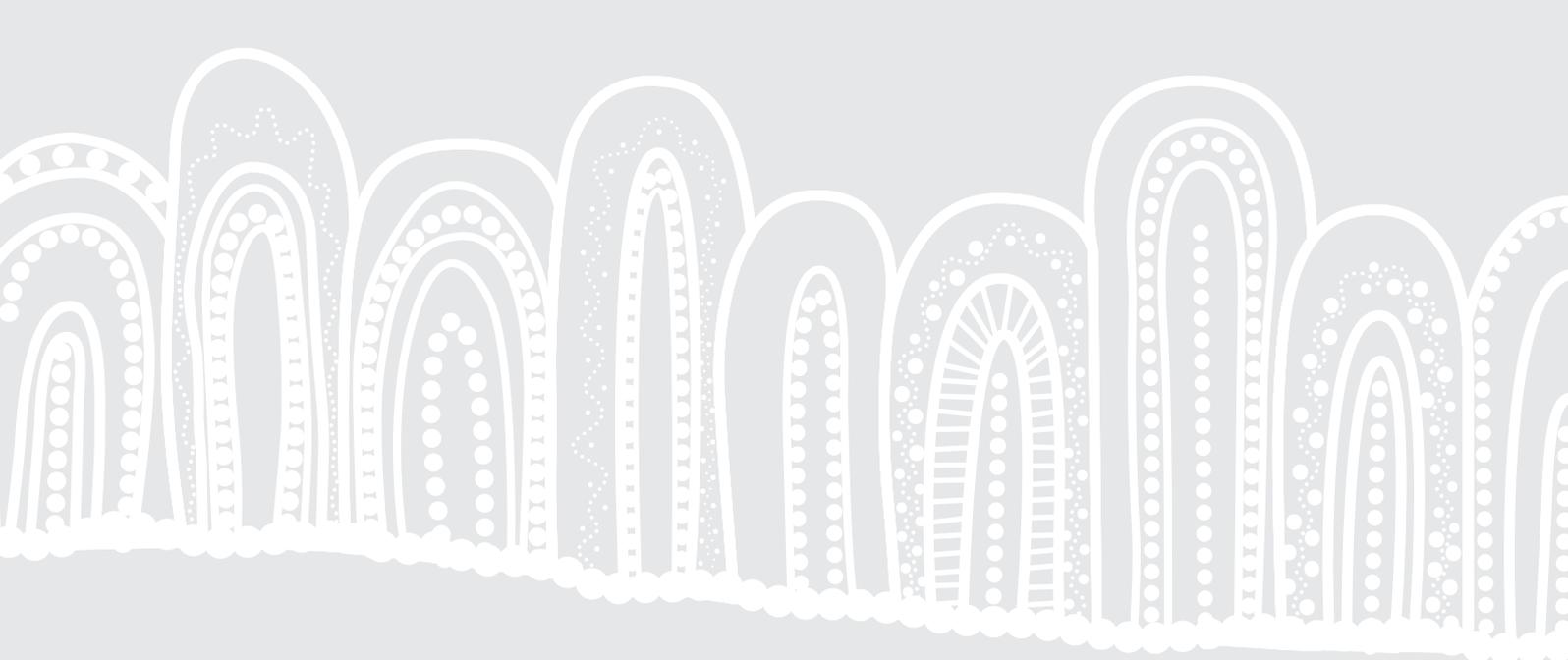
This painting represents our future kids getting a good start in life with strong support in the family home with our Families & Elders teaching our kids about their culture, beginning from their early years so that barriers in the future can be broken to be able to fit into our community, lead a healthy lifestyle and gaining good skills for employment and education.

About the artist

Leeann Kelly - Pedersen

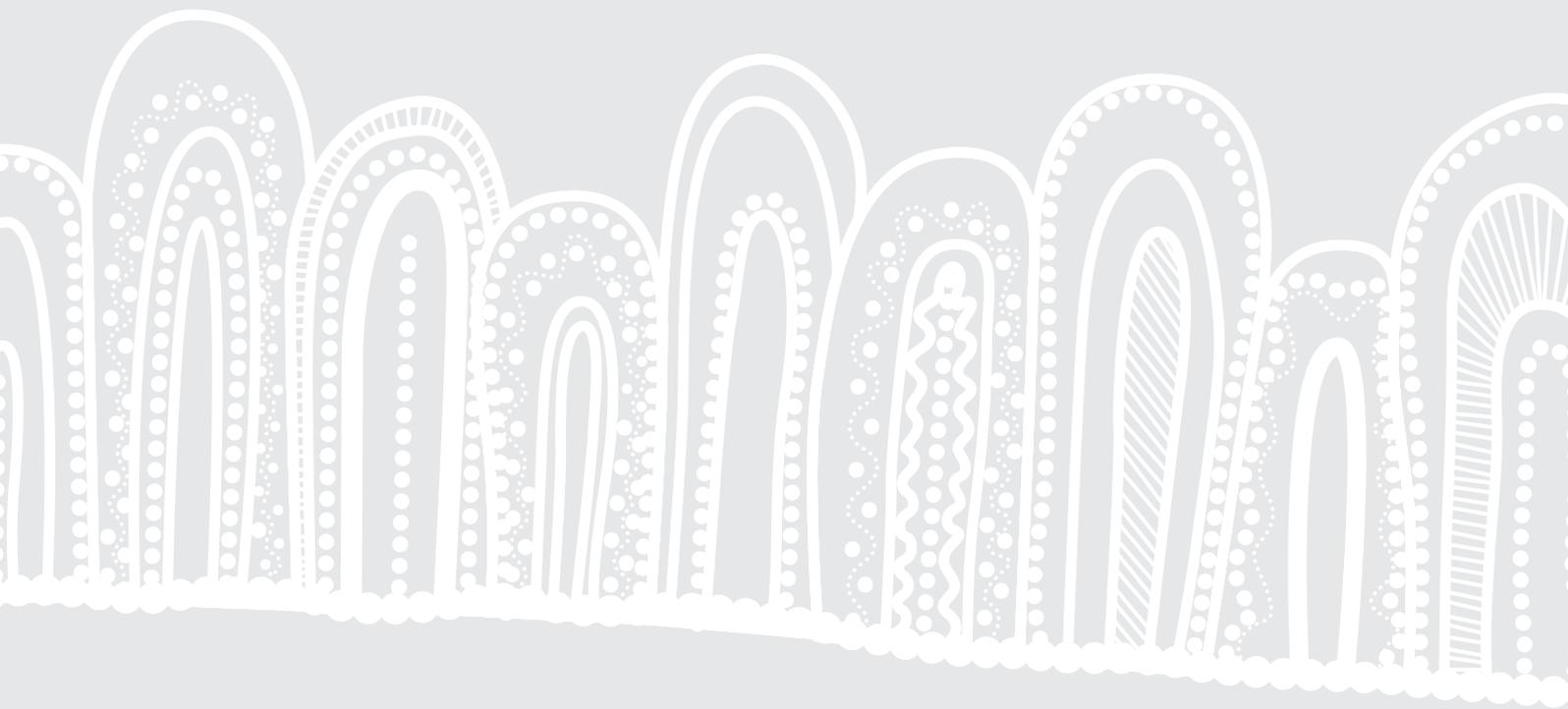
I am a Wajarri/Nhanda woman from the Midwest of Western Australia. My parents are Wajarri woman Dawn Flanagan/Hamlett, who is a recognised artist of the Midwest & has won many Art Awards that was exhibited in the Morawa/Mullewa/Geraldton/Perth Galleries. My father is Steven Kelly who is a Nhanda man from Carnarvon. His family are from the Kalbarri/Northampton area whose ancestors lived along the Murchison River near Kalbarri. My father has worked on most Midwest Cattle/Sheep Stations & Farms as a Labourer.

My love of Art came to me quite early as a child. My favourite subject at school was Art. I am known in the Geraldton community for my artwork and my past position in the Irra Wangga Language Centre involved in reviving & maintaining Aboriginal languages in the Midwest Region. I tell my grandchildren my stories & teach them about my culture. They are turning into excellent little artists with their artwork being sold in the Gwoonwardu Mia Cultural Centre Carnarvon where I currently have some artwork for sale. My artwork consists of my life experiences, places I have been to, things I have seen during my lifetime and my cultural experiences. I love collecting quondong & the bush pear. I make jewellery from the quondong seeds. My inspiration from my artwork comes from my mother who is a recognised artist. She tells stories about "old aboriginal" stories from her life & stories from her elders about special places and things from what she has experienced during her life. I also am inspired by my sisters Carlene & Vanessa Kelly who are also great artists.



Acronyms

ABCB	Aboriginal Business Capability Building
ACCHO	Aboriginal Community-Controlled Housing Organisation
ACCCHS	Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Services
ACCO	Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations
AceL	Aboriginal Cultural eLearning
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AEEO	Aboriginal employment and engagement officer
AER	Aboriginal Expenditure Review
AFLDM	Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making
AFSS	Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy
AHP	Aboriginal Health Practitioner
AHRS	Aboriginal History Research Services
AISS	Aboriginal In-home Support Service
AMGP	Aboriginal Maternity Group Practice
AMS	Aboriginal Mediation Service
AOD	Alcohol and Other Drugs
ARO	Aboriginal Representative Organisations
ARP	Aboriginal Ranger Program
ASBT	Aboriginal School Based Training
BCYR	Baby Coming You Ready
BDR	Banned Drinkers Register
BHDC	Banksia Hill Detention Centre
BSS/PIR	Bail Support Service/Prison In-Reach Legal Service
CAFS	Child and Adolescent Forensic Service
CDP	Cultural Development Plan
CLO	Community Liaison Officers



CTP	Career Taster Program
ECHS	Enhanced Child Health Schedule
EIFS	Earlier Intervention and Family Support
EYP	Early Years Partnership
EY PPG	Early Years Partnership Planning Group
FHRI	Future Health Research and Innovation
GTO	Group Training Organisation
HSSP	Housing Sector Strengthening Plan
IFSS	Intensive Family Support Services
ILUA	Indigenous Land Use Agreement
JPP	Justice Policy Partnership
JSC	Jobs and Skills Centre
KJJS	Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy
LCF	Local Capability Fund
NIF	New Industries Fund
OOHC	Out of Home Care
PPG	Partnership Planning Group
PRA	Preschool Reform Agreement
PRIS	Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing
RSM	Regional Service Model
SIDR	Social Investment Data Resource
SNAICC	Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TCP	Transitional Care Program
WAGTP	Western Australian Group Training Program
YEP	Youth Engagement Program

Message from Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

I am pleased to present the WA Government's Annual Report on Closing the Gap 2023 (Annual Report), highlighting the progress we have made over the last twelve months to implement the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement). The Annual Report provides a valuable opportunity to reflect on the journey travelled so far and acknowledge opportunities for improvement as we work to achieve real, long-lasting change.

This has been a year of enormous historical significance. As we reflect on the outcome of the 2023 referendum to enshrine a Voice to Parliament, I acknowledge the resilience and strength of Aboriginal leaders and their communities throughout Western Australia.

I am reassured that the National Agreement will continue to provide important mechanisms to centre the voices and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across Australia in policy development and reform. Together with the WA Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy, Closing the Gap will also shape our approach to partnership with Aboriginal people at the State, regional and local level in Western Australia.

Ms. Pat Turner AM, Lead Convenor of the Coalition of Peaks and Ms. Vicki O'Donnell OAM, Chairperson of the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia met with WA Cabinet Ministers in August this year to discuss our shared priorities in relation to Closing the Gap and speak directly with Ministers about key initiatives underway in WA. This was an excellent opportunity to demonstrate that responsibility for the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and Outcome Areas is shared across all of government in a strategic and coordinated way.

I would also like to acknowledge the leadership of our key partners, the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia and the Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia, who have continued to provide invaluable insights and advice to drive our work. They have been critical to the delivery of key achievements over the reporting period, including the establishment of a new peak body for Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) the Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia, and the release of the WA Government's inaugural Aboriginal Expenditure Review. These achievements will provide a crucial foundation for our next phase of implementation, as we continue to strengthen our partnership arrangements and efforts to increase the number and quality of services delivered by ACCOs.

The Annual Report shows some improvements across a majority of Closing the Gap targets in Western Australia, however it is clear there is still much work to be done. In October 2023, the WA Government released its second Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2023-25. The Implementation Plan is an important companion document to the Annual Report and outlines WA Government's strategic priorities for the next two years to drive progress against the Priority Reforms and Closing the Gap outcome areas. I look forward to working with our key partners as we move into this next phase of implementation and delivery.



Hon Dr Tony Buti MLA

Message from Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA

The Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA (AACWA) is the WA Government's key strategic partner in the National Agreement, providing advice and guidance on the State's implementation. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap articulates a commitment to changing the way government works.

The Productivity Commission (PC) is about to deliver its first three-yearly review of Closing the Gap. AACWA is concerned about the PC's findings to date regarding areas of little or no progress. Aboriginal communities and families across the state are diverse with vastly different needs, which must be adequately reflected in proposed partnerships. Timelines set by national Closing the Gap governance structures can mean timelines for local consultation and participation in decision making is inadequate, failing to allow for decentralised decision-making.

We have heard a commitment from government regarding genuine partnership and are pleased to hear the Minister's commitment to strengthen our partnership arrangements and efforts to increase services delivered by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). Partnership is needed if we are to close the gap, but it is important to get the delivery right and we will continue to hold government to account regarding this commitment.

AACWA has seen some progress this year. The WA Government reaffirmed Closing the Gap governance arrangements with AACWA providing a critical strategic role in providing direction and input on implementation. AACWA provided high level advice to government including engagements with seven Ministers over the year, including a meeting with Premier Cook in August 2023. AACWA continues to work closely with the Department of Treasury on the Aboriginal Expenditure Review 2022-23, and for the first time, co-chairs and representatives of the council were invited to the budget-lock up, which provided further insight into government processes.

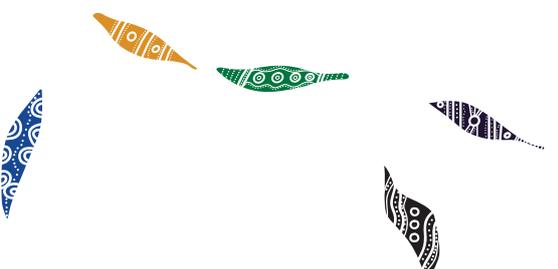
In September 2022, AACWA hosted the first Culture at The Heart Workshop with Aboriginal advisory bodies from across state government. 'Culture at the heart' means ensuring culture remains a central consideration throughout decision making processes and ensures continued prioritisation through governments planning, policy, and projects. Aligning with Priority Reform Three, Culture at the Heart approaches present opportunities to transform government. We would like to see this become an enduring forum; by strengthening connections between advisory bodies, a coordinated consistent approach can be taken in Closing the Gap. There is potential for this joined up approach to empower advisory bodies, to provide strategic leadership, to progress the vision of a better future for Aboriginal people in Western Australia.





The release of the recent Closing the Gap Implementation Plan signalled a change in approach, reaffirming the four priority reform areas of the National Agreement aligned with the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy (AES). WA's new ACCO peak body, the Council of Aboriginal Services WA (CASWA), was established in 2023, creating opportunities to build on the existing partnerships and invaluable expertise in the ACCO sector. Ensuring ACCO's have greater access to, and ownership of data will support the identification of further opportunities to strengthen and build the sector.

AACWA's aspirations have not changed since commencing work with the WA Government on the AES in 2019. Like the National Agreement, the AES commits the WA Government to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people to support healing, and ensure culture is at the centre of the design and delivery of programs and services for our communities. We require reform that supports open, inclusive, and transparent co-design and genuine shared decision-making. AACWA reiterates that it is time for truth-telling and to acknowledge what we know is not working for Aboriginal people and communities. To create meaningful solutions and outcomes, we need to understand fully what is working well, what is going wrong, and where there are opportunities for change.



Gail Beck
Co-Chair
AACWA

Marty Sibosado
Co-Chair
AACWA

Message from Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia

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.

In the three years since the inception of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, a robust foundation has been laid for a partnership built on mutual respect and shared responsibility.

The journey towards closing the gap is both a testament to achievements and a recognition of the challenges that lie ahead. The last year has seen some progress in the implementation of initiatives outlined in the WA Closing the Gap Implementation Plan. These efforts have been guided by the principles of formal partnerships, shared decision-making, and empowering Aboriginal communities.

The Annual Report on Closing the Gap 2023 (the Report) reflects a comprehensive overview of the progress made against the Priority Reform Areas and socioeconomic outcomes. Key achievements in the Priority Reforms signify not only milestones reached but the dedication to systemic reforms necessary for substantial and lasting change.

While we acknowledge the progress made, it's equally crucial to highlight the challenges that persist and demand our unwavering attention.

While efforts have been made in establishing formal partnerships and shared decision-making frameworks, especially within key sectors like health and place-based initiatives, much work remains to be done. The limited progress in some areas underscores the magnitude of the challenges faced in truly embedding shared decision-making processes.

The formation of the Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia (CASWA), significant investment into ACCO Peak Body representation, as well as the ACCO Sector Strengthening Grant Program signify important steps towards a sustainable community-controlled sector. However, these initiatives in strengthening the ACCO sector are not progressing equally across all government agencies and departments, and the sector still grapples with resource constraints and capacity challenges that hinder its ability to deliver optimal services.

Transforming government organizations to ensure cultural safety and responsiveness remains an ongoing endeavour. Despite strengthened governance arrangements and the development of implementation plans, there's a continual need for deeper cultural integration within these systems.

Finally, access to data and information at a regional level has seen promising initiatives such as the launch of PeopleWA. However, barriers persist in achieving comprehensive data access and sovereignty, which are crucial for informed decision-making and community-driven development.

While we acknowledge these challenges, we reaffirm our commitment to working collaboratively. The road ahead demands sustained efforts, increased resources, and a deeper understanding of the multifaceted needs of Aboriginal communities.

This report serves as a reminder of our collective responsibility to address these challenges head-on. It's a testament to the dedication of all involved and a call to action to overcome hurdles, foster genuine partnerships, and ensure equity and empowerment for all Aboriginal people and their communities.



Vicki O'Donnell
Chairperson of Aboriginal Health
Council of Western Australia,
Member Western Australia Coalition
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Peak Organisations





Introduction

Since the National Agreement came into force three years ago, the WA Government has worked collaboratively with the Coalition of Peaks to establish the foundations for working in partnership over the life of the Agreement. These first three years of implementation have had a strong focus on the negotiation of new national Partnership Actions, such as Sector Strengthening Plans and Policy Partnerships, and additional Socioeconomic Outcomes and Targets. The national governance architecture is now fully operational with formal partnership arrangements between all Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties at all levels.

Five national Policy Partnerships have been established to identify opportunities for collective effort on priority policy areas: justice, housing, languages, early childhood care and development, and social and emotional wellbeing. Throughout 2022-23, the WA Government continued to actively participate in these policy partnerships, including representation at meetings, participating in consultations and collaborations to inform the development of national strategies, frameworks and policy development.

As the Policy Partnerships mature, it is anticipated that each will continue to develop policy approaches and accountability mechanisms that will have new policy and funding implications for the WA Government. WA Government recognises that these are significant system level reforms, requiring new ways of working across government and is committed to working with its key Aboriginal partners to ensure WA Government's work is fully informed and effective.

This year has been a significant year for WA Government. On 14 August 2023, Ms Pat Turner AM, Lead Convenor of the Coalition of Peaks, alongside Ms Vicki O'Donnell OAM, Chairperson of the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia addressed a meeting of Western Australia Cabinet Ministers. This provided the opportunity to reaffirm WA Government's commitment to implementing the National Agreement, highlighting achievements to date, and confirming WA's Closing the Gap priorities for 2023-24. Consistent with WA Government's effort over the past 24 months, Ms Turner's address emphasised the need for whole-of-government responsibility in implementing the National Agreement's Priority Reforms and the importance of funding for Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) for the full implementation of the National Agreement.

WA Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2023-25

In 2023, WA Government developed its second Closing the Gap Implementation Plan since the signing of the National Agreement. The Western Australia Implementation Plan 2023-25, developed in consultation with the Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia and the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia renews and deepens the WA Government's commitment to the National Agreement. It moves beyond the foundational work, outlining new initiatives and key strategic actions the WA Government will implement for the next two years to drive progress towards its commitments under the National Agreement.

Annual Report on Closing the Gap 2023

This Annual Report reports on activities and progress to address the Priority Reforms and socioeconomic targets during the period September 2022 – September 2023.

It meets the WA Government's commitment under Clause 118 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) to report progress on the implementation of the National Agreement. This includes updates on efforts to implement the four priority reforms of the National Agreement and the 17 socioeconomic outcomes, by drawing on activity outcomes and data provided by the Productivity Commission.

The Annual Report consists of two main sections, documenting WA Government's efforts in the last 12 months towards Closing the Gap.

- » Section One, reports on progress made against the four Priority Reform Areas; setting out the progress made on ongoing and new initiatives.
- » Section Two, reports on progress against the 17 socioeconomic outcome areas and associated targets. The section provides summaries of how Western Australia is progressing against targets, including data on progress against the baseline for targets where data are available.



Priority Reform Areas

Central to the success of the National Agreement is the embedding of the four Priority Reforms. The Priority Reforms have guided how the WA Government has developed and implemented activities to achieve the socioeconomic targets.

Over the last 12 months, the WA Government has implemented new actions and progressed a number of the Priority Reform commitments that were outlined in the State's initial Implementation Plan. Key reform milestones have been achieved and practical progress has been made to build strong foundations to support the WA Government to progress its commitments under the National Agreement.

The table below provides a snapshot of Western Australia's progress against the four Priority Reform areas in 2022-23.

Priority Reform	Progress
Priority Reform 1 - Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Review of partnerships between WA Government and Aboriginal partners (Partnership Stocktake). » Completion of stage one of the Wadjemup project. » The East Kimberley Early Years – Place-Based Partnership
Priority Reform 2 – Building the Community-Controlled Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Establishment of the new ACCO Peak Body » Delivery of the ACCO Sector Strengthening Grant Program. » Development of the WA whole-of Government ACCO Strategy for community services to Aboriginal people » Release of Western Australia's first Aboriginal Expenditure Review Report » Release of the State Commissioning Strategy for Community Services » Release of Department of Communities ACCO Strategy 2022-2032
Priority Reform 3 - Transforming Government Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Delivery of the Department of Treasury Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy. » Strengthened Closing the Gap governance arrangements
Priority Reform 4 – Shared Access to Data and Information at Regional Level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Launch of PeopleWA, a whole-of-government linked data asset. » Western Australia Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Legislation (draft)

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 WA Government recognises the imperative of working with Aboriginal people to achieve better outcomes and is committed to working in partnership and share decision making authority consistent with Priority Reform One of the National Agreement. Like the National Agreement, the WA Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021-2029 (Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy) identifies genuine partnerships and shared decision-making as a strategic element to support empowerment, overcome systemic discrimination and achieve equal outcomes for Aboriginal people and their communities.

Partnership Stocktake - Review of partnerships between WA Government and Aboriginal partners

In 2023, WA Government undertook a Partnership Stocktake, identifying partnerships and shared decision-making arrangements that met some or all of the strong partnership elements

set out in Clauses 32 of the National Agreement - Aboriginal partners are appointed by Aboriginal people; formal partnerships are supported by an agreement; and decision-making is shared.

The 2023 Partnership Stocktake identified a total of 150 partnerships: 40 partnerships with shared decision-making by consensus (the standard that all partnerships should eventually meet, according to the National Agreement); and 110 partnerships where there is some level of shared decision-making. Of the 40 partnerships that meet the shared decision-making by consensus criteria:

- » 18 are formal agreements between the State Government and Aboriginal groups to jointly manage lands and/or waters in Western Australia.
- » 16 fall within the Health portfolio, demonstrating the effectiveness of having an established ACCO peak body for that sector.

Strengthening formal partnerships between WA Government and Aboriginal Partners

Over the past 12 months, the WA Government has continued to work closely with its key strategic partners, the Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia and the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia on the implementation of the National Agreement and the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy.

Adequate funding is needed to support Aboriginal parties to be partners with governments in formal partnerships. As such, over the last year, the WA Government significantly invested on key commitments under Priority Reform Two to enable a strong foundation for stronger partnership development consistent with Priority Reform One.

At the commencement of the National Agreement, the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia was Western Australia's sole jurisdictional peak body member to the Coalition of Peaks. The establishment of a new Western Australia ACCO Peak Body, the Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia representing the broader community services sector will be key for strengthening partnerships between WA Government and Aboriginal people and the ACCO sector.

It is anticipated that both the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia and the Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia, as peak bodies will spearhead further partnership

development and will be key strategic partners as the WA Government prioritises partnership development with the ACCO sector over the next 12 months.

The East Kimberley Early Years – Place-Based Partnership

The WA Government nominated the East Kimberley as a place-based partnership location in August 2022. Since the nomination, the WA Government has worked with East Kimberley Aboriginal organisations, local shires, and the Australian Government to develop the partnership with priority focus on the Early Years.

