

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

South Australia's Annual Report 2023-24



Government of South Australia



SAACCON
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ORIGINAL
COMMUNITY CONTROLLED
ORGANISATION NETWORK



CLOSING THE GAP

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge and respect Aboriginal¹ people as the state's First Peoples that formed First Nations, and recognise Aboriginal people as the Traditional Owners and occupants of lands and waters in South Australia.

We recognise:

- the spiritual, social, cultural and economic practices of Aboriginal people come from their connection to traditional lands and waters
- maintaining cultural heritage beliefs, languages and laws are of ongoing importance to Aboriginal people today
- Aboriginal people have made and continue to make a unique and irreplaceable contribution to South Australia.

We acknowledge Aboriginal people have endured past injustice and dispossession of their traditional lands and waters and the effects of such injustice and dispossession are still felt today.

¹ In South Australia, the term Aboriginal is adopted to refer to people who identify as Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, or both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.



About South Australia's Closing the Gap artwork

The artwork in this report was created by Brooke Rigney-Lively, a proud Ngarrindjeri and Kaurna woman and mother, musician and artist. Brooke is passionate about working in and with community, and many of her works depict her personal journey, family and connection to Country and Waters.

Jointly commissioned by the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON) and South Australia's Attorney-General's Department (AGD) Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation division, the artwork represents the partnership between SAACCON and the South Australian Government to Closing the Gap.

The artwork depicts 7 circles or meeting places representing outcome areas for Closing the Gap:

- education and employment
- health and wellbeing
- justice and safety
- housing
- land and waters
- languages
- child protection.

Crosshatching symbolises the importance of the relationship between SAACCON, the South Australian Government and community. Trees symbolise continual growth and the need to stay connected to community in pursuing better outcomes.

17 kangaroo tracks symbolise the 17 socio-economic outcomes across 4 priority reforms (the hill / mountains). Footprints represent the commitment to walk together to achieve outcomes.

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Minister's foreword

On behalf of South Australia, I acknowledge and respect Aboriginal peoples as the state's first peoples and nations and recognise them as traditional owners and occupants of land and waters in South Australia.

South Australia remains steadfast in its commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) as a top priority. I am pleased to present South Australia's third annual report for 2023-2024, detailing our progress. Achieving the Closing the Gap targets is a significant challenge requiring concerted effort from all stakeholders. We are resolute in our commitment to working collaboratively across government and with our partners to implement priority reforms and enhance socio-economic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through targeted actions.

On behalf of the government, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to SAACCON and its members, including the leadership team and secretariat. Over the past year, we have made significant progress, and our strong partnership continues to evolve into a genuine collaboration with meaningful decision-making. The partnership between the South Australian Government and SAACCON has led to the establishment of the South Australian Partnership Committee. This committee serves as the central governance body for Closing the Gap in our state and oversees progress in relation to our formal Partnership Agreement and commitments under the National Agreement.

To drive genuine progress and develop effective policies, it is crucial to integrate Aboriginal perspectives and voices into the decision-making process. Accountability is key, and annual reporting, alongside the Productivity Commission's Closing the Gap Information Repository, plays a vital role in this effort.

South Australia has made notable progress in advancing Closing the Gap targets and priority reforms, but substantial challenges persist. Urgent action is needed in critical areas such as reducing Aboriginal incarceration rates, increasing Aboriginal youth participation in employment and education, and addressing the high number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care.

We will continue to build upon our existing efforts and address any outstanding needs. I'm excited to work closely with our key partners as we advance the implementation and delivery phases.

Hon Kyam Maher MLC
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs



SAACCON's foreword

This year's Closing the Gap report reflects progress that has been made and the ongoing work required, to deliver successful outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. During the 2023 - 2024 financial year, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and the South Australian Government continued to deliver essential day-to-day programs while laying the groundwork for long-term, transformational change, including improved collaboration between the two parties.

In the first instance, it is recognised that we have a long road ahead. For the past couple of years SAACCON and the South Australian government have worked tirelessly to negotiate targeted actions across the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and Outcomes which will become our priorities until 2026. I use the analogy, we are in a marathon, not a sprint as we work to bring about substantive and sustainable change and undo decades of systemic barriers.

Reflecting on the last 3 years of reporting against Closing the Gap, South Australia remains in an unfavourable position in the collection or access to data in which to measure some critical outcomes. This is evident in two targets that being: Target 13 the absence of data to track the proportion, progress and outcomes of Aboriginal females and children who have experienced family violence and Target 14 the data relating to suicide is reported in 5-year aggregates. The latter makes it difficult to detect spikes or emerging trends early enough to enable intervention and potentially save lives. It also makes it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of suicide prevention programs and mental health policies. The impact of the absence of data for Target 13 contributes to ongoing invisibility in broader societal and governmental efforts to address violence. It impacts the allocation of resources if data does not support the need for resources and this leads to gaps in legal protection for Aboriginal women and children. SAACCON will continue to work with the South Australian Government to push for data and measure outcomes for these Targets and those across the board, including Priority Reforms which will require data.

This reflection also indicates no change has been achieved across Target 10 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander adult incarceration rates and Target 12 Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander children being overrepresented in out-of-home care in the past 3 years. With foundations having been built, SAACCON is paying attention over the next 12 months on the results of our partnership with the Department for Child Protection to address systemic change in the sector. Target 10 relating to adult incarceration rates places our partnership with the Attorney General's Department under a microscope. The challenge here and across all departments, is whether the input of ACCOs and the Aboriginal community is valued. Data over the next 12 months and beyond will paint that picture

This Annual Report also demonstrates achievements over the past 12 months. Education targets and Target 11 Aboriginal young people in detention, have remained consistent over the past 3 years experiencing improvements each year.

Other key achievements:

- *Establishment of the SAACCON Secretariat as an Independent Body:* A major milestone was SAACCON obtaining Incorporation status and advancing self-determination and empowering Aboriginal-led decision-making. This move strengthens Aboriginal leadership in shaping policies and initiatives that impact communities.
- *Secondment Arrangements:* Under Priority Reform 2 the South Australian Government and SAACCON have entered into an arrangement with the placement of 2 secondees to the SAACCON Secretariat. This type of arrangement benefits both parties through the building of capacity and capability.
- *Funding for Aboriginal-Specific Program Evaluation:* Aboriginal Health SA funded the Secretariat to evaluate a Governance Course over the next 12 months. This collaboration will focus on improving outcomes, with a particular emphasis on increasing Aboriginal representation on boards and expanding the number of Aboriginal Directors through enhanced governance training.
- *Staffing Increase from 6 to 12:* To further support the implementation of priority reforms and ensure comprehensive coverage across various sectors, staffing at the Secretariat increased from 6 to 12 personnel. This expansion strengthens our ability to drive critical work across multiple sectors under the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and Outcomes. Core funding for the Secretariat derives from the Attorney-General's Department and Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation budget.

In conclusion, while progress has been made over the past year, the real, transformative change will unfold over the next two years as the collaborative work between the South Australian Government and SAACCON takes effect. The true measure of success in this partnership lies in the government's commitment to valuing Aboriginal leadership in shared decision-making. Priorities must be shaped by the Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations and the Aboriginal community, not by government agendas.

Equally, ACCOs must receive the full and sustainable funding necessary to deliver these outcomes. This is a pivotal moment—one that will define how we address long-standing inequities. I commend the tireless efforts of both the ACCOs and the South Australian Government as we move forward, ensuring a future of improved service delivery and better outcomes for Aboriginal people in South Australia.



Scott Wilson

Lead Convenor, SA Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations Network



Executive summary

This annual report details South Australia's (SA's) progress against the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement), and South Australia's Implementation Plan for the National Agreement (SA Implementation Plan).

Drawing on information from the Productivity Commission's most recent Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report (July 2024), it reports on SA's efforts in 2023-24 across the 4 priority reform areas, 17 socio-economic outcomes and 19 related targets of the National Agreement.

Nationally, performance against the socio-economic outcomes has been mixed with only 5 of the 19 targets on track.

SA has made a positive contribution towards the national targets with 9 of the 13 targets assessed at the state level demonstrating improvement. However, the rate of Aboriginal youth who are in employment, education and training has decreased and the rate of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care has increased more than any other jurisdiction.


The steps SA is taking to meet our commitments in the National Agreement are set out in our Implementation Plan, which commits government agencies and their Aboriginal partners to specific actions that will contribute to the priority reform areas and socio-economic outcomes.

The status of these actions is detailed in SA's Closing the Gap Implementation Status Update at Attachment A.

In summary, of the actions reported for the 2023-2024 reporting period (as of June 2024):

- 147 were complete (of which 76 are now business as usual)
- 47 were in progress - on track
- 16 were in progress - delayed
- 11 were no longer being progressed
- 19 have been incorporated into the new Implementation Plan
- 4 had a status of 'other'.

Addressing the inter-related factors that contribute to poorer outcomes for Aboriginal peoples requires a holistic approach, designed and delivered in partnership with Aboriginal communities.



To achieve this, we have continued to focus our efforts on the following outcomes necessary for driving systemic change:

1. Genuine partnership and shared decision-making between the government and Aboriginal South Australians through the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON), SA's Aboriginal community-controlled sector peak body
2. Coordinated, integrated and holistic approaches to the delivery of services and programs for Aboriginal people.

Throughout 2023-24, SAACCON and the government have worked together, investing considerable time and effort, to develop a set of agreed actions that are crucial to achieving the Priority Reform and socio-economic outcomes of the National Agreement. These actions will comprise SA's new Implementation Plan for the National Agreement, which is expected to be published by the end of the 2024 calendar year.

This partnership approach is strengthened by the SA First Nations Voice to Parliament, the first reform to be delivered as part of the government's commitment to a state-based implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

SA's inaugural Local First Nations Voices were elected in March 2024 and provide a way for Aboriginal people to raise community priorities in a public, transparent and accountable way. As such, the SA First Nations Voice will play an important role in ensuring government organisations in SA are transformed and respond to the needs of Aboriginal people, a priority reform of the National Agreement.



Introduction

This annual report details SA's progress against the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement), and the SA Implementation Plan for the National Agreement (SA Implementation Plan).

Drawing on information from the Productivity Commission's most recent Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report (July 2024), it reports on SA's efforts in 2023-24 across the 4 priority reform areas, 17 socio-economic outcomes and 19 related targets of the National Agreement.

SA's Closing the Gap Implementation

SA's approach to implementing the National Agreement is underpinned by the shared understanding that addressing the inter-related factors that contribute to poorer outcomes for Aboriginal people requires a holistic approach, designed and delivered in partnership with Aboriginal communities.


With this approach in mind, our efforts to date have prioritised the following outcomes necessary for driving systemic change:

1. Genuine partnership and shared decision-making between the government and Aboriginal South Australians through the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON), SA's Aboriginal community-controlled sector peak body
2. Coordinated, integrated and holistic approaches to the delivery of services and programs for Aboriginal people.

The government and SAACCON entered into a formal Partnership Agreement in November 2022 and in early 2023, established the SA Partnership Committee as the central governance mechanism for Closing the Gap in SA. The SA Partnership Committee monitors progress against our Partnership Agreement and commitments under the National Agreement.

The SA Partnership Committee comprises an equal number of members representing SAACCON and the government. SAACCON nominates its own members while the government is represented by executive-level staff from the:

- Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF)
- Department for Child Protection (DCP)
- Department for Education (DE)
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC)
- Attorney-General's Department - Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation (AGD-AAR).



The National Indigenous Affairs Agency (NIAA) also attends as an observer, and the Local Government Association of South Australia has been invited to attend in 2024-25.

As agreed in the Terms of Reference (ToR) for the SA Partnership Committee, meetings are held at least 4 times per year, with agendas and papers developed in partnership.

The ToR are aligned to the strong partnership elements in the National Agreement and include principles for working together and shared decision-making. These are:

- collaborating and participating in shared decision-making as fully informed equal partners, acting in good faith
- making decisions by consensus, and where consensus cannot be achieved, relying on the dispute resolution clauses in the Partnership Agreement
- openly sharing and respecting the position and rationale of each other.

According to both the government and SAACCON, the Partnership Committee has proven to be an excellent mechanism for developing a shared understanding, which is crucial for relationship building and shared decision-making.

The inclusion of executive-level government agency representatives has promoted and strengthened the across-government response to the National Agreement and will help build greater ownership of National Agreement outcomes in the future.

Throughout 2023-24, SAACCON and government have worked together, investing considerable time and effort, to develop a set of agreed actions that are crucial to achieving the Priority Reform and socio-economic outcomes of the National Agreement. These actions will comprise SA's new Implementation Plan for the National Agreement, which is expected to be published by the end of the 2024 calendar year.

This partnership approach is strengthened by the SA First Nations Voice to Parliament, the first reform to be delivered as part of the government's commitment to a state-based implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Through the SA First Nations Voice, Aboriginal people can have their say at the highest levels of decision-making in SA, including Parliament, Cabinet and the government through the SA public sector, on matters, policies and laws that affect them.

The Voice comprises two levels:

- 6 Local First Nations Voices (Local Voice)
- a State First Nations Voice (State Voice).

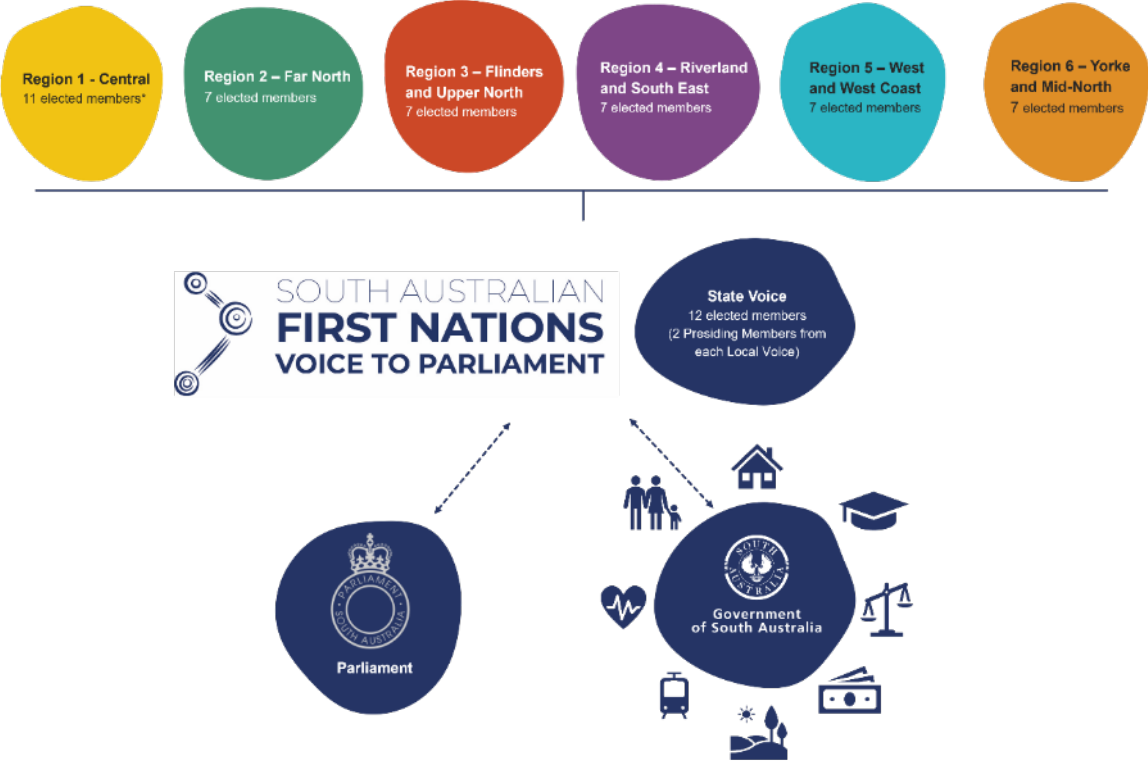
The State Voice, comprising the two Presiding Members from each Local Voice, will:

- hear the views of each Local Voice
- form state-wide views and positions that represent the diversity of Aboriginal people in SA
- present views and priorities to the Parliament, Cabinet and government chief executives.

SA's inaugural Local First Nations Voices were elected in March 2024 and provide a way for Aboriginal people to raise community priorities in a public, transparent and accountable way.

The SA First Nations Voice will play an important role in ensuring government organisations in SA are transformed and respond to the needs of Aboriginal people, a priority reform of the National Agreement.

SA First Nations Voice model




Annual Reporting

This Annual Report is the third report published by the government and SAACCON since the National Agreement commenced in 2020 and publication of the SA Implementation Plan in 2021.

Annual reporting by jurisdiction, along with the Productivity Commission’s Closing the Gap Information Repository (the CTG Repository), are important accountability mechanisms required under the National Agreement.

The CTG Repository includes a Data Dashboard for monitoring progress against agreed target outcomes and supporting indicators while the Productivity Commission’s Annual Data Compilation Report provides a point-in-time snapshot of the dashboard material.



This report incorporates an overview of SA's performance compared to national performance, as reported in the Productivity Commission's most recent Annual Data Compilation Report (July 2024)¹ and outlines the existing data limitations.

The report then describes the actions taken, and progress made, against the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and Outcomes in more detail, including a summary of the status of the Implementation Plan's actions. A more detailed acquittal of the status of each Implementation Plan action item is included at Attachment A.

The remainder of the report includes a summary of the communication actions that have been delivered and an overview of our next steps.

¹ Productivity Commission (2024). *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024*. Canberra.



Data overview

Any assessment of SA's progress against the Closing the Gap outcomes should be considered within the context of the data landscape, including data gaps, quality and the frequency of data releases.

The CTG Repository currently lacks suitable data for evaluating the 4 Priority Reforms and 4 of the socioeconomic outcomes, as follows:

- No data is available to track the proportion of Aboriginal females and children who have experienced family violence (Target 13).
- There is no new data available since the baseline was established to report on progress towards a sustained increase in the number and strength of Aboriginal languages (Target 16).
- The required data is not available to report progress on Aboriginal household access to essential services (Target 9B).
- No new data is available since the baseline was established to report on the progress towards increased access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making by Aboriginal people (Target 17).

Additionally, the following data items are not available at state and territory disaggregated levels:

- Life expectancy estimates are not produced for South Australia as Aboriginal identification is insufficient to support analysis (Target 1).
- Data for state and territory assessments of mortality due to suicide that is consistent with the target specifications is not available (Target 14).

New data continues to be developed and added to the CTG Repository and as more data becomes available, a deeper understanding will be gained of the progress made under the National Agreement.²

Priority Reforms

Agreed measures and data for the assessment of progress against the 4 Priority Reforms are yet to be developed.

² Productivity Commission (2024). *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024*. Canberra.

Socio-economic outcomes

A summary of SA's progress towards the 19 socio-economic targets, and comparison to national progress, is included in the table below.

Due to the data limitations already discussed, progress against 13 of the 19 targets has been assessed for SA. Of these 13, progress against 9 targets is improving, progress against 2 targets is worsening and for the remaining 2 targets, there has been no change compared to the baseline.

These outcome measures are fundamental to understanding SA's progress against the National Agreement. However, they are insufficient on their own. The next section of this report provides additional analysis and deeper insight into progress made to date.

| Socio-economic targets | SA progress | National progress |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Target 1: Close the Gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031. | No assessment available | Improving, but not on track |
| Target 2: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal babies with a healthy birthweight to 91%. | No change from baseline | Improving, and on track |
| Target 3: By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal children enrolled in Year Before Full time Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95%. | Improving | Improving, and on track |
| Target 4: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal children assessed as developmentally on track in all 5 domains of the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) to 55%. | Improving | Worsening |
| Target 5: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal people (age 20–24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%. | Improving | Improving, but not on track |
| Target 6: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal people aged 25–34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%. | Improving | Improving, but not on track |
| Target 7: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal youth (15–24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%. | Worsening | Improving, but not on track |

| Socio-economic targets | SA progress | National progress |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Target 8: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal people aged 25–64 who are employed to 62%. | Improving | Improving, and on track |
| Target 9a: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88%. | Improving | Improving, but not on track |
| Target 9b: By 2031, all Aboriginal households: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. within discrete Aboriginal communities receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard; ii. in or near to a town receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town (including if the household might be classified for other purposes as a part of a discrete settlement such as a “town camp” or “town based reserve”). | No assessment available | No assessment available |
| Target 10: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal adults held in incarceration by at least 15%. | No change from baseline | Worsening |
| Target 11: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal young people (10–17 years) in detention by at least 30%. | Improving | Worsening |
| Target 12: By 2031, reduce the rate of overrepresentation of Aboriginal children (0–17 years old) in out-of-home care by 45%. | Worsening | No change from baseline |
| Target 13: By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero. | No assessment available | No assessment available |
| Target 14: Significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal people towards zero. | No assessment available | Worsening |

| Socio-economic targets | SA progress | National progress |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Target 15a: By 2030, a 15% increase in Australia's land mass subject to Aboriginal people's legal rights or interests. | Improving | Improving, and on track |
| Target 15b: By 2030, a 15% increase in areas covered by Aboriginal people's legal rights or interests in the sea. | Improving | Improving, and on track |
| Target 16: By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal languages being spoken. | No assessment available | No assessment available |
| Target 17: By 2026, Aboriginal people have equal levels of digital inclusion. | No assessment available | No assessment available |

- a. There are no state and territory targets. SA's progress, therefore, has been assessed against the baseline year (and assessed as improving, worsening or no change from the baseline). The national assessments reflect progress from the baseline towards the national target.
- b. For SA, there has been no assessment made against Targets 1, 9b, 13, 14, 16 and 17 as there is no data available.
- c. Similarly, there are no assessments against the Priority Reforms as data is unavailable.

SA's Closing the Gap implementation status

The status of actions included in the SA Implementation Plan is provided in full at Attachment A.

In summary, of the actions reported on for the 2023 -2024 reporting period (as of June 2024):

- 147 were complete (of which 76 are now business as usual)
- 47 were in progress - on track
- 16 were in progress - delayed
- 11 were no longer being progressed
- 19 have been incorporated into the new Implementation Plan
- 4 had a status of 'other'.



SA's implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

Priority Reforms

The Priority Reforms respond to the voices and aspirations of Aboriginal people, and were overwhelmingly supported during the nation-wide engagement with Aboriginal communities undertaken to inform the National Agreement. The Priority Reforms are:

- **Priority Reform 1 – Formal partnerships and shared decision-making:** with governments, to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap through formal partnership arrangements.
- **Priority Reform 2 – Building the community-controlled sector:** to be strong and sustainable, delivering high quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal people across Australia.
- **Priority Reform 3 – Transforming government organisations:** Governments, their organisations and their institutions are accountable for Closing the Gap and are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal peoples, including through the services they fund.
- **Priority Reform 4 – Shared access to data and information at a regional level:** Aboriginal people have access to, and the capability to use, locally relevant data and information to set and monitor the implementation of efforts to close the gap, their priorities and drive their own development.

This is an unprecedented shift in the way governments work, by encompassing shared decision-making on the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal people.

The SA Implementation Plan, released in 2021, recognised that whilst there was strong commitment from the government and SAACCON, implementing the Priority Reforms would necessitate large-scale, transformative change, and SAACCON and the government were at the beginning of the journey.

This strong commitment from government and SAACCON remains. However, we are no longer at the beginning of the journey. Important steps have been taken to ensure that the outcomes of the National Agreement can be delivered in genuine partnership and efforts can now focus on the achievement of Priority Reforms 2 – 4.



