

OVERARCHING BILATERAL INDIGENOUS PLAN  
BETWEEN THE  
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA  
AND THE  
NORTHERN TERRITORY OF AUSTRALIA  
TO CLOSE THE GAP IN INDIGENOUS  
DISADVANTAGE

2010 - 2015

## A New Partnership to Close the Gap in Indigenous Disadvantage

### Preliminaries

1. The Commonwealth of Australia and the Northern Territory of Australia (the Governments) are committed to Closing the Gap in disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the Northern Territory.
2. In 2005, the Governments signed the first Overarching Bilateral Agreement on Indigenous Affairs. This was the first new bilateral Agreement to come out of the June 2004 Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) commitment to improve services to Indigenous Australians. The Overarching Bilateral Agreement provided a framework for the Governments to work together in a spirit of close cooperation to take action and address disadvantage among Indigenous people in the Northern Territory.
3. The Governments recognise the foundations laid by the work achieved during the period of the 2005-2010 Overarching Bilateral Agreement, including those under the auspices of the Northern Territory Emergency Response (now Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement) and Indigenous policy responses by the Northern Territory Government, including *Closing the Gap: A Generational Plan of Action* and currently, *A Working Future*.
4. *A Working Future* is the Northern Territory Government's plan for improving the lives of remote Territorians. *A Working Future* is a key element of Territory 2030, the Northern Territory Government's road map for the future of the Territory, and will strengthen services to remote communities, outstations and homelands through a hub and spoke service delivery model. All parts of *A Working Future* (Territory Growth Towns; outstations and homelands; remote service delivery; employment and economic development; remote transport strategy; and targets and evaluation) are critical for effective and efficient delivery of government services to remote areas of the Territory.
5. In December 2007, COAG agreed to a new partnership between governments to work with Indigenous communities to achieve the target of Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage, which led to the signing of the National Indigenous Reform Agreement in November 2008. Accordingly, the Governments have agreed to replace the Overarching Bilateral Agreement on Indigenous Affairs with the Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plan (OBIP) to provide a platform for implementing a new partnership between the Governments in the Northern Territory. This Plan builds on and includes components from the previous Overarching Bilateral Agreement.

### Indigenous Context in the Northern Territory

6. The Governments acknowledge that:
  - At an estimated 32 per cent of the population, the Northern Territory has the highest proportion of Indigenous people of all Australian States and Territories,<sup>1</sup> and this is expected to increase in the future;<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007), catalogue no. 4705.0 - Population Distribution, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Northern Territory Treasury (2009), *Northern Territory Population Projections*.

- More than 45 per cent of the Northern Territory's Indigenous population is aged 19 years or under compared to 26 per cent of the non-Indigenous population.<sup>3</sup> This population profile reflects significantly higher fertility and mortality rates in the Indigenous population;<sup>4</sup>
  - Aboriginal land comprises 45 per cent of the Northern Territory, and 80 per cent of coastline. Seventy per cent of Indigenous Territorians live on Aboriginal titled land;<sup>5</sup>
  - The Northern Territory is generally sparsely settled, but highly urbanised with more than half of the total population residing in the Darwin Region,<sup>6</sup> however, the majority of the Northern Territory's total Indigenous population lives outside of the Darwin Region;<sup>7</sup> and
  - Over 59 per cent of the Northern Territory's Indigenous population speak at least one Indigenous language at home.<sup>8</sup>
7. The Governments acknowledge that the size and complexity of the task required to 'close the gap' in disadvantage between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians will require concerted and sustained effort. This is particularly the case given the high levels of need that currently exist in the Northern Territory.
8. The Governments are committed to working together and in partnership with Indigenous people and communities in order to take action to strengthen cultural identity and wellbeing and address entrenched levels of disadvantage.

## Objective

9. This Plan outlines the principles and priority areas that will integrate and coordinate the Northern Territory based efforts of the Australian and Northern Territory Governments to 'close the gap' in Indigenous disadvantage for Territorians.
10. The span of required work to 'close the gap' in the Northern Territory reaches throughout the Governments' policy and services provision. This Plan consolidates information about key commitments, recognising that coordination and integration are essential to achieving agreed outcomes for Indigenous Territorians.
11. Through this Plan, the Governments will work cooperatively and in good faith to:
- Enhance joint engagement arrangements with Indigenous people and other key stakeholders across the Northern Territory;
  - Undertake joint approaches to problem solving;
  - Streamline joint planning and coordination arrangements to ensure a comprehensive and integrated approach; and
  - Identify opportunities for ongoing joint work beyond, or complementary to, current Agreements.

---

<sup>3</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008), catalogue no. 4713.7.55.001 - Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Northern Territory, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> Northern Territory Treasury (2009), *Northern Territory Population Projections*.

<sup>5</sup> unpublished estimate, NT Department of Lands and Planning, 2010,

<sup>6</sup> Northern Territory Treasury (2009), *Northern Territory Population Projections*.

<sup>7</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008), catalogue no. 3238.0.55.001 - Experimental Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Jun 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008), catalogue no. 4713.7.55.001 - Population Characteristics, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Northern Territory, 2006.

## COAG Targets and Building Blocks

12. The partnership agreed to by COAG in 2007 includes six ambitious targets for reducing Indigenous disadvantage:
  - Close the life expectancy gap within a generation;
  - Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade;
  - Ensure all four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years;
  - Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievements within a decade;
  - At least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020; and
  - Halve the gap in employment outcomes within a decade.
  
13. COAG recognises that overcoming Indigenous disadvantage will require a long term, generational commitment with major effort directed across a range of strategic platforms or 'Building Blocks'. The Building Blocks endorsed by COAG underpin the reforms that will be implemented to achieve the six specific targets aimed at Closing the Gap. The Building Blocks are:
  - Early Childhood;
  - Schooling;
  - Health;
  - Economic Participation;
  - Healthy Homes;
  - Safe Communities; and
  - Governance and Leadership.
  
14. In making this Plan, the Governments have regard to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) which captures the overarching objectives, outcomes, outputs, performance measures and benchmarks that all governments have committed to achieving through the National Partnership Agreements (NPA) and National Agreements (NA).
  
15. The Governments have particular regard to the *Service Delivery Principles for Programs and Services for Indigenous Australians* and agree to follow the *National Investment Principles in Remote Locations* and the *Principles Taken into Account in Deciding Sequencing* (Schedules D and E to the NIRA and Schedule B to the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery, respectively). The Service Delivery Principles are:
  - *Priority principle*: Programs and services should contribute to Closing the Gap by meeting the targets endorsed by COAG while being appropriate to local community needs.
  - *Indigenous engagement principle*: Engagement with Indigenous men, women and children and communities should be central to the design and delivery of programs and services.
  - *Sustainability principle*: Programs and services should be directed and resourced over an adequate period of time to meet the COAG targets.
  - *Access Principle*: Programs and services should be physically and culturally accessible to Indigenous people recognising the diversity of urban, regional and remote needs.
  - *Integration principle*: There should be collaboration between and within Governments at all levels and their agencies to effectively coordinate programs and services.

- *Accountability principle:* Programs and services should have regular and transparent performance monitoring, review and evaluation.

