
Appendix 2 Implementation of the framework

Jurisdictions' comments

This appendix provides comments by the Australian, State and Territory Governments, summarising the implementation of the framework in each jurisdiction:

- Australian Government
- New South Wales
- Victoria
- Queensland
- Western Australia
- South Australia
- Tasmania
- Australian Capital Territory
- Northern Territory.

Australian Government comments

The Australian Government views closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians as an issue of national importance. All governments have reaffirmed their commitment to Indigenous reform through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). COAG has agreed to six ambitious targets to improve health and life expectancy and provide better access to educational attainment and employment opportunities:

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

In agreeing to these targets COAG also recognised that Closing the Gap will require a long-term, generational commitment that sees major effort directed across a range of strategic platforms or ‘building blocks’. The Building Blocks endorsed by COAG are: Early Childhood; Schooling; Health; Economic Participation; Healthy Homes; Safe Communities; and Governance and Leadership. The OID’s areas for strategic action are closely aligned with the COAG targets and building blocks.

The targets and building blocks are brought together in the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) which sits under the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on Federal Financial Relations. It sets out the objectives, outcomes, outputs, performance indicators, and performance benchmarks which will be used by the COAG Reform Council (CRC) to assess progress in closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

COAG has committed to a number of Indigenous specific National Partnerships (NPs) covering Indigenous Early Childhood Development, Remote Indigenous Housing, Closing the Gap on Indigenous Health Outcomes, Indigenous Economic

Participation and Indigenous Remote Service Delivery. Other NPs (such as Early Childhood Education, and Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities and Smarter Schools), will also play a major role in contributing to meeting the Closing the Gap targets.

The NIRA will ensure that all relevant information on implementation of these reforms is publicly available, so governments can be held accountable for their decisions in relation to meeting Indigenous needs.

As part of the Remote Service Delivery NP a Coordinator-General will be appointed, responsible for the implementation of major reforms in remote housing, infrastructure and employment in remote communities. The Coordinator-General will have authority to coordinate across agencies, to cut through bureaucratic blockages and red tape, and to make sure services for Indigenous Australians are delivered effectively.

The Prime Minister will report annually to Parliament on progress in reducing the disadvantage faced by Indigenous Australians. The first report was delivered on 26 February 2009. The report will allow public scrutiny of efforts made by all governments to close the gap in Indigenous disadvantage.

The Australian Government's Secretaries Group on Indigenous Affairs is responsible for high level coordination and policy development on Indigenous affairs; coordination of a strategically focussed single Indigenous budget submission; forward looking strategies to improve service delivery and implementation of programs to achieve the closing the gap targets and oversight of overarching bilateral plans with State and Territory governments.

Australian Government services and programs to Indigenous Australians are coordinated through a network of Indigenous Coordination Centres (ICCs) in urban, regional and remote locations. The ICCs work in partnership with Indigenous communities, families and State and Territory governments to shape service delivery and respond to community priorities.

New South Wales Government comments

The NSW Government continues to build on its efforts to reduce the gap in outcomes between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians, across the seven strategic areas in the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage framework.

Two Ways Together

Two Ways Together, the Aboriginal Affairs Plan 2003–2012, is the NSW Government's 10 year plan to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities. Through Two Ways Together, the NSW Government has established a framework for coordinating whole of government action across the key national strategic change areas. The framework incorporates the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage indicators as well as NSW-specific measures.

The NSW State Plan (2006–2016)

The Government's 10 year strategic plan for improved service delivery contains priorities and targets for action that will result in improved outcomes for residents of NSW. Building on commitments made under existing plans such as Two Ways Together, the State Plan's priorities include F1: Improved health, education and social outcomes for Aboriginal people. Targets for this priority are:

- Safe families – support Aboriginal families to live without violence and harm.
- Education – increase the readiness of Aboriginal children at school entry.
- Environmental health – ensure that all Aboriginal communities have equitable access to environmental health systems.
- Economic development – increase Aboriginal employment.
- Community resilience – build community resilience.