In August 2023, Binarrri-binyja yarrowoo Aboriginal Corporation (Empowered Communities East Kimberley) was appointed as the backbone organisation for the East Kimberley place-based partnership. As an Empowered Communities organisation, Binarrri-binyja yarrowoo Aboriginal Corporation supports its member organisations across the East Kimberley and facilitates local Early Years Working Groups in Kununurra, Halls Creek and Wyndham. The Early Years Working Groups are crucial to ensuring the place-based partnership continues to be shaped by the vision and priorities of local communities.

The next step in the process is to formalise partnership arrangements and develop a shared set of priorities for further action.

Update on the Wadjemup Project

The Wadjemup Project is an Aboriginal led project, initiated by the WA Government in June 2020. The Project aims to reconcile the history of Aboriginal people's imprisonment on Wadjemup (Rottneest Island), one of the first large-scale and genuine acts of recognition of the impact of colonisation on Aboriginal people.

Stage One of the project, facilitated by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, has been completed and saw the establishment of the Cultural Authority Framework for the project. As part of Stage One, a three-part engagement process was developed and guided state-wide consultation with Aboriginal people to determine how best to commemorate the Aboriginal men and boys buried on the island, and the future use of the Quod.

Stage Two commenced in July 2023 facilitated by the Rottneest Island Authority following the WA Government commitment of \$27.5 million for the development of a Truth Telling and Ceremony Strategy and the memorialisation of the Burial Ground and development of a future use strategy for the Quod on Wadjemup.

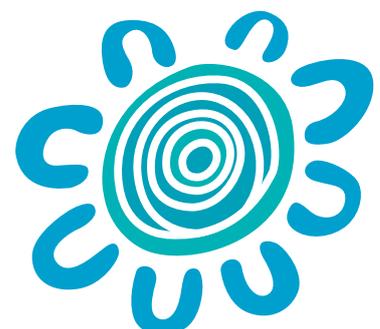
Update on Kimberley Data Project

Under the National Agreement (clauses 74 and 75), the parties commit to establish data projects in each jurisdiction "to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to access and use location-specific data on the Closing the Gap outcome areas".

In Western Australia, the Kimberley was proposed as a potential site for a data project, as data limitations had been earlier identified as one barrier to progressing work that responds to the 2019 Coronial inquest into the 13 deaths of children and young persons in the Kimberley region. The proposal was initially made by Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia and was supported by the Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia.

The WA Government allocated \$150,000 for the development of a scoping proposal for a data project in the Kimberley focused on improving the collection and sharing of mental health, self-harm and suicide data. The work was led by WA Country Health Service, guided by a Project Reference Group comprising representatives from WA and Australian Government agencies, the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia, and Kimberley ACCOs. A scoping proposal report was finalised in December 2022.

During 2023, the WA Government has continued to engage with Kimberley ACCOs about how best to progress the proposal in the context of other work underway, including the Kimberley Health Evidence Data Platform Project and PeopleWA (a linked data asset with datasets from a range of government sources including the Departments of Communities, Education, Health, Justice, and the Western Australia Police Force).



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.

Like the National Agreement, the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy recognises that services used by Aboriginal people are often more effective when designed and delivered by ACCOs.

Over the last 12 months, the WA Government has progressed a number of the Priority Reform Two commitments that were outlined in Western Australia's initial Implementation Plan, which lay the groundwork to meet Clause 55 of the National Agreement which aims to increase the proportion of services delivered by Aboriginal organisations, particularly ACCOs.

Supporting the new ACCO Peak Body

The WA Government in partnership with the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia's Social Services Committee has continued to work to support the establishment of a new ACCO peak body, the Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia.

Throughout 2022, the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia's Social Services Committee led the engagement of ACCOs across Western Australia to inform the establishment of the Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia, which was then incorporated in March 2023. In May 2023, the WA Government committed \$5.725 million to fund operation of the Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia over the next four years. The Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia now has over 30 member ACCOs, and a Chief Executive Officer has recently been appointed, with a focus in its first year of operation on building relationships across the ACCO sector and with WA Government agencies.

It is anticipated that the Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia will provide an opportunity to diversify representation of ACCOs to WA Government across many outcome areas and further support capability of the ACCO sector to deliver services and outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities.

Increasing the number of ACCOs delivering services

The ACCO Sector Strengthening Grant Program

To deliver on its commitment for grants to strengthen the ACCO sector in priority areas of housing, health, disability, and early childhood care and development, the WA Government launched the ACCO Sector Strengthening Grant Program in October 2022.

In June 2023, the WA Government awarded \$3.4 million in grants to 16 ACCOs to support community services to Aboriginal people across Western Australia. The grants will assist ACCOs in delivering high-quality, sustainable services and outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities across Western Australia.

Update on WA whole-of-Government ACCO Strategy for community services to Aboriginal People

A WA whole-of-government ACCO Strategy is under development to support the WA Government's commitments under the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy and National Agreement to increase the proportion of services to Aboriginal people that are delivered by ACCOs. This work is being led by the Department of the Premier and Cabinet in close collaboration with the Departments of Finance and Treasury, and in partnership with Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia's Social Services Committee.

Between mid-2022 and March 2023, the Department of the Premier and Cabinet engaged with ACCOs and WA Government agencies to ensure a thorough understanding of their diverse perspectives and contexts.

Western Australia Aboriginal Expenditure Review 2022-23

In August 2023, WA Government released its first Aboriginal Expenditure Review (AER) Report. The AER Report developed by Treasury, is a shared resource to promote accessibility and transparency of Aboriginal-specific spending to Aboriginal stakeholders. It provides a key tool to support the identification of opportunities to reprioritise funding to ACCOs.

- » The AER Report identifies the total quantum of spending on Aboriginal programs and services using data from 23 State Government agencies. The findings from AER report shows that in 2021-22 WA Government spent \$583.4 million (actual spend) on 362 discrete programs targeted to, or used predominantly by, Aboriginal people and communities – a 13.8 percent increase on expenditure in 2020-21. Additionally, the AER Report shows that Aboriginal organisations play a role in delivery in up to 70 percent of existing State Government initiatives relating to Aboriginal people. This included Aboriginal organisations as the sole providers of \$115.8 million
- » (or 20 percent of all expenditure) across 46 programs in 2021-22.

Supporting ACCOs in the commissioning process

The State Commissioning Strategy for Community Services (State Commissioning Strategy) released by the WA Government in August 2022, has a priority on improving and increasing contracting with ACCOs and includes various actions to enable ACCO capability development and transition to increased community service delivery by ACCOs.

To support implementation of the State Commissioning Strategy, a cross-agency governance committee has been established. In addition, a working group that includes community services peak bodies and government agencies has been established to monitor the progress of the implementation plan for the State Commissioning Strategy. These committees have an important role in driving change and ensuring consistency across government, including identifying opportunities to partner with ACCOs in service planning and design.

Department of Communities ACCO Strategy 2022-2032

The Department of Communities released the ACCO Strategy 2022-2032 in August 2022. The Strategy seeks to improve the way that the Department of 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.

A key action from the first Implementation Plan, 'A Call to Action- Implementation Plan One', is the development of an ACCO Commissioning Framework. This framework will be aligned with the State Commissioning Strategy and Communities Commissioning Plan. The Framework will guide the way the Department of Communities engages with the ACCO sector with the aim of increasing the number of ACCOs it commissions to deliver services for the Department of Communities and improve outcomes for Aboriginal children, families, and communities, ensuring sustainable economic and socio-economic development opportunities for ACCOs across Western Australia.



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.

Western Australia's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy's key principles underpin WA Government's work in reshaping services and systems to embed culture at the heart. As such, the WA Government is working to ensure its systems, institutions, and services are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

Building ownership of the National Agreement across all of WA Government

In 2022-2023, the WA Government continued to strengthen its Closing the Gap governance structures to ensure whole-of-government coordination and decision-making in implementing and reporting on the National Agreement.

In 2023, governance arrangements, including Lead Ministers and Agencies, were updated as part of the development of Western Australia's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2023-25. The intention of the governance arrangement is to ensure ownership of the Priority Reforms and outcome areas is shared across all of WA Government, in recognition that responsibility for implementation is shared across the public sector.

The strengthened governance arrangements, implemented in 2022 include:

- i. expanded membership of the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee (a statutory body under the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972), including most public sector agencies;
- ii. a Closing the Gap Deputies Group, with 18 Agencies to oversee and coordinate whole-of-government implementation; and
- iii. nine Partnership Planning Groups (PPGs) to drive progress against each of the 17 socioeconomic outcome areas and associated targets.

Throughout 2022-23, significant effort was put to consolidating and testing these governance arrangements and this work has demonstrated how these structures function in practice. Importantly, this whole-of-government coordination and decision making has resulted in built ownership of the National Agreement across all of government in recognition that responsibility for implementation is shared across the public sector.

In October 2023, the WA Government released its second Closing the Gap Implementation Plan since the signing of the National Agreement. The Western Australia Closing the Gap Implementation Plan 2023-25 was developed in consultation with the Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia and the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia.

The nine cross agency PPGs and the Closing the Gap Deputies Group were instrumental in the development of this Annual Report and the State's Implementation Plan 2023-25. Throughout 2022-23, the PPGs adopted a collective impact approach. Members from different agencies and organisations worked together to develop subject-matter input for both the Implementation Plan and Annual Report. The Closing the Gap Deputies Group provided oversight of the development of these documents and coordinated agency authorisation.

The WA Government will work closely with the Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia, the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia and the new Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia to strengthen the partnership arrangements between the Aboriginal community-controlled sector and all agencies actively involved in driving progress against the Closing the Gap outcome areas and associated targets.

Treasury's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy

The Department of Treasury (Treasury) developed the Treasury Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy to embed the principles of the Western Australia Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy and Closing the Gap Priority Reforms into the way Treasury works.

The Treasury Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy includes a commitment to review and transform processes and systems to embed culture at the heart in all actions. Importantly, this includes review of the State Budget process to identify opportunities to embed the Priority Reform Areas into the way Treasury works. It represents a fundamental shift in the way Treasury has traditionally worked and strives to ensure that decisions made about Aboriginal people are made with Aboriginal people.



Priority Reform Four: Shared access to data 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.

The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy recognises that government accountability can be strengthened in many ways including actively sharing information through reports or user-friendly dashboards; engaging with Aboriginal representative structures and place-based partnerships; and including Aboriginal people in data collection and evaluation processes.

While work has commenced to enhance systematic sharing of locally relevant data, the WA Government acknowledges that there is still more work to be done to embed Priority Reform Four.



Launch of a whole-of-government linked data asset

In August 2023, the WA Government launched PeopleWA, a whole-of-government linked data asset offering a powerful tool for research, government policy and service improvement. PeopleWA uses data linkage to combine information from across the public sector, creating a rich repository of data which will enable approved users to address the State's most complex social, health, environmental and economic issues. The data asset is protected by international best practice for transparent data governance, safeguards for personal and sensitive information, and robust cyber security controls.

PeopleWA has also been designed with a view to the anticipated future requirements of the WA Government's Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing legislation. The Western Australia Office of Digital Government has been working with ACCOs and other key stakeholders to embed Aboriginal Data Sovereignty principles in the access and use of PeopleWA.



Drafting of Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Legislation

In December 2022, the WA Government announced that it was drafting Privacy and Responsible Information (PRIS) legislation to protect the personal information of Western Australians and facilitate the responsible use and sharing of government data. The PRIS legislation will provide Western Australians with greater control over their personal information and improve the delivery of government services. This legislation will enable data to be shared within government for the right reasons and provide greater accountability and transparency about how government uses your information.

Broadly, the legislation introduces reforms that provide:

- » guiding principles and a framework to govern the collection, protection, use and disclosure of personal information across the public sector;
- » a mandatory data breach notification scheme, requiring agencies to notify the Privacy Commissioner and affected individuals of serious data breaches involving personal information; and
- » a mechanism that supports Aboriginal data sovereignty and governance in Western Australia, by requiring that Aboriginal people and communities are involved or consulted when data about Aboriginal people is shared.

Socio-economic Outcomes

This section reports on Western Australia's progress under each socioeconomic outcome area and related target, providing data on Western Australia's performance since the baseline year and progress on actions to improve these outcomes.

Since the 2022 Annual Report, the Productivity Commission has released a new year of data for 12 of the National Agreement socioeconomic outcomes:

Outcome 2	Children are born healthy and strong
Outcome 3	Children are engaged in high quality culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years
Outcome 5	Students achieve their full learning potential
Outcome 6	Students reach their full potential through further education pathways
Outcome 7	Youth are engaged in employment or education
Outcome 8	Strong economic participation and development of people and communities
Outcome 9	People in secure, appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need
Outcome 10	Adults are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system
Outcome 11	Young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system
Outcome 12	Children are not overrepresented in the child protection system
Outcome 14	People enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing
Outcome 15	People maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters

Additionally, for the first time since the National Agreement was signed, a disaggregation of data by State and Territory was released for Outcome 16 – 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing'. This is an important first step in being able to measure Western Australia's progress over time.

The new data for the outcomes outlined above are provided in this Annual Report under the relevant socioeconomic outcome areas.

The Productivity Commission dashboard and Annual Data Compilation Report have informed WA's progress against the targets in this report.

While the data shows some improvements, it is recognised that the current pace of improvement against the targets will need to accelerate. The WA Government will continue to work in partnership with Aboriginal people, communities, and organisations to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people in Western Australia and build lasting change.



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

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

WA's progress against the target

Life expectancy in years (2015-17)

	Baseline (2006)	2011	2016
Aboriginal males	64.5	67	72
Aboriginal females	70.0	72	76

Considerable improvements have been made in life expectancy for Aboriginal people, however meeting the Closing the Gap target between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people remains challenging. In the absence of new life expectancy data since the last reporting period, supporting indicators, such as the total all-cause mortality rates by age group, can provide some further insight as to how this target may be tracking in Western Australia. Current data suggests total all-cause mortality rates for Aboriginal people in Western Australia have improved between 2014-2018 and 2017-2021 across many age groups. Theoretically, this improvement may translate to improved life expectancy for Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

Life expectancy is an overarching target that is affected by a range of factors including health and social determinants. Health risk factors such as smoking, obesity, alcohol use and diet account for around 19 percent of the gap in life expectancy. Social determinants including education, employment status, housing and income are estimated to be responsible for at least 34 percent of the health gap.

In considering a holistic approach to health and wellbeing, closing the gap in life expectancy is contingent upon improvements across all socio-economic targets under the National Agreement, as well as consideration for the cultural determinants across the life-course.

Progress Snapshot

The following key strategies have guided progress on actions for reducing the gap in life expectancy:

Embedding structures, policies, and processes to ensure a culturally responsive and non-discriminatory health system

Western Australia Aboriginal Health Executive Roundtable

The Department of Health hosted the Western Australia Aboriginal Health Executive Roundtable event on 22 August 2023 with the objective of addressing racism and elevating the importance of the cultural determinants of health. A representative from Mayi Kuwayu and College of Health and Medicine, Australian National University, presented on the cultural determinants of health, Western Australia data on the impacts of racism on health and Indigenous data sovereignty principles.

Key partners and decision makers for the WA health system were invited to the Roundtable. The audience included the Minister for Health and Mental Health, Director General of Health, senior health system executives and senior stakeholders from Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Services (ACCHS). The Roundtable delegates provided suggestions for how the WA health system can embed and implement cultural determinants of health and address racism. An event report will be prepared with recommendations for future action.

Update on the Aboriginal Cultural eLearning (ACeL) course

To support the development of a culturally responsive and non-discriminatory health system, the Department of Health promotes and monitors compliance with the Aboriginal Cultural eLearning (ACeL) course. ACeL was released in April 2021 and is a mandatory course supporting the growth of a culturally competent and responsive health system. As of 1 June 2023, 80 percent of WA health system staff have completed the training, up from the 64 percent reported on 30 June 2022.

WA Health and Medical Research Strategy 2023-2033

The Department of Health is leading a culturally safe and responsive approach to supporting health and medical research in Western Australia. Supported by the WA Health and Medical Research Strategy 2023-2033, the Department of Health, alongside a Sector Advisory Panel comprising Aboriginal health expertise, is supporting the development of a consumer-driven, world leading research sector where research is translated into practice for healthier communities. Aboriginal health is one of six key strategic focus areas of the strategy, alongside regional and remote health and prevention.



The Future Health Research and Innovation Fund

The Department of Health also administers the Future Health Research and Innovation (FHRI) Fund, a secure source of funding for health and medical research, innovation and commercialisation in Western Australia. The FHRI Fund also has a focus area of Aboriginal, rural and remote health and since commencement has awarded more than \$6.7 million to research or innovation with a focus on Aboriginal Health.

An FHRI Fund Expert Committee in Aboriginal Health (Expert Committee) was recently established and will provide guidance and advice to ensure the FHRI Fund's programs and initiatives are developed and implemented to achieve the highest impacts for Aboriginal people in Western Australia. For example, the first role for the Expert Committee is to assist with the development and implementation of an FHRI Fund Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal Health Research to be awarded in 2024.

One of the FHRI Fund's flagship programs is the Challenge: Reimagining Regional and Remote Healthcare. The Challenge has sought applicants from across the globe to trial a digital health solution in the Pilbara Region of Western Australia over a 12-month period, with a focus on Closing the Gap targets 1, 2 and 4. Ten finalists are currently proving their concept in the Pilbara, working hand in hand with Aboriginal Medical Services and their local communities to deliver advanced health care in regional Western Australia. The winning finalist will be awarded a prize of \$5 million

to enable further investment in the development of their solution in Western Australia.

Building and expanding the Aboriginal health workforce, using a variety of career pathways and employment opportunities

Inclusion of Aboriginal Health Practitioners into a Western Australian public health industrial agreement

The Department of Health negotiated the inclusion of the registered profession of Aboriginal Health Practitioner (AHP) into a Western Australian public health industrial agreement. The negotiation successfully concluded in December 2022. AHPs are a nationally registered profession, joining the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. The Department of Health, in partnership with Health Service Providers, ACCHS and Training Organisations are exploring options to build a pipeline for the AHP workforce.

Implementation of the Aboriginal Workforce Policy

Through implementation of the Aboriginal Workforce Policy, the Department of Health is guiding the transformation of the WA health system and enhancing opportunities for shared decision making. The Policy strengthens increased representation of Aboriginal people at all levels of the workforce across the WA health system. The Policy has supported expansion of the Western Australia Health Aboriginal Cadetship Program to 37 cadets in 2023, and the establishment of a dedicated Aboriginal



Graduate Program for piloting in 2024-2025. Development of Aboriginal health leaders continues with delivery of the eighth Aboriginal Leadership Excellence and Development Program with 14 participants, and the fifth First Step Aboriginal Leaders Program for emerging leaders with 23 Aboriginal staff participating.

Improving access to high quality health care and services, while supporting communities to take a preventative approach to optimising health and wellbeing

The following examples of progress for Outcome 1 demonstrate working in partnership with and building the capacity of ACCHS:

Health Navigator Pilot Program

The WA Government committed \$3.5 million over 2 years (commenced November 2022), to establish the Health Navigator Pilot Program to help children in care navigate and access health and mental health services. Health navigators are Aboriginal health workers or registered nurses who assist children in out of home care, their parents, carers and child protection workers to better connect to services. The Program was co-designed with people who have lived experience, carers, advocacy groups and

ACCHS; and is built on a holistic model of care to meet health, social, cultural and spiritual needs.

An independent evaluation from the Centre for Social Impact, University of Western Australia found the Program is demonstrating a significant increase in timely access to health services, mental health services, cultural services and disability supports for children and young people in out of home care. Researchers reported at the beginning of the Program only 15 percent of children had an initial health assessment within 30 days, compared to 90 percent of children within the pilot Program.

The Program model is further supported by additional funding to Aboriginal Medical Services for nursing, midwifery and paediatrics to ensure children receive timely initial and comprehensive health assessments and referrals. Additional funding for Aboriginal Medical Services has resulted in increased access to all referral types and specialist services, including allied therapy, mental health, outpatient, behavioural, developmental, and surgical specialities as well as improved connection to the National Disability Insurance Scheme.



Transitional Care Program

The Department of Health is partnering with ACCHS to pilot the Transitional Care Program (TCP). TCP provides locally led, culturally safe, community-based transition care through ACCHS to older Aboriginal people (aged 50 and above) for up to 12 weeks after their hospital discharge, including social work, nursing support, personal care and allied health care. Broome Regional Aboriginal Medical Service, South West Aboriginal Medical Service and Geraldton Regional Aboriginal Medical Service joined the Pilot in early 2022 and are delivering TCP services within their regions. Moorditj Koort Aboriginal Corporation is building capacity to deliver TCP services to the metropolitan area. To date the Pilot has made an outstanding contribution to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal people, with a fifteen-fold increase in the number of Aboriginal people accessing TCP in the Pilot regions and 92 percent of Pilot clients maintaining or improving their independence. The Pilot is continuing to be delivered as capacity is built for ACCHS.

Strong Spirit Strong Mind Youth Project

The Mental Health Commission's 'Strong Spirit Strong Mind Youth Project' (SSSMYP) has been developed for young Aboriginal people (12 to 25 years) living in the Perth metropolitan area. The project aims to raise awareness of the harms associated with alcohol and other drug (AOD) issues and improve social and emotional wellbeing for young people. Over the past year, SSSMYP has maintained consultations with the Aboriginal Youth Reference Group and Community Specialist Reference Group. Community and stakeholder engagement consultations to inform the Campaign and Model of Service have been delivered with the report finalised in March 2023. The Model of Service is currently being developed based on the findings within the report. In addition, SSSMYP has delivered a Community Grants funding program to Aboriginal not-for-profit organisations (up to \$30,000) to deliver local community youth programs or projects to raise awareness of the harms associated with AOD issues and improve social and emotional wellbeing among young Aboriginal people and their families. 13 organisations received funding in 2022-23 and 18 in 2023-24.



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

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

WA's progress against the target

Percentage of babies born at a healthy birthweight

	Baseline (2017)	2019	2020
Aboriginal children	86.9	87.7	88.0

Healthy birthweight is a key determinant of a baby's chance of survival and good health. In 2020, 88 percent of Aboriginal babies born in Western Australia recorded a healthy birthweight, an improvement of 1.1 percent from the baseline measure in 2017.

Two important factors contributing to low birthweight include maternal smoking during pregnancy, and barriers to access antenatal care in the first trimester.

Evidence suggests that Aboriginal mothers who attend five or more antenatal care visits during pregnancy are less likely to have a low birthweight baby.

- » Western Australia still has a high proportion of Aboriginal women who smoke during pregnancy (43 percent compared to 8 percent for non-Aboriginal mothers), although the rate has reduced from 49 percent in 2013.
- » In the last four years from the baseline (2017 to 2020), Western Australia had the lowest proportion of Aboriginal mothers who attended five or more antenatal care visits, compared to other states and territories.

Progress Snapshot

The WA Government is strongly committed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal women and their families in consultation and collaboration with community. To support Closing the Gap, the Women and Newborn Health Service at North Metropolitan Health Service has commenced the Strong Links Program and an Aboriginal Maternity Group Practice (AMGP) for Aboriginal women across Western Australia. These services work in conjunction to offer outreach for women in the antenatal and postnatal periods with the aim of reducing the barriers to accessing health care and reducing the risk of maternal mortality, preterm birth, low birth weight and perinatal death through interdisciplinary care. AMGP delivers quality and evidence-informed maternal and neonatal services from the same small group of midwives and aims to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal mothers and babies. Continuity of care for birthing mothers encourages a sense of belonging and develops a safe and secure circle of trust between midwives and their families. There is also a significant body of evidence that demonstrates a reduction in preterm birth when women experience continuity of care from a known midwife during pregnancy.

Comprehensive scoping of child and maternal services across Western Australia has commenced, in partnership with ACCHS and will inform the development of a seamless model to support culturally secure antenatal care.

This has included:

- » Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia engagement with 15 member ACCHS across Western Australia to capture information about maternal and child health services, from preconception care up to the first 2,000 days of life, including postnatal care. A report on the findings and recommendations was completed in May 2023 outlining the current state of service delivery in relation to maternal and child health, the strengths of ACCHS services, identifying gaps in funding and service delivery, and resources require to improve service delivery. The report highlights the crucial role that ACCHS play in providing culturally safe, holistic, maternal and child health care for Aboriginal women and families across Western Australia.
- » The Department of Health and WA Country Health Service commissioned review of maternity and newborn services for women and families from country Western Australia. The review examined the sustainability of obstetrics, midwifery and neonatal services for country patients in Western Australia, including a focus on planning for and safeguarding a sustainable medical, midwifery and nursing workforce. Consultation has been completed with all regions, the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia and each Health Service Provider. A final report and recommendations are under development due for completion in 2023.

- » The Birthing on Country 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 Western Australia. The project is a collaboration between multiple stakeholders including the Department of Health, Health Service Providers, the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia, Ngangk Yira Institute for Change and Edith Cowan University. An online survey was administered in August 2023 to ascertain the maternity services currently available for Aboriginal women in Western Australia, and their utilisation. A report on the findings is due in December 2023.

