



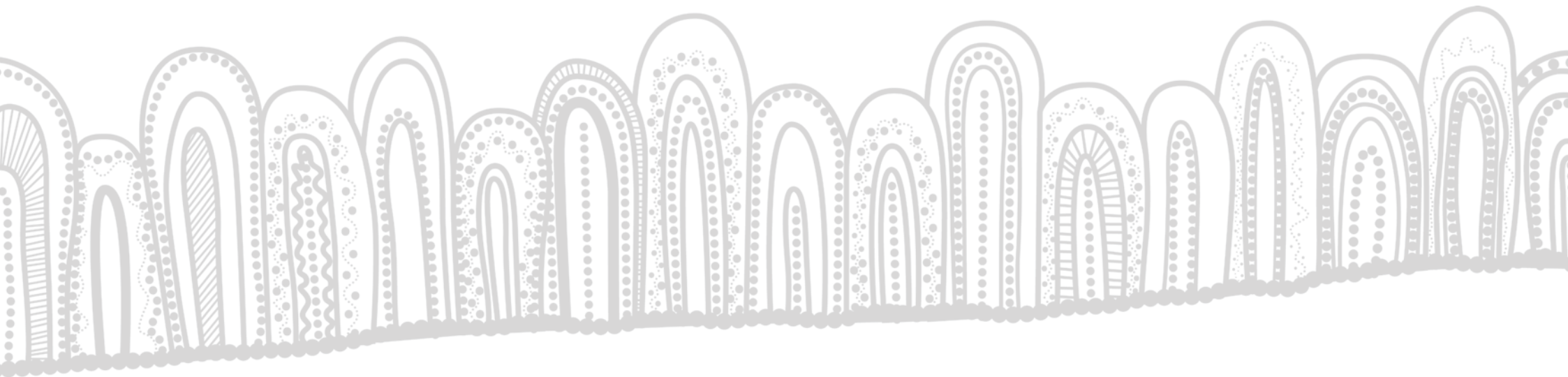
# Closing the Gap

Implementation Plan  
2026-2028

WESTERN AUSTRALIA



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**The Department of the Premier  
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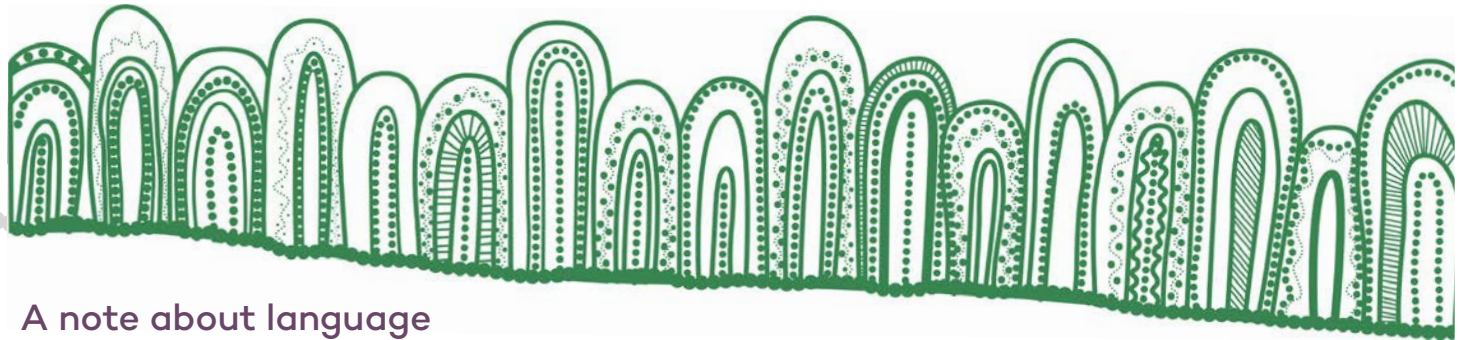
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Painting by Leeann Kelly Pedersen.  
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## Acknowledgement of Country

The Government of Western Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians throughout Western Australia and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respects to all members of Western Australia's Aboriginal Communities and their cultures, and to Elders both past and present.



### A note about language

In this document, the term Aboriginal people is used in reference to “Indigenous” or “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander” people, in recognition that Aboriginal people are the original inhabitants of Western Australia.

Together, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders make up the First Nations of Australia; however, Torres Strait Islander people in Western Australia have unique cultures, identities and histories, distinct from those of Aboriginal people. On average, Aboriginal people and Torres Strait Islanders have different socioeconomic profiles and face different challenges, despite sharing several common experiences, including a history of racial discrimination. Some families have both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage, and this rich diversity is acknowledged and celebrated.

Please be aware this publication may contain the names and/or images of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who may now be deceased.



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Mal-ga

Gard-i-ma-nha

# Malga Garrimanha

Standing Strong





This painting is about teaching our future kids about their Culture before they take the path of Education, Employment, Lifestyle and fitting into Community.

This painting also represents going back to bush, On Country and practising our culture. It's about taking our kids back to the rivers on a fishing trip and having a big cook-up together as a family.

It's important for us as families to go bush to connect with the land, it means gathering bush tucker and hunting kangaroo and other animals for food.

In the past the women gathered plant foods and the men hunted animals for meat. Our families ate healthy bush tucker and didn't have diseases such as diabetes.

Having strong family connections and strong support from our Elders leading the way for our kids is important.

This painting also represents having strong connections to our communities and teaching our future kids as our ancestors taught us.

This painting represents our future kids getting a good start in life with strong support in the family home with our Families & Elders teaching our kids about their culture, beginning from their early years so that barriers in the future can be broken to be able to fit into our community, lead a healthy lifestyle and gaining good skills for employment and education.

## About the artist



### Leeann Kelly - Pedersen

I am from the Midwest of Western Australia and I am a Wajarri/Nhanda woman. My parents are Wajarri woman Dawn Flanagan/Hamlett, who is a recognised artist of the Midwest & has won many Art Awards that was exhibited in the Morawa/Mullewa/Geraldton/Perth Galleries. My father is Steven Kelly who is a Nhanda man from Carnarvon.

His family are from the Kalbarri/Northampton area whose ancestors lived along the Murchison River near Kalbarri. My father has worked on most Midwest Cattle/Sheep Stations & Farms as a Labourer.

I have a Danish/Finnish husband hence my surname. His life story and stories of his ancestors are so intriguing to hear as he also finds my background stories from my ancestors. We have learnt a lot from each other from stories of our ancestors.

