



QUEENSLAND

# **CLOSING THE GAP**

SNAPSHOT REPORT CARD 2019



Department of Aboriginal and  
Torres Strait Islander Partnerships

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

*We pay our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ancestors of this land, their spirits and their legacy. The foundations laid by these ancestors—our First Australians—give strength, inspiration and courage to current and future generations, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, towards creating a better Queensland.*

*We recognise it is our collective efforts and responsibility as individuals, communities and governments to ensure equality, recognition and advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders across all aspects of society and everyday life.*

*On behalf of the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships, we offer a genuine commitment to fearlessly represent, advocate for and promote the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders with unwavering determination, passion and persistence.*

*As we reflect on the past and give hope for the future, we walk together on our shared journey to reconciliation where all Queenslanders are equal.*

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# MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER



*All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities in Queensland should have the opportunity to thrive.*

Closing the Gap is a nationwide effort with all governments accountable for driving change in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In Queensland, we continue to see improvements in education with more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled during their vital early years, but there is much more to do.

Together we can achieve more to close the gap across other priority areas including life expectancy, literacy and numeracy, child mortality and employment outcomes.

Meaningful, community-led solutions are key to creating real and sustainable change across Queensland, from remote townships and regional hubs, to major cities and the state capital.

The Queensland Government is reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders through a new way of working together to deliver better whole-of-life outcomes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders — children, families, leaders and communities — are at the heart of this approach to create positive change at local, regional and statewide levels working towards a Path to Treaty and Local Thriving Communities.

Principles of self-determination, community leadership and respect for Queensland's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, traditions and knowledge will guide our path forward.

The Queensland Closing the Gap Report Card is an indicator for tracking progress to close the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Queenslanders.

Importantly, it also incorporates the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders now and moving into the future.

All jurisdictions are working together with the national Coalition of Peaks, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations, to refresh the Closing the Gap agenda and develop a new national agreement on Closing the Gap.

In addition to facts and figures, the priorities, needs and aspirations of communities must be front and centre of any agenda.

## **The Honourable Jackie Trad MP**

Deputy Premier

Treasurer

Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships



# 01. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

*It is essential that we track progress, identify and build on strengths and success stories, and inform areas of focus to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.*

The Queensland Closing the Gap Report Card supports this through ongoing and regular reporting as well as providing a source of data to inform a partnership approach and co-design work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders and communities.

Significant steps were taken in 2019 that demonstrate the Queensland Government's commitment to reframing its relationship with First Nations Queenslanders as an important step towards achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. This includes the historic Path to Treaty and the Local Thriving Communities reforms. The Closing the Gap Report will represent one of the measures to track progress of this reframed relationship over time; ensuring accountability and monitoring progress to close the gap.

This Report Card uses the latest available data to measure progress of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Closing the Gap targets. Additional data is provided on other priority areas raised during recent community consultations. Consistent with the 2018 report, the 2019 data highlights that two targets, year 12 attainment and early childhood education, are on track.

Four of the existing targets expired in 2018, namely: halving the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five; closing the gap in student attendance; halving the gap for Indigenous children in reading, writing and numeracy; and halving the gap in employment. While there is a target and trajectory nationally for child mortality, small numbers of child deaths each year meant that targets could not be set for each jurisdiction.

The 2019 Report Card continues to report on progress for these four targets to highlight that, while the targets were not achieved, some progress is being made. Further, in addition to reducing child mortality, improving school attendance, reading, writing and numeracy for Indigenous children remain key focus areas and are expected to be included in the refreshed targets.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2006, non-government agencies developed a National Indigenous Health Equality Campaign, and in 2007 launched a Close the Gap campaign. This rights-based awareness campaign gave rise to a National Close the Gap Day, inspiring cross-government action. COAG pledged to close key gaps in December 2007, and in March 2008 government and non-government delegates to a National Indigenous Health Equality Summit signed a statement of intent.

In July 2008, the Rudd Government established the National Indigenous Health Equality Council, and in November of that year COAG approved the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) which set out the Closing the Gap targets. COAG recognised that improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples would require a long-term, intergenerational commitment and a progressive realisation of improvements in outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Ultimately, this intergenerational investment and the changes it brings will be incremental.

## TARGETS

This is the eleventh year of the Closing the Gap initiative. In Queensland, two of the seven COAG Closing the Gap targets outlined below are on track. However, as demonstrated under sections 02, 03 and 04 of this report, enhanced efforts across the Queensland Government have resulted in areas of improved outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, even where it is not necessarily sufficient progress to close the gap.

## OUR PROGRESS AT A GLANCE

Close the gap in <b>life expectancy</b> within a generation by 2031	NOT ON TRACK
Halve the gap in <b>mortality rates</b> for Indigenous children under five within a decade by 2018	NOT ACHIEVED
95 per cent of all Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in <b>early childhood education</b> by 2025	<b>ON TRACK</b>
Halve the gap for Indigenous children in <b>reading, writing and numeracy</b> achievements within a decade by 2018	MIXED ACHIEVEMENT
Halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20–24 in <b>Year 12 attainment</b> or equivalent attainment by 2020	<b>ON TRACK</b>
Halve the gap in <b>employment outcomes</b> between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within a decade by 2018	NOT ACHIEVED
Close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous <b>school attendance</b> within five years by 2018	NOT ACHIEVED

While Queensland has not been able to report that some targets have been achieved, there have been improvements across four of the indicators, namely child mortality rates, early childhood education, reading, writing and numeracy and year 12 attainment. These are outlined below.

### DATA USED IN THIS REPORT

Much of the data included in this report are drawn from nationally collated datasets. For each target, a primary measure and data source have been agreed nationally, from which the baseline, trajectory and target are sourced. Assessments of whether or not targets are on track or achieved can be made using only the primary data source. However, for some targets, supplementary data are available from other sources and have been used, where possible, to provide a broader examination of outcomes. These supplementary data should not be used to assess actual progress against actual targets.

