

Attachment A – Case studies of work to implement the Priority Reforms across the Social Services Portfolio

Responsible Agency	Department of Social Services	Case study for Priority Reforms 1 and 3
<u>Title:</u> Safe and Supported Formal Partnership and shared decision-making arrangements		
<p><i>Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children 2021-31</i> (Safe and Supported) aims to reduce the rate of child abuse and neglect, and its intergenerational impacts, across Australia.</p>		
<p>The <i>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023-2026</i> under Safe and Supported focuses on support for vulnerable First Nations families and particularly on reducing the over-representation of First Nations children in out-of-home care. This will be the key national mechanism to support achieving Target 12 under the National Agreement.</p>		
<p>Safe and Supported acknowledges the strength of First Nations people and communities and that, through empowering their children, young people, families and communities, First Nations people must have a genuine say in the design and delivery of services that affect them.</p>		
<p>Safe and Supported also represents a shared commitment to systemic change from all Australian governments to build stronger futures for First Nations people. This required a pivot in the way governments work to address the over-representation of First Nations children in child protection systems.</p>		
<p><u><i>Safe and Supported governance arrangements:</i></u></p>		
<p>The Safe and Supported governance structure, which is first of its kind, embeds shared decision-making with Community Services Ministers (CSM) and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group (Leadership Group).</p>		
<p>At their 19 July 2023 meeting, CSM and the Leadership Group agreed they would come together in a new forum that:</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is jointly chaired • upholds equal representation • has authority to focus on making decisions to implement, monitor and evaluate the Action Plans under Safe and Supported. 		
<p>The department has worked collaboratively with the Leadership Group and jurisdictions to develop a shared decision-making governance model that better reflects how decisions will be made in relation to Safe and Supported that is consistent with the Priority Reforms. It represents a fundamental new way governments will work with First Nations people and communities.</p>		
<p>The model aligns with commitments made under the National Agreement. An important aspect of this model is equality between government and the Leadership Group within each governance element.</p>		

Formalising these shared decision-making arrangements will be achieved through a Partnership Agreement between the Australian, state and territory governments and the Leadership Group. The Partnership Agreement will align with Priority Reform 1 under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

This transformation in way governments work with First Nations people is a prime example of a model that could be replicated across the broader Commonwealth public service.

Responsible Agency	Hearing Australia	Case study for Priority Reforms 2 and 3
<u>Title:</u> Building culturally informed and sustainable pathways of care		
<p>Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) face significant barriers in the delivery of ear and hearing health care to their communities. While government provides funding for equipment and staff training, a recent survey by National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) found that ACCHOs often have insufficient staff to release people to attend the training that staff are already overstretched and cannot take on routine ear health tasks to complete these tasks.</p> <p>Addressing these issues required Hearing Australia to transform how it engages with ACCHOs to deliver culturally safe services to First Nations people, including children.</p> <p><u>Shared Hearing Services Plans:</u></p> <p>Hearing Australia is working with NACCHO and the Department of Health and Aged Care to support the development of a national strategy to improve the hearing health of First Nations people, including children.</p> <p>As part of this national strategy, Hearing Australia has commenced a process of developing individual Shared Hearing Services Plans (Plans) in partnership with ACCHOs to support them to build capability, as well as improve clinical referral pathways for children and adults with ear disease and hearing loss.</p> <p>These Plans capture information on what ACCHOs need from Hearing Australia, and support the implementation of models of care that overcome existing barriers, including workforce shortages. Hearing Australia expects to have at least 20 Plans in place by mid-2024.</p> <p>While this approach will build the sustainability of individual ACCHOs, it will not replace the need for specialised services delivered by Hearing Australia’s audiologists. It is also unfeasible for the vast majority of ACCHOs to employ their own audiologists given the limited availability of audiologists and the locations of many ACCHOs. This reiterates the need for mainstream services to be holistic, culturally safe and free from racism. Hearing Australia has made a public commitment to ensure its services meet this criteria.</p> <p>Hearing Australia has also co-designed a Shared Hearing Services Agreement with three ACCHOs. This reflects a partnership approach and mutual responsibility for improving ear health outcomes in the community. Hearing Australia is now progressively engaging with</p>		

ACCHOs across Australia to help them utilise this approach to deliver more efficient, community driven, high-quality ear and hearing health services.

Hearing Australia is also undertaking projects to trial telehealth and the use of allied health assistants that, if successful, will allow the ACCHO to take greater responsibility for the ongoing management of their clients as they progress along the treatment pathways. The projects will be co-designed with ACCHOs with intention of completing discovery phase and pilot by end June 2024.

Lessons from Hearing Australia’s work could help inform broader efforts across the Commonwealth to transform services in partnership with ACCHOs.