The Priority Reforms also protect and support the strengthening of Aboriginal culture by:

- Ensuring Aboriginal governance and decision-making structures are supported.
- Recognising Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) are an act of self-determination where Aboriginal people deliver services to their communities based on their needs, cultures and relationship to land.
- Confronting institutionalised racism in government mainstream institutions and agencies to ensure Aboriginal people can access the services they need in a culturally safe way.
- Sharing data and information with Aboriginal people to ensure Aboriginal people have more power to determine their own development.

Progress against the Priority Reforms is reported on the following pages.

Priority 1: Formal partnerships and decision-making

Leading agency: Attorney-General's Department

| | |
|---|--|
| Outcome  | Aboriginal people are empowered to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap through formal partnership arrangements. |
| Target  | There will be formal partnership arrangements to support Closing the Gap in place between Aboriginal people and governments in each state and territory enshrining agreed joint decision-making roles and responsibilities, and where Aboriginal people have chosen their own representatives. |

The government and SAACCON are committed to building and strengthening partnerships that empower Aboriginal people to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress against the National Agreement.

Priority Reform 1 is progressed via partnerships that are embedded across the agreement. This spans national policy partnerships, localised 'place-based partnerships', as well as state-based partnership groups, or specific partnership approaches to deliver initiatives between government agencies and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)

Policy partnerships are created for the purpose of working on discrete policy areas.

There are 5 national policy partnerships that both government and SAACCON contribute to, along with the Commonwealth and other state and territory governments. These are:

- Early Childhood Care and Development
- Social and Emotional Wellbeing
- Justice
- Housing
- Aboriginal Languages

Place-based partnerships are based on a specific region, between government and Aboriginal partners (and others by agreement).

There are 6 place-based partnerships nationally, one of which is in the western suburbs of Adelaide, SA.

SAACCON is leading the establishment of SA's place-based partnership.

Place-based partnership in Adelaide's western suburbs



The priorities of this initiative will be community-led, through consultation conducted by SAACCON. The partnership includes the state government, federal government and local government.

SAACCON is currently engaging with ACCOs within the Adelaide western suburbs to identify priorities that will support both the place-based partnership and the Community Data Project (CDP).

SA has co-located the place-based partnership with the community data project and is undertaking this activity in genuine partnership with SAACCON as the primary lead for our state.

In agreeing to the priorities, our partnership will be able to identify the scope of work required and associated costs for both the place-based partnership and CDP.

Key SA actions

The SA Implementation Plan contains 9 actions against this Priority Reform. Of these actions, 4 are complete, 4 are in progress (2 are on track, 1 is delayed) and 1 is no longer in progress.

SA Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap


The formal Partnership Agreement between government and SAACCON was signed in November 2022 (see Introduction for further detail).

As discussed above, the primary focus of the SA Partnership Committee in 2023-24 has been the negotiation of a set of agreed actions, crucial to achieving the Priority Reform and socio-economic outcomes of the National Agreement.

The SA Partnership Committee has also progressed the following key actions this year:

- i. Establish the Priority Reform 2 Working Group and undertake state-wide consultation with the Aboriginal community controlled sector.
- ii. Administer the ACCO Growth Fund.
- iii. Establish an Aboriginal Workforce Development Sub-committee.
- iv. Develop the Joint Communication Plan.
- v. Develop a definition of co-design.

Government has invested an additional \$1m per year from 2023-24 to improve SAACCON's capacity to participate fully in the Partnership Agreement, recognising their crucial and ongoing role in achieving the outcomes of the National Agreement.



Building on the Partnership Agreement, SAACCON has also partnered with government agencies to develop and deliver a range of strategies and programs. For example, SAACCON have also been an integral partner for the establishment of the Peak Body for Aboriginal children and families in South Australia – Wakwakurna Kanyini. SAACCON are a dedicated member of the Establishment Steering Committee alongside SNAICC and DCP.

The South Australian Housing Trust (the Trust) has committed to working in partnership with SAACCON, meeting bi-monthly to progress the development of the Housing and Community Infrastructure Workplan (Schedule 4 Workplan). The Schedule 4 Workplan aims to support the National Agreement's Priority Reforms and to support Aboriginal people to secure appropriate, affordable housing aligned to their priorities and need.

South Australian Justice Partnership Committee

The South Australian Justice Partnership Committee (SAJPC) met for the first time in April 2024.

Mirroring the national Justice Policy Partnership (JPP) at the state level, the SAJPC brings together senior representatives from several ACCOs and SA Government agencies. The SAJPC's aim is to lead a strategic approach to furthering progress towards socio-economic outcomes 10 and 11 (Aboriginal adults and young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system) of the National Agreement.

To do so, it is empowered to provide advice to the Government and SA Partnership Committee on matters related to Targets 10 and 11, as well as the implementation of the Priority Reforms. The SAJPC also has oversight of the implementation of actions that are intended to drive progress towards Targets 10 and 11.

In accordance with the strong partnership elements of the National Agreement, the SAJPC has a formal Terms of Reference (which were developed in partnership) that:

- define the SAJPC's membership, purpose, and reporting and review requirements
- document the commitment of members to collaborate and participate in shared decision-making as equal partners, acting in good faith and with free, prior and informed consent.
- establish a Joint Secretariat to coordinate the SAJPC and its deliberations, in partnership.

Access to, and use of, data is a key focus of the Terms of Reference. All members are to 'actively support the identification and release' of quality, relevant data, including location-specific data, to support decision-making. This extends to making greater use of Aboriginal data – a key suggestion of the Productivity Commission in its Review of the National Agreement.

Collaborative Healthcare Framework



Pangula Mannamurna Aboriginal Corporation Inc (PMAC) and the Limestone Coast Local Health Network (LCLHN) have demonstrated a robust collaborative healthcare framework since establishing a MOU in 2020. This agreement, pivotal in facilitating shared resources and services, directly supports Priority Reform One — enhancing partnerships and shared decision-making between government and Aboriginal communities.

Key aspects of the collaboration


1. **Shared resources and facilities:** Under the MOU, PMAC utilises LCLHN facilities at no cost, including at remote sites, enabling the delivery of healthcare services directly within communities. This arrangement reduces barriers to access and ensures that healthcare is delivered in a timely and culturally appropriate manner.
2. **Clinical privileges and staff integration:** PMAC's healthcare professionals, including GPs, Social and Emotional Wellbeing staff, and Aboriginal Health Workers/Practitioners, are granted clinical privileges across LCLHN hospitals. This integration facilitates a seamless patient experience and enhances the continuity of care for Aboriginal patients.
3. **Training and development:** The agreement also includes provisions for clinical placements within LCLHN, providing essential on-the-job training for Aboriginal Health Practitioners (AHPs) and nurses from PMAC. This initiative not only builds capacity but also ensures that the workforce is well-prepared to meet the specific health needs of Aboriginal communities.
4. **Joint services and protocols:** The partnership extends to collaborative efforts in recruitment, data sharing, and the development of continuity of care protocols. These joint services are crucial for aligning both organisations' operations with the socio-economic outcomes and Priority Reforms stipulated in the National Agreement.

The collaboration between PMAC and LCLHN exemplifies a successful model of shared governance and resource utilisation that could be replicated in other regions. By fostering an integrated approach to healthcare delivery, the partnership not only meets immediate community health needs but also sets a foundation for sustained improvements and empowerment of Aboriginal peoples in the Limestone Coast region.

Aboriginal voice and partnerships in housing

SAACCON and Trust Schedule 4 Housing Sub-Committee

The SAACCON and Trust Housing Sub-Committee was established in early 2023 and has continued to meet bi-monthly to progress the development of the Schedule 4 Housing and Community Infrastructure Workplan (Schedule 4). The Schedule 4 actions aim to support Aboriginal peoples in SA to have equitable access to safe, secure and affordable homes.



In 2024, the SA Government entered into a multilateral agreement with the Commonwealth Government to receive \$50 million over a 5-year period through the Housing Australia Future Fund Acute Housing Measure (HAFF). The SAACCON and Trust partnership established a HAFF Implementation Plan Working Group to define key principles and priorities for the delivery of repairs, maintenance and improvements to remote Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal Advisory Committee

The Aboriginal Advisory Committee (AAC) meets quarterly and is an Aboriginal-led advisory mechanism to provide advice to the Trust Board on housing priorities across the state's housing system. The ACC remunerates its members and has been vital in providing advice on key strategic plans and policies and co-designed the Innovative RAP 2024-2026.

Shared Local Decision Making with Aboriginal Communities

The Trust has maintained relationships with Point Pearce Aboriginal Corporation, Far West Coast Partnerships, and Neporendi Aboriginal Forum Inc, developing independent Engagement Plans to progress to formal partnership agreements.

Priority Reform 2: Building the community-controlled sector

Leading agency: Department of Treasury and Finance

| | |
|---|--|
| Outcome  | There is a strong and sustainable Aboriginal community-controlled sector delivering high quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal people across the country. |
| Target  | Increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal programs and services going through Aboriginal community-controlled organisations. |

Aboriginal community-controlled services are better for Aboriginal people, achieve better results, employ more Aboriginal people, and are often preferred over mainstream services. A strong and sustainable Aboriginal community-controlled sector provides a diverse range of services and programs that contribute to the National Agreement outcomes.


The National Agreement defines the elements of a strong community-controlled sector as having:

- sustained capacity building and investment
- dedicated and identified Aboriginal workforce
- community-controlled organisations are supported by a Peak Body, which has strong governance, policy development and influencing capacity
- ACCOs have a dedicated, reliable and consistent funding model designed to suit the types of services required by communities.

National Sector Strengthening Plans

There are 6 National Sector Strengthening Plans in operation which provide a national joined-up approach to building strong community-controlled sectors in line with the agreed strong community-controlled elements. These are:

- Disability
- Housing
- Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Aboriginal Languages
- Health
- Early Childhood Care and Development.



The development of each sector strengthening plan was supported by working groups consisting of government and community-controlled sectors representatives, who worked in genuine partnership. The genuine partnership has resulted in robust plans with tangible and practical actions that will help to strengthen the community-controlled sector.

A sixth National Sector Strengthening Plan relating to Justice is currently in development via the national Justice Policy Partnership.

Key SA actions

The SA Implementation Plan contains 14 actions against this Priority Reform. Of the actions reported through this process 1 is complete, 5 are in progress (4 on track and 1 delayed), 6 have been incorporated into the new Implementation Plan, 1 is no longer being progressed and 1 had a status of 'other'.

Partnership approach

The SA Government is working in partnership with SAACCON to develop a whole-of-government approach to the delivery of Priority Reform 2. Key activities undertaken in 2023-24 include:

- establishing the Priority Reform Two Working Group, co-chaired by SAACCON, to foster partnership and across government collaboration
- undertaking a review of best practice approaches across the SA Government and gathering learnings from other jurisdictions
- undertaking mapping of and consultation with the SAACCON sector to identify the current state and strengths of the sector, its goals, and what it requires to achieve its ambitions.

SA Government also undertook a review of the SA Not for Profit Funding Policy – engaging with SAACCON and ACCOs to understand issues specific to the sector.

SA ACCO Growth Fund

SA Government has committed \$3.3m to help strengthen the ACCO sector via the ACCO Grant Fund. The grants are targeted to build the strength and sustainability of ACCOs, to deliver services across a range of sectors and meet the needs of Aboriginal people in SA.

The SA Partnership Committee oversees the expenditure of the ACCO Grant Fund, with the funding guidelines and grant process developed in partnership with SAACCON. The ACCO Grant Fund assessment panel has equal representation from SAACCON and government.

\$1.4m was provided to local ACCOs through ACCO Grant Fund in 2023-24.

Aboriginal Health Council of South Australia and SA Health Partnership Agreement



The Partnership Agreement between SA Health and AHCSA includes provision of a grant which is crucial in fortifying the capacity and governance of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Service Organisations (ACCHOs) in SA.

Partnership Impact

1. **Enhanced Sector Leadership:** AHCSA utilises the annual grant to support its member ACCHOs to maintain operational capability and optimise governance. This empowers leadership within the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, ensuring that ACCHOs can advocate effectively for their communities and influence health policy and practice at both state and national levels.
2. **Sustainable Funding and Resource Sharing:** SA Health recognises the stability of the ACCHO sector and is committed to sustaining and potentially increasing funding. This commitment supports the continuous improvement of services and the ability to meet emerging community health needs.
3. **Shared Decision-making on Strategic Initiatives:** The partnership agreement has been created through shared decision-making, ensuring that both parties contribute to, and agree upon, the strategies for improving health outcomes for Aboriginal communities. This approach respects the principles of self-determination and community-control, key to effective and culturally appropriate health service delivery.
4. **Joint Responsibilities and Adaptability:** Acknowledging that the landscape of state and national policies will evolve, the partnership is designed to be flexible, allowing for adjustments and enhancements in response to new health priorities and reforms. The transition to an outcomes-focused agreement underscores a shared commitment to accountability and effectiveness, enhancing monitoring and reporting mechanisms to assess the impact of their collaborative efforts.


Outcomes and Future Directions

The partnership serves as a model for contributing to capacity building of the sector Peak Body, illustrating the benefits of a strong, collaborative approach to community-controlled service delivery.

In 2024-25 the annual grant funding will support the establishment of a Health and Wellbeing Partnership Committee, with SAACCON, that continues the principles of mutual respect, shared responsibility, and commitment to community-driven goals, thereby fulfilling the overarching vision of a healthier, empowered Aboriginal population in SA.

DCP Aboriginal Community-controlled Procurement and Investment Strategy

DCP is strongly committed to increasing investment in the ACCO sector and currently funds ACCOs to deliver a range of services including out of home care (foster and residential), kinship care, family group conferencing, family finding, family led decision-making and reunification.



Additionally, DCP is working in partnership with two non-Aboriginal NGOs and ACCOs to transition the funding and delivery of existing family-based care services to Aboriginal children and young people to ACCOs.

DCP has commenced engagement with SAACCON to co-create an ACCO Procurement and Investment Strategy with the ACCO sector to build on and accelerate current progress towards an Aboriginal-led service sector for Aboriginal children and families, which will be further enabled with proposed amendments to the Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017 to support the progressive delegation of legislative functions to Aboriginal organisations.

Justice sector

The AGD funded JusticeNet SA to offer the ACCO Connect service, which pairs ACCOs with law firms that can provide legal assistance to identify the necessary steps to achieve their governance objectives. This may include support to structure their business to best achieve wage parity – a key element of a strong ACCO sector.

South Australian Public Sector ACCO Secondment Pilot

The Office of the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment (OCPSE) managed a pilot program during 2023-24 to place public sector employees into 2 local ACCOs - Tauondi Aboriginal Community College (Tauondi) and SAACCON. The placements were designed with the participating ACCOs to address critical capability needs.

SAACCON also hosted 2 other secondees during 2023-24 to build their capacity.

The pilot contributes towards Priority Reform 2 and provides on the ground cultural learning experience for participants. There is potential for expansion of the program following an evaluation of the pilot and consultation with SAACCON.

Aboriginal Community-Controlled Registered Training Organisations

In line with the requirements of the National Skills Agreement, Skills SA in the Department of State Development (DSD) is working closely with the 3 Aboriginal Community Controlled Registered Training Organisations (ACCRTOs) in SA to understand the most effective way to expand investment in their capability, sustainability and growth.

Subject to the outcomes of the Aboriginal Adult Education and Training Strategy, the department will also examine activities to grow the Aboriginal Vocational education and training (VET) workforce and boost the cultural competency of mainstream Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) to provide culturally safe and respectful training opportunities for Aboriginal students.

Supporting Tauondi Aboriginal College

Recognising the important role Tauondi plays within the community as a provider of culturally safe and supported education outcomes for Aboriginal people, funding of \$5.6m over 4 years has been provided to support Tauondi's plans for sustainable business operations and growth.





Tauondi is well positioned to contribute to a range of further education outcomes, supporting:

- Foundation skills for adults in a community setting, including literacy (also in Aboriginal languages), numeracy, and digital skills
- VET delivery at all levels, from foundation skills to higher level qualifications
- Culturally appropriate supports for learners to engage in and complete training and successfully transition into work
- Aboriginal language skills - building capacity of educators to deliver language skills and delivering language training
- Partnerships with other ACCRTOs to deliver courses and learner supports for their students and those of mainstream providers
- Building the cultural awareness of mainstream RTOs, especially where it supports training delivery and lifts outcomes for Aboriginal students.

Priority Reform 3: Transforming government organisations

Leading agency: Department of the Premier and Cabinet

| | |
|---|---|
| Outcome  | Governments, their organisations and their institutions are accountable for Closing the Gap and are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people, including through the services they fund. |
| Target  | Decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal people who have experiences of racism. |

The SA Government remains committed to transformation and a sustained effort to elevate accountability, reduce racism and provide culturally safe, responsive services.

Through the National Agreement, governments are required to implement the following transformation elements:

- Identify and eliminate racism through identifying and calling out institutional racism, discrimination and unconscious bias, and address disproportionate outcomes and over-representation of Aboriginal people by addressing features of systems that cultivate institutionalised racism.
- Embed and practice meaningful cultural safety by embedding high-quality, meaningful approaches to promoting cultural safety, recognising Aboriginal people’s strength in their identity as a critical protective factor. This applies to all levels of staff within government organisations.
- Deliver services in partnership with Aboriginal organisations, communities and people through developing genuine relationships between government organisations and Aboriginal people, organisations and / or businesses to enhance the quality and cultural safety of mainstream service delivery.
- Increase accountability through transparent funding allocations to improve transparency for funding allocation to, and distribution by, mainstream institutions in relation to dedicated Aboriginal-led service delivery.
- Support Aboriginal cultures through ensuring government organisations identify their history with Aboriginal people and facilitate truth-telling to enable reconciliation and ongoing healing.
- Improve engagement with Aboriginal people by ensuring that when governments are undertaking significant changes to policy and programs that primarily impact on Aboriginal people, they engage fully and transparently, and that Aboriginal people:
 - have a leadership role in the design and conduct of engagements

- know the purpose and fully understand what is being proposed
- know what feedback is provided and how it is being taken into account by government
- are able to assess whether the engagements have been fair, transparent and open.

Independent mechanism

Through the National Agreement, the SA Government has agreed to develop or strengthen an independent mechanism, or mechanisms, that will support, monitor, and report on the transformation of mainstream agencies and institutions. The mechanism will:

- support mainstream agencies and institutions to embed the transformation elements detailed above and monitor their progress
- be recognisable to Aboriginal people and be culturally safe
- engage with Aboriginal people to listen and to respond to concerns about mainstream agencies and institutions
- report publicly on the transformation of mainstream agencies and institutions, including progress, barriers and solutions.

The SA Government is committed to exploring the essential features of, and suitable models for, the independent mechanism, in partnership with SAACCON and the SA First Nations Voice.

Early work has identified several existing legislative and non-legislative structures that have accountability and reporting mechanisms in place, to varying degrees. However, none meet all the requirements for the independent mechanism.

The SA Government and SAACCON have commenced discussions on the Independent Mechanism through the SA Partnership Committee and advice on this matter will also be sought from SA's First Nations Voice, as soon as is practicable.


Key SA actions

The SA Implementation Plan contains 8 actions against this Priority Reform. Of the actions reported through this process 4 are complete (1 of which is now business as usual), 2 are in progress but are delayed and 2 have been incorporated into the new Implementation Plan.

Transforming government organisations

Historical and contemporary public policy, processes and practices have had unintended racially discriminatory consequences for Aboriginal peoples.

In recognition of this fact, DPC is committed to shifting the culture and systems within SA Government to ensure Aboriginal people can thrive in SA.



From 2024-25, DPC will lead the implementation of Priority Reform 3 on behalf of SA Government and is setting out the government's approach to meeting its commitments under the National Agreement, including embedding Priority Reform 3 within policy design and service delivery models. DPC's approach to leading Priority Reform 3 will be grounded in the transformational elements of the National Agreement and the Productivity Commission's review recommendations for Transforming Government, which include:

- power needs to be shared
- mainstream systems and culture need to be fundamentally rethought
- stronger accountability is needed to drive behavioural change.

To realise the full scope of the reforms and meet SA Government's requirements DPC will partner with SAACCON to transform SA Government culture and systems. This partnership aims to advance the elimination of racism in the public sector and embed genuine co-design to improve policy outcomes.

Public Sector Anti-Racism Strategy 2023-28 and Action Plan

Preventive Health SA and OCPSE have developed the first *Public Sector Anti-Racism Strategy 2023-28 and Action Plan* to focus across-government action against racism.

The Strategy and Action Plan were developed through extensive consultation with Aboriginal and multicultural communities and were publicly launched in November 2023. The Anti-Racism Strategy addresses systemic, interpersonal and internalised racism in the public sector, in line with the transformation elements under Priority Reform 3.

It takes proactive steps to identify and oppose racism by changing policies, behaviors and beliefs that perpetuate racist ideas and actions. The Anti-Racism Strategy is evidence-based and aligned with the Australian Human Rights Commission's approach to developing the proposed national anti-racism framework.

Attorney-General's Department Closing the Gap Framework

The AGD has developed a Closing the Gap framework. Drawing on the findings of the Productivity Commission, the framework aims to fundamentally transform how the Department conducts its business, as outlined by the Priority Reforms. It provides practical guidance to business units and includes referrals to upcoming cross-government Closing the Gap policies (such as the Communications Framework).

The framework also provides examples of work that the AGD has undertaken, or is currently undertaking, to embed the Priority Reforms.

The roll-out of the framework will be supported by a Closing the Gap workshop, tailored to the unique needs and circumstances of AGD. This workshop will raise awareness of Closing the Gap and educate staff on how to align their work with the Priority Reforms.

Given the breadth of the AGD's work, the framework has the potential to accelerate improvements across various socio-economic outcomes and targets (not limited to justice).

Whole of Government Cultural Learning Framework

During 2023-24, OCPSE developed a Learning Framework for Workplace Cultural Safety (the learning framework). This recognises the importance of cultural learning as the first step towards cultural safety for all employees, especially Aboriginal and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse peoples.

The learning framework is currently being tested by OCPSE with employees from several agencies undertaking in-person and on-line workshop and learning modules. These include cultural learning workshops, tailored for the SA context and developed with Aboriginal community leaders.

The next steps include an evaluation of the learning framework following the conclusion of the respective pilots in 2024 to inform finalisation and across-government implementation.

South Australian Government Aboriginal Leadership Program – A partnership with Tauondi Aboriginal Community College

OCPSE manage the Aboriginal Frontline Leadership Program. The purpose of the program is to develop leadership capability of SA Public Sector Aboriginal employees. The program was developed and is delivered in partnership with Tauondi, an ACCO and Registered Training Organisation (RTO). The agreement between OCPSE and Tauondi ensures equal decision-making power between the parties when setting program direction and learning outcomes for participants.

Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act 2023

The nation-leading *Hydrogen and Renewable Energy Act 2023* embeds the requirement for early engagement between the SA Government and Native Title groups in legislation. The legislative framework facilitates the identification of both land suitable for development of renewable energy projects on pastoral land, Crown land, state waters as well as areas which are not suitable based on cultural or environmental values.

The Act also embeds the use of Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUA) at each stage of the project to ensure agreement-making is undertaken according to the principles of free, prior, and informed consent.

To build capacity within Native Title groups, the Department for Energy and Mining has engaged Indigenous Energy Australia to assist, where desired, in the design of criteria to be incorporated into competitive tenders with a view to maximising the embedded benefit for Aboriginal peoples, community, and Country from investment in SA's renewable energy infrastructure.

Transformation of the child protection system



SA remains committed to reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal children in its child protection system through initiatives that promote Aboriginal-led decision-making and service delivery.