Two Ways Together Partnership Communities Program

This program has been established to develop Aboriginal community resilience, which is a key underpinning strategy under State Plan Priority F1. It is designed to give Aboriginal people a strong voice in planning and deciding how their needs and aspirations are met. The program has two main elements: a Framework to underpin Governance arrangements in 40 Partnership Communities across NSW (comprising around 45% of the NSW Aboriginal population), and Guidelines for planning to provide evidence-based, practical service delivery responses and

outcomes that meet local needs and build community strength and wellbeing.

NSW Interagency Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities 2006–2011

This plan is being implemented through State-wide initiatives involving child protection, the legal system and health services. Under the plan's location-based actions, specific communities are being engaged in community-based prevention activities to raise awareness and reduce the incidence of child sexual assault.

Water and sewerage infrastructure

The NSW Government and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council have jointly funded a 25 year initiative to tackle water and sewerage issues in over 60 discrete Aboriginal communities throughout NSW. The initiative includes water disinfection, improvements to water quality, repairs to centralised sewerage systems and sub-surface irrigation, and ongoing inspections and maintenance of pump stations and water treatments plants, maintenance and cleaning of sewer pumps and sewer mains, and collection and testing of water.

Aboriginal Languages Program

Over the past five years, the NSW Government has significantly invested in community-based Aboriginal language projects. These have included the establishment of the NSW Aboriginal Language Research and Resource Centre, language revitalisation within Aboriginal communities, language education in schools and access to language materials in jails and detention centres.

Schools in Partnership Program and Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy

The Schools in Partnership and associated programs are targeted at schools with significant Aboriginal student populations. These programs focus on improving literacy, numeracy and participation outcomes through school communities forming partnerships with the local Aboriginal Education Consultative Group and the Aboriginal community, establishing targets to improve student performance, and developing Personalised Learning Plans for students with their parents. The NSW Government also funds 312 Aboriginal Education Officer positions in schools to provide extra support for Aboriginal students and their families.

Victorian Government comments

The Victorian Government is committed to improving the quality of life and life expectancy of Indigenous Victorians.

Partnership with Indigenous Victorians is central to the government's strategic directions, in civic representation and engagement and in specific partnerships in key program areas, including human services, justice and education.

The Victorian Government is acutely aware of the gaps in outcomes for Indigenous Victorians. In Indigenous Australia, the Victorian Indigenous communities are experiencing the fastest population growth. This presents significant challenges and opportunities for the community and government.

The primary government articulation of Victorian government policy is through the Victorian Indigenous Affairs Framework (VIAF). The VIAF was adopted in 2006 and provide for concerted attention in closing the gaps in strategic areas such as perinatal outcomes, early childhood development, education and justice.

The VIAF recognises the needs for concerted whole of government attention across priority outcome areas and for reform to be driven from the highest levels. Accordingly the Government uses a Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs chaired by the Deputy Premier to ensure delivery of vital reforms.

The VIAF was developed in advance of the national Indigenous reform directions now adopted by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG). The Victorian Government is committed to implementing the national reforms and meeting the targets adopted through COAG which are consistent with Victoria's existing approach.

The strategic policy framework

The VIAF established the goal, priority outcomes and Victorian strategic areas for action. Outcomes include:

- Safe, healthy and supportive family environments with strong communities and cultural identity.
- Safe, healthy and supportive family environments with strong communities and cultural identity, positive child development and education.

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- Improved employment and economic sustainability for Indigenous Victorians and their communities.
 - Prevention of violence, crime and self harm.

In the course of 2009 the VIAF is expected to be refined to accommodate additional specific targets adopted through COAG.

Performance framework

Each year the Victorian Government reports to Parliament on progress in implementing the VIAF. This is one of the strategic measures adopted in this State to strengthen public accountability for closing the gaps and meeting the goal of improving quality of life and life expectancy for Indigenous Victorians. Consistent progress is being achieved.

Management Framework

Implementation of the VIAF requires cross departmental action and a concerted whole of government management framework. The Government uses the Ministerial Taskforce on Aboriginal Affairs to provide the required policy leadership. The Taskforce is supported by the Secretaries Group for Aboriginal Affairs that drives cross departmental coordination.

Partnership with Indigenous Victorians is the cornerstone of progress

Sustained improvements in reducing Indigenous disadvantage are contingent on solid partnerships between governments and Indigenous Victorians.