I have had my artwork in a few exhibitions in Geraldton & artwork in Fremantle at the Revealed Exhibitions, but the most recognised Exhibition where my Artwork was displayed was in Geraldton Art Gallery called the Nganang Badimaya Wangga: Yarns with Badimaya Elder Gami Ollie George. (R.I.P.) while working at Irra Wangga language Centre – Bundiyarra Aboriginal Corp. I have done commission work for individuals and Government Departments, one of them was for WACHS in Carnarvon WA, my artwork was glazed onto glass

panels at the new Aged Care Unit at Carnarvon Hospital. My love of Art came to me quite early as a child. My favourite subject at school was Art. I am known in the Geraldton community for my artwork and my past position in the Irra Wangga Language Centre involved in reviving & maintaining Aboriginal languages in the Midwest Region. I tell my grandchildren my stories and teach them about my culture. They are turning into excellent little artists with their artwork being sold in the Gwoonwardu Mia Cultural Centre Carnarvon where I currently have some artwork for sale. My artwork consists of my life experiences, places I have been to, things I have seen during my lifetime and my cultural experiences. I love collecting quondong & the bush pear. I make jewellery from the quondong seeds. My inspiration from my artwork comes from my mother who is a recognised artist. She tells stories about “old aboriginal” stories from her life and stories from her elders about special places and things from what she has experienced during her life. I also am inspired by my sisters Carlene and Vanessa Kelly who are also great artists.



## Message from the Aboriginal Advisory Council Western Australia

The Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia (AACWA) welcomes the 2026–2028 WA Closing the Gap Implementation Plan as an important step toward a new way of working based on partnership, accountability and Aboriginal leadership.

As the WA Government’s strategic advisory body on Aboriginal affairs, AACWA advises and collaborates to drive systemic reform. Our work is guided by a clear vision: Aboriginal people, families and communities are empowered to live good lives and choose their own futures from a secure foundation. This vision informs our focus on truth telling, structural reform and improved outcomes across Western Australia.

This third Implementation Plan demonstrates growing recognition that Closing the Gap outcomes will not be achieved through incremental change, but through transformation of mainstream systems. This was made clear by the 2024 Productivity Commission Review and the Aboriginal

and Torres Strait Islander led Review. It was also a strong theme and focus at the 2025 Culture at the Heart Forum. This Plan signals a response through strengthened partnerships, shared decision making and clearer accountability.

AACWA welcomes the investment to reshape government systems so that decisions about Aboriginal programs and services are informed by Aboriginal leadership. The commitment to establish an Alliance, in collaboration with WA Peak Partners, AHCWA and CASWA, is a significant step toward self-determination, shared accountability and collective impact.

We acknowledge the importance of complementary reforms, including building the capability of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, strengthening culturally safe data sharing, and advancing the WA Anti-Racism Project to address systemic racism as a barrier to equity.

AACWA supports this Implementation Plan and reiterates that Culture must remain at the heart of this work. Truth telling and acknowledgement of the ongoing impacts of colonisation are essential to long term change. Through strong governance, genuine partnership and accountability, this Plan provides a pathway to improved and equitable outcomes for Aboriginal people across Western Australia.

AACWA looks forward to continuing its role as advisor, advocate and partner as the Plan is implemented.



**Rani Randall**  
Co-Chair, AACWA



**Lancel Morich**  
Co-Chair, AACWA



# Message from the Aboriginal Health Council WA and the Council of Aboriginal Services WA

The Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA) and the Council of Aboriginal Services WA (CASWA) welcome the development of the WA Closing the Gap 2026–28 Implementation Plan at a critical point in reform. Recent reviews, including the Productivity Commission’s 2024 Review and the first Independent Aboriginal Led Review, have consistently found that progress has been too slow, fragmented, and disconnected from the lived experiences and priorities of Aboriginal people in Western Australia.

This Implementation Plan reflects a more realistic acknowledgement of the scale of change required. It includes reforms long advocated for by Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) including stronger and more enduring partnership arrangements, clearer accountability mechanisms, improved data governance and a shift from advisory processes toward genuine shared decision-making. Commitments such as the establishment of an Alliance, the development of Regional Implementation Plans, strengthened

central agency stewardship and investments in ACCO capability represent important steps forward. The challenge now will be to ensure these commitments are delivered with consistency, transparency and urgency.

The existence of a plan does not in itself constitute progress. The success of this Implementation Plan will ultimately depend on the actions, behaviours and leadership of government agencies over the next three years. Commitments must translate into practical mechanisms that embed shared decision-making, reform systems and ensure Aboriginal people determine priorities, design and oversight of actions intended to improve outcomes. Aboriginal organisations must not be expected to shoulder the burden of reform without the necessary and appropriate resourcing, support and respect.

Transforming government organisations, Priority Reform 3, remains one of the most significant barriers to meaningful change. Addressing systemic racism,

fragmented governance, weak accountability and inconsistent cultural capability across agencies will be critical to realising the ambitions of the National Agreement. Sustained leadership from central agencies and Ministers, alongside transparent and consistent accountability through the proposed Alliance and partnership arrangements, will be critical to ensuring reforms are implemented across the public sector.

Genuinely region led approaches are also essential. Western Australia’s regions are diverse, and Closing the Gap strategies must be shaped by local decision-making structures, regional ACCO leadership and community authority. The commitment to Regional Implementation Plans is welcomed, but the value of these plans will depend on whether agencies enable shared decision-making at the regional level, align funding, and strengthen local governance arrangements rather than replicating centralised, government driven processes.



Data reform remains another critical area for progress. Aboriginal communities and ACCOs must have access to the data that informs policy priorities and funding decisions. The Community Led Data Connection Project, led by CASWA in partnership with the Office of Digital Government, represents an important step forward. However, this initiative sits alongside a number of other promising community-led data initiatives across the sector that also represent important groundwork, but they must be complimented by sustained investment and support to realise their full potential. These efforts must be accompanied by broader reforms that improve data access, strengthen data and literacy, and embed Aboriginal Data Sovereignty across government systems.

Over the next three years, Closing the Gap must move from ad hoc engagement to a whole of government approach grounded in partnership, accountability and cultural authority. This requires full integration of Closing the Gap into Cabinet processes, budget decisions, agency planning and evaluation, supported by the establishment of the Alliance as the central mechanism to drive shared decision-making and accountability across government, so that every part of government understands and is accountable for delivering its responsibilities as a fundamental way of working.

AHCWA and CASWA will continue to advocate for Aboriginal people, communities and organisations across Western Australia, and will hold the WA Government accountable to the commitments outlined in this Plan. We remain ready to work in genuine partnership, recognising that delivering change that is measurable, meaningful and experienced by Aboriginal communities across the state requires shared responsibility and sustained commitment.