On the 13 June 2024, the Commissioner for Aboriginal Children and Young People officially presented her report titled '*Holding on to Our Future*'. This report, resulting from an inquiry into the application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) in SA, highlights the need for increased investment in keeping Aboriginal families together and calls for systemic reforms. DCP will lead the government's response to implement necessary changes.

Collaboration with the Commissioner continues to drive the progress of legislative amendments for embedding all elements of the ATSICPP, to the standard of active efforts, providing for the progressive delegation of authority to Aboriginal entities, re-introducing the best interests of the child as a key principle in decision-making and requiring a state strategy to support all agencies to recognise their role in protecting children and families.

Financial commitments include a \$13.4m investment over 5 years to expand Family Group Conferencing (FGC) for vulnerable Aboriginal families and the declaration of Kornar Winmil Yunti Aboriginal Corporation (KWY) as an Aboriginal organisation under the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*, enhancing ACCO involvement in service delivery.

Priority Reform 4: Shared access to data and information at a regional level

Leading agency: Department of Treasury and Finance

| | |
|--|---|
|  Outcome | Aboriginal people have access to, and the capability to use, locally relevant data and information to set and monitor the implementation of efforts in Closing the Gap, their priorities and drive their own development. |
|  Target | Increase the number of regional data projects to support Aboriginal communities to make decisions about Closing the Gap and their development. |

Implementation of Priority Reform 4 is critical for Aboriginal people, for self-determination, an informed say, equal contribution and shared decision-making.

Increasing access to location-specific data and information will enable a new way for the SA Government and Aboriginal South Australians, through SAACCON, to work together and improve policies and programs to further Closing the Gap outcomes.

Shared access to data and information will also support implementation of the first 3 Priority Reforms.

Data will help Aboriginal communities and organisations have a comprehensive picture of what is happening in their communities, to inform their decision-making and enable better outcomes in Closing the Gap.

The SA Government has committed to:

- share available, disaggregated regional data and information with Aboriginal organisations and communities on Closing the Gap (subject to privacy requirements)
- establish partnerships between Aboriginal people and government agencies to improve collection, access, management and use of data, including identifying improvements to existing data collection and management
- make data more transparent by telling Aboriginal people what data government has and how it can be accessed
- build the capacity of Aboriginal organisations and communities to collect and use data.

Through the National Agreement, Community Data Projects will be established in up to 6 locations across Australia. These projects will be designed to enable Aboriginal communities and organisations to access and use location - specific data on Closing the Gap outcome areas. The SA location is the western suburbs of Adelaide.

The SA Government's Office for Data Analytics (ODA) sits on SA's Community Data Project Steering Committee and will support SAACCON and other SA Government agencies to deliver the Community Data Project aligned to the Place Based Partnership in Western Adelaide.

Key SA actions

The SA Implementation Plan contains 5 actions against this Priority Reform. Of the actions reported through this process, 2 are in progress - delayed and 3 are categorised as 'other'.

Access to health data

In committing to sharing regional data under Priority Reform 4, Preventive Health SA have supported the Narungga Health Assembly to establish the first Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service on Narungga country (Yorke Peninsula). This aligns with Schedule 2 of the Buthera Agreement between Narungga Nation Aboriginal Corporation and the State of South Australia

With the role of SA Health as the designated administrative unit, Preventive Health SA provides support with access to data from systems such as the SA Cancer Registry, Pregnancy Outcome Unit, SA Population Health Survey (SAPHS) and the Population Health Survey Module System (PHSMS).

Data sharing for justice reinvestment



Throughout 2023–24, AGD lent its expertise in data analysis to several Aboriginal community representatives who had expressed interest in applying for funding through the National Justice Reinvestment Program.

The Department prepared a suite of dashboards containing data on youth and adult offenders and offences and key demographics by Local Government Area. Additional data was sourced from DE, DCP and Department for Correctional Services (DCS) and provided to interested communities.

In total, 41 dashboards containing data at the local level were provided to Aboriginal community representatives across the state, with such data being disaggregated by gender, age and Aboriginal status so finer trends could be identified.

The AGD also provided a briefing, to explain the data, any applicable caveats and how to interpret and access additional data.

Indigenous data sovereignty in practice

OECD has commissioned the evaluation of the child health and development check pilot program delivered through a partnership with Nunkuwarrin Yunti and the development check pilot program delivered in partnership with KWY.

In line with the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty, these evaluations have been co-designed with Nunkuwarrin Yunti and KWY with input from their clients. The co-design process included the design of the questions that need to be answered and methods of data collection. The views of both the clients and staff have been incorporated to ensure the evaluation is culturally safe and appropriate.

The evaluators and OECD staff have worked with Nunkuwarrin Yunti and KWY to support the collection of service and administrative data.

As the data is analysed, the interpretation and presentation of the data will be reviewed to ensure that clients and staff are represented in an accurate and fair manner. Following completion of the evaluation, the findings will be shared with Nunkuwarrin Yunti and KWY and those that participated in the evaluation, in a format and language that is appropriate.

Alignment to the First Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-26 - Action 2 Data Sovereignty

Nationally, work has progressed on the First Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-26 - Action 2 Data Sovereignty - which is being led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander System Leadership Working Group.

Current work is being undertaken by SNAICC and the Leadership Group to define Data Sovereignty. Initial scoping and jurisdictional mapping have occurred to understand the state of activities and existing infrastructure for the sovereignty of data.

Through the provisions of the SA Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap, the SA Government and SAACCON have negotiated new implementation actions to be included in SA's updated Implementation Plan to be finalised this year.

This includes an action for DCP to work in partnership with DHS, SAACCON, Wakwakurna Kanyini – SA Peak Body for Aboriginal children and families and ODA to undertake data and research informed activities to develop a data sharing and data development plan (the plan). The plan must meet Australian Government specifications of agreed definitions and approaches to Indigenous Data Sovereignty.



Socio-economic outcomes

19 targets have been agreed to know how we are tracking against the socio-economic outcomes of the National Agreement and focus on measuring the outcomes experienced by Aboriginal people.

This section of this Annual Report provides SA's updates on actions and progress towards each outcome in 2023-24. Where data has been made available on the Productivity Commission's Closing the Gap Information Repository Dashboard an overview of progress and trends has been included.

Commentary made by the Productivity Commission in their *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024* has been included where pertinent to the SA context.

About the target data

Information for all targets is sourced from the Productivity Commission's Closing the Gap Information Repository Dashboard at: www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard

Assessments of progress should be used with caution as they are based on a limited number of data points.

Outcome 1: Aboriginal people enjoy long and healthy lives

Leading agency: Department for Health and Wellbeing

Target data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Target: Close the Gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031. | No assessment available | Improving but not on track |

Nationally,

- Aboriginal males born in 2020–2022 are expected to live to 71.9 years and non-Aboriginal males have a life expectancy of 80.6 years (an 8.8 year gap)
- Aboriginal females born in 2020–2022 are expected to live to 75.6 years, and non-Aboriginal females have a life expectancy of 83.8 years (an 8.1 year gap)
- the life expectancy gap is assessed as improving, however the target of achieving a zero life expectancy gap by 2031 is not on track to be met.

There is no assessment of progress available for SA.

SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 32 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 30 are complete (22 of which are now business as usual) and 2 are no longer being progressed.

Health for Aboriginal people is holistic, encompassing not just physical health but also social, emotional, cultural, spiritual and ecological wellbeing for individuals and communities.³ This perspective reflects a strong sense of cultural identity and deep connections to Country, culture, family, kinship and community that are essential to Aboriginal wellbeing.

SA Health’s strategic approach to improving Aboriginal health has been developed in partnership with key Aboriginal stakeholders over time, including AHCSA, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, community groups, other health sector providers, and Aboriginal South Australians.

This strategic approach is set out in key policy frameworks: *SA Health Aboriginal Health Care Framework 2023 – 2031* and *South Australian Aboriginal Health Promotion Strategy 2022 – 2030* which seek to challenge the health system to address the needs of Aboriginal

³ Productivity Commission (2024). *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024*. Canberra

people through a cultural lens, and look to a life course approach that addresses holistic health and wellbeing, and the cultural and social determinants of health.

Key SA actions

One-stop screening shop



In 2023-2024, Preventive Health SA coordinated 5 'One Stop Screening Shops' at Wonggangga Turpandi in Port Adelaide (a Northern Adelaide Local Health Network site) as well as regional and rural locations across SA; Clare, Port Pirie, Maitland, and Oodnadatta. Planning has commenced for a second Northern Adelaide Local Health Network site at Muna Paiendi in Elizabeth Vale which will be held in the latter half of 2024.

Preventive Health SA have found various components of this model to be effective including:

- Involvement of local Elders in the educational component of the day played a critical role in breaking down barriers and motivating people to participate in screening.

“I’ve never been in a room with someone aged 70 before. I’ve decided today that I want to live to be 70 and see my grandkids grow up. I’m going to do the screening test today”.

One Stop Screening Shop Participant

- Partnerships with local Aboriginal Primary Health Services - It is critical that the screening is positioned in the context of primary care so that the appropriate follow up and care can take place if the results come back positive.
- Aligning events with existing activities – Planning One Stop Screening Shops on the same day and time as regular Aboriginal Women’s or Men’s groups proved most successful. Combining education and clinics on the same day resulted in time efficiencies.
- Incentives to screen – Initially polo shirts (with Aboriginal artwork) were only available on the day of the One Stop Screening Shop but are now made available throughout the year to encourage opportunistic screening.

The next steps include ongoing refinement of the model, such as:

- Self-determination: Building the capacity of local health services to deliver these events independently and/or build screening into usual care e.g. annual health checks.
- Streamlining processes including access to screening information systems.

Outcome 2: Aboriginal children are born healthy and strong

Leading agency: Department for Health and Wellbeing

Target data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcomes | SA | Australia |
|---|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal babies with a healthy birthweight to 91%. | No change from baseline | Improving and on track |

Nationally,

- in 2021, 89.6% of Aboriginal babies born were of a healthy birthweight. This is an increase from 88.8% in 2017 (the baseline year).
- the target shows good improvement and is on track to be met
- the proportion of healthy birthweights increased in major cities between 2017 and 2021 but remained relatively stable in regional and remote areas.

In SA,

- in 2021, 87.7% of Aboriginal babies born were of a healthy birthweight. This is a decrease from 88.4% in 2017 (the baseline year).
- the proportion of Aboriginal babies born of a healthy birthweight has changed inconsistently year on year since 2017 and has been assessed as no change from the baseline.
- this assessment is provided with a low level of confidence.

SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 9 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 8 are complete (6 of those are now business and usual) and 1 is no longer being progressed.

Strengthening and investing in the health of children in the prenatal and early childhood periods can have positive and long-lasting impacts for wellbeing. The health and wellbeing of a baby are closely linked to that of their mother and surrounding environment.

As such, maintaining cultural practices, ties to community and Country, and ensuring family support can play a crucial role in promoting the wellbeing of mothers, babies and children.⁴

⁴ Productivity Commission (2024). *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024*. Canberra

Key SA actions

Keeping Families Together Model of Care



The Barossa Hills Fleurieu Local Health Network (BHFLHN) has implemented a Model of Care in maternal and birthing services that holds cultural safety and the ATSI CPP at the front of service delivery when working alongside Aboriginal families.

The model recognises the historical and ongoing impacts of systemic discrimination and the importance of cultural sensitivity and it ensures Aboriginal families are an integral part of decision-making processes, particularly in relation to child protection and family violence concerns.

Implementing Family meetings and Cultural Yarns has centred family and child voice in decision-making, whilst strengthening a multi-disciplinary health response to the ATSI CPP. As a result, the Gawler Hospital has seen **zero** Aboriginal child removals in the last few years.

BHFLHN have prioritised cultural engagement with DCP through Family meetings and Cultural Yarns to ensure the voice of the family and the unborn child is heard. It's through this we have had positive outcomes which has resulted in children going home to their families with supports in place. This process does not dismiss the necessity of removals as a last resort but ensures that families are fully informed and actively involved in this decision-making process.

Cultural Yarns aim to ensure that Aboriginal children and families thrive, learn, and feel safe in their early years. By collaborating across roles and programs, we can develop a comprehensive understanding that embraces the multifaceted strengths of families. This in turn builds the confidence of clinicians to recognise and draw upon the strengths of families and community, working in partnership with the Aboriginal Health Directorate and with the families we serve.

It is also an opportunity to share cultural wisdom and knowledge to empower consumer choice and decision-making. The model supports clinicians to engage in conversations based on trust, respect, integrity, collaboration, and kindness to foster a deeper understanding of child and family structures and situations.

Our next steps are to formalise our Keeping Families Together Model of Care to ensure it is replicated in all Aboriginal Family Birthing sites within BHFLHN and create stronger continuity of care processes for families transferring out, to ensure high level advocacy and holistic support is carried forward.

Outcome 3: Aboriginal children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years

Leading Agency: Department for Education

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|--|-----------|------------------------|
| Target: By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal children enrolled in Year Before Full-time Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education to 95%. | Improving | Improving and on track |

Nationally,

- in 2023, 101.8%⁵ of Aboriginal children in the Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) age cohort were enrolled in a preschool program. This is an increase from 76.7% in 2016 (the baseline year).
- based on progress from the baseline, the target shows good improvement and is on track to be met. This assessment is provided with a high level of confidence.

In SA,

- in 2023, 106.7%⁶ of Aboriginal children in the Year Before Fulltime Schooling (YBFS) age cohort were enrolled in a preschool program. This is an increase from 96.3% in 2016 (the baseline year).
- based on progress from the baseline, the target shows good improvement.


SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 7 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 2 are now business as usual, 3 are in progress (2 on track and 1 delayed) 1 has been incorporated into the new implementation Plan and 1 is no longer being progressed.

Socio-economic outcome 3 recognises the strengths of promoting Aboriginal connection to family, culture and identity in early childhood education.

⁵ This data should be interpreted with caution. The numerator and denominator used in this data series are compiled from different sources and as such results greater than 100% can be found.

⁶ As above.



Factors that increase access, availability and affordability of high quality, culturally appropriate education for Aboriginal children include:

- Embedding Aboriginal cultures, knowledges and identities into all education services through connecting with Aboriginal Elders, communities, organisations and culture to continue cultural practices of child rearing and language.
- Prioritising investment in Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, and support for the Aboriginal workforce to use their knowledges and expertise to deliver nurturing and culturally safe environments and education services.⁷

Key SA actions

Support for Aboriginal children with a hearing impairment

Designated preschools with high enrolments of Aboriginal children continued to access the Aboriginal Children with Hearing Impairment Support Program this reporting period. This program provides additional speech pathology services to support the building of children's speech and language skills prior to attending school.

The aim of the program is to support Aboriginal children with a focus on those experiencing a higher incidence of hearing loss related to Otitis Media and chronic ear infections. It is a known risk factor for significant delays in speech and language development and ongoing literacy skills.


National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation resources that include a focus on hearing loss in Aboriginal children were provided to preschools with high enrolments of Aboriginal children.

Hearing screening by Watto Purrinna Health Services recommenced in the northern and western suburbs, after a break during the COVID-19 pandemic, and DE's Special Educators (Hearing) worked with Hearing Australia's Hearing Assessment Program-Early Years to support screening in select regions, including Port Augusta and Whyalla. Screening was provided to children on the Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (APY) Lands in preschool and parent and children's centre settings in partnership with Flinders University.

Culturally responsive approaches to teaching and learning in preschools

Development of curriculum resources aligned to the Early Years Learning Framework, embedding intentional, culturally responsive teaching and learning is ongoing, to support preschool educators system-wide. DE's Aboriginal Voice Framework is being utilised in the development of the resources, embedding Aboriginal expertise, experience, perspectives and needs while highlighting issues to be addressed.

⁷ Productivity Commission (2024). *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024*. Canberra



Guidance and resources for preschools on culturally responsive approaches to teaching and learning, and to support the participation of 3- to 5-year-old Aboriginal children, remains a priority of DE in partnership with the OECD.

Aboriginal early childhood teachers, educators and leaders play a critical role in the workforce and in how early childhood education is delivered to Aboriginal children and how those children, families and Communities connect with early childhood services.

The Aboriginal Co-design Governance Group established through a partnership between OECD and SAACCON is co-designing an Aboriginal Early Childhood Workforce Strategy with South Australian ACCOs and Aboriginal stakeholders and communities over 2024–25 to increase the number of Aboriginal teachers and educators working in the early childhood sector.

The commitment to grow and support the early childhood workforce and provide support for quality teaching and learning in preparation for universal 3-year-old preschool delivery will leverage the programs to be provided by the TAFE Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Education and Care, which will support the acceleration of commitments to Closing the Gap by partnering with Aboriginal stakeholders to customise and translate curriculum and learning resources.

Outcome 4: Aboriginal children thrive in their early years

Leading Agency: Department for Education (leadership transferred to Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD) from May 2024)

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal children assessed as developmentally on track in all 5 domains of the Australian Early Development Census to 55%. | Improving | Worsening |

Nationally,

- in 2021, 34.3% of Aboriginal children commencing school were assessed as being developmentally on track in all 5 AEDC domains. This is a decrease from 35.2% in 2018 (the baseline year).
- based on progress from the baseline, the target is worsening. However, this assessment should be used with caution as it is based on a limited number of data points.

In SA,

- in 2021, 31.3% of Aboriginal children commencing school were assessed as being developmentally on track in all 5 AEDC domains. This is an increase from 29.0% in 2018 (the baseline year).
- based on progress from the baseline, the target is improving.


SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 10 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 7 are now business as usual and 3 are on track.

Key SA actions

SA Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care

The SA Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care made a number of recommendations, which have been accepted by SA Government, to strengthen support for Aboriginal children and families.



The OECD and SAACCON are establishing a shared decision-making process to implement new early childhood reforms for Aboriginal children. This co-design and governance process will include engagement with Aboriginal leaders and communities, and focus on:

- co-design of Aboriginal 3-year-old preschool initiatives to ensure that Aboriginal children retain and increase the benefits from 3-year-old preschool, with \$14m provided over 4 years to support this work
- co-design of an Aboriginal Workforce Strategy and underpinning initiatives
- strengthening of the ACCO sector and leverage, align and build on the Closing the Gap focus on early childhood development.

To support this work, SAACCON and OECD have entered into a formal agreement which provides funds to SAACCON to employ a project officer, building their capacity to work in partnership with OECD on co-designing initiatives to address the Royal Commission's recommendations.

Office for Early Childhood Development

The Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD) has established a dedicated Closing the Gap team, including Aboriginal staff, to support Closing the Gap initiatives and implement the recommendations of the SA Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care that empower Aboriginal children. An Aboriginal Leadership Committee is also being established to embed Aboriginal perspectives and cultural advice throughout office policies, projects, initiatives and ways of working.

OECD is establishing an Aboriginal Co-design Governance Group in partnership with SAACCON, with government and Aboriginal communities and organisations equally represented, to govern the co-design of Aboriginal preschool and workforce initiatives. The co-design process will be facilitated by an Aboriginal business.

In line with the Royal Commission recommendations, the Office for Early Childhood Development Bill 2024 has been drafted to confer on the OECD, explicit functions with respect to Aboriginal children, including to promote the cultural safety of early childhood education and care services, and to promote Aboriginal data sovereignty in relation to early childhood development data.

Outcome 5: Aboriginal students achieve their full learning potential

Leading Agency: Department for Education

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|--|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal people (age 20–24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96%. | Improving | Improving, but not on track |

Nationally,

- in 2021, 68.1% of Aboriginal people aged 20–24 years had attained Year 12 or an equivalent qualification. This is an increase from 63.2% in 2016 (the baseline year).
- based on progress from the baseline, the target shows improvement but is not on track to be met.

In SA,

- in 2021, 64.6% of Aboriginal people aged 20–24 years had attained Year 12 or an equivalent qualification. This is an increase from 61.4% in 2016 (the baseline year).
- based on progress from the baseline, the target shows improvement.

SA overview

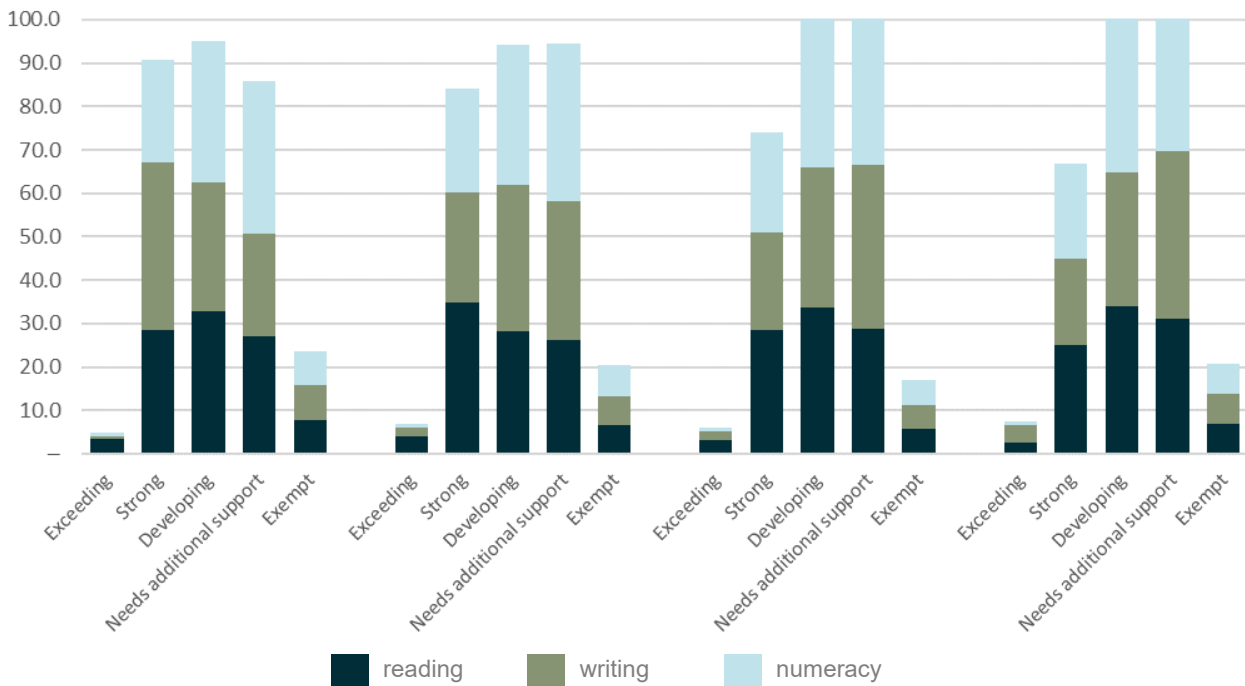
The SA Implementation Plan contains 8 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 6 are complete (with 4 of these now business as usual) and 2 are on track.

Around 65% of Aboriginal students in years 3, 5 and 7 had a reading proficiency assessed as 'developing', 'strong' or 'exceeding'. This proportion was highest for students in year 5 (67%) but decreased in year 9 to 62%.

The proportion of Aboriginal students with a writing proficiency assessed as developing, strong or exceeding declined across the schooling years – from 69% for students in year 3 to 55% in year 9.

However, the opposite was true for Aboriginal students numeracy proficiency with assessments of developing, strong or exceeding increasing across the schooling years – from 57% in year 3 to 61% in year 9.

Reading, writing and numeracy proficiency of Aboriginal students in SA (2023), for year levels 3, 5, 7 and 9



Source: ACARA National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy national results

Supporting Aboriginal students to reach their potential⁸

Throughout its review of the National School Reform Agreement (2022), the Productivity Commission heard from organisations, children and young people about the barriers faced by Aboriginal students.