Partnership commences at the local community level. Across Victoria, 38 Local Indigenous Networks (LINs) are being established involving hundreds of Indigenous Victorians in local priority setting and planning. The LINs link through to the Premier's Aboriginal Affairs Advisory Council. The Council is a key source of advice to government on Indigenous affairs issues and priorities.

There are also significant program and departmental partnership arrangements involving Indigenous community representatives, including Indigenous managed services and their peak organisations. These partnerships are proving vital in improving family safety, justice, community and educational outcomes.

Queensland Government comments

The Queensland Government continues to address Indigenous disadvantage, including the six national Closing the Gap targets.

Queensland has already advanced key Indigenous service delivery reforms across the State including the ongoing implementation of the Alcohol and Cape York Welfare Reforms, including the new Family Responsibilities Commission, along with the investment of over \$200 million in State and Commonwealth funds into new or enhanced services for Indigenous Queenslanders.

The Alcohol Reforms have seen local Indigenous Councils divesting control of canteens and thus breaking the nexus between Council income and the sale of alcohol. Councils are being compensated and additional support services are available in these communities.

The Cape York Welfare Reforms (CYWR) is a collaboration between four communities, the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments, and the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership. The reforms will run for four years and aim to restore positive social norms, re-establish local Indigenous authority, and support community and individual engagement in the real economy through the removal of the disincentives that cause dependency cycles.

The Family Responsibilities Commission, a key part of the CYWR, is an independent statutory body based in Cairns, with a legally qualified Commissioner and Local Commissioners — who are respected members from each of the four communities. The Commission aims to restore social norms and rebuild Indigenous authority. by attaching obligations to welfare payments and encouraging individuals to engage in socially responsible standards of behaviour.

Framework for Action

Improving social, health and economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders is a key priority and the seven national COAG building blocks have been adopted as the state-wide strategic framework for addressing Indigenous disadvantage, with an additional building block for ‘Land and Culture’ — given the significance of this in Queensland.

Some key strategies and innovative projects include:

- A new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Strategy which will also prioritise Indigenous child and maternal health services.
- In partnership with the Australian Government, a network of Indigenous Enterprise Development Officers provide support to Indigenous clients pursuing opportunities in business development.
- In 2008-09, \$90.2 million (including \$25 million under the Rural and Remote Indigenous Housing initiative) will be invested to construct, replace, purchase or upgrade dwellings for Indigenous clients.
- \$2.3 million in 2008-09 to remote communities through the Indigenous Environmental Health Worker Program to deliver community environmental health programs.
- The Former Origin Greats (FOG) Program fosters the participation of community members in sporting activities by using well-known sporting role models.
- The *Aboriginal Land Act 1991* was amended, enabling 99 year private residential lease provisions on *Deed of Grant in Trust* communities.

Performance monitoring and reporting

Queensland continues its strong monitoring and reporting framework, based originally on the OID performance management framework. Since the release of the Partnerships Queensland Baseline Report 2006, Queensland has redeveloped its reporting to align with the new COAG framework. In November 2008, the first annual Queensland Closing the Gap Report: 2007-08 was released, outlining progress against 17 key outcome indicators. Quarterly reporting on 21 discrete Indigenous communities continues to monitor progress in these locations.

Engagement and partnership

The Queensland Government acknowledges that it cannot close the gap by itself. The government works with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and groups (such as the new *Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council*), other levels of government, community groups, non-government organisations, the business sector and the wider Queensland community in an effort to close the gap.

Western Australian Government comments

Building on initial investments in its Action Plan in response to the Gordon inquiry into family violence and child abuse (the Gordon Action Plan), Western Australia continued its focus on whole of government initiatives aimed at improving child, family and community safety.

In line with the findings of the evaluation of the Gordon Action Plan undertaken in 2007, additional resources have been allocated for key initiatives found to have made a difference. These include the establishment of Multifunction Police Facilities, Child Protection Workers, the STRONGfamilies program, Aboriginal Support Workers, Community Supervision Agreements, programs for the management of released offenders, Safe Places – Safe People, Victim Support and Child Witness Services, expansion of Aboriginal Sexual Abuse Services and Family Violence Courts.

