
Appendix 1 COAG Communiqués

Extract from COAG Communiqué 3 November 2000

Aboriginal reconciliation

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

Extract from COAG Communiqué 5 April 2002

Reconciliation

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.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 14 July 2006

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 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 Generational Reform

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 closed¹.

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 decade²; and
- halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade.

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.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 26 March 2008

Indigenous Reform

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.

¹ The ABS has since revised life expectancy data for Indigenous Australians. However, the COAG target to halve it within a generation remains.

² The ABS has since revised the Indigenous population projections and total population estimates which are required to calculate the mortality rates. However, the COAG target to halve the gap within a decade remains.

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 (NP) with joint funding of around \$547.2 million over six years to address the needs of Indigenous children in their early years.

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 29 November 2008

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.

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.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 30 April 2009

Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services

COAG agreed to the operating arrangements for the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services (the Coordinator General). The Coordinator-General will work with coordinators identified by Commonwealth agencies and State and Northern Territory coordinators-general to coordinate planning for, and monitor the delivery of, programs and services in the 26 locations selected under the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership (NP) agreed by COAG at its November 2008 meeting.³

Extract from COAG Communiqué 2 July 2009

As agreed at its meeting in Perth last October, COAG focused today on its Closing the Gap commitments in relation to Indigenous disadvantage.

The Chair of the Productivity Commission, Mr Gary Banks AO, gave a presentation to COAG on the findings of the report *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2009*. The report shows that while there has been some progress against the Closing the Gap targets, such as infant mortality, employment and home ownership, overall the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians remains unacceptable. This presentation coincided with the joint launch of the report by the Minister for Families,

³ The role and function of the Coordinator General concluded in January 2014. The Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet took over responsibility for overseeing the requirements under the NP until it expired on 30 June 2014.

Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, the Hon Jenny Macklin MP, and Mr Banks.

Given this context, COAG agreed that effective implementation of the existing National Agreements and National Partnership Agreements was vital to close the gap in Indigenous outcomes. As part of COAG's increasing focus on implementation issues, particular effort will be needed on Indigenous outcomes.

This work will be supported by the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services, Mr Brian Gleeson, who has recently been appointed and will report to Minister Macklin and COAG. The Coordinator-General's role is to cut through bureaucratic blockages and red tape, and to make sure services are delivered in remote communities.

While the Productivity Commission's Report has framed the significant work to be undertaken, each First Minister gave a presentation to COAG on programs that are working within each jurisdiction to demonstrate the critical success factors that underpin Closing the Gap.

In addition, COAG asked the Working Group on Indigenous Reform to prepare a national strategy to improve food security for Indigenous people living in remote Australia before the end of 2009, adopted a National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap, agreed to a Closing the Gap: National Indigenous Education Statement, and signed a Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access. COAG also agreed to a Closing the Gap; National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy to address Indigenous disadvantage in urban and regional locations.

National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage

The National Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage, which COAG endorsed, identifies how investment of additional funds under existing COAG agreements will make a real difference in addressing Indigenous disadvantage. As part of the Integrated Strategy, the Commonwealth is to provide an additional \$46.4 million over four years to fund work undertaken by national data agencies, such as the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, to improve the evidence base and address data gaps.

Closing the Gap: National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy

To close the gap, there will need to be a concerted effort by government among the 75 per cent of Indigenous Australians who live in urban and regional locations across Australia.

COAG therefore agreed to a Closing the Gap: National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy, which commits governments to coordinate and target the substantial funding provided under mainstream and Indigenous-specific programs to address Indigenous disadvantage in urban and regional locations.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 7 December 2009

Report from the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services

COAG noted the first report from the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services had been launched on 4 December 2009. The Report recommends improved coordination of Commonwealth and State service delivery in the 29 priority remote communities, particularly in efforts to improve community governance, education and training, delivery of renal health services and reporting. COAG has requested the WGIR report in early 2010 on actions taken to address the recommendations contained in the report.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 19 April 2010

COAG noted the Working Group on Indigenous Reform's progress status report addressing the recommendations of the 4 December 2009 report of the Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services.

In noting the report from the Working Group, COAG restated its commitment to closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage and to continued active consideration of the needs of the 29 priority communities under the National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery when implementing COAG National Partnerships relevant to remote communities. COAG also committed to continuing its monitoring of progress of the National Partnership on Remote Service Delivery through existing mechanisms.