**Vicki O'Donnell OAM**  
Chairperson of Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia,  
Member Western Australia Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations

**Chris Bin Kali**  
Chairperson of the Council of Aboriginal Services WA



## Message from the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

The Closing the Gap 2026–28 Implementation Plan (Implementation Plan) reflects the Cook Labor Government’s commitment to long-term, structural change in partnership with Aboriginal people. While progress has been made under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement), it is clear that more needs to be done. Recent reviews, together with consistent advice from Aboriginal partners, have reinforced a continuing need to be strong and focused on the Priority Reforms as the foundation for lasting improvement across Western Australia.

Over the past 12 months, the case for change has been clearly reinforced. The 2024 Productivity Commission Review of the National Agreement (2024 Productivity Commission Review) and the first Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-Led Review of the National Agreement (Aboriginal-led Review) both confirmed that sustained

improvement depends on strengthened shared decision-making, accountability and genuine partnership. These findings align with long-standing feedback from Aboriginal partners about what is required to achieve meaningful progress.

This Implementation Plan has been developed in close collaboration with the Aboriginal Advisory Council of Western Australia and our Coalition of Peaks partners, the Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia and the Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia. Their leadership, expertise and continued advocacy have been essential in shaping an Implementation Plan that reflects Aboriginal priorities and strengthens the partnership approach at the centre of the National Agreement.

For the first time in Western Australia, more than 60 representatives from Aboriginal peak bodies, WA Government agencies and Aboriginal Advisory Groups came together through a

Key Stakeholder Workshop to jointly identify the focus areas and actions for this Implementation Plan. This work was supported by joint and individual meetings held throughout 2025, ensuring Aboriginal people and communities had a direct role in informing the Implementation Plan from development through to finalisation.

The Implementation Plan includes new investment to support the delivery of the Priority Reforms through targeted initiatives developed in direct response to the priorities of Aboriginal partners. These initiatives are designed to strengthen Aboriginal leadership in decision-making, support the growth of the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, and embed culturally secure, place-based approaches across government service systems.

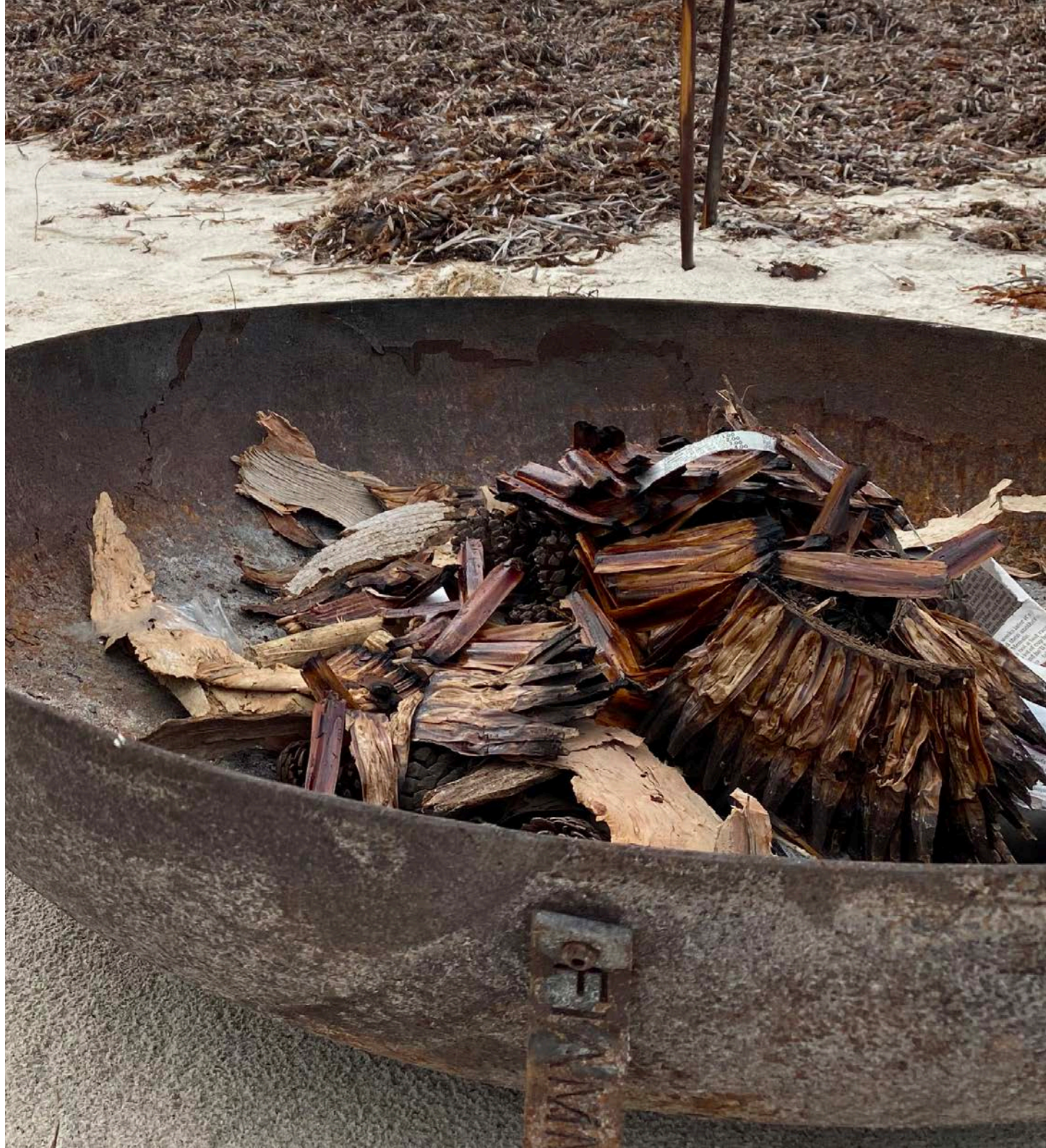


Through this Implementation Plan, the WA Government is reinforcing its commitment to the Joint Council's response to the 2024 Productivity Commission Review and confirming its commitment to the Joint Council response to the Aboriginal-Led Review. This reflects a clear focus on transparency, accountability and long-term transformation in the delivery of Closing the Gap.

As Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, I remain committed to working alongside Aboriginal people and communities to ensure the Closing the Gap agenda delivers meaningful and lasting change, and to improving outcomes for Aboriginal people across Western Australia.



**Hon Don Punch MLA**  
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs





## Introduction

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement), which came into effect in July 2020, established a significant shift in the way governments work with Aboriginal people and communities. This shift embeds the principles of genuine partnership and shared decision-making in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs for Aboriginal people, to overcome entrenched disadvantage and achieve life outcomes equal to those of all Australians.