For Year 12 attainment the primary data source and baseline is the 2006 Census of Population and Housing, with additional data available from the 2011 Census and the 2016 Census. Given new data will not be available until after the 2021 Census, supplementary data from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS), the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (AATSIHS) and National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) has been provided in this Snapshot report.

For the employment outcomes target the primary data sources are the NATSISS (for 2008 and 2014–2015), the AATSIHS (2012–2013) and the NATSIHS (2018–2019) with the baseline being 2008.

It should be noted that the NATSISS, AATSIHS and NATSIHS are sample surveys of a relatively small number of randomly selected people, while the Census is a count of the whole population taken every five years. Estimates from the sample surveys cannot be compared with those from the Census due to the different methodologies used to collect the data and develop the estimates. Overall, this survey data highlights indicative progress and is not a definitive assessment of progress.

For each measure the most recent available data at the time of publication, whether primary or supplementary, have been reported. Due to the nature of these datasets, there is often a time lag associated with release of this data, in some cases over 12 months. Where possible, the latest available data for 2018–2019 have been reported, however some measures rely on data from 2017–2018 due to limited release dates. Where relevant this has been noted throughout the report. As data release dates are specific to the dataset in question and spread throughout the year, it is likely that between collation and publication of this report, for some measures, new data may be published.

## 02. PROGRESS SNAPSHOT: HEALTH

### FACTS

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy gap for males and females was 7.8 years and 6.8 years respectively

Higher rates of hospitalisation for acute interventions lead to significant system costs and lower health outcomes

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders have the highest life expectancy nationally

#### LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH INCREASED



MALE

**72.0** years  
(2015–2017)

Non-Indigenous: **79.8** (2015–2017)



FEMALE

**76.4** years  
(2015–2017)

Non-Indigenous: **83.2** (2015–2017)

#### CHILD MORTALITY IMPROVED (per 100,000)



ABORIGINAL AND  
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

**145.9** (2014–2018)  
**173.1** (2003–2007)

Non-Indigenous: **87.9** (2014–2018)  
**118.2** (2003–2007)



*Queensland's progress:*

**Close the gap in life expectancy within a generation by 2031 – not on track**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders have the highest life expectancy nationally, compared with other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and also experienced the greatest improvement nationally in life expectancy in recent years.

Current available data indicates that life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males has improved by 3.3 years, from 68.7 years in 2010–2012 to 72.0 years in 2015–2017.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, life expectancy has improved by two years, from 74.4 years in 2010–2012 to 76.4 years in 2015–2017.

The three leading drivers of the life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other Queenslanders, which together explain over half of the gap, are: cardiovascular disease which accounts for an estimated 21 per cent of the gap for males and females; cancers which accounts for an estimated 20 per cent of the gap for males and 18 per cent for females; and diabetes, which accounts for an estimated 13 per cent of the gap for males and 18 per cent for females.

*Queensland's progress:*

**Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade by 2018 – not on track**

Mortality rates for both non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have shown overall long term improvements. However, in recent years, progress in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child mortality rate has slowed, leading to an increase in the gap.

For the years 2014–2018, the mortality rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in Queensland was 145.9 per 100,000, 1.7 times the rate of non-Indigenous children. While the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child mortality rate has declined from 159.1 per 100,000 at baseline, the gap has increased from 47.0 deaths per 100,000 in 2008–2012 to 58.0 per 100,000 in 2014–2018.

Efforts continue to address the issues affecting child mortality, and halving the gap in mortality rates remains a priority.

*Current strategies:*

**Initiatives for positive health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders:**

- My health, Queensland's future: Advancing health 2026
- Health and Wellbeing Strategic Framework 2017–2026
- Immunisation Strategy 2017–2022
- Making Tracks towards closing the gap in health outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders by 2033
- Queensland Sexual Health Strategy 2016–2021
- Queensland Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol Strategic Plan 2014–2019
- Queensland Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Strategy 2016–2021
- Shifting minds: Queensland Mental Health Alcohol and Other Drugs Strategic Plan 2018–2023
- Every life: The Queensland Suicide Prevention Plan 2019–2029.



# 03. PROGRESS SNAPSHOT: EDUCATION

## FACTS

Around 9 in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 3 students achieved at or above the reading NMS<sup>†</sup> in 2018

Over 8 in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 3 students achieved at or above the numeracy NMS in 2018

Over 8 in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 5 students achieved at or above the numeracy NMS in 2018

Over 8 in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 9 students achieved at or above the numeracy NMS in 2018

Over 6 in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 20–24 year olds had at least a Year 12 or equivalent education in 2018–2019

## EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



PROGRESS

**86.7%** (2018)

**95%** of all Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025

## NUMERACY



PROGRESS

**85.1%** (2018)

**Year 9 numeracy** gap reduced from **20.6%** (2008) to **11.1%** (2018)

**Year 5 numeracy** gap reduced from **22.5%** (2008) to **12.3%** (2018)

PROGRESS

**84.8%** (2018)

## READING



PROGRESS

**87.1%** (2018)

**Year 3 reading** gap reduced from **22.5%** (2008) to **10.2%** (2018)

**Year 5 reading** gap reduced from **25.9%** (2008) to **14.6%** (2018)

PROGRESS

**81.8%** (2018)

## YEAR 12 ATTAINMENT OR EQUIVALENT



PROGRESS

**65.7%** (2018)

**Year 12 attainment** gap reduced from **33%** (2006) to **25.7%** (2018)

## SCHOOL ATTENDANCE (Years 1–10)

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES  
STRAIT ISLANDER STUDENTS



**83.5%** (2019)

School attendance gap has had little change  
Non-Indigenous: **91.9%** (2019)

<sup>†</sup> National Minimum Standard

Queensland's progress:

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**Halve the gap for Indigenous children in reading, writing and numeracy achievements within a decade by 2018 – mixed achievement**

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**National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)**

Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have made strong progress towards halving the gap in reading in Year 3, and reading and numeracy in Year 5. Notably, the Year 9 numeracy gap has halved as well.

