



AUSTRALIAN  
**LOCAL GOVERNMENT**  
ASSOCIATION

# ALGA

## Closing the Gap

### 2023 Annual Report



*Image courtesy of LGA SA.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the first storytellers of this land and traditional owners of country on which we now live and work. We recognise their continuing connection to lands, waters, communities, and cultures. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to elders past and present. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this report may contain the names of people who have since passed away. ALGA thanks its members and councils' agencies who have provided data and other information to be included in this document. We would like to thank the Coalition of Peaks and government agencies that have assisted ALGA and reached out to help councils to progress the objects of the agreement at a state, regional and local level.

*The front cover image was taken at the launch of an Indigenous education and social skills project at the Kalaya Children's Centre, which was a joint initiative between City of Port Adelaide Enfield and City of Onkaparinga.*

# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Opening statement .....  | 3  |
| Priority Reforms .....   | 7  |
| Priority Reform One: Partnership and shared decision-making.....                         | 8  |
| Priority Reform Two: Building the community-controlled sector.....                       | 10 |
| Priority Reform Three: Transforming government organisations.....                        | 12 |
| Priority Reform Four: Shared access to data and information at a regional level .....    | 14 |
| Attachment 1 - Resolutions of the National General Assembly 2023.....                    | 15 |
| Attachment 2 - Case Studies .....  | 18 |
| Attachment 3 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce in Local Government ..... | 26 |

## Opening statement

*Councillor Linda Scott, President of the Australian Local Government Association*

In September 2021, ALGA and our member state and territory local government associations made a commitment. We committed to a partnership between local government, the Coalition of Peaks, and the Federal, State and Territory governments, to Close the Gap.

This is the second Annual Report on our progress on that commitment, and while I'm heartened by the progress we have made on some fronts, it saddens me to admit that resourcing constraints on local government have resulted in areas where we have not done enough. Nationally, the Productivity Commission released its second Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation report in July 2022, providing a snapshot of progress under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. It showed that 5 of the Closing the Gap targets are not on track. Indeed, as the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney, has said, the gap is not closing – for some targets, it's widening.

Because ALGA is a federation of state and territory local government associations coming together to act as the national voice of local government, rather than a government body involved in service delivery, this report looks different to those produced by states or territories, or by the Commonwealth Government. Our report uses a traffic light approach to indicate the level of progress that has been made on each action in the Implementation Plan. Green indicates that relatively good progress has been made in the first full year of operation of the plan. Amber indicates progress has commenced, but more needs to be done to advance the strategy. Red indicates that we have made very little progress, and that we need to do better.

Both this report and the report from the Productivity Commission highlight the need for greater effort in developing the key relationships between levels of government, in particular state and territory governments and their local governments and First Nations peoples' partners.

Closing the Gap across all local government areas is, as the Minister has indicated, a task for all parties. ALGA remains committed to working collaboratively with all partners to achieve our mutual goals in this vitally important national project.

As President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), it is my great pleasure to present ALGA's Closing the Gap Annual Report. I look forward to continuing to work with our Partners to progress the next stage of our Implementation Plan, and through the Joint Council meeting for Closing the Gap.



Cr Linda Scott

President

Australian Local Government Association



## PURPOSE OF THIS ANNUAL REPORT

In September 2021, the (ALGA) published its implementation Plan in line with the commitment of all signatories to the National Agreement Closing the Gap. The Commonwealth, states and territories are required to prepare their Implementation Plan and Annual Report using an agreed format. However, ALGA and the Coalition of Peaks, because of their different roles, responsibilities and circumstances are not required to adopt that agreed format.

ALGA is a federated organisation comprised of state and territory local government associations. It is governed by a Board with representatives from each state and territory association and a President elected by the Board. To inform this Annual Report, the ALGA Secretariat has involved a network of state and territory policy officers with responsibility for the provision of policy advice related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait communities, including in some jurisdictions supporting Aboriginal Shire Councils. The network is designed to facilitate the progress of the ALGA Implementation Plan, assist in monitoring, and reporting and share information and strategies to progress Closing the Gap within each jurisdiction.

This document is the second Annual Report on the progress of the Australian Local Government Association's (ALGA) Closing the Gap Implementation Plan. This Report has been informed by the Productivity Commission's Closing the Gap Draft Report which notes that the Agreement sits within an evolving landscape. It notes 'The Agreement is now one of several key commitments made by governments to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes a legislated Indigenous Voice to Parliament in South Australia, legislated Treaty and Truth telling processes in Victoria and Queensland, and the upcoming referendum to change the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. These initiatives may result in new decision-making and accountability structures that could provide a further catalyst for changes to the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.'