The evaluation also highlighted the importance of an integrated results-based focus for programs and services aimed at reducing family violence and child abuse. Recognising that achieving results is a long term commitment that requires monitoring of intermediate outcomes, an outcomes pathway linked to the OID framework has been developed.

As an extension of the Gordon Action Plan, the WA Government has implemented the Safer Communities, Safer Children model representing its ongoing commitment to continue its effort in partnerships with Aboriginal people. The model has been implemented in five Indigenous communities in the Kimberley region of Western Australia to coordinate whole of government action to address community issues arising from disclosures of child sexual abuse.

The Safer Communities Safer Children model involves three main phases. The first phase comprises immediate and short-term responses through which evidence is obtained by specialist interviewers, perpetrators are charged and case-managed within the criminal justice system, victims are provided with safety, support and intervention strategies, and community education is provided to raise awareness of legal processes and their implications.

In the second phase the broader community is supported to manage issues that result from the allegations and arrests. This phase involves community healing and involves the establishment of arrangements for effective engagement. It includes provision of child victim support and responses to drug and alcohol and mental health issues; cultural and healing activities; protective behaviours

programs; and alternative dispute resolution.

Phase three is the longer term community building process through which agencies work with communities to accomplish cultural and societal changes needed to ensure the long-term safety and security of children. This phase involves ongoing partnerships to strengthen governance and service functions and includes community development, governance training, establishing structures for community participation, addressing housing and accommodation and public health needs.

The model has been very successful in achieving a rapid and effective response to disclosures by integrating the efforts of key agencies to meet the needs of child victims, their families and communities.

The need to engage Indigenous communities in the development and implementation of solutions to family violence and child abuse has been widely acknowledged and further reinforced in the findings of the evaluation of the Government's Gordon Action Plan. Western Australia's Aboriginal Justice Agreement has established roles for Local Justice Forums, Regional Justice Forums and the Western Australian Aboriginal Justice Congress to facilitate collaboration and negotiations between the Indigenous community and Government on matters relating to the justice system and its impact on Indigenous Western Australians.

The WA Aboriginal Justice Agreement provides a state-wide framework for improving justice-related outcomes for Aboriginal people, guided by a set of agreed principles. The intended long-term outcomes of the WA Aboriginal Justice Agreement are:

- providing safe and sustainable communities
- reducing the number of victims of crime
- reducing the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal people in the criminal justice system.

These outcomes are supported by performance measures closely aligned with the OID framework.

Western Australia's current work towards making Indigenous children, families and communities safer complements the COAG Indigenous reforms in general, and the *Safe Communities* building block in particular.

South Australian Government comments

South Australia's Strategic Plan (SASP) remains the State's peak policy and strategy document. Its 2007 revisions included an increase from two Aboriginal-specific targets to nine. The current targets closely align with the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage (OID) framework. They are:

- reduce the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal unemployment rates each year
- lower the morbidity and mortality rates of Aboriginal South Australians
- resolve 75 per cent of all native title claims by 2014
- Aboriginal cultural studies included in school curriculum by 2014 with involvement of Aboriginal people in design and delivery
- increase the number of Aboriginal South Australians participating in community leadership development programs
- improve the overall wellbeing of Aboriginal South Australians
- reduce overcrowding in Aboriginal households by 10 per cent by 2014
- increase yearly the proportion of Aboriginal children reading at age appropriate levels at the end of Year 1
- increase the participation of Aboriginal people in the South Australian public sector, spread across all classifications and agencies, to 2 per cent by 2010 and maintain or better those levels through to 2014.

Given the major national reform agenda that has been progressed since December 2007, the South Australian Government is now seeking to realign its activities to ensure consistency with the new COAG Aboriginal-specific targets and the initiatives being implemented through National Partnership Agreements.

This alignment process will result in a revised Aboriginal Strategic Plan which will act as a consolidated strategy document bringing together the actions and policy directions of the full range of national and state frameworks, including the SASP, the COAG Indigenous Reform agenda and the OID.

Structural arrangements in place to ensure across-government coordination in this area are being re-examined in light of the national reform agenda and the impact this is having on operations within the South Australian public sector.

Arrangements will also be reviewed with the Australian Government, within the context of negotiations for a new *Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs*, to ensure appropriate lines of communication exist between the two Governments.