**Year 3 reading**

In 2018, 87.1 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were scoring at or above the National Minimum Standards (NMS) in reading compared to 66.2 per cent in 2008. The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was 22.5 percentage points in 2008 and this has reduced to 10.0 percentage points in 2018.

**Year 5 numeracy**

In 2018, 84.8 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students scored at or above the NMS in numeracy, up from 69.5 per cent in 2008. The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was 22.5 percentage points in 2008 and this has reduced to 12.3 points in 2018.

**Year 9 numeracy**

In 2018, 85.1 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students scored at or above the NMS for numeracy, up from 73.2 per cent in 2008. The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students was 20.6 percentage points in 2008 to 11.1 percentage points in 2018.

Due to the year on year volatility of the results, the confidence intervals around the 2018 results have been considered when assessing whether results met the target to halve the gap.

Queensland's progress:

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**95 per cent of all Indigenous four-year-olds enrolled in early childhood education by 2025 – on track**

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Children who participate in early childhood education are given the opportunity to build a strong foundation for emotional, social, physical and mental wellbeing. Further, early childhood education provides a focus towards positive outcomes and offers future lifetime opportunities to thrive in society.

Queensland is on track to achieve this Closing the Gap target. In 2018, 86.7 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were enrolled in preschool in the year before they started school, an increase from 83.1 per cent in 2017. The gap has narrowed from 7.2 percentage points to 3.8 points.



Queensland's progress:

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**Halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20–24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment by 2020 – on track**

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The aim to halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20–24 in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment by 2020 was on track in 2016 according to the Census based target and trajectory. Census data are published every five years.

Interim supplementary data from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social and Health Surveys shows an increase in Year 12 or equivalent attainment from 52.9 per cent in 2008 to 65.7 per cent in 2018–2019 among 20–24 year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

Queensland's progress:

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**Close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance within five years by 2018 – not achieved**

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**Overall attendance**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student attendance rate in Queensland was 83.5 per cent for all Year 1 to 10 students in 2019; 8.4 percentage points lower than the equivalent non-Indigenous rate (91.9 per cent).

Attendance rates have changed little over time and were not achieved by 2018. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary student attendance rate (Year 7–10) was 10.3 points lower than the non-Indigenous rate (80.2 per cent compared with 90.5 per cent).

Attendance rates by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were lowest in remote and very remote regions, particularly for secondary students, with the gap reaching up to 23.9 points for all Queensland schools combined in very remote areas (government and non-government schools).

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Current strategies:

**Initiatives highlighting the importance of education and giving all children a great start:**

- Advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education: An action plan for Queensland
- Advancing education – An action plan for education in Queensland
- Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities
- Every student succeeding: State School Strategy 2018–2023.

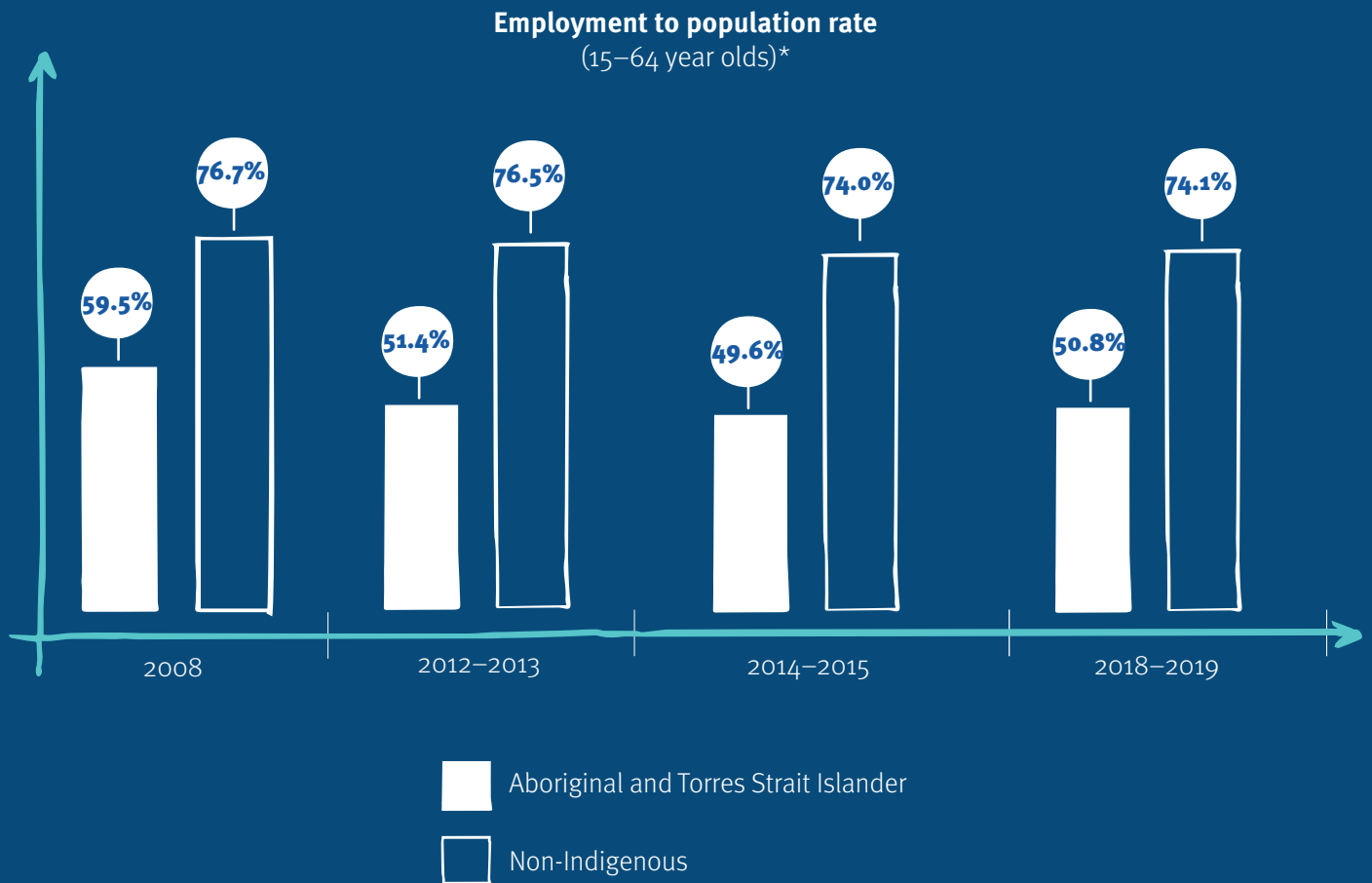
**The Queensland Government is increasing the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Year 12 attainment through:**