These barriers included that schools are not always culturally safe spaces, that the curriculum does not reflect aspects of learning valued by Aboriginal people, and that non-Aboriginal teachers and school leaders may have a limited understanding of Aboriginal knowledges and cultures.⁹


A culturally responsive approach to the curriculum and pedagogies enables students to see their identities, cultures and knowledge reflected in what and how they learn. It supports a student's perception of their potential and supports educational outcomes.

SA actions

Aboriginal Education Strategy 2019-2029

⁸ Productivity Commission (2024). *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024*, Canberra

⁹ Productivity Commission (2024). *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024*, Canberra



Tranche 2 of the Aboriginal Education Strategy is focused on systemic change with the central principle of improving engagement and partnerships with Aboriginal people, organisations, community, family and students guiding program design, delivery and evaluation.

Key system level enablers are in progress, establishing the governance, policy, funding and workforce settings to support system-wide progress on the Strategy's goals at all levels:

- Aboriginal Voice Framework
- Aboriginal Funding Reform
- Aboriginal Workforce Plan
- Aboriginal Expert Advisory Panel.

An effective, and important approach has been the embedding of Aboriginal community priorities, input and advice into the design and delivery of initiatives in tranche 2. This has been achieved through advisory and reference groups, collaboration and direct engagement of ACCOs and experts, and through the provision of grants.

For example, teaching and learning resources for Aboriginal languages, and resources which showcase Aboriginal knowledges and ways of knowing have been developed and implemented in collaboration with SA Aboriginal language groups and Traditional Owner groups. This has ensured the creation of resources that are respectful of the priorities, cultural authority and aspirations of Aboriginal communities, and empower Aboriginal students to see themselves, their identities and cultures reflected in their learning.

87 Aboriginal staff from across the state have registered to participate in DE's Aboriginal Voice Framework since its commencement in 2022. Development and delivery of training, for Aboriginal staff and Policy Officers, in partnership with Tauondi has provided culturally safe learning opportunities for Aboriginal staff and supported increased cultural knowledge and understanding for non-Aboriginal staff. Staff who have accessed the training report greater confidence in responding to requests for feedback and in engagement processes.

The following milestones are noted for each of the Strategy's goals:

Goal 1: Aboriginal children develop foundations for success in the early years

- Pilot child health and or development check program has commenced with Nunkuwarn Yunti and Kornar Winmil Yunti Aboriginal Corporation, providing information, support and referral pathways to parents and caregivers of Aboriginal children (program now transferred to the Office for Early Childhood Development).

Goal 2: Aboriginal children and young people excel at school

- Priority Learners Team established, providing tailored support to focus Local Education Teams and schools to improve Aboriginal learner achievement, reaching 31% of Aboriginal learners in South Australian public schools.
- 20 schools are being actively supported to build educator capability in teaching Aboriginal learners of English as an additional language or dialect, with emerging evidence at a classroom level for growth in students' proficiency in Standard Australian English.
- Active collaborations with Aboriginal revival language organisations and owners to develop Aboriginal languages curriculum resources continue and have expanded.
- Professional resources, learning and support continues to be provided to Anangu Personalised Learning Coordinators, so they are confident in their abilities to develop One Plans.
- Anangu Educators are accessing Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara teaching materials and resources and professional learning to support their work in delivering a culturally affirming and locally meaningful education for their children.
- Teaching and learning resources across multiple learning areas have been developed with Aboriginal Communities, supporting growth in educator confidence in delivering Aboriginal contexts in the curriculum.

Goal 3: Aboriginal children and young people are on pathways to success

- In 2023, there were 1,139 students engaged in SAASTA academies across the state with 707 year 10, 11 and 12 students working towards completing their SACE certificate.
- In 2024, the strengthening of SAASTA continued with a strategically and culturally aligned expansion of its workforce structure to meet the growing number of schools choosing to take on SAASTA programs. This year alone, there were 6 new additional school based academies. There is also interest from APY Lands schools to have SAASTA program delivered locally.
- All students participating in the SAASTA academies meet, uphold and maintain above 80% school attendance, respectful behaviour and completion of curriculum tasks.

SAASTA has met program goals with the following measures:

- Increase in retention rate for SAASTA students
- Increase in the academic achievement of SAASTA students
- Increase in attendance rates for students in SAASTA classes
- Increase in the number of learners participating in SAASTA programs
- Increase in the leadership capabilities of SAASTA students
- Increase in student access to culturally safe and responsive curriculum.

Culturally Responsive Framework

An implementation pilot of DE's Culturally Responsive Framework was completed in June 2024. Learnings from the pilot have been used to develop a roadmap to further build cultural responsiveness, informed by real experiences more broadly across the education system.

Tools and resources to build cultural responsiveness across the system have been developed, and key workforce policies, programs and processes, specifically relating to recruitment, scholarships and leadership pathways, have been evaluated and strengthened.

Kardla Miyurna Entreprenungas have been engaged to co-create a Learning Support Program to build cultural responsiveness for all workforce across the education system. The program will be mandatory, providing foundational learning for all employees with a focus on place based cultural and historical contexts, self-reflection, and a clear connection to the 'Knowing, Doing, Being' learning journey and domains within the Culturally Responsive Framework.

An approach to measuring cultural responsiveness in a meaningful way has been determined this reporting period, with a baseline established.

Partnership with the Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Education Committee (PYEC)

PYEC is an Anangu-run organisation that leads the strategy for the education of Anangu in the Anangu schools. A formal PYEC-Department for Education agreement has been collaboratively developed, covering 4 areas:

- the role of the PYEC
- the role of governing councils and the interrelationship between governing councils and the PYEC
- the roles and responsibilities of the PYEC, the department and other major stakeholders
- the impact of the PYEC strategic plan on school priorities and the common work that will be carried out.

Partnership with the SA Aboriginal Education and Training Consultative Council (SAAETCC)



SAAETCC is the peak body dedicated to supporting improved educational opportunities for the achievement of Aboriginal children and young people in South Australia.

SAAETCC aims to support the Minister to fulfil commitments to the Aboriginal community, and work with the Department for Education (DE) to sustain long-term improvement to the social, education and economic status of Aboriginal people.

SAAETCC is a key member of the national Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (Coalition of Peaks) and a founding member of SAACCON.

DE and SAAETCC have negotiated a 3-year Grant Agreement with a total value of \$3.3m for the period 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2026. The Grant Agreement sets out 4 areas in which DE and SAAETCC will partner to support Aboriginal learners, families and communities:

1. advocacy for improved educational outcomes for Aboriginal children and young people
2. advice
3. service delivery
4. cultural responsiveness.

This new agreement is a significantly increased investment in SAAETCC, enabling it to fulfill an enhanced partnership role with DE in keeping with commitments under the Partnership Agreement, the Strategy for Public Education, the Aboriginal Education Strategy and the Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan.

Outcome 6: Aboriginal students reach their full potential through further education pathways

Leading Agency: Department of State and Development

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|---|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal people aged 25–34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70%. | Improving | Improving, but not on track |

Nationally,

- in 2021, 47% of Aboriginal people aged 25–34 years had completed non-school qualifications of Certificate III or above, an increase from 42% in 2016, the baseline year. This was an improvement but the target is not on track to be met.

In SA,

- in 2021, 42% of Aboriginal people aged 25–34 years had completed non-school qualifications of Certificate III or above, an increase from 40% in 2016, the baseline year.

SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 1 action against this socio-economic outcome, which is complete.

Supporting Aboriginal people to pursue further education¹⁰

Structural factors can create barriers to accessing further education for Aboriginal people. These include:

- socio-economic challenges, such as higher rates of unemployment, financial distress and competing priorities with family and community

¹⁰ Productivity Commission (2024). *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024*, Canberra

- geographical barriers, with many Aboriginal communities residing in remote and regional areas with limited access to universities, support services and digital infrastructure
- a disconnect from the mainstream curriculum that does not acknowledge or incorporate Aboriginal cultural identities, languages or histories
- racism and discrimination within educational institutions, which may create hostile learning environments.

Opportunities to support retention of Aboriginal students in further study include:

- developing culturally appropriate mentoring and tutoring programs to support Aboriginal students navigating academic challenges, building confidence and a sense of belonging with the higher education system
- offering flexible delivery of course content, including online courses, blended learning, or part-time study options. This can give Aboriginal students more options to balance studies with other responsibilities and cultural commitments
- having an open-door policy for students for whom life circumstances lead them to discontinue their studies before graduating but who later wish to return.¹¹

Key SA actions

Skills Centre pilots

Over 2023-24, DSD piloted a number of location-based physical spaces in regional SA that connect learners, industry, training providers and employers in collaborative, innovative and proactive ways.

Relationships Australia have established Skills Centres in Port Augusta and Berri with outreach support to Ceduna to respond to community and welfare sector skills shortages, with the primary focus on community services jobs and skills. The centres provide students with a safe, inclusive learning environment, using current resources, the latest technology and ongoing case management throughout their training.

In 2023-24, just under 30% of people engaged in courses delivered by the Port Augusta Skills Centre were Aboriginal. The centre is also working with TAFE SA to support delivery of foundation skills in the APY Lands.

Adult Community Education (ACE)

In 2023-24, 68 Aboriginal students enrolled across 16 ACE projects, delivering non-accredited and accredited foundation skills, by 13 community-based education providers.

¹¹ Productivity Commission (2024). *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024*, Canberra

This represented over 5% of all ACE training places for 2023-24, with participants aged between 25 to 44 years of age.

Co-design of the Aboriginal Adult Education and Training Strategy



In 2023-24, Skills SA and SAACCON commenced the co-design of a long-term Aboriginal Adult Education and Training Strategy aligned to the National Agreement and the National Skills Agreement, which commenced on 1 January 2024.

The Strategy co-design has been facilitated by an Aboriginal-owned business and informed by targeted stakeholder and community engagement to privilege Aboriginal voices and understand the lived experience of Aboriginal learners, educators and communities.

A reference group with strategic oversight of the co-design process, has been established, with a majority Aboriginal membership representing relevant government agencies and key Aboriginal stakeholders.

The Strategy will complement the initiatives in the National Skills Agreement and 'Skilled. Thriving. Connected. A policy direction for Skills in South Australia', and will consider social, community and economic outcomes, noting that skills contribute to workforce development across a variety of Closing the Gap priority areas.

The Strategy will consider:

- Supporting training pathways for all Aboriginal learners including VET in schools, and adult learners seeking to build, deepen or broaden their skills
- Delivery at all levels including pre-vocational community learning, foundation skills and certificate courses
- Supporting career pathways for Aboriginal people (school leavers and adults) to enter the workforce in key sectors (e.g. teaching Aboriginal languages, early childhood education and care)
- Service delivery through ACCRTOs and Aboriginal owned RTOs and building the capability and capacity of these organisations
- Culturally appropriate supports for Aboriginal learners
- Building capability of mainstream RTOs to support Aboriginal learners
- Implementation through place-based arrangements with service providers with demonstrated expertise in delivering training and supports to Aboriginal learners.

Fee Free TAFE Tranche 2 for Aboriginal learners

FFTT2 for Aboriginal learners commenced in 2024 and will continue for 3 years (to December 2026), offering 1,500 fee free training places for delivery by non-government training providers to Aboriginal students in SA. These places are supported by \$4.8m of funding by the Australian and SA Governments and they are additional to fee free places being offered to Aboriginal students by TAFE SA.

17 non-government RTOs, including 3 ACCRTOs, funded to deliver 870 fee free training places in 2024 across 46 accredited qualifications and skill sets with an estimated value at \$1.85m.

To support the capability of ACCRTOs delivering FFTT2, funding of \$185K was used to engage two positions (Compliance Officer and Data Management and Reporting Officer).

The implementation approach for FFTT2 was co-designed with SAACCON and SA's 3 ACCRTOs.

Equipment and Capital Grants (ECG)

ECG support state-of-the-art training facilities, contemporary infrastructure and technology, and industry-relevant equipment aligned with areas of skill demand and economic priorities in SA.

Tauondi received an ECG of \$250K in 2023-24 to support the refurbishment and construction of an undercover outdoor training area, and for the development of tailored training resources.

Outcome 7: Aboriginal youth are engaged in employment or education

Leading Agency: Department of State and Development

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|--|-----------|-----------------------------|
| Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal youth (15–24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67%. | Worsening | Improving, but not on track |

Nationally,

- in 2021, 58% of Aboriginal people aged 15–24 years were fully engaged in employment, education or training. This is an increase from 57% in 2016 (the baseline year)
- based on progress from the baseline, the target shows improvement but is not on track to be met.

In SA,

- in 2021, 56% of Aboriginal people aged 15–24 years were fully engaged in employment, education or training. This is a decrease from 58% in 2016 (the baseline year)
- based on progress from the baseline, the target is worsening.

SA overview


The SA Implementation Plan contains 6 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 4 are complete (with 2 of these now business as usual) and 2 are on track.

Key SA actions

Pathways to further education and employment

In total, 923 students from 64 schools engaged with the Aboriginal Pathways: Workabout Centre programs in 2023-2024. The Workabout Centre Program is part of the Department for Education's initiatives.

In 2023, 663 students from 64 schools successfully engaged with the Workabout Centre programs. An increase in mentoring and transition support for year 12 students marked successful outcomes.



In 2024, with the expansion of its workforce, the Aboriginal Pathways: Workabout Centre successfully expanded its programs to offer services to Aboriginal students across the state and community engagement in Coober Pedy has identified key priorities for the delivery of Workabout Centre program activities locally.

20 students in 2024 participated in Certificate II in Retail Cosmetics VET Course – a pilot project partnership between DE and the French Beauty Academy to deliver a bespoke model specifically for Aboriginal year 10 and 11 secondary students.

Additional options for VET pathways continue to be made available to Aboriginal students.

Learner Support Services for VET students

Skills SA in the Department of State Development (DSD) invests in Learner Support Services (LSS) for VET students who need additional support to complete their training and transition to further training or employment.

In 2023-24, Tauondi, a LSS provider supporting Aboriginal VET students, was funded to:

- Develop and deliver professional development workshops on Aboriginal cultural competency for RTOs with a specialised focus on Aboriginal students who are neurodiverse, have disability or are facing mental health challenges. The workshops have been developed, tested and refined and the project has been extended.
- Trial the delivery of a foundation skills tutoring service for Aboriginal students undertaking VET at any RTO.
- Deliver a foundation skills tutor skill set, to tutors from all RTOs participating in the trial.

Tauondi has experienced challenges recruiting and retaining support workers for the LSS program with changes occurring in their RTO and a reduction in the number of Aboriginal students supported through LSS, to around 3% in 2023-24.

Skills SA has worked with Tauondi, to integrate LSS supports with other supports offered by Tauondi allowing the support worker roles to be combined across these support services. This has facilitated the creation of upskilled support worker positions with sufficient hours to enable retention of their support workers.

Skill Shortage Solutions (SSS)

SSS grants support projects that collaboratively develop and deliver high impact solutions to current and future skill shortages at industry, sector, regional or workforce level. SSS also supports projects increasing workforce diversity in trade shortage areas.

In 2023-24 there are 3 SSS projects supporting VET pathways for up to 40 Aboriginal people in heavy industries (in regional South Australia), floor covering and other trades.

Outcome 8: Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal people and communities

Leading Agency: Department of State Development

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|--|-----------|-------------------------|
| Target: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal people aged 25–64 who are employed to 62%. | Improving | Improving, and on track |

Nationally,

- in 2021, 56% of Aboriginal people aged 25–64 years were employed. This is an increase from 51% in 2016 (the baseline year).
- based on progress from the baseline, the target shows good improvement and is on track to be met.

In SA,

- in 2021, 50% of Aboriginal people aged 25–64 years were employed. This is an increase from 46% in 2016 (the baseline year).
- based on progress from the baseline, the target is improving.

SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 24 actions against this socio-economic outcome.

Of the actions reported through this process 15 are complete (with 4 of these now business as usual), 8 are in progress (6 on track and 2 delayed), and 1 is no longer being progressed.

Employment plays a pivotal role in enhancing social, economic and health outcomes for individuals, as well as providing benefits to their family and community.

Employment can support wellbeing, improve access to health services through increased incomes and break cycles of poverty that may impact Aboriginal people. Employment and financial security are also linked to better outcomes for Aboriginal mental health, including a lower likelihood of mental distress and suicidal behaviour.

Addressing structural barriers to employment, for example by working collaboratively with Aboriginal communities and building a more inclusive education system, can support workforce participation.¹²

Key SA actions

Aboriginal employment in the construction industry




The Department for Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) has leveraged government procurement guidelines to produce measurable increases in employment outcomes in the government funded infrastructure and civil construction projects. Successful outcomes so far include:

- The Strzelecki Track Upgrade Project have committed to a minimum target for Aboriginal Economic Participation of 20% of the total workforce. Of the 113,362 total onsite construction hours, to the end of June 2024, 30,823 hours or 27% have been worked by Aboriginal people.
- The Oodnadatta Track Pavement Formation and Floodway Construction project continues to exceed the minimum target for Aboriginal Economic Participation, of the 15,950 total onsite construction hours, to the end of June 2024, 7,832 hours or 49% have been worked by Aboriginal people. Extensive training and upskilling of Aboriginal people has been undertaken on this project.
- Approximately 20% of labour hours on the Old Murray Bridge Refurbishment Project were undertaken by Aboriginal workers. Additionally, the Traffic Management company employed by the Contractor is a 100% Aboriginal owned business.

Port Wakefield to Port Augusta (PW2PA) Alliance is committed to continually increasing its Aboriginal engagement and inclusion in its construction projects. PW2PA project spend at end of the 2024 financial year with Aboriginal businesses was more than \$27m (6% of total), including concrete supplies; road construction; vehicle hire; traffic management; graphic design; recruitment and training. Aboriginal Workforce hours were 252,221 hours (10% of total).

The Aboriginal workforce participation rate for the Cape Jervis and Kangaroo Island Ports Upgrade is currently at 13%, with a project total of 2,457 hours worked by the Aboriginal workforce recorded to date.

¹² Productivity Commission (2024). *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024*, Canberra



The early inclusion of relevant Registered Native Title Body Corporates (RNTBCs), ACCOs and other Aboriginal stakeholders in the infrastructure project process has been fundamental to the successful outcomes of projects. DIT's Aboriginal Liaison and Project Teams have worked collaboratively with RNTBCs and key Aboriginal stakeholders facilitating communication and strengthening relationships.

Increasing Aboriginal employment in the South Australian police workforce

South Australia Police (SAPOL) continues to examine current practices and develop new strategies to attract, retain, develop and support Aboriginal employees. The number of Aboriginal employees has declined over the year, however this in line with non-Aboriginal staff attrition rates. Aboriginal people currently comprise 1.3% of SAPOL employees.

SAPOL has experienced greatest success through exploring alternate pathways in remote communities. This has been achieved through talent identification within communities and exploring the opportunity for extended contracts pursuant to the *Public Sector Act 2009*.

SAPOL will ensure that Aboriginal people are actively consulted, and Aboriginal perspectives are respected in retention and recruitment planning removing barriers by examining the needs, requirements and expectations of Aboriginal communities, individuals and the organisation.

Aboriginal Employment in the Public Sector

The SA Implementation Plan committed to increasing the number of Aboriginal people employed in the Public Sector from 2% in 2021 to 3%.

The 2023 Workforce Information Report, published by the Commissioner for Public Sector Employment, identifies that at June 2023, there were 2,517 Aboriginal employees in the SA public service, making up 2.2% of the sector. Aboriginal employment in the public sector increased by 4.9% during 2022-23. The increase in Aboriginal employment in the public sector is encouraging, but consideration of new across-government employment programs for Aboriginal people may be required to accelerate recruitment.

Behind this data, some agencies have had considerable success in employing Aboriginal people compared to other agencies and there is a concentration of Aboriginal employees in lower classification levels.

The Aboriginal Leadership Program has created a growing network of Aboriginal leaders with the skills and confidence to make a difference in their current and future workplaces, as well as increased awareness within agencies of their talented Aboriginal employees.

Mintabie Township Decommissioning and Remediation Project

The Department for Energy and Mining (DEM) is leading the Mintabie Township Decommissioning and Remediation Project to return the Mintabie Township Area to APY communities. The project is funded jointly with the Commonwealth government, with the Commonwealth also contributing employment programs to support project delivery.

Over the past year, DEM has reinvigorated a place-based partnership through re-establishing the Mintabie Oversight Committee (MOC) with membership comprising senior nominated APY representatives and Commonwealth and SA Government representatives.

The next steps are:

- APY to finalise its Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) consultations and report for consideration and approval-to-proceed by the APY Board
- MOC to agree a detailed Project Plan with inputs from the HIA
- Head contractor engaged, aiming to maximise Anangu employment and meet employment targets
- Mintabie Township decommissioning and remediation works on site (about 4 months). Expected completion date for site clean-up is March 2025.

Aboriginal Employment in the Department for Environment and Water

The SA Implementation Plan includes a commitment to increase Aboriginal employment in the Department for Environment and Water (DEW) to 4% by 2023. As of 30 June 2024, Aboriginal employment was 3.6%.

Deliverables include:


- employing 6 new Aboriginal Rangers by June 2023
- promoting to Adelaide-based universities DEW's desire to recruit graduates and postgraduates with knowledge of Aboriginal land and water interests, and skills in engaging with Aboriginal peoples¹³.

As a part of the DEW Protecting Our Parks program and election commitment, DEW has committed to employing 15 new Aboriginal Rangers by 31 December 2024, via 3 recruitment intakes.

| Intake | No. Rangers | Due Date | Status |
|--------|-------------|-------------|----------|
| 1 | 4 | 31 Dec 2022 | Complete |
| 2 | 6 | 31 Dec 2023 | Complete |
| 3 | 5 | 31 Dec 2024 | On track |

A new Aboriginal Workforce Plan is currently being developed and formal consultation will occur with Aboriginal staff and DEW Leaders.

¹³ This particular deliverable is closed with no further action. Detail as to how to produce a graduate program has been delayed due to the University of Adelaide and University of South Australia merger. Entry level recruitment programs are to be explored in DEW's new Aboriginal Workforce Plan. Status of the 'Increase Employment Opportunities' action is 'on-track' given the progress of the remaining deliverable.



Challenges or barriers included attracting staff in a highly competitive market and limited training and job opportunities available in remote areas.

Strategies implemented to address the challenges or barriers that have led to positive outcomes include:

- Increased presence at community events and job expos to promote job opportunities directly with Aboriginal people (First Nations Meet the Employer Event and Tauondi's Rec in the West).
- Working with Traditional Owners and ACCOs on the recruitment of Aboriginal Ranger positions.
- Aboriginal panel members on interview panels.
- Created an Aboriginal Ranger Development Program to support new and existing regional Aboriginal Rangers get a formal qualification (Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management) and support their career development and progress. Training provided face-to-face at both regional and metropolitan locations.

Aboriginal Employment in the Department of Human Services

In 2023-24, DHS recruited a Principal Aboriginal Workforce Consultant, to lead the implementation of the DHS Aboriginal Workforce Strategy. At the end of June 2024, the DHS Aboriginal employment rate was 4.2%, up from 3.7% in 2023 (and 3% in 2021), exceeding the 4% target set out in the DHS Aboriginal Workforce Strategy 2021-2023.

North West Indigenous Pastoral Project – Carbon-based Income Streams

The potential benefits of carbon farming include significant social benefits, which is recognised by the Traditional Owners, if carbon income is expended and managed wisely. Implementation of the project required changes to the *Pastoral and Land Management Act 1989* to allow carbon farming on SA pastoral lease-held lands. These changes were made in July 2024 and implementation can now proceed.