Responsible Agency	Department of Social Services	Case study for Priority Reforms 1, 2, 3 and 4
<u>Title: Improving Multi-disciplinary Responses Program</u>		
<p>The Improving Multidisciplinary Responses (IMR) Program is aimed at strengthening service models to effectively and proactively support First Nations children and families with multiple and/or complex needs to reduce drivers of child abuse and neglect.</p>		
<p>The IMR Program has been established to centre First Nations cultural knowledge, frameworks and responses in the way services are designed and delivered to better meet the needs of First Nations children and families with multiple and complex needs. This program was designed in partnership with the Safe and Supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group (Leadership Group) to support First Nations people’s self-determination in the design of community-led initiatives.</p>		
<p>Through a targeted competitive grant opportunity, \$44 million (from 2023-24 to 2026-27) was made available to First Nations organisations and ACCO’s to support design, implementation and evaluation of IMR projects.</p>		
<p>The IMR Program provides a clear example of the department’s efforts to transform how it engages and works with First Nations people and communities by embedding Priority Reforms 1 to 4, as outlined below.</p>		
<p><u><i>Partnering with First Nations people and organisations:</i></u></p>		
<p>The department is funding participatory design with communities through the IMR Program. This is enabling First Nations organisations to collaborate with the communities and develop place-based solutions relevant to the needs of that community.</p>		
<p>During the design phase, a Shared-Decision Making Framework was co-developed and agreed with the Leadership Group. This Framework sets out how First Nations people would genuinely share in decision-making throughout the design, selection, implementation and evaluation phases of the program.</p>		
<p><u><i>Building capacity of ACCOs:</i></u></p>		

The department is funding ACCOs to implement the IMR program. Through this, it expects an increase in the capacity and/or effectiveness of the funded ACCOs and First Nations organisations to contribute to a joined up service delivery for First Nations families with multiple and complex needs. First Nations families will benefit from services and practices designed by First Nations people which incorporate First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing.

Transforming the grant process:

The department partnered with relevant First Nations stakeholders and community to co-design the program. This included the drafting of the Grant Opportunity Guidelines.

As per the co-developed Shared Decision Making Framework, a Selection Advisory Panel was established to co-select grant recipients. The Panel included 50 per cent representation from Government (Commonwealth and jurisdictions) and 50 per cent from independent First Nations members with relevant expertise in the child and family sector.

In addition to these, the department changed the way it engages with its First Nations stakeholders and potential grant applicants to allow for informal and conversational platforms. This included offering interviews through the grant process.

Feedback from the organisations interviewed showed they appreciated the opportunity to clarify their projects and it was an approach they had not seen previously. A number of organisations advised that they could see the changes the department was making through the IMR Program in how it was engaging and working with First Nations people in line with the National Agreement.

Building community capacity and ownership in evaluation:

The department is funding independent First Nations Program Design and Evaluation Experts to work with grant recipients, and ensure culturally safe and evidence-based models are developed through the IMR program. Evaluations will advance the evidence base on different models designed for and by First Nations communities across geographically diverse locations. This evidence will influence system change where necessary.

Through providing this independent expertise and guidance, the IMR Program will support data sovereignty for First Nations people and communities. It will also build community capacity to collect data, monitor and evaluate initiatives, and control the narrative around the data.

Although a specific program within the department, there is opportunity to extend this approach to broader grant programs within the Australian Public Service.

Responsible Agency	Department of Social Services	Case study for Priority Reforms 2 and 3
<u>Title:</u> Reforming Grant Administration processes		
<p>First Nations organisations, particularly rural, remote and small to medium in size, often find it difficult to navigate GrantConnect, the grant administration system, and have limited experience and knowledge of the broader grant system including grant applications and compliance.</p> <p>In collaboration with First Nations knowledge holders, the department is working to develop an approach for establishing formal agreements for service delivery partnerships between First Nations and mainstream organisations. At a practical level, this initiative will establish a framework for formal partnership agreements between First Nations and other organisations. It will also embed this into the Community Grants Hub system for the 'design', 'select' and 'establish' phases of the grants life cycle. This will result in improved confidence for both First Nations organisations and other organisations entering into service delivery partnerships.</p> <p>This work aims to promote cultural capability and shared governance. It also aims to increase the number of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations and Indigenous-led organisations applying for grants and receiving community services sector funding.</p> <p>This reform work includes reviewing Grant administration towards more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accessible documentation and guides • targeted communication of grant opportunities • assistance with applying for grants and understanding grant processes. <p>The department is working with a local Indigenous organisation through a communications procurement to improve communication and engagement with First Nations organisations and communities. The procurement will provide a range of communication products, images and a series of 4 videos in 5 First Nations languages. Video topics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How to be grant ready • How to apply for a grant • Explaining the selection criteria • How to manage your grant <p>These videos will be housed on the Community Grants Hub website for First Nations organisations to access. Upgrades are currently underway to improve communication and engagement with the Community Grants Hub website from a First Nations perspective. This includes the development of an information page for First Nations organisations on Community Grants.</p> <p>The Community Grants Hub has the ability to expand this reform to its 11 client agencies to bring a systemic transformation across the Australian government.</p>		

