



EQUITY ECONOMICS  
AND DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS PTY LTD

# Strengthening the Partnership

## Mapping the Capability and Resources of the Coalition of Peaks

Final Report

November 2021

This Report has been produced by Equity Economics and Development Partners (Equity Economics) for the Coalition of Peaks.

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### Acknowledgement of Country

Equity Economics acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to both their land and seas. We also pay our respects to Elders – past, present and emerging – and generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples now and into the future.



### Acknowledgement of the Coalition of Peaks and Partners

Equity Economics acknowledges the resilience, strength and pride of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and staff working with the Coalition of Peaks on Closing the Gap. We also acknowledge those partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people, including representatives of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments.

### Thank you to Contributors

Thank you to the organisations and people whose reflections, ideas and stories feature in this report. We appreciate all those who gave their precious time and energy to contribute. We particularly thank those interviewed and who shared their thoughts via the Questionnaire for their contributions.

## Table of Contents

<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Key Findings.....	6
Towards a Solution .....	9
<b>Recommendations.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Methodology.....</b>	<b>15</b>
Purpose.....	15
Scope .....	15
Data Collection .....	15
Note regarding Presentation .....	18
Research Ethics .....	18
<b>Maximise the value and build on the network of the Coalition of Peaks .....</b>	<b>19</b>
Snapshot of the Coalition of Peaks and its Network .....	19
Findings and Next Steps.....	22
Recommendations.....	28
<b>Plan for the long-term and growing scope of work under the National Agreement .....</b>	<b>29</b>
Snapshot of the Scope of Work under the National Agreement .....	29
Findings and Next Steps.....	32
Recommendations.....	38
<b>Build on the strengths of Peaks and address priorities for increased capability .....</b>	<b>39</b>
Snapshot of the Capabilities of the Coalition of Peaks.....	39
Findings and Next Steps.....	42
Recommendations.....	54
<b>Ensure all Peaks have appropriate resources consistent with their roles .....</b>	<b>55</b>
Snapshot of Resources and Funding for the Coalition of Peaks .....	55
Findings and Next Steps.....	63
Towards a Solution .....	68
Recommendations.....	73
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>Appendix 1 – Current Members of the Coalition of Peaks .....</b>	<b>76</b>
<b>Appendix 2 – Jurisdictional Arrangements and Implementation Plans .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>Appendix 3 – Questionnaire .....</b>	<b>89</b>
<b>Appendix 4 – Definitions/Glossary .....</b>	<b>95</b>

## Executive Summary

In July 2020, Australian Governments and the Coalition of Peaks signed the ground-breaking *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*. In doing so, Australian Governments and the Coalition of Peaks agreed to become partners in a way that has never happened before, now sharing ownership of, and responsibility for, closing the gap. The Coalition of Peaks agreed to bring to the table their unique perspectives informed by their lived experiences, leadership, expertise, wisdom and ability to network and engage a large number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities. Australian Governments agreed to transform how they work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and invest in shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, strengthening community-controlled organisations and backing in community-led solutions.

Significant progress has been achieved in the past year under the Closing the Gap Partnership, with Implementation Plans now in place across the country. However, further discussions are required in order for all parties to ensure the right capabilities and investments are being put in place to enable the Coalition of Peaks to be full partners under the new arrangements.

Equity Economics was engaged by the Coalition of Peaks to conduct research to support discussions aiming to ensure the capability of the Coalition of Peaks matches the high ambitions set out in the National Agreement. To support these discussions, Equity Economics has worked with members of the Coalition of Peaks to map the work they are doing to support the Closing the Gap Partnership and their current capabilities and resources. We have also spoken with all Australian Governments to seek their views on the growing capability and challenges faced by the Coalition of Peaks. This work has been done alongside the Partnership Health Check 2021 and ongoing work further defining and strengthening the nature of the partnership between the Coalition of Peaks and Australian Governments at the national and state/territory levels.

We have found clear evidence that the Coalition of Peaks has built great value in a short period of time as a network able to partner with Australian Governments to Close the Gap. The Coalition of Peaks is growing in scale and effectiveness and members have the knowledge, experience, skills and reach into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and communities to deliver under the National Agreement in partnership with Australian Governments, other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, business and the not-for-profit sector if appropriately supported and resourced.

Coalition of Peaks members participating in this research strongly indicated they want to be accountable partners and are putting everything they have into the partnership with Governments. However, the majority of Coalition of Peaks members report they are currently limited in their ability to fully participate in the Closing the Gap architecture by a lack of resources, staff and time. Some Government parties also indicated a need to consider additional resourcing and to strengthen capability of Coalition of Peaks members in order to participate across all elements of the new Closing the Gap architecture.

With new ways of working committed to under the National Agreement has come evolving roles and expanded responsibilities for the Coalition of Peaks but also Australian Governments. New skills and capability need to be built and existing ones strengthened, supported by resources and investment for all parties. Coalition of Peaks members identified strong existing capability in critical areas such as leadership and governance, community engagement and policy design. However, Peaks also

identified these areas as requiring strengthened capability and resourcing, along with implementation, communication and data, monitoring and evaluation.

The Coalition of Peaks indicated they welcomed the initial investments Australian Governments have made under the National Agreement and Implementation Plans. However, after mapping the work required for the Coalition of Peaks to fulfil their roles and responsibilities under the National Agreement against current capabilities and resourcing, we have found there is a gap. Too few organisations are yet to receive funding specifically to support their participation in the Closing the Gap work, and those that have noted this funding is not yet adequate. It is critical that resources match the scale and momentum of the Partnership and this is not yet the case, although it is also clear that funding discussions are underway between Peaks and Australian Governments in many areas.

The resourcing Peaks reported they need to better support their involvement in the Closing the Gap Partnership is modest. The return on that investment is strengthened ability to realise the ambitions all the Parties to the National Agreement signed onto to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As noted in a Deloitte report commissioned by Reconciliation Australia, when the gaps in life expectancy, employment outcomes and productivity are closed, in addition to the primary benefit of improved life experiences and a better future for Indigenous Australians, there will also be significant economic growth and reduced government outlays<sup>1</sup>.

Australian Governments and the Coalition of Peaks have already made a significant start on the journey to transform ways of working. A critical next step is securing adequate resources for Coalition of Peaks members to fully undertake this vital work for the nation. It is recommended further discussions take place between the Coalition of Peaks and Australian Governments to realise the commitment of supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in Closing the Gap through the provision of adequate and ongoing financial support. This will support strengthened capability across the Coalition of Peaks to deliver with Governments on the National Agreement.

*“We see the Closing the Gap initiative as a fundamental policy framework to have Aboriginals have control over their own outcomes. We’re committed to do the work in this space and that’s why we go above and beyond our day jobs. I really want to emphasise that this opportunity is an honour and we are determined to be accountable to it. But there’s only so much we can do without adequate recognition and adequate resourcing. If we did have more resources given to us, what would be most important is remaining accountable to that and I hope that this is clear in any feedback given to Government. This isn’t about us deserving more; it’s about us being so invested in this and we expect to be accountable for this work. We just can’t do it with a small number of resources.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“Some of the work we’re doing here is much more about the relationships and how we work together to get the outcomes. I think there is a lot of accountability back to government about dollars given to service providers and Peaks. But in part, we need to swap that around so that the providers can hold government accountable to provide what they need. We need those local stories about what is or isn’t working, feeding that up and holding the funding partners accountable for that.”*

- Government Representative

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<sup>1</sup> Deloitte Access Economics, 2014, Economic benefits of closing the gap in Indigenous employment outcomes.

## Key Findings

The Coalition of Peaks commissioned this research as part of their commitment to deliver on the promise of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Equity Economics has mapped the work Coalition of Peaks members are doing to fulfil their current and evolving roles and responsibilities under the Agreements with their current capabilities and resources. We have found the Coalition of Peaks and Australian Governments should work together to:

- Maximise the value and build the network of the Coalition of Peaks;
- Plan for the long-term and growing scope of work under the Agreement;
- Build on the strengths of Peaks and address priorities for increased capability and capacity; and
- Ensure members of the Coalition of Peaks have appropriate, dedicated and secure funding consistent with their roles and responsibilities.

### Maximise the value and build the network of the Coalition of Peaks

There is clear evidence the Coalition of Peaks network is of great value to Australian Governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and organisations and communities. It now comprises 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled National Peaks, Jurisdictional Peaks and state and territory member organisations across Australia, working across sectors critical to Closing the Gap (see Appendix One). There is a need to progress and appropriately resource work set out in the Coalition of Peaks Implementation Plan in a number of critical areas.

We have found:

- The Coalition of Peaks network is of great value to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Australian Governments.
- While the Coalition of Peaks is valued, there is a long way to go to increase visibility of the work of the Peaks across all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, Government agencies, business and not-for-profit organisations.
- Coalition of Peaks members should continue to grow and increase connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and representative bodies both within and outside the Coalition.
- There is a need to strengthen the opportunities that existing Coalition of Peaks members have to fully bring their expertise to the table.

### Plan for the long-term and growing scope of work under the Agreement

It is clear from discussions with Coalition of Peaks members and all Australian Governments that there is a very significant workload involved in the new Closing the Gap Partnership; and it will continue to grow and evolve, particularly now all parties to the National Agreement have developed detailed Implementation Plans. There are now hundreds of measures that need to be delivered across all the Implementation Plans. Coalition of Peaks members and Australian Governments need to be in a position to support the effective delivery of this investment.

There is currently a misalignment between the scale of work required under the National Agreement and Implementation Plans and the resources available across the Coalition of Peaks to deliver.

We have found:

- Coalition of Peaks members were already feeling significant workload pressure prior to Implementation Plans being finalised.
- Coalition of Peaks members are anticipating getting more involved in all areas under the National Agreement.
- The Closing the Gap work is on top of members' pre-existing service delivery and policy responsibilities.
- Most Peaks find it increasingly difficult to achieve ideal balance in terms of time they spend on community-facing versus Government-facing work.
- The significant workload across the National Agreement and Implementation Plans is being underestimated by all Parties. While sequencing of work is taking place, longer-term planning is needed across all Coalition of Peaks members and Australian Governments to meet the overall task.

#### Build on the strengths of Peaks and address priorities for increased capability

In asking the Coalition of Peaks to consider their existing capability to fulfil their roles under the National Agreement, we found Peaks embracing clear-eyed discussions about how their knowledge, cultural authority, partnerships, skills, systems, workforce and resources are coming together, and how ongoing sector-strengthening work will be critical to sustained capacity building across their organisations, member organisations and other partners over time.

A clear message given by Peaks participating in this research is that lack of staff and lack of funding are the primary constraints on their ability to participate in the Closing the Gap Partnership. Of the Peaks who engaged in this research, 92 per cent said that lack of staff was a constraint on their participation in the Closing the Gap work, 86 per cent said lack of funding was a constraint, 80 per cent said lack of time was a constraint, 49 per cent said having to divert funding from other areas was a constraint, and 31 per cent identified that a lack of expertise was a constraint.

While lack of staff and resourcing were identified as the main constraints, it is also significant that a third of respondents indicated a need to build expertise and capability. It remains an immediate and ongoing task to develop new skills and ways of working in many areas and ensure staffing levels are adequate to enable that expertise to be applied comprehensively to implementing the National Agreement.

Under-resourced activities will fail, even where knowledge, experience and skills to deliver exist. Some Coalition of Peaks members reported that, at present, there is a real risk of this occurring in under-resourced areas and feared this could be later misdiagnosed as a lack of underlying capability within their organisations – when that is not the case.

We have found:

- Coalition of Peaks members clearly report they have the knowledge, cultural authority, experience and skills to deliver under the National Agreement, if appropriately supported and resourced.

- While leadership and governance are areas of strength across the Coalition of Peaks, the leadership workload should be better shared and supported to build the resilience needed to maintain and sustain momentum.
- The Coalition of Peaks have the networks and relationships to undertake strong community engagement and are already doing so where time allows. However, community engagement expertise is not being fully utilised because of limited resourcing and the extensive workload and accelerated pace of work related to implementing the National Agreement.
- There is strong policy design capability across some Peaks, while others (particularly individual member-based organisations) have strong service delivery capability that is integral for effective policy implementation. However, more policy resources are required to maximise the Coalition of Peaks' input to the policy design process.
- Peaks are concerned about identifying resources to support implementation as the Closing the Gap work continues to progress from establishing architecture into implementation. A capacity shift is required to allow co-design with the community and delivery through community-controlled organisations.
- Data, monitoring and evaluation capacity should be built within the network of Peaks so that service level information can be used to make evidence-based decisions on the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs. Given there is an acknowledged workforce shortage in data, monitoring and evaluation expertise across both Governments and the Coalition of Peaks, consideration should be given to building longer-term workforce capability in those areas.
- Many members of the Coalition of Peaks have voiced an urgent need to strengthen communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities about the National Agreement. Peaks are not finding they have sufficient resources and space to concentrate on this work and are concerned this will limit awareness, potential buy-in and valuing of what the National Agreement is delivering.
- There is also an opportunity to collaborate and pool expertise to increase the skills of staff across the Coalition of Peaks.

Ensure all Peaks have appropriate, dedicated and secure funding consistent with their roles

Coalition of Peaks members have come to the table with different and complex funding arrangements that predate the Closing the Gap Partnership. Across the members of the Coalition of Peaks, organisations receive funding from a variety of different sources, through different funding mechanisms and over different time periods. Some organisations are entirely government funded, others have small revenue streams through membership levies or philanthropic sources. Many respondents reported they are the recipients of project funding and do not have any ongoing core funding that covers their day-to-day operations. In some cases, because of historical funding relationships, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs departments and agencies are the default funders of Coalition of Peaks members rather than mainstream portfolio agencies.

Funding for participation in the Closing the Gap architecture needs to recognise these longstanding issues and seek to chart a way forward to better practice. It also needs to recognise that most Coalition of Peaks members have come into the partnership with a much lower level of resources than governments and little room to reallocate these given other funding agreements and service delivery obligations.



At present, only 31 per cent of responding Coalition of Peaks members report they are receiving additional funding to contribute to new work under the National Agreement. Forty-nine per cent of Coalition of Peaks members who participated in this research say that funding does not meet needs and 31 per cent say funding partially meets needs. No respondents said that funding fully meets needs. Forty-five per cent of Peaks who responded are currently discussing or negotiating to receive additional funding in the next 12 months as part of their work under the Agreement.

The pace of work under the Closing the Gap Partnership has been rapid, and it is clear that in many cases the development of plans and standing up of projects has jumped ahead of resource and funding discussions. The Coalition of Peaks has welcomed the commitments of Australian Governments to funding the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector, including the contributions of all Governments to the \$77.2 million virtual funding pool (over four years from 2020-21). However, funding from that pool is for ACCO sector development broadly, with a focus on priority areas under the National Agreement. A lot of work is still required to understand how that funding will be allocated, quite aside from identifying what else will be required beyond the initial sectors nominated for strengthening.

We have found:

- The majority of Peaks are not yet receiving appropriate, dedicated and secure funding to ensure they can act as accountable partners and fulfil their roles under the National Agreement.
- In some cases where funding has been provided, the terms of the funding arrangements have not necessarily met the spirit of the National Agreement and new arrangements are not always working to chart a course to better practice. We have found examples where funding is short-term, been allowed to lapse despite ongoing work or is under-estimating salaries, oncosts and overheads.
- Peaks not only require resourcing for discrete projects or elements of the Closing the Gap work, but also modest resources to sustain their footing as partners able to strongly participate in the overall work program under the National Agreement.
- Almost half of the Peaks participating in this research are discussing or negotiating to receive additional funding in the next 12 months as part of their work under the National Agreement so there are processes in train that could be used to alleviate resourcing pressures.

## Towards a Solution

Determining appropriate funding arrangements for all Coalition of Peaks members is going to be a challenge given their different size, roles and existing resource base. As self-determining organisations, all Coalition of Peaks members will need to decide on the resourcing arrangements that meet their needs and enter into discussions with Australian Governments, often on a case-by-case basis. However, there is benefit in looking across the Coalition of Peaks broadly to determine key principles and potential models for Coalition of Peaks members and Australian Governments to follow.

We have found:

- There are pockets of good practice in resourcing being provided to Peaks and principles from the Partnership and National Agreements and comparative international programs, which could be applied to support all members of the Coalition of Peaks.
- National Peaks are integral to the design and delivery of key elements of the Closing the Gap Partnership, but there is no consistency in funding to support their involvement in the Partnership. All National Peaks need dedicated Closing the Gap funding to participate (as a base on top of which project funding may then be allocated). This will depend on the size of their organisations and current core and project funding arrangements. While funding for National Peaks will have to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis, a starting point for discussions could be consideration of additional positions per organisation in the range of two to six Full Time Equivalents (FTE) for core Closing the Gap Partnership work depending on the circumstances of each National Peak. Large projects and discrete elements would then need to be resourced separately.
- There is a good deal of variation in funding arrangements across Jurisdictional Peaks and their State and Territory members, with some Peaks not currently in receipt of any funding. The funding provided by the New South Wales Government to NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (NSW CAPO) and NSW state and territory members provides a model that could be carefully drawn on by other jurisdictions (six FTE for the core secretariat, with two positions per member organisation). However, there are concerns the workload is already exceeding the resources negotiated under that model with a large breadth of work underway across 13 Officer Level Working Groups. There are also ongoing discussions between NSW CAPO and the NSW Government on what needs to be achieved and shared accountabilities in relation to the resourcing already allocated. While the arrangements in NSW provide a model that could be drawn upon, it is also clear tailoring will be required depending on circumstances in each jurisdiction. The provision of two to six FTE could assist other Jurisdictional Peaks in providing collective leadership and outreach and the provision of one to two FTE for state and territory member organisations could enable them to bring their service delivery information and data to bear in decision-making. There would need to be flexibility in each jurisdiction about how additional resources might be centralised or devolved.
- There is also work to be done to clarify the process for resourcing discrete projects or elements of the Closing the Gap work, particularly in relation to the development of Sector Strengthening Plans.
- There is a broader need to ensure all Government funding arrangements are designed to proactively build ACCOs, including utilising longer-term funding and continuous improvement approaches.

What is proposed above reflects modest suggestions put forward by some Coalition of Peaks members on what is needed at this stage to get on with implementing the Closing the Gap architecture and Partnership arrangements. Any model cannot act as a ceiling for the resourcing and staffing needs of members of the Coalition of Peaks and must not act to limit growth in membership of the Coalition of Peaks.

Equity Economics has modelled three scenarios in order to provide an indication of the range of total funding associated with the FTE estimates above. These estimates are in aggregate and do not include current investments in the Closing the Gap Partnership given many of these arrangements are short term and currently subject to negotiation.

- Scenario One: all members of the Coalition require the maximum number of FTE detailed above with six FTE for each National Peak, six FTE for each Jurisdictional Peak and two FTE for each of the current state and territory member organisations, involving a total investment of \$45 million per annum.
- Scenario Two: a midpoint option with four FTE for each National Peak, four FTE for each Jurisdictional Peak and 1.5 FTE for each current state and territory member organisation, equating to an investment of \$32 million per annum.
- Scenario Three: a minimum investment amount of \$18 million per annum in a scenario in which Coalition of Peaks members require the lowest number of FTE detailed above with two FTE for each National Peak, two FTE for each Jurisdictional Peak and one FTE for each of the current state and territory member organisations.

These figures are provided to assist discussions between the Coalition of Peaks and Australian Governments by giving rough estimates of the scale of the resourcing gap, rather than being definitive about solutions which will need to be found as suits individual Coalition of Peaks networks and members. These figures represent a modest investment. If delivered effectively, it could make a big difference in ensuring Coalition of Peaks members are able to deliver their roles and responsibilities under the National Agreement. Ultimately, this will result in strengthened ability for all parties to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as well as achieve significant economic growth and reduced government outlays.

## Recommendations

Priority	Recommendations
<p><b>Maximise the value and build the network of the Coalition of Peaks</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All Parties should work towards fully recognising and realising the potential value of the Coalition of Peaks.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Act to increase visibility of the structures and work of the Peaks across all Government agencies, business and not-for-profit organisations.</li> <li>○ Plan for the Coalition of Peaks to continue to grow in scale and reach, particularly given the focus on strengthening the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.</li> <li>○ Update information on the expertise, community reach and workforce of the Coalition and Peaks and use it to further engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, Governments, business, and not-for-profit organisations, as per the Coalition of Peaks Implementation Plan.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Coalition of Peaks members should continue to form strong connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and representative bodies within and outside the Coalition, noting work already set out in this area under the Coalition of Peaks Implementation Plan.</li> <li>3. The Coalition of Peaks National Policy and Secretariat Team should continue work to design processes in partnership with National and Jurisdictional Peaks to further ensure National Peaks, Jurisdictional Peaks and their members can bring their different types of expertise to the table, consistent with the Coalition of Peaks Implementation Plan.</li> <li>4. All Governments should monitor the effectiveness of processes set in train under Implementation Plans for Peaks to bring their expertise to the Partnership. The governance structures that have been established will require extensive time commitments and need to evolve to ensure they are working well for both Peaks and Australian Governments.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Plan for the long-term and growing scope of work under the National Agreement</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Australian Governments and Coalition of Peaks should conduct a stocktake of Implementation Plans to work through commitments and better understand the scope of work and timeframes, noting that many Peaks now have both national and jurisdictional-level commitments.</li> <li>6. The Coalition of Peaks should hold strategic discussions on the longer-term and growing scope of work under the National Agreement and Implementation Plans, including by holding workshops across sectors and in each jurisdiction, as well as progressing a national conference/ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Assembly on Closing the Gap as set out in the Coalition of Peaks Implementation Plan as soon as feasible.</li> </ol>

**Build on the strengths of Peaks and address priorities for increased capability**

7. Establish a workforce capability plan for the Coalition of Peaks, including communities of practice, training and mentoring arrangements that seek to pool expertise across members in critical areas including policy design, data monitoring and evaluation, implementation, community engagement and communication. For example, a national training plan for data, monitoring and evaluation could be established to provide tertiary pathways for data specialists.
8. Identify flexible ways to use senior placements, secondments and rotations to increase the flow of expertise, skills and perspectives into and out of the Coalition of Peaks Policy and Secretariat Team and across Jurisdictional and National Peaks, member organisations, Government agencies and other organisations. Expert partners such as the data agencies could be invited to participate in these arrangements by providing opportunities for practical learning and skills transfer.
9. Support the Joint Communications Strategy by providing funding to develop communication materials to:
  - Promote the Partnership and National Agreements across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities; and
  - Improve buy-in, and commitment to, the Agreements over the longer-term and increase accountability to communities for results.

**Ensure all members of the Coalition of Peaks have appropriate, dedicated and secure funding consistent with their roles and responsibilities**

10. Governments should reaffirm their commitment to the principle of supporting members of the Coalition of Peaks to act as accountable and effective partners through the provision of adequate and ongoing financial support. A starting point for discussions between Governments and Peaks is a funding model comprising:
  - two to six FTE for each National Peak to enable these organisations to provide leadership in the Closing the Gap work across their areas of policy, workforce and program expertise;
  - two to six FTE for each Jurisdictional Peak and one to two FTE for each state and territory member organisation to allow for proactive engagement across the breadth of the National Agreement;
  - appropriate wage parity with Government to ensure arrangements are sustainable;
  - provision for oncosts and overheads, with consideration given to opportunities for achieving back-office efficiencies through the establishment of shared services arrangements;
  - long-term funding commitments to at least 2029 with a focus on the next four financial years;
  - flexibility to allow members of the Coalition of Peaks to allocate resources as needed across the specific areas of capability required in order to deliver on their areas of responsibility under the National Agreement; and
  - dedicated funding for large, discrete pieces of work under the National Agreement.
11. Ensure Government funding arrangements proactively build Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and allow for longer-term funding and continuous improvement with:
  - the process for disbursing funding through the sector strengthening virtual pool clarified with the objective of talking more clearly with National Peaks, Jurisdictional Peaks and members about what they can expect; and
  - appropriate funding relationships between mainstream agencies and sectoral Peaks that take into account their Closing the Gap roles and responsibilities.

## Methodology

### Purpose

The purpose of this research has been to map the work the Coalition of Peaks are currently doing to support the Closing the Gap Partnership, and their current capabilities and resources. The Coalition of Peaks commissioned this research to help ensure they have the right structures, functions, capabilities and resources to fulfil their current and evolving roles and responsibilities under the Partnership and National Agreements.

This is the first study that captures the diversity of the Coalition of Peaks and asks specific questions about the capability and resourcing of member organisations to deliver on the Closing the Gap Partnership. It offers key insights and findings which can be used by the Coalition of Peaks in discussions with Australian Governments to support the Closing the Gap Partnership into the future.

### Scope

The scope of this research has included:

- reviewing the current structure, roles and responsibilities under the Closing the Gap Partnership, ways of working and resources of the Coalition of Peaks;
- highlighting the way work planning needs to evolve to meet current and future projected tasks and responsibilities across multiple work streams;
- understanding the way Coalition of Peaks member organisations need to be supported to fulfil their roles and responsibilities under the Partnership and National Agreements, including their accountabilities to their memberships and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- identifying current strengths in capability and areas where further capability needs to be built;
- assessing current resourcing arrangements against the workload and capability needs of the Coalition of Peaks; and
- recommending a way forward that can be used by the Coalition of Peaks and Governments to build resources and capability.

This work has been done conscious of the parallel Partnership Health Check 2021 being undertaken by the Coalition of Peaks and Australian Governments. Accordingly, we have not focused research on the 'relationship and partnership capabilities' of the Coalition of Peaks or Australian Governments, although these matters have inevitably come up in discussions. It is important that this report be considered as part of broader ongoing work on further defining and strengthening the nature of the partnership between the Coalition of Peaks and Australian Governments at the national and state/territory levels.

### Data Collection

Evidence for this research has been drawn from desktop review and analysis of material relevant to the Coalition of Peaks and Closing the Gap Partnership including the Partnership Agreement and National Agreement, Implementation Plans, annual reports, organisational structures and comparative international programs.

It has also been drawn from a questionnaire designed by Equity Economics with input from the Closing the Gap National Secretariat, as well as four member organisations of the Coalition of Peaks who assisted with the refinement of questions.

The questionnaire had a total of 39 questions and is at Appendix Three. The questionnaire was launched on 18 August 2021 and closed on 10 September 2021. It was distributed via email to members of the Coalition of Peaks. Respondents were also offered the opportunity to undertake the questionnaire through a telephone or video interview with a member of the Equity Economics project team. Sixteen telephone interviews were conducted to support the questionnaire process, with an average duration of 50 minutes.

At the time the questionnaire was open for response, the COVID-19 pandemic limited the ability of some organisations to respond due to their other pressing workloads supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities across Australia.

Of the 49 member organisations that responded to the questionnaire:

- all 15 National Peak bodies responded;
- six were Jurisdictional Peak bodies;
- 27 were state and territory member organisations; and
- one was an anonymous submission.

While not all members of the Coalition of Peaks were able to undertake the questionnaire, the response rate allows for a comprehensive snapshot of Coalition members (70 per cent of the total number of organisations in the Coalition).

At this Interim Report Stage, members of the Coalition of Peaks from all jurisdictions (as well as National Peak bodies) have completed the survey, with the exception of Tasmania. Statements by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) in the Tasmanian Implementation Plan were closely examined and have been reflected in this report.