- Advancing education – An action plan for education in Queensland
- Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation
- Every student succeeding: State School Strategy 2018–2023
- Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities.

# 04. PROGRESS SNAPSHOT: EMPLOYMENT

## FACTS

The unemployment rate for Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples (15 to 64 years old) is 20.2% in 2018–2019, three times higher than that of non-Indigenous Queenslanders (at 6.0%)



17.2%  $\longleftrightarrow$  GAP  $\longleftrightarrow$  23.3%

\* Primary data source: NATSISS



*Queensland's progress:*

***Halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within a decade by 2018 – not achieved***

Employment levels for both non-Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, and Australia-wide remain largely unchanged since 2008.

In 2018–2019, 50.8 per cent of 15–64 year old Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders were employed compared with 74.1 per cent of non-Indigenous Queenslanders. The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in employment outcomes has been persistent over time and was 23.3 percentage points in 2018–2019.

Employment levels vary depending on where people live. In 2018–2019, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in non-remote areas were more likely to be employed than those in remote areas. Just over half of working age Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in major cities were employed (56.9 per cent) in 2018–2019, compared with three-quarters (74.8 per cent) of non-Indigenous persons.

The Queensland Government continues to invest in strategies to improve employment outcomes. During the 2018–2019 financial year, 405 employers benefitted from \$3,643,812 in Back to Work payments to employ 454 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees across Queensland.

*Current strategies:*

***The Queensland Government is pursuing employment and economic development outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders through:***

- Skilling Queenslanders for Work
- The Queensland Indigenous (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Procurement Policy
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework 2016–2026
- Advancing Small Business Queensland Strategy 2016–2020
- Moving Ahead Strategy
- The Youth Employment Program
- Advancing Indigenous Business
- Skills for Queensland – Great training for quality jobs (the Skills Strategy)
- Back to Work program
- Indigenous Community Sport and Recreation Program
- Torres Strait Community Sport and Recreation Program.

# 05. CLOSING THE GAP REFRESH

*In February 2018, COAG agreed that federal and state governments would review the targets and refresh the Closing the Gap agenda, consulting with and working in partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.*

## Special Gathering

As part of the refresh, Indigenous leaders and prominent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, including six from Queensland, met in Canberra in February 2018 for a 'Special Gathering' prior to COAG to discuss future priorities with First Ministers. A Special Gathering Statement was released highlighting that existing targets should be retained and reviewed, and outlining areas of highest importance for setting additional future targets as part of the refresh: families, children and youth; housing; justice, including youth justice; health; economic development; culture and language; education; healing; and eliminating racism and systemic discrimination. This statement also demonstrated a commitment to a new approach, guided by the principles of empowerment and self-determination.

## A new approach to Closing the Gap Refresh

Subsequently, at COAG's December 2018 meeting, federal and state governments committed to ensuring that the finalisation of targets and implementation of the Closing the Gap framework occurs through a genuine, formal partnership between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and Indigenous Australians through their representatives. This formal partnership must be based on mutual respect between parties and an acceptance that direct engagement and negotiation is the preferred pathway to productive and effective outcomes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must play an integral part in the making of the decisions that affect their lives — this is critical to closing the gap. In 2019, this formal partnership saw the development of the Closing the Gap Partnership Agreement, which Queensland has signed.

A key component of this formal partnership is the Joint Council on Closing the Gap, which draws together Ministers from each jurisdiction with 12 Coalition of Peak members to drive the partnership agreement.

On 23 August 2019, this Joint Council agreed in principle that the key reform priorities for the development of a new National Agreement on Closing the Gap would be:

- developing and strengthening structures to ensure the full involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in shared decision making at the national, state, local or regional level
- building the formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services sector
- ensuring all mainstream government agencies and institutions undertake systemic and structural transformation to contribute to Closing the Gap.

On 23 January 2020 a fourth priority reform was agreed, the development of local data projects.

These overarching principles should also inform the proposed targets covering:

- Lifelong learning
- Health and wellbeing
- Children, families and justice
- Housing and community infrastructure
- Land, water, culture and language
- Citizen participation and economic independence.

These proposed target areas closely align with those put forward at the Special Gathering.

## **Commonwealth Government Closing the Gap Refresh consultations in 2019**

The Coalition of Peaks, made up of nearly 50 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies representing community-controlled organisations that deliver important services to their communities, led national engagements to decide on a new national agreement on Closing the Gap.

Meetings were held with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations in every state and territory to talk about what was needed to improve their lives and to provide input to the new agreement.

Over 2,300 people attended nearly 70 face-to-face meetings in capital cities, regional towns and remote communities from September to December 2019, with an online survey conducted at the same time resulting in nearly 1,700 responses.

There was significant support for the key reform priorities proposed for the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap: develop and strengthen structures to ensure full involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in shared decision making at the national, state, local or regional level; build the formal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services sector; ensure all mainstream government agencies and institutions undertake systemic and structural transformation to close the gap; and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander control of, and access to, local data to enable informed decisions, drive development and accelerate outcomes.