## Schedules

16. The Schedules to this Plan are in two parts. They outline where significant joint effort will be required to effect meaningful change to achieve the Closing the Gap targets.
17. Part one contains Schedules with particular relevance to the Northern Territory context and which underpin joint work across a range of areas. They include:
  - 1.1 Remote Service Delivery NPA
  - 1.2 Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory NPA
  - 1.3 National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy (NIRA)
  - 1.4 Agreed Data Quality Improvements (NIRA)
  - 1.5 Healthy Country, Healthy People<sup>9</sup>
  - 1.6 Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Agreement
  - 1.7 Indigenous Arts and Culture
18. Part two contains Schedules that relate to each of the seven COAG Building Blocks mentioned in Clause 12 above (Schedules 2.1-2.7). The purpose of these Schedules is to consolidate joint activity in each of the Building Block areas, including existing COAG Agreements and Strategies.
19. The Governments will work in partnership to:
  - Align existing Northern Territory Government and Australian Government Indigenous initiatives;
  - Align the reporting requirements associated with these activities;
  - Engage in joint strategic policy development and planning processes for future activity in the Northern Territory;
  - Develop and share evidence and undertake joint planning and implementation of evaluations; and
  - Make results of evaluations publicly available via the Closing the Gap Clearinghouse in order to build a cumulative body of evidence to inform and improve policy and service delivery for Indigenous Australians.
20. Activities that contribute to the objectives of this Plan are set out in the Schedules, or may be set out in additions to the Schedules, additional Schedules or other documents as appropriate. The Governments agree that if additional National Partnership Agreements, National Agreements, Strategies and Frameworks are adopted by COAG that have particular relevance to the Closing the Gap targets, they will be incorporated into the Schedules where appropriate.

## Arrangements for Indigenous consultation and representation

21. The Governments will work with Indigenous people to determine arrangements for Indigenous consultations and representation at the regional or local level. The parties will be guided by:

---

<sup>9</sup> Schedule 1.5 of this Plan replaces Schedule 2.5 of the previous *Overarching Agreement on Indigenous Affairs between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Northern Territory of Australia 2005-2010*.

- Northern Territory and national advisory groups and representative bodies – in particular, the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples and the Northern Territory Government’s Indigenous Affairs Advisory Council;
- Land Councils (Northern Land Council, Central Land Council, Tiwi Land Council and Anindilyakwa Land Council);
- Indigenous advisory groups – sector specific;
- Indigenous expert organisations on specific topics;
- Informal or ongoing relationships; and
- Implementation Plans of the National Partnership Agreements listed in the Schedules.

### **Joint Machinery**

22. The Governments will establish an Overarching Bilateral Indigenous Plan Governance Committee to oversee the effectiveness of this Plan. The OBIP Governance Committee will comprise the Northern Territory State Manager of the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA) and the Chief Executive of the Northern Territory Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services (DHLGRS). The OBIP Governance Committee will seek input from other relevant agencies, and invite them to participate in meetings as required.
23. The OBIP Governance Committee will meet within one month of this Plan being agreed to determine its Terms of Reference and working arrangements. The OBIP Governance Committee will be jointly supported by the Office of Indigenous Policy, DHLGRS and the FaHCSIA Northern Territory State Office.
24. The OBIP Governance Committee will meet quarterly, and draw on existing governance and reporting mechanisms, to:
  - Provide strategic leadership for, and oversee effectiveness of, the Plan to ensure the Governments are working towards their mutual goals;
  - Ensure a cohesive and integrated approach to meeting the Closing the Gap targets is applied, including simplifying and streamlining joint arrangements where possible;
  - Oversee arrangements for Indigenous consultation and representation;
  - Facilitate joint Ministerial oversight including, as appropriate, meetings between relevant Australian and Northern Territory Government Ministers;
  - Identify priorities for joint action to consider through appropriate government mechanisms; and
  - Identify and seek to address barriers to the achievement of the objectives of this Plan.

### **Term of Plan**

25. The term of this Plan will be for five years with an option to renew. It will be jointly reviewed after five years and can be amended at any time by agreement in writing between the Governments.

**Schedule 1.1**  
**REMOTE SERVICE DELIVERY**  
**NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

The Indigenous specific [Remote Service Delivery National Partnership Agreement](#) (NPA) aims to establish effective service delivery models to enable remote Indigenous communities in priority locations to receive and actively participate in government services at a level broadly comparable with that in non-Indigenous communities of similar size, location and need elsewhere in Australia.

Commencing in the fifteen priority locations of Angurugu, Galiwin'ku, Gapuwiyak, Gunbalanya, Hermannsburg, Lajamanu, Maningrida, Milingimbi, Nguiu, Ngukurr, Numbulwar, Umbakumba, Wadeye, Yirrkala and Yuendumu, the Remote Service Delivery NPA establishes the framework and principles for implementing the National Indigenous Reform Agreement and relevant National Partnership Agreements and National Agreements in these communities.

The Governments note the Northern Territory Government's *A Working Future* policy, which provides a long term vision and framework for remote towns in the Northern Territory. The implementation of the *A Working Future* policy and the Remote Service Delivery NPA will be complementary.

The Remote Service Delivery framework, as outlined in the NPA and the Bilateral Implementation Plan for Remote Service Delivery between the Australian and Northern Territory Governments, emphasises:

- Improving access to culturally inclusive services;
- Increasing the range and standards of services;
- Building strong governance and leadership;
- Simplifying access and co-ordination between governments and communities;
- Increasing economic and social participation; and
- Promoting personal responsibility and engagement.

### **Governance and Reporting**

A Board of Management has been established to oversee the Remote Service Delivery NPA. Membership of the Board of Management includes senior representatives of key Australian Government and Northern Territory Government agencies and Local Government. The Australian Government Coordinator-General for Remote Indigenous Services and the Northern Territory Government Coordinator-General for Remote Services may attend meetings of the Board of Management.

The Board of Management will operate and report in accordance with arrangements set out in the [Bilateral Implementation Plan for Remote Service Delivery](#).

**Schedule 1.2**  
**CLOSING THE GAP IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**  
**NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

The Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) was announced on 21 June 2007. Its immediate aims were to protect children and make communities safer. In October 2008 an independent NTER Review Board reported to Government that the situation in remote Northern Territory communities and town camps remained acute and that the NTER should continue.

The Governments recognise as a matter of urgent national significance the continuing need to address the high level of disadvantage and social dislocation experienced by Indigenous Australians living in the Northern Territory. The [Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement](#) (NPA) provides for the continuance until 30 June 2012 of a number of measures under the NTER and relevant legislation.

The intention of the NPA is to maintain and strengthen efforts and investment made under the NTER to: improve the health and wellbeing of children; reduce violence and improve family and community safety; improve school engagement and performance; promote personal responsibility and positive behaviours; and create sustainable communities to support children and youth including through education and employment pathways.

The NPA also integrates a number of initiatives commenced under *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: A Generational Plan of Action*, developed by the Northern Territory Government in response to the *Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse (Little Children are Sacred)* report into child abuse and neglect in the Northern Territory.

Resetting the relationship between Governments and Indigenous people is a further objective of the NPA and key to the sustainability of progress in Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory.

The Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement includes Schedules which constitute an agreed implementation plan for the NPA:

- A Food Security – Community Stores Licensing Regime
- B Remote Policing and Substance Abuse
- C Property and Tenancy Management
- D Interpreters
- E Follow Up Care – Ear, Nose and Throat (2009-10)
- F Follow Up Care – Dental
- G Mobile Outreach Service
- H Family Support
- I Enhancing Education

**Governance and Reporting**

Monitoring of outcomes under the Closing the Gap in the NT NPA will be in accordance with the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory Evaluation Strategy. The Evaluation Strategy will be overseen by the Evaluation Steering Committee. Further, the Northern Territory Government's Closing the Gap Coordination group works collaboratively across agencies to identify and implement strategic policy required to achieve the objectives of this NPA.

The Northern Territory Children's Commissioner is an independent statutory officer charged with promoting the wellbeing of vulnerable and protected children. One of the core functions of the Commissioner is to monitor the implementation of any government decision arising from the *Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse* (the *Little Children are Sacred* report) and to report annually to the Minister for Child Protection.

The Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government will jointly evaluate the programs and services under the NPA in 2011-12 and this will inform any further commitments by either government beyond the term of the NPA.

### **Schedule 1.3**

## **URBAN AND REGIONAL SERVICE DELIVERY STRATEGY**

On 2 July 2009, COAG agreed to the [National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy for Indigenous Australians](#) which forms Schedule B to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement. Through the Strategy, the Governments have agreed to utilise the Indigenous specific and mainstream National Partnership Agreements (NPA) and National Agreements (NA) in the areas of health, housing, early childhood, education and employment to improve outcomes for Indigenous people in urban and regional areas.

The Governments have agreed that the Strategy will focus on urban and regional centres of Darwin, Katherine, Nhulunbuy, Tennant Creek and Alice Springs and will be progressively rolled out over time. Roll out of the Strategy will take into account existing initiatives such as the Alice Springs Transformation Plan (ASTP) and the Tennant Creek Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program (SIHIP).

As at 30 June 2008, about 116 000 people (55 per cent) of Northern Territorians live in the Territory's regional centres, including about 15 per cent of the Northern Territory's Indigenous population. Proportionally, each regional centre has a significant Indigenous population:<sup>10</sup>

- Darwin (11 per cent);
- Katherine (28 per cent);
- Tennant Creek (55 per cent);
- Nhulunbuy (7 per cent); and
- Alice Springs (21 per cent).

#### **Statement of Intent**

The Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy includes five action areas agreed by COAG. These are integration and governance, effective services, focussing on local need/location based approaches, strengthening Indigenous capacity and effective accountability and sustainability. The Governments will seek to:

- Identify areas of need in regional centres in which Governments and non-government agencies can work collaboratively to tackle issues in an agreed and co-ordinated manner;
- Establish appropriate mechanisms to coordinate policy and services in regional centres that contribute to Closing the Gap; and
- Meet any reporting requirements agreed through the Working Group on Indigenous Reform.

Consistent with relevant COAG agreements and decisions, and any subsequent advice from the Working Group on Indigenous Reform, the OBIP Governance Committee will agree parameters for developing this Schedule, which will be finalised as soon as possible during 2010.

---

<sup>10</sup> [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(2007\), catalogue no. 3235.0 - Population by Age and Sex, Australia, 2006;](#) [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(2009\), catalogue no. 3238.0 - Experimental Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 1991 to 2021.](#)

## **Governance and Reporting**

As agreed in the NIRA, the effectiveness of the Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy will be reviewed nationally after three years.

At the July 2009 COAG, jurisdictions, including the Northern Territory, were required to report to COAG on the progress of the National Urban and Regional Service Delivery Strategy by the end of 2009. This was provided in December 2009. Future reporting to COAG will be determined by the Working Group on Indigenous Reform.

## Schedule 1.4 AGREED DATA QUALITY IMPROVEMENTS

On 2 July 2009, COAG agreed a number of actions to improve the performance indicator data under Agreed Data Quality Improvements, Schedule F to the [National Indigenous Reform Agreement](#) (NIRA). Reforms to data quality across National Partnership Agreements and National Agreements are critical to measure progress towards Closing the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage. Governments have committed to eleven specific action areas to enhance data quality, to be completed by 30 June 2013.

### Indigenous Specific Outcomes

The Governments have agreed to data quality improvements to build a quality data collection system to support Closing the Gap measurement and reporting. Efforts and responsibilities are:

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) to implement improvements to Census Indigenous enumeration procedures to improve the quality of the Census count of Indigenous Australians.
- The ABS will expand the scope of the Census Post Enumeration Survey to include very remote areas and discrete Indigenous communities.
- The ABS and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) will lead analysis of the level of Indigenous identification in key data sets, including a baseline report and ongoing five-yearly studies to monitor identification levels over time.
- All jurisdictions will adopt the standard ABS Indigenous status question and recording categories on data collection forms and information systems for key data sets.
- All jurisdictions will improve procedures for collecting Indigenous status information in health and education data by training staff in key data collection positions about how and why to ask the Indigenous status question and to raise awareness about its importance.
- All jurisdictions will develop and implement initiatives to raise the Indigenous community's awareness about the importance of identifying as Indigenous when accessing services and to therefore raise the propensity for identification.
- The ABS will link Census records with death registration records to assess under-identification of Indigenous mortality for use in the compilation of Indigenous life expectancy estimates.
- The AIHW and ABS will lead, in partnership with the States and Territories, the development of national best practice guidelines for data linkage and an examination of current and planned data linkage work (Commonwealth and State and Territory) relevant to Indigenous identification.
- The AIHW will lead the development of an enhanced Perinatal National Minimum Data Set collection to capture data in relation to smoking during pregnancy, child and maternal health and the Indigenous status of the baby.
- The AIHW will, with stakeholders, review jurisdictional practices for collecting pathology information and develop a business case for the implementation of a nationally consistent pathology data collection, including Indigenous status.
- The Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing, in partnership with State and Territory health departments and in collaboration with AIHW, will develop national Key Performance Indicators for Indigenous-specific primary health care services: A coordinated data collection is also planned.

**Statement of Intent**

The Governments will populate this Schedule with specific activities that will be undertaken against each of the eleven action areas (above) to improve data quality in the Northern Territory, taking into consideration the COAG Reform Council's report on the NIRA due for release in April 2010. This draft Schedule to the OBIP will be finalised as soon as possible during 2010.

**Governance and Reporting**

To be determined during Schedule development.

## **Schedule 1.5**

### **HEALTHY COUNTRY, HEALTHY PEOPLE**

#### **Statement of Intent**

This Schedule supports Indigenous engagement in the sustainable management of land and seas in the Northern Territory. Since it was agreed in 2006, the Schedule has succeeded in brokering coordinated Government investment to support the employment of over 300 Indigenous rangers. The Australian and Northern Territory Governments commit to continued investment in Indigenous land and sea management and to securing the future of this sector in the Northern Territory by taking a more focused and coordinated approach to the development and implementation of government policies, legislation and programs.

#### **Context**

The Australian and Northern Territory Governments value the past and ongoing work of Indigenous people in protecting and sustaining country and the productive use of natural and cultural resources of the Northern Territory for future generations. The Governments acknowledge the important role the Northern Territory Land Councils' Caring for Country programs play in supporting the engagement of Indigenous people in this area. Indigenous people are significant landholders, with stewardship responsibilities for approximately 45 per cent of the Northern Territory's landmass and 80 per cent of its coastal areas, much of which has very high environmental and cultural values and is rich in natural resources.