Delivery of education and support services for maternal health risk factors during pregnancy continue to support the target of increased healthy birthweight:

Baby Coming You Ready

Baby Coming You Ready (BCYR) is an Aboriginal-led 'wrap-around' digital platform developed within the Ngangk Yira Institute for Change, Murdoch University facilitating honest communication and engagement between Aboriginal mothers and their nurse/health worker. BCYR uses sensitive touchscreen images and Aboriginal voice-overs to guide Aboriginal mothers and their health care provider through a meaningful 'yarn' though areas that commonly impact

families' health and wellbeing. Using a strength-based and family centred approach it has been co-designed to provide a supportive model-of-care for both users, through enhanced trauma-informed, culturally safe antenatal/postnatal assessments. All required screening is included (for example tobacco use and family and domestic violence) and assists professionals to provide woman-centred and directed ongoing care.

BCYR completed a two-year pilot in partnership with the WA Country Health Service (in five sites in the Wheatbelt), East Metropolitan Health Service, Child and Adolescent Health Service and ACCHS. The successful 18-month feasibility pilot (300 women and 50 clinicians) in clinical settings demonstrated increased trust from clients with clinicians, high-level usability, acceptability and accuracy from client and clinician perspectives. Importantly, the pilot demonstrated enhanced two-way communication facilitating women's honesty, sharing, problem-solving and sense of self-efficacy and empowerment not before experienced. BCYR has demonstrated the ability to provide a culturally responsive therapeutic approach to supporting the perinatal mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal mothers. This directly impacts the health and wellbeing of mother, and her developing infant. Measurable impacts for the infant include gestation, birth weight, infant attachment, and developmental outcomes.



Funding has been secured which will enable BCYR to work in partnership to refine resources and processes and embed BCYR as best practice with the health services in these sites over the next five years. In addition, consultations for pilot expansion has commenced across the Pilbara including WA Country Health Service sites, Aboriginal Medical Services and receiving hospitals including King Edward Memorial Hospital. BCYR has the potential to upscale to a statewide implementation trial ultimately embedding BCYR as standard perinatal clinical practice.

Alcohol. Think Again

The Alcohol. Think Again public education campaign ‘One Drink’ ran statewide between September 2022 and January 2023 using mass media channels. The campaign, implemented by the Mental Health Commission, aims to raise community awareness about the harms associated with alcohol use in pregnancy, including increased risk to the baby of lifelong physical, mental and behavioural disabilities. The key message of the campaign is ‘any amount of alcohol mum drinks, baby drinks too’. It challenges the commonly held but inaccurate belief that a mother’s placenta protects a developing baby from alcohol.

‘One Drink’ advertising featured prominently on several Aboriginal media channels around Western Australia. The commercial was televised on NITV and broadcast on Noongar Radio, PAKAM Radio, Radio Mama, Tiama Pulka Network, Radio Goolarri and Ngaarda Radio. The radio scripts and recordings were produced by each regional network to ensure suitability for the local audience. Targeted marketing for Aboriginal people was also disseminated via social media channels.





Outcome 3:

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

National 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.

WA's progress against the target

Percentage of children enrolled in YBFS (2021)

	Baseline (2016)	2021	2022
Aboriginal children	94.85	107.2	109.2

The Year Before Fulltime Schooling is provided in public schools across Western Australia. Western Australia has recorded an improvement over time for this target and has met the target of 95 percent set out in the National Agreement.

Progress Snapshot

Early Years Partnership Planning Group (State)

The Early Years Partnership Planning Group (EY PPG) was established in late 2022 to facilitate cross-agency collaboration and work in partnership with Aboriginal people, their organisations, and communities, to expedite Western Australia's progress against the socioeconomic outcome areas 3 and 4 in the National Agreement.





The EY PPG has representatives from the following agencies with Departments of Education and Communities being co-leads:

- » Department of Education
- » Department of Communities
- » Child and Adolescent Health Service
- » WA Country Health Service
- » Mental Health Commission
- » Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation
- » Department of Premier and Cabinet

The first annual workplan for the EY PPG is currently in development. The workplan will drive initiatives that align with the focus of the national Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership, key areas of action identified in the Early Childhood Care and Development Sector Strengthening Plan which will drive progress towards related socio-economic targets and priority reforms.

KindiLink

In 2022, the 58 KindiLink sites in Western Australia provided 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. The KindiLink project enhances children's learning, builds the confidence and capability of parents as their children's first educators, establishes strong home-school partnerships, and contributes to improved long-term school attendance. Professional learning provided for new staff includes the Abecedarian Approach to Learning (3a). 3a is a set of evidence-based teaching and learning strategies for early childhood educators and parents to use with children from

birth to five. Educators also participate in a yearly statewide KindiLink forum to support the sharing of experiences and learnings across the state.

Child and Parent Centres

In Western Australia, 22 Child and Parent Centres continue to operate on or near public schools, providing support to children to transition into school successfully, and to increase the capability of parents to support their children's development. The delivery of services focuses on the birth-to-four years age range. These are focussed on offering early learning, child and maternal health (including the Aboriginal Medical Services), and parenting support and wellbeing programs and services. Three Child and Parent Centres (Fitzroy Valley, Halls Creek and Kununurra) continue to host and support the KindiLink project.

Better Beginnings Family Literacy Program

The State Library of Western Australia delivers the Better Beginnings Family Literacy Program. In 2021, the WA Government committed \$1 million over five years to provide for the more equitable delivery of Better Beginnings in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions, particularly in Aboriginal communities. In 2022, the State Library employed a Better Beginnings Project Officer based in Broome for the life of the project. The officer develops and coordinates community partnerships to support the delivery of the Better Beginnings program in the regions, with a particular focus on the early literacy needs of Aboriginal families.



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

National target: By 2031, increase the proportion of children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census to 55 percent.

WA's progress against the target

Percentage of children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census

	Baseline (2018)	2021
Aboriginal children	31.4	31.3

To enable Aboriginal children to thrive in their early years and engage in early childhood education, there are complex systemic and socioeconomic intersecting factors and barriers that may impact capacity to progress outcome area targets. These issues are exacerbated in regional or geographically isolated areas of Western Australia.

While in its early stages of development, the establishment of the WA Government Early Childhood Education portfolio will provide significant opportunities for both State Government and also in collaboration with the Australian Government to address some of barriers to achieving substantial progress against the national targets.

Progress Snapshot

Early Years Partnership

The Early Years Partnership (EYP previously called the Early Years Initiative) aims to improve child well-being and school readiness in four Western Australian communities to create lasting change for children across Western Australia.

EYP is a 10-year collective impact partnership between the WA Government (Departments of Communities, Health and Education) and Minderoo Foundation. Telethon Kids Institute is the evidence and evaluation partner, and the Australian Government is a supporting partner through the Connected Beginnings placed-based grants program.

In 2023, community plans were launched for the four partner communities of Armadale West, Central Great Southern (Shires of Katanning, Kojonup, Gnowangerup and Broomehill-Tambellup), Derby (including Mowanjum and Pandanus Park) and Bidyadanga.

Across the four communities, common themes include the early detection of developmental delay, access to early learning and early intervention, parent wellbeing, family safety and family financial well-being. In addition, the social and physical infrastructure in remote communities that enables family and therefore child wellbeing.

Connected Beginnings funding supports the work of the EYP in all four communities, in partnership with local ACCOs.

Examples of work already progressing against the community plans include:

- » Funding and delivery of the dental health project in the Central Great Southern.
- » Funding provided to Bidyadanga to revitalise a facility to provide a culturally safe men's wellbeing space, to support Dad's wellbeing and parenting capacity.
- » Funding and project support provided to Ngunga Women's Group to progress the early learning and family centre proposal.
- » Creation and distribution of 'brain boxes', a tool to support professionals to improve parent knowledge on the importance of the early years.

In August 2023, the Minister for Early Childhood Education, EYP Board and many local community members met to launch Wirriya dunji ooba babanil ingun (Happy strong small children) early years community plan for children in Derby, and Yija Tili (True Sparks) early years community plan for children in Bidyadanga. Now in its implementation phase, The Department of Health is providing additional resources to coordinate health-related actions in these community co-designed action plans.

Child Safety and Out-of-Home Care

The Department of Communities continues to provide a key role in child safety and out-of-home care.

The Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy 2022-2032 and the Safe and Supported: National Framework to Protect Australia's Children 2021-31, will drive positive change and outcomes through collective effort across governments and sectors, and have a positive impact to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people.

The WA Government endorsed the Action Plans and is committed to working with other jurisdictions progressing activities and deliverables over the next 12 months.

Australian Early Development Census

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) has recently been integrated with the WA Government's Social Investment Data Resource (SIDR) which provides a linked, administrative database for researchers and policy analysts.

The AEDC will assist the evaluation of the EYP and demonstrate whether the collective impact partnership in the four EYP locations has improved outcomes for children aged 0-4 years over the 10-year partnership.

The SIDR linked administrative data also has measures of household and socioeconomic measures so that priority areas identified by communities as being important to child health and wellbeing, such as family financial security, and the actions identified can be measured for change over time both in the EYP areas and comparative communities. The use of the integration of the AEDC into SIDR is an important development and provides an opportunity to better inform WA Government's actions towards Closing the Gap and measure progress towards outcome areas 3 and 4.

WA Country Health Service

Community health services for Aboriginal children and families are co-designed and delivered by regional Aboriginal health teams, Aboriginal workers and liaison staff, and other community health staff with a strong local cultural focus. In many remote communities, WA Country Health Service partners with and funds Aboriginal Medical/Health Services to provide highly accessible community health services.

WA Country Health Service offers a universal schedule of community child health contacts (0-14 days, 8 weeks, 4 months, 12 months, 2 years and at school entry) for all children in country Western Australia. In addition, WA Country Health Service offers an Enhanced Child Health Schedule (ECHS) which can provide up to 10 extra contacts for families and children with need for additional support.

The table below shows universal schedule child health contacts provided by WA Country Health Service for Aboriginal children in country Western Australia from 1 September 2022 – 31 August 2023.



Universal schedule child health contacts provided for Aboriginal children in country Western Australia (2022-23)

Universal contacts	Number of Aboriginal children who received check	Number of Aboriginal children eligible for check	Percentage of Aboriginal children who received check
0-14 days	562	1098	51.2%
8 weeks	587	1093	53.7%
4 months	571	1090	52.4%
12 months	511	1135	45.0%
2 years	333	1056	31.5%
School Entry	810	1221	66.0%

An additional 621 ECHS contacts were provided by WA Country Health Service for Aboriginal Children in country Western Australia from 1 September 2022–31 August 2023.

Over the next year, WA Country Health Service aims to work with agency partners, including the Aboriginal Medical/Health Service sector, to improve standardised client centred data collection and reporting for child health service activity and outcomes.

Child and Adolescent Health Service

Child and Adolescent Health Service has core health activities that support Aboriginal Children in Western Australia thriving in the Early Years.

The Universal Child Health program: All families with Aboriginal children are offered free universal child health service or referral to the dedicated Aboriginal Health Team. The Child and Adolescent Health Service Child Health services includes Universal Plus and Partnership components. Aboriginal families may be offered or request the Child and Adolescent Health Service Universal Plus service offers additional contacts to help clients manage or resolve a particular concern



or issue. The Partnership service is for clients who require help to manage or resolve increasingly complex physical, developmental, psychosocial, behaviours and health concerns, which may be complicated by socioeconomic, social and environmental factors.

The Aboriginal Health Team: The Aboriginal Health Team provides culturally sensitive, quality, evidence-informed, community health services to Aboriginal children and their families. A focus of the Aboriginal Health Team is the dedicated Ear Health Team offering targeted ear screening to Aboriginal children in primary schools across the Perth metropolitan area.



2022 Calendar Year - Aboriginal child health check completion rates - (Child and Adolescent Health Service - Child and Adolescent Community Health)

Universal postnatal visit	Universal postnatal visit with 14 days	8 week check	4 month check	12 month check	2 year check
94.1%	75.4%	76.3%	65.7%	38.2%	25.9%

The Aboriginal Health Team and Child Development Service employ a full-time Senior Speech Pathologist and a part-time Senior Occupational Therapist. Multi-disciplinary clinics (medical and allied health) are offered on a regular basis. Speech Pathology and Occupational Therapy can provide assessment, intervention, developmental guidance information to families with no to minimal waiting time for appointments.

Child and Adolescent Health Service community nurses undertake health assessments on children in State care, many of whom are young Aboriginal children. The assessments are for children new to care and then annually for every year they are in care. Children in care have complex health needs.





CASE STUDY

Early Years Partnership - Central Great Southern Community Plan - Dental Health Project

The Central Great Southern Community Plan identified that Child Health is a priority area with an initial focus on dental health, in response to the data trend of children presenting to the emergency department for preventable dental health related issues.

The dental project focuses on dental health and aims to reduce the impact of a high sugary diet on oral health. It provides a visiting dental service which is cost effective, improves dental hygiene, and reduces the impact of early childhood tooth cavities.

Under the 18-month project, University of Western Australia dental students and a supervisor visit the community three times a year to provide free dental checks and early treatment for children aged 1-4 years who have limited local access to free dental services prior to starting school.

The work also includes understanding poverty and food insecurity and how these impact on the decisions families make when purchasing food.

The first dental week took place in May 2023. The dental team saw 183 of the 449 (approximately 40 percent) of eligible children across the region with Aboriginal children making up 20 percent of this cohort (c.f 11 percent of population of Aboriginal children).

The second visit took place in July 2023. A total of 247 children have been assessed since the first visit in March 2023. This represents 45 percent of all children aged 0-4 years and 55 percent of all children aged 1-4 years in Central Great Southern. 49 children were seen for treatment or review. Timeliness and synergies with the WA Country Health Service paediatric pathways project work have resulted in progressing the early years dental health surgery in the Great Southern. From September 2023, following the third Dental Health team visit, dental surgery will be provided for children from the Katanning Health Service operating theatre.

Children in the Central Great Southern attending dental checks during Dental Week 2023.





Outcome 5: Aboriginal students achieve their full learning potential

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

WA's progress against the target

Percentage of people aged 20-24 who have attained year 12 or equivalent

	Baseline (2016)	2021
Aboriginal people	57.4	61.1

Supporting schools to create culturally responsive classrooms that build on the strengths of Aboriginal students, engage them in their learning and enable them to thrive academically and socially is a priority for this socioeconomic outcome. This work is guided by the Department of Education's Aboriginal Cultural Standards Framework (Framework) which informs the important role schools play in providing opportunities for Aboriginal students to see themselves, their identities and their cultures reflected in the curriculum and in the learning environment, to positively impact their engagement and achievement. The Framework continues to support 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.

The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy continues to underpin the WA Government's approach for schools to embed Aboriginal histories, cultures and languages into classroom practice, and create learning environments that build respect for the cultures, experiences and worldviews of Aboriginal people. All Western Australian public schools have the flexibility and autonomy to develop and implement locally determined, place-based strategies and programs that are responsive to the needs and aspirations of students in the school.

In the calendar year 2022, 305 Certificate III and above level qualification completions by Aboriginal people aged 20 to 24 were reported.



This is a 13.4 percent increase compared to the 2019 outcome for this cohort (pre-COVID) of 269 completions. In the first half of 2023, a total of 103 qualification completions in Certificate III and above level qualifications by Aboriginal people aged 20 to 24 have been reported.

Progress Snapshot

Creating culturally responsive classrooms

The Department of Education is working at a system level to strengthen the cultural responsiveness of the agency, in alignment with the WA Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy and priority reform areas of the National Agreement.

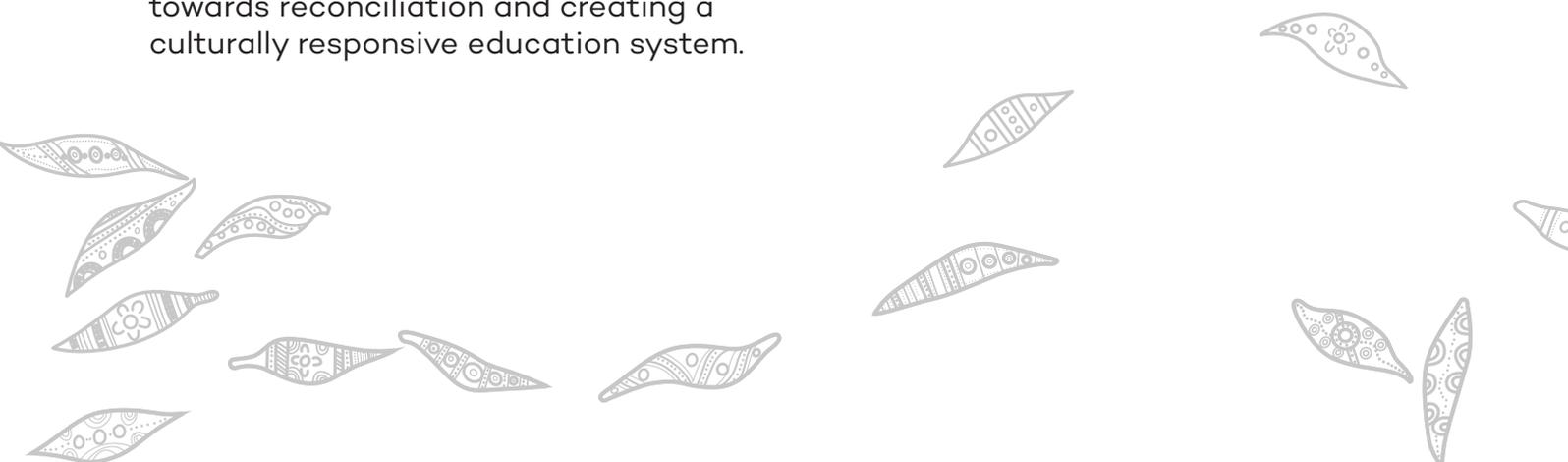
The Department of Education has established a system-level Aboriginal advisory mechanism to strengthen its relationship and shared decision-making with Aboriginal people. The Aboriginal Advisory Body will be a strategic and cultural advisory body on the transformation of public education services. The Aboriginal Advisory Body is an independent voice to the Department and Minister for Education. It will have an advisory role in the Department of Education's progress towards reconciliation and creating a culturally responsive education system.

Culturally responsive professional learning, advice and guidance

The Department of Education provides professional learning, advice and guidance for school staff to further understand the Department's directions for building a culturally responsive agency; and to develop and use knowledge of Aboriginal people, histories, cultures, languages and worldviews to positively impact student wellbeing, engagement and achievement.

This includes a culturally responsive school leadership program co-designed with school principals, Danjoo Koorliny Elders and the Centre for Social Impact. Fourteen school principals completed the inaugural program in June 2023. A second cohort of 22 school principals commenced the one-year program in August 2023.

From 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023 the Department of Education delivered 75 professional learning workshops to 4,205 principals, teachers, graduate school psychologists and senior Education staff to support the creation of culturally responsive schools.



Culturally responsive pedagogies

An online Culturally responsive pedagogies self-paced professional learning course was launched in March 2023 to strengthen staff understanding of:

- » culturally responsive pedagogies and how to use these approaches to support students' varied strengths, interests and needs in a culturally safe learning environment.
- » Aboriginal languages, cultures and histories and how to enrich the curriculum and provide opportunities for all students to engage in reconciliation.
- » the attributes of cultural responsiveness to support student wellbeing, engagement and achievement.

The course was completed online by 353 staff in Semester 1, 2023.

Quality Teaching Strategy

Strengthening support for teaching and learning excellence in every classroom has been paramount. In 2022, the Department of Education launched the Quality Teaching Strategy. This establishes a shared, system-wide position on effective teaching to set clear and common expectations of classroom practice across all public schools. It also provides programs, services, and supports to help school leaders build cultures of teaching excellence, including culturally responsive pedagogies.

Supporting wellbeing, engagement and achievement of Aboriginal students

A continued focus on student progress and achievement is at the centre of the State's education improvement efforts.

The Department of Education continues to deliver supplementary programs operating in schools to further support the wellbeing, engagement and achievement of Aboriginal students. This includes tailored and individualised mentoring support to Aboriginal secondary students to achieve positive academic outcomes and meaningful post-school destinations such as university, further training or employment. The celebration of culture and strengthened sense of belonging and connection to community empowers students to pursue their aspirations.

Phonics Initiative

To ensure all students have the best opportunity to be successful literacy learners, in 2023 the Department of Education commenced the implementation of the Phonics Initiative in public schools to support the development of student literacy skills from an early age, ensuring targeted intervention where required. This, combined with culturally responsive learning environments, provide the conditions for Aboriginal students to develop foundational skills needed to reach their full learning potential.



The Kimberley Schools Project

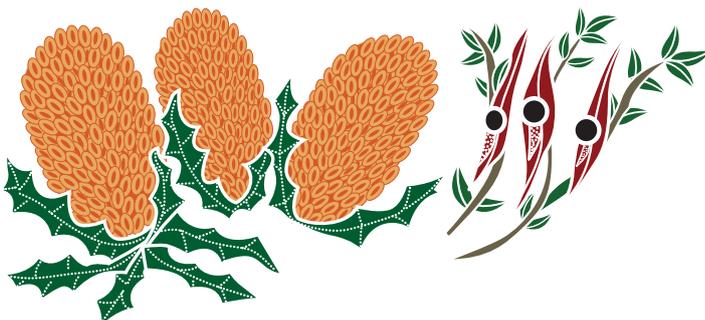
The Kimberley Schools Project continued to be implemented in 20 public schools and one non-government school across the Kimberley education region. The project has 4 pillars: targeted teaching, early years, attendance and community engagement. In 2022–23, the focus has been realigned to include a greater emphasis on school attendance and community engagement, through empowering and developing the leadership capability of Aboriginal staff.

Review of senior secondary school pathways

In June 2023, a review of senior secondary school pathways was launched in a bid to help all Western Australian students reach their full potential through their post school study, training, or employment pursuits. The review will explore whether current pathways options for Aboriginal students build the skills and knowledge they need to successfully access further study, training, and work options available to them.

The Preschool Reform Agreement

The Preschool Reform Agreement (PRA) facilitates children’s early learning and development and transition to full-time school. PRA funding continues to support Department of Education initiatives such as KindiLink, designed to support program quality and maximise preschool participation by Aboriginal children and families. In 2023, recognising the pivotal role of Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers and Education Assistants in supporting Aboriginal students’ learning, targeted funding was provided to build the capability of these staff through professional learning to support the delivery of early years literacy initiatives.





Outcome 6: Aboriginal students reach their full potential through further education pathways

National 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.

WA's progress against the target

Percentage of people aged 25 to 34 years old who have completed AQF Certificate level III or above.

	Baseline (2016)	2021
Aboriginal people	33.8	37.1

Like all young people, Aboriginal students need to be able to access multiple pathways to further their education to support reaching their full potential. Ensuring Aboriginal people reach their full potential through the pursuit of further education pathways is a priority for the WA Government.

Providing more opportunities for Aboriginal students to achieve tertiary qualifications is a vital step in strengthening employment prospects and social outcomes. Attaining a Certificate III or above qualification significantly improves participation in the labour market and reduces the likelihood of unemployment.

To achieve this target, the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy continues to underpin the WA Government's approach to supporting Aboriginal students to learn and progress at school and leave school with the capabilities demanded by further education, training and workplace environments.

In the calendar year 2022, 328 Certificate III and above level qualification completions by Aboriginal people aged 25-34 years were reported. This is a 20.6 percent increase compared to the 2019 (pre-COVID) outcome for this cohort of 272 completions. In the calendar year 2023 up to 30 June 2023, a total of 120 completions in Certificate III and above level qualifications by Aboriginal people aged 25-34 years have been reported.

Progress Snapshot

The WA Government is working collaboratively across systems and services to enable Aboriginal students reach their full potential through further education pathways, in alignment with the WA Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy and Priority Reform Areas of the National Agreement.

Supporting education and training of Aboriginal students

The Department of Training and Workforce Development manages a range of programs that drive progress towards this target and provides financial assistance to encourage businesses to invest in the training of apprentices and trainees, including Aboriginal people.

The Western Australian Group Training Program

The Western Australian Group Training Program (WAGTP) provides funding to group training organisations (GTOs) to employ apprentices and trainees from priority groups, with wraparound support services to enable a successful completion of the apprenticeship or traineeship or secure employment. In the 2022-23 financial year, 37 Aboriginal apprentices and trainees aged 25-34 years commenced their apprenticeship or traineeship at Certificate III and above level under the WAGTP. Between 1 September 2022 and 31 August 2023, four Indigenous owned and operated GTOs were supported through the WAGTP.

The Aboriginal School Based Training program

The Aboriginal School Based Training (ASBT) program, funded by the Department of Training and Workforce Development, is a Vocational Educational and Training 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. In 2023, 324 ASBT student applications have been received, over 450 in 2022, compared to 321 in 2020.