Tasmanian Government comments

The Tasmanian Government's commitment to improving the well being of Tasmanian Aborigines is delivered through a mix of programs aimed at addressing both the fundamental causes and symptoms of Indigenous disadvantage with a focus on breaking intergenerational cycles. These programs address key elements of the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage framework and include:

Social Inclusion

In March 2008 the Tasmanian Government announced its social inclusion agenda comprising: the appointment of a Social Inclusion Commissioner for Tasmania to lead the Government's social inclusion agenda and be a champion for excluded Tasmanians; and the establishment of a dedicated Social Inclusion Unit to co-ordinate evidence based policy making, whole of government and whole of community responses to complex social issues. The Unit has recently completed statewide consultations for the development of a social inclusion strategy for Tasmania. The strategy will contain indicators and approaches to address Aboriginal disadvantage in Tasmania.

Stolen Generations

The *Stolen Generations of Aboriginal Children Act 2006* became operational on 15 January 2007. The Act enabled the Tasmanian Government to provide ex gratia payments to Aborigines who were forcibly removed from their families as children, due to the direct intervention of previous Government policies and practices. From a total of 151 applications received, 106 met the criteria under the Act and were eligible for payment. Twenty-two of these applicants were children of deceased members of the Stolen Generations. The process of financial reparation was completed in February 2008.

Through this legislation, the Tasmanian Government has taken an important step towards reconciliation with the Aboriginal community. For many applicants the process provided a chance to tell their stories for the first time. For some it was an opportunity to finally understand what happened to them as children. The actions taken by the State Government were echoed by the apology given by the Australian Government on 13 February 2008.

'pakana tunapri' — Cape Barren Island District High School

Cape Barren Island Secondary and Senior Secondary students are achieving educational success without having to leave their families, community or their links with their cultural heritage. This program links the students to teachers in various Senior Secondary Colleges around the state. They also have the benefit of the high school facilities and a support teacher on Cape Barren Island. The attendance rate at the high school is excellent and the students are starting to think about their life pathways and are setting goals towards achieving their ambitions for their futures.

'ningenneh tunapry' Aboriginal Education Programs

The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) and the Department of Education entered into a partnership to present a series of cultural awareness workshops by Aboriginal people utilising the *ningenneh tunapry* gallery at the TMAG. A series of school programs and teacher workshops are delivered by TMAG staff and local Indigenous Sharers of Knowledge. The program has been highly successful with programs being fully booked and attended by teachers and students from government, independent and catholic school sector.

Aboriginal Cross Cultural Awareness Courses

Aboriginal Cross Cultural Awareness Courses provide teachers with a historical and contemporary understanding of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and their culture. A number of two day workshops are run over the academic year that gives support to facilitate effective Aboriginal cultural understandings through the curriculum.

Critical Intervention Program

The Critical Intervention program provides for an Aboriginal Senior Social Worker to maintain case management and cross-agency co-ordination of services and support to Aboriginal students whose engagement with education is threatened by social circumstances. These include students held at the Ashley Youth Detention Facility. They are provided with professional referral and cultural support.

Australian Capital Territory Government comments

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT have the highest level of support available to close the gap and ease the disadvantage they face compared to non Indigenous residents. Significant investment has been made to address the strategic areas for action.

Childhood Development and Education and Training

The Integrated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People project provides targeted, intensive early intervention support for at-risk Indigenous families through an integrated service delivery model. This cross-government initiative addresses the Strategic Areas of Early Childhood Development and Education and Training by providing coordinated services around families, providing links to early childhood services and facilitating engagement with education. Improvements such as increased school attendances by children are evident.

The Department of Education and Training Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategic Plan 2006–09 aims to encourage Indigenous students to participate in education to achieve equitable and appropriate educational outcomes. Indigenous programs also aim to increase student understanding and respect for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural perspectives. Specific programs include:

- Koori Preschool program for Indigenous children aged 3 to 5
- personalised learning plans for each Indigenous children to year 6
- the Indigenous Literacy and Numeracy initiative
- mentoring programs for Indigenous students in years 11 and 12
- a school leadership initiative providing professional learning and action research activities for public school principals and deputy principals.