**“When approached holistically, the Priority Reforms provide a roadmap for rebalancing power, embedding cultural authority and achieving long-term, community-led outcomes, which in turn, will ‘close the gap’.”**

*2025 Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review*

Central to this commitment are the four Priority Reform Areas (the Priority Reforms) which detail the structural reform needed to drive progress on the Socioeconomic Targets (the Targets) of the National Agreement and achieve meaningful change for Aboriginal people. The Priority Reforms are:

- » Priority Reform 1 – Formal partnerships and shared decision-making.
- » Priority Reform 2 – Building the community-controlled sector.
- » Priority Reform 3 – Transforming government organisations.
- » Priority Reform 4 – Shared access to data and information at a regional level.

The Productivity Commission 2024 Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the PC Review) highlighted that progress on embedding the Priority Reforms has been insufficient and that implementation must be more strategic, targeted and undertaken in genuine partnership with Aboriginal people. The WA Government has committed to the Joint Council's decision to implement 15 of the 16 recommendations of the PC Review.

The WA Closing the Gap 2026-28 Implementation Plan (the Plan) responds directly to those findings. The Plan sets out a whole-of-government approach to strengthened delivery of the Priority Reforms through targeted initiatives, developed with the Aboriginal Advisory Council of WA (AACWA), the Aboriginal Health Council of WA (AHCWA), the Council of Aboriginal Services WA (CASWA) and agency Aboriginal Advisory Groups (AAGs)/Aboriginal Advisory Bodies (AABs).

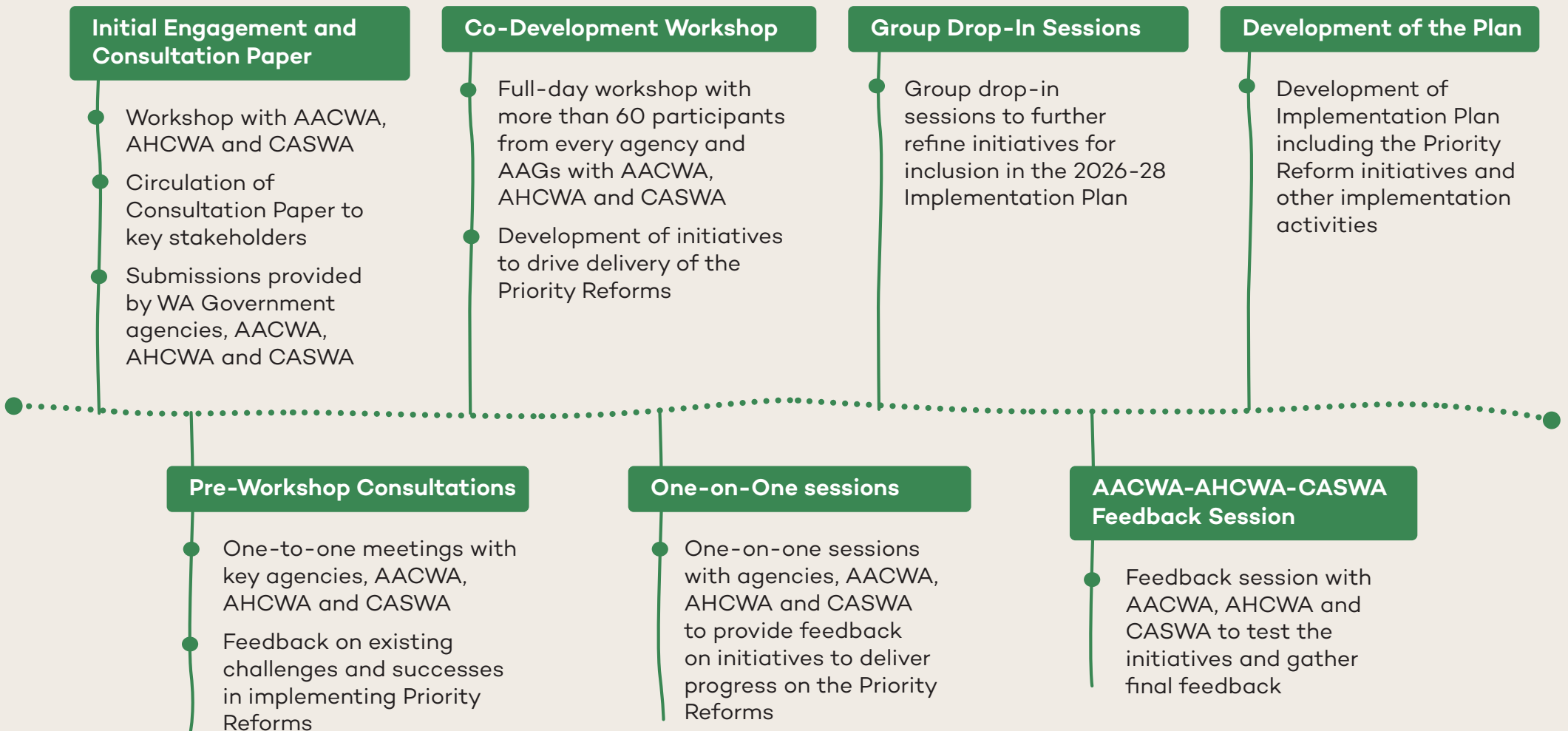
The Department of the Premier and Cabinet (DPC) will drive implementation of the Plan and will be supported by central agencies, the Department of Treasury and Finance (DTF) and the Public Sector Commission (PSC), to deliver the Plan's initiatives. These initiatives will be delivered through partnership and shared decision-making with AACWA, AHCWA and CASWA as well as other WA Government agencies as appropriate.

Consistent with the requirement under the National Agreement, DPC will publish a Closing the Gap Annual Report each year, which will report on the WA Government's progress against the initiatives in this Plan, as well as progress against the Priority Reforms and Targets of the National Agreement more broadly.



# Co-Development of the Plan

A high-level overview of the approach to the co-development of the Plan with WA Government agencies, AACWA, AHCWA, CASWA and AAGs is provided below.



## Our Vision

Western Australia has contributed positively to national performance on Closing the Gap outcomes, with improvements across ten of the 19 Targets. However, progress remains variable and the findings of both the PC Review and the Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-Led Review of the National Agreement (the Aboriginal-Led Review) reinforce what our Aboriginal partners have consistently told us that more strategic, accountable and partnership-driven implementation is required to drive genuine change.

...meaningful progress requires government to share power, listen deeply, act responsibly and invest in place-based approaches that honour community leadership...