**Figure 1**

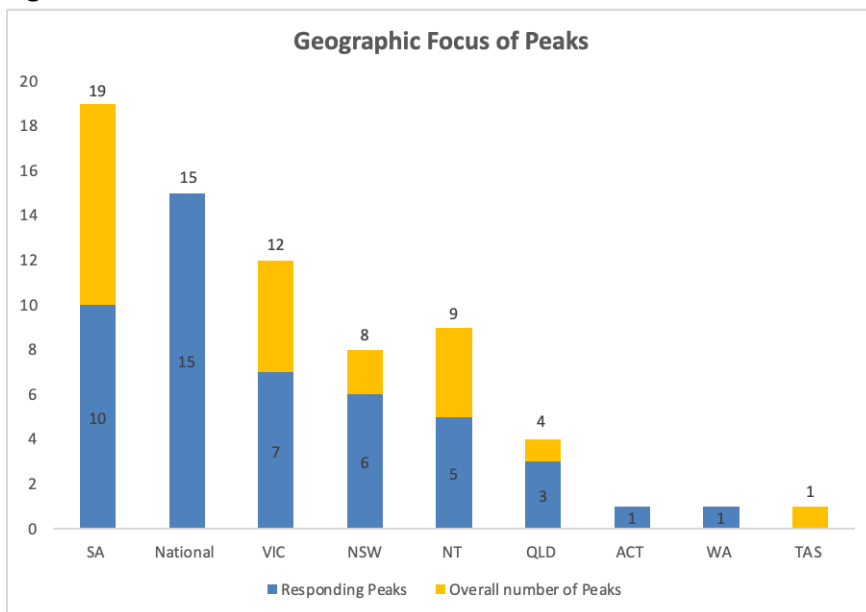


Figure 1: Geographic focus of Coalition of Peaks and those responding to the questionnaire (note one anonymous response not included in chart).

Questionnaire respondents included Chief Executive Officers, Policy Officers, Finance Officers and other positions.

**Figure 2**

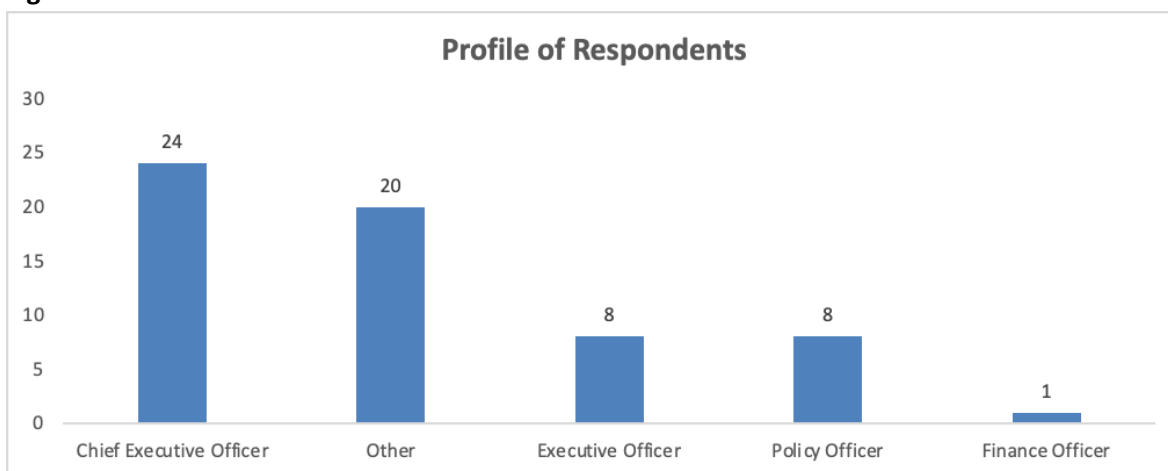


Figure 2: Profile of Respondents by Position

Interviews were also held with representatives from all Australian Governments to seek their views on the growing capability and other challenges faced by the Coalition of Peaks as partners under the National Agreement. Eleven interviews were held with representatives from:

- the National Indigenous Australians Agency;
- all State and Territory Governments agencies with lead responsibility for Closing the Gap;
- the Australian Local Government Association; and
- the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Equity Economics and the Coalition of Peaks thank those who generously shared their time and views, especially given the difficult circumstances facing all Australian Governments and Peaks in

responding to the COVID-19 pandemic during the data collection period. The willingness of Coalition of Peaks members and Australian Governments to participate in this research during this difficult time is reflective of the strong and committed pool of people currently working on Closing the Gap in Australia.

### Note regarding Presentation

Unless otherwise specified, all percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number for ease of reading in this report. Due to rounding, numbers presented throughout this document may not add precisely to the totals provided and percentages may not precisely reflect the absolute figures. It is also important to note that one Coalition of Peak member respondent was anonymous and their responses have been included where possible.

### Research Ethics

This research has been conducted with respect for the resilience, strength and pride of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff across the Coalition of Peaks and other organisations working on Closing the Gap. It has also been conducted respecting all those partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and people on Closing the Gap including the Australian Government and State and Territory Governments. Interviews were tailored to the way interviewees felt they could best contribute and with the aim of recognising strengths, speaking frankly about challenges and building trust. All information and data have been managed with adherence to principles of confidentiality, cultural safety and privacy.

# Maximise the value and build on the network of the Coalition of Peaks

## Snapshot of the Coalition of Peaks and its Network

### Coalition of Peaks Members

In early 2019, the Coalition of Peaks came together as an act of self-determination to change the way Australian Governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Coalition is currently a representative body of 70 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled National Peaks, Jurisdictional Peaks and member organisations across Australia.

Under the Partnership Agreement of March 2019 and National Agreement of July 2020, the Coalition of Peaks is a formal partner with Australian Governments, sharing decision-making on and responsibility for, Closing the Gap. It is operating not only to represent its members but with a broader commitment to advancing community-controlled representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community-led approaches.

The visual identity of the Coalition of Peaks is below.

**Figure 3**

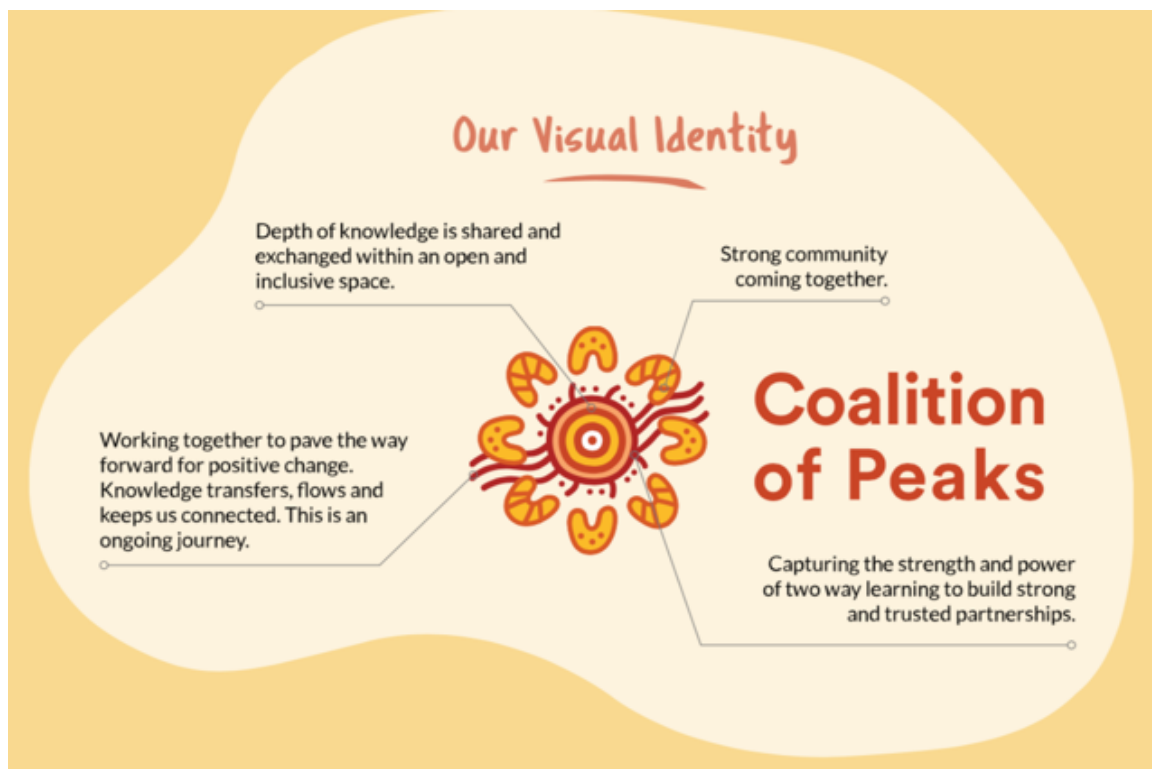


Figure 3: Reproduced courtesy of the Coalition of Peaks

Within the Coalition of Peaks there are currently:

- 15 National Peaks; and
- 56 Jurisdictional Peaks and members working across all states and territories.<sup>2</sup>

### Closing the Gap Sectors

The Coalition of Peaks includes organisations working across all sectors critical to Closing the Gap. It is vital to recognise each member defines their purpose in their own ways using holistic and integrated concepts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing and life outcomes. However, with the aim of demonstrating the current reach and expertise of the Coalition of Peaks, the chart below seeks to categorise Coalition of Peaks members into twelve sectors covering all socio-economic indicators contained within the National Agreement.

Figure 4

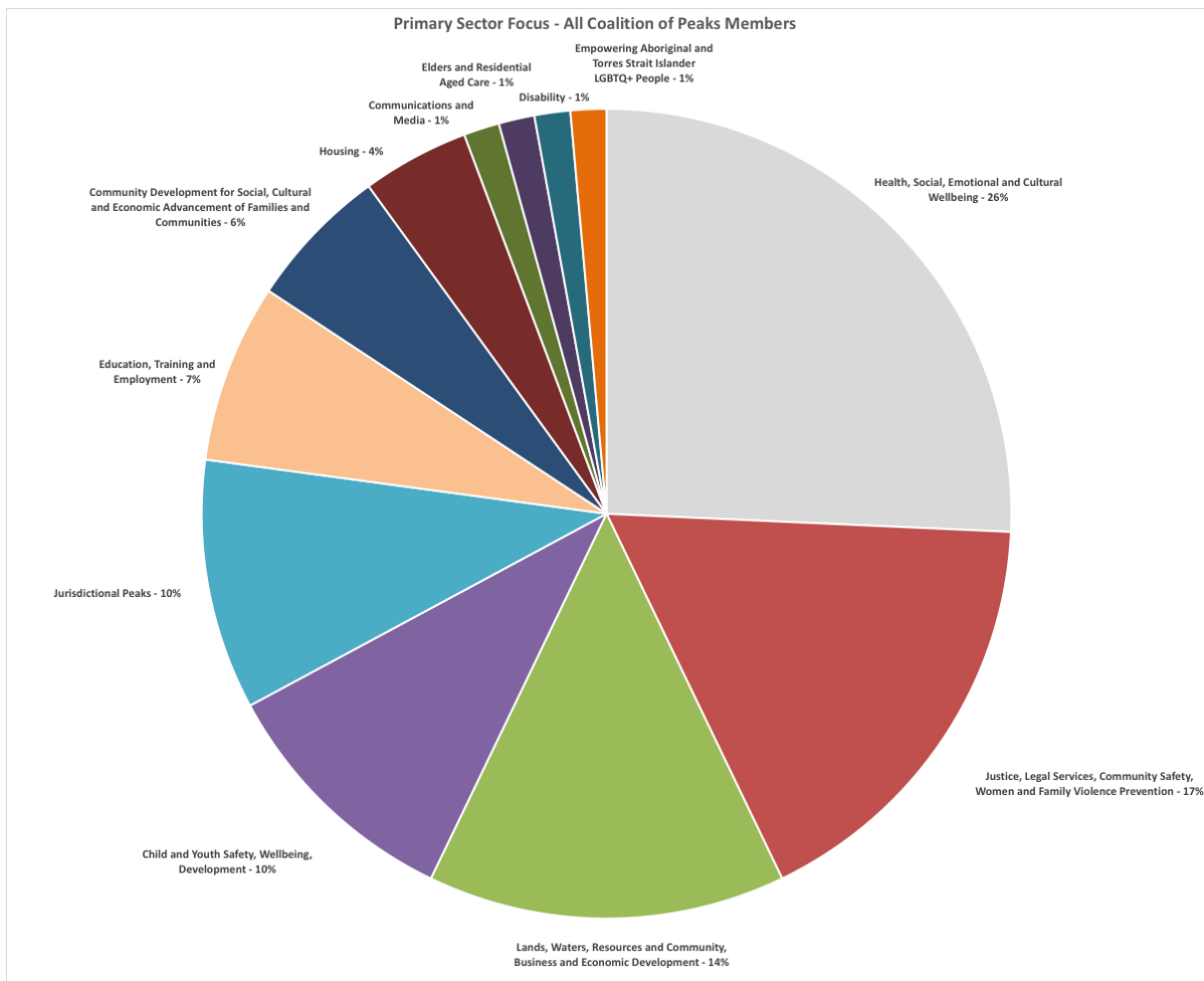


Figure 4: Primary Sector Focus: All Coalition of Peaks Members

<sup>2</sup> Note that First People’s Disability Network is both a National Peak and a member of the NSW Coalition of Peaks so this totals to 71.

## **Member Histories, Size and Networks**

Members of the Coalition of Peaks vary significantly in terms of their histories, size, roles and networks.

### *Histories*

Peaks organisations vary considerably in their duration of operation: for example, the Aborigines Advancement League has operated for 64 years whereas others are much more recent, like Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia operating for one to two years. Despite their varied histories, overall Coalition of Peaks organisations are grounded in decades of experience working on community-led responses to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, families and individuals.

### *Size*

Members range from having four staff to large service delivery and representative organisations having over 250 staff.

### *Service Delivery Roles and Responsibilities*

Forty-three members of the Coalition of Peaks are directly responsible for delivering front-line programs and services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients in the areas of health, social and emotional wellbeing, justice, community safety, child and family support, family violence, disability, aged care and land, sea and native title.

### *ACCO Networks*

Many Peaks have their own extensive networks of ACCOs as members. While further work needs to be done, preliminary mapping shows the 70 members of the Coalition of Peaks collectively have over 800 ACCOs and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and partner organisations as members.

### *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff networks*

A number of Peaks (eg Australian Indigenous Doctors Association, Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers Association and NT Indigenous Business Network) have individual member networks. Collectively these Coalition of Peaks members are reaching almost 8,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students and supporters working in front line health and wellbeing service delivery and in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses.

## **Geographic Focus**

There are Coalition of Peaks members operating at the national level and in every state and territory. The chart below sets out the percentage of members operating at the national level and in different parts of the country. It should be noted that the chart does not take account of the size of individual Peaks and their networks, but rather is based on the number of Peaks in each jurisdiction. For example, in Western Australia (WA), the one Peak operating – Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia – has a large reach across WA due to its network but this is not captured below. Nevertheless, it is an important chart for showing the balance of Coalition of Peaks membership across different states and territories and at the national level.

Figure 5

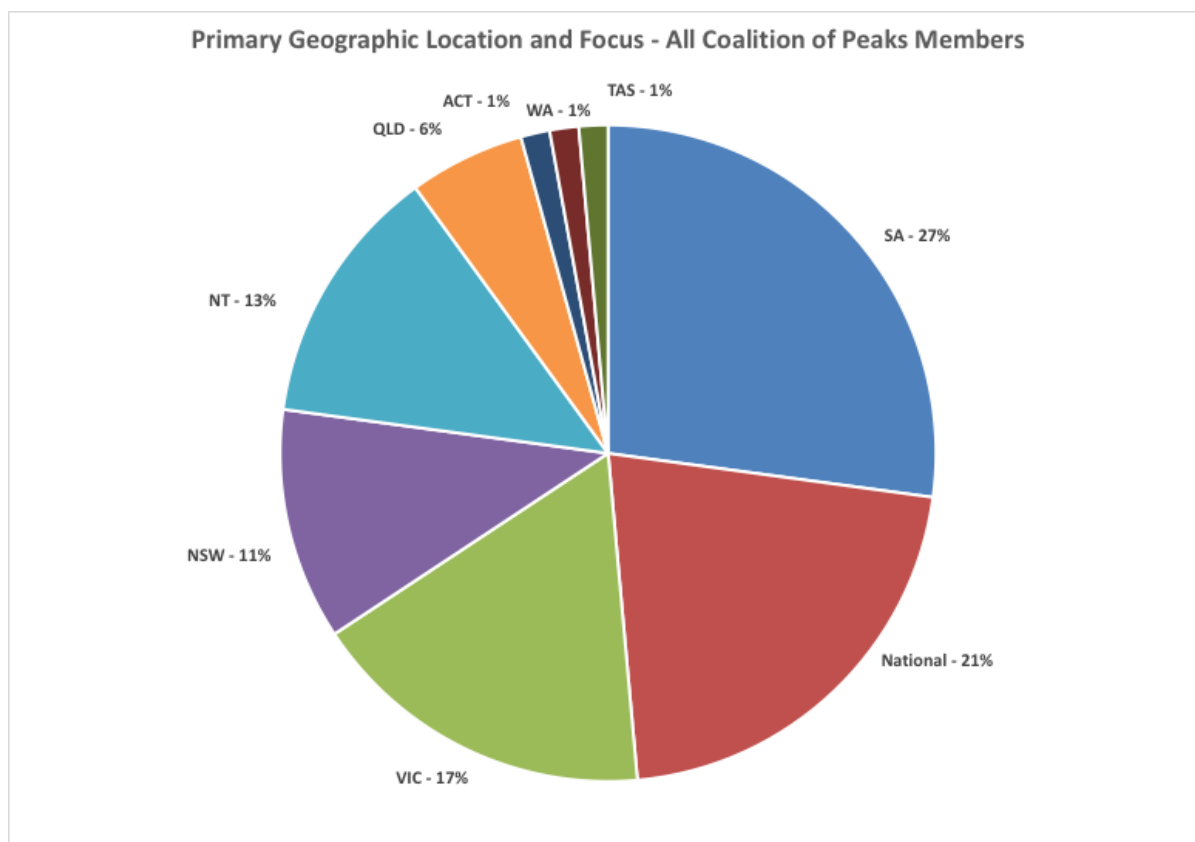


Figure 5: Primary Geographic Location and Focus: All Coalition of Peaks Members

## Findings and Next Steps

The Coalition of Peaks and all Australian Governments share a vital and common interest in ensuring the full value of all Coalition of Peak members and Government agencies is brought to bear in joint efforts towards Closing the Gap. In signing up as joint formal parties to the Closing the Gap Agreements, Coalition of Peaks members and Australian Governments have in effect recognised that it won't be possible to close gaps without all parties achieving their full potential in the way they commit networks, knowledge, skills and resources to the challenge.

There is evidence of the significant and growing value of the Coalition of Peaks network to ACCOs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and to Australian Governments. In a short period of time, the Coalition of Peaks has networked a large number of ACCOs together to collectively build on the strong reach they have into Aboriginal and Torres Islander organisations and communities.

There is also evidence that further developing the scale and reach of the Coalition of Peaks remains an ongoing journey. The Coalition of Peaks network is continuing to grow as new members join at the national and state/territory levels. There were 42 members of the Coalition of Peaks when the Partnership Agreement was signed in March 2019. Twenty-nine organisations have since joined and one organisation has left the Coalition. This growth trajectory is likely to continue as further work is done on strengthening and expanding the ACCO sector. It is clear Coalition of Peak members must continue to form strong connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and representative bodies within and outside the Coalition of Peaks to further maximise their reach and effectiveness.

Below are our key findings in more detail.

## **1. The Coalition of Peaks network is of great value to ACCOs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Australian Governments**

Coalition of Peaks members and representatives from Australian Governments participating in this research voiced the great value being created in Peaks working together and with Governments in partnership for Closing the Gap. Coalition of Peak members emphasised one of the strongest benefits of the Coalition of Peaks is the growing ability to develop relationships and share knowledge and skills with other ACCOs across the country and across sectors.

*“One of the key positives to come out of the Closing the Gap Agreement is ACCOs being able to coordinate and not only understand what each sector is doing but also being able to support and add extra voice to issues.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“The partnership has provided the opportunity to link sectors and systems with voices and evidence from communities (namely Stolen Generations and their families who make up one in every three of our mob). We’ve become a trusted advisor to Government and to other Coalition of Peaks partners. This has been important. Survivors have wanted us to do this, and now we can.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“Our experience of AEC [Aboriginal Executive Council] meetings is of high quality, democratic and inclusive discussions to arrive at consensus positions. We share our expertise and knowledge on justice, family violence, child protection, mental health and other issues with other ACCOs. They share their expertise and knowledge with us...All our services are a part of the same ecosystem, interacting with common clients and there are huge gains to be made working together to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

Government representatives also reflected on the value of the Coalition of Peaks as a network that can be drawn upon for shared decision-making, policy design and deep engagement across the Aboriginal community-controlled sector and communities.

*“Peaks are doing a great job. They have a strong role and voice. It has been powerful to see Peaks and Ministers sitting together discussing the Implementation Plans. Peaks are willing to share their vast knowledge and experience.”*

- Government Representative

*“Our Peaks... some are relatively new and some have been here for a long time – either way they actually know their local service environment, local communities and context and are best placed to advise on what works.”*

- Government Representative

*“The discipline of the Coalition of Peaks has been extremely helpful in getting everyone to the table to share views and come up with agreed positions. That is complex work. The Coalition of Peaks are doing all that in a very professional way.”*

- Government Representative

**2. While the Coalition of Peaks is strongly valued, there is a long way to go in increasing visibility of the work of the Peaks across all Government agencies, business and not-for-profit organisations.**

Coalition of Peaks members and representatives from Australian Governments also suggested that while the Coalition of Peaks has great value as it stands, its effectiveness will grow with increased visibility of its structures and work.

Some members raised the need for the Coalition of Peaks to continue to work to increase understanding of the reach of Peaks into ACCOs across jurisdictions and within sectors. In many cases, structures are new and can seem complex to those not familiar with them. Members spoke of the need to ensure all Government agencies (not only those with lead responsibility for Closing the Gap), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, businesses and not-for-profit organisations better understand the benefits of working with the Coalition of Peaks network and what it can bring in terms of knowledge, skills and community engagement. There are already many examples of what the Coalition of Peaks is bringing to the table in terms of highlighting urgent national issues, strengthening policy design and engaging communities including in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is an opportunity for these early wins to be more strongly communicated.

*“People need more visibility of how to get involved at different levels. Business and other service providers, not just Governments.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“Some of our biggest partners are in the disability sector – mainstream organisations – not only the Aboriginal Community Sector... There is a way to go to join everyone up so we all understand one another. We have the knowledge and skills, it’s about implementation.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We have a way to go in reaching out to explain what we’re about. That’s the next step. The first bit has been getting our own arrangements in order.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

Some Government representatives also echoed this thinking in different ways.

*“On the Government side there needs to be a better understanding of what [our Jurisdictional Peak] is doing with their networks. What are they doing in a concrete way to strengthen ACCOs, for example.”*

- Government Representative

*“There’s a journey we need to go on to explain the work we are doing with the Peaks to line agencies. We need to push this out and get them [to] form their own partnerships. Some line agencies have this in train and understand the Peaks, and some don’t.”*

- Government Representative



**3. Coalition of Peak members should continue to grow and increase connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and representative bodies both within and outside the Coalition.**

We have found the relationships between Peaks and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations outside of the Coalition of Peaks are also critical and will need to grow as the policy and place-based partnerships, sector strengthening plans, new targets and community data projects are all developed and implemented. All recently released Implementation Plans strongly emphasise the importance of the Coalition of Peaks working with broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and representative bodies.

There are some socio-economic areas and Aboriginal community-controlled sectors represented more strongly in the Coalition of Peaks than others, although this is slowly being worked through to deliver the full scope of work under the National Agreement. Some sectors – including health, justice, legal services and child and family wellbeing and safety – are more strongly represented at the national level or in certain states and territories. Representation for other sectors – including education and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages – is strengthening, although more evident at the jurisdictional level. Consideration will also need to be given in time to the relationship between the Coalition of Peaks and new representative structures designed as part of any ‘voice’ to Executive Government or Parliament.

The journey Coalition of Peaks members are on to build networks is understood and indeed a number of those interviewed reflected that it’s a fundamental part of Priority Reform Two – *Building the Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector*.

*“As the ACCO sector grows, our networks will grow. We need to be ready for that.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“A lot of us work with other structures and organisations in our areas all the time. We’re all in the same meetings. We’re used to working together.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We’re made up of very longstanding Peaks and also now new members. There’s a lot of discussion and trust to be built so everyone understands one another.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We have to make sure we’re staying clear on the principle of members being Aboriginal community-controlled. These are tough discussions to navigate. We need space to get it right.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“An important part of self-determination is choice. Some organisations might not want to get involved in the Coalition or be in a position to do so.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

Some Governments we spoke to suggested they recognise the importance of Peaks as self-determining coalitions working through, on their own terms, how they might embrace new members. Where Peaks’ coverage has been lower, some governments warned of the risk of some structures being seen as a ‘closed shop’ and encouraged more engagement and outreach between the Coalition of Peaks and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

The work of developing broader sector coverage of Peaks needs to be resourced, particularly as the number and capacity of ACCOs are increasing and will continue to do so because of the explicit focus in Priority Reform Two on sector strengthening and reprioritisation of grant funding to ACCOs and Indigenous organisations generally. This is occurring in some areas with several of the recently released state and territory Implementation Plans containing resources to develop new Peak organisations in critical areas.

A number of Government agencies, including in the Northern Territory and WA, are proactively working with Peaks and other organisations to strengthen networks, recognising the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to take the lead in determining how partnerships and coalitions may form. This is something Coalition of Peaks members are working through in their own ways as suits the different networks of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, and their visions and purpose in different parts of the country.

It is also clear some jurisdictions like New South Wales, Victoria, the Northern Territory, South Australia and the Australian Capital Territory have well developed Jurisdictional Peak and member organisation structures where others like WA, Tasmania and Queensland are undertaking further work to build these structures. In WA, the WA Government, the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) and other partners are working to establish a consortium to represent Western Australian ACCOs (\$1.4 million has been provided to AHCWA by the WA Government to undertake this work). AHCWA is seen as well positioned to do this work given the breadth of networks they have across the state.

*“One challenge is ensuring there is representation of views across sectors. [Our jurisdictional peak] is a strong body in itself but there are other groups that aren’t part of it and Government need to hear their views to ensure Closing the Gap maintains momentum into the future.”*

- Government Representative

*“[Our Jurisdictional Peak] has been going through a strengthening and transition process to broaden membership. This is bringing in expertise they didn’t have previously.”*

- Government Representative

*“An area to build capacity goes to the need for broader representation so that ACCOs from other sectors can engage with Government.”*

- Government Representative

*“There are a number of new Peaks forming in our state. When other Peaks want to form and join, we’ll then have a discussion with the existing Coalition of Peaks here to work out the way forward and not presume anything. But obviously, if new Peaks want to join and everyone supports that, then you know, we’ll be supportive. There might be a few different arrangements that emerge and we’re pretty flexible. But our overarching approach is to encourage a partnership model and use our Partnership Working Group to coordinate.”*

- Government Representative

#### **4. There is a need to strengthen the opportunities existing Coalition of Peaks members have to fully bring their expertise to the table.**

Above all, both Coalition of Peaks members and Australian Governments discussed the need to continue to build opportunities for existing Coalition of Peaks members to bring their expertise to the table across the spectrum of policy design, service delivery, community engagement and

monitoring and evaluation. Overall, the platform and processes sitting behind the Coalition of Peaks have facilitated members being able to bring their voice and expertise in ways that they have not been able to before. The processes for Peaks teleconferences, multiple working groups and preparations for Partnership Working Groups and Joint Council meetings have created avenues for members to put their issues and ideas forward.

However, the pace of work over the last two years has been fast and some members also voiced the need for clearer pathways into policy discussions, ongoing canvassing of member priorities (particularly those of newer members) and recognition of the different types of members and their forms of knowledge.