Healthy Lives and Safe and Supportive Communities

Outcomes for Healthy Lives and Safe and Supportive Communities Strategic Areas for Action are being achieved through the implementation of:

- A New Way: The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Wellbeing Plan 2006–2011
- The Cultural Respect Implementation Plan 2006–2009
- The ‘Integrated Indigenous Service Delivery Project’

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- Development of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Residential Rehabilitation Service
 - Improving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health data quality.

Economic Participation

The ACT Indigenous Traineeship Program provides an opportunity for young Indigenous people to commence traineeships each year with a guarantee of full time employment with ACT Government. The Program responds to skills shortages by up-skilling a portion of the population under/unemployed and features a mentoring component and cultural awareness training for staff. Eleven trainees completed the pilot program in 2007-08 and are now employed in ACT Departments. The second program commenced in May 2009.

Home Environment

As part of its action plan to improve housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Housing and Community Services ACT is achieving positive results against key deliverables by: establishing an Indigenous specific homelessness service, increasing public housing allocations to Indigenous people; sustaining Indigenous public housing tenancies; reducing overcrowding for Indigenous public housing tenants; and increasing the number of Indigenous staff in Housing ACT.

Governance and Leadership

The ACT Government provides funding for the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, which reports to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs on issues relating to ‘connection to land’ and heritage in the ACT. The ACT Government set up the Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs to progress service delivery issues of importance to Indigenous people in the ACT.

In July 2008, seven members of the inaugural ACT Indigenous Elected Body were announced – the first such representative body in Australia. The Indigenous Elected Body provides direct advice to the ACT Minister for Indigenous Affairs on priorities for the expenditure of funds for policies and services aimed at improving the lives of Indigenous people living in the ACT.

Northern Territory Government comments

The Department of the Chief Minister provides whole-of-government strategic policy advice on Indigenous affairs. It works with agencies across government to develop and implement strategic and targeted activities in key areas such as governance, housing and infrastructure, health, education, safer communities and economic development.

Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs

The Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Northern Territory of Australia 2005–2010 represents a commitment by the Northern Territory and Australian governments to work collaboratively to improve government service delivery and achieve better outcomes for Indigenous people in the Northern Territory.

Closing the Gap

On 20 August 2007, the Northern Territory Government launched Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage — a Generational Plan of Action aimed at addressing the gap in outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians within a generation. Closing the Gap contains a vision and objectives and sets ambitious but achievable targets at the five, ten and twenty year marks to overcome Indigenous disadvantage. It also identifies priority actions in the next 5 years.

An Operational Group comprised of senior public servants at the Deputy Secretary level are managing the implementation and monitoring of Closing the Gap and report on progress and outcomes to the Chief Executives' Taskforce on Indigenous Affairs. Highlights from the first 12 months of the operation of Closing the Gap report can be found at the following web address: <http://www.action.nt.gov.au/>

Northern Territory Emergency Response

On 21 June 2007 the former Australian Government announced the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) to build the basis for a better future for Aboriginal children. The current Australian Government has continued most NTER measures and on 6 June 2008 announced a comprehensive and independent review. The review's report was released on 13 October 2008.

The Northern Territory Government's submission to the review called for a new governance framework to be developed based on principles of integrated service delivery and cooperation between governments.

The Northern Territory Government will be working with the Australian Government to ensure that NTER investment and activity in the Territory is sustained and enhanced. This will mean working to ensure that investments are aligned with the Closing the Gap agenda of both Governments and other major reform areas such as COAG, CDEP and local government reform.

COAG Working Group on Indigenous Reform (WGIR)

In December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a new model of cooperation underpinned by more effective working arrangements. Six targets have been agreed to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage – specifically to:

- close the life expectancy gap within a generation
- halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade
- ensure all four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years
- halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements within a decade
- at least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020
- halve the gap in employment outcomes within a decade.

COAG has now agreed to five National Partnerships to specifically address Indigenous disadvantage:

- Indigenous Early Childhood
- Closing the Gap on Indigenous Health Outcomes
- Remote Indigenous Housing
- Indigenous Economic Participation
- Remote Service Delivery.

Together, these National Partnerships represent a strong response to COAG's commitment to Close the Gap and will deliver significant outcomes to Indigenous Territorians.