The Australian and Northern Territory Governments recognise the key role Indigenous people have in managing land and seas in the Northern Territory to achieve biodiversity protection, conservation, biosecurity and border security outcomes, particularly in remote regions. The Governments acknowledge that implementation of this Schedule must take full account of the aspirations, priorities and preferences of Indigenous people with land and sea management interests, and that training and partnerships that build capacity play a critical role in enabling Indigenous people to effectively manage land and seas.

The Governments acknowledge the cultural and spiritual motivations and responsibilities of Indigenous people to care for land and seas. Indigenous people and the broader community experience environmental, social, cultural, health and economic benefits through this work. These benefits provide a clear case for ongoing government support and investment in this area, noting that a number of Indigenous land and sea management organisations have already established, and many organisations will continue to explore, associated economic and social enterprise opportunities to help achieve longer term financial sustainability.

#### **Objectives**

The Australian and Northern Territory Governments commit to the following objectives.

1. *Better coordination*  
Improve the coordination of whole-of-government investment to deliver streamlined flexible funding arrangements, contracting and reporting requirements for Indigenous organisations involved in Indigenous land and sea management.
2. *Employment and economic development opportunities*  
Strengthen Indigenous employment and economic development opportunities associated with natural and cultural resource management; guide the delivery of appropriate training; increase the number of Indigenous people employed and the career opportunities for young people and

school children in land and sea management; and enhance recognition of Indigenous land and sea management as a sustainable industry sector in the Northern Territory.

3. *Environmental outcomes*

Protect the environment by reducing threats to natural and cultural values through weed, fire and feral animal management and biosecurity surveillance.

4. *Improved planning and sustainable partnerships*

Support improved planning and the development of partnerships between Indigenous groups, governments, not-for-profit organisations and the private sector to underpin Indigenous engagement in land and sea management.

5. *Broader Indigenous engagement*

Support greater participation of senior community members, women and young people both as rangers and as participants in land and sea management projects, recognising that this engagement delivers demonstrated health benefits, educational outcomes and employment pathways and plays a fundamental role in the transmission of Indigenous ecological knowledge and in maintaining Indigenous cultural traditions.

## **COAG Targets**

The Schedule makes a strong contribution to the Closing the Gap target to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade. In addition, the Governments recognise that Indigenous land and sea management contributes to the Building Blocks of health, economic participation, and governance and leadership.

## **Investment streams**

The Schedule will target and bring together existing investment streams and seek to identify new sources of investment to support the delivery of its objectives. Funding for wages, training, supervision, expert advice, equipment, assets and infrastructure is critical to securing a sustainable Indigenous land and sea management sector. The current investment in Indigenous land and sea management organisations includes funding provided by the following agencies.

- *Australian Government*  
Australian Customs and Border Protection Service; Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA), Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA); the Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC).
- *Northern Territory Government*  
Department of Education and Training (DET); Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport (NRETAS); Department of Resources (Fisheries).

## **Governance and Coordination**

The parties agree to the following arrangements to implement the Schedule.

- *Bilateral Steering Committee*: comprised of senior executive representatives DEWHA, FaHCSIA, NRETAS and the Office of Indigenous Policy (Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services), jointly chaired by DEWHA and NRETAS.
- *Operational Group*: comprised of senior representatives from DEWHA, FaHCSIA, DEEWR, NRETAS, Department of Housing, Local Government and Regional Services, ILC, and the

Northern Territory Natural Resource Management Board, the Anindilyakwa Land Council, the Central Land Council, the Northern Land Council, and the Tiwi Land Council.

- *Government Working Group*: comprised of various government agencies with an interest and investment in Indigenous land and sea management.

### **Implementation and Planning**

The Bilateral Steering Committee will review and endorse an Implementation Plan, a Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Strategy, and a Communication and Engagement Strategy within six months of agreeing to the Schedule. Progress reports detailing performance against COAG targets and other indicators identified in these plans will be provided annually through the Bilateral Steering Committee to Northern Territory and Australian Government ministers with portfolio responsibilities for Indigenous affairs and the environment.

**Schedule 1.6**  
**GROOTE EYLANDT AND BICKERTON ISLAND**  
**REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

The [Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Agreement](#) was signed by the Australian and Northern Territory Governments and the Anindilyakwa Land Council on 20 May 2008. Stage 2 was signed by the original parties plus the East Arnhem Shire Council and Groote Eylandt Mining Company on 10 November 2009.

The Agreement establishes a regional partnership to achieve sustainable and measurable improvements for people living in the Anindilyakwa region across the COAG Building Block areas. Through the Agreement, the parties will work together to coordinate services and effectively deliver initiatives across communities in the region in response to locally identified need. The Regional Partnership Agreement is one model for Governments to effectively coordinate services and achieve improvements against the COAG targets, as recognised in the Bilateral Implementation Plan for the Remote Service Delivery National Partnership Agreement.

The Regional Partnership Agreement:

- Establishes the principles and strategies necessary to improve the coordination and provision of services across the Anindilyakwa region;
- Encourages sustained economic development through targeted investments of government, private and royalty funding in education; employment, training and business development; housing; infrastructure and community health and safety;
- Establishes a framework for implementation including governance arrangements, roles and responsibilities and an evaluation framework;
- Sets out an agreed plan of action, which aims to achieve measurable and sustainable improvements for people living in the Anindilyakwa region; and
- Enables parties to maximise the impact of their respective resources through collaboration and a shared vision of long term economic independence for the Anindilyakwa region.

### **Governance and Reporting**

The Agreement is governed by the Regional Partnership Committee, which comprises senior representatives of each party. The Committee meets quarterly. The functions of the Committee are set out in Clause 4 of the Agreement.

**Schedule 1.7**  
**INDIGENOUS ARTS AND CULTURE**

Strengthening and sustaining the Indigenous arts sector remains a priority, pursuant to the previous [Overarching Bilateral Agreement on Indigenous Affairs](#). The parties agree that the coordination, planning and delivery of Indigenous arts programs and Indigenous cultural activities, Indigenous language and broadcasting services in the Northern Territory will complement initiatives across the COAG Building Blocks.

**Statement of Intent**

The Governments will populate this Schedule with specific activities. It is anticipated that this Schedule to the OBIP will be finalised during 2010-11.

**Governance and Reporting**

To be determined during Schedule development.

## Schedule 2.1 BUILDING BLOCK: EARLY CHILDHOOD

For an equal start in life Indigenous children need early learning, development and socialisation opportunities. Access to quality early childhood education and care services, including pre-school, child care and family support services such as parenting programs and supports, is critical. Appropriate facilities and physical infrastructure, a sustainable early childhood education and health workforce, learning frameworks and opportunities for parental engagement are also important and require attention. Action in the areas of maternal, antenatal and early childhood health is relevant to addressing the child mortality gap and to early childhood development.<sup>11</sup>

### Context

Indigenous children in the Northern Territory are more than twice as likely as non-Indigenous children to die before the age of one.<sup>12</sup>

Research has shown that health, growth and development in the first three years of life play a crucial role in later outcomes. Evidence shows that substantial benefits accrue from investments made in the first few years of life and this is even more so for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

### Targets

COAG has set targets to:

- Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade;
- Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade; and
- Ensure all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to quality early childhood education within five years.