*“Previously there was no focus on communications and media. The Access to Information Target is drawing attention. In thinking about digital inclusion, this has been one area that we have brought to the table.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“I think the fact that we have had a seat at the table in these negotiations is a huge step and a positive step going forward. Having high level government Chief Executives...asking us what else is needed, consulting and accepting our advice and direction has been a great approach. I think as ACCOs we have been elevated and I hope that further opportunities will arise for us all.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We want to do a lot more and we need to do a lot more but the challenge is how to get more involved when we have so much already on our plates.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We had a good induction meeting with the Secretariat but there is a lot of intensity and everything is urgent... From the perspective of a new organisation, there needs to be a lot more focus on relationship building and clearer signposting of how to get involved.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We are contributing to an extent. We could be contributing more. The Coalition of Peaks is a really strong group, and it is good to be a part of it but it is quite time consuming to participate. Our Board has made the decision to make this time investment and that comes at a cost to other activities. This is not a small thing for an organisation of our size.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

The Coalition of Peaks National Secretariat recognises the need to continue to build ways to harness the expertise of Peaks and their contributions across all aspects of the work. It is clear this is challenging with the Secretariat and individual members doing their best given the scale of work and timeframes.

The recently announced additional funding from the Commonwealth Government of \$10 million over four years from 2022-23 for the National Policy and Secretariat Team (commencing May 2022) will assist in further developing pathways for Peaks to engage and in strengthening member support. Ideas on the table include running more comprehensive inductions for new members, allocating national Secretariat staff to more strongly support specific members in different sectors and jurisdictions and taking more systematic approaches to network and capability development. However, additional funding into the National Secretariat is still over six months' away, which will

delay plans to increase support provided to Coalition of Peaks members to engage and bridge this growing unmet need.

Governments have also recognised the need to continue to work on processes that bring the expertise of Coalition of Peaks members to the table. The recent Implementation Plans contain a large number of processes for this to occur. The workload and investment that will be required to make the most of these processes is very significant for Peaks and Australian Governments. This is discussed further in the next chapter.

## Recommendations

Priority	Recommendations
<p><b>Maximise the value and build the network of the Coalition of Peaks</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. All Parties should work towards fully recognising and realising the potential value of the Coalition of Peaks.               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Act to increase visibility of the structures and work of the Peaks across all Government agencies, business and not-for-profit organisations.</li> <li>b. Plan for the Coalition of Peaks to continue to grow in scale and reach, particularly given the focus on strengthening the Aboriginal community-controlled sector.</li> <li>c. Update information on the expertise, community reach and workforce of the Coalition and Peaks and use it to further engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, Governments, business, and not-for-profit organisations, as per the Coalition of Peaks Implementation Plan.</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Coalition of Peak members should continue to form strong connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and representative bodies within and outside the Coalition, noting work already set out in this area under the Coalition of Peaks Implementation Plan.</li> <li>3. The Coalition of Peaks National Policy and Secretariat Team should continue work to design processes in partnership with National and Jurisdictional Peaks to further ensure National Peaks, Jurisdictional Peaks and their members can bring their different types of expertise to the table, consistent with the Coalition of Peaks Implementation Plan.</li> <li>4. All Governments should monitor the effectiveness of processes set in train under Implementation Plans for Peaks to bring their expertise to the partnership. The governance structures that have been established will require extensive time commitments and need to evolve to ensure they are working well for both Peaks and Australian Governments.</li> </ol>

# Plan for the long-term and growing scope of work under the National Agreement

## Snapshot of the Scope of Work under the National Agreement

### National Agreement and Architecture

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap aims to fundamentally change the way Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people work together across four Priority Reform and 17 Socioeconomic targets. Under Clauses thirteen and fifteen of the Partnership Agreement, the Coalition of Peaks and Australian Governments agreed to share ownership of, and responsibility for, the jointly agreed framework and ongoing implementation and monitoring of efforts to close the gap.

It is clear from discussions with Coalition of Peak members and all Australian Governments the transformative work program is operating across a very broad front (see Figure 6). This is vital but resource-intensive work requiring in-depth reflection and time to establish significantly different ways of working for both Coalition of Peaks members and Australian Governments.

Figure 6

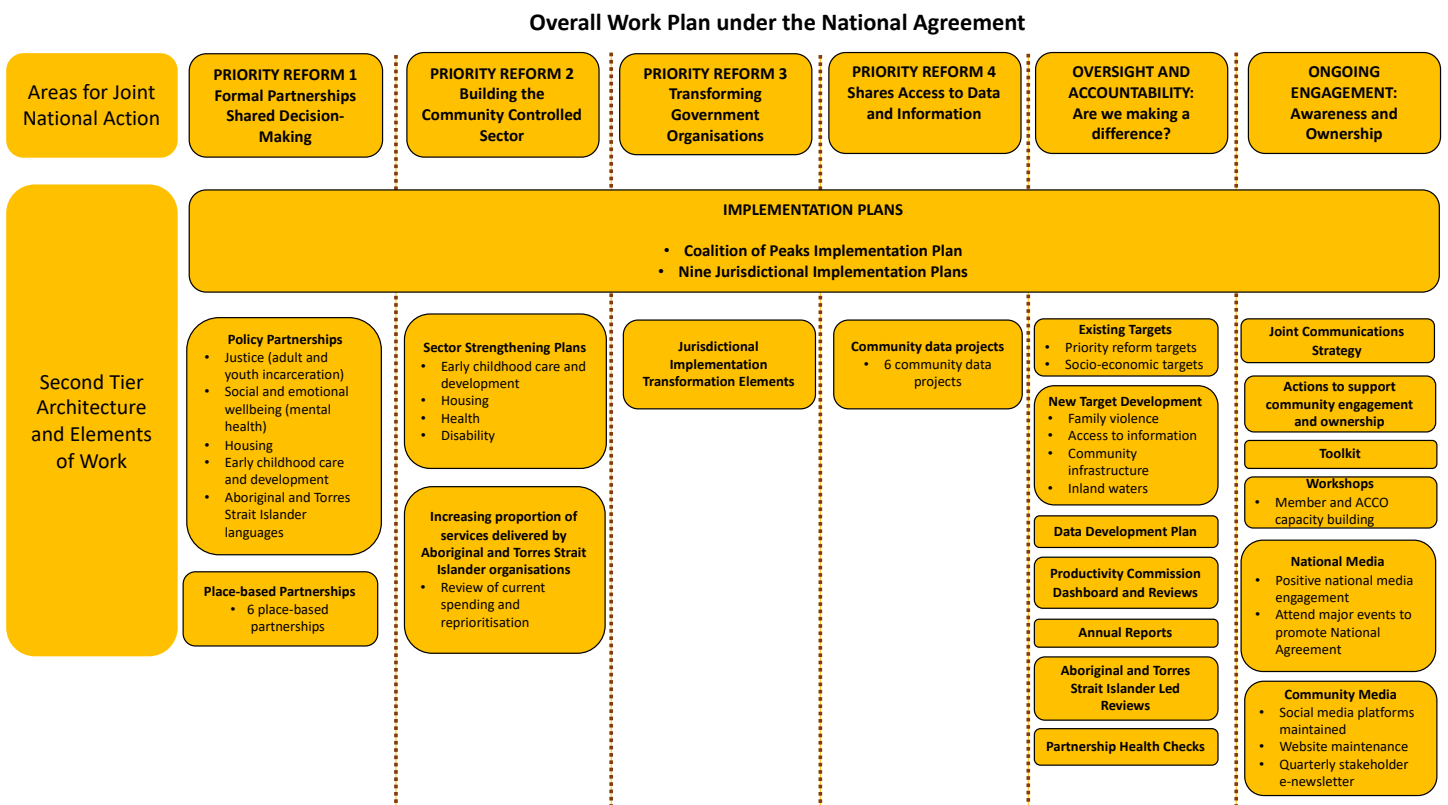


Figure 6: Closing the Gap Workplan under the National Agreement

There is substantial national level architecture supporting Closing the Gap governance and shared decision-making as set out in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7

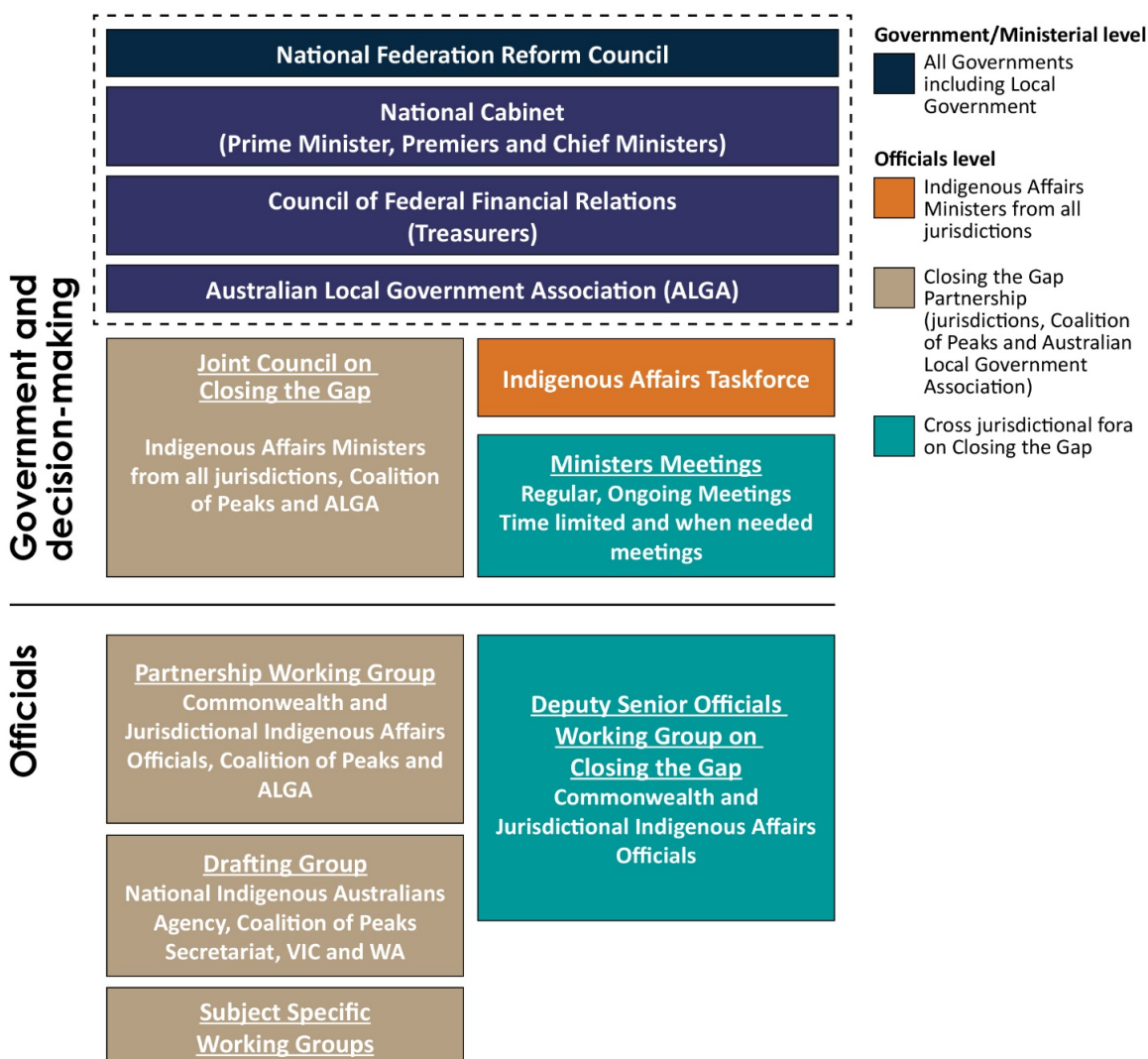


Figure 7: Reproduced from the Commonwealth Government Implementation Plan

Coalition of Peaks members currently support this architecture through strong participation in the Joint Council, Partnership Working Group, Drafting Group and multiple subject specific Working Groups.

The Joint Council is co-chaired by the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, and the Lead Convener of the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations, Ms Pat Turner AM. It includes ministers from each state and territory, 12 members of the Coalition of Peaks participating as subject matter experts and representatives for their jurisdictions, and a representative of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

### High Level Summaries: Closing the Gap Implementation Plans

Detailed Closing the Gap Implementation Plans have now also been developed under the National Agreement. These plans seek to implement commitments directly flowing from the National

Agreement, but also include many broader complementary initiatives such as those aimed at truth-telling, redress for Stolen Generations members and treaty-making.

Eleven Implementation plans were released in August and September 2021:

- A Closing the Gap Commonwealth Implementation Plan;
- Eight State and Territory Implementation Plans;
- An Implementation Plan from ALGA; and
- A Coalition of Peaks Implementation Plan.

In settling these Plans, a critical milestone was reached and a large body of work exists to now forge ahead with Governments and Coalition of Peaks members working together on implementation. However, it also should be noted that some jurisdictions are aiming to build on their plans in cases where they were developed quickly or where further engagement is required with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

There are hundreds of new and existing measures across all the Implementation Plans with an aggregate of over \$2 billion in measures aimed at Closing the Gap. There are also a large number of areas identified as requiring further discussions to determine funding. Coalition of Peaks members and Australian Governments need to be in a position to support the effective delivery of this investment in order to achieve progress in Closing the Gap.

The work programs and governance and partnership arrangements under each of the Implementation Plans represents a shift from a predominantly national level work program to include significant state and territory based work programs. This means that Jurisdictional Peaks and their members will now not only be feeding into the national level architecture, but also into implementation in each jurisdiction. Jurisdictions have established governance architectures that to varying degrees mirror the national Closing the Gap architecture with Partnership Working Group type structures now in place and officer-led working groups on specific areas. Supporting these structures is resource intensive and many Peaks and Government representatives highlighted the need to be realistic about the time and effort required for all parties to effectively utilise these joint decision-making structures to achieve outcomes. The need to prevent processes from becoming overly bureaucratic was also strongly put forward by all parties.

Appendix Two contains one-page descriptions of the arrangements in place within each jurisdiction in terms of Coalition of Peaks membership, joint governance and resources. They also highlight major features of the recently negotiated Implementation Plans and partnerships in place. These have been put together as it is critical that all parties have greater visibility of the different arrangements across the country.

When looking across the Implementation Plans, it is clear that the overall work program is very extensive. Many measures will require intensive work by Coalition of Peaks members in partnership with Australian Governments. There are also lots of others that will only require general oversight

The new arrangements emerging at the national and jurisdictional levels are fundamental to the implementation of the Closing the Gap work program. An appropriate scale of resourcing across both Australian Government and Coalition of Peaks' members will be needed to support effective delivery.

## Findings and Next Steps

The Coalition of Peaks and all Australian Governments share a joint interest in ensuring they have a common understanding of the Closing the Gap workload and what parties need in order to deliver. While a lot of the work is being carefully sequenced so it does not all 'hit at once', there is a sense that a backlog is building, and a huge amount still needs to be achieved.

A number of Coalition of Peaks members commented the workload is as it should be given the ambition, scope and scale of transformation set out under the National Agreement. But the key is to fully understand this workload and ensure it is suitably resourced.

Below are our key findings in more detail.

### 1. Coalition of Peak members were already feeling significant workload pressure prior to Implementation Plans being finalised

There is clear evidence many Coalition of Peaks members have, to this point, managed the Closing the Gap workload by going above and beyond, given the landmark opportunity it represents to transform ways of working.

We asked Coalition of Peaks members to what extent they have been able to participate in Closing the Gap activities to date:

- 15 per cent of members suggested they have been able to participate in all of the activities, with most of the responses in this category from the larger National and Jurisdictional Peaks;
- 48 per cent of members suggested they have been able to participate in 75 per cent or more of activities; and
- 37 per cent of members suggested they have been only able to participate in half or less of the activities, with many citing their very significant other policy and service delivery responsibilities.

**Figure 8**

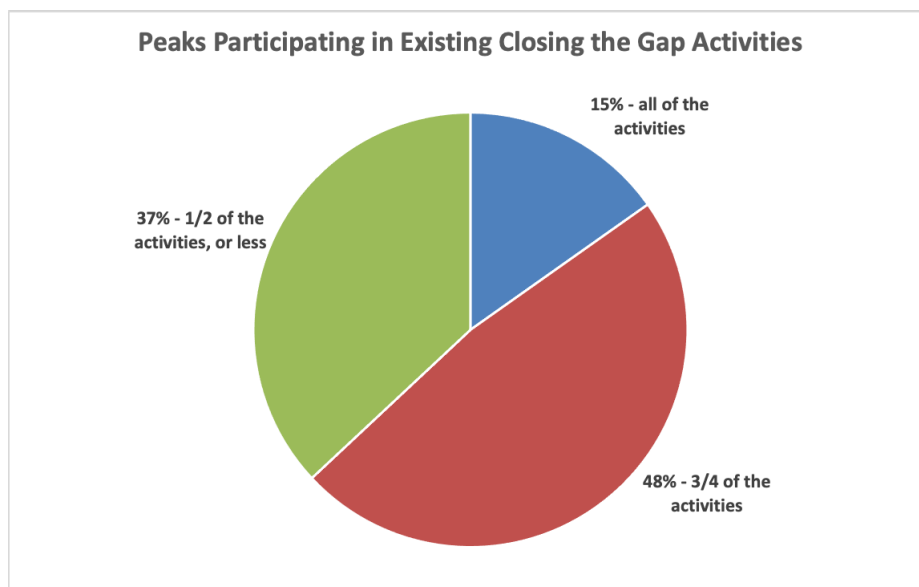


Figure 8: Extent to which Peaks have been able to participate in existing Closing the Gap Activities



All Coalition of Peaks members participating in this research voiced a clear challenge in managing the workload associated with the National Agreement, while emphasising that the answer cannot be to selectively engage, 'pick up one ball but drop another' or prioritise particular commitments at the expense of others.

*"There is a huge workload and our members operate on a part time basis so it is difficult to engage in all of the work."*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*"[Our Peak] has a significant workload coordinating approximately 15 different working groups. We are doing a great job under significant pressure, but we need to plan to sustain this work."*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*"Outside of formal agenda items, the Coalition of Peaks also take the opportunity to include a range of further related – but separate – topics to meetings for discussion. I'm not sure that the related workload is always fully understood by Governments and yet it is very important to achieving targets on a national level."*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*"One hundred per cent commitment was given through leadership, policy and advocacy work to finalise the National Agreement and once that was signed off then our jurisdictional plan had to be negotiated. Bringing other individuals and organisations up to speed requires time and resources that our organisation could not continue to offer at the same pace due to current workload and core business."*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

Government representatives were also clear about the extent of work required under the Closing the Gap Partnership.

*"There is a huge risk that Peaks are being spread too thin trying to take on a scale of work that is enormous. That is one of the strategic risks that needs to be managed."*

- Government Representative

*"We are finding it really hard to keep up with the work in our small jurisdiction, let alone our Peak organisations that don't have government structures to rely on."*

- Government Representative

*"The reality is what we have set in train is hugely ambitious – it has to be if we are going to make the progress we haven't managed to achieve before. We must be clear about the scale of the work unfolding."*

- Government Representative

## **2. Coalition of Peak members are anticipating getting more involved in all areas under the National Agreement.**

The compounding challenge is that most members expect an increase in involvement in Closing the Gap architecture and work over the next 12-24 months, particularly in relation to the policy and place-based partnerships, sector strengthening work and data, monitoring and evaluation. In order to help manage the scope of work, Coalition of Peaks and Australian Governments have put

significant effort into sequencing work. This has been essential, although it has often meant deferring some matters and also means Coalition of Peaks members are anticipating getting involved in more activities as time goes on.

We asked Coalition of Peaks members about the broad categories of work they have been involved in to date and those they intend to become involved in at a later stage. The graph below provides some indication of the growing scale of work, although it is likely to underestimate the percentage increase of work in the pipeline, given how recently the Implementation Plans have been released.

**Figure 9**

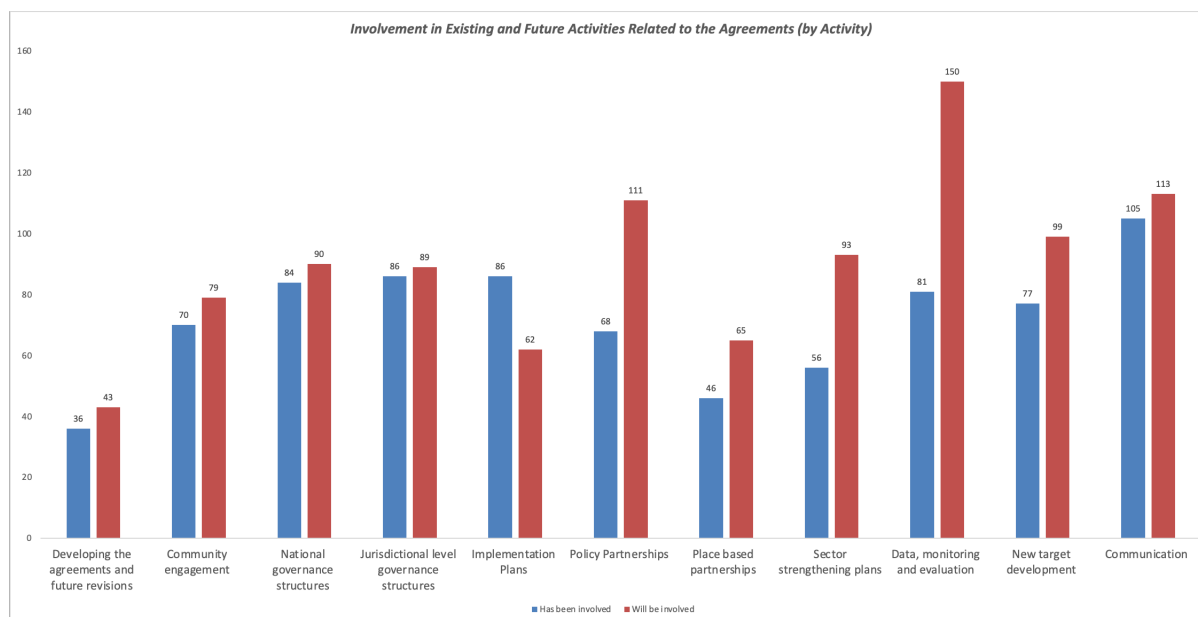


Figure 9: Peaks reporting existing and future engagement with various Activities related to the Agreements

This picture was also painted by both Coalition of Peaks members and Government representatives throughout our engagement.

*“There is so much more to be done. Now we’ve moved into the implementation phase our role needs to increase – of course it does.”*

- Coalitions of Peak Member

*The pace is high, but we are already one year into a ten-year agreement, so we need to keep moving. It’s a strain to get it done, and if we were resourced better this would be easier.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“There’s lots in the National Agreement that isn’t focused on the priority targets. The scope of work is huge. There are other clauses that will creep up and catch Government and Peaks out because they aren’t thinking about them early enough.”*

- Government Representative

*“Peaks are picking up new projects that might not have been originally planned, for example, the human service workforce project. This is really important work, but it shows how this is going to keep expanding.”*

- Government Representative

*“The peaks have been strong advocates for appropriate sequencing. It is helpful when the Peaks say more time is required...and make sure there are robust and good practices applied. But it will all need to get done. Everyone has signed up to timelines.”*

- Government Representative

### **3. The Closing the Gap work is on top of members’ other service delivery and policy responsibilities**

All Coalition of Peaks members have service delivery, member support and/or specific policy responsibilities in addition to their Closing the Gap work. All members emphasised the importance of Governments fully understanding this and provided many examples to show they felt ‘stretched’ in just meeting their current core responsibilities. For example, a number of health sector Peaks pointed to the immense policy and service delivery agenda that has been pursued in response to the pandemic, rising challenges of mental health and suicide prevention and primary health care reform. All this work with Health Departments and Aboriginal community-controlled health organisations has had to be managed alongside Closing the Gap Partnership work.

*“We are a stretched team working with multiple organisations and processes. Often we are in back-to-back meetings with Governments and others all day.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We also need to be aware of putting our members in a position where they are very stretched and severely under resourced. We could be taking the lead to do more but then we would be filtering work down to our member organisations who are severely under-resourced. That is the reality.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“I have been involved in working groups around the development of Implementation Plans. I often feel in those meetings like a bit of a ‘passenger’. The reason for that is the volume of the workload that I’m managing at the same time as the Closing the Gap work. I don’t have the capacity to be as prepared for those meetings as I would like to be.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“Everyone is stretched and it’s noticeable. We need time to plan.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“The challenge is trying to balance all our work as well as our contribution to the Coalition of Peaks. We are contracted with government to do lots of work. We want to fulfil expectations with Coalition of Peaks and be up there across 100 per cent of the activities. There is huge potential but it’s about time and resources. We want to get some good wins, but we can’t do that if we are running from here to there. If we had dedicated roles for the Closing the Gap work, it might be easier to manage.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

#### 4. Most Peaks find it difficult to achieve balance in terms of time they spend on community-facing versus Government-facing work.

Coalition of Peak members also face real challenges balancing the time they spend on community-facing versus Government-facing work. We asked members whether they felt they were getting the balance right and whether they would seek to change the balance of work across stakeholders if they could. The majority emphasised the very significant time being taken up on Closing the Gap work with Governments. This is seen as critical, but there is a need for more space for community engagement. This is a theme taken up in the next chapter.

The chart below provides a snapshot of how members participating in this research currently feel they are spending their time.

Figure 10

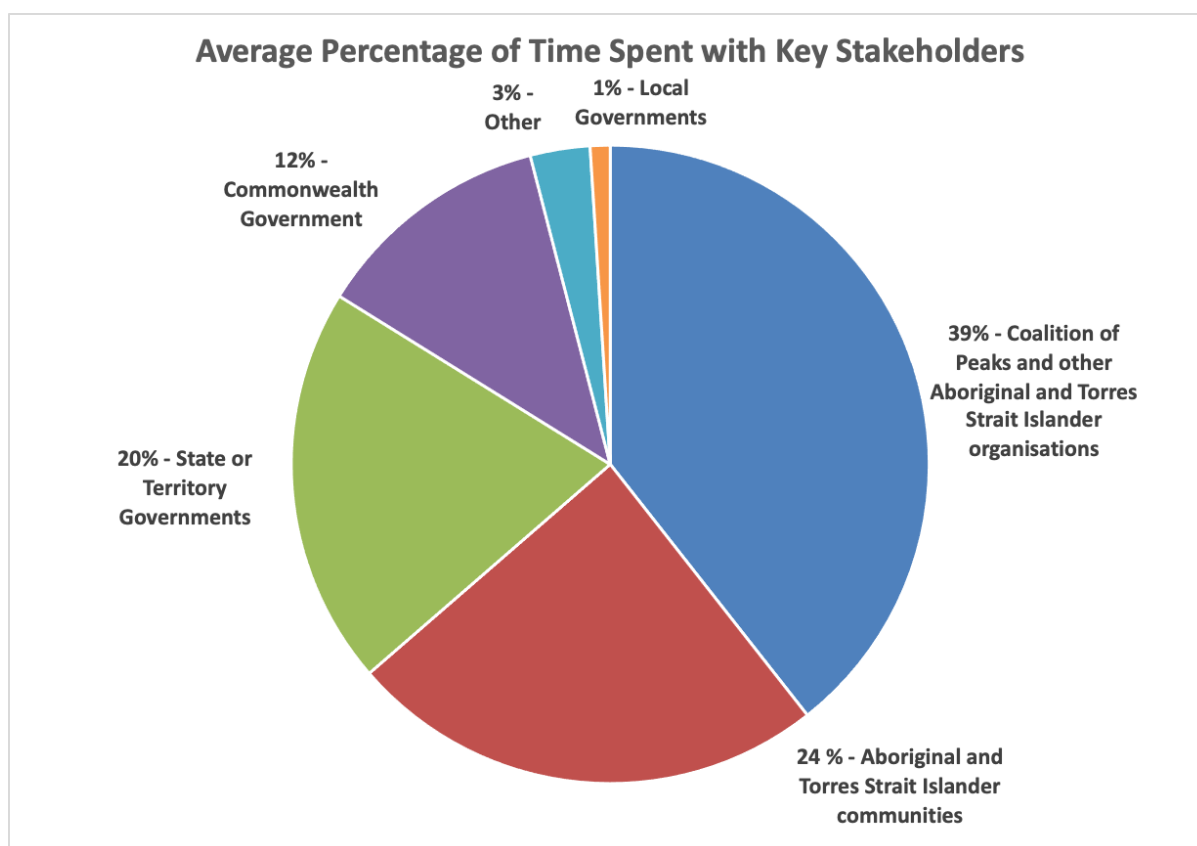


Figure 10: Average time spent with key stakeholders

In this figure, the 'Other' category largely consisted of mainstream Peak organisations, service delivery agencies and research institutions. A number of members spoke of the need for their engagement with these organisations as critical for Closing the Gap, but that time and resources remain a challenge.

