
Appendix 1 COAG Communiqués

Extract from COAG Communiqué 3 November 2000

ABORIGINAL RECONCILIATION

The Council thanked the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation for its extensive work and contribution to the nation over the past nine years.

Reconciliation is an ongoing issue in the life of Australians and a priority issue for all governments that will require a concerted and sustained effort over many years. The Council acknowledged the unique status of Indigenous Australians and the need for recognition, respect and understanding in the wider community.

The Council agreed that many actions are necessary to advance reconciliation, from governments, the private sector, community organisations, Indigenous communities, and the wider community. Governments can make a real difference in the lives of Indigenous people by addressing social and economic disadvantage, including life expectancy, and improving governance and service delivery arrangements with Indigenous people.

Drawing on the lessons of the mixed success of substantial past efforts to address Indigenous disadvantage, the Council committed itself to an approach based on partnerships and shared responsibilities with Indigenous communities, programme flexibility and coordination between government agencies, with a focus on local communities and outcomes. It agreed priority actions in three areas:

- investing in community leadership initiatives;
- reviewing and re-engineering programmes and services to ensure they deliver practical measures that support families, children and young people. In particular, governments agreed to look at measures for tackling family violence, drug and alcohol dependency and other symptoms of community dysfunction; and

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- forging greater links between the business sector and Indigenous communities to help promote economic independence.

The Ministerial Council on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs will continue its overarching coordination and performance monitoring roles, including its contribution to the work of the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 5 April 2002

RECONCILIATION

The Council reaffirmed its continuing commitment to advance reconciliation and address the social and economic disadvantages experienced by many Indigenous Australians.

The Council considered a report on progress in implementing the reconciliation framework agreed by the Council in November 2000 (will be available at www.dpmc.gov.au/docs/comm_state_index.cfm). The report shows that all governments have made progress in addressing the COAG priorities of leadership, reviewing and re-engineering programmes to assist Indigenous families and promoting Indigenous economic independence. Ministerial councils have also made progress in developing action plans and performance reporting strategies, although this has been slower than expected.

To underpin the commitment to reconciliation and to drive future work, the Council agreed to a trial of a whole-of-governments cooperative approach in up to 10 communities or regions. The aim of these trials will be to improve the way governments interact with each other and with communities to deliver more effective responses to the needs of Indigenous Australians. The lessons learnt from these cooperative approaches will be able to be applied more broadly. This approach will be flexible in order to reflect the needs of specific communities, build on existing work and improve the compatibility of different State, Territory and Commonwealth approaches to achieve better outcomes. The selection of communities and regions will be discussed between the Commonwealth, States and Territories, the communities and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and be announced by mid 2002.

The Council also agreed to commission the Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision to produce a regular report against key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage. This report will help to measure the impact

of changes to policy settings and service delivery and provide a concrete way to measure the effect of the Council's commitment to reconciliation through a jointly agreed set of indicators.

The Council noted that it would continue to review progress under the reconciliation framework, and that the next detailed report on progress achieved by governments and ministerial councils would be provided to the Council no later than the end of 2003.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 14 July 2006

INDIGENOUS ISSUES

Generational Commitment

COAG agreed that a long-term, generational commitment is needed to overcome Indigenous disadvantage. COAG agreed the importance of significantly closing the gap in outcomes between Indigenous people and other Australians in key areas for action as identified in the *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators Report* (OID) released by COAG in 2003.

COAG's future work will focus on those areas identified for joint action which have the greatest capacity to achieve real benefits for Indigenous Australians in the short and long term.

COAG has agreed to establish a working group to develop a detailed proposal for generational change including specific, practical proposals for reform which reflect the diversity of circumstances in Australia.

The working group will consider how to build clearer links between the OID framework, the National Framework of Principles for Delivering Services to Indigenous Australians, the COAG Reconciliation Framework and the bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments. The working group will report back to COAG by December 2006.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 13 April 2007

INDIGENOUS ISSUES

Indigenous Generational Reform

COAG reaffirmed its commitment to closing the outcomes gap between Indigenous people and other Australians over a generation and resolved that the initial priority for joint action should be on ensuring that young Indigenous children get a good start in life.

COAG requested that the Indigenous Generational Reform Working Group prepare a detailed set of specific, practical proposals for the first stage of cumulative generational reform for consideration by COAG as soon as practicable in December 2007. National initiatives will be supported by additional bi-lateral and jurisdiction specific initiatives as required to improve the life outcomes of young Indigenous Australians and their families.

COAG also agreed that urgent action was required to address data gaps to enable reliable evaluation of progress and transparent national and jurisdictional reporting on outcomes. COAG also agreed to establish a jointly-funded clearing house for reliable evidence and information about best practice and success factors.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 20 December 2007

Indigenous Australia

COAG agreed the 17 year gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians must be closed.

COAG today agreed to a partnership between all levels of government to work with Indigenous communities to achieve the target of closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage. COAG committed to:

- closing the life expectancy gap within a generation;
- halving the mortality gap for children under five within a decade; and
- halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade.

COAG recognised the pathway to closing the gap is inextricably linked to economic development and improved education outcomes.

COAG also specifically addressed the importance of tackling the debilitating effect of substance and alcohol abuse on Indigenous Australians.

COAG has also agreed that States and Territories will report transparently on the use of their Commonwealth Grants Commission funding which is on the basis of Indigenous need funding for services to Indigenous people.