Responsible Agency	Services Australia	Case study for Priority Reform 3
Title: Bespoke (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Service Centre Design		
<p>Services Australia undertook research to discover and understand the pain points customers experience when accessing face-to-face services. Services Australia is progressively transforming the customer service experience supported by a contemporary and welcoming service environment. The design applies a human centred design philosophy and is effective in providing respectful and accessible services.</p> <p>Contemporary service centres ensure a consistent service delivery approach and environment, whilst tailoring to local community needs and demographics.</p> <p>Bespoke (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Contemporary Service Centres aim to enhance service delivery in communities with a high proportion of First Nations customers through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • community inclusion in design and development • culturally respectful service options informed by the community • a physical environment that is welcoming and inclusive of the local community. <p>Success will be measured by customer satisfaction and feedback data to ensure measures of satisfaction reflect successes from a First Nations customer perspective. Local customers and First Nations key stakeholders (e.g. Community Council, community organisation partners) will be involved in service design activities.</p> <p>Services Australia is committed to the implementation of this approach for identified service centres to deliver a service experience respectful of the cultural needs of each identified community. Community engagement, tailored to respect unique local community structures and practices, will be included as part of the design and development approach of the service experience and centre refurbishment. Although a specific program within Services Australia, opportunities exist for all government service delivery agencies with face-to-face service delivery pathways to embed this approach to improve the design of service centres to enhance service delivery to First Nations clients and customers.</p>		

Responsible Agency	Department of Social Services	Case study for Priority Reform 3
Title: Building the cultural safety and capability of the National Redress Scheme		
<p>First Nations peoples are over-represented in the applications submitted to the Scheme. This is consistent with high rates of institutionalisation, including out-of-home care, juvenile justice and remote schooling. As such, it is important that the Scheme and the services that deliver it are culturally safe.</p> <p>To this end, the department, in collaboration with First Nations organisations, is enhancing the support available to First Nations people who are thinking of applying or have applied to the National Redress Scheme (the Scheme).</p>		

For example, an Australian First Nations Cultural Competency training program is being embedded within the Scheme’s training program for all staff. This has positioned the Scheme to be more trauma-informed and culturally understanding as it works with First Nations applicants, and is building trust in the Schemes ability to respond to the cultural needs of applicants.

The Scheme also funds 12 Indigenous-specific Redress Support Services (RSS) to deliver specialist services to First Nations people. However, efforts have also focused on building the capabilities of all RSS to support First Nations applicants to engage with the Scheme. This includes through the development of a Maturity Framework for Redress Support Services to assist them to reach best practice in the delivery of trauma-informed, survivor-centred and culturally safe support.

This work is supported by the department’s engagement with First Nations organisations to determine the needs of First Nation people for additional support as a result of their traumatic experiences of abuse in institutions. These organisations include the Healing Foundation, Indigenous-specific RSS across Australia and the National Link-Up Leadership group.

Lessons from work to improve the Scheme’s appropriateness for First Nations applicants could help inform other efforts to transform service delivery across the Commonwealth.

Responsible Agency	Department of Social Services, with the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)	Case study for Priority Reform 4
<u>Title:</u> Community Data Projects – Blacktown		
<p>The department and NIAA have been working closely in 2023 to advance foundational work to enable the sharing of information and data at a local level, as part of the Community Data Projects set out in the National Agreement.</p>		
<p>This foundational work positions the department and NIAA to commence data sharing with communities, alongside state and local government counterparts, in up-to 6 locations across Australia – Blacktown (NSW); Kimberley (WA); Maningrida (NT); the western suburbs of Adelaide (SA); Doomadgee (QLD); and Gippsland (VIC).</p>		
<p>In the department, foundational work has included the identification of its First Nations localised data holdings (in a data inventory) to support First Nations community-centric insights about what is happening on the ground. The evidence will inform local decisions and drive the First Nations community’s own development.</p>		
<p>The data inventory view assists communities to:</p>		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. conceptualise their data ask 2. determine if the data they require is available 3. unearth thinking about the use of related data that may contribute to a refined data picture that better meets their identified areas of interest 		

4. identify the specific data items they would like to access
5. frame their data request.

Blacktown project:

Departmental and NIAA data will initially contribute to a proof-of-concept project regarding the approach to data sharing in Blacktown. The project will test concept feasibility, application and proof of insights.

The Blacktown Local Government Area (LGA) Community Data Project is a joint partnership between NIAA, NSW Coalition of Peak Organisations (NSW CAPO), Department of Premier and Cabinet NSW and Aboriginal Affairs NSW.

This group, along with Maiam Nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty collective (MNW), met with the Western Sydney Aboriginal community to understand the data priorities, needs and capabilities of the Blacktown LGA Aboriginal community. The meeting focused on:

- the purpose of the Closing the Gap Community Data Project and the selection of Western Sydney and Blacktown LGA
- discussing Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance
- workshopping community data needs and priorities
- confirming which organisations might choose to participate in the project
- scheduling follow up community sessions.

As a result, 5 emerging priorities were identified by the Blacktown LGA Aboriginal community and processes to support data matching with these priorities has taken place.

Work is now shifting towards the safe release and storage of this data in a secure portal for the community to access. This work is being led by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. First Nations user capability training is being planned to ensure that community members can analyse and interpret what the data means about their community circumstances on the ground.

This innovative work positions other Commonwealth agencies to undertake a broader rollout to other community data project locations. Similarly, lessons learned will be able to inform broader work around Priority Reform 4.