ALGA and a number of Peaks and Government representatives participating in this research also emphasised that the role of local government in this work needs to expand.

Local Government Associations are being engaged by some jurisdictions, particularly in the Northern Territory, but have not yet been fully engaged by others. Some Local Government Associations have

direct delivery responsibility for essential services and will be critical to the design and delivery of place-based initiatives and the new community infrastructure target.

**5. The significant workload under the National Agreement and Implementation Plans is being underestimated by all Parties. While sequencing of work is taking place, longer-term planning is needed across all Coalition of Peaks members and Governments, to meet the overall task.**

Overall, there is clear evidence that there is a very significant program of work to manage, and longer-term planning, including of resource implications, is needed across all Coalition of Peaks members and Governments to meet the challenge.

A number of Coalition of Peaks members and Government agencies spoke of the need to plan for the growing scope of work under the National Agreement. Some members noted there has not been an opportunity to pull back from the immediate busy work required to establish the Closing the Gap architecture, in order to fully assess the overall Closing the Gap strategy and plan for the longer-term.

This is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. In its review of the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, the Australian National Audit Office noted major policy initiatives that have long-term targets, such as the Closing the Gap initiative, require long-term planning and focus to ensure policy objectives are delivered<sup>3</sup>. This is a salutary reminder because the current Closing the Gap accountability mechanisms are largely designed to drive and track progress rather than support long-term forward planning.

The Coalition of Peaks come together in fortnightly teleconferences to review work, debate issues and agree positions to bring to Governments. However, prior to restrictions associated with the pandemic, a number of larger workshops were held to talk through policy and partnership issues. It is critical these workshops occur again when possible, to conduct longer-term planning and to develop strategic approaches. Longer term planning over three-to-five-year timeframes would:

- provide greater certainty for the Coalition of Peaks on the medium-term roadmap;
- allow forecasting of funding needs; and
- assist with holding the course and building momentum.

*“We are stuck in a two-week thinking cycle of fortnightly teleconferences. There hasn’t been an opportunity to pull back from the busy work to assess how the overall strategy is progressing. It’s difficult at this level to stay on top of all the parallel pieces of work happening under Closing the Gap Plan – the sector strengthening plans, the policy partnerships and the data projects etc. In essence, an opportunity for broader conversations about progress and strategy is required.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

As the Closing the Gap Partnership moves towards implementation, with workloads widening and deepening at the national and jurisdictional level, it is important to be conscious of previous experience in Indigenous policy design and program delivery. As noted in the Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure conducted by the Department of Finance in the early years of the original Closing the Gap Strategy, “in the Indigenous area, more than any other, there has been a huge gap

<sup>3</sup> Auditor-General Report No.27 2018-19 Performance Audit Closing the Gap, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Productivity Commission

between policy intent and policy execution, with numerous examples of well-intentioned policies and programs which have failed to produce their intended results because of serious flaws in implementation and delivery”<sup>4</sup>.

## Recommendations

Priority	Recommendations
<p><b>Plan for the long-term and growing scope of work under the National Agreement</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="616 533 1417 719">5. Australian Governments and Coalition of Peaks should conduct a stocktake of Implementation Plans to work through commitments and better understand the scope of work and timeframes, noting that many Peaks now have both national and jurisdictional level commitments.</li> <li data-bbox="616 748 1417 1048">6. The Coalition of Peaks should hold strategic discussions on the longer-term and growing scope of work under the National Agreement and Implementation Plans, including by holding workshops across sectors and in each jurisdiction as well as progressing a national conference / Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Assembly on Closing the Gap as set out in the Coalition of Peaks’ Implementation Plan as soon as feasible.</li> </ol>

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<sup>4</sup> Department of Finance (2010) Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure, released under Freedom of Information

## Build on the strengths of Peaks and address priorities for increased capability

### Snapshot of the Capabilities of the Coalition of Peaks

In asking the Coalition of Peaks to consider their existing capability to fulfil their roles under the National Agreement, we found Peaks wanting to embrace discussions about how their cultural authority, experience, partnerships, knowledge, skills, systems, workforce and resources are coming together and how the ongoing sector-strengthening work will be critical to sustained capacity building across their organisations, member organisations, broader ACCOs and other partners over time. Coalition of Peaks members also emphasised there was no point in talking about their experience, knowledge and skills without at the same time talking about the practical elements of capability including systems, workforce and resources.

Given the parallel Partnership Health Check process underway, we have not explored cultural, relational and partnership capabilities in detail in this research, although these matters did inevitably come up in discussions. Alternatively, we asked Coalition of Peaks members to focus on *functional* capabilities and identify their top strengths and their top priorities for strengthened capability and resources across the following categories:

- **Leadership and governance:** providing leadership and engaging in decision-making including being a partner and a joint decision-maker and placing culture at the centre of decision-making;
- **Community engagement:** involving community members in decision-making and discussions;
- **Policy design:** identifying key problems, issues or strengths to be built upon and formulating policy solutions based on experience, consultation, and analysis;
- **Implementation:** delivering new actions, policies and programs that directly flow from the Closing the Gap Agreements;
- **Data, monitoring and evaluation:** capturing data and measuring and reporting on activities to foster continuous improvement, accountability and results; and
- **Communication:** raising awareness, developing and delivering accessible and inclusive communications to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to talk together and to Governments, other stakeholders and the broader community about how to best realise the commitments in the National Agreement for organisations, communities and people on the ground.

The public policy model applying to the Closing the Gap Partnership can only be divided into the categories outlined above to a certain extent. It is also important to also understand the broader range of cultural, relational and partnership capabilities grounded in self-determination and power-sharing involved in the Closing the Gap Partnership.

### Strongest areas of capability

Across the Coalition of Peaks, leadership and governance, policy design and community engagement were identified by respondents as the strongest areas of capability. This partially reflects the nature of the Closing the Gap work to date and the fact the Coalition of Peaks and government parties are now transitioning into key elements of delivery.

**Figure 11**

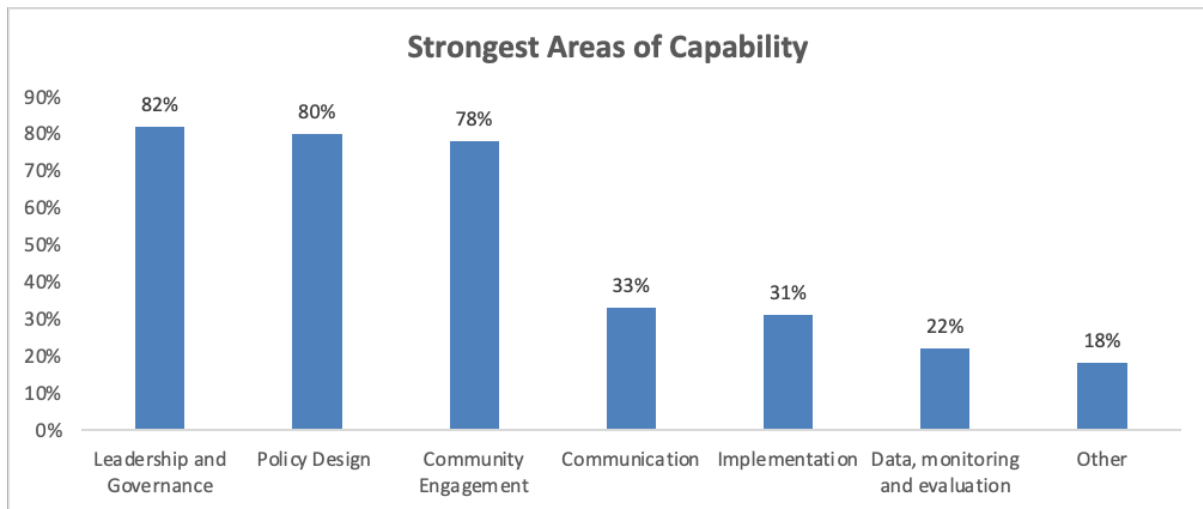


Figure 11: Strongest Areas of Capability Identified by Respondents

### Priorities for strengthened capability

Respondents identified a cross section of areas as priorities for strengthened capability, as reflected in Figure 12, including:

- policy design;
- community engagement;
- communication;
- leadership and governance;
- data, monitoring and evaluation; and
- implementation.

**Figure 12**

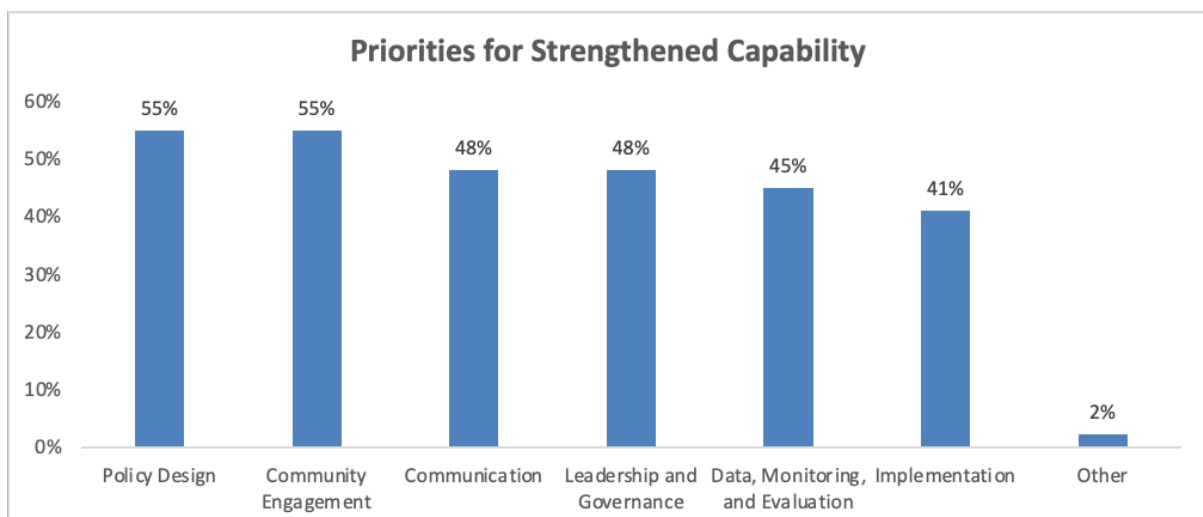


Figure 12: Priority Areas of Capability Identified by Respondents

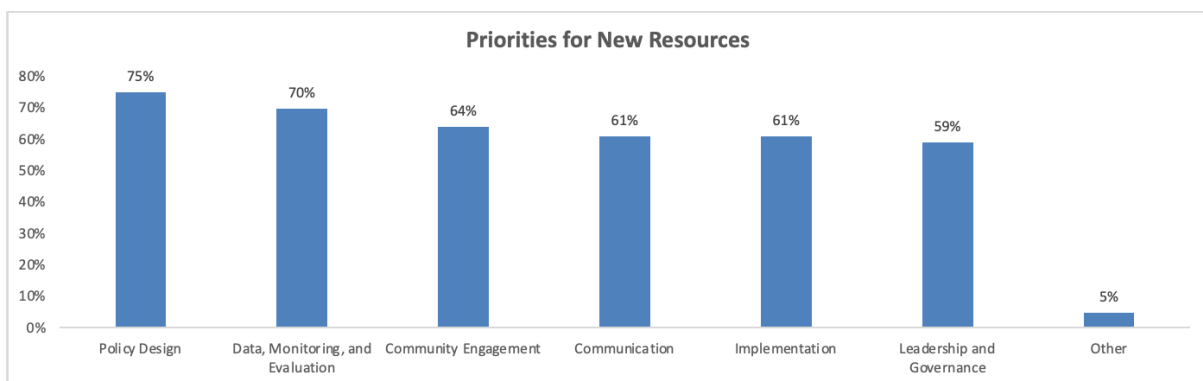


## Priorities for additional resources

Respondents identified a need for more resources across a largely corresponding range of capabilities (Figure 13) including:

- policy design;
- data, monitoring and engagement,
- community engagement;
- communication;
- implementation; and
- leadership and governance.

**Figure 13**



*Figure 13: Priority Areas of Capability Identified by Respondents*

Figure 14 examines Peaks' main constraints on their contributions to the National Agreement. Some 92 per cent referred to lack of staff, 86 per cent said lack of funding, 80 per cent said lack of time, 49 per cent said having to divert funding from other areas and 31 per cent of respondents noted that a lack of expertise was a constraint. This reflects that while Peaks are generally confident of their expertise, it will be an ongoing task to develop new skills and ways of working in many areas.

Figure 14

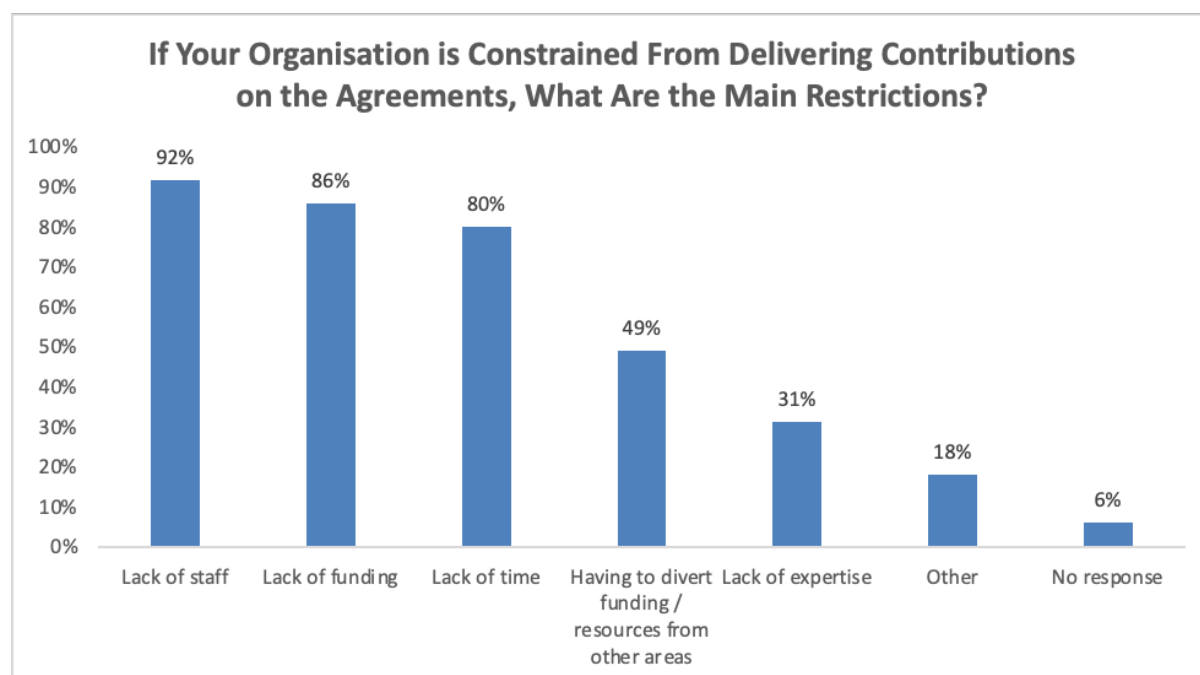


Figure 14: Issues Constraining Peaks from Delivering Contributions Identified by Respondents

Note: 12 Peaks selected “All of the above”, which has been incorporated into each of the above categories

## Findings and Next Steps

Below we step through our findings, summarise what we learnt in talking to Peaks and Governments, and suggest practical actions for next steps.

- 1. Coalition of Peaks members clearly report they have the knowledge, cultural authority, experience and skills to deliver under the National Agreement if appropriately supported and resourced.**

Coalition of Peaks members report they have the knowledge, experience, skills and reach into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and communities to deliver under the National Agreement in partnership with Australian Governments, if appropriately supported and resourced. However, under-funded or understaffed activities can fail even where knowledge, experience and skills exist<sup>5</sup>. Some Coalition of Peaks members reported that at present, there is a real risk of this occurring in under-resourced areas and feared this could be later misdiagnosed as a lack of underlying capacity within their organisations – when that is not the case.

<sup>5</sup> Tsey, et al., 2012, Improving Indigenous community governance through strengthening Indigenous and government organisational capacity. Resource sheet no.10 produced by the Australian Institute for Family Studies for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse

*“We have the skills and knowledge. It’s about the implementation, but we’re not funded to do the work. This isn’t a capability strengthening issue, it’s about being able to deliver”.*

- Coalitions of Peaks Member

*“There is plenty of expertise and no shortage of smart, well qualified Aboriginal people doing really good social media and communications work and community engagement work. There's not a workforce gap, it's a resource gap”.*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We have expertise, but we don't have time, space, staff and resources. It often feels like robbing Peter to pay Paul. We are making decisions about the most important meeting we need to go to. While we attend one, another one gets dropped. It's a balancing act with workflow.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“For some government colleagues, there has been direct exposure to ACCOs and the capability and capacity that exists which in a small way has been dispelling myths about whether Aboriginal people can make decisions for themselves and encouraging Governments to work with community-based organisations. They are seeing we are skilled, how much work gets done and the productivity and size of the outcome generated by a small workforce.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

Coalition of Peaks members recognise the journey they need to take to strengthen capability across their organisations and the Aboriginal community-controlled sector as a whole. With new ways of working comes the need for new roles and expanded responsibilities. New skills and capability need to be built and strengthened, supported by resources and investment.

**2. While leadership and governance are areas of strength across the Coalition of Peaks, the leadership workload should be shared and supported in order to build the resilience needed to maintain and sustain momentum.**

‘Leadership and governance’ were identified as a:

- strength by 82 per cent of respondents and by many Governments;
- an area for strengthened capacity by 48 per cent of respondents; and
- an area requiring additional resources by 59 per cent.

Many Government representatives expressed their respect for the leadership of the Peaks.

*"[Our jurisdictional Peak] is very open all the time. Not backwards in coming forward. The co-chairing is really great. We feel like they are there at the table and at the same level... They are very much across the content and very engaged."*

- Government Representative

*"We won't always see eye to eye, but I absolutely respect the Coalition of Peaks leadership in this."*

- Government Representative

*"[Our Jurisdictional Peak] has put in effort despite being stretched with resources. They drove negotiations through a weekly drafting group to maintain momentum. They are keeping us to account on working in a different way. They have legitimacy, a seat at the table and are working as a partner."*

- Government Representative

Concerningly, there was significant commentary from members of the Coalition of Peaks and from Government representatives about the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives who are heavily involved in Closing the Gap governance, and also responsible for managing important frontline services. These representatives are under significant pressure to manage their day-to-day business as usual operations, while also participating in the Closing the Gap architecture. They have heavy workloads, including chairing and co-chairing fortnightly teleconferences, working groups and ministerial level executive committees. Representatives in these positions are constantly having to choose which meeting not to attend and working long hours to manage their dual roles.

*"As much as your own Board supports this very important work, they are also concerned how much of it is impacting on myself as the CEO of a tiny organisation staffing wise and resource wise. They become concerned about how much it takes me away from core business. I would be interested in hearing from others how they find a balanced resolution around this...I do at times struggle with the commitment I have made from our organisation's resourcing aspect. So, it relies on a lot of goodwill and unpaid hours out of hours."*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*"There are a lot of people getting left behind with that sort of structure and pace. Worry isn't too strong a word when I reflect on where we got to. I was worried about their wellbeing [in relation to the leader of a Jurisdictional Peak]. It's such a big expectation and pressure to put on one person. We got through it in spite of the pressure. But it was an inordinate amount of pressure, politics, expectations, and the [jurisdictional Coalition of the Peaks representative] was unsupported and under resourced, as was Government."*

- Government Representative

*"We are largely focused on clients through our Client Service Officers as an organisation. However, it is worth noting that our work with Governments (policy and consultation processes) take up a lot of senior staff time... In my diary, I have three or four conflicts at any given time. We*

*are always trying to figure out who we can send and how we can cover all bases.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“A lot is happening in Aboriginal affairs which is fantastic, but it means many parts of our state Government are looking to engage with Aboriginal leaders... It’s a challenge for Government – how do we better coordinate so that valuable expertise from Aboriginal leaders and communities isn’t exhausted?”*

- Government Representative

The capacity of an organisation relates to its ability to get things done. Hard capacities include technical skills, structures, infrastructure and financial resources. Soft capacities include morale, engagement, motivation and staff wellbeing<sup>6</sup>. There is a risk to the wellbeing of representatives and staff involved in the Closing the Gap work who do not receive any deputy or policy support, which could lead to burnout.

*“We have to look at the health and well-being of people involved in this work. There is a serious overload. We are often in this space because of our commitment to do this work. We need to look at organisational wellbeing. The final comment is that Closing the Gap is a potential revolution around the way activities happen. We want the opportunity to participate fully and drive the agendas we need to. We are all stretched too thin. It is going to be about putting more oil on the machine rather than building another part to the machine.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“The lack of funding has meant I have had to rely really heavily on other staff. I have had to have our workforce development officer act as 2IC when I am not available. Even though he doesn’t get paid for that and it isn’t actually a position, I have had to rely on him. Likewise with our accountant and our admin officer. All the hard work means someone else has to pick up the slack. Plus, the late hours all the time, the taking work home, the impact on sleep. If you are working on Closing the Gap during work hours, then you are working on [your other organisational responsibility] out of hours. But we are going to do the best we can.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We have a smaller number of key players. We can’t burn out these key Aboriginal leaders contributing to this work. That’s part of our desire to find ways to share load and broaden representation.”*

- Government Representative

**3. The Coalition of Peaks has the networks and relationships to undertake strong community engagement and is already doing so where time allows. However, community engagement expertise is not being fully utilised because of limited resourcing and the extensive workload and accelerated pace of work related to implementing the National Agreement.**

Community engagement was identified by:

- 78 per cent of respondents as an area of strength;
- 55 per cent as an area requiring strengthened capability; and

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<sup>6</sup> Tsey, et al., 2012, Improving Indigenous community governance through strengthening Indigenous and government organisational capacity. Resource sheet no.10 produced by the Australian Institute for Family Studies for the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse

- 64 per cent as a priority for further resources.

Coalition of Peaks members pointed to the need to engage the community as critical to the success of the Closing the Gap process and the need to sustain engagement through implementation. Organisations with large service delivery footprints have well established community engagement and have used these to engage and deliver on the National Agreement.

*“In terms of community engagement, the proof is in the pudding with the way the ACCHOs have been there from the get-go to manage the COVID-19 pandemic with [our Jurisdictional Peak] coordinating. That has made a huge difference...When we look at human services and delivering better outcomes for Aboriginal people, the importance of those community networks and reach is probably underestimated... The COVID-19 pandemic brought into sharp relief the importance of community engagement.”*

- Government Representative

*“Our [state or territory representative] Peak has really solid structures to be able to tap into for communications and engagement and their members are all influential organisations in themselves. They are also nationally influential.”*

- Government Representative

However, lack of resources – particularly amongst Jurisdictional Peaks – has meant engagement with Commonwealth and state/territory officials and forums has sometimes been prioritised over community engagement, in order to meet the deadlines associated with the Closing the Gap milestones.

*“We haven’t had the funding or resources to complete community engagement in the extensive way that we would like to. For any of this to be successful and to be truly Aboriginal-led, Aboriginal people on the ground need to be involved and widely consulted. For the Agreement to be meaningful, it needs to be owned by Aboriginal people.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“With additional resources the time spent with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities would increase. At current, the same people who are engaging with the Coalition of Peaks and the State Governments then need to also engage with the communities. Increasing resourcing would allow a dedicated person to engage the communities without the constraints of also reviewing and providing feedback on documents, attending meetings and proposing activities.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

- 4. There is very strong policy design capability across some Peaks, while others (particularly individual member-based organisations) have strong service delivery capability that is integral for policy design. However, more policy resources are required to maximise the Coalition of Peaks’ input to the policy design process.**

Policy design was identified by:

- 80 per cent of respondents as an area of strength;
- 55 per cent as an area requiring strengthened capability; and

- 75 per cent as a priority for further resources.

While policy capability is high across the broad spectrum of Coalition of Peaks members including National Peaks, Jurisdictional Peaks and member organisations, Coalition of Peaks members indicated that the scale and remit of the Closing the Gap workload requires a modest increase in policy positions. In many cases organisations said the addition of even one FTE with policy responsibilities would enable them to fully participate in the Closing the Gap work.

Several national peaks identified their policy leadership as directly benefiting Government policies and investments.

*“Our policy leadership played a significant role in the \$120 million in new Commonwealth investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood services announced on National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day this year.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We had a leadership role in the development of two key policy frameworks in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health - the revision of the Health Plan and Health Workforce Plan - which form a significant basis of the health component of the Agreement. These plans reflect the priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities far more strongly than their predecessors and incorporate Indigenous knowledges better, such as the cultural determinants of health. Implementation of these plans will provide a foundation for a more holistic approach to health and wellbeing and an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation in the health workforce, through more culturally responsive approaches to policy and program development, led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

Jurisdictional Coalition of Peaks members also noted the importance of bringing service delivery data and experience to bear in policy discussions.

*“It is very positive coming together to share expertise through the [Jurisdictional Peak body]. It is a forum for strong policy development, grounded in service delivery experience”.*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

However, in some instances, a lack of dedicated policy officers is restricting Peaks to primarily responding to Government proposals, rather than bringing their own policy initiatives to the table.

*“[Peaks] need to bring forward their own directions rather than waiting for Government to put forward a proposal and then smashing it down.”*

- Government Representative

*“Policy capability varies, of course, according to history. Some policy capability within Peaks is fairly well evolved, especially where a fair bit of funding has gone in... I mean in other areas, Peaks have had bit of a different role and have been focused on advocacy and delivery... they are strong organisations jut not yet as linked to agencies and policy processes...”*

- Government Representative

One Coalition of Peaks member noted as the leader of their Jurisdictional Peak, as well as the CEO of a large service delivery agency, what they really needed was a policy officer to support their dual-leadership role. Another peaks representative noted that funding is generally provided to ACCOs for service delivery only and rarely for policy and research capability.

**5. Peaks are concerned about identifying resources to support implementation as the Closing the Gap work progresses from establishing architecture into implementation. A capacity shift is required to allow co-design with the community and delivery through community-controlled organisations.**

There is still significant work to be undertaken to establish the Closing the Gap architecture, and policy design work for place-based and policy partnerships, which is happening concurrently to implementation of early Closing the Gap program initiatives. However, Peaks are also concerned about ensuring there is effective capability and resources for implementation.

Implementation was identified by:

- 31 per cent of respondents as an area of strength;
- 41 per cent as an area requiring strengthened capability; and
- 61 per cent as a priority for further resources.

Coalition of Peaks members feel the implementation effort has been underestimated and does not account for the significance of the work, its complexity (establishing new governance, setting policies and procedures, establishing discrete projects related to policy partnerships, sector strengthening, place-based partnerships, and data projects), combined with the need to acquire and develop new skills and capabilities. Members noted that they will need to plan for capacity development and implementation costs will need to be adequately estimated and budgeted.