At the engagements, most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people supported the priority areas (such as health, education, housing, justice, children and families, and economic development) for which targets have been developed. The feedback on the targets themselves, including the wording, outcomes, measures and focus, was often that they needed to be changed.

The Coalition of Peaks and Australian governments are now negotiating how the outcomes of the engagements will be reflected in the new National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which is expected to be finalised in mid-2020.

## **Queensland Closing the Gap Refresh consultations in 2019**

During November 2019, the Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DATSIP) supported the Coalition of Peaks by helping to organise consultations across Queensland and promoting the online survey on its website.

Over 260 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, community members, mainstream service providers and representatives of community-controlled organisations attended the Queensland sessions at Thursday Island (25 attendees), Townsville (50), Rockhampton (55),

Cairns (40), Mount Isa (24) and Ipswich (60). Meeting notes were provided to the Coalition of Peaks for inclusion in their Engagement Report.

Ms Pat Turner, CEO of National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation and Co-Chair of the Joint Council, chaired the Ipswich meeting. Other meetings were also chaired by members of the Coalition of Peaks and all communities and chairs expressed appreciation for the involvement of local facilitators at each location. The outcomes from the Queensland consultations closely reflect the national feedback detailed in the *Coalition of Peaks Community Engagement Snapshot* (available at [naccho.org.au/programmes/coalition-of-peaks/have-your-say](http://naccho.org.au/programmes/coalition-of-peaks/have-your-say))

One unique issue raised at the Thursday Island consultation, however, was the importance of recognising the culture of Torres Strait Islander peoples as separate and distinct from Aboriginal culture and people. This needs to be reflected in Queensland's consideration of state-wide targets and input at the national level.

DATSIP and the Department of the Premier and Cabinet will seek Queensland Government approval of the National Agreement before the Joint Council meeting, proposed for 6 April 2020, which will finalise and progress the Agreement to COAG, proposed for July 2020.

## **OVERARCHING PRINCIPLES**

The principles of healing, eliminating racism and systemic discrimination, and self-determination were strongly supported by Queensland's Closing the Gap consultation participants to be the focus for each priority and target. The Queensland Government recognises the importance of these priorities and promotes and supports self-determination at all levels and across all aspects of the Closing the Gap agenda moving forward.

Released in 2018, the Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) reaffirms the Queensland Government's commitment to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, organisations and across government to refocus efforts to close the gap.

The Queensland Government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework provides a strategic vision for Queensland Government agencies to provide efficient, effective and responsive services to Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples by ensuring their perspectives are an inherent part of core business across all agencies. This is underpinned by five principles:

1. valuing culture
2. leadership and accountability
3. building cultural capability to improve economic participation

4. engagement with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and businesses
5. culturally responsive systems and services.

As an overarching objective, the Queensland Government is committed to working with First Nations Queenslanders to reframe the relationship as part of the response to Recommendation 7 of the *Queensland Reparations Taskforce Report – Reconciling Past Injustice*.

This approach is underpinned by ‘doing with’ Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples and not ‘to’, and builds on a range of initiatives as described below.

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*Current strategies:*

***The Queensland Government is committed to building stronger relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through:***

- Queensland Reparations Taskforce Report – Reconciling Past Injustice
- Truth, Healing and Reconciliation Taskforce
- The Hope and Healing Framework
- Path to Treaty
- Local Thriving Communities Reform agenda
- Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037
- Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan 2018–2021
- Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Service Plan 2017–2020
- Queensland Government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework
- Queensland public sector inclusion and diversity strategy 2015–2020
- Queensland’s Framework for Action: Reshaping our approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Domestic and Family Violence
- Queensland Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Strategy 2016–2021
- Queensland: an age-friendly community – Strategic direction statement and Action plan
- Partnering for the future: advancing Queensland’s community services industry 2017–25
- Queensland Financial Inclusion Plan
- Making Tracks towards closing the gap in health outcomes for Indigenous Queenslanders by 2033
- Queensland Housing Strategy 2017–2027: building a better housing future for all Queenslanders
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019–2023
- Queensland’s Framework for Action – Reshaping our Approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Domestic and Family Violence

- Advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education: An action plan for Queensland.

## OUR FUTURE STATE: ADVANCING QUEENSLAND’S PRIORITIES

The Closing the Gap priorities raised during consultations throughout Queensland also have strong alignment with *Our Future State – Advancing Queensland’s Priorities*. Our Future State represents the Government’s priorities for the community comprising: create jobs in a strong economy; give all our children a great start; keep Queenslanders healthy; keep communities safe; protect the Great Barrier Reef; and be a responsive government.

### Other significant priority areas

In addition to the existing Closing the Gap targets the Report Card documents a range of data on significant priority outcome areas as identified in the community consultations held as part of the refresh agenda. Many of these priority areas are therefore also being explored as part of the refresh for consideration on additional target areas to be agreed to nationally.

### Children living in out-of-home care

There has been an increase in the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (0–17 years) living in out-of-home care in Queensland, up from 35.4 per 1,000 in 2013 to 43.0 per 1,000 as at 30 June 2019. Just over half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care are placed with kin, with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander care giver or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residential care services.

The Queensland Government is committed to addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in the child safety system. *Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037 (Our Way)* and its associated action plans commits the Queensland Government and Family Matters Queensland to working in partnership with communities and key stakeholders to eliminate the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the child protection system by 2037, and to closing the gap in life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families.

The Queensland First Children and Families Board has been established to provide strategic leadership and oversight of the implementation of the *Our Way* strategy and action plans, and to hold government and partners accountable to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The Board brings together eight eminent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Queensland who possess a vast range of expertise and strong cultural perspectives. The Chair of Family Matters Queensland and the Directors-General of the Departments of Child Safety, Youth and Women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships hold perpetual membership.