Working Group on Indigenous Reform

Indicative Forward Work Program From March:

- Identification of duplication and overlap between Commonwealth and States with new framing recommendations on roles and responsibilities.
- Ensuring that new Commonwealth/State agreements in health, schools and housing contain specific targets for Indigenous Australians.
- Reducing alcohol and substance abuse and its impact on families, safety and community wellbeing.
- Addressing passive welfare.
- Identifying further joint reforms and implementation timetables by the end of 2008, including in the following areas:
 - basic protective security from violence for Indigenous parents and children;
 - early childhood development interventions;
 - a safe home environment;
 - access to suitable primary health services;
 - supporting school attendance;
 - employment and business development opportunities; and
 - involving local Indigenous people in the formulation of programs that support them.
- Optimal service delivery for small remote communities.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 26 March 2008

Indigenous Reform

COAG reaffirmed its commitment to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and agreed to a new national target for its reform agenda -halving the gap in Indigenous employment outcomes within a decade. COAG agreed on a series of specific actions across health, education, affordable housing and water supply, that will begin to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians, including to provide at least 48,000 dental services to Indigenous people over four years under the new Commonwealth Dental Health Program, targeting the needs of Indigenous Australians through the Transition Care initiative, the elective surgery waiting list reduction plan and the Place to Call Home program for homeless people.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 3 July 2008

Indigenous Reform — Closing the Gap

Leaders agreed to sustained engagement and effort by all governments over the next decade and beyond to achieve the Closing the Gap targets for Indigenous people.

As a first step, COAG agreed in principle to a National Partnership with joint funding of around \$547.2 million over six years to address the needs of Indigenous children in their early years.

The National Partnership is based on evidence that improvements in Indigenous child mortality require better access to antenatal care, teenage reproductive and sexual health services, child and maternal health services and integrated child and family services. Bilateral plans for implementing the reforms will be agreed between each jurisdiction and the Commonwealth for COAG's consideration in October 2008. COAG further agreed to consider in mid 2009 a progress report and advice about the contribution of COAG's broader reform agenda to overcoming Indigenous children's disadvantage. The Commonwealth will continue to explore with the States the role that conditions on benefit payments could play in increasing the take up by vulnerable families, including vulnerable Indigenous families, of early childhood, family support and child and maternal health services.

COAG agreed that the Working Group on Indigenous Reform (WGIR) should continue to develop reform proposals for improving community safety, remote service delivery and Indigenous economic development and active welfare for

consideration in October 2008. In addition, COAG requested the WGIR, in conjunction with other Working Groups, to report to COAG in December 2008 on how COAG's broader reform agenda will deliver an integrated strategy on closing the gap for all Indigenous people.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 2 October 2008

Indigenous Early Childhood Development

In a further demonstration of all governments' commitment to sustained engagement and effort in achieving COAG's Closing the Gap targets for Indigenous people, leaders signed COAG's first National Partnership (NP) covering Indigenous Early Childhood Development.

Through the agreement, the Commonwealth and the States and Territories will work together to improve the early childhood outcomes of Indigenous children by addressing the high levels of disadvantage they currently experience to give them the best start in life. The NP comprises \$564 million of joint funding over six years to address the needs of Indigenous children in their early years. As part of the initiative, 35 Children and Family Centres are to be established across Australia to deliver integrated services that offer early learning, child care and family support programs. The funding will also increase access to ante-natal care, teenage reproductive and sexual health services, and child and maternal health services.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 29 November 2008

Indigenous Reform

COAG has previously agreed to six ambitious targets for closing the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians across urban, rural and remote areas:

- to close the gap in life expectancy within a generation;
- to halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade;
- to ensure all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years;
- to halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements for Indigenous children within a decade;

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- to halve the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020; and
 - to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

Since the targets were agreed in December 2007 and March 2008, all governments have been working together to develop fundamental reforms to address these targets. Governments have also acknowledged that this is an extremely significant undertaking that will require substantial investment. COAG has agreed this year to initiatives for Indigenous Australians of \$4.6 billion across early childhood development, health, housing, economic development and remote service delivery.

The NP on Indigenous Early Childhood Development is now joined by a new National Agreement on Indigenous Reform and two new NPs which cover the areas of Economic Development (\$228.8 million — \$172.7 million Commonwealth funding and \$56.2 million State funding over five years) and Remote Service Delivery (\$291.2 million over six years).

Taken together with the Indigenous Health NP and the Remote Indigenous Housing NP, these new agreements represent a fundamental response to COAG's commitment to closing the gap. Sustained improvement in outcomes for Indigenous people can only be achieved by systemic change. Through these agreements, all governments will be held publicly accountable for their performance in improving outcomes in these key areas.

National Indigenous Reform Agreement

COAG agreed to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) which captures the objectives, outcomes, outputs, performance measures and benchmarks that all governments have committed to achieving through their various National Agreements and NPs in order to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage. The NIRA provides an overarching summary of action being taken against the closing the gap targets as well as the operation of the mainstream national agreements in health, schools, vocational education and training (VET), disability services and housing and several NPs. The NIRA will be a living document, refined over time based on the effectiveness of reforms in closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

Closing the Gap COAG Meeting in 2009

In October 2008, COAG agreed to convene a dedicated meeting in 2009 on closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

COAG has asked for advice on how the NPs and National Agreements will collectively lead to a closing of the gap and what further reforms are needed. In addition to this, COAG has asked for a Regional and Urban Strategy to coordinate the delivery of services to Indigenous Australians and examine the role that private and community sector initiatives in education, employment, health and housing can make to the success of the overall strategy.

COAG noted that it will work to develop a further reform proposal, including benchmarks and indicators for improvements in services and related outputs relevant to family and community safety, for consideration at the Closing the Gap COAG meeting to be held in 2009.

Revised framework of the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage Report

In April 2002, COAG commissioned the Productivity Commission's Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision to produce a regular report against key indicators of Indigenous disadvantage, with a focus on areas where governments can make a difference. The resulting Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage (OID) Report has been published every two years since 2003.

COAG agreed to a new framework for the OID Report that is aligned with the closing the gap targets.