Peaks are concerned about shifting gears as the Closing the Gap work progresses from establishing architecture into implementation.

*“The volume of work and competing demands does make participation challenging, particularly shifting increasingly toward implementation and the various streams of work this has generated.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

Several Coalition respondents noted the transformation in responsibility from advocacy and negotiation to implementation, requires a capacity shift to allow co-design with the community and delivery through community-controlled organisations.

*“The work will now change from advocacy and negotiation to implementation, monitoring and accountability. What is required going forward is a shift towards the detail of implementation and the need to lift capacity to engage in an ongoing basis with local Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal communities”.*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We need to be resourced to find ways to really co-design programs and allow the community to be a part of implementation. We don't just want to be 'participating', we need to be 'doing' and have ACCOs actually delivering services and programs.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member



Government representatives also acknowledged the need for a discussion around the capabilities required for implementation.

*“We would be keen to get to a point to discuss with [our jurisdictional Peak] the capabilities to deliver on implementation. This is a shared partnership with shared accountabilities... We want to know what they are going to do to improve capability of the community-controlled sector.”*

- Government Representative

- 6. Data, monitoring and evaluation capacity should be built within the network of Peaks so that service level information can be used to make evidence-based decisions on the design, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs. Given there is an acknowledged workforce shortage in data, monitoring and evaluation expertise across both government and the Coalition of Peaks, consideration should be given to building long-term workforce capability in those areas.**

Data, monitoring and evaluation was identified by:

- 22 per cent of respondents as an area of strength;
- 45 per cent as an area for further capability; and
- 70 per cent as a priority for further resources.

As noted in the National Agreement, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations should be supported by Governments to build capability and expertise in collecting, using and interpreting data in a meaningful way. While this will be particularly important for the six community data projects, all members of the Coalition of Peaks need to build their capabilities in these areas in order to capitalise on community-controlled delivery of services through continuous improvement and shared best practice. The Indigenous Evaluation Strategy produced by the Productivity Commission notes that “for decades there have been calls to better understand how policies and programs are affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. But the reality is that evidence about what works and why remains thin. And yet, to design policies and programs that improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, evidence is central”<sup>7</sup>.

Coalition of Peaks respondents noted that they are the repositories of important client level data, which requires expertise and capacity in order to use this information to improve national frameworks, for data projects and to evaluate the community-controlled sector.

*“We hold valuable client data that demonstrates the interactions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with the justice and services system. This could be harnessed to respond in smarter ways to improve justice and broader outcomes. We are very conscious we are sitting on a lot of data, the challenge is resourcing someone with the right expertise to fully utilise it and share information. It is also related to needing to ensure we have rigorous evaluation of the Aboriginal Community Controlled sector and what we are achieving. We need to identify common points for early intervention across our services.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

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<sup>7</sup> Productivity Commission (2020) Indigenous Evaluation Strategy <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/indigenous-evaluation/strategy>

*“Significant resources are required to enable community data projects in particular: the development of Indigenous data principles and practices for the sector; investment into a database maintained by the Jurisdictional peak body for its members to feed live data sets; the need for facilitated community data workshops to design localised principles for data management and how it can inform policy and practice and essentially outcomes for their community.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We have significant expertise and detailed knowledge of our clients and the supports they need to improve outcomes. We can build the evidence-base with localised data from the ground up, learning from the service delivery experience and hearing client views to drive population change. Having resources to fully engage would enable the best possible outcomes. There is a sense that we are not using sufficient organisational intelligence from service delivery organisations in Australia to drive change and progressively improve community health and outcomes in comparison to UK experience with disadvantaged cohorts for example”.*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

Several government representatives observed that data, monitoring and evaluation is an area where capacity needs to be strengthened on both sides. One representative noted that Government (and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations) are reliant on data which is generated and provided by Government and not necessarily geared towards use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations or policy officers in Government working in Aboriginal affairs.

*“Everyone is aware there is a workforce gap in [data, monitoring and evaluation]... There are lots of different jobs and skills in this area related to extraction, analysis, methodology. You don’t have to be a university graduate, community members and service organisations can be trained.*

*Aptitude is important.”*

- Government Representative

*“Capability within government is low, particularly on locational data. We’ve struggled in the past to allow access to data to see the impact of interventions within a reasonable timeframe”.*

- Government Representative

*“This is an area where we are not mature. Even within the [area responsible for Aboriginal affairs] we don’t have a data person. We rely on central data areas for data collection to provide information. We don’t have any control over the data. It has to be requested with some sort of analysis and [our office] does the policy around it. In terms of the skills needed on the [Coalition of Peaks] you’d think you need people who understand at least the story around the data. But it is Government’s responsibility to put it in a way the community understands, not just a raw spreadsheet.”*

- Government Representative

*“There are absolutely gaps on data sharing, interpretation and communication.”*

- Government Representative

*“We all have issues with data capability and it’s going to be critical. One of the rationales for us investing in the current Peaks is for us all to be using the knowledge and data sitting within ACCOs to improve policies and programs. The capacity at the moment to be using local level data is not overwhelmingly strong. We all know that.”*

- Government Representative

*“[Our Peak] will need to build capability to monitor levels of community engagement across our state and progress under the National Agreement. [Our Peak] is small and the Agreement is broad. This will be a challenge for all parties but for [our Peak] in particular as a small agency.”*

- Government Representative

Data, monitoring and evaluation capacity is integral to measuring and delivering on the Closing the Gap Partnership and workforce capability has not been sufficiently considered to date. It is worth exploring tangible mechanisms to build capacity such as a national training plan to build expertise in collecting, analysing and applying data through:

- university placements with flexible entry and scholarships to support student pathways;
- outreach with major data agencies such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to provide placements for outposted staff from the Coalition of Peaks to gain practical experience; and
- establishing networks of data, monitoring and evaluation specialists across the Coalition of Peaks and Governments.

**7. Many members of the Coalition of Peaks have voiced an urgent need to strengthen communication with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities about the National Agreement. Peaks are not finding they have sufficient resources and space to concentrate on this work and are concerned this will limit awareness of the Agreement and potential buy-in and valuing of what the National Agreement is delivering.**

Communication was identified by:

- 33 per cent of respondents as an area of strength;
- 48 per cent as an area for strengthened capability; and
- 61 per cent as a priority for further resources.

There was a consistent message across respondents to the questionnaire that there had been insufficient communication about the Agreements.

*“It really concerns me that communications and awareness raising is an area we haven’t had the resources to do well in because it’s such an important part.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“There is no capacity for communications which makes it difficult to keep the broader Aboriginal community on the train of the Closing the Gap campaign.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“How are we going to let our mob know how we are going, where we are tracking? We do communications but we want to be able to put across our goals and raise awareness. I feel we need resourcing around that. We are in discussions with the government about policy officer positions but there has been no focus on positions related to communications or community engagement.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“The Aboriginal community isn't going to be able to help implement the changes if it doesn't know what the commitments are, what the progress is, or what the opportunities are for them within the Implementation Plan...”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

Government representatives also expressed concern about the lack of communication about the Agreements to date.

*“If you took a poll today of 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and asked them about the new Agreement, the resonance would be pretty low. Now, that has always been a problem when initiatives are set by a national and jurisdictional Government but this is now different... It's important that communities are a bit more aware of, of what we're trying to do. It makes things a lot easier when you're talking about improving health services or better delivery of child protection services and connecting it to transforming the way we do business. I still think we've got quite a way to go embedding the new Closing the Gap Partnership as a concept at the local level.”*

- Government Representative

*“A big thing will be how to communicate out to organisations and to the regions. Because of the timeline for development of the Implementation Plan, we weren't able to get out to communities to make sure regional voices were heard. That's probably one of the weak points that will be strengthened.”*

- Government Representative

The Joint Communication Strategy was agreed by the Joint Council in April 2021. Its key objectives are to:

- build ownership, trust, credibility and accountability of the National Agreement among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and assist them to engage with Governments to apply the commitments in the National Agreement;
- provide a central role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander media;
- ensure communications about the National Agreement are clear, accessible, timely, relevant and work to preserve the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages;
- ensure communications products are developed and implemented in partnership, including through community generated content; and
- build awareness and support among all Australians, including to ensure strong systemic engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It was intended that Implementation Plans would budget and plan to actualise these commitments, however, most Implementation Plans have yet to establish communication strategies and budgets.

The recently released Implementation Plans do contain commitments to communicate what is occurring under the National Agreement but it is clear that prompt action needs to be taken to develop communication materials to promote the Agreements across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. There is an opportunity for more work to be done centrally to support all Peaks and jurisdictions to communicate about the Agreements.

*“There is a whole range of work our members could be doing to engage with community (which they are not currently resourced to do) and we could be helping to facilitate and co-ordinate that. There are so many layers in our sector. We also need to be aware of putting our members in a position where they are very stretched and severely under resourced. We could be taking the lead to do this but then we would be filtering this down to our member organisations who are severely under-resourced. That is the reality. This severe underfunding of our members in itself is an ongoing massive gap. And a lot of time is being lost in terms of how this could really work and support our communities as a whole.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

#### **8. There is an opportunity to collaborate and pool expertise to increase the skills of staff across the Coalition**

Coalition of Peaks members expressed an increasing need throughout the partnership negotiation and implementation process for skilled and trained individuals to fill a range of capabilities and roles, as noted above.

There is an opportunity for the Coalition of Peaks to collaborate, pool expertise, increase the skills of staff and ensure the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce across the community-controlled sector is empowered to make the strongest contributions they can to Closing the Gap. There would be significant benefit in increasing the flow of expertise, skills and perspectives into and out of the Coalition of Peaks Policy and Secretariat Team and across Jurisdictional and National Peaks, Government agencies and other organisations. This would contribute to strengthening the processes of partnership, innovation and transformation sitting within the Agreements.

Periodically bringing in strategic long-term planning and organisational change experts would also assist Peaks to take a birds-eye-view of progress towards strengthening architecture and transforming ways of working with Governments.

In order for strengthened capability to be built effectively across the Coalition of Peaks, the workforce and resourcing shortages identified in this review need to be addressed. The next section provides findings recommendations in relation to resourcing.

## Recommendations

Priority	Recommendations
<p><b>Build on the strengths of Peaks and address priorities for increased capability</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Establish a strong workforce capability plan for the Coalition of Peaks including communities of practice, training and mentoring arrangements that seek to pool expertise across members in critical areas including policy design, data monitoring and evaluation, implementation, community engagement and communication. For example, a national training plan for data, monitoring and evaluation could be established to provide tertiary pathways for data specialists.</li> <li>8. Identify flexible ways to use senior placements, secondments and rotations to increase the flow of expertise, skills and perspectives into and out of the Coalition of Peaks Policy and Secretariat Team and across Jurisdictional and National Peaks, member organisations, Government agencies and other organisations. Expert partners such as the data agencies could be invited to participate in these arrangements through providing opportunities for practical learning and skills transfer.</li> <li>9. Support the Joint Communications Strategy by providing funding to develop communication materials to:             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Promote the Partnership and National Agreements across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities; and</li> <li>b. Improve buy-in, and commitment to, the National Agreement over the longer-term and increase accountability to communities for results.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

## Ensure all Peaks have appropriate resources consistent with their roles

### Snapshot of Resources and Funding for the Coalition of Peaks

At the formation of the Closing the Gap Partnership it was clear the Coalition of Peaks would need sufficient resources to be an effective partner with Australian Governments. Clause 30 of the Partnership Agreement acknowledges the Coalition of Peaks need to be provided with ongoing financial support to enable them to engage and negotiate as equal partners with Australian Governments.

Coalition of Peaks members have come to the table with different and complex funding arrangements that predate the Closing the Gap Partnership. Across the members of the Coalition of Peaks, organisations receive funding from a variety of different sources, through different funding mechanisms and over different time periods. Some organisations are entirely Government funded, others have small revenue streams through membership levies or philanthropic sources. Many respondents report they are the recipients of grant funding and do not have any ongoing core funding that covers their day-to-day operations. Short-term project dependency contributes to ongoing uncertainty of funding and creates challenges to meet the costs of overheads and core business functions such as corporate services, operations management, executive leadership and governance.

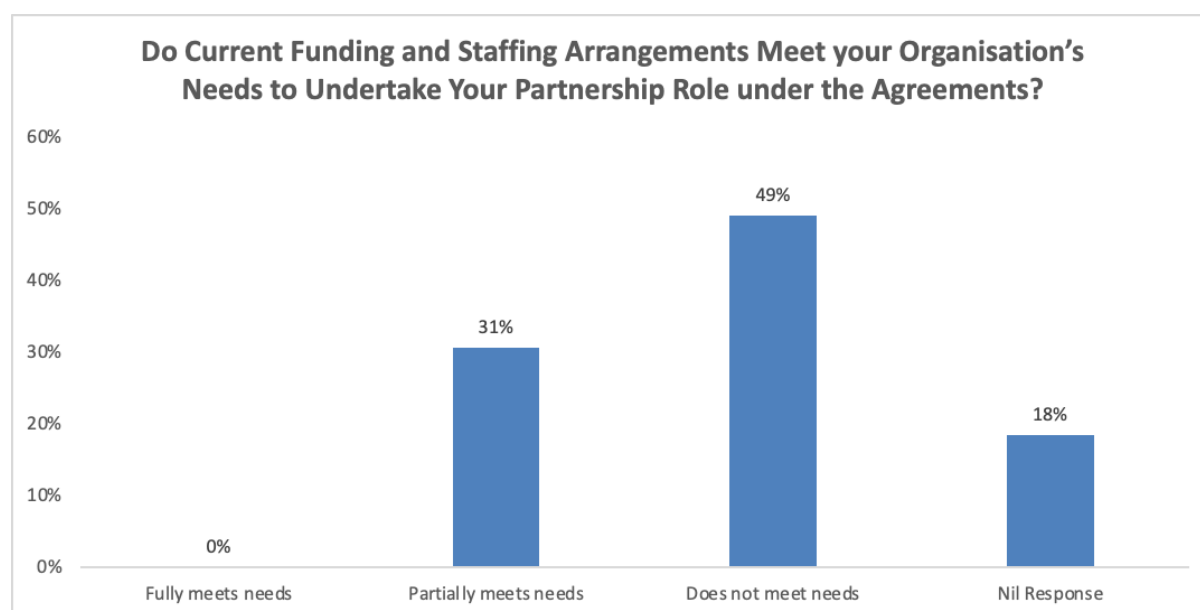
As challenging as it will be, it is clear that this complexity must be managed and that all Coalition of Peaks members need to be resourced to undertake their partnership role under the National Agreement.

The Coalition of Peaks has welcomed Australian Government commitments to funding the development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector, including the contributions of all Australian Governments to the \$77.2 million virtual funding pool (over four years from 2020-21). However, funding from that pool is for ACCO sector development broadly, with a focus on priority areas under the National Agreement. A lot of work is still required to understand how that funding will be allocated.

There are examples of Australian Governments working to provide additional resources to the Coalition of Peaks to undertake partnership work, but it is early days. As a result, no members of the Coalition of Peaks, as yet, say funding fully meets needs (see Figure 15):

- 49 per cent of Peaks say funding does not meet needs;
- 31 per cent say funding partially meets needs; and
- the remainder submitted a nil response.

**Figure 15**



*Figure 15: Percentage of Coalition of Peaks Respondents on whether funding meets needs*

When asked what the most important assistance their organisation could receive to support involvement in the National Agreement, Coalition of Peaks respondents had a consistent message that more resources and staff are required.

Only 31 per cent of responding Coalition of Peaks members report they are receiving additional funding to contribute to new work under the National Agreement, with 54 per cent not receiving any additional resources at all. The remainder did not respond. Of those Peaks who are receiving funding:

- 53 per cent are State and Territory member organisations;
- 27 per cent are National Peaks; and
- 20 per cent are Jurisdictional Peaks.

Forty-five per cent of respondents are currently discussing or negotiating to receive additional funding in the next 12 months as part of their work under the National Agreement, 37 per cent are not in discussions and the remainder did not respond. When asked about the provision of non-financial support:

- no respondents said that shared information systems were in operation; and
- six per cent said office space had been provided.

Respondents to the questionnaire were asked to provide information on the number of full-time employees (FTE) working in their organisations. While the average number of FTE across all Coalition of Peaks organisations is 52, the number of FTE working specifically on core activities under the Closing the Gap Partnership and structure average is 1.7 across all questionnaire respondents. It is likely respondents may not have included some discrete projects being undertaken in relation to the socio-economic targets and under-estimated the time of senior Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives involved with the Closing the Gap architecture and governance. It is also true that, in a sense, all of the work of Coalition of Peaks members is related to Closing the Gap.



However, the 1.7 FTE figure remains a critical marker that reveals the Closing the Gap architecture and defined processes under the National Agreement are currently relying on too few people.

## **National Peaks**

There is significant variation in the funding and FTE arrangements across the National Peaks. They are receiving income from a range of sources including:

- Commonwealth Government;
- State and Territory Governments;
- philanthropy;
- donations; and
- member fees.

Funding durations and obligations with Governments vary. Some National Peaks are almost entirely reliant on multiple fixed term grants, terminating projects and fee-for-service funding. Others receive significant dedicated core funding to support their day-to-day responsibilities as a Peak body. Some National Peaks are not currently in receipt of any Government funding. One Peak said that communities expect Peaks to be independent voices to governments, but that explaining this to governments and maintaining adequate funding can be difficult. Peaks are sometimes perceived in simplistic terms as advocating against government policy when they are trying to navigate a very complex path representing communities as well as partnering with governments.

The following charts provide an illustration of the different funding arrangements for two National Peaks and give an indication of the complexity of these arrangements. Some organisations generate small income streams from membership levies as with the annual income for one National Peak body illustrated in Figure 16. While revenue streams may increase with the growth of the ACCO sector it will not remove the need for secure and appropriate funding from Government to support the Closing the Gap Partnership.

Figure 17 provides an example of another National Peak body operating with a patchwork of funding including 10 Commonwealth grants (six from NIAA and three from DSS), five grants from state government, and eight non-government grants, sponsorships or donations as well as funding through partnerships with other Aboriginal organisations.

Figure 16

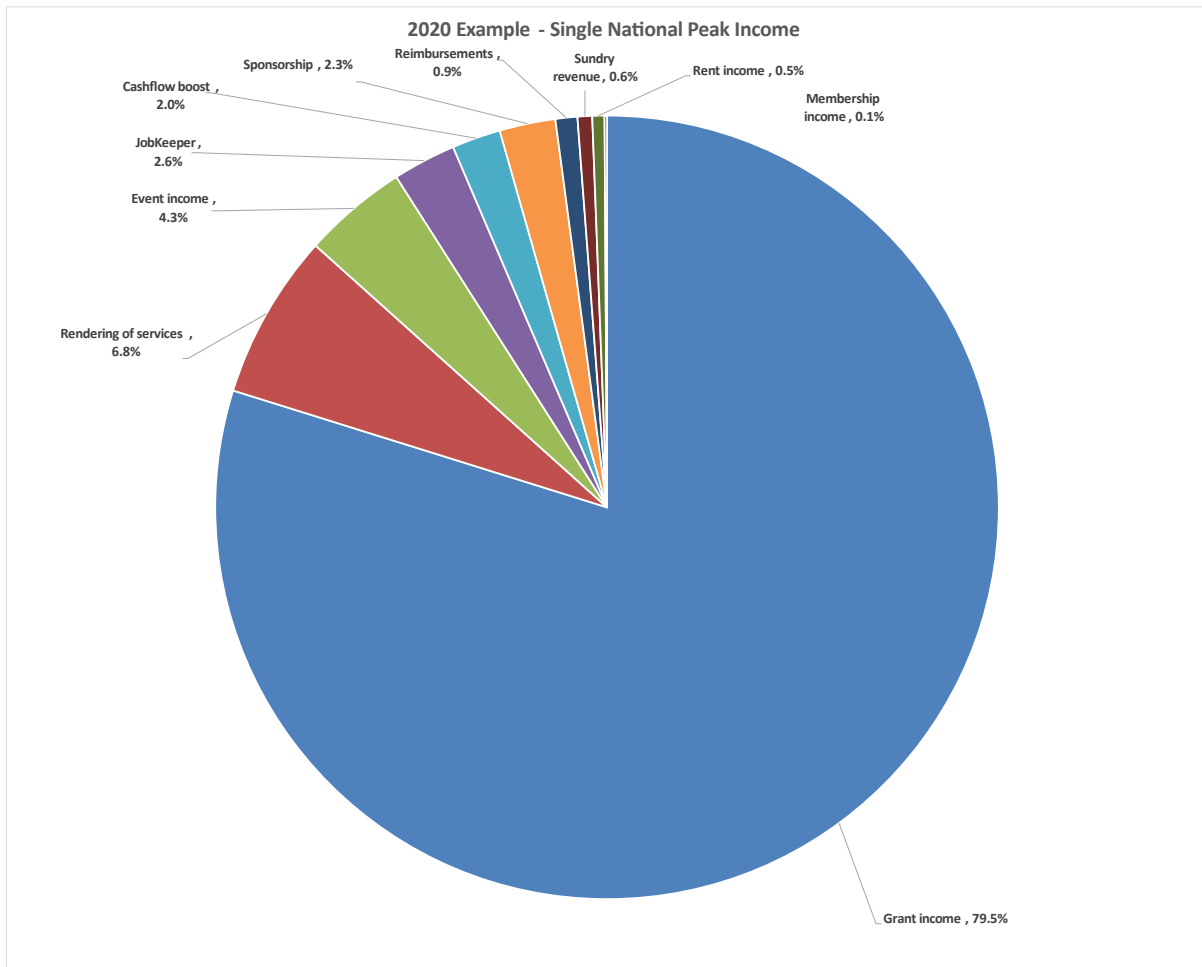


Figure 16: 2020 Example – Single National Peak Income

Figure 17

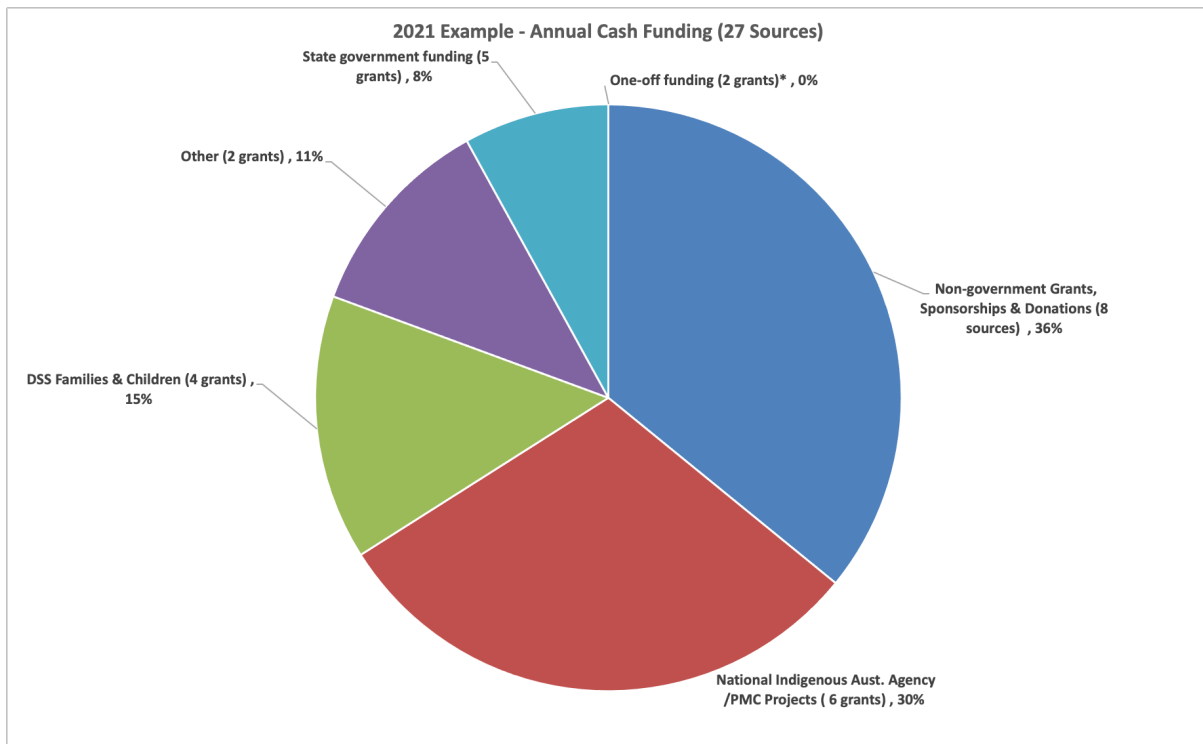


Figure 17: 2021 Example – Annual Cash Funding (27 Sources)

The average total number of FTE employed in each National Peak was 15. However, there was a significant range with some Peaks not having government funding to employ any FTE, and other larger, more established Peaks having between 20 to 40 FTE. Across the National Peaks the number of FTE working on Closing the Gap ranges considerably, with 53 per cent of National Peaks able to direct one FTE or less to work on the National Agreement and 33 per cent having two to five FTE working on Closing the Gap. It should be noted that Figure 18 does not represent funding *allocated* for FTE working on the Agreement, rather it reflects the number of FTE members of the Coalition are currently able to *direct* towards Closing the Gap work within their existing resources.

Figure 18

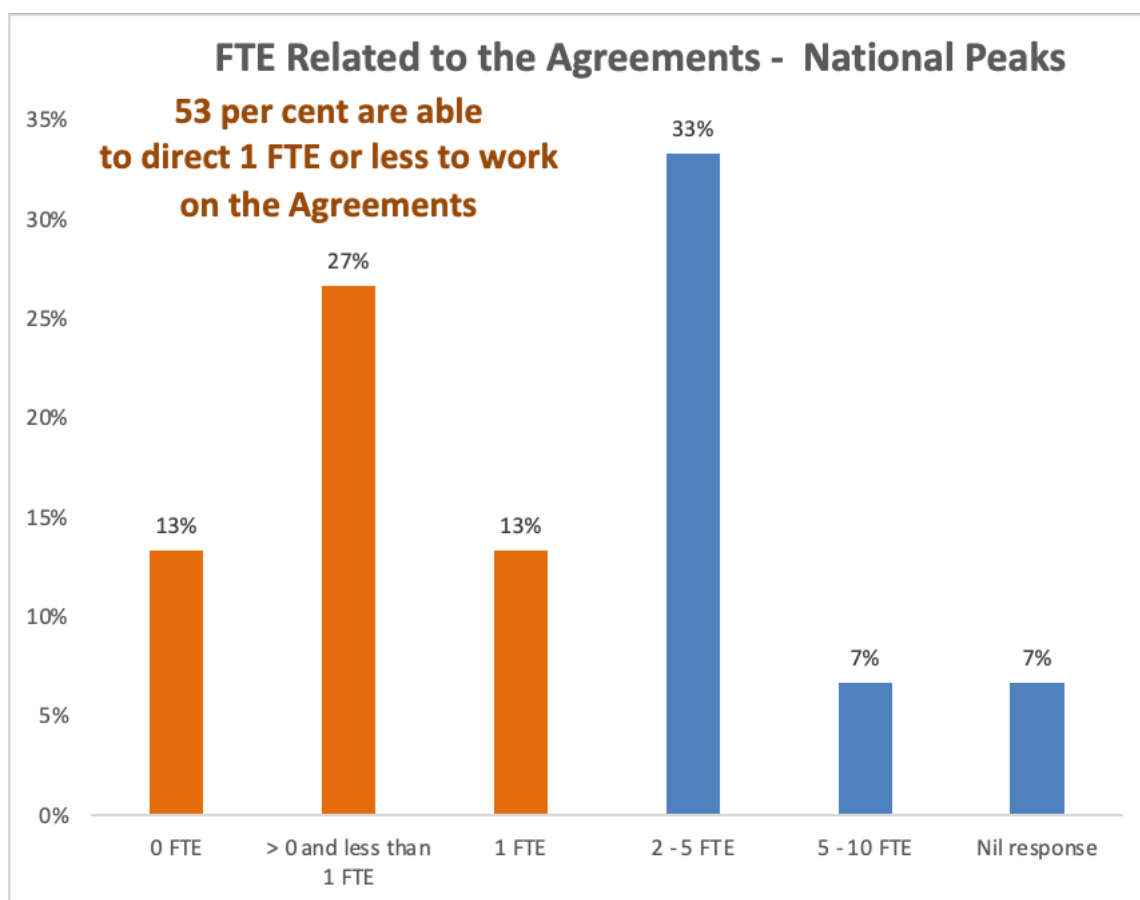


Figure 18: National Peaks FTE working on Closing the Gap Partnership

Overall, 27 per cent of National Peaks have received funding specifically in relation to Closing the Gap and 67 per cent have not received any funding. The remainder did not respond. Several of the Peaks are currently in negotiations or discussions to receive funding for Closing the Gap. Some 47 per cent of National Peak bodies say funding does not meet needs, 33 per cent say funding partially meets needs, and the remainder marked “other” or did not respond.