Department of Transport Aboriginal training programs

Within the Department of Transport, METRONET's Yanchep Rail Extension project established a partnership with the CareerTrackers Indigenous Internship Program, engaging university undergraduates who complete 12-week summer internships and 5-week winter internships on the Project. The cohort subsequently transition onto a graduate program or can take a permanent role with the contracting parent company.

METRONET's C-series railcar program developed, in collaboration with North Metropolitan TAFE, is a 10-week Aboriginal pre-employment program which aims to connect young Aboriginal people to training and employment opportunities. Students receive practical training while completing two rail infrastructure entry level skill sets that introduce them to electrical and mechanical topics. At the end of the program, some students are offered apprenticeships to deliver the new C-series railcars.

Aboriginal career promotion programs

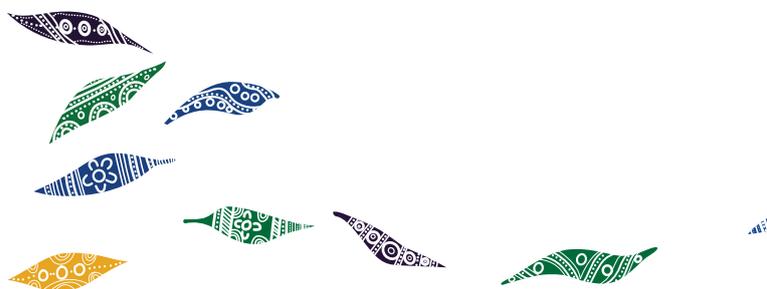
Year 9 Career Taster Program

The Year 9 Career Taster Program (CTP) is a \$22 million election commitment, which aims to support Year 9 students to start their career exploration journey. CTP introduces students at an early age to the range of career options and training pathways available to them. This helps increase the likelihood of a higher proportion of students being prepared to undertake and complete a Certificate III qualification. The program commenced in September 2022 and is fully funded to run until the end of the 2025. The CTP is focussed on helping students to explore potential career pathways through hands-on, industry-led activities. Taster experiences are designed to provide flexible and hands-on experiences to suit all learning requirements, facilitate inclusivity and culturally appropriate delivery and promote bespoke delivery to priority cohorts, including Aboriginal students.

The Main Roads Bunbury Outer Ring Road project's Yaka Dandjoo program also coordinates a Career Taster initiative that brings year 9 students on site to gain career insights and exposure to the civil construction industry.

The Two-Way Science Initiative

The Department of Education's Two-Way Science Initiative (the Initiative) supports a two-way approach to teaching and learning that connects the Western Australian Curriculum: Science to Aboriginal knowledges. The Initiative supports schools to build partnerships with local Aboriginal communities to co-design learning programs. An evaluation completed in 2022 found strengthened relationships with the local Aboriginal community increased teacher confidence and capacity to connect local Aboriginal knowledges with the science curriculum and increased engagement of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. Outputs of the Initiative include Two-way Science videos, online teaching and learning resources and a book featuring illustrations of practice.





STEM skills strategy, Future Jobs, Future Skills

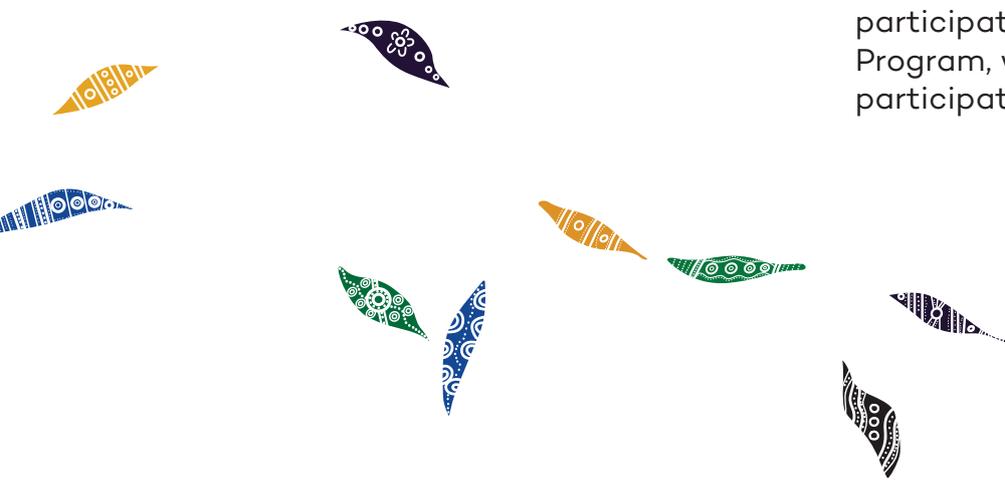
The Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation's State STEM skills strategy, Future Jobs, Future Skills, aims to ensure young people are prepared for future jobs with STEM skills, with a focus on under-represented groups in STEM, including Aboriginal people, to ensure no-one is left behind in the future economy. The Gwoonwardu Mia Jobs and Skills Project is a partnership between Tourism WA, the Western Australia Museum, Real Futures and TAFE to provide employment and training opportunities at the Gwoonwardu Mia Culture Centre Café. The program will involve 36 Aboriginal participants with the first 12 recently commencing their employment training program. The program continues to engage local Aboriginal people into hospitality and tourism.

Djinda Ngardak career promotion program

The Djinda Ngardak career promotion program is supported by schools, teachers, Indigenous community groups, local chefs and businesses and offered to Aboriginal year 10-12 high school students from across Western Australia to participate in a culinary masterclass taught by renowned chefs and trainers. Students are also mentored by local Elders and cultural leaders during activities on-Country that facilitate the exploration of traditional plants and ingredients and support cross-cultural sharing and connection to Country. The most recent program saw 113 students participate in the program working in partnership with Crown to deliver the World Indigenous Tourism Summit Gala Dinner for more than 600 guests.

Scitech's Aboriginal Education Program

Scitech's Aboriginal Education Program includes hands-on, interactive incursions where students are introduced to science concepts with a strong focus on numeracy and literacy and understanding through doing. In 2021-22, 2,278 students and teachers participated in the Aboriginal Education Program, with a further 2,936 students participating in 2022-23.





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

National target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67 percent.

WA's progress against the target

Percentage of people aged 15 to 24 years who are fully engaged in employment, education or training.

	Baseline (2016)	2021
Aboriginal people	51.5	53.1

A range of ongoing programs have been put place to support the training and employment outcomes of Aboriginal youth in Western Australia, including:

- » The Department of Training and Workforce Development's Aboriginal School-based Training Program, which 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 Department of Training and Workforce Development's Western Australian Group Training Program provides financial assistance to group training organisations to take on, and provide wrap around support to, apprentices and trainees from under-represented cohorts, including

Aboriginal people, and at-risk Aboriginal students.

- » Bush Rangers WA, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions' youth-based conservation and community development program, which has a high Aboriginal participation rate.
- » The Solid Futures program which gives Aboriginal people formal training, paid employment and support to complete a Certificate III in Government, and helps agencies to build diverse, talented and inclusive workforces.
- » The Department of Transport's Driving Access and Equity program which seeks to remove considerable barriers faced by residents in remote Aboriginal communities to obtaining their driver's licence.

- » Additionally, within the Transport Portfolio, Main Road's Aboriginal Employment and Retention Plan 2021-24 works to improve the level of direct employment and meaningful employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal people by applying actions from specific focus areas. To date, 57 Aboriginal peoples are employed with Main Roads. The transition to in-house maintenance contracts will ensure many more opportunities to employ Aboriginal peoples into the future.
- » Main Roads has the ability to establish meaningful employment and training initiatives across its projects to improve skills capacity in local areas. For example, the Outback Way project delivered a construction training program to 20 local Aboriginal people in road construction and plant operation. On-the-job training was coupled with theory classes in Laverton as participants worked towards completion of a Certificate III in construction.
- » Main Roads' Bunbury Outer Ring Road project has had more than 160 people, predominantly Aboriginal people, graduate from its Yaka Dandjoo Program, building skills capacity in the local area. The project team also partnered with a skill hire and apprentice training company to support participants to engage in a civil construction apprenticeship.



Progress Snapshot

Enhancing opportunities for Aboriginal people to engage in employment

Enhanced Aboriginal services at Jobs and Skills Centres

Aboriginal Services are provided at a network of 19 Jobs and Skills Centres (JSCs) across Western Australia to enhance opportunities for Aboriginal people to engage in sustainable employment and help meet the State's skills shortages and growing workforce demand. JSC services have been strengthened through a \$8.14 million investment around the State, including the addition of the Fremantle JSC located at South Metropolitan TAFE's Fremantle campus.

Approximately 30 Aboriginal employment and engagement officers (AEEOs) are employed across the JSC network. They work closely with employers and other key service providers in their area to integrate services and maximise training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal clients and ensure culturally appropriate employment and career services are provided.

The inclusion of more Aboriginal artwork also forms part of the enhanced services to JSCs to ensure they are providing a culturally supportive, vibrant, and welcoming space for Aboriginal staff and clients, where community members and employers can meet, and find local information and resources.

From 1 September 2022 to 31 August 2023, across all JSCs:

- » 4,035 Aboriginal clients accessed services;
- » 14 percent of all JSC clients identified as Aboriginal;
- » 19,775 services delivered to Aboriginal Clients; and
- » 1,167 organisations received Aboriginal employment advice and/or information.

Supporting Aboriginal youth job seekers

The Department of Training and Workforce Development has engaged the Waalitj Foundation to provide practical assistance to Aboriginal youth job seekers aged 15–24 years who are not at school to address individual barriers to participating in employment or training leading to employment.

Support includes payment for items such as training and resources fees, industry tickets, driver licences and lessons, personal protective clothing, and work wear.

As at 11 July 2023, 154 Aboriginal youth have received funded support, of these:

- » 54 have been employed;
- » 10 have commenced a traineeship or apprenticeship;
- » 8 have enrolled in qualifications; and
- » 5 have enrolled in qualifications and been employed or transitioned from employment to training or vice versa.

Emerging Curators Program

The WA Museum's Emerging Curators Program (\$70,000 per annum) provides Aboriginal participants across Western Australia with professional and personal mentorship, to gain museum-related skills and experience, including curation and storytelling, exhibition development, and conservation and object handling.

In 2022–23, the WA Museum partnered with Ngarluma Yindjibarndi Foundation Limited in Roebourne (Leramugadu) to collaborate with three talented participants who engaged in weekly online modules and two internships with the WA Museum in Perth and the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. Project highlights included workshops on object handling, preventative conservation, storytelling, and project management. Participants also received accredited training in recording oral histories with Goolarri Media in Broome.

Aboriginal youth training programs

Aboriginal Pastoral Training Program

The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development is supporting Nyamba Buru Yawuru's Warrmijala Murrgurlyai Rise up to Work program which is focused on training and capacity development opportunities for Aboriginal youth and creating industry access to skilled labour in the regions. In 2022–23, 11 Aboriginal youth participated in the Aboriginal Pastoral Training Program with nine moving into employment on pastoral stations in the Kimberley and Pilbara regions. This program will be expanding into the East Kimberley over the next 12 months.

Digital and Technology Skills Grant

The Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science and Innovation provided a grant from 2019 to 2022 under the Digital and Technology Skills program to Fire Tech Camp Australia (now known as STEM Smart Pty Ltd) for the Wirrpanda STEM Indigenous Project. The Program aimed to spark interest and engagement with digital and technology literacy among Aboriginal teenagers through boot camps and after-school programs.

The project concluded in June 2022, with the final report received during the reporting period September 2022 to September 2023.

Over the three-years, the project delivered digital literacy courses to 142 young Aboriginal people and young people from low to medium socioeconomic backgrounds in Perth. Fire Tech also used the grant funding for 24 Aboriginal adult mentors to build capability in delivering digital literacy programs beyond the length of the grant period.

Aboriginal Heritage Management Skill Set and Certificate

The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage has been collaboratively developing an Aboriginal Heritage Management Skill Set course, and future TAFE Aboriginal Heritage certificate course. Following the WA Government's announcement to repeal the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021 and restore the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 with amendments, the TAFE training program is being adjusted to align with an amended the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972 and to support improving capacity of Native Title groups, Prescribed Body Corporates or Representative bodies, in undertaking heritage activities or consultation required for the protection of Aboriginal sites. The course is expected to provide potential education and future employment opportunities for Aboriginal youth interested in entry level employment with a Native Title group and in the protection of Aboriginal heritage.



Solid Futures Aboriginal traineeship program

The Solid Futures Aboriginal traineeship program gives Aboriginal people formal training, paid employment and support to complete a Certificate III in Government, and helps agencies to build diverse, talented and inclusive workforces. The program is run each year in metropolitan and regional areas by matching employing agencies with trainees and providing support throughout the traineeship.

In 2022-23 the program was expanded to include trainees over the age of 24 to encourage applications from a broader group of interested candidates.

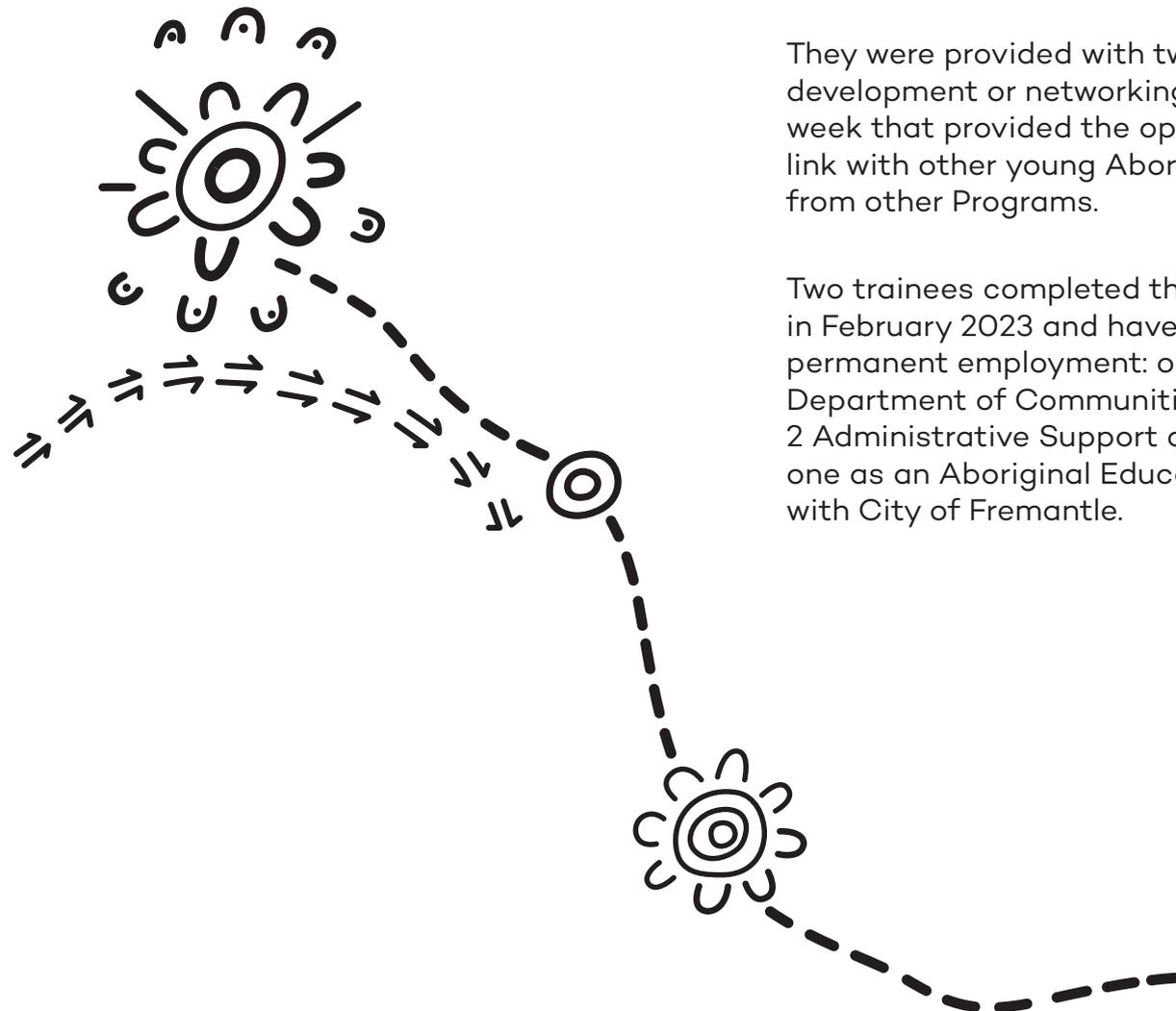
Interagency Aboriginal Traineeship Program

The Department of Communities developed a joint Aboriginal Traineeship Program, in collaboration with the City of Fremantle. The attraction and recruitment process actively sought to use less formal methods of advertising and interviewing aimed at a younger demographic with a focus on local young people, local training and local employment opportunities.

Three trainees (aged 24 years and under) were selected and commenced the Program in July 2021, developing a broad range of skills and experience as they undertook placements across state and local government whilst working to complete their Certificate III in Business.

They were provided with two dedicated development or networking sessions per week that provided the opportunity to link with other young Aboriginal trainees from other Programs.

Two trainees completed the Program in February 2023 and have gained permanent employment: one with the Department of Communities as a Level 2 Administrative Support officer and one as an Aboriginal Education Officer with City of Fremantle.



CASE STUDY

Enhanced Aboriginal services at TAFE Jobs and Skills Centres

JSCs provide free careers advice and support to all Western Australians to help them overcome barriers to training and employment. JSCs are one-stop shops providing friendly careers, training and employment advice and assistance. Available support includes specialist and culturally sensitive employment and career services for Aboriginal people, which have been enhanced through a WA Government \$8.14 million investment. The enhanced services offered to Aboriginal people through the JSC network aim to provide support to each individual for their unique set of circumstances.

Approximately 30 AEEOs are employed across the JSC network. They work closely with employers and other key service providers in their area to integrate services and maximise training and employment opportunities for Aboriginal clients and ensure culturally appropriate employment and career services are provided.

Morgan* was a young Aboriginal student at risk of disengaging from school. Through free support provided by staff at the Fremantle JSC, Morgan received mentoring that helped her gain the confidence she needed to enrol to study a Certificate I in General Education. Through the qualification, Morgan is developing valuable foundation skills and is back on track pursuing a training pathway. Through the support of a dedicated AEEO at the JSC, Morgan has remained connected to school and has more information about options for training and employment post-school. Morgan is one of the many Western Australians including Aboriginal people who have been supported by Western

Australia's network of 19 JSCs to commence or continue their training or employment, and to secure long-term employment opportunities.

Timothy* had not worked for some time when he was approached by the JSC. He was keen to transform his life but was experiencing accommodation issues and just didn't know where to start. Staff at the Midland JSC suggested Timothy receive wrap-around support services and ongoing employer mentoring through the Koomba Birdal Program. Timothy was supported by staff from day one, signing up to complete a Certificate II in Conversation and Ecosystem Management through the program. He was also supported to improve his Language, Literacy, Numeracy and Digital skills, and through the support of his JSC mentors was on track to complete the program in September 2023.

Staff at the JSCs can help clients become job-ready, including help with resumés and job applications. Anna* recently worked with a culturally compatible person at Joondalup JSC to apply for a position as an Aboriginal and Islander Education Officer at a local primary school, a position she had been volunteering in for some time. Anna wanted to work with a staff member who would understand her background and support her to secure a role she enjoyed. The AEEO supported Anna to update her resume and cover letter, as well as addressing the role selection criteria specific to a government application. Anna also received additional one-on-one support as she progressed through the interview stage, which helped her secure the role.

Outreach services are another way JSCs are having an important role in their communities. While Jeremy* was at the Wandoo Rehabilitation Prison he had contact with the Fremantle JSC through their outreach program, and then followed up with staff at the JSC when he was released. The AEEO facilitated job networking opportunities for Jeremy and he was able to secure employment with Main Roads WA. Jeremy has also accessed ongoing wrap-around support which has helped him to continue in his job at Main Roads WA.

Women and Aboriginal people are among the cohorts that may experience multiple barriers to training and employment, and this is another area where JSCs can make a difference. Recently Jessica and Lisa* were supported to connect into a BHP Indigenous training program that would provide them with a lucrative FIFO role. Lisa had travelled from regional Western Australia to seek better opportunities for her children in Perth, while Jessica was from Tasmania and looking for alternative employment opportunities. Both Jessica and Lisa received

wrap-around support to assist them with their accommodation and training needs in Perth while they completed the program, which helped both women secure employment with the company.

Sharon* was recently provided with ongoing mentoring and support to help her address her career and academic barriers, while she undertook a traineeship in the Defence Industry Pathways Program. The support she received from Fremantle JSC staff helped her to successfully gain employment with Raytheon Australia upon completion of her traineeship program, and she is also a current finalist for a key Training Award for Aboriginal students in Western Australia.

* Note: Names have been changed in these case studies to deidentify the JSC clients

Below: Culturally sensitive employment and career support through enhanced Aboriginal services is on offer at TAFE Jobs and Skills Centres.





Outcome 8:

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

National target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed to 62 per cent.

WA's progress against the target

Employment rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25 to 64 years as a percentage

	Baseline (2016)	2021
Aboriginal people	44.7	49.8

Since the last Annual Report, the proportion of Western Australia's working age Aboriginal people and communities in employment has slightly increased (45 to 50), leading to a narrowing of the gap between Aboriginal people and communities and non-Aboriginal people in terms of economic participation since the last reporting period.

The 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. The Jina Plan provides the WA Government with an agreed

approach to align, collaborate and communicate cross-agency activities aimed at growing a diversified and sustainable Aboriginal tourism sector for Western Australia. The Jina Plan is the collective efforts of eight Government agencies and the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Organisation in the delivery of 69 actions that focus on the three pillars of:

- » Positioning WA as the premier Aboriginal tourism destination.
- » Building the capacity of Aboriginal people to enter the tourism sector.
- » Facilitating the development of authentic Aboriginal cultural experiences.

Progress Snapshot

Growing a sustainable Aboriginal Tourism sector

The 2022-23 year was the second year of the Jina Plan implementation with the status of the program's actions identified as:

- » 6 completed actions.
- » 29 ongoing actions – time defined actions ongoing to achieve delivery date.
- » 33 actions are on track – actions delivered over the Jina Plan's four-year horizon.
- » 1 action yet to begin – funding for this action becomes available from 2023-24.

Some of the highlights from the Jina Action Plan deliverables 2022-2023 include:

- » 13 export ready Aboriginal tourism operators were represented at the 2023 Australian Tourism Exchange plus a number of businesses participated in the WA Cruise Exchange and at the Australian Tourism Export Council Meeting Place.
- » A Pilbara based Aboriginal operator attended the United Kingdom and Europe Marketplace event and two operators participated on Tourism WA's East Coast Tourism Roadshow.
- » 52 Nyumbi dance performances delivered at the Western Australian Museum/Boola Bardip free of charge to over 200 visitors each week, engaging 10 Aboriginal dance groups.
- » Five Aboriginal cultural activations delivered at Yagan Square.
- » New major cultural tourism event Jamba Nyinayi Festival held at

Cardabia Station in April 2023 to celebrate the Total Solar Eclipse.

- » 655 delegates attended the 2023 World Indigenous Tourism Summit in Perth/Boorloo.
- » Aboriginal artist produced an 80 metre mural for FIFA Women's World Cup.
- » Six Camping with Custodian campgrounds operated the 2022 season providing camping and cultural experience for visitors to the Kimberley and Pilbara. A seventh campground site progressed to construction stage and will be completed late in 2023.
- » Gateway welcome and acknowledgement of Country signage and art in development at Broome and Perth Airports, Broome and Fremantle Ports.
- » Tourism WA launched the Aboriginal inspired Walking On A Dream state tourism brand launched in September 2022 into national and international core visitors markets.
- » Discover the Dreaming cultural talks delivered by Traditional Owners in Kalbarri and Wellington National Parks.
- » Support for Aboriginal events in parks including Karijini Experience and Yajilarra Festival.
- » 22 Aboriginal businesses supported through the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Organisation Business Hub Program accessing the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council coaching staffing based in Broome, Geraldton, Albany and Perth.
- » 12 Aboriginal businesses supported through the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council's Aboriginal Tourism Academy (business development) program.

Delivering outcomes through strong Partnerships

Through the Jina: Western Australian Aboriginal Action Plan 2021–2025 (Jina Plan), Tourism WA expanded its partnership arrangement with the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council to deliver some core actions of the Jina Plan.

Incorporated in 2022, the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council is the peak industry body representing Aboriginal Tourism and has played a continued role in demand and supply-side activity to support the growth of a sustainable indigenous tourism sector. The collective aim of the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council and Tourism WA is to work together to grow the sector from its current economic contribution of \$63.8 million supporting 516 full time equivalent jobs. Currently there are some 180 small family/community owned Aboriginal tourism businesses in Western Australia.

Tourism WA has a longer standing partnership agreement with the Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council to support administration, governance and marketing activities through (currently) a \$900,000 per annum funding agreement. This was expanded with the commencement of the Jina Plan with a four year program totalling \$4.32 million which commenced in 2022–23 to deliver against seven Jina Plan actions.