The Circle - First Nations Entrepreneur Hub

The Circle, based at Lot Fourteen, provides a single point of entry to connect industry, private enterprise and Government to a capable, confident and thriving Aboriginal business sector across the state.

The Circle's operations are currently wholly funded by the Commonwealth's National Indigenous Australian Agency (NIAA). The current funding agreement with the NIAA is set to expire on 30 June 2025. The Commonwealth have advised that any future funding will be notified in early 2025 with a transitional model currently under development.

Outcome 9: Aboriginal people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need

Leading Agency Target 9A: SA Housing Trust

Leading Agency Target 9B: SA Housing Trust

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Target 9A: By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88%. | Improving | Improving, but not on track |
| Target 9B: By 2031, all Aboriginal households: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. within discrete Aboriginal communities receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard II. in or near to a town receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town (including if the household might be classified for other purposes as a part of a discrete settlement such as a ‘town camp’ or ‘town based reserve’. | No assessment available | No assessment available |

Nationally,

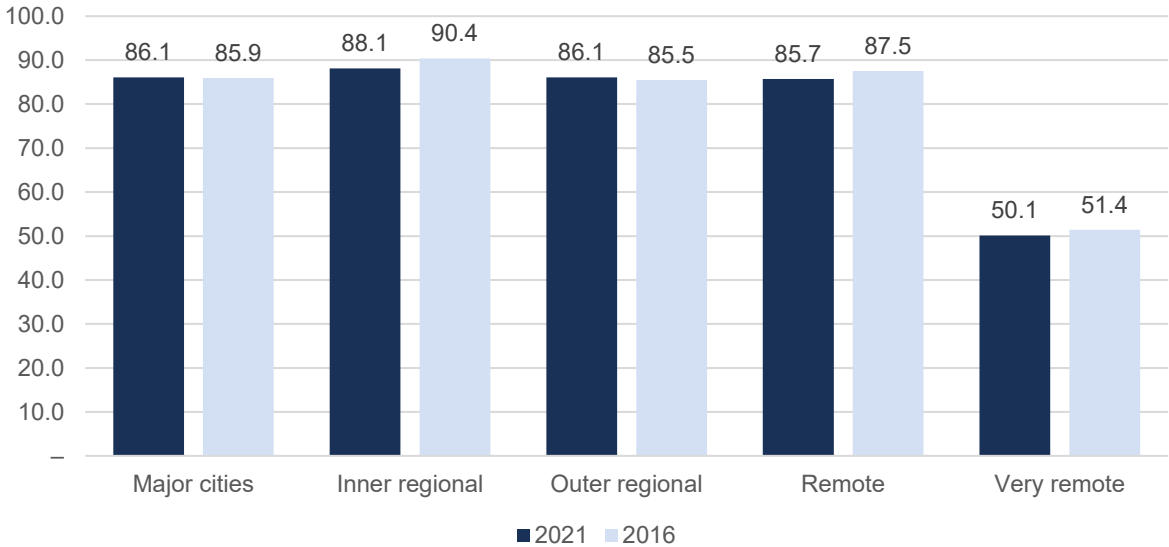
- in 2021, 81.4% of Aboriginal people were living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing. This is an increase from 78.9% in 2016 (the baseline year)
- based on progress from the baseline, target 9A shows improvement but is not on track to be met.

In SA,

- in 2021, 82.8% of Aboriginal people were living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing. This is an increase from 82.5% in 2016 (the baseline year)
- based on progress from the baseline, target 9A is improving.

Target 9B is not able to be reported against as there is no data source currently available which includes all required data elements.

Proportion of Aboriginal people able to secure an appropriately sized house in SA by remoteness




As is evident in the chart above, while there has been a slight decrease in overcrowding in metropolitan Adelaide (from 86.1% in 2016, the baseline year, to 85.9% in 2021) overcrowding has increased in inner regional, remote and very remote areas over the same time frame.

Housing is a basic human need and is central for overall health and wellbeing.¹⁴ Living in poor quality housing is a risk factor for physical and mental health and may impact a person’s ability to fully participate in society.¹⁵ The long-term focus of Australian governments’ efforts to address the housing needs of Aboriginal people is generally centred on addressing overcrowding.

Overcrowded housing can impact health, education and social outcomes, and can reduce a person’s sense of safety and security. On average, Aboriginal household sizes tend to be larger compared to other households. This is influenced by factors including the preference

¹⁴ AIHW (2019). *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*. Canberra. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/indigenous-people-focus-housing-homelessness>. Accessed 26 August 2024.

¹⁵ Productivity Commission (2022). *In need of repair: The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement*, Study Report, Canberra.



of some Aboriginal people to live with more people in a household – enabling a greater connection to family and culture – and the limited supply of affordable housing.^{16 17}

The definition of the overcrowding measure in Australia is based on the Canadian National Occupancy Standard, which does not reflect the culture and preferences of all Aboriginal people.¹⁸

Meeting the diverse needs of Aboriginal people requires culturally appropriate housing designs and appropriate facilities. Increasing the availability and accessibility of social housing and addressing housing affordability may contribute to reducing overcrowding for Aboriginal people.

SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 8 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 4 are complete (with one of these now business as usual) and 4 are on track.

Key SA actions

South Australian Aboriginal Housing Strategy 2021-2031 (AHS)

The SA Aboriginal Housing Strategy 2021-2031 is a 10-year plan to improve housing outcomes for all Aboriginal South Australians. The strategy aligns closely to the National Agreement and aims to:

- put Aboriginal voices at the centre of decision making
- change the way Government does business
- create more jobs for Aboriginal peoples and businesses
- make more safe places to stay when and where you need it
- provide better access to housing
- enable pathways for buying a house that are accessible and ethical.

¹⁶ Brackertz, N and Wilkinson, A (2017). *Research synthesis of social and economic outcomes of good housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People*
<https://web.archive.org/web/20190330204745/https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/research-synthesis-social-economic-outcomes-housing.pdf>. Accessed 26 August 2024.

¹⁷ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (2020). *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2020*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

¹⁸ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (2020). *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2020*, Productivity Commission, Canberra.

In 2023, the Trust undertook an Internal Audit Review on the implementation of the South Australian Aboriginal Housing Strategy 2021-2031 (AHS). The audit assessed the overall control environment, including the current established structure and responsibility for delivery of the AHS.

To ensure the AHS remains on track for implementation by 2031, the Internal Audit Review recommended the development of a Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) to facilitate a cohesive implementation approach across the Trust's directorates, as well as developing formal measurable key performance indicators to track progress against AHS deliverables.

Housing Sector Strengthening Plan (Housing – SSP)

The priority actions of the National Sector Strengthening Plan are aligned to the Housing and Community Infrastructure Workplan (Schedule 4), AHS and Closing the Gap Priority Reforms. The Trust, in partnership with SAACCON has collaborated with NATSIHA to explore the establishment of a South Australian Aboriginal Housing Peak Body.

Additionally, our shared local decision-making partners have played a vital role in the Trust's engagement approach to expending the allocation of the Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF) for repairs and maintenance programs to remote Aboriginal communities.

Purrkanaitya Aboriginal Elders Village



Purrkanaitya is a priority project for the Kurna Yerta Aboriginal Corporation (KYAC) and community and is being delivered in partnership between KYAC, Aboriginal Community Housing Limited (ACHL), Community Housing Limited (CHL), Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) and the Trust.

This innovative development is on a 1.5ha site 12 km south of the Adelaide CBD on Kurna Country. Purrkanaitya promotes independent living and will deliver long-term, culturally appropriate and affordable housing tenancies for Aboriginal Elders.

Key benefits of the Purrkanaitya Elders Village development:

- The provision of additional (and highly needed), purpose built, co-designed, culturally appropriate independent living options (40 units) for elderly Aboriginal people in Adelaide.
- An increase in stock and long-term tangible Aboriginal housing outcomes.
- Accessible site with linkages to Kurna Cultural Heritage precinct and Living Kurna Cultural Centre promoting activities and social interactions between tenants.
- A positive, supportive lifestyle opportunity promoting positive, sustainable physical and mental health outcomes, in a secure, stable, affordable, and culturally appropriate environment achieving optimal 'ageing in place' opportunity.

The Trust continues to work with all partners to facilitate the contractual arrangements for construction to commence and to enable disbursement of the grant funding.

Transitional Accommodation Centres Procurement

The Lakeview Transitional Accommodation Centre (LTAC) at Port Augusta and Wangka Wilurrara Transitional Accommodation Centre (WWTAC) at Ceduna provide critical services supporting Aboriginal cultural mobility throughout regional SA.

To build the capacity of the local ACCO sectors, aligned to Priority Reform 2 and commitments made in the AHS, the Trust has embarked upon an alternative procurement approach which prioritises local Aboriginal community economic development, and economic participation and employment opportunities.

The procurement approach disaggregates existing contracts into distinct packages of work, enabling immediate access to and use of local ACCOs and Aboriginal Business Enterprises for smaller value, less complex, defined services based on existing local sector interest, capability and capacity. An independent Aboriginal owned business has been used to undertake local Aboriginal community engagement and market sounding activities to define the work packages.

To manage and mitigate the risks involved with procuring services from local Aboriginal organisations, where they are in the infancy stages of building their capacity to provide these services, the approach involves direct market quotation and rigorous hands-on contract management processes. Assistance is also being provided to facilitate access to Aboriginal business capacity building supports, such as Australian government funded Aboriginal business development services and the new Remote Jobs and Economic Development Program grants.

The market approaches will be undertaken in August and September 2024, with contracts to be awarded in late 2024, with clear economic participation and employment outcomes embedded in agreements.

Remote Area Energy Supply

The upgrade of the Central Power House in Umuwa was designed to introduce renewable generation to reduce diesel fuel consumption and improve outage rectification time through automation and visualisation.

Key outcomes from the project include:

- upskilling departmental and contractor knowledge in the design, installation, and operation of renewable plant
- designing systems for automation and visualisation
- integrating complex technologies to operate as one system.

The learnings from the Central Power House upgrade will inform the new submission to the Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) for the upgrade of 3 Aboriginal community power stations for high penetration renewables and automation at Yalata, Oak Valley and Pipalyatjara.



The key challenge to this project was the significant cost of these systems due to:

- very remote location, distance to relocate specialised engineering installation crews and materials
- extreme harsh weather making roads unpassable delaying project timelines
- upward cost pressures in the post COVID inflationary environment
- specialised knowledge and risk in integrating the various technologies.

Positive outcomes were achieved through focus on meaningful and early communication with community, councils, and executives to:

- obtain support and services
- ensure clear understanding of the projects and the challenges faced in integrating new technology, and
- explain effects on community supply while the project is rolled out and commissioned.

Next steps are:

- Early engagement of the communities for the next projects at Yalata, Oak Valley and Pipalyatjara.
- Development of system concepts and a submission to ARENA for matching funding.

Critical human water needs

DEW is committed to developing a standard for a basic level of safe and reliable potable water for self-supplied remote communities, including Aboriginal communities.

The department continues to work with communities and the Australian Government to identify solutions to the identified water supply, quality and pricing issues, including:

- Scientific studies of groundwater quality and quantity.
- Construction of water infrastructure to improve water security for remote Aboriginal communities, in partnership with the National Water Grid Authority. Projects include:
- Iga Warta Water Security Project, on Adnyamathanha Country, aims to improve the quality and quantity of water available throughout the Iga Warta Homeland (a community identified as being at high risk of water insecurity). In 2023-24 a new water supply well was established and new water storage tanks, pumps and monitoring systems will be installed as part of the project.
- Gerard Water Security Project, delivered by SA Water, aims to re-establish and upgrade a water treatment plant that provides drinking water to approximately 45 Aboriginal residents living on the River Murray.

- Indulkana (Iwantja) Water Security Project, delivered by SA Water, aims to upgrade the existing water supply for the APY community of 280 people, by drilling 3 new bores in response to increased housing and high-water consumption which is currently placing stress on the existing bore field.
- DEW has also been working with the Scotdesco community on the far west coast to implement a range of works including water collection and storage infrastructure as well as automation technology to maximise water capture. The work is being undertaken with funding assistance of \$0.5 m from the Australian Government.
- Development of water security standards for self-supplied remote communities. Following on from the stocktake report, water security standards have been drafted by DEW. The intention behind the development of standards is to set targets to help achieve long-term water security in these communities, and to have these standards clearly articulated to, and agreed by, the communities. It is anticipated that being able to assess a community's water security against agreed standards will provide a robust basis for the identification of necessary improvements, assist in the funding application process, and encourage efficient and effective water supply solutions.

In 2023-24, through the Consumer Advocacy and Research Fund (CARF) under the *Water Industry Act 2012*, DEW funded:

- The Aboriginal Lands Trust (ALT) to undertake a workshop in Coober Pedy to address the issues of water supply, cost and debt in remote Aboriginal communities and develop strategies and actions to resolve such issues. The workshop was comprehensive and included input from numerous government and non-government stakeholders including District Council of Coober Pedy, SA Housing Authority and SA Water. Actions from the workshop were identified and assigned to relevant stakeholders to address.
- Kerri Muller NRM Pty Ltd to develop a decision-making framework, for dealing with complex water management issues of self-supplied communities in SA.
- The SA Council of Social Service to advocate for Aboriginal communities with respect to water affordability issues and other inequities experienced by some communities via submissions to the Productivity Commission's 2024 Inquiry into the National Water Initiative, 2024-25 State Budget and the SA Water Regulatory Determination 2024 Draft Decision.

SA Water supported CARF with the completion of a new reticulation network within community, and the installation of new meters to residential and commercial properties.

DEW will also progress amendments to the *Water Industry Act 2012* to exempt small water retailers from requiring a retail licence via ESCOSA if certain conditions are met.

Final project reports and resources will be published online via the DEW CARF webpage to enable public access. Public access of these resources will provide the foundations for this work to be built on and leveraged as part of future projects and advocacy in this space.



Wastewater projects

To address increasing demands on the Pipalyatjara wastewater network, SA Water delivered an upgrade to wastewater infrastructure at Pipalyatjara in the APY Lands.

The upgrade included a new pump station with increased capacity and a wastewater pumping main to ensure the pump station can take on additional wastewater and address public health and environmental issues related to overflows from the station.

Early planning works also commenced to upgrade wastewater infrastructure at Yalata on the state's Far West Coast, including to the treatment plant and pump station to better manage increased sewage inflows.

Outcome 10: Aboriginal adults are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system

Leading Agency: Department for Correctional Services

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|---|-------------------------|-----------|
| Target: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal adults held in incarceration by at least 15%. | No change from baseline | Worsening |

Nationally,

- at 30 June 2023, the age-standardised rate of Aboriginal prisoners was 2,265.8 per 100,000 adult population.
- the 2023 rate is an increase from the previous year (2,151.1 per 100,000 adult population in 2022) and an increase from 2,142.9 per 100,000 adult population in 2019 (the baseline year).
- based on progress from the baseline, the target is worsening.

In SA,

- at 30 June 2023, the age-standardised rate of Aboriginal prisoners was 2,372.0 per 100,000 adult population.
- the 2023 rate is a decrease from the previous year (2,451.0 per 100,000 adult population in 2022) and a decrease from 2,395.5 per 100,000 adult population in 2019 (the baseline year).
- based on progress from the baseline, the target is improving.

Australian Law Reform Commission - Pathways to Justice

In February 2017, the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) received Terms of Reference to undertake an inquiry into the incarceration rate of Aboriginal peoples.

This is an overview of their final report *Pathways to Justice—Inquiry into the Incarceration Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*¹⁹

¹⁹ Australian Law Reform Commission (2017). *Pathways to Justice—Inquiry into the Incarceration Rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Summary Report No 133*. <https://www.alrc.gov.au/publication/pathways-to-justice-inquiry-into-the-incarceration-rate-of-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-alrc-133-summary/>. Accessed 24 August 2024

Key findings

- In 1991, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) found that the fundamental causes for over-representation of Aboriginal people in custody were **not** located within the criminal justice system.
- The social determinants of incarceration on Aboriginal peoples, include education and employment, health and disability, housing and homelessness, child protection and youth justice.
- Aboriginal peoples overrepresentation in custodial settings remains, as does the disproportionate disadvantage experienced by many Aboriginal peoples.
- Aboriginal women experience family, domestic and sexual violence at higher rates than the broader Australian community, and the majority of Aboriginal women in prison have experienced physical or sexual abuse.
- The number of Aboriginal parents—particularly women—in prison has a direct effect on the number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care, which is a recognised pathway to youth detention and adult offending.

What works

Working in Partnership and local shared decision-making: The ALRC reiterates that governments must work with Aboriginal organisations and communities to implement strategies to reduce Aboriginal incarceration. One way to achieve local involvement is through Aboriginal Justice Agreements. Justice reinvestment also emphasises tailored, local solutions to the particular drivers of incarceration in a community. All further examples included here assume this partnership approach.


Justice reinvestment: Redirection of resources from the criminal justice system into place-based, community-led initiatives to address offending and incarceration, applying a distinct data-driven methodology to inform strategies for reform.

Addressing Family violence: Requires a combination of preventative education, community engagement, support services and legal assistance (as both early intervention and response) to address family violence against Aboriginal women and children.

Bail reform: A large proportion of Aboriginal people held on remand do not receive a custodial sentence upon conviction or may be sentenced to time served while on remand. The ALRC recommends bail laws should require bail authorities to consider issues and circumstances arising from a person's Aboriginality when making bail determinations.

Sentencing and Aboriginality: The ALRC recommends the introduction of provisions requiring sentencing courts to take a two-step approach: first, to take into account the unique systemic and background factors affecting Aboriginal peoples; and then to proceed to review evidence as to the effect on that particular individual offender.

Community-based sentencing: Community-based sentence regimes need to be made more accessible and flexible for Aboriginal offenders, to provide greater support and to



mitigate against breach. Once community-based sentences are uniformly available, consideration could be given to abolishing short terms of imprisonment and suspended sentences.

Mandatory sentencing: The ALRC suggests that states and territories do further work to identify and repeal mandatory sentence provisions that in practice have a disproportionate impact on Aboriginal peoples.

Prison programs and parole: Prison programs should be developed with relevant Aboriginal organisations to address known causes of offending—such as poor literacy, lack of vocational skills, drug and alcohol abuse, poor mental health, poor social and family ties. For female offenders in particular, programs need to be trauma-informed and culturally safe. Prison programs should be made available to Aboriginal people serving short sentences or held on remand. Reforms are required to encourage, first, eligible Aboriginal prisoners to apply for parole and, secondly, the development of throughcare programs that provide ongoing support following release from prison.

Access to justice: Access to legal representation and advice is one of the cornerstones of addressing the disproportionate rates of Aboriginal incarceration. Need to ensure adequate resourcing of legal assistance providers.

Aboriginal women: Strategies that aim to address the offending of Aboriginal women must take a trauma-informed and culturally appropriate approach. To this end, all criminal justice responses should be developed with and delivered by Aboriginal women.

Fines and driver licences: Imprisonment is a disproportionate response to unlicensed operation of a motor vehicle and/or fine default. The ALRC recommends the amendment of fine enforcement regimes so that they do not, directly or indirectly, allow for imprisonment.

Police accountability: The ALRC recommends that police practices and procedures—particularly the exercise of police discretion—are reviewed by governments so that the law is applied equally and without discrimination with respect to Aboriginal peoples. The ALRC also recommends that police complaints handling mechanisms be reviewed and mechanisms for independent assessment or review of complaints should be considered.

Child protection and adult incarceration: Research suggests that the relationship between the child protection system, juvenile justice and adult incarceration is so strong that child removal into out-of-home care and juvenile detention could be considered key drivers of adult incarceration.

SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 12 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 8 are complete (4 of which are now business as usual) and 4 are on track.

Key SA actions

Over-representation of Aboriginal South Australians in the criminal justice sector

DCS is committed to reducing the rate of Aboriginal adults held in incarceration by at least 15% by 2031. At the time of this commitment the percentage of Aboriginal prisoners was 24.1%. DCS is committed to achieve a reduction of 20.5% by 2031.

There are several challenges and barriers the DCS faces, including (but not limited to):

- High remand population, including as a result of the nature of offences and housing challenges.
- Growing cohort of female Aboriginal remanded prisoners.
- Language barriers with traditional Aboriginal men, including during the admission process and difficulty with understanding directions.
- Establishing and maintaining throughcare and community-based support.

To overcome the challenges faced, the Aboriginal Cultural Unit located within Mirnu at Yatala Labour Prison aims to address the high remand rate of Aboriginal men and focuses on interventions that enable Aboriginal men to reduce and or stop reoffending, all while being in a culturally safe place. The program supports men to better understand cultural values and connections including kinship and community ties, support with numeracy and literacy as well as addressing any rehabilitation needs where appropriate to do so. Once men have successfully completed this program, they will be transferred to lower security sites.

Currently, the first round of 24 men is nearing their program completion with a new cohort to be placed in Mirnu by the end of August/early September.

In relation to language barriers, DCS has sought assistance from Anangu Interpreter Services to support traditional Aboriginal men and women in care during their professional visits, for example, being present for court hearings or sitting in on meetings with their legal representatives.

The ongoing delivery of Lemongrass Place by ADAC has provided male Aboriginal offenders from regional and remote areas with the skills and capacity to successfully reintegrate themselves back into community. Lemongrass Place also encourages participants to engage in employment and training opportunities.

Through the action's implementation, DCS has increased their cultural competency within their workforce with the establishment of the Aboriginal Cadetship Program. This has seen 2 Aboriginal women commence work within one of the Community Correctional Centres while they undertake their chosen field of study at university. These 2 positions provide DCS with culturally appropriate case management and staff who can share and grow the understanding of cultural needs for Aboriginal offenders across Community Correctional Centres.



Additionally, the continuation of the Road to Redemption program, with partners Workskil Australia and Carey Training supports Aboriginal men and women who have recently exited custody to secure employment in the construction and civil construction industry. Participants in this program graduate with a Certificate II in Construction as well as accredited Aboriginal Mental Health First Aid training. All participants receive ongoing support and mentorship post-program completion. 59 participants have now completed the program with nearly 3 out of 4 entering the workforce.

In terms of next steps for this action:

- The second Aboriginal Cadetship Program will be launched in early 2025
- SA Government has invested \$1.2m per annum to enable the ongoing operation of Lemongrass Place. The ongoing program delivery will be by ADAC.
- DCS will continue to run the Road to Redemption program in partnership with Workskil Australia and Carey Training with the aim to increase secure employment for Aboriginal men and women released from care.
- DCS will conduct a review of the first program delivered at the Aboriginal Cultural Unit within Mirnu to ensure the program is providing the right resources and services to support Aboriginal men to successfully progress through care and back into community.

Justice Policy Partnership

The establishment of a national Justice Policy Partnership (JPP) in 2021 was accelerated in recognition of the urgency for joined up national action and leadership in light of increasing over-representation of Aboriginal people in incarceration and in acknowledgement of the enduring crisis of Aboriginal deaths in custody.

The focus and primary function of the JPP is to make recommendations for actions to address adult and youth incarceration, with a focus on actions and activities that progress Targets 10 and 11, as well as the Priority Reforms and other drivers of incarceration.

Throughout 2023–24, the JPP met to progress the implementation of its Strategic Framework. The Strategic Framework sets out national policy priorities for achieving outcomes 10 and 11. An Implementation Roadmap has been developed to give effect to the Strategic Framework and is in the process of being approved by the respective Australian and state and territory governments.

At the request of the Standing Council of Attorneys-General (SCAG), the JPP also provided advice to SCAG on bail and remand reforms. As the SA government representative on the JPP, the AGD responded to multiple requests for information, including requests for sensitive and complex data.

