

Second Meeting of the Joint Council on Closing the Gap

23 August 2019, Adelaide, Communiqué

The Joint Council on Closing the Gap held its second meeting in Adelaide on 23 August 2019. The inaugural meeting was on 27 March 2019 in Brisbane.

The Joint Council acknowledged the significant progress of the formal Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap between governments and the Coalition of Peaks. This partnership, which gave effect to the Joint Council, now includes signatories from the Coalition of Peaks, the Commonwealth, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory, the Northern Territory and the Australian Local Government Association. Although Tasmania is yet to sign, it has been participating fully.

The Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap is an historic arrangement. It supports formal, shared decision making between Australian governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Peak Organisations on Closing the Gap, as represented through the Coalition of Peaks. Today the Joint Council considered matters which have been jointly developed between governments and the Coalition of Peaks through a Partnership Working Group.

The Joint Council considered a review of the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA), completed by the Partnership Working Group, and agreed to develop a new National Agreement on Closing the Gap, covering the next ten years, continuing the NIRA's successful elements, strengthening others and addressing foundational areas that were previously excluded from consideration. The new National Agreement on Closing the Gap will be developed for the consideration of the Council of Australian Governments and the Coalition of Peaks.

The Joint Council endorsed in principle three new reform priorities for collective action to be built into the new National Agreement and accelerate improvements in life outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:

1. Developing and strengthening structures to ensure the full involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in shared decision making at the national, state and local or regional level and embedding their ownership, responsibility and expertise to close the gap;
2. Building the formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services sector to deliver closing the gap services and programs in agreed priority areas; and
3. Ensuring all mainstream government agencies and institutions undertake systemic and structural transformation to contribute to Closing the Gap.

As part of a shared commitment to the new partnership approach to Closing the Gap, the proposed reform priorities will form the basis for a public engagement process to be led by the Coalition of Peaks, in partnership with governments. The engagements will focus on building understanding and support for the reform priorities from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives of organisations and communities across Australia; as well as talk through what is needed to make sure the reform priorities deliver real change to peoples' lives, taking into account differing local and jurisdictional contexts. The engagements will be held in September and October 2019.

The Joint Council also endorsed high-level accountability arrangements, for further development and inclusion in the new National Agreement. The new accountability arrangements deliver greater transparency and shared accountability for improving outcomes in the lives and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and for how governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples work together.

The Joint Council endorsed their Terms of Reference and forward work plan, these are now operational and can be accessed at <https://closingthegap.pmc.gov.au/joint-council>.

Members attending

Member	Representing
The Hon Ken Wyatt MP (Co-chair)	Commonwealth
Pat Turner AM (Co-chair)	Coalition of Peaks
Cheryl Axleby	Coalition of Peaks
Muriel Bamblett AO	Coalition of Peaks
Jamie Lowe	Coalition of Peaks
Cindy Berwick	Coalition of Peaks
Trevor Pearce	Coalition of Peaks
Natalie Lewis	Coalition of Peaks
Vicki O'Donnell	Coalition of Peaks
David Warrener	Coalition of Peaks
Katrina Fanning PSM	Coalition of Peaks
John Paterson	Coalition of Peaks
The Hon Don Harwin MLC	New South Wales
The Hon Gavin Jennings MLC	Victoria
Kathy Parton, Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships on behalf of the Hon Jackie Trad MP	Queensland
The Hon Ben Wyatt MLA	Western Australia
The Hon Stephen Wade MLC	South Australia
Rowena Gilbertson, Chief of Staff on behalf of the Hon Roger Jaensch MP	Tasmania
Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA	Australian Capital Territory
The Hon Selena Uibo MLA	Northern Territory
Mayor David O'Loughlin	Australian Local Government Association