The Aboriginal Tourism Academy is Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council's long-term business development support program providing coaching and small procurement

investments in market-ready Aboriginal tourism businesses to support these businesses to export-ready status. In 2022–23, 12 Aboriginal tourism businesses have benefited from the Academy support.

The Aboriginal Tourism Hub program is an initiative of the Jina Plan and is designed to assist new start or challenged Aboriginal tourism businesses with core administrative, financial and booking support services, including assistance with booking platforms, business website development and book-keeping. The Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council Hub Staff are based in Broome, Geraldton, Albany and Perth, and as of 2022–23, the Hub services a total of 22 Aboriginal tourism businesses in Western Australia.

The Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement

The Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement (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 nationally. 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 ILUA provides members of the Yamatji Nation with access to and rights to trade the use of 25.8 gigalitres of groundwater under the Yamatji Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserve. The Yamatji Southern Regional Corporation signed their first landmark agreement for water entitlements to be optioned to Perpetual Resources in November 2021 and they are activity negotiating other agreements.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is involved in the coordination and delivery of a key project, the Water Monitoring Training Project, which creates jobs and supports enterprise as an outcome of the ILUA.

The Water Monitoring Training Project aims to provide an opportunity for Traditional Owners from Yamatji Nation to develop accredited monitoring skills and to deliver monitoring services to the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, other government agencies and the private sector. A total of \$455,000 of funding is allocated to this project with additional funding of \$900,000 to employ qualified Yamatji water monitors in service contracts to the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation for a period of up to seven years commencing from year three of the ILUA. This project commenced in Jan 2022 and currently has two trainees onboard, one has recently completed a Certificate III in Laboratory Skills at TAFE. Both Trainees have been mentored through on the job training at Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and have also spent time with other partners including ILUKA Resources, 29 Metals and the Water Corporation.

Activation of an ethical biodiscovery industry in Western Australia

The State Government is committed to delivering of new Biodiscovery legislation for Western Australia aligning with principles contained in the Nagoya Protocol. The WA Biodiscovery Bill will, for the first time, provide protection for the use of Aboriginal traditional knowledge that has been shared about WA biological resources and will be used in biodiscovery activities. Two phases of engagement with Aboriginal people were held during the reporting period including targeted workshops with Aboriginal people and representative organisations in September and October 2022 and as part of broader stakeholder engagement during May 2023.

Planning for ongoing engagement with stakeholders is underway and will be especially important for development of guidance material for the Bill including a Traditional Knowledge Code of Practice to assist biodiscovery proponents and Traditional Knowledge Custodians to enter in mutually agreed terms, including benefit sharing, for the use of traditional knowledge in biodiscovery activities. It is anticipated that there will be employment and research partnership opportunities for Aboriginal people as a result of partnerships with biodiscovery proponents. The certification regime that will be established in the Bill will enable researchers to demonstrate their environmental, social and governance credentials and position WA as the place to undertake biodiscovery.

WA Government contracting with Aboriginal businesses.

The Aboriginal Procurement Policy commenced on 1 July 2018 and mandates progressive targets for the award of contracts to registered Aboriginal businesses. The Policy aims to leverage the WA Government's role as a major purchaser to support the economic participation of Aboriginal people. In the 2022-23 financial year, contracts with Aboriginal businesses represented 6.86 percent of all awarded government contracts. A total of 356 contracts were awarded to Aboriginal businesses in 2022-23, amounting to over \$254 million.

The Department of Training and Workforce Development contracts 10 Aboriginal owned registered training organisations to provide publicly funded vocational education and training. In addition, the Department of Training and Workforce Development contracts three Aboriginal service providers to deliver the JSC services in regional Western Australia. Four Aboriginal owned and/or operated group training organisations are receiving support through the Western Australian Group Training Program.

The New Industries Fund and innovation hubs

The New Industries Fund (NIF) supports the acceleration of new and emerging businesses in Western Australia. The NIF was expanded by \$9.1 million to a total of \$25.8 million in the recent State Budget, to deliver more targeted support for regional, female and Indigenous founders and businesses seeking to commercialise their products.

Specifically, \$1 million per year has been ear-marked for regional entrepreneurs and an additional \$1 million per year also for female and/or indigenous innovators, through existing grant programs of the NIF in 2023-24 and 2024-25.

In addition, all four WA Government co-funded innovation hubs (in cyber, data science, life sciences and creative tech) have a focus on Aboriginal engagement, working with indigenous entrepreneurs and innovators in their respective sectors.

Building the capability of Aboriginal businesses

Aboriginal Business Capability Building program

To support the Aboriginal Procurement Policy, the Department of Finance administers the Aboriginal Business Capability Building (ABCB) program which provides individualised capability building support services to program participants. The objective of the program is to provide support in the areas of tendering for government contracts, pricing, marketing, business growth, governance and contractual compliance. The ABCB program is delivered by two Aboriginal businesses and is accessible to Aboriginal businesses in the Kimberley, Pilbara, Central and Southern regions of Western Australia. During the 2022-23 financial year 103 Aboriginal businesses have participated in the program.

The Aboriginal Procurement Advisory Service

The Aboriginal Procurement Advisory Service, funded by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, aims to assist Aboriginal businesses to secure contracting opportunities with government and private sector opportunities across the regions. Since September 2022, Aboriginal Procurement Advisory Service has supported an additional 78 Aboriginal Businesses across the State and tracked 29 successful tenders valued at over \$5.16 million.

The Local Capability Fund

The Local Capability Fund (LCF) delivered by the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science, and Innovation continues to build capability, capacity and improve the competitiveness of Aboriginal businesses competing for government and private sector contracts.

Since 2018-19 the Aboriginal Business Round of the LCF has awarded a total of more than \$2.5 million in grant funding to 59 Aboriginal businesses, supporting 187 new staff including 23 new apprentices. The funding has enabled Aboriginal business to secure 294 major new contracts valued at \$108.4 million, representing a leverage ratio of 43:1 (\$43 dollars of new contracts won for every \$1 in funding awarded). In the annual reporting period, the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science, and Innovation awarded grant funding of \$586,742 to 15 Aboriginal businesses through the Aboriginal Business Round of the LCF.

Aboriginal businesses awarded funding through the Aboriginal Business Round of the LCF represent several industries, including construction; manufacturing; professional, scientific, and technical services; mining; and agriculture. The outcomes reported on annually include contracts won and additional employment created through apprenticeships.

In 2023, the Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science, and Innovation provided opportunity for 10 Aboriginal owned business to co-exhibit on the inaugural Aboriginal Capability Pavilion at AOG Energy conference and exhibition, showcasing their products and services to over 6,800 attendees. The co-exhibitors were selected through a competitive Expression of Interest process. The Department of Jobs, Tourism, Science, and Innovation has committed to continue the support of this initiative in 2024.

Local Content Advisory Network

The nine Regional Development Commissions each provide local content officers responsible for driving and supporting opportunities for regional businesses, including Aboriginal entities, to supply to State Government. The Network focuses on regional businesses increasing participation in supply chains, growing and diversifying, and developing additional capability.

Supporting Aboriginal business initiatives through environmental regulation and policy

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation uses environmental regulation and policy to

support Aboriginal business initiatives. This includes the Containers for Change WA and the Murujuga Rock Art Strategy.

Over the reporting period, seven Aboriginal businesses have overseen refund point services under the Containers for Change WA, including services in Gascoyne and Kimberley. Concurrently, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation has been working with Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation to deliver the Murujuga Rock Art Strategy, which will see Murujuga Aboriginal Corporation take an increasing role in ensuring that rock art is protected.

Many State Agreement companies sign partnership agreements with Traditional Owner groups to facilitate long-term and mutually beneficially relationships between the Company and the Traditional Owners. An example of this is Griffin Coal and the Gnaala Karla Booja People signed a Partnership Agreement in 2016, to provides employment, education and training/cultural development for the Gnaala Karla Booja People.

Since 2017, State Agreements have included the requirement for the proponent to prepare a Community Development Plan that describes the proponent's proposed strategies for achieving community and social benefits, including training and employment for indigenous and non-indigenous persons living in the relevant region of Western Australia.

WA Hiking Participation Grant

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries WA Hiking Participation Grant aims to grow participation in hiking in Western

Australia by providing financial support to organisations to develop and deliver new opportunities for participation, skill development and/or building the capacity of leaders including guides, instructors and volunteers.

In 2023, the Nintirri Centre in the Pilbara received \$25,000 to deliver an Aboriginal Tour Guide Training Program to build the hiking skills and knowledge of local people to be able to safely lead hiking activities for visitors on the Tom Price, Paraburdoo and Karijini National Park Trails.

Revealed WA Aboriginal Art Market

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries has been working with more than 25 Aboriginal art centres in Western Australia since 2008 to deliver the Revealed Aboriginal art exhibition and markets. The Revealed program shines a spotlight on the next generation of artists and art centres through curatorial and creative development, exhibitions and market days. In 2023, the exhibition was a collaboration between Fremantle Arts Centre and the Aboriginal Art Centre Hub of Western Australia, featuring more than 300 curated artworks by 100 independent and art centre artists from across Western Australia. The sales from the event totalled \$407,463.

Facilitating Aboriginal Participation improvements across the Transport sector

The Transport Portfolio comprises Main Roads, Department of Transport, Public Transport Authority, Office of Major Transport Infrastructure Delivery, Metronet and Westport.



The Transport Portfolio established an Aboriginal Engagement team to deliver best-practice solutions that maximise Aboriginal Participation outcomes, embed culturally responsive practices into the Portfolio, and supports or implements programs that build pathways and create long-term benefit. This is undertaken by:

- » Coordinating and maintaining the Aboriginal Business Directory.
- » Coordinating and maintaining the Portfolio's Aboriginal Participation Dashboard.
- » Monitoring Aboriginal business engagement and worked hours across all agencies and construction projects and provision of strategic advice.
- » Introductions with emerging Aboriginal businesses, providing assistance in working with the Portfolio.

The Transport Portfolio established a Business and Employment Advisory Group, comprising many prominent Aboriginal leaders, to guide and support initiatives to increase Aboriginal participation within our sector.

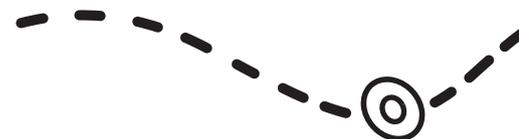
In addition, METRONET's Gnarla Biddi Strategy guides and implements cultural recognition, employment and procurement initiatives across all of its projects.

Main Roads has incorporated initiatives into its major construction contracts including (but not limited to):

- » Mandatory minimum targets for Aboriginal employment and business engagement.
- » Mandatory Aboriginal Participation Plans incorporating targets for Aboriginal employment, traineeships and business participation via subcontracts.
- » Incentivised targets for both employment and procurement of Aboriginal businesses, based on the proportion of Aboriginal working age population in the area.
- » Granting of price preferences of up to \$500,000 for tenderers that propose to use dedicated labour hours for Aboriginal employment and dedicated subcontracting arrangements to registered Aboriginal businesses.

In addition, Main Roads has committed to:

- » Assisting non-prequalified Aboriginal businesses to develop management systems that lead to business opportunities in road construction and maintenance.
- » Further reviewing procurement processes to provide direct contracting opportunities for Aboriginal businesses in accordance with the State Aboriginal Procurement Policy.

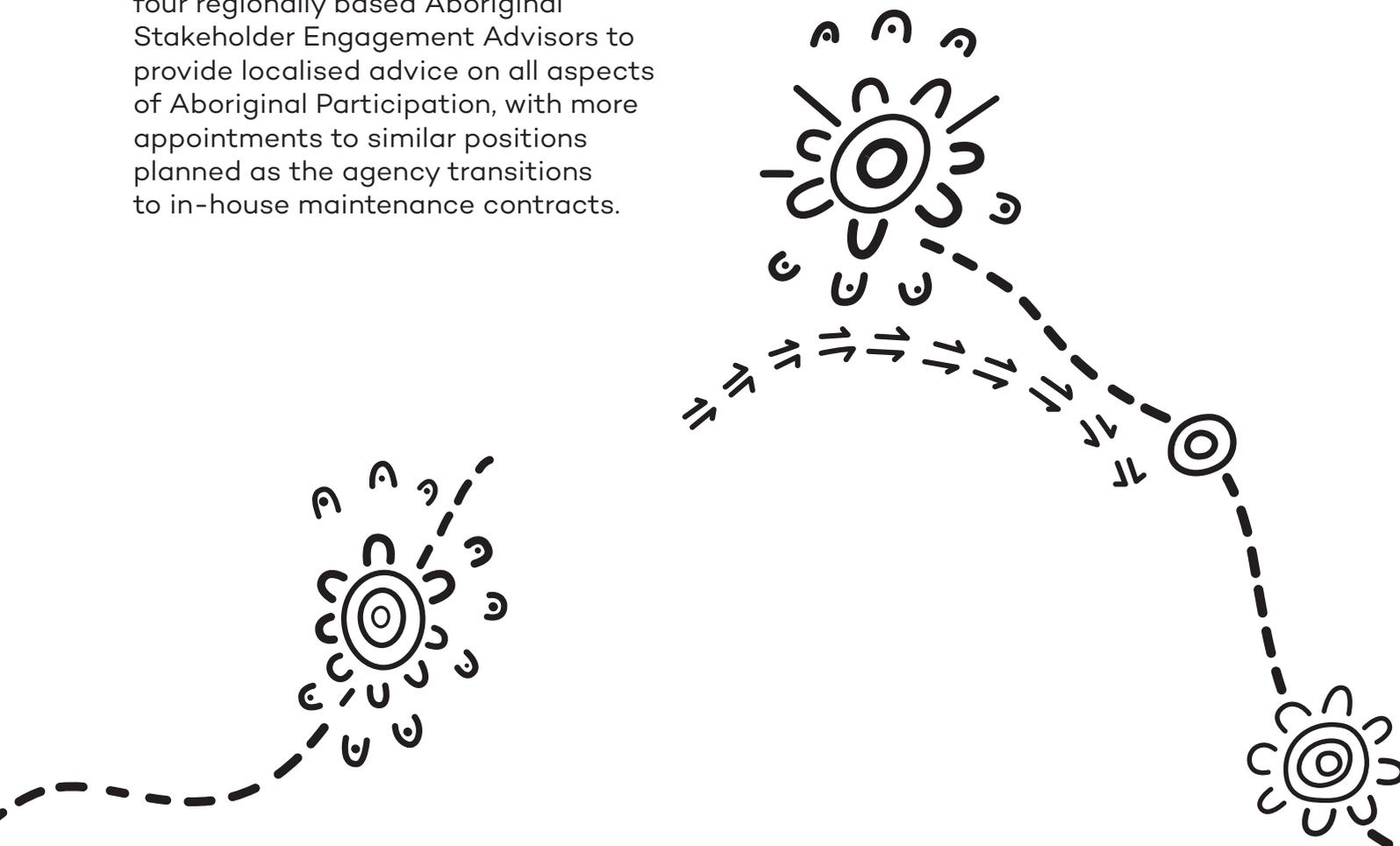


The WA Government Aboriginal Participation Targets are to expend \$700 million in contracts to Aboriginal businesses, and 3.5 million hours to be worked by Aboriginal peoples. The Transport Portfolio is tracking well towards the State Government's Aboriginal participation targets as shown in the table below.

Aboriginal participation in the Transport Portfolio

Year	Hours worked by Aboriginal people	Expenditure on Aboriginal businesses
2021	464.9K hours	\$ 92.2m spent
2022	730.6K hours	\$121.8m spent
2023	826.5K hours	\$173.1m spent
Total	2,027K hours	\$387.1m spent

Additionally Main Roads has appointed four regionally based Aboriginal Stakeholder Engagement Advisors to provide localised advice on all aspects of Aboriginal Participation, with more appointments to similar positions planned as the agency transitions to in-house maintenance contracts.





Outcome 9:

Aboriginal people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need

National target 9a: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88 percent.

WA's progress against the target

Percentage of people living in appropriately sized housed

	Baseline (2016)	2021
Aboriginal people	75.2	78.8

The WA Government is committed to providing appropriate, affordable, non-overcrowded housing and culturally responsive service options for Aboriginal people and families. Western Australia has been making steady progress towards this target. However, there are factors which may impact Western Australia's capacity to achieve progress towards outcome/target 9a, including:

- » The current absence of:
 - an Aboriginal Community-Controlled Housing Organisation (ACCHO) Peak Body to guide, and drive progress; and
 - ACCHOs registered under the Western Australia Community Housing Regulatory Framework, limiting options available to ACCHOs to access funding streams.
- » Under-reporting in overcrowding, making it difficult to accurately assess the scale of the problem.
- » Shortage of building materials and skilled trades making it difficult to build or modify homes.
- » Sheer scale of Western Australia, making addressing overcrowding in regional and remote areas logistically difficult.

Progress Snapshot

Update on the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Housing Sector

Aboriginal Community-Controlled Housing Organisation Strategy

The Department of Communities commissioned an Aboriginal-owned business from June 2023 to September 2023 to seek culturally appropriate Aboriginal engagement and consultation for feedback and input on the draft ACCHO Strategy 2024-2034 (Strategy). This will ensure the Strategy reflects the sector's preferred approach to build capacity and grow the sector over the next 10 years.

The Strategy should be finalised by 2024 and will inform the WA Government's State Implementation Plan of the Housing Sector Strengthening Plan (HSSP). The Strategy will help to align Western Australia's policy environment with the HSSP and National Housing and Homelessness Agreement.

The Strategy will provide high level guidance on HSSP's six key priority areas:

- » workforce;
- » capital infrastructure;
- » service delivery;
- » governance;
- » consistent funding models; and
- » support from a peak body.

ACCHO Sector Strengthening Project

The Department of Communities provided \$150,000 to Shelter WA to facilitate capacity and network-building of the ACCHO sector for the period October 2022 to October 2023. The intention has been to provide resources, enable relationship building and lay the foundations for the development of ACCHO representation, across Western Australia, and in turn maximise place-based and Aboriginal-led progress towards WA Government's commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Outcome 9 (Target 9a).

In July 2023, Western Australia's first ACCHO Sector Strengthening Summit was held. The Department of Communities co-hosted the Summit with Shelter WA and the National Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Housing Association. The Summit brought ACCHOs from across Western Australia for the first time, to discuss priorities for the sector, including establishing a state strategy and Aboriginal housing peak body or ACCHO representative to build capacity and grow the ACCHO sector.

The Department of Communities is also establishing a baseline understanding for overcrowding in Western Australia. An Aboriginal-owned consultancy was commissioned from June 2023 to September 2023 to verify lived experience of the overcrowding reflected in Census data and highlight areas of need. This will help define the path to reducing overcrowding to 12 percent by 2031. The Department of Communities will continue to collaborate with the ACCHO sector and government agencies to co-design purpose-built

policy options to implement the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and achieve Closing the Gap Outcome 9/Target 9a.

Remote Communities Fund

The WA Government has committed \$140 million out of the \$350 million Remote Communities Fund (Fund) to improve housing in remote and town-based Aboriginal communities. The Fund will advance the State Government's commitment to Target 9a.

The Department of Communities is delivering a Remote Housing Review and Guide as part of the rollout of the Fund to ensure that housing improvements and designs are informed by community needs and aspirations, support improved health outcomes, and are more climate resilient and suited to environmental conditions.

The Department of Communities is also working to foster closer working relationships with the Department of Health and Aboriginal Health Peaks, with the aim of leveraging existing relationships, data, and funding, and coordinating actions to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities that reflect our shared priorities.



Boorloo Bidee Mia - Transitional crisis accommodation for rough sleepers

Boorloo Bidee Mia is a key initiative of the WA Government's All Paths Lead to a Home—Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030. Boorloo Bidee Mia commenced on 5 August 2021, providing the first evidence-based low barrier homelessness service of its kind. It provides culturally supportive transitional accommodation for chronic rough sleepers with highly complex needs with a service capacity of up to 70 residents.

Perth based ACCOs, Wungening Aboriginal Corporation and Noongar Mia Mia, were jointly awarded \$10.5 million via a grant to deliver culturally informed responses, tenancy management and lodging support to residents of Boorloo Bidee Mia until 30 June 2024. Since commencement until 29 September 2023, Boorloo Bidee Mia had supported 117 people and 66 percent of current residents identify as Aboriginal.

All Path's Lead to Home – Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030

The WA Government will continue to invest in measures to improve housing and homelessness outcomes for Aboriginal people in Western Australia. The All-Path's Lead to Home – Western Australia's 10-Year Strategy on Homelessness 2020-2030 (the Strategy) aligns closely with the HSSP by directly committing to improved Aboriginal wellbeing outcomes that are Aboriginal designed and delivered, place-based and culturally appropriate. The key outcome focus one directly



relates to the Aboriginal wellbeing and includes:

- » Aboriginal people have safe, secure and stable housing that is culturally appropriate.
- » Aboriginal communities and organisations design and deliver services primarily affecting Aboriginal people.
- » Social housing policies and practices are flexible and culturally responsive.

The first 2020-2025 Action Plan includes nine priority actions under the Focus Area “Improving Aboriginal Wellbeing”:

- » Strengthen the role of Aboriginal organisations and communities in designing and delivering culturally appropriate responses for Aboriginal people.
- » Ensure government policies and practices impacting homelessness reflect an understanding of Aboriginal culture and values.
- » Ensure homelessness response services are culturally responsive and flexible to better meet the needs of Aboriginal people.
- » Increase the availability of appropriate accommodation and service options for Aboriginal people and families.

These Priority Actions include a range of activities which have been outlined elsewhere in this report such as Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation, Boorloo Bidi Mia and the ACCHO Sector Strengthening Project. Other initiatives include:

- » The Common Ground program is a key priority in achieving the Strategy’s outcomes of reducing rough sleeping, improving Aboriginal wellbeing and delivering

innovative housing programs. Representatives from community housing and community service organisations, ACCOs and other Australian Common Ground sites have been actively engaged in the design process. Workshops and interviews were also held with people experiencing homelessness to ensure the Common Ground will meet the needs of its tenants. The Common Ground projects are progressing, with ADCO Constructions appointed to build the East Perth Common Ground, and the Mandurah Common Ground in design phase.

- » The Aboriginal Housing First Support Service (Mooditj Mia) was implemented in 2021 and is funded as part of the Housing First Homelessness Initiative. The service is delivered by an ACCO consortium led by Noongar Mia Mia in partnership with Wungening Aboriginal Corporation. The service is guided by the Noongar Housing First principles and utilises the systems of community, family and kinship, lore and relational systems to facilitate more effective service delivery. This culturally informed approach to addressing homelessness provides culturally safe case management support to Aboriginal people sleeping rough to deliver support, service linkages and access to housing and accommodation options.
- » As part of the Agency Commissioning Plan, the Department of Communities is working in collaboration with the sector, ACCOs, Elders, people with lived experience and government agencies to improve the current homelessness service system, including transition to a Housing First approach that aligns with the Strategy.

Expansion of Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation facilities

The WA Government is committed to increasing the availability of appropriate accommodation and service options for Aboriginal people and families. Aboriginal Short Stay Accommodation facilities are designed to provide safe, culturally appropriate, and affordable short-term accommodation for Aboriginal people who travel to regional centres to access services, or for business, cultural or family reasons.

The WA Government is planning two additional Aboriginal Short Stay facilities in regional Western Australia, to be located in Kununurra, in the East Kimberley and Geraldton, in the Mid-West Region. The site for Geraldton has been leased and procurement for the head contractor is underway. A build concept design has been developed for Kununurra in consultation with stakeholders. In addition, the WA Government has also committed to providing a further Aboriginal Short Stay facility in Perth, for which community and stakeholder consultation has been undertaken, build concept design completed, and schematic design underway.

The Department of Communities will continue to engage with Aboriginal people, the community services sector, government agencies and a range of other stakeholders across the state to ensure each new facility is culturally appropriate and responsive to the place it is located and the needs of Aboriginal people it will accommodate.

North-West Aboriginal Housing Fund

The \$200 million Fund is a State Government initiative established with support from the Australian Government to invest in Aboriginal driven programs that increase housing choices and supports for Aboriginal families in the Pilbara and Kimberley as a means of improving education and employment outcomes; increasing aspiration and independence; and enabling wealth creation.

As at September 2023, \$112.4 million has been approved to deliver seven investments, with at least \$75.8 million of approved investment and/or spend directed to Aboriginal organisations.