While ACCOs are represented on the JPP by Coalition of Peaks members, a challenge for South Australia's involvement in the JPP has been ensuring that the government representative is informed by the views and advice of South Australian ACCOs.



One of the responsibilities of the South Australian Justice Partnership Committee (SAJPC), which includes equal representation from SAACCON and the SA government, is to oversee the implementation of actions in South Australia that are intended to drive progress towards these outcomes, including those arising out of the JPP.

The SAJPC will provide a direct line of sight between South Australian ACCOs operating in the justice system and the JPP, and the AGD will continue to seek the views and advice of the SAJPC on matters of the JPP.

Custody Notification Service

The establishment of a CNS in all Australian jurisdictions was a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody. The CNS is a 24-hour telephone-based service intended to deliver an independent, culturally appropriate health and wellbeing check, along with basic legal information, to any Aboriginal person entering police custody.

The CNS commenced in SA on 1 October 2021, with the commencement of the *Summary Offences (Custody Notification Service) Regulations 2020*. The Australian Government provides funding directly to Aboriginal Legal Rights Movement (ALRM) to deliver the CNS in SA, therefore reporting and data is shared between ALRM and the Commonwealth.

KPMG was engaged by the NIAA to conduct an independent evaluation of the CNS. The final report was published in September 2023. Despite the strength of evidence mostly being rated 'weak' or 'some evidence', the report found:

- Overall, CNSs across Australia are well designed to meet client needs – with some gaps or weaknesses evident.
- The reach of the CNS was considered adequate at supporting intended clients but could be improved with greater promotion of the CNS and improved relationships with police.
- The majority of expected activities and outputs are being delivered.
- Protection of the legal rights of Aboriginal people in custody by the CNS was assessed as 'good'.
- The achievement of improved relationships between police, Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services (ATSILS) was considered adequate. Building and sustaining relationships between these 3 stakeholders was reported as an ongoing challenge.

According to the most recent publicly available data from 2022–23, since 2021, there have been 3 deaths of Aboriginal people in DCS custody in SA. There have been no deaths in police custody in this period.

National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-25

The National Legal Assistance Partnership 2020-25 (NLAP) provides funding to ALRM for the delivery of legal assistance services to Aboriginal South Australians, including within the criminal justice system.



On 23 June 2023 Dr Warren Mundy was appointed to undertake an independent review of the NLAP, drawing on evidence from a range of sources, including published literature, workforce data analysis, government reports and inquiries, and consultation with stakeholders across jurisdictions. On 28 May 2024, the Attorney-General of the Commonwealth of Australia publicly released the *Final Report of the Independent Review of the NLAP*. The review will inform negotiations on future funding arrangements, following the expiry of the current NLAP on 30 June 2025.

The review concluded that *‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience greater unmet legal need than any other group in the community’* and that resourcing of ATSILS ‘has been inadequate for well over a decade’. It was recommended that Closing the Gap Priority Reforms must be addressed by the next iteration of the NLAP.

ALRM have raised issues in relation to their ability to continue delivering high quality legal assistance services in SA due to resourcing issues, which is consistent with the concerns raised in the independent review report. One effective strategy implemented to provide high quality legal assistance is increased wage levels for legal staff to provide parity with that of Legal Aid Commissions for the remaining term of the current NLAP.


AGD will continue to consult ALRM on the unique requirements of Aboriginal people accessing legal assistance services and associated service delivery challenges, as well as issues regarding adequate funding, throughout the negotiation process for the next iteration of the NLAP.

In addition, the AGD recently undertook an assessment of legal need in SA, to better understand the prevalence of legal problems in order to support government and service providers to strategically plan the delivery of legal assistance services. The findings of this report, including those relating specifically to Aboriginal people, will help SA advocate for appropriate funding for ATSILS throughout the NLAP negotiation process. AGD will continue to engage with ALRM regarding funding and capacity issues and will raise these issues with federal counterparts to ensure ALRM can continue to deliver crucial services to Aboriginal peoples in SA.

Aboriginal Justice Advocacy Service

AGD funds ALRM to provide advice and advocacy on behalf of Aboriginal South Australians and their interactions with the justice sector. Drawing on its extensive experience in providing services to Aboriginal people in contact with the South Australian justice system, the Aboriginal Justice Advocacy Service (AJAS) provides expert technical advice to the SA Government on proposed legislative reforms and matters of particular concern. The input and advice from the AJAS is highly valued and plays a critical role in ensuring progress towards socio-economic outcomes 10 and 11.

AGD has now established the SAJPC, which brings together representatives from ALRM, other SA ACCOs and SA Government agencies. This committee provides a direct line of sight to the national JPP and increases the flow of information between the two bodies. Ultimately, this will result in more coordinated work to achieve socio-economic outcomes 10 and 11.



ALRM has also received funding through the NLAP to increase its data capability and capacity to inform the JPP.

Operation Flinders

Operation Flinders provides short-term, outdoor adventure-based training programs for young people between the ages of 14 and 16 years at risk of offending or reoffending behaviours. The program aims to reduce this risk through the development of personal capacity and attendance in education or employment settings. Expected outcomes are:

- participants show increased commitment to school based education and/or vocational training
- participants are supported to develop awareness and positive values attached to personal health and wellbeing and social behaviours
- participants are supported to find pathways to employment.

Operation Flinders facilitates the program for a minimum of 250 participants per year.

Community Transition and Learning Centre (Lemongrass Place)

The Community Transition and Learning Centre (Lemongrass Place), delivered in partnership with Aboriginal Drug and Alcohol Council (ADAC), currently has 20 beds available. To enable the ongoing operation of Lemongrass Place, the Government has invested \$1.2m per annum from the 2024-25 budget.

Lemongrass Place has been effective in providing Aboriginal-led program delivery with a strong focus on cultural safety and collaboration. The program has enabled both DCS and the Service Provider to identify and support participants and sustain a level of participation that returns value-for-money.

The program has also been effective in establishing an operating model that provides evidence-based supports for participants. Participants have engaged in many construction and traffic control courses over the last 12 months and have gained qualifications to enable them to work on mine sites, construction sites and in traffic management.

The next steps for the Lemongrass Place involve implementing the recommendations of the independent program evaluation that include:

- Providing diverse social and cultural activities for the men to participate in (onsite and external locations) to support enhanced cultural safety.
- Offering enhanced opportunities for extended family involvement and community engagement to improve exit planning and outcomes.
- Developing employment strategies and pathways that are relevant to the labour market in remote communities and that consider cultural employment pathways (arts, music, caring for Country).



Violence Prevention Program – Aboriginal Males (VPP-AM)

The Violence Prevention Program – Aboriginal Males (VPP-AM), as well as the Aboriginal Male Family Violence Program (AMFVP), are currently being delivered in prisons. However, community-based programs for the VPP-AM and AMFVP have not commenced yet.

In 2023-24, there have been two VPP-AM programs completed, 1 at Mobilong Prison and 1 at Port Augusta Prison while 1 AMFVP program has been completed at Cadell Training Centre. DCS continues to receive positive feedback from participants of these programs. Ongoing delivery further builds DCS' knowledge and skills of working with Aboriginal people in a culturally appropriate way.

Next steps include the integration of Our Way My Choice (OWMC) program into the VPP-AM program, ensuring RPB clinicians are invited to be a part of this program, establishment of an AMFVP working party as well as ongoing consultation with ASD.

Aboriginal Witness Assistance Officer

Aboriginal Witness Assistance Officers provide support, education and awareness to victims and witnesses involved in criminal prosecutions, and in particular Aboriginal victims. The role will also educate staff in the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions about cultural and community considerations in matters in which Aboriginal people are involved.

Outcome 11: Aboriginal young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system

Leading Agency: Department of Human Services

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Target: By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal young people (10–17 years) in detention by at least 30%. | Improving | Worsening |

Nationally,

- in 2022-23, the rate of Aboriginal young people aged 10–17 years in detention on an average day was 29.8 per 10,000 young people in the population
- the 2022-23 rate is above the previous 3 years (from a low of 23.6 per 10,000 young people in 2020-21) but it is a decrease from 32.1 per 10,000 young people in 2018-19 (the baseline year).
- the trend for the target shows no change from the baseline.

In SA,

- in 2022-23, the rate of Aboriginal young people aged 10–17 years in detention on an average day was 18.8 per 10,000 young people in the population
- the 2022-23 rate is a decrease from the previous year (19.5 per 10,000 young people in 2021-22) and a decrease from 28.5 per 10,000 young people in 2018-19 (the baseline year).
- based on progress from the baseline, the target is improving

SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 10 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 7 are complete (5 of which are now business as usual), 1 is on track and 2 have been incorporated into the new Implementation Plan.

Key SA actions

Young People Connected, Communities Protected: South Australia’s Youth Justice State Plan 2020-2023

The Young People Connected, Communities Protected: South Australia’s Youth Justice State Plan 2020-2023 was reported as complete in 2022-23.

Youth Justice Forum with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations

On 6 December 2023, DHS hosted a forum in Port Lincoln to bring together community representatives, non-profit organisations, and government agencies, to explore joined-up approaches. The forum was attended by representatives from 10 government and community sector entities and resulted in funding commitments for two local services to address local issues, and a commitment to hold a similar forum in Whyalla in 2024-25.

The forum occurred in the context of local concerns about escalating anti-social behaviour among youth cohorts. Following the forum, DHS provided funding to local community organisations, including to KWY for 2 Aboriginal Youth Worker positions to help reduce incidents of youth offending, and to West Coast Youth and Community Support towards a night bus service that transports young people from public spaces to a nominated safe place.

Ongoing engagement is continuing in Port Lincoln, and the Forum in Whyalla is on track to be held in late 2025.

Implementation of the Aboriginal Youth Justice Principle

In response to a recommendation by the Training Centre Visitor (TCV), DHS commenced reporting annually on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Justice Principle (Principle) in its Annual Report for 2023-2024. DHS also responds to requests from the TCV who has legislated functions under the *Youth Justice Administration Act 2016* to:

- conduct visits and inspections of Kurlana Tapa (including unannounced visits)
- advocate for children and young people in Kurlana Tapa and promote their interests
- advise the Minister about any systemic reforms to improve the quality of care, treatment or control of residents, or the management of Kurlana Tapa.

DHS is working to meaningfully embed the Principle into all areas of practice in partnership with the TCV and its staff. This includes providing open access to Kurlana Tapa, facilitating regular visits and inspections, and preparing comprehensive materials, data, and records on a cyclical and ad hoc basis.

DHS will continue to work closely with the TCV to promote the safety and wellbeing of young people in custody at Kurlana Tapa.

Aboriginal Cultural Connections Framework / Cultural Community of Practice

The development of the Aboriginal Cultural Connections Framework is ongoing. In the past year:

- DHS commenced developing an Aboriginal Practice Framework for Youth Justice (APFYJ), in consultation with DHS staff, Aboriginal people and other relevant stakeholders. The Framework will focus on bi-cultural practices that intertwine cultural and clinical approaches and will supplement the broader Youth Justice Practice Framework (which is also under development).

- The Cultural Community of Practice was renamed to Aboriginal Cultural Community of Practice (ACCOP) to reflect its focus on Aboriginal matters and people and incorporation of the Cultural Champions Network. ACCOP is co-chaired by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff and driven by its members. ACCOP membership is voluntary and driven by staff dedicated to improving cultural competency, safety, and practice across DHS Youth Justice. It is ongoing and should be considered business as usual.

Work on the APFYS is ongoing and involves extensive consultations. It is contingent on a project underway to develop a broader Youth Justice Practice Framework. Both projects are driven in tandem with key timelines aligned.

In the future, it has been identified that this action should be split in two, as follows:

- Aboriginal Practice Framework for Youth Justice
- Aboriginal Cultural Community of Practice (replacing Cultural Champions Network)

Legislative measures

The *Youth Justice Administration Act 2016* recognises the over-representation of Aboriginal young people in the justice system and aims to improve responses to their needs through specific provisions that ensure best practice approaches are taken during their supervision.

Under the *Youth Justice Administration Act 2016*, assessment and case planning must consider the cultural identity and unique needs of Aboriginal young people and include representations made by the young person and their guardian, relative or carer.

The Principle builds on this, by requiring that family and community participate in case planning, assessment, and decision-making for Aboriginal young people.

This action is embedded in legislation, and many of the other listed activities undertaken by Youth Justice meet this action. Work is ongoing to improve DHS' cultural responsiveness and compliance with the legislation. Activities that meet this action are captured in reporting under other actions including Annual Reporting on the Principle and the Aboriginal Cultural Connections Framework.

Cultural Champions Network

DHS committed to integrating the Cultural Champions Network into the day to day operations of Youth Justice, to strengthen cultural awareness and links across the directorate.

The Cultural Champions Network has been incorporated in the Aboriginal Cultural Community of Practice which has a broader range and scope. It is led by senior Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff. Membership is voluntary and driven by staff dedicated to improving cultural competency, safety and practice across DHS Youth Justice.

Support Aboriginal Young People Program

The Support Aboriginal Young People Program, incorporating the Circles of Trust Training Package, was developed with the Stanton Institute and incorporated into the Certificate IV in Youth Work undertaken by new recruits at Kurlana Tapa. This package will be reviewed upon completion of the Aboriginal Practice Framework for Youth Justice.

Yarning Circle

Yarning Circles provide a safe space to engage Aboriginal young people in conversation with each other and Aboriginal facilitators about culture, cultural practices, history, issues affecting themselves, their families, and wider Aboriginal communities. There are separate Girls' and Boys' yarning circles. In 2023-24, a total of 42 Yarning Circles occurred.

To overcome staffing shortages, the sessions are facilitated by a combination of Kurlana Tapa, DHS Exceptional Needs Unit, and Headspace Aboriginal facilitators. The Yarning Circles provide an important cultural safe space and are well attended. Yarning Circles will continue through 2024-25.

Child Diversion Program

During 2022-23, DHS expanded the geographic reach and eligibility criteria of the Child Diversion Program (CDP). The CDP diverts Aboriginal children aged between 10-14 years who have been charged with a minor offence away from a custodial environment. It provides short term, culturally safe, supported accommodation, and supports Aboriginal children and their families in the community.


The CDP model uses an evidence-informed approach, focusing on Aboriginal methodologies and culturally centred approaches to engagement. These include Aboriginal Family-Led Decision Making, Relationship-Based Practice, Kinship and Family Mapping.

Cultural support for Aboriginal Youth Justice clients



There has been a 34% reduction since 2018-19 (baseline year) in the rate of Aboriginal children and young people under custodial youth justice supervision on an average day in SA – from 28.5 per 10,000 in 2018-19 to 18.8 per 10,000 in 2022-23.

Senior Aboriginal Cultural Advisors and Consultants provide advice and support to staff working with Aboriginal young people across Community Youth Justice and in Kurlana Tapa. There is also an emphasis on family mapping and scoping in collaboration with a young person and/or their families to identify young people's kinship networks and important community members.



In Kurlana Tapa in 2023, two operational Aboriginal Cultural Support Worker roles were created, and these were implemented in 2024. This teams strives to action the objectives of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Justice Principle by providing operational and cultural support and advocacy to Aboriginal young people admitted to Kurlana Tapa.

The Therapeutic Services teams based in Kurlana Tapa are culturally informed in their work and liaise closely with the Senior Aboriginal Cultural Advisor when conducting therapeutic work with young people.

In addition to cultural supports provided by on-site staff, CAMHS facilitated sessions around specific topics, including:


- **Journey to Respect:** An intergenerational violence prevention program (4 sessions). Overall aim to reduce incidence of family violence. Asks participants to look at behaviours of male members in their family to gain power and control and look for any similarities in their own behaviours.
- **Cultural Catch Ups:** Informal and unstructured cultural program which was developed during COVID. The program explores topics and activities dependent on which young people are attending. This may include learning about their mob including their language, location and Dreaming, learning the didgeridoo, making and throwing boomerangs and cooking traditional food such as kangaroo tail on the fire.
- **Respect Sista Girls 2:** The program aims to enable young Aboriginal women to describe the relationships between past and present based on their cultural knowledge, develop their own sense of awareness and begin a healing journey from being a young girl to a woman. It supports participants to reclaim their identity, recognising the cultural values within family structures and building positive relationships based on their Aboriginal belief system.

In Community Youth Justice, key projects to further this action includes the Aboriginal Youth Pathways to Employment Pilot Project with RAW Group (Aboriginal owned and managed Australian company), engagement with Aboriginal Cultural Consultants, in partnership with Metropolitan Aboriginal Youth and Family Services (MAYFS), and use of the Genopro Program to assist with Family, Kinship and Community mapping.

Improving Cultural Support for Aboriginal Youth Justice Clients is an ongoing effort. Some of the more specific session work is subject to the availability of appropriate Aboriginal facilitators. Drawing on Aboriginal staff from other DHS business areas as well as external providers has helped address this challenge.

South Australian Road Safety Strategy

DIT's Senior Aboriginal Leadership Committee provides feedback and cultural oversight of the Road Safety Action Plan. An annual review of SA's Road Safety Action Plan 2023-2025 has highlighted two new proposed actions specific to Aboriginal people that are being considered for inclusion in South Australia's Road Safety Action Plan 2024-2026.



A challenge identified is the lack of data available on Aboriginal road users. While national work to address this issue is ongoing, DIT has developed interim processes to access statistical data derived through data licensing information matched with road crash records to collate information and evidence to better inform areas of need and further investigation, where a licence holder has identified as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent.

The next steps include:

- The University of Adelaide’s Centre for Automotive Safety Research will soon release their report on Aboriginal road safety which considers coronial files involving Aboriginal people who have lost their life on South Australian roads. It is anticipated this report will provide key findings and recommendations to improve road safety outcomes for Aboriginal people.
- DIT are awaiting the draft report on Prevention and Diversion from the Overrepresentation of Aboriginal People in the Criminal Justice System Working Group.
- A review of the Mandatory Alcohol Interlock Scheme with a specific section that considers participation rates as well as barriers to entering the program for rural and remote Aboriginal Road Users.
- The Principal Policy Officer Aboriginal Road Safety represented DIT by attending the First Nations Road Safety Summit hosted by the National Office for Road Safety and Senator the Hon. Carol Brown, which included discussions about road safety messaging for Aboriginal road users. It is anticipated there will be actions from the summit.

Outcome 12: Aboriginal children are not overrepresented in the child protection system

Joint Lead Agencies:

- Department for Child Protection
- Department of Human Services

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|---|-----------|-------------------------|
| Target: By 2031, reduce the rate of overrepresentation of Aboriginal children (0–17 years old) in out-of-home care by 45%. | Worsening | No change from baseline |

Nationally,

- Aboriginal children remain overrepresented in the child protection system.
- in 2023, 57.2 per 1,000 Aboriginal children aged 0–17 years were placed in out-of-home care.
- this shows an improvement for Aboriginal children since 2021 (57.6 per 1,000 children), the rate of Aboriginal children in out of home care has worsened since the baseline year (2019) (54.2 per 1,000 children).

In SA,

- Aboriginal children remain overrepresented in the child protection system.
- in 2023, 94.1 per 1,000 Aboriginal children aged 0–17 years were placed in out-of-home care.
- this has worsened since 2021 (90.0 per 1,000 children) and has worsened to an even greater degree since the baseline year (2019) (75.3 per 1,000 children).

Data is now available for a supporting indicator on the application of the ATSI CPP, covering placement and connection (Indicator 12e). The ATSI CPP consists of guiding principles for decision-making within the child protection system.

In 2023, around 3 in 5 (63%) Aboriginal children in out-of-home care were living with Aboriginal or non-Indigenous relatives or kin, or Aboriginal carers. This was similar to the proportion in 2019 (the baseline year), at 63%.

In SA, 3 in 5 (61%) Aboriginal children in out-of-home care were living with Aboriginal or non-Indigenous relatives or kin, or Aboriginal carers. This shows an improvement since 2019, at 58%.

SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 14 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 10 are complete (3 of which are now business as usual) and 4 have been incorporated into the new Implementation Plan.

Key SA actions

Development of a successor plan to the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020

DCP co-led negotiations to reach a shared commitment to align efforts to achieve Target 12 through Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 (the Framework), and the associated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan, which was released in January 2023 following a co-design process with the Aboriginal Leadership Group and SNAICC.

Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the Aboriginal Leadership Group are currently working towards implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan: 2023 to 2026.

The Action Plan provides 8 action areas agreed as the critical drivers to achieving transformational change. It is underpinned by an Outcomes Framework to ensure government accountability and transparency to Aboriginal people. The 8 action areas are:

1. Delegated Authority
2. Investing in the Community Controlled Sector
3. Data Sovereignty
4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce
5. Active Efforts
6. Legal Supports
7. Advocating for Accountability and Oversight
8. Social Determinants of Child Safety and Wellbeing

There are 4 National Working Groups established to provide governance to actions and efforts for delivering commitments, these include:

- Working Group 1: Workforce
- Working Group 2: Accountability and Data
- Working Group 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander System Leadership
- Working Group 4: Working Together to Support Children and Families.

Current National priorities include the establishment of:

- National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- National Child and Family Investment Strategy

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Support
- National approaches to improve access for children and young people in out of home care and families to universal services such as housing, education and health.

Identifying leads for various activities and finalising work plans remain significant challenges. At the national level, ongoing discussions are needed to address issues related to data sovereignty. There is also notable overlap in activities across different governance structures and policy partnerships, necessitating greater clarity and coordinated efforts.

Progress is underway in addressing the identified challenges. Agencies agree to the need to enhance coordination and streamline approaches, effectively reducing overlap across different governance structures and policy partnerships. Efforts are underway to clarify roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, discussions are occurring at the National level to foster flexibility at the state level to drive collaborative initiatives in partnership and tailor solutions to local needs.

It is critical that the next steps build on existing momentum by continuing to work through the National Framework and Aboriginal Action Plan as the agreed roadmaps to reduce the over representation of Aboriginal children in care.

DCP's partnership with SAACCON, Wakwakurna Kanyini and other Aboriginal partners in leading the implementation of actions in the Child Protection Schedule, will be vital to ensure state level efforts are coordinated, culturally informed and effective.

Alongside this, it is important to recognise that SA's success in achieving Target 12 requires whole of government effort to address the experience of disadvantage across the breadth of social determinants, and a willingness of the government to provide the broader foundations for change.


Embed family-led solutions in practice

The Family Group Counselling (FGC) Program is an ongoing initiative funded by DCP and delivered by Aboriginal Family Support Services (AFSS) and Relationships Australia South Australia (RASA). FGC in SA is utilised in the statutory child protection context, with a particular focus on Aboriginal families and community members to identify strategies to keep children and young people safe, and where possible, with family and kin.

The UCC (Unborn Child Concern) FGC service, also delivered by AFSS and RASA, provides expectant parents and their family an opportunity to address child protection concerns prior to the birth of an Aboriginal infant or for parents and their family to make decisions about care arrangements once the infant is born.

Finding Families program

The Finding Families program was introduced in December 2023 to give all children and young people in care the opportunity to grow up in family-based settings. The Finding Families program provides a dedicated response to directly engage children and young people in residential care, along with their families and significant others, to identify and establish safe, secure placements within their extended family and community networks.



A significant component of the program is dedicated to working with Aboriginal families to ensure cultural factors are considered when finding and securing family based placements for Aboriginal children and young people. KWY are partnering with DCP to provide this service.

Family Led Decision Making for Aboriginal Families Framework

The Family Led Decision Making for Aboriginal Families Framework underpins the approach by DCP in supporting family participation in decision making. In addition, the case planning, review and annual review chapters of the DCP Manual of Practice sets out requirements for DCP staff to engage and work in partnership with parents, family and kin to inform the development and review of the case plan.