Under the National Agreement, all state and territory governments' Implementation Plans are to be whole-of-government plans, covering government agencies and statutory bodies (local governments are statutory bodies under the relevant Local Government Act in their jurisdiction). In addition, state and territory government Implementation Plans are to include information on how they will work with their local councils. However, the Productivity Commission's initial assessment of jurisdictional reports was that there was little visibility of local government.

Draft Report notes that ALGA members (State and Territory associations, referenced in ALGA's Implementation Plan and this Annual Report) rely on support and authority from and are limited by progress made by state and territory governments. Further, that state and territory reports should articulate a whole-of-government strategy or theory of change and do not explain how jurisdictions will work with local governments.

ALGA and state and territory associations acknowledge the challenges, complexity, and ambition of this Partnership Agreement. ALGA and member associations agree with the Productivity Commission that there are pockets of good practice, but more needs to be done. ALGA's Annual Report, therefore, seeks to complement jurisdictional Annual Reports and does not report on the 537 individual local governments across the nation.

ALGA also acknowledges the evolving landscape in which all parties to the National Agreement and that over-time the strategies outlined in jurisdictional Implementation Plans and working relationships between parties will mature and become more collaborative, comprehensive, and productive.

This Annual Report provides a high-level assessment of ALGA's progress to implement its Plan and provides information on progress on the four priority reforms of the Closing the Gap Agreement. Given the level of maturity of the relationships and Implementation Plans of all parties this Report provides an up-date to the on-going actions contained in the 2022 Annual Report.



## WHAT WE SAID WE WOULD DO

Under the National Agreement, the requirements of ALGA’s Implementation Plan are set out in (cl 109). They are to:

- a. ensure local governments understand the Agreement and its commitments and encourage its adoption by local governments.
- b. assist the state and territory governments to work with local governments in the implementation of this Agreement.
- c. support strengthened shared decision-making at the local level, supporting local governments to be part of partnerships with the Commonwealth, states, and territory governments and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

## WHAT WE HAVE DONE (HIGH-LEVEL SUMMARY)

**Awareness raising:** As mentioned in last Annual Report ALGA convenes the National General Assembly of Local Governments (NGA). It is the premier national gathering and policy forum for Mayors, Councillors, and senior decision-makers in local governments across the nation. The 2023 NGA convened attended by ALGA was attended by 1,133 delegates representing 316 out of the 537 councils across Australia.

Each year ALGA has used the as an opportunity to raise awareness and engage local governments across the nation on issues affecting First Nations Peoples and Closing the Gap in particular.

In 2021, ALGA invited Professor Tom Calma AO to address the Assembly on the Indigenous Voice and Donnella Mills, Chair of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to address the Assembly on Closing the Gap. The primary aim of these sessions was to raise awareness of the importance of issues affecting First Nations Peoples and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

At the 2022 NGA, the Hon Linda Burney MP, Minister for Indigenous Australians, provided a keynote address and outlined the Government’s priorities over the next term. Ms Jody Broun, CEO National Indigenous Australians Agency and Fiona Cornforth, CEO of The Healing Foundation continued the process of raising awareness of the need for local government participation in, and engagement on, Indigenous issues at all levels. Delegates at the NGA also heard from Indigenous local government councillors during panel discussions and debate on motions designed to inform ALGA’s national policy development.

In 2023 the NGA included a Panel on, A Conversation About the Voice. This Panel consisted of First Nations Mayors nominated by ALGA as members of the Commonwealth Governments First Nations Engagement Group. The Mayors were nominated by member state and territory local government associations and highlight the diversity of local governments across the nation. Panel Members were:

- Mayor Ross Andrews, Yarrabah Aboriginal Shire Council
- Mayor Matthew Ryan, West Arnhem Regional Council
- Cr Esmá Livermore, Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council
- Mayor Phillemon Mosby, Torres Strait Island Regional Council

Awareness raising within local government and the broader community has also been pursued through articles in ALGA’s regular newsletters to council (ALGA NEWS) and through social media channels.







progress has been made in the intervening time between reports. Amber indicates progress has commenced, but more needs to be done to advance the issue. Red indicates that little progress has been made to date.

It should be noted that ALGA’s Implementation Plan has operated in a year of lingering disruption due to COVID, natural disasters and where community attention has focussed on the proposed referendum on a Voice to Parliament. This has in some instances complemented the work of councils on Closing the Gap, and in other cases disrupted consultation on the Implementation Plan and the development of this Annual Report.

### Priority Reforms

There are four priority reform areas identified in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, each of which has been included in the ALGA Implementation Plan. The Priority Reforms focus on changing the ways that Governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to embed long-term systemic change and support the accelerated achievement of the socio-economic targets. It is recognised however that these reforms will require concerted effort and time to be embedded in the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and individuals.