### Jurisdictional Peaks

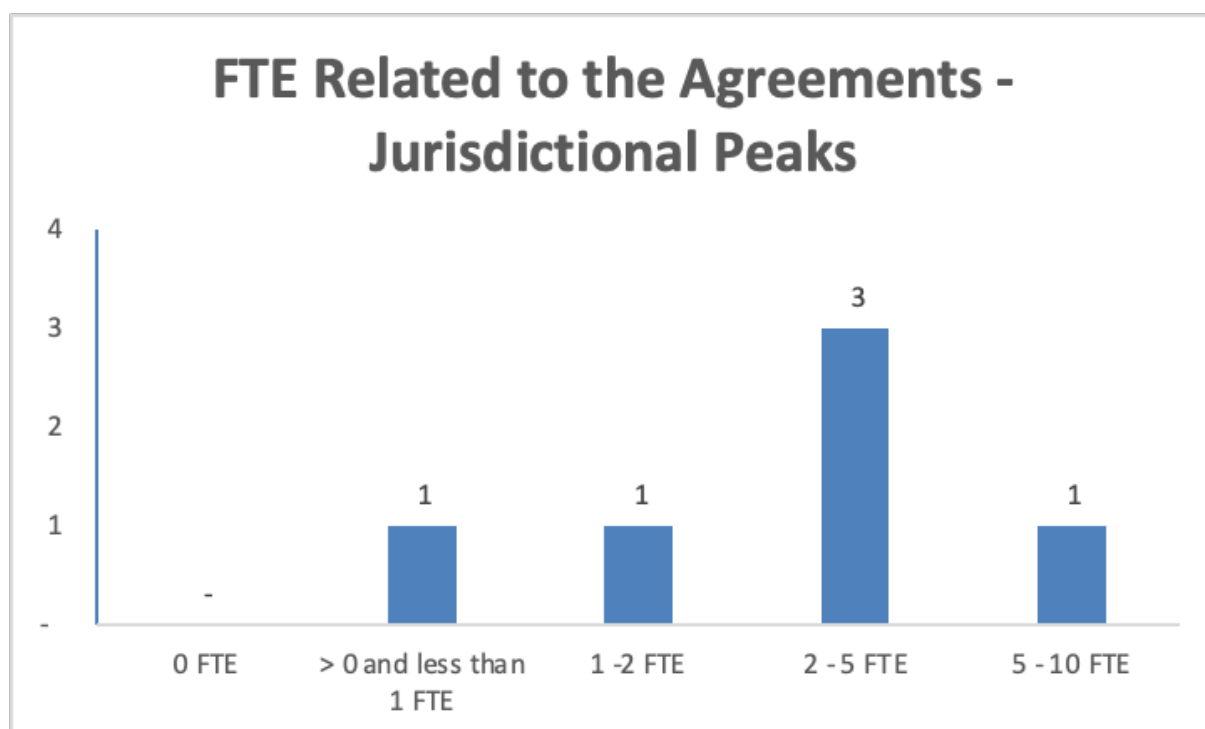
There is also a great deal of variance across the Jurisdictional Peaks in their funding arrangements with state and territory Governments in relation to funding amounts, FTE numbers, salary levels, provision for on-costs and duration. The following table provides a high-level summary of current funding arrangements for the jurisdictional Peaks.

Funding for Jurisdictional Peaks

NSW	The NSW Government has provided \$3.9 million over 12 months for 22 FTE to support NSW members of the Coalition. These positions have been distributed across NSW CAPO and its member organisations with: six FTE positions in NSW CAPO; and two FTE positions in each of the eight member organisations.
WA	The Western Australian Government is providing \$1.4 million to establish a consortium of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. This funding is for AHCWA to deliver a discrete project to strengthen the capacity of ACCOs in WA. The funding is not targeted at providing AHCWA with additional resources or capacity to undertake Closing the Gap Partnership activities.
NT	From 2021-22 Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT (APO NT) will be receiving funding for five FTE with: \$300,000 from the NT Government under a five-year funding agreement; and \$400,000 from the Commonwealth (NIAA) under a three-year funding agreement.
SA	The SA Government is providing the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON) with \$433,000 per annum over four years for operating costs and for meetings. The SA Government has committed to extending this funding over the life of the Agreement on a three plus three plus three year model.
VIC	The Victorian Government is currently providing approximately \$200,000 per annum for 1.5 FTE in the Aboriginal Executive Council and \$80,000 for each of the 11 member organisations. A new funding arrangement is currently being discussed.
QLD	The Queensland Government has approved funding of \$2.4 million over four years from 2021-22 to support the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition (QATSIC). This grant funding will support five policy officers located within QATSIC partners to engage with Closing the Gap processes and assist the Queensland Government in implementing the National Agreement.
ACT	A temporary contracted officer (0.9 FTE) is providing Closing the Gap policy support until December 2021. ATSIEB elected members also receive sitting fees.
TAS	While the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) is not currently receiving funding from the Tasmanian Government, discussions will continue to see how this could be accomplished. External support was provided to help in the engagement and drafting of the Tasmanian Implementation Plan.

At present, half of the Jurisdictional Peak bodies say funding partially meets needs and half say funding does not meet needs. Across the Jurisdictional Peaks the number of FTE working directly on the Closing the Gap Partnership ranges from 0.9 FTE to 6 FTE and correlates to funding provided by jurisdictional governments to support participation in the Closing the Gap Partnership.

**Figure 19**



*Figure 19: Jurisdictional Peaks' FTE working on the National Agreement*

### **State/Territory Members**

There is significant variation in the funding and FTE arrangements across state and territory members of the Coalition of Peaks. Twenty-seven state/territory members of the Coalition of Peaks responded to the questionnaire. Of these, 20 were service delivery agencies and the remainder had functions related to research, enterprise networks, and advisory councils.

State/territory Peaks members receive income from a variety of sources including:

- Commonwealth Government;
- State and Territory Governments;
- philanthropy; and
- self-generated revenue.

Funding relationships with Governments vary. Some funding is via non-ongoing grant arrangements, while some other organisations receive income from statutory funds. The duration of funding ranges from six months to five years.

There is significant variance in the total number of FTE employed in state/territory member organisations, consistent with their different roles and responsibilities. The total number of FTE employed in state and territory members ranges from one to 260. The number of FTE working on Closing the Gap also ranges between zero and two to five FTE.

Figure 20

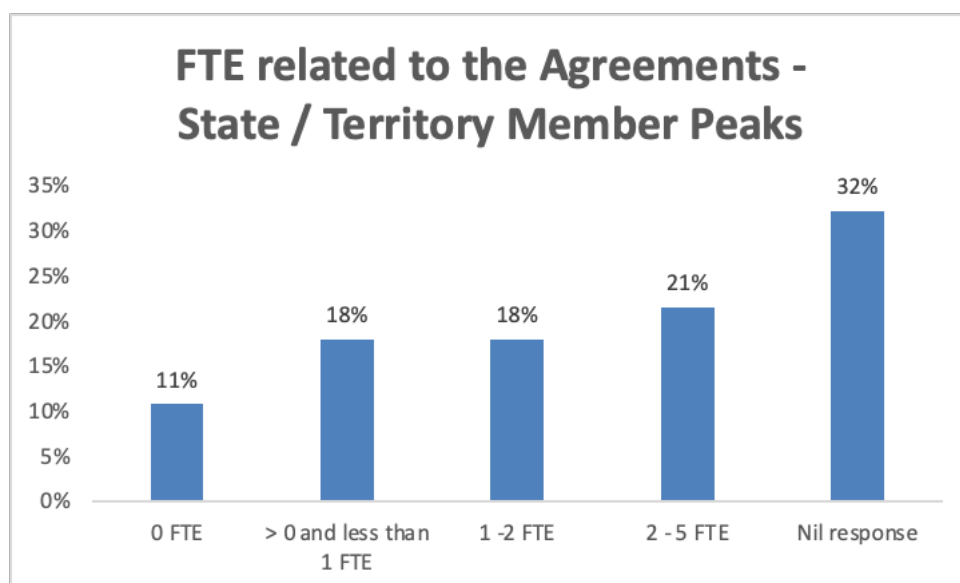


Figure 20: State/Territory FTE working on the National Agreement

When asked if they are in receipt of funding specifically in relation to Closing the Gap:

- 48 per cent state and territory members said 'yes'. This includes NSW member Peaks receiving funding via NSW CAPO and VIC members receiving funding via AEC and members receiving funding for specific discrete elements of work;
- 30 per cent said 'no'; and
- the remainder did not respond.

Fifty-two per cent of state and territory members say funding does not meet needs, 22 per cent say funding partially meets needs and the remainder did not respond.

## Findings and Next Steps

It is clear that a lot of work is taking place to consider ongoing resourcing for the Coalition of Peaks, particularly now that Implementation Plans are in place. There is a need to step back and take a birds-eye-view to understand the importance of resourcing decisions for the overall outcomes being sought under the National Agreement.

Investing resources to support members of the Coalition of Peaks to be accountable partners will pay dividends by improving outcomes and reducing investments in practices, policies and programs that have not previously proven to be effective.

Across all Australian Governments significant resources are being put towards the delivery of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. In 2015-16, total direct government expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians was estimated to be \$33.4 billion<sup>8</sup>.

- The estimated expenditure per person was \$44,886 for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, around twice the rate for non-Indigenous Australians (\$22,356). The higher per

<sup>8</sup> Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2017 Indigenous Expenditure Report.

person expenditure reflects the combined effects of greater intensity of service use because of greater need and because of the younger age profile of the population and higher cost of providing services (for example, because of more remote locations, or because targeted services are provided in addition to mainstream services).

- Indigenous specific services (targeted expenditure assumed to relate exclusively to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians) accounted for 18 per cent of direct expenditure on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Mainstream services (expenditure available to all Australians through services and programs — for example, school education) accounted for 82 per cent.
- The Australian Government accounted for \$14.7 billion (44 per cent) of direct Indigenous expenditure. The remaining \$18.8 billion (56 per cent) was provided by State and Territory Governments.

**1. The majority of Peaks are not yet receiving appropriate, dedicated, and secure funding to ensure they can act as accountable partners and fulfil their roles under the National Agreement.**

The Coalition of Peaks reported they welcome the initial investments Australian Governments have made under the National Agreement and Implementation Plans. However, after mapping the work required for the Coalition of Peaks to fulfil their roles and responsibilities under the National Agreement against current capabilities and resourcing, we have found there is a gap. Too few organisations are receiving funding specifically to support their participation in the Closing the Gap work and those that are noted this funding is not adequate. It is critical that resources match the scale and momentum of the partnership and this is not yet the case. As noted in Clause 33 of the National Agreement, adequate funding is needed to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties to be partners with governments. However, at this stage only 31 per cent of respondents are receiving funding to specifically support their involvement in the Closing the Gap Partnership.

**2. In some cases where funding has been provided, the terms of the funding agreement have not necessarily met the spirit of the Agreement and these arrangements are not working to chart a course to better practice.**

In some cases where funding has been provided, the terms of the funding agreement have not necessarily met the spirit of the Agreement. We have found examples where funding:

- has been provided for a short term only;
- has been allowed to lapse, although Government has signalled its intention to renew the funding arrangement;
- has been set based on the salary costs of a junior position in Government, but the responsibilities of the Peak's representative include negotiating with Chief Executives in Government; and
- does not provide for on-costs and overheads, resulting in reliance on support provided by community-controlled service delivery organisations.

It should also be noted that ACCOs may not wish to enter into funding agreements with government parties where there is a divergence of views on processes, program objectives or scope.



Some Peaks are receiving funding for additional specific work under the National Agreement, for example, to develop a sector strengthening plan, while receiving no additional resources to meet the full breadth of their activities under the Agreement. This leaves core functions unfunded such as member engagement, communications, representation and leadership on committees and policy advice.

One Jurisdictional Peak noted that although funding has been provided it has not been in the spirit of the Agreement as “funding lacks adequacy and flexibility”. Another Jurisdictional Peak noted that while they were receiving funding from Government, they now have a vastly expanded workload exceeding these resources, creating significant strain on resourcing for the organisation. Better planning and resourcing discussions are required to ensure workloads are realistic and able to be achieved.

The current slow and patchy allocation of resources needs to be addressed for the overall partnership to be successful. There is little rationale for the vastly different treatment of similar bodies within the Coalition of Peaks.

*“It comes down to lack of reliable and consistent funding as the main restriction [on participation in the Closing the Gap work]. We’re currently fighting for our life here.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“Secure, adequate and long-term funding is most important. We have good access to Government and respectful relationships, but this only gets you so far.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We need to get more certainty of our resources to be able to work effectively to the 10-year plan. We can't be in the cycle of negotiating funding and leaving it to the last minute. We need to resource and build the systems we need.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“[The funding for this work] is on a three-month rolling contract so we need more funding certainty. That is stressful, and we need to be more considerate about people and their families. We need to be resourced to find ways to really co-design programs and allow the community to be a part of implementation. We don't just want to be 'participating', we need to be 'doing' and have ACCOs actually delivering services and programs. ...We are constrained in what we can take on. I am hoping common sense prevails and we get some additional resources to meet all the commitments in the Plans. We are not thinking ahead, everything is too last minute. We need to be in the best possible position and present a strong business case - we need the support to be able to do that. At the moment, it is hard to set priorities because we don't know realistically whether we will get resourcing for them”.*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

The challenge Peaks are facing securing longer-term funding is in-part a consequence of the evolving nature of the National Agreement and efforts to sequence priority work and resources. It is also a feature of the different and inconsistent decisions being made across Commonwealth Government and States and Territory agencies about available funding.

Current arrangements are insufficient to match the resources available to Government for comparable public service positions, salaries and oncosts making it difficult to compete with Government on recruiting and retaining staff. This may be an indication Peaks are still being viewed by Governments in some cases as stakeholders, rather than as equal partners. The lack of appropriate funding erodes the partnership and risks achievement of the Closing the Gap outcomes.

*“The money coming through is for salary only. No on-costs. No money to buy a pen and a notepad. Let alone a laptop. This is the discrepancy. From the viewpoint of Government, they are providing salary for an equivalent position but really it is about 30 per cent less than that, seniority wise.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“It is really hard to recruit the right people with the limited salaries we are able to offer.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We need to apply an Administration Fee to all funding agreements... to cover overheads, HR/Payroll and attendance at meetings/consultations.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“We’re running out of space in our office... I think about FTE and having the right mix of skills, knowledge, and expertise, and even if that is possible / available, the issue is that we don’t have the resources or the infrastructure to allow for maximising the benefit of this investment. To be as effective as we would like to be, we need support for all on-costs.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

Current arrangements are contrary to the principle outlined in Clause 30 of the Partnership Agreement, which acknowledged the Coalition of Peaks needs to be provided with adequate and ongoing financial support to enable them to engage and negotiate as equal partners within the formal Partnership Agreement, and this will be separate to their current funding, as this is a new activity not covered by existing funding sources. The provision of adequate funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties to be partners with Governments is an indicator on Priority Reform One. This indicator is not on track to be met at this stage.

*“The challenge is there will always be a power imbalance between Government and community organisations. We need to work out ways to reduce this and ensure everyone has the resources and capability to engage in the partnership as much as possible.”*

- Government Representative

### **3. Peaks not only require resourcing for discrete projects or elements of the Closing the Gap work but also modest resources to sustain their footing as partners able to strongly participate in the overall work program under the National Agreement.**

It is clear many Peaks and Government officials are unclear on the process for disbursing funds through the Sector Strengthening pool, how funding will be allocated to different agencies and whether organisations will receive funding from the Commonwealth as well as state and territory contributions to the pool.

The amount of funding for specific projects and partnerships could be determined based on an analysis of workplans jointly agreed upon by the Coalition of Peaks and jurisdictional governments, as is currently occurring in many instances. These should be informed by jointly developed detailed proposals, including a description of the project objective, activities and deliverable, a budget outlining the activities and costs and a cash flow projection based on the budget proposal, including identification of any additional funding sources. Appropriate provision should be made for research, data and evaluation, community consultation and engagement of relevant experts.

*“We need a team to support members and really be able to do the community and sector strengthening work...We want to do the work to plan for how we can strengthen and deliver programs and services. If we don't do that, our ACCOs will be getting small piecemeal funding and not be able to engage with our community and get outcomes in a meaningful way. We need to be more serious about this.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“Details [are] required on the allocation of Commonwealth funding to states, both in terms of funding allocations but also who is being funded and who is responsible for delivering programs/initiatives being funded.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

Some Peaks and Governments noted with concern that the Closing the Gap work and principles are being ring-fenced to the specific areas of action outlined in the National Agreement and not applying across mainstream programs and agencies, such as employment services. Strong whole-of-government mechanisms need to be put in place at all levels of government to ensure the principles outlined in the National Agreement apply across the broad range of government services accessed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders. As noted, in the Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure conducted by the Department of Finance<sup>9</sup>, “achievement of the Closing the Gap targets and other Indigenous policy goals will depend critically on improvements in the quality of the mainstream services delivered to Indigenous Australians – particularly for Indigenous communities in urban and regional settings”.

This is becoming increasingly important as the implementation of the National Agreement starts to move from a centralised national approach, through to jurisdictional engagement through Implementation Plans and devolution to portfolio responsible agencies. Government officials commented Aboriginal Affairs portfolios are sometimes the default funder of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and Peak bodies rather than mainstream agencies like Social and Disability Services. This can lead to patchy funding arrangements where some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak bodies receive funding and others do not. Officials noted resourcing is allocated more effectively if there is a relationship between the mainstream agency and the community-controlled organisation or Peak. As these relationships develop, appropriate resourcing will be required, and it is not likely the repurposing of existing Government funding and organisational resources will be sufficient to meet the as yet undefined demands of these evolving relationships. All relevant agencies need to be actively engaged in supporting Priority Reform Two through their programs, grants and other funding arrangements.

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<sup>9</sup> Department of Finance (2010) Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure, released under Freedom of Information

**4. Almost half of the Peaks participating in this research are discussing or negotiating to receive additional funding in the next 12 months as part of their work under the National Agreement so there are processes in train that could be used to alleviate resourcing pressures.**

It is clear there is a lot of activity underway to consider resourcing to ensure Coalition of Peaks members are able to undertake their functions in relation to the National Agreement. The section below provides information and analysis that may assist Coalition of Peaks Members and Australian Governments to discuss the way forward.

## Towards a Solution

Determining appropriate funding arrangements for all Coalition of Peaks members is going to be a challenge given their different sizes, roles and existing resource base. As self-determining organisations, all Coalition of Peaks members will need to decide on the resourcing arrangements that meet their needs and enter into discussions with Australian Governments, often on a case-by-case basis. However, there is good practice in terms of determining resources across elements of the partnership and principles from comparative international programs, which can be applied to support all members of the Coalition of Peaks.

What is proposed below reflects the modest suggestions put forward by Coalition of Peaks members on *what is needed at this stage* to get on with the Closing the Gap architecture and partnership arrangements, and is not reflective of the full scale of work and resources that will be required by the Coalition of Peaks and other parties throughout the life of the Agreement. The model below cannot be seen as a ceiling for the resourcing and staffing needs of members of the Coalition of Peaks and must not act to limit growth in Coalition of Peaks membership.

### Key Principles

Funding decisions for the Coalition of Peaks should reflect the principles outlined in the success indicators for the partnership<sup>10</sup>, particularly:

#### *Partnership Governance*

- That the structures established under the Partnership Agreement are working to give effect to the principles of equal participation, shared decision-making and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination; and
- That working arrangements that address the power imbalance in the relationship between the Partnership Parties are in place and effective.

#### *Support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Participation:*

- The Coalition of Peaks need to be provided with adequate and ongoing financial support to enable them to engage and negotiate as equal partners within the formal Partnership Agreement ... (Clause 30); and

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<sup>10</sup> Hoffman, S, 2020. *Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap Health Check 2020*.

- Government Parties provide adequate funding for the Coalition of Peaks to undertake all of their responsibilities effectively.

Principles from the approach to building partnerships between Canadian First Nations and the Government of Canada are also relevant. The Canadian Department of Indigenous Services was established in 2019 with a legislated mandate of implementing the gradual transfer of departmental responsibilities to Indigenous governments and organisations<sup>11</sup>. The Government of Canada and Canadian First Nations have also entered into a new fiscal relationship to provide predictability, flexibility, autonomy and sufficiency in funding to First Nations communities, service delivery providers and organisations. The new arrangements result from a review of funding arrangements, which found the process of accessing, allocating, and accounting for financial resources was counterproductive<sup>12</sup>. Key principles of the new approach include:

- a shift from a reactive approach to a proactive one, focusing on early engagement and support;
- the provision of flexible, sufficient and predictable funding; and
- capacity strengthening to provide First Nations with a policy leadership role.

An immediate step taken was the creation of ten-year grants<sup>13</sup>. Under these grants, First Nations can retain unspent funds, with an annual increase based on inflation and population growth. Ten-year grants are provided through the Professional and Institutional Development Program, which provides funding to develop the capacity of First Nations and Inuit communities and institutions<sup>14</sup>. The program provides funding for: salaries and wages; training; travel; communications; office overheads; office supplies; community information; professional services; systems; and hardware and software for data collection, analysis and reporting.

The guidelines for Canadian treaty negotiating tables can also be used as a point of comparison, noting their consistent objective of ensuring that Indigenous groups can participate in the negotiation process on a level playing field. Funding for treaty negotiations is determined based upon jointly agreed upon work plans, as well as provision for operating costs<sup>15</sup>.

### **Possible Model for National Peaks**

We have found that National Coalition of Peaks members are integral to the design and delivery of key elements of the Closing the Gap Partnership, but there is no consistency in their funding for core operational expenses, nor for their involvement in the partnership.

There is significant variance in the current funding arrangements. An assessment could be undertaken of the existing project and operational funding of National Peaks to determine the appropriate level of resourcing required to support their involvement in the Closing the Gap work. In conducting this assessment, it may be useful for Coalition of Peaks members and Governments to

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<sup>11</sup> Indigenous Services Canada Annual Report to Parliament 2020 <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1602010609492/1602010631711#chp11>

<sup>12</sup> A new approach: co-development of a new fiscal relationship between Canada and First Nations <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1516389497863/1613148302012>

<sup>13</sup> Government of Canada 10 year grant <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1527080791657/1527080813525>

<sup>14</sup> Professional and Institutional Development Program: Program Guidelines [<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1480342101195/1565366368150>]

<sup>15</sup> Contributions to support the negotiation and implementation of treaties, claims and self-government agreements or initiatives [<https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1386360760450/1615724488357>]

discuss whether provision of two to six FTE for each National Peak in the Coalition of Peaks would support them to deliver what is needed at this stage to address core responsibilities under the Closing the Gap Partnership and structure (as a base on top of which project funding may then be allocated). The range of FTE outlined above reflects the different sizes and levels of responsibility National Peaks have under the National Agreement. Large projects and discrete elements would then need to be resourced separately.

In some cases, the provision of this small number of FTE may be sufficient to allow these organisations to fully participate in the Closing the Gap work. For newly establishing Peaks, those without core operational funding and/or those with critical policy partnership and sector strengthening responsibilities under the partnership, more may be required.

One National Peak put forward a model for what is considered to be a core functional capacity for a National Peak body aligned to the requirements of the National Agreement. They suggested a funding model based on 17 positions including:

- Executive leadership (Chief Executive Officer, Chief Finance Officer, Operations Manager, Policy and Research Lead and Sector Development Lead);
- Operations support (Executive Assistant, Administration Officer, Finance Officer);
- Three Policy and Research Officers;
- Three Sector Development Officers;
- Three Communications and Engagement Officers; and
- Administration and on-costs.

### **Possible Model for Jurisdictional Peaks and their State and Territory Members**

There is a good deal of variation in funding arrangements across Jurisdictional Peaks. Funding discussions are underway in a number of jurisdictions and will be critical over coming months.

The funding provided by the NSW Government to NSW CAPO and NSW state and territory members could provide a model to carefully draw upon, noting that there are concerns that workload across NSW Peaks is already exceeding the resources negotiated under the NSW CAPO model. There are also further discussions required to clarify what is expected on all sides for this investment and to ensure shared accountabilities.

The NSW Government has provided \$3.9 million over 12 months to NSW CAPO for 22 positions with six FTE placed with the Jurisdictional Peak and each member organisation receiving funding for two positions which are supporting policy and community engagement roles. This is broadly consistent with what we have heard from Jurisdictional Peaks and their member organisations in this research in terms of what is required for them to participate in the Closing the Gap work, noting the need for more detailed discussions to take place to fully map workloads and requirements within each jurisdiction.

The provision of two to six FTE would assist other Jurisdictional Peaks in providing collective leadership and outreach for the Closing the Gap Partnership. When asked about the workforce they require, Jurisdictional Peaks had different requirements including:

- a manager, research and policy officers, communication and project staff;

- a policy officer, two logistics staff to manage meetings, one government engagement officer to assist with negotiation and strategic engagement, one senior community engagement officer to help build the ACCO sector; and
- funding for one to two full time project/research staff.

The provision of one to two FTE for state and territory Peaks member organisations would enable them to bring their service delivery information and data to bear in decision-making. It is critical member organisations remain linked to this work and funded to contribute as they are often on the frontline of service delivery and will be vital to the success of strengthening Aboriginal community-controlled services to deliver and build the evidence-base in terms of what is being achieved on the ground.

In determining any arrangements, it is important that Jurisdictional Peaks and their member organisations have flexibility in allocating the distribution of funding:

- across their jurisdictional network and member organisations; and
- across functions such as: leadership; co-design; research and policy; community involvement; communication; stakeholder engagement; project officers; legal services; negotiation; change management; administration; and data, monitoring and evaluation.

### **Operational Costs**

Administrative costs should be provided for the scenarios outlined above, including for: accommodation; hardware and software; analysis and reporting; communication; contracted professional and technical services; purchased and/or leased equipment, supplies and material; meetings; information and training services; community consultation initiatives and travel.

Some Jurisdictional Peaks receive considerable in-kind support or auspicing in terms of staff resources, office space, IT and other business infrastructure from one or more member bodies whose primary responsibility is as a delivery service organisation. This puts pressure on these organisations. An alternative model would be to provide appropriate on-costs and for proactive exploration of opportunities to share services across members of the Coalition of Peaks.

Jurisdictions like South Australia are exploring mechanisms to build the Aboriginal community-controlled sector by introducing Government procurement practices that require not-for-profit organisations to partner with ACCOs. This approach can support partnerships and sharing of corporate resources across ACCOs and the broader non-government sector, rather than placing organisations in competition with one another.

