



**Coalition
of Peaks**

Letter from the Coalition of Peaks to the Productivity Commission review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The Coalition of Peaks is calling for Australian Governments to take urgent and sustained efforts to fulfil their commitments on the implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. While the Peaks have been encouraged by some progress of governments to embrace and implement the Priority Reforms in the National Agreement, overall efforts are too inconsistent and lack the necessary courage. Governments are behind on several commitments, and some actions have been addressed in a cursory way that has not led to genuine change.

When the Coalition of Peaks signed the two landmark agreements with governments – the Partnership Agreement in 2019 and the National Agreement in 2020 – we endorsed community voices when we told governments; “*more needs to be done, and done differently*”. The change that is required is reflected in the four Priority Reforms of the National Agreement which were informed by nationwide engagements of almost 4,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We echo the sheer frustrations reflected by the views in the latest paper published by the Productivity Commission as part of its Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, *Review Paper 3 – What we have heard to date*. Governments and public servants have built and benefited from a notorious reputation of Indigenous Affairs as the most intractable set of problems in the Australian policy landscape. This has made it an elusive and grim endeavour for the Australian public.

It is without doubt that the barriers our people face are complex and multifaceted. But they are a consequence of what our people have endured for millennium. It has been a tremendous and successive failure of public administration featuring the whims of politics, neglect, discrimination, top-down approaches, legislative changes, defunding and investment, distributed responsibilities and everchanging goal posts. Our seats at tables with governments and public servants have too often been temporary, interchangeable, and all for show.

When the Coalition of Peaks negotiated a 10-year agreement with governments, it was with a view to stabilise the Closing the Gap policy framework and ensure our representatives and governments are working towards genuine self-determination and local, shared-decision making. It was our hope that three years into the National Agreement, there would be more achievements and progress made. However, the life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and the success of the National Agreement, depends on governments changing the way they work.

There is a necessary stability and continuity that is required to achieve this better future. We are hopeful that governments, together with the Coalition of Peaks, can implement the National Agreement in full and ensure change is occurring for the better.

Signed by the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations:



Also signed by: National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services Forum; NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations; Loddon Mallee Aboriginal Reference Group; Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition; Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council; Aboriginal Family Support Services; First Nations of South Australia Aboriginal Corporation, who don't currently have logos available for use.

About the Coalition of Peaks

This submission is provided on behalf of the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (Coalition of Peaks, the Peaks), the representative body of some 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled peak organisations, which represent approximately 800 member organisations that provide services to more than 500,000 of our people nationally, and in every state and territory. The Coalition of Peaks came together to change the way Australian governments work with our people.

Australian Governments have committed to the full implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) as well as a range of measures that will support improved life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The National Agreement was initiated by the Coalition of Peaks and was negotiated and agreed with all Australian governments and the Australian Local Government Association through the Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap (Partnership Agreement).

The Peaks are an act of self-determination and provide governments with an unparalleled network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations. There is no other forum for governments to negotiate and agree the policies and programs that have a significant impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The National Agreement was informed by nationwide engagements of almost 4,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and highlights that we knew what was needed to improve the lives of our people.