### Baselines

Progress toward achieving these targets in the Northern Territory will be measured according to the following baselines:<sup>13</sup>

- For 2003-2007, the mortality rate for Indigenous children aged 0 to 4 years was 3.6 deaths per 1000 children, and for non-Indigenous children aged 0 to 4 was 1.2 per 1000 children. The rate ratio is 2.9 Indigenous child deaths to non-Indigenous child deaths;
- The measure is yet to be agreed that will inform the target of ensuring all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years; and
- For the baseline year of 2008, the proportion of students who achieved at or above the national minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy was:

---

<sup>11</sup> NIRA, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2009), *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework 2008 report: detailed analyses*, p. 437.

<sup>13</sup> Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *National Agreement performance information 2008-09: National Indigenous Reform Agreement*. Canberra: Productivity Commission, 2009.

Year	Reading (%)		Writing (%)		Numeracy (%)	
	Indigenous	Non-Ind.	Indigenous	Non-Ind.	Indigenous	Non-Ind.
Year 3	30.4	88.2	46.6	95.2	52.4	96.5
Year 5	25.8	88.9	32.8	90.2	38.3	91.6
Year 7	32.4	93.5	29.9	89.2	50.2	95.6
Year 9	37.9	92.2	32.8	84.6	46.1	93.6

### Indigenous Specific Outcomes<sup>14</sup>

- Indigenous children are born and remain healthy
- Indigenous children have the same health outcomes as other Australian children
- Children benefit from better social inclusion and reduced disadvantage, especially Indigenous children
- Quality early childhood education and care supports the workforce participation choices of parents in the years before formal schooling
- Indigenous children acquire the basic skills for life and learning
- Indigenous children have access to affordable, quality early childhood education in the year before formal schooling as a minimum

### COAG Policy and Reform Directions

This Early Childhood Schedule incorporates the following COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans.<sup>15</sup> Further COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans may be added to this Schedule over time.

- [National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development](#): to improve the early childhood outcomes of Indigenous children by addressing the high levels of disadvantage they currently experience, to give them the best start in life.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education](#) and related Implementation Plan: universal access to quality early childhood education in the year before school.
- [National Partnership Agreement on TAFE Fee Waivers for Childcare Qualifications](#): TAFE and other government providers will not levy fees on students undertaking eligible child care courses in 2009.
- [Investing in Early Years – a National Early Childhood Development Strategy](#): details the areas where action is required to develop an effective early childhood development system by 2020.
- [National Partnership Agreement on the Quality Agenda for Early Childhood Education and Care](#): to establish a jointly governed unified National Quality Framework (NQF) for early childhood education and care and Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) services, replacing existing separate licensing and quality assurance processes.

### Other Initiatives

- [A Working Future](#) (NT)

<sup>14</sup> NIRA, Schedule C.

<sup>15</sup> NIRA, Schedule C.

- NTER Supporting Families Measure – this measure will establish new crèches in nine communities and upgrade existing crèches in thirteen communities (Joint)
- Families as First Teachers – parenting services that support families with young children to access appropriate developmental programs (NT)
- Australian Early Development Index (AEDI) – a national data base to build and strengthen communities for children and their families (Joint)
- The Early Years Learning Framework – national curriculum for 0-5 year olds (Joint)

### **Indigenous Engagement**

Through community consultations with key stakeholders in the community, including relevant Australian Government and NT Government agencies.

### **Governance and Reporting**

As set out in the COAG Agreements and Implementation Plans listed above.

## Schedule 2.2 BUILDING BLOCK: SCHOOLING

Human capital development through education is key to future opportunity. Responsive schooling requires attention to infrastructure, workforce (including teacher and school leader supply and quality), curriculum, student literacy and numeracy achievement and opportunities for parental engagement and school/community partnerships. Transition pathways into schooling and into work, post school education and training are also important. Life long learning is important and attention is also needed regarding adult literacy and numeracy skills.<sup>16</sup>

### Context

On average, Indigenous students achieve lower literacy and numeracy levels than other students. In the Northern Territory in 2009, 40 per cent of Indigenous students achieved the Year 3 reading benchmark, compared with 90 per cent of non-Indigenous students.<sup>17</sup> In 2006, 13.5 per cent of Northern Territory Certificate of Education recipients were Indigenous.<sup>18</sup>

Starting school early, improving attendance rates, providing high quality teaching and leaving school later are essential to improving literacy and numeracy skills and therefore providing a good start in life. Preschool and early education programs have been associated with increased levels of school completion and improved literacy and social skills necessary for school success.

### Targets

COAG has set targets to:

- Lift the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate to 90 per cent by 2020;
- Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade; and
- At least halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

### Baselines

Progress toward achieving these targets in the Northern Territory will be measured according to the following baselines:<sup>19</sup>

- For the baseline year of 2006, the proportion of the 20-24 year old population having attained at least a year 12 or equivalent or Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate II or above was 18.3 per cent for Indigenous 20-24 year olds and 76.9 per cent for non-Indigenous 20-24 year olds; and
- For the baseline year of 2008, the proportion of students who achieved at or above the national minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy was:

---

<sup>16</sup> NIRA, p. 6.

<sup>17</sup> Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development & Youth Affairs (2009), *National Assessment Program – Literacy & Numeracy: Achievements in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions & Numeracy*, p. 10.

<sup>18</sup> Northern Territory Government (2007), *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: A Generational Plan of Action*.

<sup>19</sup> Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *National Agreement performance information 2008-09: National Indigenous Reform Agreement*. Canberra: Productivity Commission, 2009.

Year	Reading (%)		Writing (%)		Numeracy (%)	
	Indigenous	Non-Ind.	Indigenous	Non-Ind.	Indigenous	Non-Ind.
Year 3	30.4	88.2	46.6	95.2	52.4	96.5
Year 5	25.8	88.9	32.8	90.2	38.3	91.6
Year 7	32.4	93.5	29.9	89.2	50.2	95.6
Year 9	37.9	92.2	32.8	84.6	46.1	93.6

### Indigenous Specific Outcomes<sup>20</sup>

- Schooling promotes the social inclusion and reduces the educational disadvantage of children, especially Indigenous children
- Indigenous children and youth meet basic literacy and numeracy standards, and overall levels of literacy and numeracy are improving
- Indigenous young people successfully transition from school to work and/or further study

### COAG Policy and Reform Directions

This Schooling Schedule incorporates the following COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans.<sup>21</sup> Further COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans may be added to this Schedule over time.

- [National Education Agreement](#): all Australian school students acquire the knowledge and skills to participate effectively in society and employment in a globalised economy.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Low Socio-economic School Communities](#) and the Smarter Schools Implementation Plan: supports a suite of within school and broader reforms designed to transform the way schooling takes place in participating schools and address the complex and interconnected challenges facing students in disadvantaged communities. This Agreement aims to improve student engagement, educational attainment and wellbeing in participating schools, make inroads into entrenched economic disadvantage (including in Indigenous communities), contribute to broader social and economic objectives and improve understanding about effective intervention that can be implemented beyond the schools participating in this Agreement.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy](#) and the Smarter Schools Implementation Plan: will focus on the key areas of teaching, leadership and the effective use of student performance information to deliver sustained improvement in literacy and numeracy outcomes for all students, especially those who are falling behind.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality](#) and the Smarter Schools Implementation Plan: is designed to improve teacher and school leader quality to sustain a quality teaching workforce.
- [National Partnership Agreement on the Nation Building and Jobs Plan – Schedule D: Building the Education Revolution](#) and its [Implementation Plan](#): this reform will provide new facilities and refurbishments in schools.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions](#): established to increase participation and attainment of young people in education and training and

<sup>20</sup> NIRA Schedule C.