The DCP case plan contains mandatory sections for recording details of consultation undertaken to inform the development of the Aboriginal Cultural Identity Support Tool (ACIST), with accompanying guidance specifying that this consultation may include parents, extended family, Elders and others with cultural authority for the infant, child or young person.

The requirement for supporting the participation of children and young people in decision making is reinforced throughout the DCP Manual of Practice. Specific guidance seeking the views of children and young people and working in partnership to make decisions is contained in the Supporting children and young people in care chapter of the Manual of Practice. Further guidance regarding best practice considerations for supporting children and young people's participation in decision making is set out in the 'Supporting the participation of children and young people in decision making Practice Paper'.

DCP acknowledges that family-led decision making is a comprehensive approach and requires efforts across all phases of child protection intervention. Therefore, DCP are prioritising strategies for further implementing and embedding strategies of the DCP Family Led Decision Making Framework for Aboriginal families.

Additional funding

In March 2023, the Minister for Child Protection announced an additional \$13.4m over 5 years dedicated to expanding FGC services. As at 30 June 2024, 90% of Aboriginal families who participated in a FGC continued to safely care for their children, highlighting the significance of family-led decision making.

The total investment into the Finding Families pilot is approximately \$2.6m, which includes \$1.26m for internal staffing and around \$1.3m for external staffing through an ACCO. KWY has been contracted for the first 6 months of the pilot.

In July 2023, the Australian Centre for Child Protection (ACCP) at the University of South Australia was commissioned by DCP to undertake an evaluation of FGC in SA. Representatives from AFSS and RASA have been involved in the evaluation including members of the Project Control Group. The Final Report is expected to be delivered to DCP by 31 July 2024 and the findings and recommendations considered in the subsequent weeks.

Legislative reform



Following a review of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*, informed by community engagement where more than 900 people provided feedback, a new draft Bill has been developed which seeks to broadly incorporate community input to improve child protection legislation in SA.

The new draft Bill seeks to:

- balance feedback received, recommendations outlined in recent and existing reviews and inquiries, alongside the government's commitment to deliver fundamental reforms critical to keeping children and young people safe and supported
- reconcile and embed the broad policy settings and directions which generated majority support in the consultation phase, including new and dedicated provisions for Aboriginal children and young people as well as embedding all elements of the ATSI CPP to the standard of active efforts
- enable the delegation of legislative authority to recognise Aboriginal entities, as well as introducing the child's best interests as a guiding principle in decision making and requiring the development of a state strategy to support all agencies to recognise their role in protecting children and families.

The Bill is expected to be introduced into Parliament later this year.

In addition, on 31 January 2024, K W Y was gazetted as a recognised Aboriginal organisation under section 12 of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*, and is contracted by DCP to support decision-making for Aboriginal children and young people in care or entering care, as is the case with AFSS.

The draft Bill's progression has been approached in a considered way and in consultation with key stakeholders. The release of recommendations of the 'Holding on to Our Future Report' and other external reviews have required the Government to take the necessary time to ensure a fulsome and considered response.

The scheduled review of the *Children and Young People (Safety) Act 2017*, along with the subsequent legislative reform program, demonstrates a genuine commitment to thorough and informed assessment and enhancement to the legislative framework governing SA's child protection system. The comprehensive review presented an invaluable opportunity to redefine the future of our interventions and responses for keeping children and young people safe, loved, nurtured and connected.

The Children and Young Person (Safety and Support) Bill is expected to be introduced to Parliament later this year. Once introduced, the Bill will be subject to debate, further amendments, and approval, before it is passed. Once passed, implementation planning will commence to embed the amendments to improve the framework under which SA's child protection system operates.

Development of strategy to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children and young people in the child protection system

At the national level, DCP co-led negotiations to reach a shared commitment to align efforts to achieve Target 12 through Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021-2031 (the Framework), and the associated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan, which was released in January 2023 following a co-design process with the Aboriginal Leadership Group and SNAICC.

At the state level, DCP continues to work in active partnership with SAACCON and other Aboriginal partners to agree a series of priority jointly led actions, in a dedicated Child Protection Schedule to the Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap.

To achieve the transformational change required to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in care, significantly increased and sustained investment across early intervention and intensive family support services, as well as appropriate human resourcing is vital. DCP also recognises the importance of working in partnership with Aboriginal communities and that ACCOs are supported to deliver these services.

The establishment of Wakwakurna Kanyini is a demonstration of the SA government's commitment to meaningfully open government decision-making processes to the voice of Aboriginal people. Wakwakurna Kanyini is expected to commence operations at the end of September 2024.

DCP's next steps includes developing SA's Jurisdictional Plan for the implementation of the First Aboriginal Action Plan 2023-26 as it relates to Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2023-31.

The Jurisdictional plan will be prioritised and developed in partnership between DCP, SAACCON, DHS and Wakwakurna Kanyini, the SA Peak Body for Aboriginal children and families. Schedule 6, once signed, will be incorporated into the updated Implementation Plan which is due to be finalised later this year.

DHS Early Intervention Research Directorate

In 2023-24, DHS's Early Intervention Research Directorate commissioned a new family support service for young Aboriginal families in northern Adelaide. This program has been commissioned through a newly developed Cooperative Dialogue procurement approach that facilitates shared decision-making with the ACCO sector in the design and implementation of this new service.

South Australian Peak Body for Aboriginal Children and Young People

See Priority Reform 2.

Outcome 13: Aboriginal families and households are safe

Leading Agency: Department of Human Services

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Target: By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero. | No assessment available | No assessment available |

In 2018-19, the baseline year

- 8.4% of Aboriginal females aged 15 years and over, nationally, experienced domestic physical or face-to-face threatened physical harm.
- 7.2% of Aboriginal females aged 15 years and over, in SA, experienced domestic physical or face-to-face threatened physical harm.

There is no new data since the baseline year of 2018-19.

Aboriginal communities are based on complex kinship systems that influence all aspects of life. Kinship determines an individual’s roles and responsibilities, behaviours and obligations to their family, community and Country. Kinship systems are essential for social and emotional wellbeing, particularly for children.^{20 21}

Further, nurturing family environments in childhood lay the foundation for competent and healthy adults who contribute to society and enjoy happy, fulfilling lives.^{22 23}

²⁰ Australian Law Reform Commission (2017). *Pathways to Justice—Inquiry into the Incarceration Rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Summary Report No 133*. <https://www.alrc.gov.au/publication/pathways-to-justice-inquiry-into-the-incarceration-rate-of-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-alrc-133-summary/>. Accessed 24 August 2024

²¹ Bourke, S, Wright, A, Guthrie, J, Russell, L, Dunbar, T and Lovett, R (2018). ‘Evidence Review of Indigenous Culture for Health and Wellbeing’, *The International Journal of Health, Wellness, and Society*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 11–27.

²² Miller, HM, Young, C, Nixon, J, Talbot-McDonnell, M, Cutmore, M, Tong, A, Craig, JC and Woolfenden, S (2020). ‘Parents’ and carers’ views on factors contributing to the health and wellbeing of urban Aboriginal children’, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, vol. 44, no. 4, pp. 265–270.

²³ Berger, LM and Font, SA (2015). ‘The Role of the Family and Family-Centered Programs and Policies’, *The Future of children*, vol. 25, no. 1, pp. 155–176.

The over-representation of Aboriginal children in Australia's child protection system and the complex factors that contribute to family violence are interconnected and are also linked to the impact of colonisation, dispossession and cultural dislocation.²⁴

The child protection system today reflects the same grief, trauma and harm associated with government legislation and policies of assimilation and can be detrimental for Aboriginal child, family and community wellbeing.²⁵

Fear that their children will be removed is a key reason why some Aboriginal females do not report family violence.²⁶

The child protection system is tied closely with entrances into juvenile justice and adult incarceration.^{27 28} The history of forced displacement, disenfranchisement and stealing of wages have also entrenched disadvantage in housing, employment and health outcomes, contributing to the vulnerability of Aboriginal families and children today.²⁹ⁱ

Cultural healing and the restoration of self-determination can assist both individuals and communities to strengthen protective factors and connect to culture, kin and Country.³⁰ This connection, in turn, can build resilience and mitigate further harm.^{31 32}

²⁴ Pezzullo, L, Taylor, P, Mitchell, S, Pejowski, L, Le, K and Bilgrami, A (2010). *Positive Family Functioning*, Access Economics, Sydney.

²⁵ SNAICC 2017, *Strong families, safe kids: Family violence response and prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families*, p. 32.

²⁶ Menzies, K (2019). 'Understanding the Australian Aboriginal experience of collective, historical and intergenerational trauma', *International Social Work*, vol. 62, no. 6, pp. 1522–1534.

²⁷. AIHW (2024). *Family, domestic and sexual violence: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*.

²⁸ Healing Foundation (2013). *Our Children, Our Dreaming: A Call for a More Just Approach for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families*.

²⁹ SNAICC (2023). *SNAICC Submission on the Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Draft Report*.

³⁰ Salmon, M, Doery, K, Chapman, J, Gilbert, R, Williams, R and Lovett, R (2019). Defining the indefinable: descriptors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and their links to health and wellbeing, *National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health*, Canberra, p. 56.

³¹ Clark, Y (2000). 'The construction of aboriginal identity in people separated from their families, community, and culture: Pieces of a jigsaw', Routledge, *Australian Psychologist*, vol. 35, no. 2, pp. 150–157.

³² Walker, R and Shepherd, C (2008). *Strengthening Aboriginal family functioning: What works and why?*

SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 10 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 8 are complete (1 of which is now business as usual) and 2 are in progress (1 on track and 1 delayed).

Key SA actions

Keeping Victims Informed program

AGD provides funding to the Department for Correctional Services (DCS) to operate the Keeping Victims Informed (KVI) program. The service commenced 1 July 2021. Additional funding was provided to DCS to continue delivering the program to 30 June 2025.

KVI provides information to high-risk victims of family and domestic violence whose perpetrators are in custody or under the supervision of DCS. Victims' safety planning is undertaken, including liaison with and referral to other support organisations along with culturally appropriate services being delivered to Aboriginal victims.

The KVI service is provided to victims:

- for the period that victim's domestic or family violence charges remain before the court and the perpetrator is in the custody or supervision of DCS
- in the event of a conviction and sentence for that charge, until the sentence is fully served
- until the victim opts-out of the service
- unless the victim cannot be contacted after 3 attempts (phone/SMS/email)
- unless the victim's perpetrator has not come into DCS custody or supervision.


The Victim Support Unit (VSU) makes direct telephone contact to registered victims who have completed online registration forms allowing referrals from SAPOL's Child and Family Investigation Section or the Multi-Agency Protection service. Through KVI, the VSU informed victims of changes to their perpetrator's custody status, parole conditions which impact victim safety and supervised bail conditions which impact victim safety.

The VSU ensures that the KVI is tailored to victims' needs, including appropriate service provision for clients who identify as Aboriginal and speak a language other than English, and/or are living with a disability.

Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service

AGD funds the Legal Services Commission of South Australia to operate the Women's Domestic Violence Court Assistance Service (WDVCAS) from the Victims of Crime Fund and the NLAP.

WDVCAS provides expert and specialist information, legal advice and legal representation to women navigating the court system with difficult or complex domestic and family violence



matters that fall outside the remit and/or expertise of other Commonwealth and State-funded domestic and family violence legal services in SA.

WDVCAS primarily provides services to women on matters relating to intervention orders and focuses on improving the safety of women and children by supporting them in reporting breaches of intervention orders or in raising other safety concerns relating to intervention orders. WDVCAS continues to work with staff within domestic and family violence legal systems in SA to increase the understanding of intervention orders.

WDVCAS provides services to women involved in family violence matters, ensuring they are tailored to client needs, with particular attention paid to appropriate service provision for Aboriginal women, women from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and women with disability. These services include:

- information and advice
- legal tasks
- advocacy (non-court appearance)
- representation (court appearance)

WDVCAS provides a state-wide service, particularly focusing on supporting vulnerable women living in regional areas, in the Upper Spencer Gulf (Port Augusta and surrounds) and the Limestone Coast (Mount Gambier and Surrounds), who experience greater incidents of domestic and family violence.

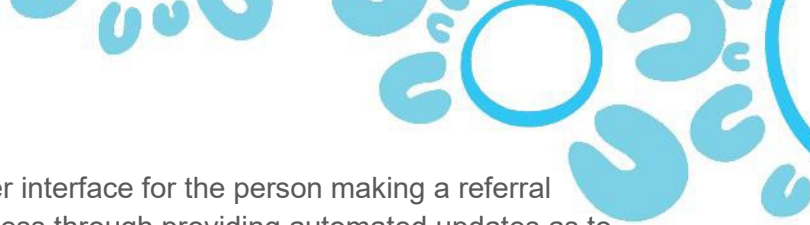
WDVCAS has created partnerships with ACCOs to support Aboriginal women to engage with WDVCAS in a culturally safe and appropriate manner. WDVCAS also works closely with SAPOL prosecutors, South Australian courts, SACAT and domestic and family violence assistance services.

Family Safety Framework

The AGD provides funding from the Victims of Crime Fund to the Office for Women for the operation of the Family Safety Portal.

The intention of the Family Safety Framework (FSF) is to drive improved, integrated service responses for high-risk victims of domestic and family violence in South Australia. The FSF ensures that services to the families most at risk of violence are provided in a structured and systematic way through agencies sharing information about high-risk families and taking responsibility for supporting these families to navigate the justice and support service systems. This is achieved through Family Safety Meetings (FSM) which occur in 17 FSF regions across South Australia. FSMs bring together relevant agencies to provide coordinated, appropriate and consistent responses aimed at enhancing victim safety, reducing re-victimisation and increasing perpetrator accountability.

The AGD funds the Office for Women to provide the administration function of the FSF including management and maintenance of the Portal. The Portal continues to enable a secure online information management system capturing the entire lifecycle of a referral onto a FSF Meeting.



The Portal provides a much faster, easier user interface for the person making a referral whilst increasing the transparency of the process through providing automated updates as to the status of their submission.

The system allows for better coordination of information sharing between all members of each regions FSM. The user experience is more efficient than the previous system. Through ongoing management of the Portal and seeking external feedback, several opportunities to improve the Portal's functions to create a more efficient user experience have been identified and are being progressed in consultation with the technology vendor.

Work is currently underway to review and refine robust data collection and reporting from the Portal. DHS will engage with SAACCON to ensure any review of the FSF incorporates culturally responsive tools and practices. DHS will also explore opportunities to increase ACCO engagement under the FSF.

Building Capacity in Vulnerable Families Working Group (Aboriginal Affairs Executive Committee)

Launched in November 2023, the public sector's Anti-Racism Strategy and Action Plan aims to dismantle racism in all its forms and enhance cultural awareness, competency and safety within public sector workplaces for Aboriginal people, as well as people of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Development of the Strategy was proposed by the Building Capacity in Vulnerable Families Working Group established under the Aboriginal Affairs Executive Committee. The design of the Strategy was led by Professor Katina D'Onise, Preventive Health SA, a core member of the working group. In 2022, a steering committee was established that provided the resources to complete the project. It also enabled the consultation process that engaged key peak bodies and Aboriginal peoples and communities and representatives.


The Building Capacity for Vulnerable Families Working Group is continuing to develop projects to improve the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable families through:

- identifying gaps in early intervention services
- culturally contextualising the 'through their eyes' training package
- linking Domestic and Family Violence services
- establishing an Aboriginal-led Early Intervention Network
- increasing consistency across social and emotional wellbeing services.

Umuwa Multi-Agency Facility (MAF)

The Multi-Agency Facility (MAF) by design, and borne out in implementation, is a successful 'one stop shop' concept by providing the ability for Anangu to access services from SAPOL, DHS and DCP in one place.

Being co-located with other agencies also provides security and comfort for individuals seeking advice or making a report, as it is not immediately obvious to other community members that they are seeking police assistance.



SAPOL have 5 staff based at the MAF in Umuwa - the Officer in Charge APY Lands, an APY Lands Criminal Investigation Branch investigator and 3 APY Lands Family Violence Investigation Section members.

Between 2023-24, 391 APY Lands Domestic Violence Offence Occurrence Reports were raised and investigated by the Family Violence investigators based at the MAF in Umuwa. As a result of these investigations, there were a total of 200 suspects arrested or reported.

Child and Family Support System

DHS led a reform of South Australia's child and family support system with a vision for children to be safe and well in family, community and culture. A key driver is to reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal children in out of home care. This action was reported complete in the 2022-23 Annual Report.

Child and Family Safety Network

DHS developed a Child and Family Safety Network (CFSN) model to provide community-based responses to children and families with high and complex needs who require a cross-sector response. This action was reported complete in the 2021-22 Annual Report.

Review of the State Disability Inclusion Plan

A review of the State Disability Inclusion Plan (Inclusive SA) and development of a new State Disability Inclusion Plan is occurring and aligns with Australia's Disability Strategy and amendments to the *Disability Inclusion Act (2018) SA*.

DHS is committed to engaging SAACCON and its members to participate in consultation processes, and to considering services for Aboriginal women and children living with disability who experience violence for priority discussion.

Costings associated with the review and any subsequent work are incorporated in pre-existing funding for the State Plan. Outreach consultation with families occurred with 3 ACCOs and further consultation will continue throughout the review timeframe.

The review of the State Disability Inclusion Plan is ongoing and scheduled to conclude in December 2024.

Committed to Safety Plan

Committed to Safety is South Australia's plan to address domestic, family and sexual violence, and includes actions focused on Aboriginal peoples connected to primary prevention, services and support response actions, and justice actions. This action was reported complete in the 2022-23 Annual Report.

Ceduna Services Collaboration



DHS has a long-standing relationship with key agencies and service providers in Ceduna to reduce alcohol related harm and improve community safety. DHS continues to work closely with the Ceduna community, the Australian Government and local service providers on this matter.

In 2023-24, DHS supported the Far West Community Partnerships (FWCP) to lead the Ceduna Services Collaboration, to:

- provide coordinated and collaborative services aimed at achieving long-term regional goals, as well as providing an immediate response to surge issues that appear in community from a harm minimisation and safety perspective.
- lead the development of the Ceduna summer response. Service providers met regularly to identify and coordinate rapid service responses to address the safety and wellbeing of remote visitors and the people around them.

A key challenge in 2023-24 was securing long-term resourcing to sustain the initiative. Resourcing was successfully secured via co-contributions from multiple government agencies, with commitment from 11 SA government agencies (including DHS) to continue the Ceduna Service Collaboration for another 5 years to 30 June 2029.

The Far West Community Partnership will continue to lead the initiative.

Safety and Wellbeing Taskforce

The Department for Human Services (DHS) chairs the Safety and Wellbeing Taskforce, which includes federal, state and local government agency representatives. The Taskforce is a state-wide, multi-agency approach to deliver adaptive and responsive service systems aimed at effectively supporting Aboriginal peoples from remote communities to be safe and well whilst they are in Adelaide and priority regional locations.

Through the Taskforce, DHS has led the implementation of several strategies, including establishing an Adelaide-based Remote Visitor Outreach Team, temporary Safer Places to Gather, and a state-wide Return to Country Program. The Taskforce has also implemented place-based responses in Adelaide, Port Augusta, Ceduna/Far West Coast, APY Lands and Coober Pedy.

Adelaide

- DHS established the Remote Visitor Outreach Team. This multi-disciplinary team includes outreach staff, cultural advisers and interpreters working from a centralised service hub in the Adelaide CBD to provide wrap-around support.
- In August 2023, DHS established a Safer Place to Gather (SPTG) at Edwards Park in the Adelaide Park Lands, to provide vulnerable remote Aboriginal visitors a temporary, safer place to seek shelter and access support.

Port Augusta

- DHS established a Youth Outreach Team, extended the youth services (including the Youth Bus and the Youth Centre hours), and led the Port Augusta youth network and the Intensive Youth Response, to provide intensive wrap-around support for young people engaging in the justice system.
- DHS also facilitated a series of co-design workshops with community members, service providers and key stakeholders to develop the draft Port Augusta Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan and Governance Model. The proposed collaborative structure engages the local community and brings together Aboriginal community representatives, the business community, State and Australian government agencies, and local government and councillors. We are in the process of establishing the community leadership group as part of the governance model and envision this Plan will be foundational in informing the work of this group.

Ceduna

- DHS has a long-standing relationship with key agencies and service providers in Ceduna to reduce alcohol related harm and improve community safety. DHS continues to work closely with the Ceduna community, the Australian Government and local service providers on this matter.
- DHS supports the Far West Community Partnerships (FWCP) to lead the Ceduna Services Collaboration, to provide coordinated and collaborative services aimed at achieving long-term regional goals, as well as providing an immediate response to surge issues that appear in community from a harm minimisation and safety perspective.
- The FWCP led the development of the Ceduna summer response. Service providers meet regularly to identify and coordinate rapid service responses to address the safety and wellbeing of remote visitors and the people around them.

Coober Pedy

DHS has a targeted approach in Coober Pedy and, in January 2024, engaged Umoona Community Council to trial the delivery of assertive outreach and Return to Country supports in Coober Pedy.

Return to Country

DHS coordinates a Return to Country program throughout South Australia that enables Aboriginal people whose primary place of residence is a remote or regional community, to return home should they wish to do so. Eligibility criteria applies, including a contribution to the ticket cost, arranged through Centrepay.

The 2024-25 State Budget provides \$1.58m over 3 years for the extension of the multi-agency response to support the safety and wellbeing of remote Aboriginal visitors, residents and businesses in Adelaide and regional South Australia.

Outcome 14: Aboriginal people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing

Leading Agency: Department for Health and Wellbeing

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|--|-------------------------|-----------|
| Target: Significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal people towards zero. | No assessment available | Worsening |

Nationally (which for this target is for New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined),

- in 2022, the suicide age-standardised rate for Aboriginal people was 29.9 per 100,000 people, above the rate of the previous two years and above the baseline in 2018 (25.1 per 100,000 people)
- in 2022, suicide was the leading cause of death for Aboriginal people aged 15–39 years. Based on progress from the baseline, the target is worsening.
- this assessment is provided with a high level of confidence.

No assessment of progress is available for SA.

SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 29 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 20 are complete (10 of which are now business as usual), 7 are in progress (4 on track and 3 delayed) and 2 are no longer being progressed.

More people report experiencing racial prejudice³³

Racism negatively affects the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people, increasing risks of anxiety, depression, self-harm, asthma, higher Body Mass Index, smoking and death by suicide.

The latest data (2022) shows that Aboriginal people experienced racial prejudice at a significantly higher rate than non-Aboriginal people, with this rate (and gap) continuing to grow.

The proportion of Aboriginal people aged 18 years or over who reported experiencing racial prejudice in the past 6 months increased from 43% in 2018 to 60% in 2022. For the general

³³ Productivity Commission (2024). *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024*. Canberra

community, the proportion reporting racial prejudice in the past 6 months rose from 20% to 25% over the same period.

In SA, the proportion of Aboriginal people aged 18 years or over who reported experiencing racial prejudice in the past 6 months increased from 57% in 2018 to 62% in 2022. For the general community, the proportion reporting racial prejudice in the past 6 months rose from 14% to 22% over the same period.³⁴

Key SA actions

South Australian Aboriginal Mental Health and Wellbeing Centre (The Centre)

The Aboriginal Mental Health and Wellbeing Centre project continues to be on-track. The service will provide direct services to Aboriginal people, families and communities in a jointly managed, culturally safe model of mental health care.