The first action plan, Changing Tracks 2017–2019, has established strong foundations for transformational change across the child protection system through a new legislative framework that:

- promotes the safe care and connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their families, community and culture
- promotes the safe care and connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with their families, community and culture
- supports the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to self determination
- enables family-led decision making
- embeds the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principle across the child protection system
- provides a greater emphasis on culture as a protective factor and the need for ongoing connection to family, community and culture
- enables the Chief Executive to delegate functions or powers under the *Child Protection Act 1999* to the CEO of an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community-controlled service.

In addition to the above, the Queensland Government has rolled out 33 community-controlled Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Wellbeing Services to make it easier for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to access the right child and family support services at the right time.

The implementation of the next action plan, Changing Tracks 2020–2022, will continue the Our Way journey towards a Queensland where all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people grow up safe, loved and cared for in family, community and culture.

Future key priorities going forward will include growing investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled child and family services, embedding the child protection legislative amendments in policy and practice across the child protection system, implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Healing Strategy to address the effects of inter-generational trauma, violence, and abuse experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families. The Wellbeing Outcomes Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in Queensland, co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities, will inform government investment and decision making.

## Family Violence

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders experience disproportionately high levels of violence, including domestic and family violence. This was evidenced in the *Not Now, Not Ever: Putting an End to Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland* report which emphasises the importance of having a service delivery network which wraps around families and offers holistic support.

In May 2019, the Queensland Government released *Queensland's Framework for Action – Reshaping our Approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Domestic and Family Violence* to better respond to the complex issues related to family violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This framework was developed in collaboration with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

In September 2019, the Third Action Plan of the *Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026* was released. The Third Action Plan builds on existing work and includes signature actions which include:

- improving equity in access to services for Queenslanders most vulnerable to domestic and family violence
- implementing an enhanced housing response for individuals experiencing domestic and family violence
- implementing *Queensland's Framework for Action – Reshaping our Approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Domestic and Family Violence*.

In October 2019, *Prevent. Support. Believe. Queensland's Framework to address Sexual Violence* was released. The Framework aims to address sexual violence against people of all genders and backgrounds and all types of sexual violence, including sexual assault and rape, youth sexual violence and abuse, child sexual abuse and intimate partner sexual violence.

In 2018–2019, 11.2 per cent of all reported victims of sexual assault in Queensland were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Prevent Support Believe Framework recognises the disproportionate experience by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of sexual violence and seeks to address this through the priority areas of Prevention, Support and Healing, and Accountability and Justice. The Framework will be supported by an Action Plan to be released in 2020.

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*Current strategies:*

***The Queensland Government is working to ensure the next generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders are safe, healthy and resilient through:***

- Our Way: A generational strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families 2017–2037
- Queensland’s Framework for Action: Reshaping our Approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Domestic and Family Violence
- Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2016–2026
- Third Action Plan of the Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Strategy 2019–2020 to 2021–2022.

### **Youth justice**

The overall rate of supervised orders for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10–17 years) in 2018–2019 was 61.9 per 1,000, a decline from 67.6 per 1,000 in 2017–2018. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people admitted to supervised orders were, on average, younger than other youth with 27.3 per cent aged under 15 years at the time of sentencing in 2018–2019 (compared with 14.6 per cent for other youth).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth were more likely to receive a detention order than other youth (10.5 per cent compared with 6.3 per cent) and less likely to receive a probation order (45.2 per cent compared with 55.3 per cent). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people living in outer regional areas (35.9 per 1,000) and remote areas (41.1 per 1,000) were more likely to be admitted to a supervised order than those living in other regions in 2016–2017.

On 11 December 2018, the government released Queensland’s first Youth Justice Strategy ‘*Working Together Changing the Story: Youth Justice Strategy 2019–2023*’. This strategy will provide a whole-of-government road map for preventing and responding to youth crime in Queensland. The Queensland Government’s Our Future State priority ‘to keep communities safe’ has set a target to reduce rates of youth reoffending by 5 per cent by 2020–2021.

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*Current strategies:*

***The Queensland Government is addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in the youth justice system through:***

- Working Together Changing the Story 2019–2023
- Youth Justice Strategy Action Plan 2019–2021
- Establishment of the new Department of Youth Justice.

### **Adult imprisonment**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to be over-represented in adult prisons. Queensland’s age standardised rates at 30 June 2019 compared with one year prior show a small increase of 92.8 per 100,000 persons for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from 1,731.8 to 1,824.6 per 100,000. In contrast, there was little change in the non-Indigenous rate.

Despite accounting for less than four per cent of Queensland’s adult population Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners accounted for around 1 in 3 prisoners. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners were younger on average than their non-Indigenous peers, with a median age of 31.2 years compared with 35.1 years.

### **Reducing recidivism**

The Queensland Government is determined to reduce barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners’ safe return to the community, and is actively working with Elder groups and First People’s Chaplaincy Services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners across Queensland.

A range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific services and programs are being delivered both in custody and in the community to improve the outcomes for people who come into contact with corrective services. A number of these services are delivered in conjunction with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and groups including Community Justice Groups.

The Queensland Government is also currently undertaking work brought about by the Queensland Parole System Review, particularly to increase delivery and develop new rehabilitation programs specifically designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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*Current strategies:*

***The Queensland Government is addressing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in the adult justice system through:***

- Community Justice Groups, including funding to enhance Community Justice Groups and Community Legal Centres.
- Queensland's Murri Courts.
- Delivering culturally appropriate programs to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners to support rehabilitation and reduce the risk of recidivism.

### **Housing**

There is no new data to report and as noted in the 2018 Snapshot report in 2016, around 33.9 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households either owned their own homes or were paying a mortgage, up from 31.9 per cent in 2006. Notably over the same period, the proportion of non-Indigenous households owning or their home or with a mortgage decreased from 66.5 per cent to 63.5 per cent.