<sup>21</sup> NIRA Schedule C.

assist them to make a successful transition from school to further education, training or full-time employment.

- [Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement](#): provides measures in education including teacher housing, additional classrooms, school nutrition, quality teachers and enhancing literacy and numeracy.

### **Other Initiatives**

- *A Working Future* (NT)
- Schools Assistance – non-government and Catholic Education funding by Australian Government through NT Treasury
- Boarding Facilities (Australian Government)
- Parental and Community Engagement (PaCE) (Australian Government)
- School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) (Australian Government)
- NTER Enhancing Education Measure (Joint)
  - 200 Teachers
  - Expansion of Classroom
  - Teacher Housing
  - School Nutrition Program (SNP)

### **Indigenous Engagement**

Specifically for School Enrolment and Attendance Measure (SEAM) and School Nutrition Program (SNP) engagement is conducted through consultation with communities, key stakeholders such as schools and principals and relevant Australian Government and NT Government agencies.

Further, the Northern Territory Indigenous Education Council (NTIEC) is an Indigenous representative advisory body appointed by the Minister for Education and Training to provide advice and make recommendations to the NT Government and Australian Government Ministers on education for Indigenous students in the Northern Territory.

### **Governance and Reporting**

Progress against this Schedule will be reported on in accordance with the relevant COAG Agreements and the Smarter Schools Implementation Plan.

A joint Education Steering Committee will monitor outcomes against this Schedule.

## Schedule 2.3 BUILDING BLOCK: HEALTH

Indigenous Australians' access to effective, comprehensive primary and preventative health care is essential to improving their health and life expectancy, and reducing excess mortality caused by chronic disease. All health services play an important role in providing Indigenous people with access to effective health care, and being responsive to and accountable for achieving government and community health priorities. Closing the Indigenous health gap requires a concerted effort in the prevention, management and treatment of chronic disease. Indigenous children and their parents need access to programs and services that promote healthy lifestyles.<sup>22</sup>

### Context

Life expectancy at birth is approximately 12-14 years lower for Indigenous Territorians than non-Indigenous Territorians.<sup>23</sup> Non-communicable diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer, account for almost 80 per cent of the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancy, with poor access to primary health care services also responsible for the disparity.<sup>24</sup>

In order to reduce the gap in life expectancy, chronic disease management and increased access to quality primary health care are essential. Primary health care services in remote Aboriginal communities provide essential clinical services such as emergency care, illness treatment, chronic disease management, preventative care such as immunisation, antenatal care, health screening and follow-up care for emerging health conditions, and specific programs to address the underlying causes of ill health and family dysfunction, such as substance misuse, nutrition and environmental health programs.

### Targets

COAG has set targets to:

- Close the life expectancy gap within a generation; and
- Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade.

### Baselines

Progress toward achieving these targets in the Northern Territory will be measured according to the following baselines:<sup>25</sup>

- For 2005–2007, the estimated life expectancy at birth for Indigenous males was 61.5 years and for Indigenous females 69.2 years; for non-Indigenous males 75.7 years and for non-Indigenous females 81.2 years. The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous life expectancy at birth was 14.2 years for males and 11.9 years for females; and
- For 2003–2007, the child mortality rate for Indigenous children aged 0 to 4 years was 3.6 deaths per 1000 children, and for non-Indigenous children aged 0 to 4 was 1.2 per 1000 children. The rate ratio is 2.9 Indigenous child deaths to non-Indigenous child deaths.

---

<sup>22</sup> NIRA, p. 6.

<sup>23</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007), catalogue no. 3302.0.55.003 - Experimental Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, 2005–2007.

<sup>24</sup> Northern Territory Government (2007), *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: A Generational Plan of Action*.

<sup>25</sup> Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *National Agreement performance information 2008-09: National Indigenous Reform Agreement*. Canberra: Productivity Commission, 2009.

## Indigenous Specific Outcomes<sup>26</sup>

- Indigenous Australians and those living in rural and remote areas or on low incomes achieve health outcomes comparable to the broader population
- Indigenous people have ready access to suitable and culturally inclusive primary health and preventative services
- Indigenous people remain healthy and free of preventable disease

## COAG Policy and Reform Directions

This Health Schedule incorporates the following COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans.<sup>27</sup> Further COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans may be added to this Schedule over time.

- [National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes](#) and its [Implementation Plans](#): sets out specific action to be taken by the Australian Government and complementary action by State / Territory governments to address the gap in health outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Hospital and Health Workforce Reform](#) and its Implementation Plan: to improve health workforce, hospitals and capacity.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Preventive Health](#): reforms Australia's efforts in preventing the lifestyle risks that prevent chronic disease.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development](#): to improve the early childhood outcomes of Indigenous children by addressing the high levels of disadvantage they currently experience, to give them the best start in life.
- [National Healthcare Agreement](#): to improve health outcomes for all Australians and the sustainability of the Australian health system.
- [National Disability Agreement](#): provides the national framework and key areas of reform for the provision of government support to services for people with disabilities.
- [Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement](#): including follow up dental care and ear, nose and throat care and augmentation of NT Sexual Assault Mobile Outreach Service.

## Other Initiatives

- [A Working Future](#) (NT)
- Aboriginal Primary Healthcare Reform (Joint)
- Expanding Health Services Delivery (Development) Initiative (Australian Government)
- Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Key Performance Indicators – an initiative that integrates community controlled health services and government managed health service reporting against a range of key performance measures (Joint)

---

<sup>26</sup> NIRA Schedule C.

<sup>27</sup> NIRA Schedule C.

- Pathways to Community Control – a regional framework to build capacity and competence of communities to engage more in planning, delivery and evaluation of health services (Joint)
- Cultural Security Framework – promoting a culturally competent health workforce, health system and organisational culture (NT)

### **Indigenous Engagement**

Regional Steering Committees provide the engagement at the community level in each of the 14 Health Service Delivery Areas (HSDAs), and the NT Aboriginal Health Forum Partnership oversees the progress of the Initiative and makes key recommendations on the relevant plans.

Extensive regional consultations with Aboriginal communities on improving the level of cultural security in health services have been finalised and work has commenced on the implementation of agreed strategies.

The creation of the Pathways to Community Control Framework that focuses effort on building the capability and capacity of Aboriginal communities to engage across a range of opportunities in the development, delivery and evaluation of health services. This includes partnerships with peak Indigenous health organisations such as Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT).

### **Governance and Reporting**

Progress against this Schedule will be reported on in accordance with the relevant COAG Agreements and Implementation Plans.

The Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum (NTAHF), which includes the Community Controlled Sector, NT Health and Families and the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, will coordinate activity under this Schedule as outlined in the Implementation Plans for the NPA on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes.

