

MEDIA RELEASE

30 July 2020

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA) welcomes the new National Closing the Gap Agreement

The failure to close the gaps in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health inequality, and other measures of social and economic disadvantage, cannot be justified. Deficit based solutions, steeped in western ideals, and designed by Governments with little or no involvement from the people being targeted have underpinned approaches in Indigenous Affairs for too long, and a sensible way of doing business is long overdue.

The introduction of the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap announced today indicates we are entering a new era and traversing a new path. NATSIHWA welcomes this development. You can read the full Agreement here [NATIONAL AGREEMENT ON CLOSING THE GAP](#)

For the first time in history the Agreement has been negotiated in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through representation led by the Coalition of the Peaks. This signifies a major shift in the way governments have previously worked and recognises that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a genuine role in designing and delivering the policies, programs and services affecting them, that better life outcomes are achieved.

The Agreement prioritises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led decision making, community-controlled services, improved accountability and access to reliable local level data to support decision making. Importantly the Agreement includes mechanisms to ensure continued political ownership; that progress is publicly monitored; and that Closing the Gap remains a national priority.

The Agreement provides the first refresh of the Closing the Gap targets since their introduction in 2008 and includes targets in areas across education, employment, health and wellbeing, justice, safety, housing, land and waters, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages. Under the Agreement all Governments have also committed to promoting cultural safety and addressing institutionalised racism through systemic and structural reform.

The challenges impacting upon Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people don't exist in isolation, and nor do their solutions. Reaching the Agreement has been a complex process and serves to remind us all of the collective power we have and how the small connected actions of our organisations working together can make a large difference. Please see the [Coalition of Peaks Media Release](#)

Seeing our leaders coming together with shared understandings of the problems, shared understandings of the solutions and a shared determination to affect change has been a satisfying experience. Likewise we have welcomed the humility of leaders across all levels of Government. The Agreement provides a significant opportunity to accelerate and achieve improved outcomes for our people.

For media enquiries, please contact (02) 6221 9222 or email eo@natsihwa.org.au