This has enabled support to be provided to:

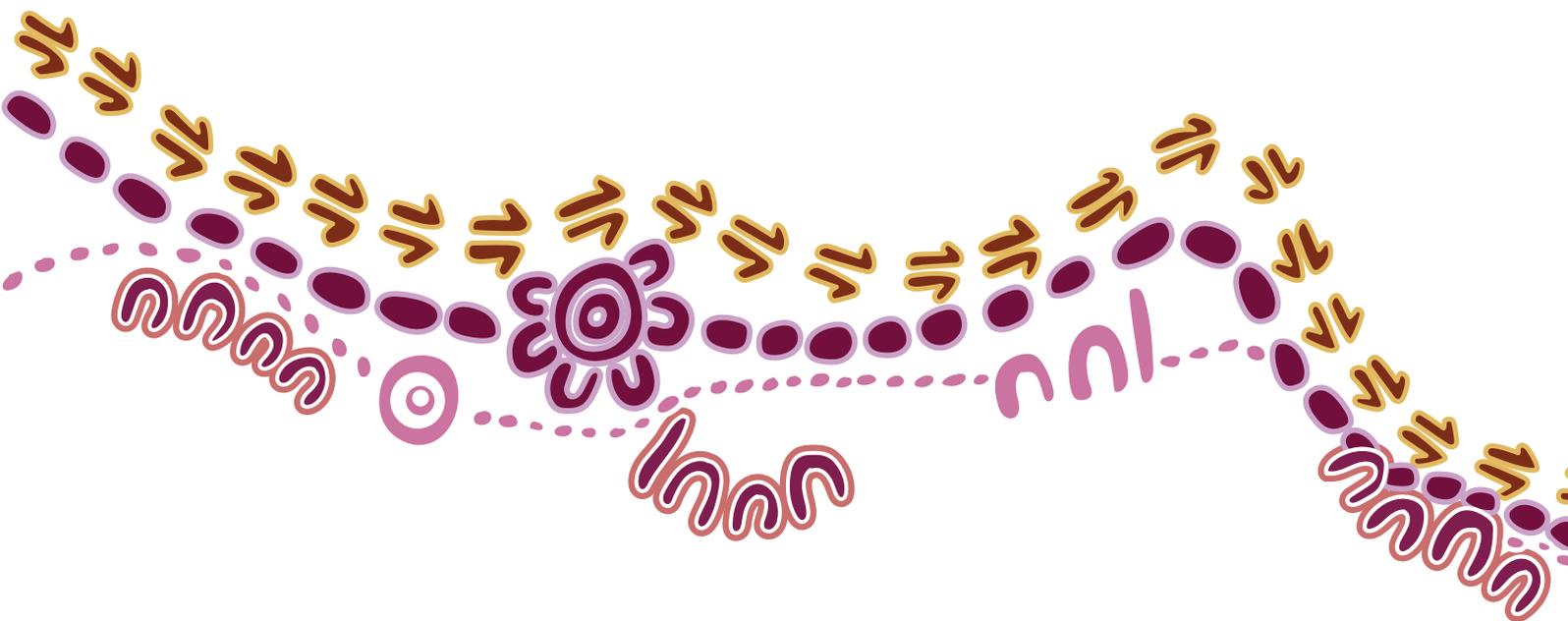
- » 207 families to be supported, including eight who have achieved home ownership.
- » 477 Aboriginal people to maintain or improve their employment, including 39.4 percent who achieved their own employment goals, 28.4 percent who increased their income, 19.1 percent with increased net wealth and 20.4 percent feeling 'very confident' in managing their money.
- » 69 Aboriginal people to make progress towards achieving an apprenticeship.
- » Over 300 homes are expected to be made available for affordable rental or home ownership through full investment of the Fund.

» Projects currently live include:

- Expansion of the East Kimberley Transitional Housing Program: providing 50 affordable homes and support services for Aboriginal people.
- Hedland Aboriginal Home Ownership Program: providing 40 affordable homes and support services for Aboriginal people.
- 'Jalbi Jiya' Program by Nyamba Buru Yawuru: 25 properties to support home ownership and other goals for employment, education, and wellbeing.
- Housing Pathways Support Program by Robe River Kurama Aboriginal Corporation: a support service enabling up to 28 families to be supported to achieve home ownership, through the provision of culturally secure coaching and capacity building.

» Projects currently in capital delivery:

- Ganalili Accommodation and Training Facility by Yindjibarndi Aboriginal Corporation: 10 transitional housing units and training facilities for apprentices, low-income tradespeople and individuals leaving the justice system in Roebourne, with the facility due to be completed in the first quarter of 2024.
 - Yura Yungi Employee Accommodation and Career Development: 5 new builds for Aboriginal medical staff and trainees in Halls Creek developed by Yura Yungi Medical Service Aboriginal Corporation.
- » Approved projects under development:
- Affordable Housing program in the Kimberley: A mix of employee and home ownership opportunities enhanced by engagement services to build capacity and access to employment.





Outcome 9: Aboriginal people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need

National target 9b: By 2031, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households:

- i. within discrete Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard.
- ii. in or near to a town receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town (including if the household might be classified for other purposes as a part of a discrete settlement such as a “town camp” or “town-based reserve”).

As this target was agreed in 2022, nationally there no Productivity Commission data currently available.

To drive progress towards Target 9b, the WA Government has prioritised investment in improving the power and water infrastructure in remote and town-based communities.



Progress Snapshot

Remote Communities Fund

The WA Government recognises too many people living in remote and town-based Aboriginal communities experience poor health and wellbeing. Factors such as low populations and significant distances present challenges, such as higher per capita service delivery and infrastructure maintenance costs. The provision of safe and reliable essential (power, water, wastewater) services to achieve better health and social outcomes is a WA Government priority.

In the 2021-22 WA State Budget, the Government committed \$350 million to establish the Remote Communities Fund to improve essential and municipal services and housing availability in remote and town-based Aboriginal communities in Western Australia.

Essential services improvements

Between 1 April and 30 June 2023, the WA Government transferred responsibility for the delivery of essential services to 141 remote and town-based Aboriginal communities transferred from the Department of Communities to the State-owned utilities: Water Corporation and Horizon Power.

The WA Government provided \$200 million from the Remote Communities Fund for Water Corporation and Horizon Power to continue to operate and maintain power, water and wastewater services and infrastructure before making improvements over the next 10 years.





Outcome 10: Aboriginal people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system

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

WA's progress against the target

Imprisonment rate per 100,000 of the adult population

	Baseline (2019)	2021	2022
Aboriginal people	3,581.8	3,449.3	3,213.6

The 2023 Productivity Commission's Dashboard update on Outcome 10 shows that the incarceration rate for Aboriginal adults in Western Australia has improved since the base year of 2018-2019. The number of adults in custody on an average day decreased by 10.3 percent (3581.8 to 3213.6 per 100,000 adults). It is acknowledged in this reporting that while Western Australia has made progress towards Outcome 10, the State has the furthest to come given the level of overrepresentation in the criminal justice system of Aboriginal people.



Progress Snapshot

Justice Policy Partnership and Partnership Planning Group

The Department of Justice is an active member of the National Closing the Gap Justice Policy Partnership (JPP) and attended in person four meetings from September 2022 to September 2023 across Australia. With other state and territory government representatives, alongside the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Independent Aboriginal members, the JPP progressed its Strategic Framework to Joint Council in June 2023 – providing the JPP with a roadmap for achieving its strategic priorities.

Under Western Australia's Closing the Gap governance, the Department of Justice has convened the Justice Partnership Planning Group (PPG) to bring relevant agencies together to work with the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia, the PPG's foundational Aboriginal partner on targeted approaches to Outcomes 10 and 11 and associated Targets. Since September 2022, the Justice PPG has convened four meetings to focus on an interim work plan, assist in meeting the Work Plan of the JPP, as well as guide the implementation of agreed initiatives in Western Australia that will positively impact on Outcomes 10 and 11 and associated Targets.

Kanyiminpa Jukurrpa Program

In 2021, the WA Government awarded \$1.5 million to the Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa Group ACCO, to deliver the Yiwarra Kujju – Martu Western Desert Justice Program to Martu Communities east of Newman for three years: 2021-22; 2022-23; 2023-24.

The Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa Program aims to improve criminal justice system outcomes for the Martu people of the Western Desert community through the provision of on-country mentoring, drug and alcohol services, and therapeutic diversionary programs. The Program is delivered through a suite of end-to-end cultural prevention, diversion, and intervention programs.

The Department of Justice also supports the Martu Parole Pilot Program provides Martu people at Roebourne Regional Prison with support on Parole application plans at the earlier possible point, transition from prison back to remote communities east of Newman, access to contemporary video conferencing reporting for participants on parole or as part of court order requirements, and court attendance via video-link whilst on bail in remote communities east of Newman.

Through the Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, the following outcomes were achieved in 2022-23:

- » 28 people were employed;
- » 36 leadership sessions were delivered at Roebourne Regional Prison to 418 Martu participants;
- » 32 Wanka Minyirra sessions / Sittings (Martu Court Advisory Panel) were delivered to 125 Martu participants;

- » Transitional transport support was provided to 54 Martu back to Country from Roebourne Regional Prison;
- » 28 Martu participants were supported with their parole applications to the Roebourne Regional Prison with 13 granted Parole; and
- » 52 Martu participants were supported with their Bail application, resulting in 24 Martu being granted bail.

Legal Assistance Strategy

The Department of Justice is implementing the Legal Assistance Strategy 2022-2025. The Legal Assistance Strategy seeks to ensure that people experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage in Western Australia are best able to access appropriate and timely legal assistance irrespective of where they are located in the state. Aboriginal people are identified in the Strategy as a Priority Client Group.

The Legal Assistance Action Plan guides how the Legal Assistance Strategy is implemented. The Department is working towards self-determination and the provision of culturally safe services for Aboriginal people. The Legal Assistance Action Plan also seeks to ensure that legal assistance service delivery is informed by a robust evidence base in relation to legal need.

Key actions under the Legal Assistance Action Plan, include the development of a Legal Assistance Services Commissioning Strategy and Implementation Plan, developing legal assistance service provider roles which reflect a sector-wide minimum

level and standard of service and the development of a Workforce Planning and Development Strategy and Implementation Plan.

On 7 July 2023, an independent consultant was engaged by way of an open tender process to support the development of a Legal Assistance Services Commissioning Strategy and Implementation Plan including the development of legal assistance provider roles which reflect a sector wide minimum level and standard of service. As part of this process, the Department of Justice and the independent consultant will evaluate current service provision for Aboriginal clients to ensure that Aboriginal people have access to culturally safe services and obtain feedback on what the minimum level and standards of service for Aboriginal people should be.

This project aims to deliver a client-centred strategy and implementation plan for the sector, which sets a clear strategic direction for the future of the system, supported by key stakeholders and ready to be operationalised.

The independent consultant will be engaging with stakeholders in the sector through briefing sessions, workshops and focus groups between August 2023 and February 2024.

Work is also continuing on the Workforce Planning and Development Strategy, which will focus on growing and sustaining the rural, remote and regional workforce and sustaining and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and Family Violence Prevention Legal Services.

Carey Bindjareb Project

The Carey Bindjareb Project a collaborative program between Carey Training Pty Ltd and the Department of Justice to provide Aboriginal men currently engaged in the criminal justice system with industry training in a supportive environment that steers them to employment in mining, construction, and associated industries. The program leads men to positive and sustainable changes for their life and positively impacts their families, participants receive culturally appropriate based training and mentoring, and graduate with a Certificate II Civil Construction and several other skills to support employment opportunities. A second project based on the Carey Bindjareb Project is now operating in Roebourne Regional Prison and is called the Carey Maramara Project.

Between September 2022 and September 2023, the Carey Bindjareb Project outcomes included:

- » 25 participants completed the Carey Bindjareb Project;
- » 13 participants have since been released and gone into employment (52 percent);
- » 6 participants have been released and reoffended (24 percent); and
- » 6 participants have yet to be released (24 percent).

The Carey Maramara Project has just finished the first intake with 10 participants successfully completing the program.

Open Days Program

The Department of Justice worked collaboratively with other agencies and community members to conduct their most remote Departmental Open Day in the Western Desert community of Kiwirrkurra in July 2023, during the visit the Department serviced 174 community members, providing a range of services including, birth certificates, Western Australia Photo cards and learners permits.

Adult and Youth Contracted Services Project

The Department of Justice has commenced a project to plan for the future commissioning of Corrective Services' adult rehabilitation programs and reintegration services, and youth justice contracted services across Western Australia.

State-wide consultation to understand and inform service delivery needs, gaps, opportunities, and funding requirements for current and future contracted services commenced in September 2023.

Aboriginal Legal Services of Western Australia Limited Bail Support Service/ Prison In-Reach Legal Service

The Department of Justice has provided further funding for the Aboriginal Legal Services of Western Australia Limited Bail Support Service/Prison In-Reach Legal Service (BSS/PIR) from July 2023 to June 2025. The BSS/PIR operates in Perth and the BSS also operates in Broome/Derby. BSS/PIR aims to reduce avoidable remand by providing earlier access to bail and support for adult



accused persons to comply with bail. The Department of Justice has also approved the employment of a new role (post-sentence supervision order) to assist clients who have engaged well with BSS post-sentence.

ALSWA Work and Development Permit Service

The Department of Justice has provided additional funding for 12 months for the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia Work and Development Permit Service (to 30 June 2024). The Work and Development Permit Service aims to increase access to the Work and Development Permit Scheme for Aboriginal adults across the state. The 2023-2024 funding includes a priority focus on the Kimberley region.

The Aboriginal Language in Custody Program

The Department of Justice's state-wide roll out of the Aboriginal Languages in Custody Program is aligned with the Closing the Gap targets, and has been delivered through the Department of Education, Employment and Transition Services provided Noongar language classes to Wandoo Rehabilitation Centre and Karnet Prison Farm.

The Department of Justice has partnered with the Noongar Boodjar Language Cultural Aboriginal Corporation to deliver the Aboriginal Language Program on Whadjuk Noongar Country to four adult prisons and Banksia Hill Detention Centre.

The Department of Justice has also partnered across Regional Western Australia with Irra Wangga Language Centre, to deliver Cultural Language Program to Aboriginal participants at Greenough Regional Prison, and Wirlomin ACCO, to deliver their Noongar Language and Stories to participants at Aboriginal Albany Regional Prison.

Winjan Koolinga Group (Mandurah Police District)

The partnership between the WA Police Force, Winjan Aboriginal Corporation and Coodanup College allows local Elders and community members to take, a select group of disengaged Aboriginal male youth, on Country to connect to land and culture, experience traditional cultural activities and open the space. The young men were initially identified by local police as having disengaged from education and were potentially at risk of entering the criminal justice system. The Elders will continue to engage and mentor the youth participants.





Outcome 11:

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

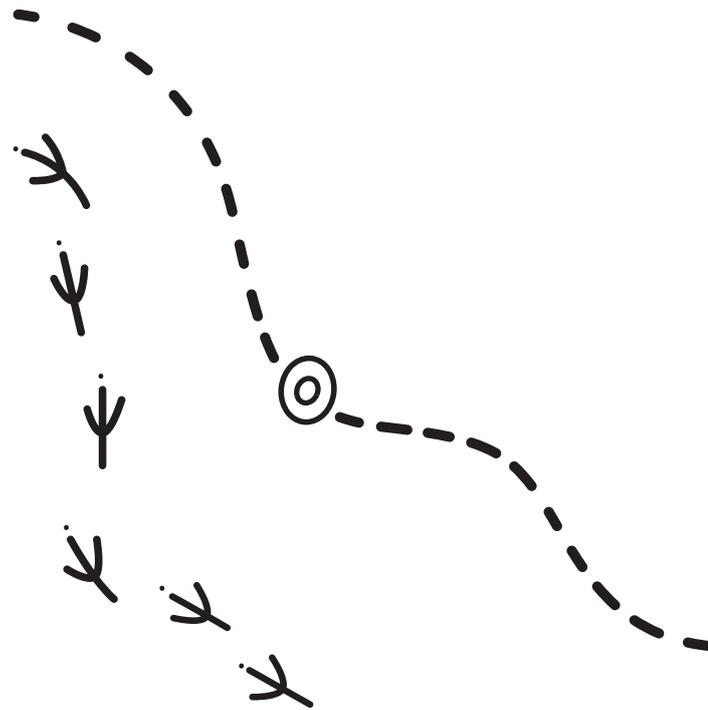
National target: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by 30 percent.

WA's progress against the target

Young people in detention per 10,000 young people

	Baseline (2016)	2021	2022
Aboriginal young people	55.1	40.8	44.6

The 2023 Productivity Commission's Dashboard update on Outcome 11 shows that the incarceration rate for Aboriginal young people in Western Australia has improved since the base year of 2018-2019. The number of young people in detention aged 10-17 years on an average day decreased by 19.1 percent (55.1 to 44.6 per 10,000 young people). Western Australia 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.



Progress Snapshot

Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy Collaborative Design Project

As part of the 2021-2022 State Budget process, the WA Government committed to funding the co-design of the development of the scope and operational options for a safe place facility for street-present young people in Broome.

The Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy Collaborative Design Project (KJJS-Collab Project) was established to undertake the co-design process. It is a partnership of Aboriginal community members supported by a backbone organisation West Kimberley Futures – Empowered Communities Ltd (EC-West) (comprising three representatives each from Empowered Young Leaders and the Broome Regional Youth and Families Council), multiple government agencies (Department of Justice (Lead agency), WA Police Force, Department of Communities, Department of Local Government Sport and Cultural Industries and Mental Health Commission), and the Shire of Broome. Shared decision-making with the Aboriginal community representatives has been a fundamental component of the KJJS-Collab Project.

WA Police Force's ACCO Strategy 2022-2032

The WA Police Force's ACCO Strategy 2022-2032 was endorsed in September 2022. The WA Police Force ACCO Strategy ensures that services will be designed by the WA Police Force in partnership with local Aboriginal Communities.

The Strategy has three main principles:

- i. Cultural Safety and Governance
- All services for Aboriginal children, young people, families, and communities are grounded in Aboriginal knowledge and culture.
- ii. Relationships - Building genuine relationships and partnerships with ACCOs to deliver strong accountability and implement culturally responsive ways of working.
- iii. Economic Opportunities - ACCOs are supported via economic and socio-economic opportunities to deliver community services.

The new process is streamlined and simplified to ensure it is more accessible and promotes and supports individual police stations to collaborate with their community to identify, address and share accountability for resolving local issues.

This pathway aims to see a consistent increase in the number of ACCO's engaged by the WA Police Force to deliver programs in partnership with Policing Districts to meet a community-identified need.

Supporting vulnerable Aboriginal children and young people in contact with the justice system

Child and Adolescent Forensic Service

The Child and Adolescent Forensic Service (CAFS) has been established to provide specialist mental health support for young people up to 18 years of age who are at risk of, have been, or are currently, in contact with the criminal justice system. There are three operational elements of CAFS:



Consultation liaison and outreach;
Multidisciplinary Mental Health Team at
Banksia Hill Detention Centre (BHDC)
and Transition Services from BHDC.

Therapeutic Court Pilot for Care & Protection matters, Children's Court of Western Australia

The Department of Justice has provided funding to Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia to deliver culturally secure legal representation to Aboriginal children, parents and families appearing in the Court. The connection between the involvement of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care and involvement in the criminal justice system is well established and ensuring that Aboriginal children remain out of care will likely have a flow on positive impact in terms of their involvement in the criminal justice system.

Early intervention, prevention and diversionary approaches

Youth Engagement Program

The Youth Engagement Program (YEP) Expansion: The National Indigenous Australians Agency has funded the expansion of Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia's YEP to the East Kimberley (Kununurra) and Halls Creek for two years. The YEP 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.

Moorditj Youth Program Foundation (Wheatbelt Police District)

This program has been codesigned to assist Moorditj Youth Foundation Aboriginal Corporation, its partners, the community, and the WA Police Force to reduce the prevalence of Aboriginal youth related crime within the Wheatbelt community. The Moorditj Youth Program provides a locally based culturally safe case management support program available to youth and their families, with an emphasis on diversionary measures and one-to-one mentoring.

Individualised wrap around support for at risk youth and their families (Cannington Police District)

A wrap around support program has commenced for Aboriginal youth and their families in the Cannington Police District. The Program is designed and delivered in partnership with the Langford Aboriginal Corporation and Jacaranda Community Centre, who are included in local youth justice management conversations, meetings and decisions.

While the project is still in its early stages, the ACCOs and local police have reported initial communications and partnership meetings have been positive and effective. The ACCOs, as service providers, appreciate the opportunity to work together in delivering services across the Cannington District.



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

National target: By 2031, reduce the rate of overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (0-17 years old) in out-of-home care by 45 percent.

WA's progress against the target

Children aged 0-17 years in out-of-home care, rate per 1,000 children

	Baseline (2019)	2021	2022
Aboriginal children	64.2	64.7	61.6

During 2022-2023 there was a total of 17,564 child protection notifications, and 15,485 child safety investigations. As at 30 June 2023 there were 5,174 children in the care of the Chief Executive Officer, with 59 percent of these children (3,068) Aboriginal. Approximately 50 percent of the Aboriginal children in care were placed with family.

The objects of the Children and Community Services Act 2004 acknowledge the primary role of parents, families and communities in safeguarding and promoting the wellbeing of children. The Department of Communities' strategic directions include a focus on self-determination, recognising that better outcomes can be achieved when people are at the centre of decisions about their own lives, and earlier intervention and prevention.

Under the Building Safe and Strong Families: Earlier Intervention and Family Support (EIFS) Strategy, the Department of Communities, in partnership with the community services sector, delivers the following programs to support vulnerable families to keep children safely at home:

- » The Aboriginal In-home Support Service (AISS) is a metropolitan-based culturally responsive program, designed to assist Aboriginal families where children are at imminent risk of entering care, and support reunification processes.
- » The Intensive Family Support Service (IFSS) is a state-wide service for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families where children are at imminent risk of entering care or working towards reunification.

- » Family Support Networks which provide a common entry point to services and deliver earlier, targeted support to families experiencing complex issues and those most vulnerable to involvement with the child protection system.
- » The Regional Service Model (RSM) is a newly implemented service operating in the South West, Pilbara and East Kimberley regions. The RSM is comprised of three streams of service, with varying levels of support dependent upon family's needs: Statutory Intensive In-home Support, Community Intensive In-home Support, and the Early Diversionary Support Network.

All EIFS services are led by or work in partnership with an ACCO to ensure a culturally safe and responsive service system and prioritise referrals for Aboriginal families.

- » AISS operates across five Department of Communities corridors in the metropolitan region and is delivered by Wungening Moort, a consortium of four locally based ACCOs, led by Wungening Aboriginal Corporation. Wungening Moort has delivered the service since 2018 and continues to support Aboriginal families to keep their children safely at home, connected to culture, country, and community through provision of culturally secure and holistic programs and strategies.
- » IFSS operates in 14 locations across the State. IFSS is ACCO-led by Yorgum Healing Services in the Wheatbelt and Centacare Kimberley Association Inc. in the West Kimberley.
- » In the past 12 months AISS received 236 referrals and IFSS received 231 referrals from the Districts. Data indicates 87.5 percent of Aboriginal

children referred to the 'keep children safe at home' stream remained at home after 12 months.

Progress Snapshot

Ten Year Roadmap to Reduce the Number of Aboriginal Children in Care

The Department of Communities, in partnership with Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)- National Voice for our Children are in the final stages of developing the 10 Year Roadmap to Reduce the number of Aboriginal Children in Care (Roadmap). The Roadmap has been developed in line with the priority reform areas, in particular formal partnerships and shared decision making.

The Roadmap will act as Western Australia's whole of Government response to Target 12 and respond to actions and deliverables under Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-31. The Roadmap will be a critical driver of change aimed at keeping Aboriginal children safe and well with their families.

In October 2022, SNAICC commenced regional culturally safe consultation sessions co-facilitated with local ACCOs with knowledge of the diverse Western Australia Aboriginal community, child protection history, policy and practice. In March 2023 a two-day forum was held bringing together Aboriginal leaders and representatives from across Western Australia and senior government representatives.

Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making

Aboriginal Family Led Decision Making (AFLDM) is a 'way of working' that empowers Aboriginal families to make decisions that address the safety needs of their children in a culturally safe way, promoting self-determination in child protection proceedings. Under AFLDM, Aboriginal convenors facilitate a process that supports Aboriginal families to make decisions on how best to keep their children safe and connected with their community.

In September 2022 the WA Government announced an additional \$1.2 million to extend the current pilots in the Midwest and Mirrabooka regions, until 30 June 2024. Findings from an evaluation of the two pilot sites highlighted positive program outcomes for families including implementation of family plans, reunification, mitigation of children going into care and increased contact between parents and children in out of home care. There is strong collaboration between the districts and the ACCOs.

The pilot evaluation highlights the efforts of the Department of Communities and ACCOs working together in a place-based partnership, responding to the local needs of families involved with the child protection system.

Aboriginal Representatives Organisations

In October 2021, the State Parliament passed the Children and Community Services Amendment Act 2021 which includes provisions for Aboriginal Representative Organisations (AROs), promoting the principle of self-determination as per section 12 of the Act.

The new provisions will ensure AROs are consulted before a placement arrangement is made for Aboriginal children in care; and provides the opportunity to participate in the preparation and review of Cultural Support Plans for Aboriginal children. 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 WA Government has committed \$1.3 million to support the implementation of a 12-month ARO Pilot in Armadale and the Kimberley region. In November 2022, the ARO pilot commenced with two ACCOs awarded grants to deliver the pilot; Yorganop Association (Armadale district) and Aarnja Ltd (Kimberley district).