## Schedule 2.4 BUILDING BLOCK: ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

Individuals and communities should have the opportunity to benefit from the mainstream economy – real jobs, business opportunities, economic independence and wealth creation. Economic participation needs to extend to disadvantaged job seekers and those outside of the labour market. Access to land and native title assets, rights and interests can be leveraged to secure real and practical benefits for Indigenous people. Other financial assets, capacity building, employment and training programs, incentive structures and social and physical infrastructure, including communications and transport, are needed to foster economic participation and community engagement. Through this participation, parents and other adults can become effective role models for their families and community. The design and delivery of welfare (both transfer payments and services) needs to promote active engagement, enhanced capability and positive social norms. Ensuring that communities have support to address factors that are a barrier to engagement such as problem gambling is critical.<sup>28</sup>

### Context

In the Northern Territory in 2007, the Indigenous labour force participation rate (15 years and over) was 50.5 per cent, while unemployment was 14.6 per cent.<sup>29</sup> Based on 2001 data, it is estimated that 2000 additional jobs would need to be created per annum for 10 years to lift the Indigenous employment level in the Northern Territory to non-Indigenous levels.<sup>30</sup>

### Targets

COAG has set a target to:

- Halve the gap in employment outcomes within a decade.

### Baselines

Progress toward achieving this target in the Northern Territory will be measured according to the following baseline:<sup>31</sup>

- For the baseline year of 2008, in the Northern Territory the proportion of the Indigenous working age population (15-64 year olds) employed was 50.8 per cent and for the non-Indigenous working age population was 85.0 per cent. The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Territorians was 34.1 percentage points.

### Indigenous Specific Outcomes<sup>32</sup>

- The Indigenous working age population has the depth and breadth of skills and capabilities required for the 21st century labour market

---

<sup>28</sup> NIRA, p. 7.

<sup>29</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008), catalogue no. 6287.0 - Labour Force Characteristics of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, Estimates from the Labour Force Survey, 2007.

<sup>30</sup> Northern Territory Government (2007), *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: A Generational Plan of Action*.

<sup>31</sup> Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *National Agreement performance information 2008-09: National Indigenous Reform Agreement*. Canberra: Productivity Commission, 2009.

<sup>32</sup> NIRA Schedule C.

- Indigenous people of working age participate effectively in all sectors and at all levels of the labour market

### **COAG Policy and Reform Directions**

This Economic Participation Schedule incorporates the following COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans.<sup>33</sup> Further COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans may be added to this Schedule over time.

- [National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Economic Participation](#) and its [Implementation Plan](#): will contribute to the Council of Australian Governments target to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people within a decade.
- [National Agreement on Skills and Workforce Development](#): identifies the long term objectives of the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments in the areas of skills and workforce development.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Productivity Places Program](#) and its [Implementation Plan](#): will increase qualifications commencements and course enrolments to reduce skills shortages and increase the productivity of industry and enterprise.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions](#): will increase the qualifications and skill levels of young Australians and improve their capacity to make successful transitions from schooling into further education, training or employment.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access](#): will improve public access internet facilities and related computer training in remote Indigenous communities.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing](#): will provide Indigenous employment and skills development opportunities.

### **Other Initiatives**

- *A Working Future* (NT)
- Healthy Country, Healthy People (Schedule 1.6) (Joint)
- Groote Eylandt and Bickerton Island Regional Partnership Agreement (See Schedule 1.7 – includes action against all seven building blocks) (Joint)
- Tanami Regional Partnership Agreement (Joint)
- Indigenous Economic Development Strategy (NT)
- Jobs Package (Australian Government)
- Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), the Department of Education and Training (DET) and the Department of Business and Employment (DBE) on Transitions, Skills, Workforce Development and Employment.

---

<sup>33</sup> NIRA Schedule C.

## **Indigenous Engagement**

Through community consultations with key stakeholders in the community, including relevant Australian Government and NT Government agencies and Shire Councils.

Through the Indigenous Economic Development Strategy Future Forums in Territory Growth Towns

## **Governance and Reporting**

As set out in the COAG Agreements and Implementation Plans listed above.

The MOU on Transitions, Skills, Workforce Development and Employment involves senior officials from relevant Australian and Northern Territory Government Agencies. It includes three sub working groups:

1. Remote Training, Employment and Economic Development (RTEED)
2. Childcare Industry Indigenous Workforce Development
3. Resources Industry indigenous Workforce Development

The Indigenous Economic Development Taskforce oversees the Northern Territory's Indigenous Economic Development strategy and reports annually to Northern Territory's Cabinet. The Indigenous Economic Development Taskforce consists of high profile Indigenous and non-Indigenous representatives of major industries and key Northern Territory and Australian Government Agencies.

## Schedule 2.5 BUILDING BLOCK: HEALTHY HOMES

A healthy home is a fundamental precondition of a healthy population. Important contributors to the current unsatisfactory living conditions include inadequate water and sewerage systems, waste collection, electricity and housing infrastructure (design, stock and maintenance). Children need to live in accommodation with adequate infrastructure conducive to good hygiene, study and free of overcrowding.<sup>34</sup>

### Context

Nearly a quarter of Indigenous people aged 15 years and over in Australia are living in overcrowded housing. This situation is most pronounced in the Northern Territory, with more than 60 per cent of Indigenous Territorians living in overcrowded conditions. Overcrowded houses are more difficult to maintain and keep clean and lead to increased likelihood of spread of infection and infectious diseases.<sup>35</sup>

### Targets

COAG has set targets and benchmarks to reduce overcrowding and homelessness, which are set out in the relevant National Partnership Agreements and their Implementation Plans.

Housing improvements will contribute to the achievement of all six COAG Closing the Gap targets.

### Indigenous Specific Outcomes<sup>36</sup>

- Indigenous children's living environments are healthy
- Indigenous families live in appropriate housing with access to all basic utilities
- Indigenous people have improved housing amenity and reduced overcrowding, particularly in remote areas and discrete communities
- Indigenous people have the same housing opportunities as other people

### COAG Policy and Reform Directions

This Healthy Homes Schedule incorporates the following COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans.<sup>37</sup> Further COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans may be added to this Schedule over time.

- [National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing](#) and its Implementation Plan (incorporating the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program): aims to facilitate significant reform in the provision of housing for Indigenous people in remote communities and to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing condition and severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities.
- [National Affordable Housing Agreement](#): provides a framework within which all tiers of government will work together to improve housing affordability for all Australians.

---

<sup>34</sup> NIRA, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Northern Territory Government (2007), *Closing the Gap of Indigenous Disadvantage: A Generational Plan of Action*.

<sup>36</sup> NIRA Schedule C.

<sup>37</sup> NIRA Schedule C.

- [National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness](#) and its [Implementation Plan](#): aims to facilitate significant reforms to reduce homelessness.
- [National Partnership Agreement on Social Housing](#) and the [Implementation Plan on Social Housing](#): facilitates the establishment of a ‘Social Housing Growth Fund’ that will support reforms to increase the supply of housing.
- [National Partnership Agreement on the Nation Building and Jobs Plan – Schedule C: Social Housing](#) and the [Implementation Plan on Social Housing](#): this reform significantly increases the supply of social housing, particularly for Australians who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

### **Other Initiatives**

- Fixing Houses for Better Health (Australian Government)
- *A Working Future* (NT)

### **Indigenous Engagement**

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing, the Strategic Indigenous Housing and Infrastructure Program has established Housing Reference Groups comprising community residents and Traditional Owners that will provide input into housing works and ongoing property and tenancy management issues.