This Plan responds directly to those findings. The WA Government's commitment to implementing the 15 PC Review recommendations endorsed by the Joint Council on Closing the Gap (Joint Council) strengthens the foundation for reform, with some recommendations being implemented through this Plan and others providing the basis or support for continued progress towards long term change. Alongside this, the introduction of the Targets in Focus initiative will enable a more rigorous, evidence-based approach to delivery, starting with early years, youth employment and education, housing, essential services and family safety. Whilst the Targets in Focus initiative represents an increased focus on certain Targets, the WA Government remains committed to the delivery of all 19 Targets in the National Agreement. These areas reflect the priorities of Aboriginal people and will provide a practical model to accelerate progress.

At the same time, the WA Government remains focused on driving delivery in the broader priority areas of jobs, health, housing, safe and inclusive communities, and improving infrastructure and services in regional centres, which are areas central to the social determinants of Closing the Gap. Good-practice examples already exist across the public sector, and this Plan seeks to better highlight, connect and build on these examples to strengthen place-based responses.





Our vision for the Plan is to shift Closing the Gap from a set of commitments to a whole-of-government way of working. Achieving this requires sustained structural change that empowers Aboriginal people, strengthens the Aboriginal Community-Controlled sector and reshapes government systems so that decisions, services and investment are informed by Aboriginal leadership and local priorities. The WA Government is proud to present the Plan for its delivery with a key focus on:

- » Embedding Closing the Gap as a key pillar of the WA Government's delivery agenda, strengthening accountability and independent oversight by integrating Closing the Gap into Cabinet and Budget processes, agency planning and public reporting.
- » Strengthening genuine partnership-making in the WA Government's ways of working, ensuring Aboriginal people and organisations have meaningful influence over decisions that affect their communities. This work will continue to be driven by the Aboriginal Affairs Coordinating Committee (AACC) as the senior cross-government coordinating body.
- » Driving meaningful change and delivery against the Priority Reforms, lifting cultural capability, accountability and cross-agency coordination so that systems, structures and behaviours support better outcomes.
- » Understanding WA's unique regional story through place-based responses, recognising that WA's regions, communities and cultures are diverse and that place-based solutions deliver the most enduring change.

This vision reflects what Aboriginal people have consistently told us – that meaningful progress requires government to share power, listen deeply, act responsibly and invest in place-based approaches that honour community leadership. Through this Plan, we commit to building the foundations, partnerships and accountability required to drive improvement in progress to achieve the Priority Reforms and Targets.

**Our vision for the Plan is to shift Closing the Gap from a set of commitments to a whole-of-government way of working.**

# Priority Reform 1 – Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision-Making

**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 where Aboriginal people have chosen their own representatives.

## Areas for Change

As this Plan was developed, we heard from our Aboriginal partners that it is essential that formal partnerships and shared decision-making with the WA Government are prioritised over the lifetime of this Plan. Specifically, we heard:

- » Formal partnerships prioritising community leadership over government control are needed, with community representatives able to define and participate in accountability and co-design the terms of reference.
- » A shift is needed from advisory roles to shared decision-making, embedding partnerships into government frameworks and ensuring measurable outcomes.
- » Co-design processes with clear limitations and transparent expectations are required, ensuring community determines how and when to participate.
- » Building capacity for advisory bodies by providing funding and resources would allow for genuine involvement in decision-making.

These principles have informed the new investment initiatives and supporting actions which will be delivered for Priority Reform 1 under this Plan.



## New Investments

### Establishment of an Alliance

The WA Government will invest \$1 million to fund the formal establishment of an Alliance between AACWA, AHCWA and CASWA. Bringing to life an act of self-determination by the three parties, an Alliance will be established in 2026 to increase accountability and transparency of the WA Government's progress to implement Closing the Gap outcomes.

Once established, the Alliance will work with the WA Government to develop an initial workplan to determine its priorities over the duration of the Plan. The Alliance will play a key role in driving the WA Government's progress to deliver Priority Reform 3 (transforming government organisations), with a focus on strengthening accountability for Aboriginal outcomes across WA Government agencies. Further information is provided in the Priority Reform 3 section.

Alliance members will be allocated resources to support participation in the Alliance and broader Closing the Gap governance, as well as funding for training and development to enable strengthened participation and to seek independent advice to inform options for increasing transparency and accountability.



### Regional Implementation Plans

The WA Government will invest \$2 million to support the development of Closing the Gap Regional Implementation Plans across WA's regions. These plans will provide a place-based mechanism for progressing the Priority Reforms and relevant Targets, developed in genuine partnership with local Aboriginal communities.

Under this initiative, each region will be supported to develop a Regional Implementation Plan, once a place-based project proposal has been submitted, with governance and decision making determined locally by Aboriginal people. DPC will support the delivery of Regional Implementation Plans through the development of supporting tools and frameworks that will be taken to the Alliance for oversight and approval.



## Other Initiatives

### AHCWA-CASWA-WA Government Partnership Agreement

The WA Government is committed to entering into a formal Partnership Agreement with AHCWA and CASWA following the commencement of this Plan. This Partnership Agreement will set the relational foundations for how the WA Government and Aboriginal partners will engage in shared decision-making through defined, and agreed upon, partnership principles.

As the Partnership Agreement is co-designed by all parties, it will focus on defining how shared decision-making will function, embedding cultural safety and authority, ensuring diverse representation and supporting transparency and reciprocal accountability.


### Formalising Partnerships

Alongside the formal Partnership Agreement, the Alliance will work with the WA Government to scope criteria to formally define partnerships and the principles that underpin partnerships between Aboriginal communities and organisations and the WA Government. Determining agreed shared decision-making arrangements between the WA Government and Aboriginal people ensures consistency in establishing partnerships and transparency about who makes decisions, how decisions are made and what those decisions are about. This could also include addressing minimum requirements for shared decision-making with Aboriginal people in the development and implementation of strategies, policies, programs and practice.

### East Kimberley Place-Based Partnership

The WA Government is committed to implementation of the East Kimberley Place-Based Partnership under the National Agreement. In November 2025, the WA Government endorsed the Partnership Agreement collaboratively developed between Binarri-binyja yarrowoo (BBY) Aboriginal Corporation and government partners.

Following the signing of the Partnership Agreement, the Partnership Table will develop an Action Plan drawing on the priorities from the Regional Development Agenda for Growing Up Strong Kids. To support the Partnership Table's work, the WA Government has allocated \$1.3 million over three years towards early years initiatives in the future Action Plan.