On 14 June 2019, the Queensland Government launched the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019–2023*. The Action Plan outlines how government, communities and the housing sector will work together to create better housing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

Key features of the Action Plan are a place-based approach to develop local housing plans with communities and a person-centred approach to provide culturally-responsive services and housing support to respond to individual needs, wherever people are along the housing continuum.

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*Current strategies:*

***The Queensland Government is addressing overcrowding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander housing through:***

- Queensland Housing Strategy 2017–2027: a 10-year framework driving key reforms and targeted investment across the entire housing continuum
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Action Plan 2019–2023
- Master Planning in Discrete Communities.

### **Entrepreneurship (economic development)**

Improving employment and business outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples remains a priority for the Queensland Government. This benefits business owners, families, communities and the state's economy.

Moving Ahead Strategy 2016–2022, a whole-of-government initiative, aims to increase the economic participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through training, skilling, work, business development and growth. There are five priority areas: Build a more skilled and diverse workforce; Focus on youth and plan for the future success; Build our partnership with industry; Increase entrepreneurship, business growth and innovation; and Overcome barriers and realise opportunities to completion. Progress on the strategy's 27 actions has been tracking well with five completed and continued progress on all other actions.

The Queensland Indigenous (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Procurement Policy was developed under the Moving Ahead strategy. It provides a whole-of-government framework to increase Queensland Government spend with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to three per cent of addressable procurement spend by 2022. Under this policy, programs such as Enterprise Queensland Indigenous Programs support businesses to develop and grow.

Progress towards this target, which is also reflected in the Queensland Procurement Policy, is underway, with Queensland Government engaging 421 Indigenous businesses during the 2018–2019 financial year (a decrease from 427 in 2017–2018), which secured \$329 million in Queensland Government procurement.

The Queensland Government seeks to leverage employment and supply chain outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through Strategic Partnership Agreements with industry. DATSIP continued to build on strong relationships with Queensland's peak industry bodies, businesses and sporting organisations in 2019 to jointly focus on improved opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders.

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*Current strategies:*

***The Queensland Government is committed to creating jobs in a strong economy through:***

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Strategic Framework 2016–2026.
- Queensland Indigenous (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Procurement Policy
- Moving Ahead: a strategic approach to increasing the participation of Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islander people in Queensland's economy 2016–2022
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business and Innovation Reference Group
- Skilling Queenslanders for Work
- Youth Employment Program
- Advancing Indigenous Business Initiative
- Backing Indigenous Arts Initiative
- Employment and Education Housing Program
- Advancing Small Business Queensland Strategy 2016–20
- Skills for Queensland – Great training for quality jobs
- Back to Work program
- Supporting the Black Business Finder as Queensland's online Indigenous Business Gateway
- Indigenous Innovation and Entrepreneurs Program (IIEP).

**Land and waters**

The Queensland Government is partnering with Indigenous communities to care for land and sea country, engage future generations and provide jobs and training. Negotiated work plans reflect Traditional Owner, local community and Queensland Government priorities through the Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger program. This work includes soil conservation, pest plant and feral animal control, cultural heritage recording and protection, managed burns (savanna burning), biodiversity and species monitoring. Community engagement activities can include school based and other traineeships, Junior Ranger activities, contributions to local community events and support for disaster recovery.

Conservation and employment outcomes are delivered to benefit over 100 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the Queensland Indigenous Land and Sea Rangers program. This highly successful initiative supports some of the most environmentally sensitive parts of our state.

Through the Cape York Peninsula Tenure Resolution program, the Queensland Government is changing the tenure of identified properties to Aboriginal freehold land and jointly managed national parks. The tenure changes allow Traditional Owners to return to their country and

pursue employment and business opportunities in national park management, grazing, forestry, natural resource management and tourism.

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*Current strategies:*

***The Queensland Government continues to partner with Indigenous communities to care for land and sea country, provide jobs and training and engage future generations through:***

- Queensland's Indigenous Land and Sea Ranger program
- Queensland's Climate Change Response: Queensland Climate Transition Strategy and Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy
- Reef 2050 Long-Term Sustainability Plan supported by the Queensland Reef Water Quality Program: Five-year investment plan 2017–2018 to 2021–2022
- Cape York Peninsula Tenure Resolution program
- Land Restoration Fund.

**Social inclusion and disability**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience higher rates of disability, but in some instances do not engage with services in the disability service sector.

Queensland's commitment to implement the *National Disability Strategy 2010–2020* and complement the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) in Queensland will assist in breaking down barriers to the participation of people with disability in community life and improving access to the services that everyone needs.

The Queensland Government is committed to addressing the under-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the child safety system with NDIS plans and disability support. This will be achieved by working with families, communities and the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to identify and refer more Aboriginal and Torres Strait children and young people requiring disability support to the NDIA, as well as a commitment to improving data collection and reporting in relation to disability.

The NDIS is also creating longer-term business opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-based organisations as a result of the implementation of the scheme, as well as increased employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders in delivering disability services to NDIS clients.

The higher rates of disability experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is an important point across all Closing the Gap targets. Consideration should be given to how data, services or strategies focused on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with disability might be captured in the refreshed targets for the new National Agreement.

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*Current strategies:*

***The Queensland Government is committed to an all-inclusive, all abilities Queensland through:***

- All Abilities Queensland: Opportunities For All – State Disability Plan 2017–2020
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Disability Service Plan 2018–2021
- Inclusion and Diversity Strategy 2015–2020.

## **Culture and language**

The *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003* and the *Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Act 2003* protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage. These Acts require land users to take all responsible and practicable measures to ensure their activity does not harm cultural heritage.

Landusers can access DATSIP's award-winning cultural heritage database through an online portal, to ascertain whether any cultural heritage sites and places have been previously recorded on the database. As at 21 January 2020 there were 405 Cultural Heritage Management Plans registered on this database (there were 372 as at 30 June 2018). This efficient search process enables land users to meet their duty of care obligations established by the Cultural Heritage Acts.