Backoffice efficiencies could be achieved by sharing services across members of the Coalition of Peaks and potentially with other non-government organisations<sup>16</sup>. This would assist in leveraging their combined size and resources to spread the cost of services across a number of organisations, making these services more affordable. For example, three or four Peaks could share office space, accounting services, procurement of office equipment, furniture or vehicle leasing, marketing services, consulting services, IT, and human resources.

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<sup>16</sup> Matan, R, 2008, Shared Services in the Nonprofit Sector, Sobel & Co., LLC Certified Public Accountants and Consultants. [<https://sobelcollc.com/sites/default/files/whitepaper.reservefunds.rm.sg.pdf>]

## Funding Horizons to Activate Growth and Continuous Improvement

As noted in the Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure conducted by the Department of Finance, “the deep-seated and complex nature of Indigenous disadvantage calls for policies and programs which are patient and supportive of enduring change... A long-term investment approach is needed, accompanied by a sustained process of continuous engagement. Broad budget allocations should be reviewed every few years to identify medium-term budget priorities that support a balanced approach to meeting the Government’s Indigenous policy goals<sup>17</sup>”.

Funding should be committed over the remaining period of the Partnership Agreement with an initial focus on the next four financial years and with the capacity to adjust funding levels from time-to-time based on workload volume, membership levels and other project-specific activities set out in funding agreements with agreed upon work plans and budget proposals. It will be important to guard against perverse incentives that serve to limit growth in Coalition of Peaks membership, which could arise if funding allocations set ceilings and do not allow for the addition of new organisations joining the Coalition of Peaks.

*“There are many requirements on many groups – different working groups, the different sector strengthening plans – we will need to push responsibility onto our line agencies to develop their partnership and resourcing agreements with Peak organisations. I can't really see that workload easing as we go on given the scope of the Agreement. We'll have no doubt different action plans to areas that need additional attention.”*

- Government Representative

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<sup>17</sup> Department of Finance (2010) Strategic Review of Indigenous Expenditure, released under Freedom of Information



## Recommendations

Priority	Recommendations
<p><b>Ensure all members of the Coalition of Peaks have appropriate, dedicated and secure funding consistent with their roles and responsibilities</b></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>10. Governments should reaffirm their commitment to the principle of supporting members of the Coalition of Peaks to act as accountable and effective partners through the provision of adequate and ongoing financial support. A starting point for discussions between Governments and Peaks is a funding model comprising:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. two to six FTE for each National Peak to enable these organisations to provide leadership in the Closing the Gap work across their areas of policy, workforce and program expertise;</li> <li>b. two to six FTE for each Jurisdictional Peak and one to two FTE for each state and territory member organisation to allow for proactive engagement across the breadth of the National Agreement;</li> <li>c. appropriate wage parity with Governments to ensure arrangements are sustainable;</li> <li>d. provision of on-costs and overheads, with consideration given to opportunities for achieving back-office efficiencies through the establishment of shared services arrangements;</li> <li>e. long-term funding commitments to at least 2029 with a focus on the next four financial years;</li> <li>f. flexibility to allow members of the Coalition of Peaks to allocate resources as needed across the specific areas of capability required in order to deliver on their areas of responsibility under the National Agreement; and</li> <li>g. dedicated funding for large, discrete pieces of work under the National Agreement.</li> </ol> </li> <li>11. Ensure Government funding arrangements proactively build Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and allow for longer-term funding and continuous improvement with:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. the process for disbursing funding through the sector strengthening virtual pool clarified with the objective of talking more clearly with National Peaks, Jurisdictional Peaks and members about what they can expect; and</li> <li>b. appropriate funding relationships between mainstream agencies and sectoral Peaks that take into account their Closing the Gap roles and responsibilities.</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

## Conclusion

The Closing the Gap Partnership has a long way to run with commitments already identified over this decade. Further upfront investments in Coalition of Peaks members and Australian Governments to deliver will build value for years to come. This is the way the Closing the Gap Partnership will reach the goal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people having life outcomes equal to all Australians.

When we asked Coalition of Peaks members and Australian Governments if they could provide early examples of how the Closing the Gap Partnership is leading to improved policies and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – the vast majority were able to do so.

*“Work is starting to shift. We are going into meetings with a level of equalness (not complete equalness). We are getting involved in conversations that we wouldn't have previously. How we are seen is shifting from just a funded service to being in the room to seriously talk (high level and confidential conversations). We feel this will only get bigger. We are going to be able to lead on content and process as opposed to government doing it. The way in which people are treating us has shifted.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“It was really important to have [our Peak] at the table for discussions on youth justice with our agencies. They were robust discussions and having [our Peak] represent their views was really constructive as all [our] agencies could hear directly from them. We were able to make more progress than we have in years.”*

- Government Representative

*“The work we did with Infrastructure Victoria is a good example. Every five years the government releases a 30-year infrastructure report. The first one released contained two references to the word, “Aboriginal”. It appeared in the Acknowledgement of Country upfront and then in the very last page which said the next time, they would think about doing some work on the Aboriginal community. Well, the AEC and members followed up. The newly released strategy has hundreds of references to Aboriginal people, including population growth and really detailed data. The AAL and other Vic member organisations contributed to the process. Of course, the next step is implementation but at least the input is there.”*

- Coalition of Peaks Member

*“I was discussing examples of progress under Closing the Gap with a colleague in Health. Given the extraordinary circumstances of last 18 months it's interesting to reflect on relationship. [Our] response to COVID-19 is attributable to the stronger relationship between [our Government] and [Peak organisation] and their strong relationships with community-controlled health bodies. This has been the spirit of Closing the Gap in action. [We] have all brought skills to bear in the health interests of Aboriginal people. There has been a strong appreciation by government like never before of the importance of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health connections. This is the essence of what we need to apply more broadly. I want to think about how going forward we can proactively (rather than reactively) seek out opportunities to partner and work differently.”*

- Government Representative

While both Coalition of Peaks members and Australian Government representatives emphasised it is early days and there is a huge task of transformation ahead, we heard many examples of positive

processes and outcomes that were unlikely to have occurred in the past. Many emphasised that what is needed now are the right investments to ensure both Coalition of Peaks members and Australian Governments can deliver. The new Closing the Gap Partnership needs to be given the very best chance to succeed.

## Appendix 1 – Current Members of the Coalition of Peaks

### **National**

Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives  
First Nations Media Australia  
First Peoples Disability Network  
Indigenous Allied Health Australia  
Lowitja Institute  
National Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners  
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services  
National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation  
National Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services Forum  
National Native Title Council  
SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children  
The Healing Foundation  
Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association  
Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia  
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association

### **New South Wales**

NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peaks (NSWCAPO):  
NSW Aboriginal Land Council  
NSW/ACT Aboriginal Legal Services  
Link Up NSW  
NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group  
NSW Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council  
BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation  
ABSec – NSW Child, Family and Community Aboriginal Corporation  
First Peoples Disability Network (this organisation is both a National and NSW member)

### **Australian Capital Territory**

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body

### **Northern Territory**

Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APONT):  
Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance NT  
North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency  
Central Land Council  
Northern Land Council  
Tiwi Land Council  
Anindilyakwa Land Council  
Northern Territory Indigenous Business Network  
Yillihousing Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory

### **Victoria**

Victorian Aboriginal Executive Council (AEC):  
Victorian Aborigines Advancement League  
Koori Youth Council  
Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated  
Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service  
Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

Djirra  
Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (FVTOC)  
Aboriginal Housing Victoria  
Victorian Aboriginal Health Service  
Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd  
Aboriginal Community Elders Service

**Western Australia**

Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia

**Tasmania**

Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre

**Queensland**

Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition (QATSIC)  
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Legal Service (Qld) Ltd  
Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Protection Peak Limited  
Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council  
Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Services

**South Australia**

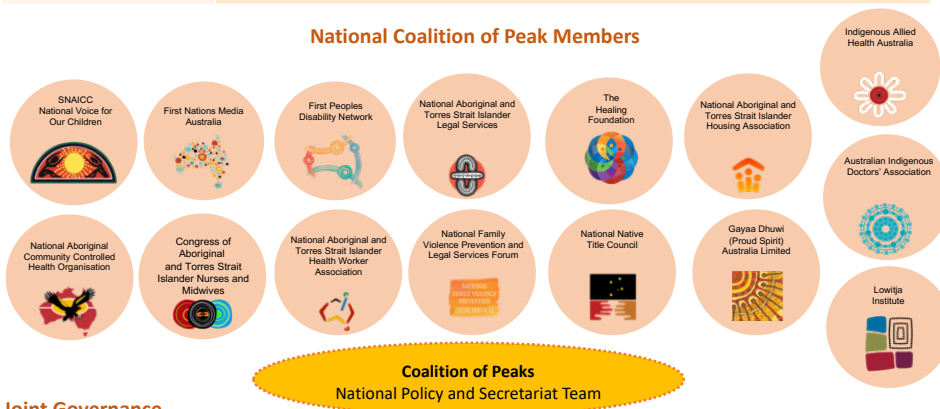
South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON):  
Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement  
Kornar Winmil Yunti  
Nunga Mi:Minar  
InComPro  
South Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council  
Family Violence Legal Services Aboriginal Corporation  
Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantatjara Yankunytjatjara Womens Council  
Kura Yerlo  
Aboriginal Family Support Services  
Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council  
Aboriginal Sobriety Group  
Nunkuwarnin Yunti  
Pangula Mannamurna  
Tauondi Aboriginal College  
Narungga Nation Aboriginal Corporation  
South Australian Native Title Services  
Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia

# Appendix 2 – Jurisdictional Arrangements and Implementation Plans

## Commonwealth Closing the Gap Architecture and Implementation Plan

Snapshot of Closing the Gap Implementation Plan – Investment and Priorities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than \$1b in new measures in addition to existing commitments to Close the Gap</li> <li>• Almost all activities allocate some funding (two activities with funding TBC)</li> <li>• It is a 'live' plan with annual reports updating on delivery and actions over the coming year.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Plan details structural reforms and new investments to Close the Gap, building on measures in the 2021-22 Budget. These include the Territories Stolen Generation Redress Scheme (\$378.6m), delivering new or upgraded ACCHO facilities (\$254m), an early childhood package (\$122m), on country boarding schools (\$75m) and funding for Indigenous languages (\$22.8m) among many other measures.</li> <li>• The Commonwealth has committed \$46.5m towards development of the community-controlled sector. A Justice Policy Partnership is being supported to reduce rates of adult and youth incarceration (\$7.6m).</li> <li>• \$3.2m has been provided to assess the needs and increase the involvement of Aboriginal community-controlled organisations in the child and family sector.</li> <li>• Policies are to be put in place to increase the proportion of service delivery through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly community-controlled-organisations.</li> </ul>

### National Coalition of Peak Members



### Joint Governance

<p><b>Closing the Gap Implementation Joint Working Group</b>          NIAA, Commonwealth Agencies and Coalition of Peaks currently represented by Pat Turner (NACCHO), Jamie Lowe (NNTC), Priscilla Atkins (NAAJA), June Riemer (FPDN), Fiona Conforth (Healing Foundation) and Muriel Bamblett (VACCA)</p>	<p><b>Secretaries Committee on Social and Indigenous Policy</b></p>
<p><b>Commonwealth Agencies &amp; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partners</b>          (Leads on Targets and Priority Reforms)</p>	<p><b>Indigenous Australians Interdepartmental Committee and Sub Working Group</b></p>
	<p><b>NIAA</b>          Closing the Gap Branch and Agency Policy and Regional Teams</p>

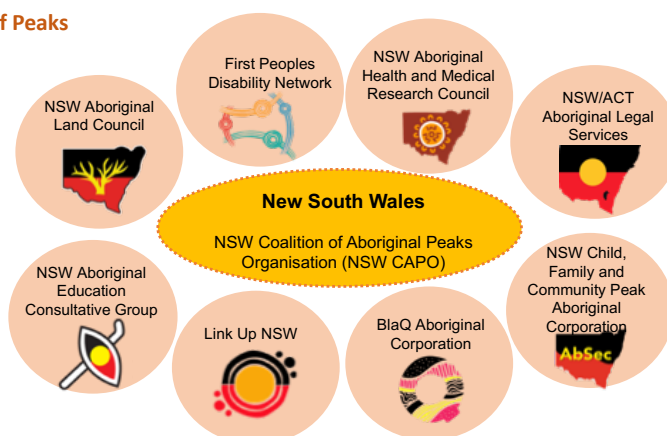
<p><b>Funding for Coalition of Peaks at National Level</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commonwealth provided funding of \$4.6m to the Secretariat to initially establish the Partnership and National Agreements.</li> <li>• A commitment has been made to continue and increase funding to \$10m over four years from May 2022.</li> <li>• This will fund approximately 9 FTE with positions including the Lead Convenor, Head of Policy and Secretariat Team, Senior Policy Advisers, Engagement, Communications and Projects Officers.</li> <li>• Further discussions are required to ensure appropriate core funding for all National Coalition of Peaks Members and ensure priority projects are fully funded.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Key Features of Partnership</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Commonwealth National Indigenous Australians Agency is a critical partner at the centre of new Closing the Gap arrangements alongside the Coalition of Peaks National Policy and Secretariat Team.</li> <li>• Significant work is underway to broaden ownership and responsibility for Closing the Gap reforms across all Commonwealth Government agencies with lead agencies being identified to work on targets and across priority reforms with National Coalition of Peak members and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.</li> <li>• At the outset of the new Closing the Gap partnership, work was heavily focused at the national level on negotiating the initial Agreement. A shift is now occurring towards greater implementation and delivery activity at the State/Territory levels.</li> </ul>
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\* Expenditure specifically identified in Implementation Plan (not total Indigenous expenditure for the Commonwealth Government)

## NSW Closing the Gap Architecture and Implementation Plan

Snapshot of NSW Implementation Plan – Investment and Priorities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approx. 200 measures or activities listed within the Plan (Funding amounts for measures allocated but not included in the Plan).</li> <li>• Approx 10 activities without specific funding allocated.</li> <li>• 12 months duration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitments across all socio-economic areas, particularly in the areas of children and youth, justice and safety and economic development.</li> <li>• The focus of the first Plan is on the four priority areas from the National Agreement and a fifth specific to NSW on 'Employment, Business Growth and Economic Prosperity'.</li> <li>• New grants program to support ACCOs and businesses to drive work to achieve Priority Reforms and targets (\$8.7 million).</li> <li>• Commitment to building priority ACCO sectors (NSW contribution to the national joint funding pool \$7.4 million).</li> <li>• A co-designed Aboriginal Child and Family Investment Strategy to focus government investment in ACCOs including workforce, funding streams and building a locally responsive, community-focused organisation.</li> </ul>

### NSW Coalition of Peaks



### Joint Governance



### Current Funding for NSW CAPO and Members

- \$3.9 million (12 months funding) to NSW CAPO for participation in Closing the Gap governance and providing expert advice through the officer-level working groups.
- This is funding 22 positions:
  - 6 FTE for the NSW CAPO Secretariat (Coordinator, Policy Officer, Engagement/Media Officer, Researcher, Negotiator and Support Member)
  - 2 FTE (Dedicated Closing the Gap Policy and Engagement Officers for each of the 8 NSW CAPO Members)
- Discussions are required on longer-term funding arrangements, including assessment of growing workload and more clearly identifying shared accountabilities and outputs.

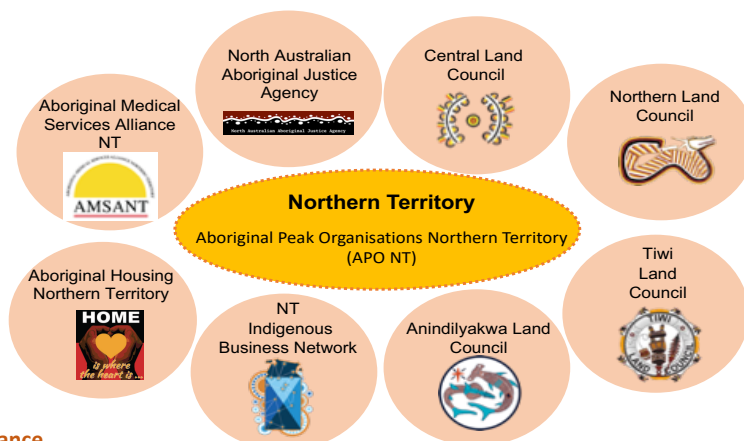
### Key Features of NSW Partnership

- NSW Government is investing to ensure NSW CAPO can be at the table and play a critical role in policy analysis and project development across OLWGs.
- There were significant partnership discussions and consultations leading up to development of the Implementation Plan including a workshop in March 2021 with over 100 attendees. In April 2021, NSW CAPO led the first round of community discussions on the Implementation Plan to engage directly with communities on ideas, stories and experiences.
- There is a fast-growing agenda and working-level architecture requiring increased capability on all sides and discussions on shared accountability.

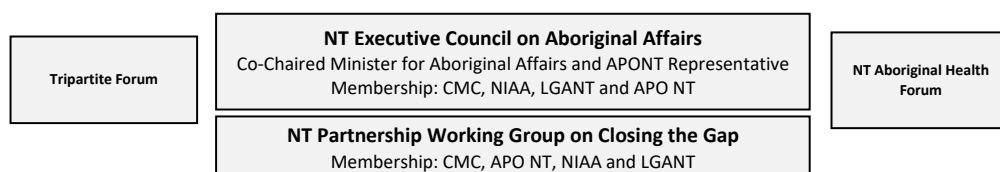
## NT Closing the Gap Architecture and Implementation Plan

Snapshot of NT Implementation Plan – Investment and Priorities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approx. 55 measures or activities listed within the Implementation Plan.</li> <li>• \$38m currently committed in the Implementation Plan*.</li> <li>• Majority of activities listed with funding still to be determined.</li> <li>• 12 months duration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first Implementation Plan is an initial response to the new Closing the Gap partnership focused on embedding the Priority Reforms and alignment with the NT <i>Everyone Together</i> Aboriginal Affairs Strategy. Further work is required to address the socio-economic targets.</li> <li>• There is commitment to building priority ACCO sectors (NT contribution to the national joint funding pool \$2 million over four years). Further funding allocation from the Commonwealth and NT is to be agreed as sector strengthening plans are developed. Governance support for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations is to be provided through the Aboriginal Governance and Management Program.</li> <li>• \$36 million in funding over 5 years to ACCOs to provide place-based community led Family Support services that support the prevention of Aboriginal children’s entry into out-of-home-care and the return of Aboriginal children to their family.</li> <li>• Commitment to establish NT Aboriginal led Justice Policy Partnership by the end of October 2021 (funding TBC with NTG, Cth and APO NT and ACCOs in discussions).</li> <li>• An Education policy partnership is to be formed by end of November 2021.</li> </ul>

### Aboriginal Peak Organisations NT



### Joint Governance



### Current Funding for APO NT and NT Members

- From 2021-22 APO NT will be receiving funding for five FTE with: \$300,000 from the NT Government under a five-year agreement; and \$400,000 from the Commonwealth (NIAA) under a three-year funding agreement.
- NAAJA has 0.5 FTE dedicated to working on justice aspects of the Agreement. A Five Year Grant Funding Agreement (2021-2026) for NAAJA is currently being finalised with the NT Government.
- AHNT has approximately 1 FTE dedicated to working on housing aspects of the Agreement and is hoping to secure additional resources.

### Key Features of NT Partnership

- The NT Government, Commonwealth Government and APO NT were working together prior to the National Agreement and are now building a partnership approach that reflects the scope of the National Agreement and NT Implementation Plan.
- There is a strong role for the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT) in the governance arrangements and it has been suggested this could provide a model for local government engagement for other jurisdictions.
- Given the timeline for developing the Implementation Plan, there was not sufficient opportunity to get out to communities to make sure all regional voices were heard – this is a key area of focus going forward.
- An Aboriginal Senior Officers Working Group are champions in driving the Closing the Gap agenda with the Heads of NT Agencies.

\* Expenditure specifically identified in Implementation Plan (not total Indigenous expenditure for NT)

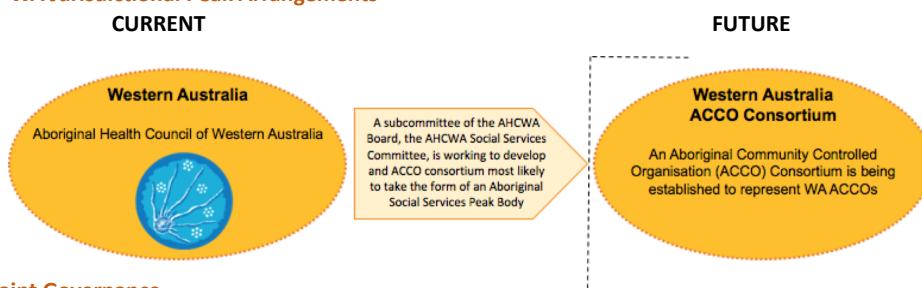


## WA Architecture and Implementation Plan

### Snapshot of WA Implementation Plan – Investment and Priorities

- Approx. 150 measures or activities listed within the Implementation Plan
- Significant funding commitments in the Plan (including native title settlements)\*
- 38 activities with funding TBC
- 12 months in duration
- The Implementation Plan contains commitments across all socio-economic areas, particularly in the areas of housing, harnessing the social and economic opportunities of native title settlements and regional development plans, justice, early childhood, education and health. The Plan was released alongside an Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy 2021-2029 outlining the underlying rationale for reform and principles for working differently.
- AHCWA and other partners with funding from the WA Government are working to establish a consortium to represent Western Australian ACCOs and support capability and capacity development in the ACCO sector (commitment of \$1.4 million by WA Government).
- An Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee is also being established to guide justice work under the Plan.
- There are also commitments to building priority ACCO sectors with sector strengthening grants (\$3.4m) and \$850,000 for an ACCO Capability Building Grants Program.

### WA Jurisdictional Peak Arrangements



### Joint Governance

The WA Government is continuing to improve and establish governance structures and processes to oversee and monitor effective Closing the Gap implementation. At present they involve:



### Current Funding for AHCWA

- Until recently, AHCWA was not receiving additional funds for Closing the Gap partnership work.
- AHCWA estimates it has been allocating 1-2 FTE to the new Closing the Gap partnership work out of its broader budget but that it needs dedicated resources to undertake the work required.
- AHCWA has received \$1.4 million to establish the WA ACCO consortium but this will not cover broader Closing the Gap partnership work.
- The WA Government's partnership with AHCWA to develop the ACCO Consortium is in recognition of AHCWA's expertise as a peak body and Aboriginal-led entity that can advise the WA Government on what is needed for Closing the Gap sector strengthening and representation.
- Further discussions are required between AHCWA and DPC for broader funding over the next four years.

### Key Features of WA Partnership

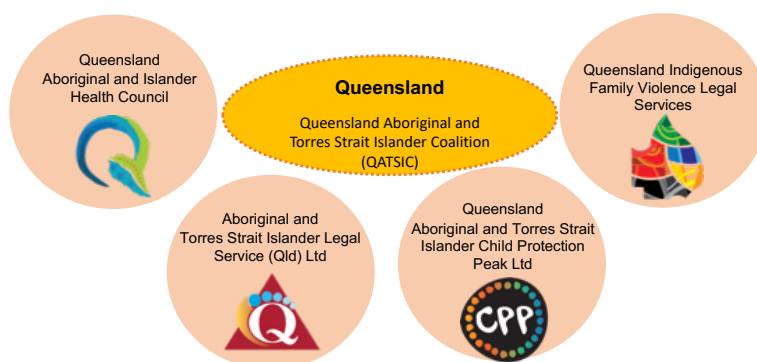
- The Coalition of Peaks currently has one member based in WA – AHCWA. The Chair of AHCWA is also a member of the Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA.
- Under the Implementation Plan, the WA Government is bringing together many strands of work aimed at improving life outcomes for WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and aligning it with the priorities in the Closing the Gap Agreement. This includes work on native title settlements.
- WA is also seeking to develop clearer structures, to bring together the significant number of Aboriginal Advisory and Representative Bodies across the State.
- The WA Implementation Plan was developed close to the WA election under tight timeframes and there is a need for additional community engagement and discussion to refine the Plan.

\* Expenditure specifically identified in Implementation Plan (not total Indigenous expenditure for WA)

## QLD Closing the Gap Architecture and Implementation Plan

Snapshot of QLD Implementation Plan – Investment and Priorities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• \$387m currently committed in the Implementation Plan for new and existing measures and activities.*</li> <li>• Two activities with funding TBC.</li> <li>• 12 months duration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Implementation Plan contains commitments across all socio-economic areas and structural reforms include: progressing the Path to Treaty (\$300 million); Local Thriving Communities; the establishment of the Queensland First Children and Families Board; the development of Queensland’s Framework for Action – Reshaping Our approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Domestic and Family Violence; and the First Nations Health Equity Reform Agenda (\$37.8 million).</li> <li>• \$9.3 million over four years to support the implementation of the National Agreement (QLD contribution to the sector strengthening pool).</li> <li>• An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Queensland Peak has been established after consultation with Indigenous community housing organisations (IChOs) across the state, and with the formation of an ICHO Working Group to oversee the development of the body. An ICHO has been contracted to auspice the peak body (\$5.5 million over four years).</li> </ul>

### Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition (QATSIC)



### Joint Governance

QLD Closing the Gap Partnership Committee
<p>Co-chaired: Department of Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and QATSIC</p> <p>Membership: Deputy Director Generals from relevant Departments, QATSIC, Local Government Association of Queensland representative and relevant Commissioners</p>

Current Funding for Queensland Peaks	Key Features of QLD Partnership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Queensland Government has approved funding of \$2.43 million over four years from 2021-22 to support the Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Coalition. This grant funding will support five policy officers located within QATSIC partners to engage with Closing the Gap processes and assist the Queensland Government in implementing the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.</li> <li>• Funding is likely to come from the \$9.3m pool. This may also fund some key investments in the QLD community-controlled sector identified under national priority plans.</li> <li>• A housing Peak has been established, with \$5.5 million over four years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The QLD Peaks have been operating in their sectors for many years, however they only decided to form a Coalition in November 2020.</li> <li>• Given this, Queensland Peaks were not as fully involved as they will be in the future in the development of Implementation Plans. However, some critical elements of the Plan were worked up over many years with individual Peaks (e.g. the Health Equity Framework was worked up in a partnership between QAIHC and the Qld Department of Health).</li> <li>• There is ongoing work on linking work of QATSIC with QLD Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Councils and other organisations.</li> <li>• Work is also underway on ensuring Queensland Government agencies are strengthening partnerships and understand their roles under the Agreement and Implementation Plan.</li> </ul>

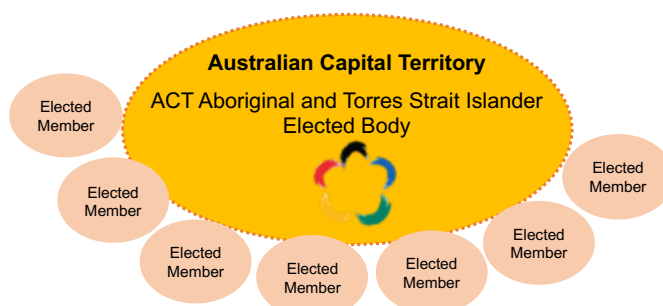
\* Expenditure specifically identified in Implementation Plan (not total Indigenous expenditure for QLD)

## ACT Closing the Gap Architecture and Implementation Plan

### Snapshot of the ACT Implementation Plan – Investment and Priorities

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approx. 22 measures or activities listed within the Plan</li> <li>• Approx \$38m currently committed in the Plan across new and existing measures*</li> <li>• Plan will be reviewed and updated in line with each phase of the ACT Agreement. Next phase January 2022-December 2024.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Implementation Plan contains commitments across socio-economic areas and aligns work under the National Agreement and ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028. There is a commitment to establish a \$20 million Healing and Reconciliation Fund and work will commence with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body on governance arrangements.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a focus on justice and community led approaches to justice reinvestment with targets beyond those set in the National Agreement including reducing the rate of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve parity with the non-indigenous incarceration rate and reducing the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17) in detention by at least 30 per cent by 2031. There is also a focus on continuing to implement child wellbeing and out of home care measures from the <i>Our Booris, Our Way</i> Report.</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are commitments requiring significant sector strengthening including in relation to Aboriginal childcare, out of home care, youth services and housing. The ACT contribution to the virtual funding pool is \$0.8 million.</li> <li>• An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Procurement Policy is also to be delivered to maximise opportunities for growth within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses and community service organisations.</li> </ul>

### ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB)



### Joint Governance

<p><b>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Inter-Directorate Committee</b>          Co-chaired: ATSIEB and Chief Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate          Members: Directorate Representatives and ATSIEB members</p>	<p>Strategic Board          Committee – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs</p>
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### Current Funding for ATSIEB

- Discussions are to be held with the ACT Government reviewing arrangements for resourcing for the ATSIEB.
- A temporary contracted officer (0.9 FTE) is providing Closing the Gap policy work until December 2021. There has not been an increase in resourcing to date, however discussions will be held with the ACT Government.
- ATSIEB are making submissions to the Remuneration Tribunal to consider remuneration and entitlements of part time office holders. The submission will be seeking a review of the activities and growing role of ATSIEB and that remunerations/entitlements are commensurate.
- ATSIEB has indicated they need a dedicated budget and funding agreement to enable greater policy, community engagement and sector strengthening, government engagement, data and research and member support.

