

# National Reconciliation Week

## Closing the Gap?



**Closing the Gap** is Australia's national strategy aimed at reducing inequity between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians across key areas such as health, education, employment, and justice.

### What are the origins of Closing the Gap?

The initiative was launched in 2008 following the 2005 Social Justice Report, which called for equality in health and life expectancy within 25 years. In 2019, a significant shift occurred with the establishment of the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#). This agreement was co-designed with the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations, marking a move towards genuine partnership and shared decision-making between governments and Indigenous communities.

### Targets and priority reforms

The 2020 National Agreement outlined 19 targets across 17 outcome areas, including health, education, employment, housing, justice, and digital inclusion. These targets are underpinned by four Priority Reforms aimed at transforming how governments work with Indigenous communities:

- **Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision-Making:** Ensuring Indigenous people are central to the design and implementation of policies and programs.
- **Building the Community-Controlled Sector:** Supporting Indigenous-led services to deliver culturally appropriate programs.
- **Transforming Government Organizations:** Enhancing the cultural competency of public institutions.
- **Shared Access to Data and Information:** Improving transparency and accountability through better data sharing.

[Closing the Gap Priority Reforms](#)

### Progress and challenges

Progress toward these targets has been mixed. According to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, of the 14 targets with available data:

#### 3 targets are on track, including:

- Target 2: Increase the proportion of babies with a healthy birthweight.
- Target 3: Increase the proportion of children enrolled in early childhood education.
- Target 8: Increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 who are employed.

#### 5 targets are improving but not on track, such as:

- Target 1: Close the gap in life expectancy within a generation.

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Target 5: Increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieving their full learning potential.

### 4 targets are worsening, including:

- Target 4: Increase the proportion of children assessed as developmentally on track.
- Target 10: Reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration.
- Target 12: Reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care.
- Target 14: Reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing high or very high levels of psychological distress.

In summary, Closing the Gap represents a significant effort to address longstanding inequalities faced by First Nations peoples. While some progress has been made, significant challenges remain. There is a need for ongoing commitment to genuine partnership, culturally appropriate service delivery, and accountability is essential to achieving the objectives.



## Conclusion

Recent Cultural Capability training sessions touched on some of these “Gaps” and how they have evolved with firsthand lived experience being discussed.

The Closing the Gap initiative remains one of Australia’s most important and ambitious social reform efforts, aimed at addressing entrenched inequalities faced by First Nations peoples.

While the 2020 National Agreement signalled a progressive shift co-designed policy and delivery, progress has been uneven across key targets. Continued commitment from all levels of government, stronger accountability mechanisms, and a deeper respect for Indigenous voices are essential to ensure the initiative delivers lasting, equitable outcomes. Only through sustained partnership and cultural integrity can the vision of true parity be achieved.

For a more detailed understanding refer: [Closing the Gap](#)