## Priority Reform 2 – Building the Community-Controlled Sector

**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.

### Areas for Change

AACWA, AHCWA and CASWA have long been advocating for the sustainable development of the ACCO sector through service transition and long-term, sustainable funding. These concerns were reflected in the development of the Plan, with specific feedback reflecting:

- » Shifting commissioning and service delivery to ACCOs, prioritising them over mainstream services, is needed along with ensuring capacity to tender for services.
- » A shift to long-term commissioning to ACCOs will empower communities and enables entities to employ and retain specialists. A focus on Aboriginal communities is needed in evaluation processes.
- » Government spending often does not reflect Aboriginal community priorities; allocation based on population fails to consider service delivery costs in remote and rural areas. Accountability can be lacking with funds not always reaching communities.

The feedback made it clear that service transition is not enough and that long-term, sustainable commissioning to ACCOs that reflects the unique circumstances of providing place-based services to Aboriginal people in WA's unique regions is required moving forward.



## New Investments

### ACCO Transition Pipeline

The WA Government will invest \$5.8 million to establish an ACCO Transition Pipeline (the Pipeline). The Pipeline will consist of two phases:

- i. Mapping current service contracts and assessing ACCO market readiness to develop a transition blueprint for efficient, sustainable service delivery.
- ii. Pilot an ACCO Strengthening Program to build capability for long-term service delivery in human service sectors, focussing on practical elements such as service design and pricing, strategic planning, workforce development, compliance and partnership development.

Under the ACCO Transition Pipeline, over \$3.3 million will be dedicated to the ACCO Strengthening Program and will be made available from 2027 following the completion of the first phase of the project. The WA Government is also investing in CASWA to support their participation in the mapping exercise and to identify service requirements. The ACCO Strengthening Program will be designed with input from the Alliance.

The ACCO Transition Pipeline will leverage off other work including the Aboriginal Expenditure Review, State Commissioning Strategy and the Aboriginal Business Capacity Building Program to ensure ACCOs are prepared to tender for and manage sustainable contracts.

## Other Initiatives

### National Skills Agreement

Under the National Skills Agreement, the WA and Commonwealth Governments are jointly investing \$43.9 million to expand investment in partnership with the Aboriginal Community-Controlled training sector in Western Australia.

Through this investment, AHCWA and CASWA, in partnership and representing the broader Aboriginal Community-Controlled Registered Training Organisation sector, will grow in 2026 to deliver new workforce development and training functions, adding new positions and key work in a first of its kind agreement with the WA Government to develop skilled sector workforces and increase capacity for the Western Australian Aboriginal Community-Controlled training sector.

### CASWA Sustainability

The WA Government is also investing over \$8 million into CASWA to sustainably fund operational requirements over the duration of this Plan and beyond. Under this investment, CASWA will be funded to meet its growing roles and responsibilities to support the implementation of the National Agreement.

Since its establishment, CASWA has been an integral partner to the WA Government in the implementation of the National Agreement and in advocating for improved outcomes for Aboriginal communities and organisations across WA. This new funding will allow CASWA to consolidate its existing functions and build its capacity to support ACCOs across WA.

The WA Government looks forward to working with CASWA as it seeks to grow its membership base and establish new functions, including improved data and ACCO directory capabilities.



# Priority Reform 3 – Transforming Government Organisations

**Outcome:** Governments, their organisations and 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 the proportion of Aboriginal people who have experiences of racism.

## Areas for Change

During the development of the Plan, stakeholders were consistent that Priority Reform 3 remains the biggest challenge in delivering Closing the Gap. Progress to transform government organisations has been too slow, and Aboriginal partners have not been brought on this journey. Our partners, with input from WA Government agencies, provided the following solutions to drive change against Priority Reform 3:

- » Implement a whole-of-government project to address racism. Racism is systemic; solutions require more than cultural awareness training, including structural reforms.
- » Establish independent, Aboriginal-led mechanisms for auditing, reviewing and reporting on progress. External accountability is crucial; current structures lack impact without independent oversight.
- » Develop cross-government communication to raise awareness of Closing the Gap and its meaning for all Public Sector staff and Aboriginal communities. Awareness is uneven; campaigns can clarify objectives and drive community-level change.
- » Employ, retain and promote Aboriginal staff, especially in middle management and frontline roles. Genuine inclusion addresses workforce shortages and supports empowerment.
- » Improve central agency stewardship of the National Agreement to drive whole-of-government change.

Stakeholders have not only identified Priority Reform 3 as requiring the most change – they have provided tangible examples of actions that can be taken to drive change on this Priority Reform.

## New Investments

### Alliance-Led Accountability

Once established, the Alliance will lead an oversight workplan for the duration of this Plan to support delivery of Priority Reform Three. The Alliance will provide oversight of government progress, including strengthened accountability for Aboriginal outcomes and implementation of key policy reforms such as the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy (AES) and the ACCO Strategy. The Alliance will also have an opportunity to brief Cabinet on an annual basis.

Key functions may include formal advice and briefings, public reporting and insights and undertaking system reform analysis. Moving forward, the Alliance will also provide advice to the WA Government on proposals for new sector-specific Aboriginal peak bodies and their potential establishment.

Aboriginal partners have identified the need for clearer performance measurements and Aboriginal-led evaluation principles. Over the life of the Plan, the WA Government will work with the Alliance to define these measurements and embed Aboriginal-led evaluation approaches into the Priority Reforms.

### Western Australian Anti-Racism Project

The WA Government will invest \$500,000 to undertake a WA Anti-Racism Project in partnership with the Alliance, AAGs/AABs and WA Government agencies. Under this initiative, Reconciliation WA will commence the planning of this Project, including initial engagement with key stakeholders to support project scoping. This work will inform a proposal to be taken to the Alliance and the AACC for endorsement.

In 2025, the WA Department of Health partnered with Kurongkurl Katitjin to collaborate and develop an Aboriginal Anti-Racism Toolkit, the first of its kind in WA. A forum was held in November 2025 to guide the development of anti-racism strategies and a conference is planned for 2026 to promote the key anti-racism initiatives. The collaboration and Aboriginal Anti-Racism Toolkit will provide valuable learnings to inform the WA Anti-Racism Project.