Extract from COAG Communiqué 13 February 2011

COAG adopted a streamlined agenda built around five themes of strategic importance that lie at the intersection of jurisdictional responsibilities:

- a long-term strategy for economic and social participation;
- a national economy driven by our competitive advantages;
- a more sustainable and liveable Australia;
- better health services and a more sustainable health system for all Australians

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- Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

COAG renewed its commitment to strong ongoing monitoring and reporting of important national initiatives to ensure that they meet their goals and are delivered in a timely way. As part of the emphasis placed on implementation, governments committed to prioritising the passage of legislation to give effect to agreements reached by COAG.

Extract from COAG Communique 13 December 2013

Improving outcomes for Indigenous Australians

More needs to be done to ensure Indigenous Australians can access the same quality of services and have the same opportunities as other Australians.

There is no quick fix, and governments will need to focus on all areas of policy to make a difference, including education, health, housing, economic development and employment, in urban, regional and remote Australia.

In recent years, school attendance for Indigenous children in some areas has gone backwards. That is unacceptable.

While a lot of work is already underway across governments, COAG agreed an immediate, stronger focus is required to keep kids in schools and ensure safer communities.

COAG agreed to a range of measures to improve Indigenous school attendance, including:

- minimum school attendance benchmarks;
- publishing twice-yearly data on school attendance for all students broken down by Indigenous and non-Indigenous;
- ‘no-excuses’ messaging campaign;
- support and compliance, such as truancy officers, to ensure children attend school; and
- conducting audits of attendance, including on-the-spot audits.

All governments agreed to work together on additional strategies to improve Indigenous school attendance in remote schools and communities, recognising this will lead to better outcomes.

Recognising that each State’s circumstances are different, COAG agreed that some flexibility in support and compliance measures may be needed.

Indigenous Australians, like all Australians, have a right to live in communities safe from violence and abuse.

There are some remote Indigenous communities (with populations greater than 300) with no permanent police presence and where nearby police cannot respond quickly.

COAG agreed to work together to ensure these communities are safe, including through establishing a permanent police presence in some additional communities.

Extract from COAG Communique 2 May 2014

Improving outcomes for Indigenous Australians

COAG noted early evidence of success in the work of all jurisdictions working with communities to improve school attendance of Indigenous children. But there is still more to do.

COAG agreed the new five-year target of Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance, and to ensure it is met, COAG agreed to:

- the Commonwealth and the States and Territories, in partnership with communities, developing specific strategies by no later than 31 October 2014, to improve school attendance where the attendance rate for Indigenous children is below 80 per cent;
- each State and Territory monitoring Indigenous students' attendance rates in schools where they are below 80 per cent at least every month;
- each State and Territory undertaking on-the-spot audits of school attendance information before the end of the year; and
- public reporting of school attendance information, recognising privacy issues, later in 2014, and then twice yearly from 2015 onwards.

COAG also agreed to work more closely with Indigenous communities and take practical approaches to target action and investment to agreed local priorities. As a result, communities and local leaders should be more engaged and better able to share the responsibility for setting priorities and improving outcomes in their own communities.

Extract from COAG Communique 10 October 2014

Indigenous Affairs

COAG agreed jurisdictions need to work together to ensure Indigenous people have access to the same opportunities as non-Indigenous people.

All governments agreed that greater effort is required to meet our educational targets for Indigenous children and this will require commitment and integrated action at a

community level. COAG agreed to further actions to improve Indigenous students' school attendance and to share evidence of actions that work to improve school attendance. The Commonwealth will work bilaterally with states on:

- more regular reporting of school attendance where there are significant attendance issues, so attendance remains a focus and evidence-based action is taken quickly if rates do not increase;
- effective use of truancy measures, so parents and communities see a direct consequence if they fail to ensure their children attend school; and
- aligning and integrating each government's efforts.

COAG acknowledged there are already many accomplished teachers and principals working in regional and remote schools. COAG asked Education Ministers to report on strategies to attract and retain quality teachers and school leaders to regional and remote schools. A progress report on this, and school attendance, will be provided to COAG at its first meeting in 2015.

COAG noted Mr Andrew Forrest's report to the Commonwealth, *Creating Parity – The Forrest Review*, on his review of Indigenous training and employment programmes. Jurisdictions noted his key finding that a decent education provides a strong basis for parity in employment outcomes.

The Forrest Review makes broad and ambitious recommendations to the Commonwealth on areas of Commonwealth, state and shared responsibility. COAG discussed priority areas and agreed to identify areas that would benefit from bilateral action, with agreements to be finalised by the end of the year.

COAG noted that the Commonwealth, the Northern Territory and Queensland will urgently investigate Indigenous land administration and land use to enable traditional owners to readily attract private sector investment and finance to develop their own land with new industries and businesses to provide jobs and economic advancement for Indigenous people. The Commonwealth, Northern Territory and Queensland will report on this issue to the first COAG meeting in 2015.