Out of Home Care Commissioning

The Department of Communities' commissioning of out of home care (OOHC) service provision responds to the growing over-representation of Aboriginal children in care. The OOHC commissioning work will result in a system to better align services with current evidence-based, trauma informed child protection case practice with a focus on reducing the number of children in care, particularly Aboriginal children, and providing stable care arrangements. Contract award is expected within the current tender offer validity period, and transition of services will commence towards the end of 2023 and into 2024.

For all children and young people, but especially Aboriginal children and young people, changes to the OOHC system will result in children being cared for in care arrangements that meet their physical, emotional, cultural, and spiritual needs in keeping with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle. A priority for the Department of Communities is to ensure Aboriginal children in OOHC in Western Australia live with family or in care arrangements provided by ACCOs.

Building the capability and capacity of the ACCOs is an important part of this work. By increasing the number of ACCOs providing OOHC services, and working in partnership to achieve their sustained success, more Aboriginal children in care will remain on country, with Aboriginal carers, connected to family, community, and culture, in culturally safe and responsive care arrangements.

This represents a significant step towards improving outcomes for Aboriginal children and demonstrates positive action in achieving targets set by the National Agreement.

The Noongar Family Safety and Wellbeing Council has received a grant to support newly awarded ACCO OOHC providers across the state. This is to ensure ACCOs that have received a contract:

- » are prepared and ready to commence service provision of awarded OOHC services on or before 1 January 2024;
- » are confident in their knowledge of OOHC and contracted requirements;
- » have resources available to deliver culturally safe OOHC services; and
- » have completed development plans detailing activities to drive capability and capacity to deliver services to Aboriginal children, families and communities.

In line with Closing the Gap Priority Reform 2, Department of Communities' OOHC commissioning approach recognises the importance of self-determination and the Department of Communities seeks to provide Aboriginal communities with opportunities to lead through community-based and family-led solutions. This approach, supported by the Department of Communities ACCO Strategy 2022-2032, emphasises partnering with and supporting ACCOs to develop high-quality services run by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal children, families, and communities. The OOHC re-commissioning aligns with this objective by increasing the involvement of ACCOs in the provision of services within the OOHC system.

At Risk Youth Strategy 2022-2027

On 19 September 2022, the Department of Communities released the At Risk Youth Strategy 2022-2027 (the Strategy).

The Strategy aims to strengthen responses for young people aged 10 to 24 years with multiple and complex problems who are at risk of harm and have increased vulnerability of experiencing poor life outcomes. These young people are likely to be at increased risk of requiring a tertiary and/or statutory response, including entry into the child protection, police, justice, and acute mental health systems.

The four Focus Areas of the Strategy are:

- » Focus Area One: Partnerships, collaboration, and integrated responses.
- » Focus Area Two: Targeted initiatives to improve long term outcomes.
- » Focus Area Three: Strengthening the services system for at risk young people.
- » Focus Area Four: Services and supports for Aboriginal young people.

The Department of Communities is working in partnership with the Youth Affairs Council of Western Australia on the implementation of the Strategy, which includes establishing and co-chairing the multi-agency At Risk Youth Reference Group.

The Department of Communities is exploring avenues for the redesign of at risk youth funded services, in the context of commissioning. This work will align with, and respond to, Focus Area Three and Four of the Strategy.

Earlier Intervention and Family Support (EIFS) Strategy

The EIFS Strategy aims to prevent children from entering care and reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the child protection system. EIFS services delivered under the Strategy provide assessment and coordination, in-home support, and case management service provision to families, supporting them to address issues that impact on their parenting, and to help keep children safe.

In 2022, the WA Government invested further in EIFS with an additional \$23.9 million allocated in the State Budget to expand successful programs and establish a new regional model. The additional funding has enabled EIFS services to reach more children and families in regional and remote areas and meet increased demand across the State.

The Regional Service Model is a newly implemented service operating in the East Kimberley, Pilbara, and South West regions. In late 2022, the Department of Communities engaged an external consultant, Indigenous Professional Services to develop the new regional model. Indigenous Professional Services engaged extensively with key stakeholders in the three regions to develop a model that meets the local needs and allows for expansion to other regions across the State. South West commenced the service on 1 March 2023. East Kimberley and Pilbara regions commenced on 1 July 2023.



In each region, contracts were awarded to local ACCOs to establish the Early Diversionary Support Network. South West Aboriginal Medical Service is leading this work in the South West, Ngarliyarndu Bindirri Aboriginal Corporation in the Pilbara, and Kimberley Birds in the East Kimberley.

Aboriginal Mediation Service

A core function of the Aboriginal Mediation Service (AMS) is to provide culturally secure intensive case management and mediation to disputing parties in Aboriginal communities. Service delivery in the AMS is continually reviewed for on-going improvement and to ensure it meets the needs of Aboriginal clients. In early September 2023, the AMS commenced accreditation in the Family Dispute Resolution area to enable the AMS to increase its involvement and assistance in family disputes. As part of on-going stakeholder engagement, a focus of the AMS is to increase accessibility and engage with associations and clients on family wellbeing, housing, health, and workplace disputes matters.

The Department of Justice Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy

The Department of Justice is developing a Justice Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy (Justice AFSS). The development of the Justice AFSS is a requirement of the First Action Plan 2020-2022 of the Path to Safety: Western Australia's Strategy to Reduce Family and Domestic Violence 2020-2030, which is a key strategy of the Western Australia Closing the Gap Jurisdictional Implementation Plan.

To inform the development of the Justice AFSS, the Department has assembled the Justice AFSS Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) comprised of family violence experts from the Aboriginal Community-Controlled and legal assistance sectors, senior Aboriginal community members, internal Department staff and representatives from the Department of Communities and WA Police Force. The SRG provides senior Aboriginal cultural and family violence specialist advice and is co-chaired by the Chief Executive Officer of the Aboriginal Family Legal Service and the Department of Justice's Assistant Director of Aboriginal Inclusion.

In addition to internal departmental resources, \$82,300 has been provided to support the development of the Justice AFSS. This funding has supported:

- » a Senior Policy Officer being released from the Aboriginal Family Legal Service to work at the Department to assist development of the Justice AFSS
- » sitting fees for Aboriginal community members on the SRG; and
- » a specialist Aboriginal consultant.

Dandjoo Bidi-Ak Protection and Care Court (Pilot Therapeutic Court), Children’s Court of Western Australia

The Dandjoo Bidi-Ak Protection and Care Court (Pilot Therapeutic Court) in the Children’s Court of Western Australia commenced on 10 July 2020 and involves a separate list of cases in the Protection and Care jurisdiction in the Perth Children’s Court, focusing on families in need. It aims to address the issues that cause families to come before the court in a holistic, therapeutic and culturally informed manner.

The Pilot was introduced as an unfunded initiative and was operating two days per week with current support and commitment from stakeholders being provided through cooperation and goodwill. Other stakeholders involved in Dandjoo Bidi-Ak include the Department of Communities, Aboriginal Legal Service of WA, Legal Aid WA, Women’s Legal Service WA and the Mental Health Law Centre.

Target families for the Pilot include the following:

- » Families who have participated in pre-birth planning at King Edward Memorial Hospital.
- » Young parents (primarily under the age of 25 years) with a newborn baby and/or other young children.
- » Parents who were in care themselves (currently 25 percent of parents); and
- » Where there is a strong likelihood of the matter resolving by consent.
- » Although the Pilot is not solely for Aboriginal families, the majority of the participants are Aboriginal.
- » Since commencing on 10 July 2020:
- » 129 families have participated in

the Dandjoo Bidi-Ak Protection and Care Court with 40 families currently participating, as at 30 June 2023.

- » 32 families comprising 51 children have achieved reunification.
- » 11 out of 14 further babies of mothers in Dandjoo Bidi-Ak Protection and Care Court were supported to remain with the mother as a result of the pilot.

Outcomes for the 89 families who exited Dandjoo Bidi-Ak Protection and Care Court saw the Department of Justice withdraw 20 applications (23 percent), 59 orders made (66 percent) and only 10 families returned to the protection and care stream (11 percent).

The Dandjoo Biki-Ak Protection and Care Court and stakeholder support services have been funded to 30 June 2024, which has included funding to expand the program from two to four days per week.

The Department of Justice’s Research Applications and Advisory Committee has recently approved and allocated a grant to conduct an evaluation of the Dandjoo Bidi-Ak therapeutic Pilot Court. The evaluation aims to:

- » Assess the achievement of the stated aims and objectives of the Therapeutic Pilot Court at the Perth Children’s Court, Dandjoo Bidi-Ak.
- » Inform resourcing decisions and refinements to the Protection and Care therapeutic court model.
- » Assess the cultural safety and impact of the court processes on Aboriginal children and families.
- » Contribute to improved outcomes for Aboriginal children and their families who are in contact with the juvenile justice system.

Improving the safety of Aboriginal children – Quairading (Wheatbelt Police District)

Improving the safety of Aboriginal children – Quairading was developed in response to concerns from local Aboriginal Elders and community members about young children being unrestrained in vehicles.

“The idea of writing out infringements for \$600 seemed counterproductive as the money would be better spent on a car seat, involving the community in an event to reinforce the importance of protecting the safety of the next generation was a call to action”. (The Officer in Charge, Quairading Police Station)

A community day held on 18 May 2023 resulted in the installation of 20 car seats by a Wheatbelt District ACCO, Kaata-Koorliny Employment and Enterprise Development Aboriginal Corporation.

The project was aimed at improving road safety outcomes by providing education and awareness.





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

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

WA's progress against the target

Women experiencing physical harm in the last twelve months, as a percentage

	Baseline (2019)	Latest
Aboriginal emales (15+)	9	NA

Family violence is a complex and an intersecting issue, with ongoing health, economic and social implications on Aboriginal families and communities, with Aboriginal women and their children being disproportionately impacted. These implications often carry social, reputational and economic costs to governments. Costs are associated with loss of productivity in the workplace, impact on adult and child victims, and increased demands on health, welfare, housing, crisis, and legal and statutory services including child protection and justice services.

In Western Australia, family violence was identified as a significant contributing factor in more than 70 percent of cases where an Aboriginal young person has suicided¹. Further, female Aboriginal prisoners are likely to have been victims of family violence and sexual abuse – with one Western Australia study suggesting that up to 90 percent of Aboriginal female prisoners were survivors of family and other violence².

- 1 Ombudsman Western Australia 2020. Preventing suicide by children and young people 2020. Government of Western Australia.
- 2 Mandy Wilson et al, 'Violence in the Lives of Incarcerated Aboriginal Mothers in Western Australia' (2017) 7(1) SAGE Open 6.



Family violence is also the most investigated and substantiated type of child abuse in Western Australia and is a primary cause of children and young people entering out-of-home care including Aboriginal children. In the quarter ending 30 September 2022 family violence was a significant issue contributing to or causing harm in 72 percent of completed child safety investigations where abuse was substantiated.

The Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy 2022-2032 includes commentary on the need for funding reforms to support sustainable funding to ACCOs to enable Aboriginal-led responses to family violence. Of the Department of Communities' recurrent investment in family and domestic violence, 15 percent is currently directed to ACCOs.

Inquiries by the Director of Liquor Licensing have demonstrated that communities based in remote and regional areas of Western Australia are experiencing high levels of alcohol-related harm, and family and domestic violence. The WA Government has a range of policy interventions which can be used to restrict the sale and supply of liquor, to reduce alcohol-related harm. Such interventions aim to ensure fewer alcohol-related presentations to hospital, including those results from domestic violence.



Progress Snapshot

Release and implementation of Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy

A key priority action of Path to Safety: Western Australia's Strategy to Reduce Family and Domestic Violence (2022-2032) includes working with Aboriginal people and communities to co-design and implement a dedicated whole-of-Government Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy, released by the WA Government, in December 2022, sets the vision that Aboriginal families and communities in Western Australia are safe, strong, and happy, enabling our future generations to thrive. It was designed in partnership with the Western Australian Aboriginal community, Aboriginal stakeholders, and ACCOs. Over 1,000 people contributed to developing the Strategy.

In 2023 early work to support Aboriginal family safety is underway, with implementation planning currently occurring. Early considerations of foundational bodies of work to underpin Strategy implementation include the development of an Aboriginal Healing Framework for family violence, the development and piloting of regional and place-based actions plans and development of a practice framework, and associated guidelines, to help build workforce capability to address family, domestic and sexual violence in existing services where Aboriginal families are already engaged. The work will also build the capacity of family and domestic violence services such as the Family and Domestic Violence Response Teams, to provide culturally appropriate responses.

Alignment with the implementation principles outlined in the strategy remains a priority, including ensuring that actions under the Strategy are Aboriginal-led, designed in partnership, place-based, responsive to different groups and people and that they reflect new and better ways of working.

Being led by the priorities of community, the WA Government will continue to seek opportunities to fund and support initiatives that contribute to the Strategy's vision of ensuring that all Aboriginal families and communities in Western Australia are safe, strong and happy, enabling future generations to thrive.

Family and Domestic Violence Hubs

In February 2023, Hope Community Services was awarded a contract to run the Armadale Family and Domestic Violence Hub in partnership with Yorgum Healing Services Aboriginal Corporation. The \$14.7 million election commitment builds on the success of similar projects in Mirrabooka (Naala Djookan) and Kalgoorlie (Mara Pirni Healing Place). The Armadale hub will offer a range of specialist family and domestic violence and other community services in one location, making it easier for victim-survivors and those affected by family violence to access help.

Work is also underway to establish a fourth family and domestic violence hub in Broome to further support and promote Aboriginal family safety.

Boost for frontline response to family and domestic violence

Announced in November 2022, the WA Government delivered \$11 million dollars to create more specialist positions to bolster frontline response to family and domestic violence over three years. Thirty-four Family Safety Officers will enhance Family and Domestic Violence Response Teams, which are also comprised of police and child protection workers. The enhancement will have a dedicated focus on providing culturally responsive services for Aboriginal people and families, facilitated in part through the employment of Aboriginal people to Family Safety Officer positions.

Culturally appropriate programs

The design and delivery of culturally appropriate programs and actions to prevent and reduce family and domestic violence and better meet the needs of Aboriginal people remains a priority.

Two programs aimed at addressing family violence in the Kimberley have been extended for a further four years from 2022. The Derby Family Violence Service responds to family violence in Derby and the Mowanjum Aboriginal Community, and the Change Em Ways Kimberley Project, an Aboriginal men's behaviour change program, continues to operate in the remote communities of Bidadanga, Fitzroy Crossing and Balgo/Kutjungka.



Cultural Agents of Change Partnership – Kimberley Police District

This initiative was developed out of conversations between the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre and the Commissioner for Police. The WA Police Force, in partnership with the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre, sought cultural permission for the initiative. Through codesign, the initiative encompasses place based strategies that address issues of youth offending, alcohol and other substances that impact on family and community relationships. The partnership with Tjurabalan communities, the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre and the WA Police Force enhances the capability of partners to deliver community safety outcomes.

Yiwarra Kuju - Western Desert Justice Program

The Western Desert Justice Program works to improve criminal justice system outcomes for the Martu people of the Western Desert community through the provision of on-Country mentoring, drug and alcohol services, and therapeutic diversionary programs.

The Yiwarra Kuju is defined by Martu as: The Right Way, and is underpinned by Martu cornerstones of Culture, Country and Community and 11 Martu Principles with the aim to get:

- » Martu away from the justice system at the earliest point of contact;
- » Martu out of prison; and,
- » Martu people back to Martu Culture, Country and Community.

- » The Program is delivered through a suite of end-to-end cultural prevention, diversion and intervention programs which includes access to the:
 - » Martu Leadership Program, adult education and development initiative.
 - » Wama Wangka, a Martu-conceived and delivered program to address alcohol and substance abuse, violence, depression and suicide.
 - » Martu Ranger program, which provides employment to over 300 Martu annually.
 - » Men and Women's Martu Panel's - delivered by Martu Elders and senior community people who make cultural recommendations to the:
 - Magistrate on bail or alternative on-country sentencing options; and
 - Prisoner Review Board to assist in the development and cultural endorsement of the individual prisoners' plans for parole to ensure that these are achievable in the remote regional communities.

In 2022-23, the Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, the Martu people and associated communities, in partnership with the Department of Justice have developed and implemented a range of cultural safe and secure services, such as: Wangka Minyirrpa – (Martu Cultural Advisory Panel to courts and the Prisoners Review Board), Women's Wangka Minyirrpa Panel (Give Voice to Martu Women experiencing Family Violence), Martu Visitors Program, Leadership Program, Placement Officer, Martu Transport Program, Martu Community and in-Prison Mentors and Roebourne Regional Prison's Martu Leaders Peer Support Team.

Kimberley Juvenile Justice Strategy (KJJS – Collab Project)

As part of the 2021-2022 State Budget process, the WA Government committed to funding the co-design of the development of the scope and operational options for a safe place facility for street-present young people in Broome.

The KJJS-Collab Project was established to undertake the co-design process in 2021-2022. It is a partnership of Aboriginal community members supported by a backbone organisation West Kimberley Futures – Empowered Communities Ltd (EC-West) (comprising three representatives each from Empowered Young Leaders and the Broome Regional Youth and Families Council), multiple government agencies (Department of Justice (Lead agency), WA Police Force, Department of Communities, Department of Local Government Sport and Cultural Industries and Mental Health Commission), and the Shire of Broome. Shared decision-making with the Aboriginal community representatives has been a fundamental component of the KJJS-Collab Project.

Liquor Control Initiatives

The Director of Liquor Licensing has been exploring ways of reducing alcohol-related harm to Aboriginal families and households. This includes working with Aboriginal communities, Native Title Prescribed Bodies Corporate, and ACCOs to make use of provisions for liquor restrictions under sections 64 and 175 of the Liquor Control Act 1988 (WA). This includes liquor restrictions, implementation of a Banned Drinkers Register (BDR) and Takeaway Alcohol Management System inquiries into the availability of packaged liquor in the Kimberley and the Pilbara, the establishment of dry communities, and consultations towards the development of Regional Alcohol Management Plans. Proposals to strengthen and potentially expand the BDR were released for consultation in September 2022, and new laws are now being drafted to make the BDR mandatory for licensees in selected areas and allow for individuals to be registered for alcohol-related offending, not just in or near licensed premises.



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

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

WA's progress against the target

Rate of suicide deaths in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (5-year aggregate) per 100,000 of the population

	2014-18 (Baseline)	2020	2021
Western Australia	37.9	33.3	34.7
Australia ¹	23.7	25.6	26.4

Aboriginal people living in Western Australia recorded the highest suicide rate when compared to other states and territories in all three reporting periods. However, the Western Australia rates have decreased the most when compared to other jurisdictions over the same time period.

The WA Government is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal people to ensure a culturally secure social and emotional wellbeing approach to suicide prevention. To date, progress has been made towards strengthening partnerships by working in collaboration with Aboriginal communities to identify and implement localised place-based activity across the state, as outlined in the key achievements below.

Progress Snapshot

Regional Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Plans and establishment of a State-wide network of Community Liaison Officers

As part of the Western Australian Suicide Prevention Framework 2021 – 2025, the Mental Health Commission (Commission) has funded ACCOs to support the development and implementation of Regional specific Aboriginal Suicide Prevention Plans (Regional Plans) across the 10 Health Regions. In line with Priority Reform Two, each Regional Plan is implemented through a local governance structure to ensure local ownership and that community priorities are being considered and incorporated into the Regional Plans.

¹ Excludes data from Victoria, Tasmania and ACT

The Regional Plans seek to improve social and emotional wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal People. Annual seed funding is provided to each local ACCO to fund the implementation of the Regional Plan. These activities differ from region to region depending on local experience, existing resources, community priorities and need. In 2022/23, activities undertaken included back to Country camps, Elders luncheons, establishment of Men's and Women's groups, U Rite days, grief and loss days and community suicide prevention training and capacity building events.

To support the implementation of the Regional Plans the Commission has also funded a state-wide network of 12 Community Liaison Officers (CLOs). Each CLO is an Aboriginal person employed through a local ACCO. The CLO program was first established in 2021 and all positions have been recruited to.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Model of Service Pilot Program

The regional Social and Emotional Wellbeing 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 five pilot sites across Western Australia.

During 2022-23, the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia finalised contracts with all pilot site ACCHS, allowing the services to commence recruitment of staff and the implementation of service. The ACCHSs commenced community engagement

and promotion of the service within the local community as well as coordinating education sessions, campaigns, health promotion activities, psychosocial support, targeted interventions, supported co-ordinated care and referrals pathways to other services to suit the needs of the community.

The University of Western Australia School of Indigenous Studies has been engaged to conduct the evaluation of the Pilot. In 2022-23 they met with all pilot sites to establish relationships and commence system assessments. This included interviews with partnership stakeholders and ACCHS staff and clients as well as broader community members.

Reintegration Integration Sustainability Evaluation

In 2022, the Aboriginal Men's Leadership program with Reintegration Integration Sustainability Evaluation, based at Wooroloo Prison Farm for men, delivered a culturally inclusive 10-week Aboriginal cultural leadership initiative working with Aboriginal on their social, emotional and wellbeing.

Delivered by YAD consultancy at Wooroloo Prison Farm, the Aboriginal Men's Leadership program aims to increase the level of support and access to culturally appropriate, therapeutic, cultural healing and leadership for Aboriginal men.



CASE STUDY

Mental Health Commission Suicide Prevention Workshop 2023

In June 2023 the inaugural Suicide Prevention Workshop was held in Perth and provided a platform to establish a unified approach to community-led suicide prevention that aligns with the Western Australia Suicide Prevention Framework 2021-25. The workshop brought together Suicide Prevention Coordinators (SPCs) and CLOs from across the State to share their experiences of working in their communities and identify further opportunities to collaborate.

The SPCs and CLOs are funded by the Mental Health Commission through the Western Australia Suicide Prevention Strategy 2021-25. They are embedded in a variety of organisations including ACCOs, Community Alcohol and Drug Services and WA Country Health Services. The SPCs and CLOs coordinate activities to build the capacity of stakeholders and empower the community, through community-led activities, to build resilience and social and emotional wellbeing.

To open the workshop, Aunty Liz Hayden conducted a Welcome to Country followed by the SPCs and CLOs participating in a Rhythm to Recovery drumming session to establish a space that paved the way for open communication and collaboration for the duration of the workshop.

The SPCs and CLOs were given the opportunity to hear from a range of researchers and service providers, introduced to new tools and strategies to work with community, had the opportunity to collaborate and learn from one another, and were afforded facilitated time to plan future strategies and activities surrounded by motivated, supportive and likeminded people.

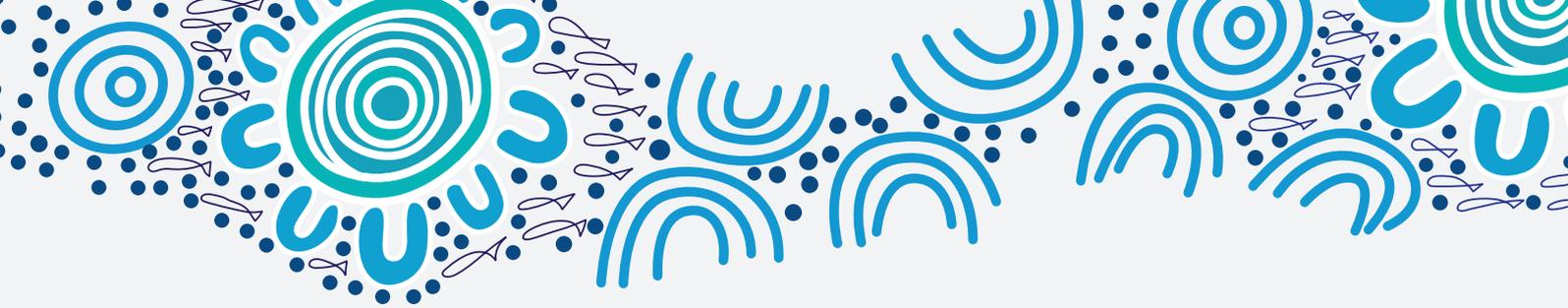
The workshop provided an opportunity to showcase the expertise and passion of the SPCs and CLOs, and the extent of work happening across Western Australia to support some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

When asked about the highlight of the workshop, participants said:

“The break-out [sessions] with the CLO’s coming together to discuss the CLO project, what’s working, what isn’t working and learning about the strategic direction of the Commission.”

“Thank you for investing in this event and bringing us together. It has been amazing.”





Outcome 15:

Aboriginal people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters.