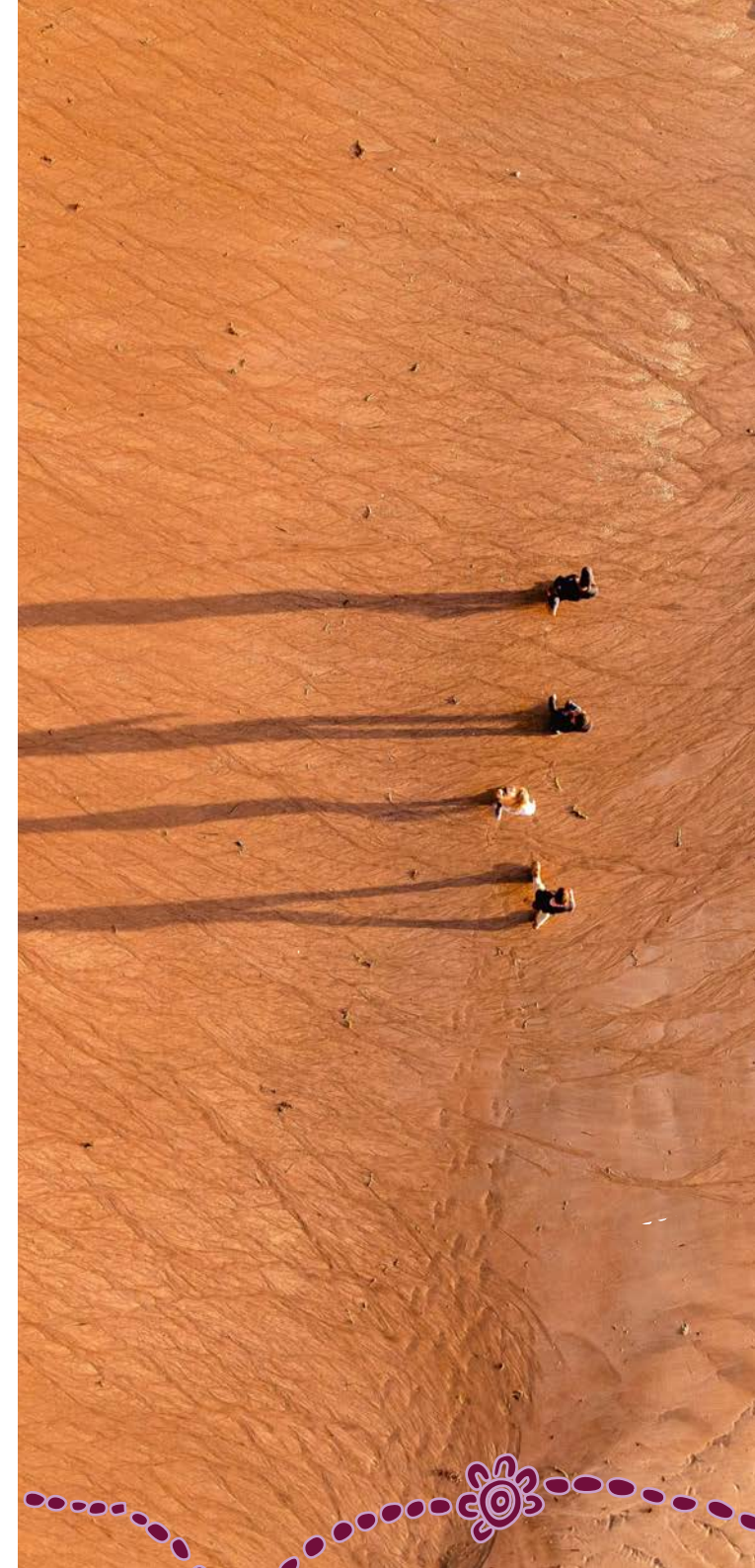
## Other Initiatives

### Aboriginal Expenditure Review and Budget Reform

The Aboriginal Expenditure Review (AER) continues to be a central mechanism for improving transparency, accountability and strategic alignment of the WA Government's investment in Closing the Gap outcomes. The most recent AER, released in December 2025, reflects a significant increase in government expenditure on programs and services specially for, or predominantly used by Aboriginal people and communities. The recent AER found that Aboriginal expenditure increased by 22.8% between 2021-22 and 2022-23 to a total of \$759.4 million and is budgeted to increase by a further 34.4% in 2023-24.

To ensure this rising investment leads to measurable improvements, the WA Government will strengthen future

AERs by improving the level and quality of detail in AER reporting data and the understanding of how investment supports Aboriginal-led, place-based outcomes. Agencies will be expected to use AER insights to inform program design, investment decisions and service delivery improvements. Complementing this, the WA Government is committed to implementing Essential Action 3.3 of the PC Review (to review and update Cabinet and Budget processes so that they explicitly promote, support and encourage the Priority Reforms). DTF, in partnership with DPC, is developing options to strengthen the State Budget process to support delivery of Closing the Gap outcomes, particularly against the Priority Reforms. This will also be achieved through the strengthening of the relationship between DTF and Aboriginal peak body partners.





## Central Agency Stewardship

Stronger central agency stewardship is critical to progressing the Priority Reforms and responding to feedback from stakeholders and the findings of the PC Review, which highlighted the need for clearer leadership and coordination across government. DPC, supported by DTF and PSC, will strengthen whole of government implementation of Closing the Gap by developing strategic guidance for public sector staff and agencies and establishing a Community of Practice to support information sharing and improve communication across the public sector. A Communications Strategy will support this work to embed expectations of WA Government agencies across the whole public sector.

Central agencies will also embed Closing the Gap into core government systems. Consistent with PC Review Essential Action 3.3, DPC and DTF are developing strengthened Cabinet and Budget processes so that proposals demonstrate genuine partnership, alignment with the Priority Reforms and delivery of Closing the Gap outcomes.

This work is closely linked to the Targets in Focus initiative, which introduces a more rigorous, evidence based approach to delivery across early years, youth employment and education, housing, essential services and family safety Targets. These areas reflect Aboriginal priorities and will guide cross government effort over the next three years. Work to date has

included identifying the first set of focus areas, improving data capability and establishing mechanisms for more coordinated delivery. Next steps will include embedding Targets in Focus into agency planning, monitoring and reporting processes, ensuring central agencies drive consistent, place-based and outcomes-focused implementation across all regions.

Through strengthened guidance, improved systems and coordinated oversight of both the PC Review recommendations and Targets in Focus, central agencies will support a more coherent, accountable and effective whole-of-government approach to Closing the Gap.



## DWER's Caring for Country: 10 Year Transformation Strategy

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) is developing the Caring for Country: 10 Year Transformation Strategy (the Transformation Strategy) to embed Aboriginal empowerment and systemic reform into DWER's operations. The Transformation Strategy will guide long-term, transformative change by strengthening cultural capability and integrating Aboriginal worldviews and knowledge systems into core business.

The Transformation Strategy will align DWER's systems, services and policies with the National Agreement and the AES, recognising the unique value Aboriginal people bring to the management, protection and stewardship of WA's water resources and environment. This work will underpin DWER's strategic directions and strengthen accountability by ensuring Aboriginal voices inform and guide DWER's transformation.

DWER is a future-focused organisation with responsibility to care for Country, climate and community. The Transformation Strategy will strengthen collaboration with Aboriginal people and embed Aboriginal worldviews into water and environmental management. Priority Reform 3 will be central to the Transformation Strategy as the critical enabler to transforming DWER's systems and services to ensure they are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal people and communities.



## Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy

Building on the Culture at the Heart Forum in June 2025, which brought together around 40 representatives from AACWA, AHCWA, CASWA and agency AAGs/AABs, the WA Government will work with the Alliance to scope options to elevate the AES into ways of working across the whole of government, including by further embedding the AES' four key elements (Culture at the Heart, Walking Together, Building Aboriginal Empowerment into How We Work and Investing in Foundations and Futures) across WA Government agencies.



# Priority Reform 4 – Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level

**Outcome:** 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.

**Target:** Increase the number of regional data projects to support Aboriginal communities to make decisions about Closing the Gap and their development.

## Areas for Change

The need to improve access to Aboriginal data and the transfer of this data to Aboriginal communities and organisations was made clear during the development of the Plan. However, stakeholders made clear that change needs to go beyond this – Aboriginal communities and organisations need to be better supported to access, analyse, control and utilise data to drive better outcomes for Aboriginal people. Specifically:

- » Whilst data sharing between WA Government and ACCOs has improved, more work is needed to foster a culture of data sharing between all WA Government agencies and ACCOs.
- » Building mechanisms to share and understand data for analysis and storytelling is needed, along with establishing community ownership and understanding of data-use.
- » Community should be able to understand and own their data, with government supporting regional, place-based approaches to data collection and sharing.
- » Government is not effective enough at using data for narrative setting and encouraging action.

To drive progress against Priority Reform 4, it is clear change needs to capture more than simply transferring data to Aboriginal communities and organisations. To ensure a holistic approach to Priority Reform 4, a new Data Connection Project will be established.



## New Investments

### Community-Led Data Connection Project

The WA Government is investing \$800,000 to establish a Community-Led Data Connection Project in partnership between the Office of Digital Government and CASWA. This Project will provide a culturally responsive single point of contact interface for Aboriginal communities and organisations in WA to request and access government-held data.

The Community-Led Data Connection Project will build on the Office of Digital Government's previous work with the Pilbara Aboriginal Health Alliance on the 'Our Story, Our Way' Project. This will include a focus on:

- » Supporting ACCOs to attain additional data literacy and analytics support to formulate data requests.
- » Utilising the range of other Commonwealth and non-government data sources to attain a comprehensive regional-level picture of progress against all Closing the Gap Targets.
- » Addressing privacy and cultural barriers so that government custodians can release data at the regional level.

Through the Community-Led Data Connection Project, CASWA and the Office of Digital Government will build a partnership to inform the development of culturally appropriate and safe data sharing practices with Aboriginal communities for the WA Public Sector. This Project will provide a culturally responsive single point of contact interface (placed within CASWA's new data office) for Aboriginal communities and organisations in WA to request and access government-held data.



## Other Initiatives

### Aboriginal Data Governance

Health's Aboriginal Data Governance Policy was developed with advice and guidance from the Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector. Launched in June 2025, this Policy aims to ensure the WA health system recognises the rights of Aboriginal people in WA to govern the collection, ownership and use of data about their people and communities.

Throughout the duration of this Plan, the WA Government will work with the Alliance to explore further work to support strong Aboriginal Data Governance across the WA Public Sector, building on the work Department of Health and other WA Government agencies have done to date. Over the course of the Plan, the WA Government is committed to working with the Alliance to explore opportunities to drive further progress on Priority Reform 4.

### Sharing Government-Held Information Under the Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024

The Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Act 2024 (PRIS Act) aims to protect the privacy of personal information held by the WA Government and facilitate responsible sharing of government information for permitted purposes. Under the PRIS Act, ACCOs can request access to government information to support research with a clear public benefit.

In collaboration with Aboriginal stakeholder groups, DPC is developing resources to strengthen data capability and empower ACCOs to find and request data under the PRIS Act.

### Aboriginal Population Project

The Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage is developing detailed Aboriginal population estimates and medium-term forecasts for Western Australia and its sub-state regions by Indigenous status, age and sex.

This work supports Priority Reform 4 by improving shared access to high quality regional demographic information using Australian Bureau of Statistics data and contemporary demographic methods.

The resulting estimates and forecasts will assist government agencies in planning services and infrastructure, evaluating outcomes and measuring progress against Closing the Gap Targets.

## Early Years Community Data Project

Under the East Kimberley Place-Based Partnership, BBY Aboriginal Corporation is leading the Early Years Community Data Project to improve access to locally relevant data, develop shared measurement practices and build capability to use locally relevant data and information on early years.

To support this Project, a Data Working Group comprising of representatives from BBY Aboriginal Corporation, the WA Government and the Commonwealth Government was established, with its first meeting held in October 2025. Throughout the duration of this Plan, these stakeholders will work closely to understand the data needs to inform the Data Working Group.



# Response to the Aboriginal-Led Review

Under Clause 125 of the National Agreement, an independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led review of the National Agreement is to be carried out within 12 months of a Productivity Commission review. Following the first PC Review, the first Aboriginal-led Review was released in June 2025. The WA Government acknowledges this significant milestone.

Following the release of the Aboriginal-led Review, the Coalition of Peaks led the development of a response to be endorsed by the Joint Council. Throughout the second half of 2025, government and non-government stakeholders across Australia worked together through the national Closing the Gap governance to develop a Joint Council response to the Aboriginal-led Review, which was provided to the Joint Council in November 2025 for in principle support.

## The Partnership Actions

The Joint Council response to the Aboriginal-led Review consists of 18 Partnership Actions to be implemented by a range of stakeholders. The Partnership Actions cover the key themes of the Aboriginal-led Review, including improving communications and governance, enhancing transparency, developing best-practice models and growth targets and establishing new mechanisms to drive delivery.

Throughout the second half of 2025, DPC worked with AHCWA, CASWA and the relevant WA Government agencies to determine the WA position on the Joint Council's response to the Aboriginal-led Review.

Through this Plan, the WA Government is endorsing the Joint Council's response to the Aboriginal-led Review and supporting or supporting in-principle all 18 of the Partnership Actions. There are six Partnership Actions that will

require a national response through Joint Council. Partnership Action 8 is directed to the Australian Local Government Association, and the remaining 11 Partnership Actions will require implementation at a jurisdictional level, which the WA Government will action in partnership with AHCWA and CASWA.

## Next Steps

DPC will work with the Alliance, once established, and relevant WA Government agencies to develop a workplan to commence implementing the Partnership Actions relevant to State and Territory Governments. Regular reporting will be provided to the AACC and the Alliance to ensure progress and accountability on the implementation of the Partnership Actions. With these actions being captured under this Plan, future Closing the Gap Annual Reports will report on the progress to implement the Partnership Actions.