### **Governance and Reporting**

Progress against this Schedule will be reported on in accordance with the relevant COAG Agreements and Implementation Plans.

The Joint Steering Committee is the governance mechanism established for the Remote Indigenous Housing National Partnership Agreement and associated Implementation Plan.

## **Schedule 2.6**

### **BUILDING BLOCK: SAFE COMMUNITIES**

Indigenous people (men, women and children) need to be safe from violence, abuse and neglect. Fulfilling this need involves improving family and community safety through law and justice responses (including accessible and effective policing and an accessible justice system), victim support (including safe houses and counselling), child protection and also preventative approaches. Addressing related factors such as alcohol and substance abuse will be critical to improving community safety, along with the improved health benefits to be obtained.<sup>38</sup>

#### **Context**

As at 30 June 2009, the imprisonment rate of Indigenous people in the Northern Territory was 11 times higher than for the non-Indigenous population. In 2008, Indigenous people comprised just under one-third of the Northern Territory's population, but were the victims of over half of all assaults, half of all sexual assaults and nearly two-thirds of all homicide and related offences.<sup>39</sup>

Personal and community safety are critical concerns for Territorians. To achieve a safe living, working and family environment for Territorians, we need to strengthen the child protection system, tackle the causes of crime and violence (such as alcohol abuse and social dislocation), boost frontline community policing, implement youth development programs and develop local solutions to crime and family violence.

#### **Targets**

Improving community safety is fundamental to achieving all six COAG Closing the Gap targets.

#### **Indigenous Specific Outcomes<sup>40</sup>**

- Indigenous children and families are safe and protected from violence and neglect in their home and communities
- Alcohol and other drug abuse among Indigenous people is overcome
- Breaking cycles of criminal behaviour and violence normalisation

#### **COAG Policy and Reform Directions**

This Safe Communities Schedule incorporates the following COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans.<sup>41</sup> Further COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans may be added to this Schedule over time.

- [Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement](#) and its Schedules.
- [National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children](#): consists of high-level and supporting outcomes, strategies to be delivered through a series of three-year action

---

<sup>38</sup> NIRA, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> [Australian Bureau of Statistics \(2010\), catalogue no. 1362.7 - Regional Statistics, Northern Territory, Mar 2010.](#)

<sup>40</sup> NIRA Schedule C.

<sup>41</sup> NIRA Schedule C.

plans and indicators of change that can be used to monitor the success of the Framework.

- [National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness](#): supporting people at risk of or experiencing homelessness with quality services and improved access to sustainable housing.

### **Other Initiatives**

- [National Indigenous Law and Justice Framework](#)
- *A Working Future* (NT)
- Public Safety Model – a whole-of-government program addressing antisocial behaviour through targeted service delivery and multi-agency collaboration (Joint)
- Community Education and Remote Alcohol Management Planning (Joint)

A number of place based safety initiatives exist that contribute to the Safe Communities Building Block in the areas of youth diversion, community policing, drug diversion and family support services. Northern Territory wide initiatives exist in the areas of road safety, alcohol and Indigenous police and Indigenous children and family services worker career development.

The Northern Territory Children’s Commissioner is an independent statutory officer charged with promoting the wellbeing of vulnerable and protected children. One of the core functions of the Commissioner is to monitor the implementation of any government decision arising from the *Inquiry into the Protection of Aboriginal Children from Sexual Abuse* (the *Little Children are Sacred* report) and to report annually to the Minister for Child Protection.

### **Indigenous Engagement**

Engagement of remote communities is a core component of the Family Support Package and the Mobile Outreach Service Plus (CTG NPA). Mechanisms include community meetings, employment of local people including as cultural consultants, regular community visits, developing and maintaining relationships with service providers in the community.

### **Governance and Reporting**

Progress against this Schedule will be reported on and monitored through the NTG interagency Community Safety Working Group and the Joint Steering Committee established to oversee implementation of the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement. Alcohol initiatives will be reported and monitored by the Alcohol Management Working Group.

Monitoring of outcomes under the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement will be in accordance with the Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory Evaluation Strategy which is overseen by the Evaluation Steering Committee.

## Schedule 2.7 BUILDING BLOCK: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Strong leadership is needed to champion and demonstrate ownership of reform. Effective governance arrangements in communities and organisations as well as strong engagement by governments at all levels are essential to long term sustainable outcomes. Indigenous people need to be engaged in the development of reforms that will impact on them. Improved access to capacity building in governance and leadership is needed in order for Indigenous people to play a greater role in exercising their rights and responsibilities as citizens.<sup>42</sup>

### Context

National and international literature on best practice social and community development programs unanimously conclude that program delivery is more effective when it is informed by, developed with, and implemented in partnership with the community. Improved capacity building in governance and leadership will support communities to engage as equal partners with the Governments.

Governance generally refers to the way the members of a group or community organise themselves to make decisions that affect them as a group. Leadership is critical to the development of a strong governance culture, and there can be specific cultural aspects to Indigenous leadership.<sup>43</sup>

### Targets

Stronger governance and leadership will support the achievement of all six COAG Closing the Gap targets.

### Indigenous Specific Outcomes<sup>44</sup>

- Indigenous communities are empowered to participate in policy making and program implementation
- Indigenous communities are represented through credible consultation/governance mechanism
- Connecting the way government agencies work in remote areas (the governance of governments) and developing community capacity

### COAG Policy and Reform Directions

This Governance and Leadership Schedule incorporates the following COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans.<sup>45</sup> Further COAG Agreements, Strategies and Implementation Plans may be added to this Schedule over time.

- [National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery](#): to ensure more efficient and effective planning, analysis, coordination, delivery and evaluation of services and better use of resources in selected remote locations. (See Schedule 1.1.)

---

<sup>42</sup> NIRA, p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> [Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision \(2009\), \*Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2009\*. Canberra: Productivity Commission, p. 58.](#)

<sup>44</sup> NIRA Schedule C.

<sup>45</sup> NIRA Schedule C.

- [Closing the Gap in the Northern Territory National Partnership Agreement](#)

### **Other Initiatives**

- [A Working Future](#) (NT)
- Local Government Reform in the Northern Territory (NT)
- Native Title and Land Rights Program (Australian Government)
- Indigenous Capability and Development Program (Australian Government)
- Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) (Australian Government)

### **Indigenous Engagement**

The following mechanisms support Indigenous engagement in the implementation of National Partnership Agreements:

- Approaches to engagement detailed under the Integrated Strategy for Closing the Gap;
- Indigenous Engagement Officer networks; and
- Application of the Remote Service Delivery Engagement Framework.

### **Governance and Reporting**

A Strategic Directions Committee comprising representatives of key Australian Government and Northern Territory Government agencies provides strategic leadership for local government reform in the Northern Territory.

The Remote Service Delivery Board of Management provides the mechanism to coordinate activity under the Remote Service Delivery NPA and its associated Implementation Plan.