

Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Final Report

Webinar

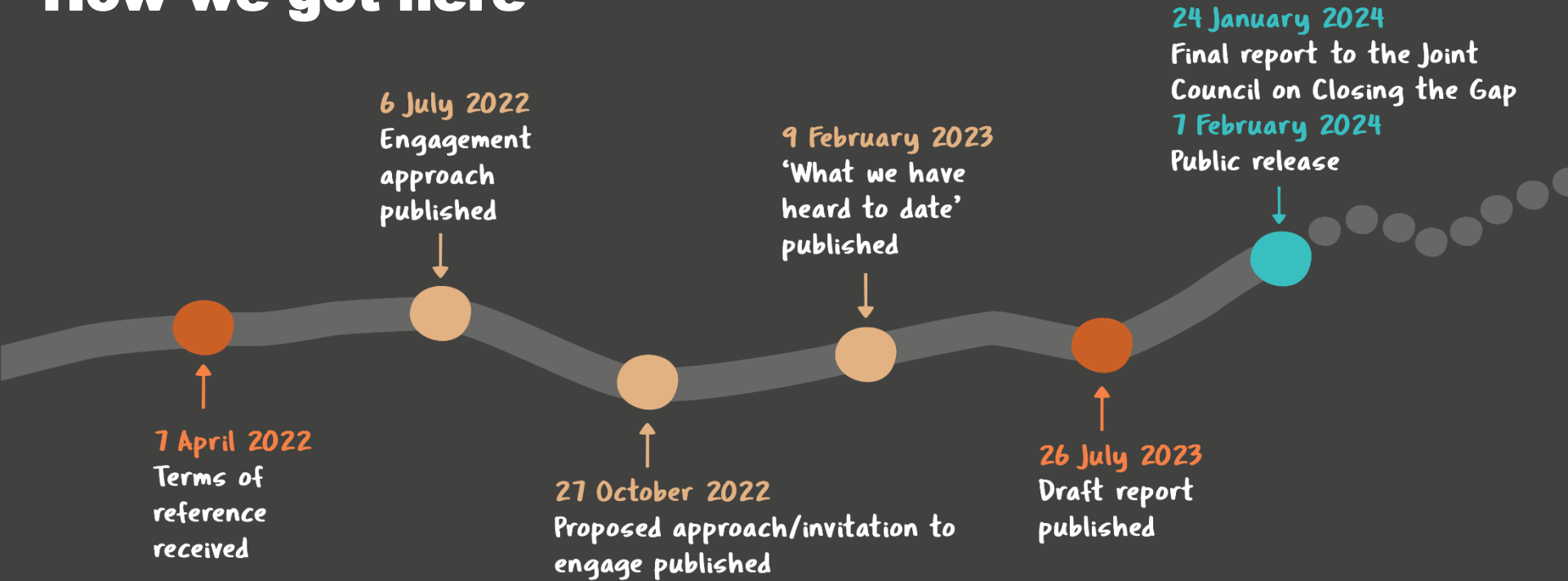
29 February 2024

Romlie Mokak, Commissioner

Natalie Siegel-Brown, Commissioner









How we got here

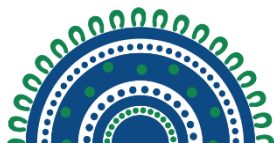


Ongoing engagement throughout

- 235 meetings, 136 with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations
- 101 submissions, 51 from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations
- 7 virtual roundtables

Overall assessment – insufficient progress

-  The commitment to shared decision making is rarely achieved in practice
-  Government policy doesn't reflect the value of the community-controlled sector
-  The transformation of government organisations has barely begun
-  Governments are not enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led data
-  Performance reporting provides only a partial picture of progress
-  Accountability for delivering on the commitments in the Agreement is lacking



To achieve change, the Commission is making four thematic recommendations, each with specific actions

1. Power needs to be shared
2. Indigenous Data Sovereignty needs to be recognised and supported
3. Mainstream systems and culture need to be fundamentally rethought
4. Stronger accountability is needed to drive behaviour change



Recommendation 1

Power needs to be shared



Some partnerships arrangements have succeeded in building trust and progressing the priorities of communities

But others have done little to bridge mistrust, and most have fallen short of embedding shared decision making in a sustained way

Governments need to trust that relinquishing control over decisions will enable better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Recommendation 1

Power needs to be shared



- ↪ Amend the Agreement to clarify that Priority Reform 1's purpose is self-determination and its scope is broader than policy and place-based partnerships (**action 1.1**)
- ↪ Treat ACCOs as essential partners in program and service design and delivery, not simply as funding recipients (**action 1.2**)
- ↪ Ensure there are regular meetings between Ministers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies only (**action 1.3**)
- ↪ Adequately resource Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in implementation, as well as actions by government organisations to implement the Agreement and its accountability mechanisms (**action 1.4**)
- ↪ Treat implementation plans as strategic documents containing a theory of change, not laundry lists. Work closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners to agree strategies and actions that are substantive and critical to achieving the objectives of the Agreement (**action 1.5**)

Recommendation 2

Indigenous Data Sovereignty needs to be recognised and supported



Sharing existing data with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities is a necessary but not sufficient for shared decision-making

While the commitments under Priority Reform 4 relate to some aspects of IDS, they do not reflect all of the key principles of IDS

Recommendation 2

Indigenous Data Sovereignty needs to be recognised and supported



- ↪ Amend the Agreement to explicitly include IDS as part of the outcome statement for Priority Reform 4 (**action 2.1**)
 - This should be accompanied by other changes, including adopting the definitions of IDS and IDG set out by the Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective and governments committing to partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities to embed IDG
- ↪ Establish a Bureau of Indigenous Data (**action 2.2**) to support governments to embed IDG into their data systems and practices, invest in the data capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, and consolidate and oversee the data development work under the Agreement

Recommendation 3

Mainstream systems and culture need to be fundamentally rethought



Governments have not fully grasped the scale of change required to their systems, culture, operations and ways of working to deliver the unprecedented shift they have committed to in the Agreement

Without fundamental changes, the objective of the Agreement is unlikely to be achieved

Recommendation 3

Mainstream systems and culture need to be fundamentally rethought



- ↪ Government departments need to develop and execute a transformation strategy for their portfolio (**action 3.1**)
- ↪ Ensure funding and contracting rules explicitly incorporate accountability for funders to abide by the Priority Reforms in commissioning processes (**action 3.2**)
- ↪ Review and update Cabinet and Budget processes so that they explicitly promote, support and encourage the Priority Reforms (**action 3.3**)
- ↪ Designate a senior leadership group to drive public sector change in each jurisdiction (**action 3.4**)
- ↪ Embed responsibility for improving cultural capability and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people into public sector employment requirements (**action 3.5**)

Recommendation 4

Stronger accountability is needed to drive behaviour change



Despite the range of accountability mechanisms in the Agreement, they are not sufficient to influence the type of change envisaged in the Agreement

They are not sufficiently independent, do not contain timely and appropriate consequences for failure, obscure the individual responsibilities of each party and are not informed by high-quality evaluation

Recommendation 4

Stronger accountability is needed to drive behaviour change



- ↪ Establish the independent mechanism in each jurisdiction without further delay (**action 4.1**)
- ↪ Embed the National Agreement on Closing the Gap in other intergovernmental Agreements (**action 4.2**)
- ↪ Include a statement on Closing the Gap in every government organisation's annual report, detailing substantive actions taken and the outcome of those actions (**action 4.3**)
- ↪ Publish the stocktakes, partnership agreements, transformation strategies and other documents developed under the Agreement (**action 4.4**)

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