DATSIP is undertaking a review of the Cultural Heritage Acts including: commencing the review with the release of a consultation paper on 23 May 2019 and inviting public submissions to the review by 26 July 2019; holding public consultation sessions in Rockhampton, Mackay, Roma, Bundaberg, Cairns and Thursday Island in June 2019, and in Mount Isa, Townsville and Brisbane in July 2019. Options developed from this are currently being further consulted on with key stakeholders.

In May 2018, the Queensland Government launched the Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan 2018–2021 which identified that DATSIP and the Department of Education will co-design a Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Community consultation was undertaken in 2018–2019 with Language Forums hosted by the Queensland Indigenous Languages Advisory Committee in Rockhampton, Roma, Brisbane and Cairns.

Queensland has more than one hundred unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages which are all in danger of being lost without support to maintain, record and grow the number of language speakers.

The Queensland Government is continuing to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to develop the Languages Policy and an action plan to complement the policy. The action plan will capture current government activities and provide opportunity for new initiatives to build on the work being done and to promote the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages as an important part of Queensland's rich cultural heritage.

In 2019, in recognition of the International Year of Indigenous Languages, the Queensland Government introduced an Indigenous Languages Grants Program that delivered support for 31 languages projects across the state.

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*Current strategies:*

***The Queensland Government continues to appreciate and promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and language through:***

- Roll out of language programs in state schools under the Australian Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal Languages
- State Library of Queensland – Indigenous Knowledge Centres
- Backing Indigenous Arts (BIA) initiative to build sustainable and ethical Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander arts industries
- First 5 Forever – a family literacy program aimed at creating stronger language and literacy environments for 0–5 year old children
- The roll out of the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Short Course Syllabus and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies General Senior Syllabus for students in the senior phase of learning
- Queensland Government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Capability Framework
- The Queensland Art Gallery's Gallery of Modern Art (QAGOMA) in consultation with its Indigenous Advisory Panel, will present exhibitions to promote the art of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, deliver QAGOMA touring programs to Indigenous communities, and develop educational programs which support Indigenous students
- Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan 2018–2021
- Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy.

## 06. MOVING FORWARD

This report evidences much still needs to be done in a number of Closing the Gap priority areas.

Despite some progress, there continues to be significant disparity between outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and non-Indigenous Queenslanders. It is clear that more needs to be done to improve wellbeing and life outcomes for Queensland's First Nations people by building on their strengths and embracing their strong cultural knowledge to develop solutions.

*Partnerships with a range of agencies, such as the Queensland Government Statistician's Office – our partners in preparing this report – are an important means for undertaking analysis, identifying successes, and improving outcomes.*

It is understood that during the past decade the most profound progress has been in those areas where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have led design and implementation processes from the beginning.

That is why during NAIDOC Week on 14 July 2019, the Deputy Premier launched the Queensland Government's Tracks to Treaty – Reframing the relationship with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. Two key elements of the Tracks to Treaty strategic reform are the Path to Treaty and the Local Thriving Communities reform.

As part of the Tracks to Treaty, the Statement of Commitment was signed to reframe the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and the Queensland Government. This reframed relationship acknowledges, embraces and celebrates the humanity of Queensland's First Nations.

Path to Treaty represents an opportunity to come together as Queenslanders to start a journey towards a future that is more just, more equal and more respectful for First Nations Queenslanders. The Queensland Government's commitment to a reframed relationship does not diminish in any way our commitment and responsibilities to Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage. Improved social, economic and cultural outcomes need more than just better service delivery, they need to be founded on a better relationship.

Local Thriving Communities (LTC) is a significant, long-term reform that will result in a different way of government working with communities to deliver better outcomes for the state's 19 remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. LTC works to improve outcomes through enhanced local decision-making so that each community has a strong voice in decisions. This approach is based on mutual respect, high expectations relationships and applying a collaborative approach to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities a greater voice in shaping their future. LTC has a focus on local solutions for long standing issues.

Path to Treaty builds on the progress made to date, including the 2010 amendment to the preamble to the Queensland Constitution to honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Australians. In 2019, the Queensland Government commenced a conversation for statewide agreement-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, holding 24 community consultation sessions across Queensland. Path to Treaty ensures the voices of all Queenslanders are heard in the treaty conversation and benefits all by promoting reconciliation and shared pride in culture and heritage. Additional key actions include:

- the *Human Rights Act 2019* which acknowledges the importance of the right to self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders



- launch of the Queensland Government Reconciliation Action Plan 2018–2021
- commitment to the legal recognition of traditional Torres Strait Islander child rearing practices
- establishment of the Queensland First Children and Families Board
- establishment of the Local Thriving Communities Joint Coordinating Committee
- commitment to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are represented on various boards and committees
- appointment of the First Nations Advisor for Housing.

State-wide consultation on a Path to Treaty was undertaken from September to December 2019 by the Treaty Working Group. Recommendations on next steps based on the consultation were recently provided to the Queensland Government by an Eminent Panel of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders and non-Indigenous Queenslanders.

The Queensland Government will continue to build upon mechanisms not just to include Indigenous representation in decision making but to ensure self-determination is at the heart of efforts guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

DATSIP's Policy Leaders Forum (PLF) is also a key body established to enable the Queensland Government to work collaboratively and in partnership with highly regarded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, Elders, policy and program experts, academics and community members; and to share information, expand expertise and influence outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders. The PLF provides a process to inform the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policy with member's expertise across health, justice, education, training, housing and child protection.

We must also continue to advocate for changes in the service delivery system reforms to support thriving remote and discrete communities — as recommended in the Queensland Productivity Commission's Service delivery in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities report.

In conclusion, a refreshed Closing the Gap agenda will provide a key mechanism as part of the reframed relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the Queensland Government and will deliver improvements by monitoring outcomes and developing solid targets and measures for priorities of importance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

*Reframing the relationship and self-determination are essential elements to building a genuine and long lasting partnership with Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples that sees individuals and communities move from surviving to thriving.*