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

National Target 15b: By 2030, a 15 per cent increase in areas covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s legal rights or interests in the sea

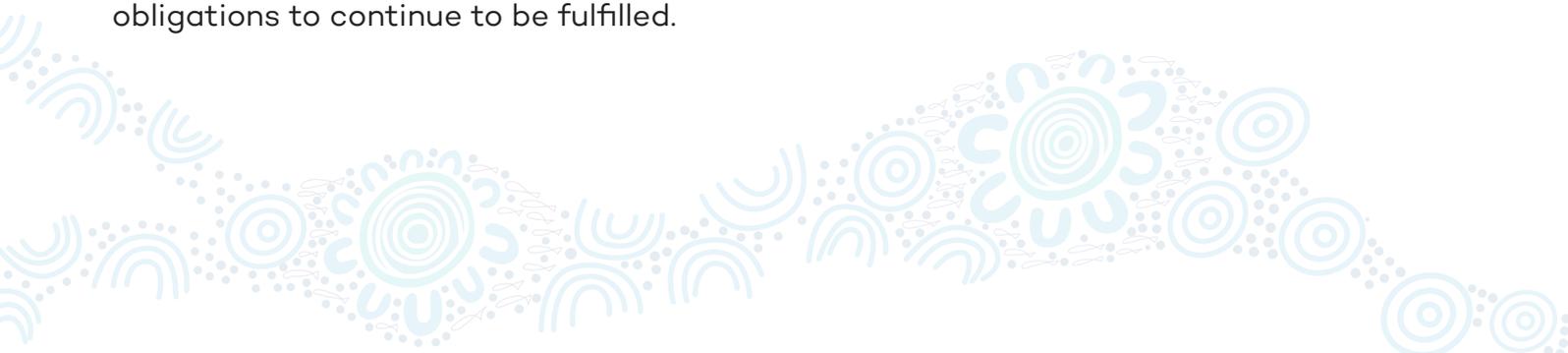
WA’s progress against the target

Square kilometres of land and sea mass subject to Aboriginal people’s legal rights or interest

	Baseline (2019)	2021	2022
Land Mass	1,654,747	1,713,927	1,796,650
Sea Mass	40,076	40,145	40,147

Land and water underpin Aboriginal relationships, economies, identities and cultural practices. Many aspects of the land and seascape are important as part of Aboriginal cultural heritage. Recognition of the rights and interests of Aboriginal people supports a caring for country approach to land and sea management and enables cultural obligations to continue to be fulfilled.

Western Australia is well positioned to meet the targets for Outcome 15. While it can provide challenges, Western Australia’s significant size and population density provides opportunities for Aboriginal people to maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters.



Progress Snapshot

Aboriginal Heritage Protection

The recognition and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage is a strong focus of the WA Government. The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021 (ACHA) received Royal Assent in December 2021 and was fully enacted on 1 July 2023, and implementation commenced by Department of Planning, lands and Heritage. On 8 August 2023, after serious consideration and consultation, the Government made the decision to repeal the ACHA and restore the return to an amended Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972. The decision provided the opportunity to incorporate targeted amendments to address core matters raised over the previous five-year journey to legislative reform, including ensuring that Aboriginal people are not constrained in the decision making process, the addition of equal rights of review, and provision in Section 18 of the 1972 Act that requires new information about Aboriginal heritage to be reported. The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Implementation Group, established in July 2023, consisting of representatives from various industry groups, as well as local government, Aboriginal corporations and the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Council, will continue to ensure a smooth transition back to the renewed 1972 legislation. In addition, a commitment has been made by the WA Government to support improving capacity of Native Title groups, Prescribed Body Corporates or Representative Bodies, in the management and protection of Aboriginal heritage.

Divestment of the Aboriginal Lands Trust Estate

Over the past year, the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage continued to work actively with Aboriginal stakeholders across the State to negotiate positive divestment outcomes for the Aboriginal Lands Trust estate into direct control of Aboriginal people. The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage has engaged with communities to identify their aspirations, to achieve consent from relevant Aboriginal interest holders and understand the support requirements, prior and post divestment, to ensure long term sustainability. Fifteen properties have been divested since September 2022 and substantial progress made towards the divestment of a further 30 properties. To remove legislative barriers to divestment, the WA Government is continuing to progress targeted amendments to the Aboriginal Affairs Planning Authority Act 1972.

Diversified Land Use opportunities

The Land and Public Works Legislation Amendment Act 2023 was proclaimed on 10 August 2023. The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage is implementing a new diversification lease, a non-exclusive leasehold tenure that accommodates multiple land uses and can coexist with native title rights and interests. The diversification lease offers further opportunities for Aboriginal people to hold secure tenure over large parcels of Crown land and enter into partnerships with proponents for renewable energy or other projects for economic outcomes.

Native Title determinations

Three native title determinations have been made between September 2022 and the end of August 2023, covering approximately 3,994 square kilometres of the Western Australia's land mass. This includes the Purnululu and Gajangana Jaru native title determination, which is one of the oldest native title claims in Australia and is the second agreement under section 47C of the Native Title Act 1993 entered into by the WA Government. Section 47C agreements enable native title rights and interests to be recognized over areas that had previously been considered extinguished as a result of the creation of National Parks or conservation reserves.

Approximately 88 percent of the state's land mass is now subject to a native title determination.

Tjiwarl Palyakuwa (Agreement)

In 2022-2023, an historic native title compensation settlement was reached between the WA Government and the Tjiwarl Aboriginal Corporation on behalf of the Tjiwarl Native Title Holders in the northern Goldfields region.

The Tjiwarl Palyakuwa (Agreement) Indigenous Land Use Agreement commenced on 22 May 2023, and includes a comprehensive package of benefits that compensates Tjiwarl Native Title Holders for historic acts done by the State that have impaired or extinguished their native title rights and interests. The fulfilment of commitments under the Agreement began in 2022-23 with the payment of monetary benefits to Tjiwarl Aboriginal Corporation and a Parliamentary Statement by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs on 20 June 2023.

Crown Land Benefits under State Significant Indigenous Land Use Agreements

The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage continues to have a strong focus on partnership building in implementing the Crown land components of the South West Native Title Settlement and Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement. The comprehensive agreements provide for sustainable long-term cultural, social and economic development opportunities and foundation capacity building. The Tjiwarl Palyakuwa Indigenous Land Use Agreement has commenced, and includes compensation in the form of land benefits, including the transfer of ownership of land parcels to Tjiwarl People, including the grant of freehold preserving native title rights and a process for any future grants of land.

In 2023, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions engaged with the six Noongar Aboriginal Corporations under the South West Native Title Settlement to build relationships and plan for cooperative management of the conservation estate in the Settlement area. By September 2023, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions had executed Cooperative Management Agreements with four of the corporations.

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions also engaged with the Tjiwarl and Yamatji peoples on joint management of conservation estate lands under the Tjiwarl Palyakuwa Indigenous Land Use Agreement and the Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement.



Bidyadanga Land Activation Pilot

The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage continued to work in partnership with community residents and Native Title holders to progress reform land tenure in Bidyadanga to improve and deliver sustainable economic, health and social outcomes. Broad consensus on land tenure aspirations has been reached and the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage is working with The Department of the Premier and Cabinet to progress the development of an Indigenous Land Use Agreement for the land transfers.

Plan for Our Parks and joint management of conservation estate

In 2019 the State Government launched Plan for Our Parks (PfOP), to create five million hectares of new national and marine parks and conservation reserves across Western Australia in five years. Thanks to the participation of traditional owners, key stakeholders and interest holders, PfOP is halfway to achieving the five-million-hectare milestone in 2024.

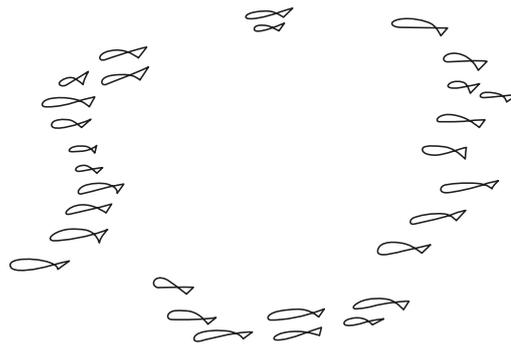
PfOP is enabling the joint management and vesting of new and existing conservation areas. This provides additional legal rights and interests for Aboriginal people as they will have a statutory role to jointly manage these areas under the Western Australian Conservation and Land Management Act 1984. The initiative is transforming and embedding shared decision-making across the conservation estate.

In 2023, a number of important parks and reserves were created as part of PfOP, including Bunuba National Park in June 2023, which will be jointly managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and Bunuba Dawangarri Aboriginal Corporation.

In May 2023, Matuwa Kurrara Kurrara National Park and a nature reserve at Lake Carnegie were created. The reserves will be jointly managed Tarlka Matuwa Piarku Aboriginal Corporation and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. They add more than 800,000 hectares to Western Australia's conservation estate and protect Aboriginal cultural heritage values and unique biodiversity.

Through the PfOP initiative, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions is progressing with negotiations for a number of other Indigenous Land Use Agreements across the State.

At 30 June 2023 the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, also has 18 formal joint management arrangements covering 6.4 million hectares of parks and reserves, which equates to 24 percent of the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions-managed lands and waters.



Supporting Aboriginal rights to water

As part of Government's commitments under the South West Native Title Settlement, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will facilitate access to public drinking water source protection areas for cultural practices. Engagement with the Regional Aboriginal Corporations will begin in late 2023 to facilitate this process.

To support Aboriginal rights to water, the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation has and will continue to facilitate the provision of Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves, depending on the aspirations and expectations of Traditional Owners.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is actively incorporating Aboriginal cultural water requirements into all of its Allocation Planning activities for water. To date this has been done for the draft Fitzroy Water Allocation Plan and is planned for the Warren Donnelly surface water allocation plan.

The Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety) continued to facilitate consultation with the Department of the Premier and Cabinet, Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage and Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety to coordinate responses and assist the information sharing to matters and actions arising from claims made by Native Title holders under the Native Title Act.

The Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety conducted planning to identify and deliver the subsequent remediation of historic abandoned shaft features located in close proximity to regional communities.

Aboriginal Ranger Program

The Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions continued to administer the Aboriginal Ranger Program (ARP), which is delivering jobs, training and community development opportunities for Aboriginal people across a range of tenures mostly in regional and remote communities across Western Australia. The current total allocation for the ARP is \$83 million over six years between 2021–27. This is in addition to the previous \$20 million investment from 2017–21.

In December 2022, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions allocated \$10 million to fund an extra 17 new and emerging Aboriginal organisations through Round 5 (Development Fund), to help them establish new ranger programs or build on emerging ones.

In December 2022, the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions published a three-year evaluation of social, economic, cultural and environmental outcomes from Phase One of the program, which found the ARP is helping empower Aboriginal people and families through employment and training on country, allowing for connection to country and culture. The study found the positive impacts include increases in self-confidence, pride, gender equality and improved mental and physical health.

CASE STUDY

Creation of Bunuba National Park marks halfway milestone for Western Australia's Plan for Our Parks

In 2023, a new national park was created in the Kimberley that is larger than the size of London, marking the halfway milestone of the Plan for Our Parks initiative.

Bunuba National Park covers more than 220,000 hectares. It extends the existing Dangu Geikie Gorge National Park along the Fitzroy River, north to Dimond Gorge.

The addition means 2.5 million hectares has been added to Western Australia's conservation estate under the Plan for Our Parks initiative. Five million hectares of national and marine parks and reserves are being created, increasing the State's conservation estate by 20 percent. This is on target for completion in 2024.

The Fitzroy River is a sacred place for Bunuba Traditional Owners and holds spiritual ties to their ancestral history. Along with the establishment of Warlibirri National Park in 2022, this new reserve delivers on a 2017 election

commitment to create a national park along the Fitzroy and Margaret rivers.

Bunuba Dawangarri Aboriginal Corporation and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions will jointly manage Bunuba National Park.

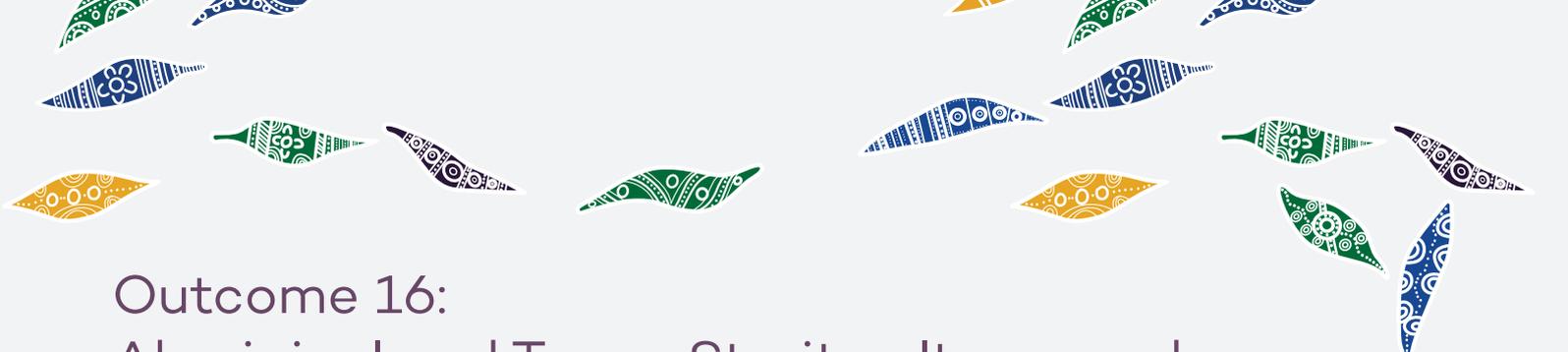
During the consultation process, neighbouring pastoralists were given the chance to discuss boundaries, access to water, bores, fencing and opportunities for diversification.

Bunuba Dawangarri Aboriginal Corporation Director said this was a historic outcome for the community – one that will have great cultural, social and economic benefits for Aboriginal people.

“We welcome the opportunity to be a part of the creation of Bunuba National Park, which builds on our existing joint management partnerships that help protect our Country.”



Above: Dancers gather at Bunuba National Park to celebrate the park's creation in June 2023.



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

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

WA's progress against the target

Total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages spoken

	Baseline (2019)	Latest
Aboriginal Languages	31	N/A

The June 2023 Data Dashboard update contains for the first time a disaggregation of data by State and Territory for Outcome 16. This is an important first step in being able to measure Western Australia's progress over time.

The disaggregated data shows that, of the 123 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages spoken nation-wide, 31 of these are spoken within Western Australia.

The goal of ensuring 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing' is well aligned with the Western Australian Government's Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021 – 2029, which places 'culture at the heart'.

The diverse Aboriginal languages of Western Australia are an important

cultural asset, and a fundamental part of the cultural identity of the State. Language is the carrier of culture.

Although many languages are still being used in the State, all of Australia's Aboriginal languages are regarded as 'threatened' when measured against the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization vitality indicators.

Due to the lack of consistent data collection at a national and state level there is a limited ability to track progress so far. Work is underway to establish a Western Australia data development plan in line with the National Data Development Plan in order to establish a tracking mechanism. In the meantime, other indicative data from the ABS 2021 census and collected from language centres has been used to inform the current status.

Progress Snapshot

WA Government languages sub-working group

In 2023, a working group specifically focused on Outcome 16 was formed, with representation from the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC), the Department of Education and the Department of Justice. The group's aim is to facilitate cross-agency collaboration and to work in partnership with Aboriginal people, their organisations and communities to expedite progress against the national target. The group's initial focus is on establishing a State-specific data development plan and creating partnerships with Western Australia Aboriginal language centres and other key stakeholders.

Promoting languages and culture in the Kimberley

Julurru Junba Project

DLGSC has provided \$500,000 to the Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Culture Centre for the Julurru Junba Project, to document a song cycle that was traded through language groups in the Kimberley, Pilbara and Northern Territory. This project is nearing completion in 2023.

Kimberley Language Resource Centre

The Kimberley Language Resource Centre is conducting a research and planning project, State of Language Continuation in the Kimberley Report,

to identify priorities for strategic investment in language revitalisation and revival across the region, in 42 language groups. This model has the potential to be applied to other regions.

Connecting to Country program

DLGSC funding for the Connecting to Country program supports Aboriginal communities to do on-Country trips designed to transfer culture between generations. From 2017-18 to 2022-23, 36 of 81 projects funded included a specific focus on language. Demand for this program has grown significantly.

Aboriginal languages in schools

Learning Aboriginal languages supports Aboriginal students to develop a strong sense of identity, pride and self-esteem that strengthens the wellbeing and engagement of all students. The Department of Education is committed to continuing these languages by teaching them in public schools across Western Australia

In 2022, there were 24 Aboriginal languages being taught in 92 Western Australian public schools. Within these schools, 12,795 students in Kindergarten to Year 12 studied an Aboriginal language.

The Aboriginal Language in Custody Program

The Department of Justice's state-wide roll out of the Aboriginal Languages in Custody Program has been delivered through:

- » The Departments of Education, Employment and Transition Services

which provides Noongar language classes to Wandoo Rehabilitation Centre and Karnet Prison Farm.

- » Aboriginal Language Program on Whadjuk Noongar Country. The Department of Justice has partnered with the Noongar Boodjar Language Cultural Aboriginal Corporation to deliver the Aboriginal Language Program on Whadjuk Noongar Country to Hakea Remand Prison, Boronia's Pre-Release Centre, Casuarina Prison, Melaleuca Women Prison, and Banksia Hill Detention Centre.

The Department of Justice has also partnered across Regional Western Australia with:

- » The Geraldton, Bundiyarra Aboriginal Community Aboriginal Corporation - Irra Wangga Language Centre to deliver their Cultural Language Program to Aboriginal participants at Greenough Regional Prison.
- » The Albany, Wirlomin ACCO to deliver their Noongar Language and Stories to participants at Aboriginal Albany Regional Prison.

Aboriginal Cultural Centre

The Aboriginal Cultural Centre project is jointly funded by the Australian and WA Governments and led by Aboriginal people working in partnership with the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries. The Centre will provide spaces for art, performance, education, research, community and commercial activities. It will also become a significant tourism drawcard, inspiring visitors to explore all regions of the State to experience first-hand the unique Aboriginal cultural offerings available on Country.

In 2022, two significant milestones were achieved: the location was chosen by the Whadjuk Aboriginal Cultural Centre Cultural Authority and a cleansing ceremony was conducted by Whadjuk Noongar Elders, including a smoking of the site, a water cleansing, ceremonial song and dance and a formal Welcome to Country.

Aboriginal History Research

The Aboriginal History Research Services (AHRS) is a culturally responsive and dedicated unit within the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries that partners with Yorgum Healing Services, Kimberley Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation, collecting institutions, and government agencies to provide a comprehensive historical records research service. The AHRS services link individuals and families with their ancestral and cultural lineage that may have been previously unknown or disconnected, due to past Government policies such as those that resulted in the Stolen Generations. Through this critical family history research and information provided by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Aboriginal people can further connect to Country, community, and culture, which importantly includes establishing links to language groups, which forms a strong part of Aboriginal identity. The AHRS completed 1033 requests for 2022-23, a 13 percent increase compared to the previous year.



Progress Snapshot

The Interjurisdictional Digital Inclusion Working Group

In June 2023, Data and Digital Ministers agreed to reestablish the Interjurisdictional Digital Inclusion Working Group to identify specific initiatives Ministers could champion, including opportunities to improve telecommunications services for digitally disadvantaged Australians. Specifically, Ministers agreed to explore options to advance digital inclusion for First Nations people in collaboration with the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group, to support Target 17 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The Working Group will work closely with the Advisory Group to focus efforts to support Target 17. The WA Government, as a proud champion for digital inclusion, participates in the Working Group.

The WA Government's approach to digital inclusion

In October 2022, WA Government released the Digital Inclusion in WA Blueprint (the Blueprint) and the Digital Inclusion Partnership Framework (the Framework) as the whole-of-government approach to improving digital inclusion outcomes for Western Australians, by addressing the key barriers to digital inclusion – connectivity, affordability, skills and design.

The Digital Inclusion in WA Blueprint

In December 2022, the WA Government published the Blueprint, which outlines the Government's plan to work collaboratively with committed partners, to make WA more digitally inclusive.

The Blueprint is being delivered through a whole of government Blueprint Implementation Program (the Implementation Program) – a program of initiatives that government is delivering to improve digital inclusion outcomes in Western Australia. 16 digital inclusion initiatives are currently being delivered through the Implementation Program, ranging from a project led by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) to improve internet connectivity at 55 locations across the Kimberley, Pilbara, Goldfields, Esperance and Mid-West, to a project led by the Department of Training and Workforce Development to deliver affordable courses to support the development of digital skills through TAFE.

The Blueprint Partnership Framework

The Blueprint Partnership Framework has been developed to support the delivery of the Blueprint, by creating the ecosystem necessary to facilitate close collaboration and co-investment opportunities between the WA Government and its key digital inclusion partners. The Framework consists of the:

- » Digital Inclusion Accord (the Accord) – an instrument digital inclusion partners can sign up to, to show their commitment to work in collaboration to address the barriers to digital inclusion. The Accord currently has 26 members and has already generated connection between partners to identify opportunities for collaboration.
- » Leadership Forum (the Forum) – a group of senior-level digital inclusion partners from the WA Government, the community services sector, industry and community, that meet biannually to provide high-level coordination and an ongoing commitment to improving digital inclusion outcomes in Western Australia. The Forum has been tasked with setting the State's Digital Inclusion Priority Areas, the actions required to deliver on those Priority Areas and a framework to evaluate the impact of the collaborative approach to digital inclusion. The WA Government intends to host the inaugural Forum meeting in the final quarter of 2023.



Improving connectivity in regional and remote Western Australia

Across 2022-2023, mobile coverage and Wi-Fi installations projects were completed across regional and remote Western Australia by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

A new Telstra 4G mobile coverage was installed in the remote communities of Yulga Jinna in December 2022 and Kutkabubba in January 2023, bringing the total number of remote communities with mobile coverage to 50. Funding has been allocated for new mobile coverage at a further 26 communities through previous rounds of the Mobile Black Spot Program and Regional Connectivity Program, to be completed by June 2024. In addition, the WA Government has committed co-funding in support of applications for new mobile coverage at 11 communities and improved mobile coverage at 4 communities under the latest rounds of the Mobile Black Spot Program and Regional Connectivity Program which closed on 11 August 2023.

On 1 June 2023 a new nbn premium service, the Sky Muster Plus Premium was launched, which provides access to uncapped data usage. The Mowanjum community Wi-Fi and Wi-Fi installations in Kalumburu and Jigalong will be upgraded to Sky Muster Plus Premium in November 2023 so that all data is free to users.

Wi-Fi at 8 outstations near Kalumburu awarded under the Regional Connectivity Program Round 2 will be completed by June 2024.

Innovative community-scale Wi-Fi installations were completed in Mowanjum in October 2022 and Tjuntjuntjara in August 2023 through the Regional Connectivity Program in partnership with Australian Private Networks (APN). The solutions have been co-designed with each community to meet their specific needs. In Tjuntjuntjara, the solution provides:

- » A solar-powered rooftop Wi-Fi mesh network with up to four days battery backup.
- » Internal Wi-Fi access points in every building to support seamless connectivity indoors and outdoors from anywhere in the community.
- » Free, unmetered, unlimited data for residents and visitors through nbnco's Sky Muster Plus Premium service.
- » A central communications hub.
- » A local telephone network with wall-mounted handsets in every building. This allows external callers to dial one number for the community plus an extension number to reach a specific premise, and also provides free extension-to-extension dialling between premises and options for one touch button access, for example to police or medical services.

- » Content filtering to Family Friendly Class 1 standard at the community's direction.
- » 24/7 remote monitoring and network management, plus service and maintenance.
- » Culturally appropriate installation protocols, training and education materials.
- » Employment of a Local Community Liaison Officer.

The WA Government has committed co-funding under the Regional Connectivity Program Round 3 to extend community-scale Wi-Fi to four more communities and 10 outstations.

Between September 2022 and September 2023, a total of WA Government co-funding of \$10.64 million (ex GST) was approved for mobile broadband and community Wi-Fi solutions in remote Aboriginal communities.

This expenditure supports implementation of the Digital Inclusion in WA Blueprint, which identifies quality, fit for purpose connectivity as critical for digital inclusion.





Funding to improve the digital literacy of older Aboriginal people

In July 2023, the WA Government announced a new program that aims to improve the digital literacy of older Aboriginal people, making them less susceptible to scams and digital crime. The program will teach older Aboriginal people how to better use their own handheld device, such as mobile phones, with a focus on how to access online government services, seek information on elder abuse, increase scam awareness, find out what is happening in their community and stay in touch with family and friends.

Two Aboriginal organisations – Indigenous Professional Services and Jungarni-Jutiya Indigenous Corporation will share in \$50,000 funding to deliver education sessions to up to 600 people.

The sessions will be provided in Halls Creek and surrounding communities in the Kimberley and across the South West in Bunbury, Collie and Busselton over the coming months.

The gap in digital literacy amongst older Aboriginal people was highlighted during public consultation to develop An Age-Friendly WA: State Seniors Strategy 2023-2022, which found an urgent need amongst seniors for greater community education on scams and digital crime.

The consultation noted that the increasing digital divide was a barrier to seniors ageing well, as many services had been migrated online. Many seniors experienced higher levels of digital exclusion, particularly those who were from a multicultural background, low socio-economic, Aboriginal and/or living with a disability.