\* Expenditure specifically identified in Implementation Plan (not total Indigenous expenditure for ACT)

### Key Features of ACT Partnership

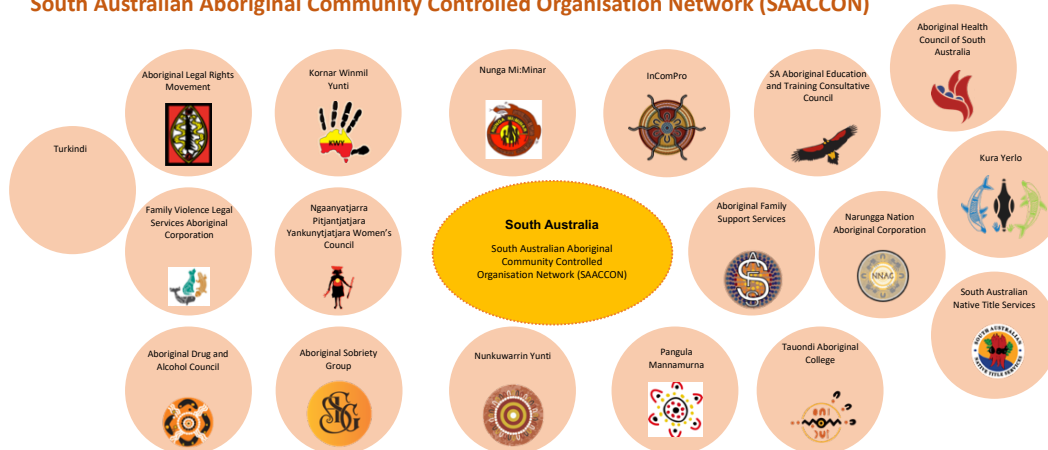
- A key feature of arrangements in the ACT is that the Jurisdictional Peak is the democratically elected ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body. The current seven members were elected in July 2021. Elections are held every three years.
- The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008* sets out the role of ATSIEB and its powers and functions which include holding at least two public hearings every term to ask questions of the ACT Government on progress being made under the Agreements and produce a Hearings Report and recommendations. The Act has been revised to include ATSIEB's national role in Closing the Gap.
- Each elected member is responsible for the implementation of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019-2028 through a focus on Directorate Action Plans which covers core and significant focus areas. This correlates closely with CTG priority reforms, which is reinforced through the Implementation Plan signed between ATSIEB and the ACT Government in June 2021.

## SA Closing the Gap Architecture and Implementation Plan

### Snapshot of SA Implementation Plan – Investment and Priorities

- Approx 240 new or existing measures or activities listed within the Plan
- Approx \$137m currently committed in the Plan (new and existing activities including funding from Cth)\*
- Three years duration.
- The Implementation Plan establishes the foundations for partnership work with a focus on the priority areas of supporting the growth of Aboriginal community controlled organisations, economic participation building stronger families, and justice.
- There is a significant focus on establishing governance structures, the functions of SAACCON and developing partnerships more broadly within the Plan. This includes mapping of Aboriginal representative structures and organisations at local and state levels, including membership / who and how are people represented.
- The SA Government has committed \$3.3m over four years to strengthen the ACCO sector. It has also committed to pursuing 3+ 3+3 funding for the ACCO sector and progressing ACCO shared services models.
- There are also measures concentrating on building the Aboriginal workforce in ACCOs in SA.

### South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON)



### Joint Governance



#### Current Funding for SAACCON

- The SA Government provided funding to establish SAACCON as a peak body for South Australia's Aboriginal community-controlled service delivery organisations at the commencement of the Closing the Gap refresh.
- The current funding agreement is for \$433,000 a year over four years. Discussions are underway to establish a formal partnership agreement that will provide greater detail on SAACCON's functions, operations and funding.
- SAACCON has indicated it requires additional staff to support policy partnership, community and sector engagement, place-based and data work.
- The Department for Child Protection is funding SNAICC - National Voice for our Children to lead a process to design a model for a Peak Body for Aboriginal children and young people in SA with SA ACCOs.

#### Key Features of SA Partnership

- The SA Government and SAACCON, are expected to enter a formal partnership agreement by December 2021.
- They collaborated on the development of the Implementation Plan and co-designed the planned implementation of the Priority Reforms.
- In a first for the South Australian Government, Closing the Gap governance is progressing towards Aboriginal co-chairs, and membership includes senior Aboriginal public servants.
- A key feature of the SA partnership is the collaboration between Aboriginal staff in government agencies and SAACCON.
- Another important feature is the focus on looking at ways to value SAACCON's large number of frontline service delivery organisations, including through progressing culturally safe best practice data sharing arrangements.

\* Expenditure specifically identified in Implementation Plan (not total Indigenous expenditure for SA)

## Victorian Closing the Gap Architecture and Implementation Plan

### Snapshot of Victorian Implementation Plan – Investment and Priorities

- Over \$1.5 billion of new and existing measures or activities listed within the Implementation Plan (including commitments to Aboriginal housing percentage of major social housing investments)\*
- 12 months duration
- The Implementation Plan contains commitments across all socio-economic areas and brings Closing the Gap work into alignment with the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework.
- Structural reforms under the Closing the Gap Agreement are progressed as well as Victoria’s commitment to the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission truth-telling forum (\$44.4m) and First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria.
- There are commitments including for Covid-19 pandemic recovery (additional \$23m), housing (10% of \$5.3 billion investment in social housing allocated for Aboriginal housing), health, justice and child wellbeing and education.
- Commitments to sector strengthening include \$3.3m contribution to the virtual pool.
- The Victorian Government is also partnering with the Aboriginal community controlled sector to design a funding model for a \$40 million Aboriginal Workforce Fund.
- A commitment has also been made of \$14m to the *Korin Korin Balit-Dajk* system transformation project to lead Aboriginal designed governance, leadership, cultural competency, funding, commissioning and data models.

### Victorian Aboriginal Executive Council



### Joint Governance

#### Aboriginal Executive Council/ Secretaries Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs

Co-chaired by AEC and DPC

Members: AEC members and Secretaries of Departments

There are many other partnership decision making forums (see below)

#### Current Funding for the AEC and members

- The Victorian Government is currently providing approximately \$200,000 per annum for 1.5 FTE for the AEC and \$80,000 for each of the AEC’s 11 member organisations.
- A new funding arrangement is currently being discussed with the AEC aiming to strengthen policy, community engagement and sector strengthening, harnessing service delivery data and communications.
- The Aborigines Advancement League is providing office space, meeting rooms, IT support, accounting and other operational services to the AEC.
- A Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Council comprising of 20 Aboriginal community leaders and Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions Executive Board is being established (\$1m).

#### Key Features of Victorian Partnership

- The AEC and the Victorian Government’s Secretaries’ Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs holds responsibility for Victoria’s Implementation Plan. Final endorsement of the Plan was provided through the joint AEC and the Secretaries’ Leadership Group on Aboriginal Affairs prior to sign off by the Victorian Cabinet.
- There are numerous maturing policy and delivery partnerships between the AEC and Government Departments.
- There are many other shared forums for decision-making including: The Aboriginal Justice Forum, Aboriginal Children’s Forum, Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, Marrung Central Governance Committee, Victorian Aboriginal Employment and Economic Council Aboriginal Strategic Governance Forum, Aboriginal Health Partnership Forum and State-wide Caring for Country Forums. The AEC has been providing updates on the Closing the Gap work to these forums.

\* Expenditure specifically identified in Implementation Plan (not total Indigenous expenditure for VIC)

## Tasmanian Architecture and Implementation Plan

### Snapshot of Closing the Gap Investment and Work Program

Total Investment	Key areas of work for the Tasmanian Government and TAC:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approx 36 new or existing measures or activities listed within the Implementation Plan.</li> <li>• Most new activities with funding TBC.</li> <li>• Two years in duration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Implementation Plan represents a starting point in the Tasmanian Government's commitment to work with the TAC and Tasmanian Aboriginal people across five initial Policy Partnerships: Justice (adult and youth incarceration); Social and emotional wellbeing (mental health); Housing; Early childhood care and development; and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.</li> <li>• The Plan was developed quickly and there is a commitment for the Tasmanian Government and TAC, in consultation with Tasmanian Aboriginal people and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, to develop a responsive Aboriginal Engagement Strategy that provides funding, details and actions for ongoing, culturally respectful, and genuine high-level engagement with Aboriginal people, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, and service providers and ensures Aboriginal engagement equity.</li> <li>• The Plan includes an initial \$5.3 million, including up to an additional \$4 million (on top of an existing \$1.3 million commitment) towards building capacity in Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations to better meet the local and regional needs of Tasmanian Aboriginal people.</li> </ul>

### Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre



### Joint Governance

- The Tasmanian Government, in consultation with the TAC and Tasmanian Aboriginal people are reviewing existing partnership structures.
- The Partners, in consultation with Tasmanian Aboriginal people and Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, will also develop Partnership Agreements aligned with this implementation plan.

#### Current Funding for the TAC

- The TAC has a large service delivery reach delivering health, family support, land and sea management and legal services to Tasmanian Aboriginal people.
- External support was provided by the Tasmanian Government to TAC to help in the engagement and drafting of the Tasmanian Implementation Plan.
- While TAC is not currently receiving funding from the Tasmanian Government, discussions will continue to see how this could be accomplished. Further discussions are underway with the TAC on the way forward in the context of further broader work under the Aboriginal Engagement Strategy and partnership structures.

#### Key Features of Tasmanian Partnership

- The Tasmanian Implementation Plan represents a starting point in the process of the Tasmanian Government working in partnership with the TAC and Tasmanian Aboriginal people
- The TAC has stated the actions in the plan require further Aboriginal community input and development and that without resources and additional time it has not been possible for Tasmanian Aboriginal people to express what changes they need and their aspirations.
- The consultation model adopted to this stage has been the public advertising and convening of four Round Tables of Aboriginal organisations and Tasmanian Government representatives state-wide. Consultation also included open Aboriginal community meetings in both the north and south of the State and direct talks with nominated representatives of Aboriginal organisations who did not attend the Aboriginal community meetings convened regionally.

\* Expenditure specifically identified in Implementation Plan (not total Indigenous expenditure for TAS)





<p><b>Introducing the Coalition</b></p>	<p>The Coalition of Peaks is an act of self-determination – the Peaks came together to change the way Australian Governments work with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and peoples, not only Coalition of Peak members. Collectively, the Peaks membership represents a sizeable portion of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population and service delivery extends to almost every community in Australia. There is a clear recognition by the Coalition of Peaks that Australian Governments need to continue and form additional partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations that go beyond the membership of the Coalition of Peaks.</p>
<p><b>Principles</b></p>	<p>The Coalition of Peaks Implementation Plan outlines the principles informing the Coalition of Peaks work:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Governments must be accountable for their commitments under the National Agreement. The Coalition of Peaks will work to hold them to account to deliver on their commitments under the National Agreement.</li> <li>2. The perspectives of member organisations and their members must be reflected in engagement with governments.</li> <li>3. Knowledge, understanding and ownership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations of the National Agreement and how to use it to engage with government is fundamental to the success of the outcomes and targets in the Agreement.</li> <li>4. Progress relies on momentum. As such the momentum for change centred around the Priority Reforms in the National Agreement must be developed and maintained. Partnering with governments by entering into formal agreements with them is necessary to achieve the objectives and targets in the National Agreement.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Timeframe</b></p>	<p>The first implementation plan of the Coalition of Peaks covers the period July 2021 – December 2023.</p>
<p><b>Commitments</b></p>	<p>There are commitments in the Plan under four areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Communicating the Agreement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, Community and Organisations.</b> This includes a series of face-to-face engagements in each jurisdiction, with key community-controlled organisations and communities to support their understanding and interaction with the National Agreements and maintaining website, social media, e-newsletter, events with government, business groups and NGOs and communication materials.</li> <li>2. <b>Building Understanding and Ownership of the Agreement.</b> This includes the Coalition of Peaks talking to a broad range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, regional governance bodies, representatives and community members in each state and territory and nationally. These discussions will include opportunities for community-controlled and regional and local bodies to participate in place-based partnerships, jurisdictional-based representative bodies, data development plans, development of targets and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reviews on progress.</li> <li>3. <b>Building Closing the Gap Policy and Program Delivery Expertise amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, Community, and Organisations.</b> This includes: ensuring a national joined-up approach to key policy areas; development of a Strategic Plan for the Development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Sector, Sector Strengthening Plans; and Strengthening and Growing National Peak Bodies.</li> <li>4. <b>Monitoring and Influencing Progress across the Partners.</b> This includes: ensuring independent mechanisms to support and report on the transformation of mainstream agencies and institutions; maintaining Coalition of Peak Governance and Joint Governance with Governments; tracking progress; and holding an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People’s Assembly on Closing the Gap.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Lead Responsibility</b></p>	<p>Leads are established for each of the actions under the Implementation Plan. A number of action are to be progressed by the Secretariat and Working Group of Peak Members. There are also specific actions for national members of the Coalition of Peaks including First Nations Media Australia, NACCHO, Gayaa Dhuwi- Proud Spirit, Healing Foundation, National Native Title Council, SNAICC, NATSIHA and NATSILS.</p>
<p><b>Resources</b></p>	<p>There are no specific resources set out against each of the actions in the Implementation Plan. Some actions are supported by commitments contained in Commonwealth and Jurisdictional Implementation Plans and others are likely to require additional resourcing discussions.</p>

## Australian Local Government Association Implementation Plan

<b>ALGA Commitment to Closing the Gap</b>	Overcoming inequality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is an important objective for local government. Local governments have many aspirations for the Agreement, in particular that it will help to support current employment and accelerate new employment opportunities for Indigenous peoples at the local government level.
<b>Objectives of the plan</b>	The objective of the Implementation Plan is to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. ensure local governments understand the Agreement and its commitments and encourage adoption by local governments;</li> <li>2. assist state and territory governments to work with local governments in the implementation of the Agreement; and</li> <li>3. support strengthened shared decision-making at the local level, supporting local governments to be part of partnerships with the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.</li> </ol>
<b>Governance</b>	There are 537 local governments. ALGA has established an internal network of officers with responsibility for the provision of policy advice and support on matters related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including in some jurisdictions supporting Aboriginal Shire Councils. This network will play an important role in ensuring delivery of actions in the Implementation Plan. ALGA did not have a Coalition of Peaks organisation to partner with to develop the Implementation Plan, however, further relationships will be developed in the next stage. The plan drew on the views of a representative of the Peaks at a National General Assembly of Local Governments in June 2021.
<b>Timeframe</b>	The Implementation Plan will be reviewed annually following publication of ALGA's Annual Report on progress of the Agreement.
<b>Commitments</b>	There are a total of 14 actions across the four priority reform areas of the Agreement: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Partnership and shared decision-making:</b> identifying legislative impediments to joint decision making; participating in stocktakes and partnership health checks; identifying principles for effective partnerships; engaging in place-based partnerships and relevant policy partnerships; and publicly promoting local government participation;</li> <li>2. <b>Building the community-controlled sector:</b> participating in the development and implementation of Sector Strengthening Plans; working with state and territory governments to review procurement policies to facilitate greater ACCO participation in council tenders; and considering the employment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff as part of the 2021 Local Government Skills and Capability Project;</li> <li>3. <b>Transforming government organisations:</b> facilitating access to cultural awareness toolkits and training to support a culturally capable and confident workforce: encouraging all local councils to develop and implement Reconciliation Action Plans that align with Closing the Gap objectives; and showcasing councils that improve the cultural appropriateness of council services; and</li> <li>4. <b>Shared access to data and information at a regional level:</b> capturing, collating and sharing learnings from councils involved in community data projects; and ALGA alerting state and territory local government associations to issues that would benefit from improved reporting raised at Joint Council meetings.</li> </ol>
<b>Lead Responsibility</b>	Actions are identified across ALGA, state and territory local government associations and councils. The efforts of individual local governments are not included in the ALGA Implementation Plan as the intention is that state and territory government Implementation Plans are whole-of-government plans, including local governments.
<b>Resources</b>	There are no specific resources set out against each of the actions in the Implementation Plan.



## Appendix 3 – Questionnaire

### Realising the Partnership: Mapping the Capability of the Coalition of Peaks

#### Part 1

**The following questions relate to your organisation and location.**

Question 1: What is the name of your organisation?

Please consistently answer for this specific organisation through the survey, recognising you may work for a number of organisations.

Question 2: Are you an individual Peak or a Jurisdictional Peak?

Please note if you are a Jurisdictional Peak body, please answer as this body throughout the survey (eg, questions about staff and funding relate to resources provided directly to your Jurisdictional Peak).

- Individual peak
- Jurisdictional peak

Question 3: What is your role in your organisation? Please tick more than one if filling in the questionnaire as a team.

- Chief Executive Officer
- Executive Officer
- Policy Officer
- Finance Officer
- Other, please specify

Question 4: Does your organisation have a national role or a state/territory specific focus? If you operate within a state or territory, please select the one you operate in. [Select all that apply]

- National
- NSW
- VIC
- SA
- QLD
- WA
- TAS
- ACT
- NT

Question 5: If you are working with a Jurisdictional Peak, is it under a MOU or another arrangement?

[Free text]

Question 6: How many member organisations and/or communities and/or people does your organisation work with and represent?

- Member organisations:
- Communities:
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people:
- Other (please describe):

## Part 2

**The following questions aim to understand the extent to which your work has changed and might continue to evolve as a result of directly working on the Closing the Gap Partnership and National Agreement (the Agreements)**

Questions 7-17: Specify the areas and processes your organisation has been directly involved in under the Agreements so far and those which your organisation expects to be involved in.

[Checkboxes: has been involved; will be involved in future]

Question 7: Developing the initial Agreements and/or future revisions

Question 8: Community engagement on the Agreements

- Community discussions and decision-making.
- Partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations including to determine policy positions
- In 1-2 sentences, please describe your involvement

Question 9: National Coalition governance and discussions with Australian Governments. Over the past 12 months has your organisation attended or plans to attend

- Peaks Fortnightly Teleconference
- Partnership Working Group meetings
- Joint Council and /or Annual Meetings with the Prime Ministry

Question 10: State/territory Coalition governance and discussions with state/territory Governments. Over the past 12 months has your organisation attended or plans to attend:

- Meetings of the Coalition of Peaks in your state/territory
- Meetings of the Peaks Coalition with the state/territory government
- Other meetings
- In 1-2 sentences please describe your involvement in these areas and processes

Question 11: Development of Implementation Plans

- Coalition of Peaks Implementation Plan
- Commonwealth Implementation Plan
- State or Territory Jurisdictional Implementation Plan [please specify which state or territory]
- If you have been involved in State or Territory Jurisdictional Implementation Plans, please confirm the relevant State(s)

Question 12: Policy Partnerships

- Justice (adult and youth incarceration)
- Social and emotional wellbeing (mental health)
- Housing
- Early childhood care and development
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages

Question 13: Place-Based Partnerships

- National workshop and policy development
- Site selection

- Community engagement

Question 14: Community Controlled Sector Strengthening Plans

- Early childhood care and development
- Housing
- Health
- Disability

Question 15: Data, monitoring and evaluation

- Community data projects
- Data Development Plan
- Productivity Commission work including the three-yearly review
- Partnership Health Check
- Closing the Gap Annual Report
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review (at the four-yearly mark)

Question 16: New target development

- New target development
- Family violence
- Access to information
- Community infrastructure
- Inland waters

Question 17: Communications

- Coalition of Peaks communications working group
- Joint communications working group
- National media
- Community media
- Raising awareness of Agreements

Question 18: Based on the list in questions [7-17] what are the main areas your organisation is involved in?

Question 19: Looking at the broad categories of work below, are you able to identify the top three areas where your organisation has strongest capability in terms of skills and resources?

- Community engagement
- Communication
- Leadership and governance
- Policy design
- Implementation
- Data, monitoring and evaluation
- Other, please specify

Question 20: Within the following broad categories, are there any areas that are:

1. A priority for strengthened capability
2. A priority for new resources, staffing or funding
3. Not a priority for further resourcing
  - a. Community engagement
  - b. Communication
  - c. Leadership and governance

- d. Policy design
- e. Implementation
- f. Data, monitoring and evaluation
- g. Other

Within the above broad categories, are there any specific areas of work under the Agreements (eg, policy partnerships or community data projects) for which your organisation needs more capability and resources to deliver effectively? Please describe.

Question 21: To what extent has your organisation been able to participate in activities related to the Agreements with your existing resources, for example, attending meetings, reviewing papers and putting forward suggestions?

- 100% of the activities
- 75% of the activities
- 50% of the activities
- 25% of the activities

Has this capacity changed over time?

Question 22: Considering all the time your organisation spends engaging with different stakeholders on the Agreements, approximately how much time was spent with each of the following groups? Your answer should total 100 per cent.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- Coalition of Peaks and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations
- Commonwealth Government
- State or Territory Governments
- Local Governments
- Other

Question 23: If there were no constraints on your organisation, would the time spent with those six stakeholders change?

Question 24: If your organisation is constrained from delivering contributions on the Agreements, what are the main restrictions?

- Lack of staff
- Lack of expertise
- Lack of time
- Lack of funding
- Having to divert funding/resources from other areas
- All of the above
- Other [please describe]

Question 25: Describe how the nature of your organisation's work has changed or is expected to change because there is now a partnership in place. For example, moving from advocacy to negotiation and partnership.

Question 26: Can you provide any early examples of how the work undertaken by your organisation in relation to the Agreements is leading to improved policies and programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people?

### Part 3

**The following questions aim to obtain a picture of your current and potential future funding and potential impacts on how you can perform your partnership role under the Agreements.**

Question 27: Specify your organisation's annual core funding.

Include whether it is ongoing or terminating and duration of funding over financial years.

Identify the source of funding and, where possible, provide estimated percentages (eg, 70% Commonwealth Government Department of X, 20% State Government Department Y)

Question 28: How many full-time equivalent staff work in your organisation?

Question 29: Estimate the number of staff in your organisation that currently work on activities related to the Agreements (eg, developing policy and new programs, attending meetings, reviewing papers and putting forward suggestions).

- 0 FTE
- 0.25 of an FTE position
- 0.5 of an FTE position
- 0.75 of an FTE position
- 1 FTE position
- 2-5 FTE positions
- 6-10 FTE positions
- 10 - 15 FTE positions
- 16 – 20 FTE positions
- 20+ FTE positions
- Other

Question 30: Has your organisation received any additional funding to undertake work related to the Agreements?

- Yes
- No

Question 31: If yes to Q30, specify any additional funding your organisation has been granted in order to undertake work related to the Agreements.

Please include information for each different funding source and include details on:

- Purpose
- Funding source (identify name of department/jurisdiction)
- Duration (ongoing/terminating)
- Financial years
- Number of additional staff funded (including any staff listed at question 29 above that are funded)

Question 32: Specify any other forms of additional support your organisation has received for work related to the Agreements.

- Secondments or loaned staff
- Office space
- Training opportunities
- Expertise and advice
- Shared information systems

- None
- Other, please specify

Question 33: If yes to question 32, who has provided that support?

Question 34: Is your organisation discussing or negotiating to receive additional funding in the next 12 months as part of your work under the Agreements?

- Yes
- No
- If yes, please describe:

Question 35: Do current funding and staffing arrangements meet your organisation's needs to undertake your role under the Agreements?

- Fully meets needs
- Partially meets needs
- Does not meet needs
- Prefer not to say
- Other

Question 36: What is the most important assistance your organisation could receive now to support involvement in the Closing the Gap Partnership and Agreement?

Question 37: Could the support provided by the Coalition of the Peaks Secretariat be strengthened in any way?

Question 38: Does your organisation have any other comments or observations about participating in the Closing the Gap Partnership and Agreement work?

Question 39: Does your organisation consent to share your organisation's data, collected during this questionnaire, with the Coalition of the Peaks Policy and Secretariat Team?

- Yes
- No

## Appendix 4 – Definitions/Glossary

### Definitions/Glossary

#### **Australian Governments**

Consisting of the Commonwealth Government, state and territory Governments, and the Australian Local Government Association.

#### **Capability**

The ability for an entity to fulfil its role as a partner under the Agreements. This comprises their capacity (size and composition of its workforce, knowledge, skills, experience, systems and resources) and culture (leadership, governance and environment).

#### **Coalition of Peaks**

The Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Peak Organisations. The Coalition of Peaks is a representative body consisting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander national and state and territory community-controlled peak organisations that work to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

#### **Commonwealth**

The legal entity of the Commonwealth of Australia, created by the Australian Constitution. The term may also be used to differentiate the Australian Government from state and territory Governments.

#### **Community Engagement**

Raising awareness and increasing ownership of the Agreements amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Involving community members in decision-making and discussions.

#### **Communication**

Raising awareness, developing, and delivering accessible and inclusive communications to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people talk together and to Governments, other stakeholders and the broader community about how to best realise the commitments in the Agreements for organisations, communities and people on the ground.

#### **Data, monitoring and evaluation**

Measuring and reporting on activities to foster continuous improvement, accountability and results. This includes capturing and reporting data.

#### **Full time equivalent**

Represents the number of full time positions that would be required to deliver an outcome, and distinguished from the headcount of actual people (full and part-time) that are employed in a function or in an organization. So if there were six people in an organization, each working half days, this would be three 'full time equivalent' positions.

#### **Implementation**

Directly delivering new actions, policies and programs that are flowing from the Agreements.

#### **Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS)**

The IAS is the way the Commonwealth Government funds and delivers a range of programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

#### **Joint Council**

The Joint Council on Closing the Gap. This is the Ministerial Council on Closing the Gap, with

representation from all levels of government and the Coalition of Peaks. Further details on the Joint Council can be found in the Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap 2019-2029.

### **Leadership & Governance**

Providing leadership and engaging in decision-making, including being a partner and a joint decision-maker when participating in forums, meetings, and negotiations with stakeholders. Placing culture at the centre of decision-making.

### **National Agreement**

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap was signed by all Australian Governments and the Coalition of Peaks in July 2020. It sets out commitments for all Australian Governments to work together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.

### **Partnership Agreement**

The Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap 2019-2029, signed by COAG and the Coalition of Peaks, setting out shared decision-making arrangements on the next phase of Closing the Gap.

### **Partnership parties**

Coalition of Peaks and the Government parties

### **Peak bodies**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled peak bodies

### **Policy Design**

Identifying key problems, issues or strengths to be built upon. Formulating policy solutions based on experience, consultation, and analysis.