11 successful Aboriginal community engagement workshops have been held across the state, including workshops for LGBTIQ+ Aboriginal community members and children and youth.

The workshops have been used to develop a draft Mind Map outlining the Centre's approach to child, youth, Adult, LGBTIQ+ and Older persons mental health and wellbeing assessments and pathways including walk-ins, referrals in and out, SA Ambulance S and SAPOL, hospital, transport, cultural inclusion (traditional healers/Ngangkari) workforce, data collection, safety and quality, partnerships with key stakeholders, training and education including student pathways and placements.


A preferred site has been identified within the Adelaide CBD and DHW will now seek Ministerial approvals ahead of commencement of the procurement process.

A First Nations Mental Health and Wellbeing Focus Group has been established. The group is a panel of experts who will give advice and recommendations and provide cultural governance for the Centre and Aboriginal mental health and wellbeing for South Australia moving forward.

This will include oversight of the development of the South Australian Aboriginal Mental Health and Wellbeing Philosophy of Care "A Better way of Working" which outlines the foundation to create, support and implement a culturally led approach that is informed and underpinned by the Social Emotional Wellbeing framework and support a wraparound approach that reflects best practice on how to do business in a compassionate and culturally respectful and compassionate way.

Community Connections Program

³⁴ Productivity Commission (2024). *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2024*. Canberra



The state-wide Community Connections Program (CCP) supports South Australians experiencing social isolation and loneliness. It is designed to reduce social isolation and loneliness by walking alongside people to build meaningful social connections, networks, and a sense of belonging.

CCP is delivered through an integrated network of partner organisations (Coordinating Partners and Community Partners) which DHS funds within each of the 12 State Government regions. CCP includes a specialised Aboriginal-specific CCP tier.

In 2023-24, DHS commissioned Tauondi as an Aboriginal Coordinating Partner (ACP) to deliver Aboriginal culturally responsive training, tailored to the specific needs of CCP Partners. DHS also commissioned two independent program evaluations. One of these will evaluate the services delivered by Aboriginal Community Partners.

The single-entry connected system piloted by Community Connections has now expanded to include the Financial Wellbeing Program and Young Carer Support Services. A consistent intake process, including simple measures of subjective and objective wellbeing, allows service providers to determine the need for connection to other services to address broader aspects of wellbeing and track changes in wellbeing over time.

The genuine collaboration built between Coordinating Partners evidences a cultural shift in how social services work together with multiple agencies towards a common purpose, shared outcomes, and decision-making, within an overarching program model.

The new ACP will facilitate training and support to improve the cultural responsiveness of non-Aboriginal Coordinating Partner services for Aboriginal participants and communities, in alignment with Priority Reform 3. The ACP will also work with Aboriginal Community Partners to support synergies across the program.

Community Services Support Program

Functions of the Community Services Support program are now funded through the Youth Support and Development Program (YSDP). YSDP supports pathways to engagement for isolated, disadvantaged and /or vulnerable young people aged 12-18:

- Kura Yerlo has been engaged to deliver services directly to Aboriginal young people and build capacity of other YSDP providers to improve access to YSDP services for Aboriginal young people.
- Through the Port Augusta Social Vision initiative, DHS funds two programs focused on Aboriginal youth: The Port Augusta Youth Safe Transport, and after-hours structured activities for young people aged 10-19, delivered through Port Augusta Youth Centre.
- DHS funds a CBD-based Safe Youth Transport Service as well as two specialist services to improve access to services for vulnerable young people from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, respectively.

This is an ongoing program which is evaluated in line with recommissioning cycles. Available data for 2023-24 includes:

- Port Augusta Youth Safe Transport: 637 unique participants; 7,311 transports provided.
- Port Augusta Youth Centre: 600 unique participants assessed; 34 programs/sessions held.
- Youth Safe Transport Program (CBD): 161 participants.

Services to Aboriginal Youth Program

In 2023-24, DHS provided \$0.9m towards the Service to Aboriginal Youth (STAY) program. STAY focuses on early intervention, providing at-risk young people aged 10-19 with access to the services and guidance needed to achieve their goals, strengthen their cultural and community connections, and build long-term resilience.

STAY has 9 providers, 4 of which are ACCOs and is delivered across 11 regional and remote locations comprising Yalata, Koonibba, Ceduna, Port Lincoln, Whyalla, Port Augusta, Port Pirie, Coober Pedy, Riverland and Murray Bridge.

STAY services are due for recommissioning by 1 July 2025, with the recommissioning process used as an opportunity to increase Aboriginal community control over these services.

Anti-Discrimination Policy

The SA Implementation Plan included a commitment to review and continuously improve the Department for Environment and Water's (DEW's) anti-discrimination policy with Aboriginal staff.

A draft Cultural Safety Procedure was endorsed by Executive for consultation with Aboriginal staff and Leaders. An external Aboriginal facilitator will be engaged to lead consultation with Aboriginal staff.

Challenges or barriers included:

- aligning with the introduction of the SA Government Anti-Racism Strategy
- developing a procedure that complements and complies with existing policies, procedures and requirements, yet is flexible and not a one size fits all approach.

Strategies implemented to address the challenges/barriers included multiple teams (Human Resources, Work Health and Safety, Employee Relations and the First Nations Partnership Unit) having input into development of the procedure.

Positive outcomes have been achieved through engagement with Aboriginal staff, Executive and leaders in the development of Aboriginal workforce initiatives and networking with other agencies across Government to learn about their cultural safety procedures.

Outcome 15: Aboriginal people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters

Leading Agency: Department for Environment and Water

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|---|-----------|-------------------------|
| Target 15a: By 2030, a 15% increase in Australia’s land mass subject to Aboriginal people’s legal rights or interests. | Improving | Improving, and on track |
| Target 15b: By 2030, a 15% increase in areas covered by Aboriginal people’s legal rights or interests in the sea. | Improving | Improving, and on track |

As at 30 June 2023, 4,213,978 km² of the land mass of Australia and 113,461 km² of the sea country of Australia were subject to Aboriginal people’s rights or interests.

Nationally,

- there was a 7.8% increase in the area of land subject to Aboriginal people’s legal rights or interests between the baseline year of 2020 and 2023.
- the progress towards the target has been driven by improvements in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory
- based on progress from the baseline, both the land mass target and sea country target show good improvement and are on track to be met.

In SA,

- land mass subject to Aboriginal people’s rights or interests increased by 2,577km² (0.5%) between 2023 and 2020 (baseline year)
- sea country subject to Aboriginal people’s rights or interests increased by 643km² (172%) between 2023 and 2020 (baseline year).

SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 11 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 3 are complete, 5 are in progress (4 on track and 1 delayed) and 3 have been incorporated into the new Implementation Plan

Key SA actions

Project Coorong – Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin Component

Healthy Coorong, Healthy Basin (HCHB) effectively supports Aboriginal people in maintaining cultural, spiritual, physical, and economic connections to their lands and waters. Several strategies have proven successful. Key approaches include:

- agreements that empower local communities to manage their traditional lands
- protecting cultural heritage through specific community involvement
- fostering economic development through support for Indigenous enterprises and local working on Country groups.

Additionally, integrating Aboriginal perspectives into education and providing skills training has enhanced two-way knowledge sharing between the department and Aboriginal communities, through both community capacity and cultural awareness.

Community-driven initiatives and partnerships have further empowered Aboriginal groups to lead projects that align with their cultural and environmental priorities. These strategies collectively contribute to preserving and enhancing the unique relationships they have with their lands and waters.

Next steps include continuing to strengthen agreements, expanding support for Aboriginal led economic and land management projects, and integrating Aboriginal perspectives. Enhancing support for community-driven initiatives and ensuring Aboriginal peoples including Traditional Owners continue to be involved in decision-making will also be crucial.

Ongoing dialogue and adapting to new challenges and opportunities will continue to preserve and enrich their connection to the lands and water.

Establishment of new co-management arrangements

Action to support Aboriginal people to take a lead role in caring for Country by supporting the establishment of new co-management arrangements:

- Establish co-management arrangements for Nukunu and Kurna by June 2023.
- Facilitate the transfer of Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park as a co-managed park to Traditional Owners, the Nganguraku people, by June 2023.

The transfer of Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park has been delayed by an opposing native title claim being lodged over the land. Action is on hold while this is resolved. Existing co-management arrangements for the park with Nganguraku are continuing while the native title issues are resolved.

Progress on other initiatives includes:

- Kurna co-management arrangements are in place and operational including on-country meetings. This has been successfully commenced with strategic park management planning underway.

- DEW is in the process of negotiating with Narungga Nation to expand the scope of the co-management arrangements to all parks on Yorke Peninsula after a successful 3.5 years of operation of the Dhilba Guuranda – Innes National Park Co-management Board.
- Nukunu co-management negotiations are continuing. While there have been some positive discussions there have been some delays associated with land tenure discussions.

A significant challenge has been the capacity of RNTBCs and their advisors to engage with DEW in the face of competing priorities. These priorities include consultation requests from multiple government and private sector sources and the volume of cultural heritage survey and/or clearance requests across their Country where many RNTBC members have full-time roles in other organisations. DEW continues to engage through multiple channels, providing information in writing and making itself available to attend meetings wherever possible.

Building personal relationships and trust has been the most effective method for progressing negotiations, addressing delays and working through challenges. These strong personal relationships have helped to navigate the challenging native title process for Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park and to maintain a positive working relationship with existing co-management board members throughout the process.

Next steps are to finalise negotiations with Nukunu and Narungga and commence meetings with new board.

Co-management program in National Parks

DEW is committed to the delivery of SA's co-management program under the *National Parks Wildlife Act 1972*.


Delivery of the co-management program is core business and a key priority of DEW's National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). The processes and procedures to deliver the program are mature and embedded in agency processes.

There are currently 13 co-management agreements covering 37 parks; comprising 2 co-management boards over Aboriginal-owned parks, 7 co-management boards over Crown owned parks, and 4 advisory committees over Crown-owned parks. This means that 65% percent of the area of the State's parks and reserve system, or 13% of the total land area of the State is co-managed.

Key successes of the program in the past year include the commencement of the new Kurna Parks Advisory Committee.

Flinders Ranges World Heritage Nomination – Formalised Partnership Agreement

The SA Implementation Plan commits to developing and implementing a formalised partnership agreement with the Adnyamathanha people that recognises the primacy of their role in the nomination process and supports them to be involved in the design and implementation of the project, including ensuring that sites of cultural significance along with cultural knowledge are appropriately considered and respected throughout the process.



Since this commitment was made, the Commonwealth has provided further guidance regarding requirements for World Heritage Nominations. These now require Free and Prior Informed Consent from traditional owners in line with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) principles.

DEW has been working with Adnyamathanha Traditional Lands Association (ATLA) in special administration and the broader Adnyamathanha community towards consent to the proposed nomination and inclusion of Adnyamathanha generated content in the nomination. In 2023-24 DEW held 3 workshops with a core group of Adnyamathanha representatives and also carried out a series of community meetings across Adnyamathanha country and an Adnyamathanha community day at Nilpena Ediacara National Park.

DEW has engaged an Adnyamathanha person to write the Adnyamathanha content, with continuing consultation of the community. The information will be used recognising Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) principles. Formal agreements for the use of the information will be developed. The process is supported financially by the Australian Government Department for Climate Change, Energy, Environment and Water.

Strong relationships have been developed through the workshop process which have developed trust and allowed for frank discussions of the world heritage bid, proposed contents of the nomination dossier and the required governance for the project. Good progress has been made in each of these areas.

Water planning and management

Several water allocation plans are currently undergoing amendment with processes in place to incorporate Aboriginal values and interests. Building on from these existing processes, DEW is planning for state-wide engagement with Aboriginal communities to co-design a framework to advance Aboriginal peoples' water interests. This will include strategies for Aboriginal ownership of water. While this work progresses, DEW continues to explore how water can be set aside specifically for addressing Aboriginal peoples water interests.

All 9 Landscape Boards across South Australia have signed a Statement of Commitment to work together with Aboriginal people and organisations to partner to manage, protect and restore Country. Many Landscape Boards have Aboriginal Engagement Committees or Focus Groups to work through water allocation plan policies and to identify cultural objectives. The state-wide engagement being planned by DEW will build on from these steps, particularly to progress towards Aboriginal ownership of water.

Next steps are to work with SAACCON and SA Native Title Services (SANTS) on the state-wide engagement approach.

National Water Reform Committee – Committee on Aboriginal Water Interests

In 2023-24 the Committee on Aboriginal Water Interests released an Insights Paper to support conversations and a shared understanding about Aboriginal water interests and values and finalised an objective on Aboriginal and Torres Islander water interests and associated outcomes for inclusion in a new National Water Agreement due for completion at the end of 2024. A meeting of the Committee was hosted in Adelaide in December 2023.

Empowering the Committee to have responsibility for and write the text and then consult with the jurisdictions has led to positive outcomes.

Next steps are for the Committee to develop principles to assist in delivering the objective and associated outcomes.

Institutional reform

DEW is committed to working toward addressing institutional reform to ensure Aboriginal peoples' interests in caring for Country is included and embedded in the Department's approaches to managing South Australia's environment, water and natural resources.

DEW has a Cross-Cultural Competency Framework and Aboriginal Engagement Guidelines to support this action. An Aboriginal Workforce Plan and Cultural Safety Procedure is also being developed and formal consultation will occur with Aboriginal staff and DEW Leaders in the second half of 2024.

Removing Barriers to Aboriginal Peoples' Access to Public Lands

DEW is committed to developing and implementing a project that seeks to identify and remove barriers to Aboriginal peoples' access to, and cultural practices on, public lands.

The 'Removing barriers to Aboriginal People's access to public lands' action has been delayed, however the establishment of DEW's Co-management Improvement Working Group established in 2023 will contribute to this action.

Connection to Country Partnerships



Monitoring of brush-tailed bettongs in December 2023 – known as yalgori to the local Narungga people – found 95% of the females checked had pouch young. The critically endangered marsupials were also found across 3 quarters of the Dhilba Guuranda-Innes National Park, an area nearly twice the size of Adelaide's CBD.

Returning yalgori is part of Marna Banggara, an ambitious project to restore lost native wildlife to southern Yorke Peninsula. They were locally-extinct due to habitat destruction and the spread of introduced predators, including foxes and feral cats.

The project is jointly funded through the Northern and Yorke Landscape Board, the Australian Government, the South Australian National Parks and Wildlife Service, WWF-Australia, and Foundation for National Parks & Wildlife, in partnership with the Narungga Nation Aboriginal Corporation (NNAC).³⁵ NNAC also participated in a cultural exchange with the Noongar people who provided bettongs for relocation, supported by DEW.

³⁵ Marna Banggara (2023). *Booming bettongs back from extinction*. 20 December 2023. <https://marnabanggara.com.au/whats-happening/booming-bettongs-back-from-extinction>

Outcome 16: Aboriginal cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing

Joint Lead Agencies:

- Attorney-General’s Department
- Department of the Premier and Cabinet

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Target: By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal languages being spoken. | No assessment available | No assessment available |

Nationally in the baseline year of 2018-19, there were 123 Aboriginal languages being spoken (with 14 considered strong).

In 2018-19 in SA, there were 17 Aboriginal languages being spoken (with only Pitjantjatjara considered to be a strong language).

There is no new data since the baseline year of 2018-19.

Nationally, as at 30 June 2023,

- there were 24 Commonwealth funded Indigenous Language Centres, of which 23 were Aboriginal community-controlled
- the number of times people accessed an activity at an Indigenous Language Centre increased by 270% between the baseline year and 2022-23, however, Queensland reporting included data for an online learning program for the first time in 2022-23 and this may have skewed the results.

In SA, as at 30 June 2023,

- there were 2 Commonwealth funded Indigenous Language Centres, of which 1 was Aboriginal community-controlled
- the number of times people accessed an activity at an Indigenous Language Centre increased by 51% between the baseline year and 2022-23.

SA overview

The SA Implementation Plan contains 5 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 1 is complete, 2 are on track, 1 has been incorporated into the new Implementation Plan and 1 is no longer being progressed.

Key SA actions

South Australian Aboriginal Languages Strategy

This action has been further developed through the negotiation of new implementation actions under the SA Partnership Agreement.

SAACCON, DPC and AGD-AAR will co-lead this new activity as part of the implementation of the National Agreement.

Aboriginal Language Interpreting Service

DHS commenced providing the Aboriginal Language Interpreting Service (ALIS) in December 2021.

ALIS is an all-Aboriginal team that offers Aboriginal language interpreting face-to-face in the Adelaide metropolitan and regional areas and remote SA. ALIS also offers interpreting by phone across SA, in ten Indigenous languages. They are Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara, Eastern Arrernte, Western Arrernte, Central Arrernte, Pintupi, Luritja, Warlpiri, Alyawarr and Anmatyerre.

At times, service delivery is impacted by interpreter availability, which is influenced by many factors as interpreters may refuse bookings for cultural reasons, kinship, sorry business, community obligations or financial reasons. ALIS continues to actively recruit Aboriginal language interpreters in the above and other languages to meet demand for the service.


ALIS supports Aboriginal people experiencing communication and/or cultural barriers when accessing services in SA across the adult and youth justice and corrections systems, health and housing services, child protection, education and other government and non-government services.

As at 31 May 2024, the ALIS has completed 423 (55%) interpreting assignments out of 768 booking requests in the 2023-24 financial year.

In 2024-25, ALIS will continue to promote the service to Aboriginal community organisations and increase awareness of the service to stakeholders. ALIS will also continue recruitment activities to expand the pool of languages offered and to provide greater access to interpreters for Aboriginal people, including in regional SA.

Strengthening Aboriginal Languages and Literacy





DE continues to work in partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled language organisations to support Aboriginal languages education in the classroom and in community, including:

- Providing grant funding to 7 South Australian Aboriginal community-controlled language organisations through the Aboriginal Community Language and Culture Partnership grant program. This program supports community-led languages revival and maintenance through education.
- Co-developing an Aboriginal languages curriculum for 3 South Australian Aboriginal languages, aligned to the Australian Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal Languages, with other languages in progress.
- Supporting a community-led, in school trial of the Kurna Scope and Sequence for the primary years is in development.
- Distribution of \$228,000 to schools to support the delivery of Aboriginal languages programs in 2024, with a further 6.7 teacher FTE provided to support Aboriginal languages programs specifically for Aboriginal children in the primary years.
- A grant to PYEC supports Anangu-led first language resource development for Anangu students. Professional learning in first language pedagogies and early reading approaches for Anangu Educators. Access to high quality first language early literacy resources, including a Pitjantjatjara and Yankunytjatjara phonics program and check, further supports Anangu children's first language literacy.

South Australian public schools continue to demonstrate a strong interest in teaching Aboriginal languages, with 66 schools known to offer a program. This spans 9 South Australian Aboriginal languages, reaching over 8,000 students statewide.

Outcome 17: Aboriginal people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives

Leading Agency: Department of Treasury and Finance

Target Data - Productivity Commission progress assessment

| Socio-economic outcome | SA | Australia |
|---|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Target: By 2026, Aboriginal people have equal levels of digital inclusion. | No assessment available | No assessment available |

Nationally,

- in 2014-15, 73.5% of Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over accessed the internet in their home.
- there is no comparable data on home access to the internet for non-Aboriginal people.
- this means that estimating a trajectory to achieve parity is not currently possible.

In SA,

- in 2014-15, 73.4% of Aboriginal people aged 15 years and over accessed the internet in their home.
- there is no comparable data on home access to the internet for non-Aboriginal people.

There is no new data since the baseline year of 2014-15.

SA overview


The SA Implementation Plan contains 14 actions against this socio-economic outcome. Of the actions reported through this process 5 are complete (2 of which are now business as usual), 7 are in progress (5 on track and 2 delayed) and 2 are no longer being progressed.

Key SA actions

Improve Narungga peoples’ access to archives in State Records SA’s custody

The SA Implementation Plan includes a commitment to work with the Narungga community to identify relevant records in the State Archive and if possible, provide copies of any records not already held by the community.

This action originated in the Buthera Agreement’s Justice Strategy.



State Records of SA has established a working group, including members from the Aboriginal Reference Group. This working group will develop a service to train community researchers and provide copies of records to be held by community, and also develop an engagement strategy to promote the service across SA.

The service will be available to all Aboriginal community groups and tailored as required.

State Records Aboriginal Reference Group

State Records SA established an Aboriginal Reference Group to advise them, along with other archive institutions, on the implementation of a response to the Tandanya-Adelaide Declaration.

The archive can hold important links to family and community for Aboriginal people, and as societies come to terms with past wrongs, the role of the archive, as a place of memory, reflection and support for current and future generations, becomes increasingly important.

Taking the lead from the Tandanya-Adelaide Declaration, State Records is re-imagining its role and relationship with Aboriginal people, with the archive becoming a model for respect and collaboration.

Aboriginal Access Officer in State Records SA

State Records SA employ an Aboriginal Access Officer to improve Aboriginal peoples' access to the State Archive collection.

Amendments to the Mining Act 1971

The *Mining Act 1971* which amended from 1 January 2021 to modernise aspects of its regulatory framework to meet contemporary industry, community, and environmental management expectations.

Since its commencement, DEM has been monitoring the efficacy of the Mining Act reforms and any unintended consequences of the amendments. Through this process DEM has identified opportunities for further reforms to enhance the legislative framework including improved access for Aboriginal peoples to data and other information.

Work to consider these legislative reform options was expected to begin in early 2024 but has been delayed until 2025 due to constrained resources within DEM. This review process once initiated will include engagement and consultation with Aboriginal people. DEM proposes to develop a targeted Issues Paper for public consultation, which will be used to inform potential amendments to the Mining Act. It is expected that this will be released in late 2024 to early 2025.



Communication actions

SAACCON and the SA Government have drafted a Joint Communications Framework. It is anticipated that the Framework will be finalised by the end of the year.

SAACCON and SA Government will develop a Joint Engagement Strategy as a separate project, which is due to be completed in 2025.

Partnership actions and National Agreement commitments

The National Agreement requires parties to review their partnership arrangements against the strong partnership elements outlined in the Agreement.

SA completed its first Partnership Stocktake in 2023 and released the Report on the Review and Strengthening of Partnerships (Partnership Review Report), with our National Agreement on Closing the Gap Annual Report 2022–23.

SA identified 36 partnerships which met the nationally agreed reporting threshold. On average, these partnerships met 76% of the strong partnership elements with 3 partnerships meeting all 15 of the elements.

Several areas for improvement were also identified, including:

- Establish partnerships in broader policy areas (currently concentrated in health, housing, environment, education, and justice).
- Establish new partnerships across regional and remote locations (currently focused on metropolitan areas with some notable exceptions on the APY Lands).
- There is opportunity to improve data collection and sharing processes across most partnerships.
- Allocation of funding to Aboriginal partners for their participation in partnership activities. Where the partnership is borne out of a contract for services, funding could enable participation in shared decision-making related to planning, design, delivery and oversight of services or policy direction.
- Where the government partner provides secretariat services as ‘in-kind’ support to the partnership, it can limit the Aboriginal partner’s ability to jointly drive the partnership and agenda on their terms. This could be improved by sharing secretariat functions with the Aboriginal partner, including rotating chairing or co-chairing responsibilities, setting the agenda and preparing meeting papers and providing adequate resources to the Aboriginal partner to perform this function.



Actions to further strengthen these partnerships against the strong partnership elements, have been included in SA's next Implementation Plan

The next Partnership Stocktake is due for completion in 2025.



Government
of South Australia



SAACCON
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL
COMMUNITY CONTROLLED
ORGANISATION NETWORK



CLOSING THE GAP