While each council may provide local solutions to local issues, some of the more significant changes to the way services and infrastructure are provided to First Nations communities are dependent upon the state and territory governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners. ALGA notes the Productivity Commission assessment that ‘transformation of government organisations has barely begun. Local Government is keen to play its part within its limited resources and mandates in supporting positive change.

The following pages provide a high-level analysis of progress on each action outlined in ALGA’s Implementation Plan.









| Key Action Area  | Progress  | Comments and further action   |
|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Key action PR1.1</b><br/>ALGA and each state and territory local government association to work with the state and territory governments to ensure that any legislative impediments to joint decision-making on closing the gap are overcome.</p>  |    | <p>ALGA continues to encourage state and territory local government associations to reach out to start in some cases, the conversation about building the relationship with their respective jurisdictional governments. Decision-making powers of councils in each jurisdiction are determined by the relevant state and or the Northern Territory Government legislation. This includes the authority of councils to delegate decision-making and the operation of council committees and advisory bodies. Associations continue to work with their jurisdiction to explore any limitations and or to develop strategies that councils may apply to progress this action as required.</p> |
| <p><b>Key action PR1.2</b><br/>The state and territory local government associations and individual councils (where relevant) to be involved in any stocktake and/or health check of existing partnerships being undertaken by state and territory governments and the relevant Aboriginal Partnership Organisation.</p>   |    | <p>While in most jurisdictions local government has limited direct involvement in the 5 priority policy partnership areas identified in the Agreement, where applicable, for example in NSW, state and territory local government associations and individual councils have had some involvement in the stocktake.</p>  |
| <p><b>Key action PR1.3</b><br/>ALGA and state and territory local government associations to identify principles relevant to (and case studies if appropriate) effective partnerships involving local governments that build on successes seen through the stocktake and health check process. These principles should be made publicly available and built upon the characteristics of shared decision-making outlined in the National Agreement at cl32 c.</p> |  | <p>Work is continuing on collating case studies of effective partnerships involving local governments and associations. Subject to resources, a deeper analysis will be undertaken to understand the factors of success and draft principles will be canvassed in relevant forums.</p>  |
| <p><b>Key action PR1.4</b><br/>The state and territory local government association will be engaged in the relevant policy partnerships at a jurisdictional level whilst ALGA will engage at the National level.</p>   |  | <p>After a slow start, most state and the Northern territory associations reported in 2022 that they have had some engagement in relevant policy partnerships with state jurisdictions. But more needs to be done. The first Closing the Gap NT Implementation Plan of which LGANT is a signatory was launched in August 2021. ALGA continues to engage with the Commonwealth and National Coalition of Peaks on relevant policy partnerships as required.</p>  |



|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Key action PR1.5</b><br/> <b>The relevant local governments to actively participate in the place-based partnerships with support from the state and territory government and local government associations. This may include identifying governance arrangements for involvement of many councils.</b></p> |  | <p><i>There are a number of place-based partnerships currently under development. State and territory local government associations have reported that relevant local governments within these place-based areas have been consulted. Separate monitoring and reporting mechanisms have not yet been established by ALGA or state or the Northern Territory Association.</i></p>  |
| <p><b>Key action PR1.6</b><br/> <b>ALGA and the state and territory local government associations to monitor council (and association) participation in priority reform 1 partnerships and report annually. Best practice to be publicly recognised.</b></p>   |  | <p><i>ALGA and state and territory associations have commenced monitoring case studies and best practice examples of priority reform 1 partnerships. Given there are 537 councils, ALGA and state and territory associations do not currently have the resources to collate this information into state and or national data systems. Note also the slow progress in the development of the national data system.</i></p> |

**Priority Reform Two: Building the community-controlled sector.**

**Outcome:** Building the community-controlled sector: There is a strong and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector delivering high-quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.




**Target:** Increase the amount of government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services going through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

The National Partnership Agreement recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services are better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People, achieving better results, often preferred over mainstream services, and employing more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. The Agreement also recognises the need for sustained capacity building and investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and workforce development.

While ALGA, the state and territory local government associations and individual local governments will have a limited direct role in building the community-controlled sectors, they can support the achievement of this priority reform, particularly in sectors where local governments are engaged in service delivery.

The Parties to the National Agreement have prioritised several sectors for joint national strengthening efforts through the development and implementation of Sector Strengthening Plans. The initial sectors are early education care and development, health with housing, and disability to be developed next.



| <b>Key Action Area</b>  | <b>Progress</b>   | <b>Comments and further Action</b>   |
|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Key action PR2.1</b><br/> <b>ALGA and state and territory local government associations to participate in the development and implementation of Sector Strengthening Plans as appropriate.</b></p>  |    | <p><i>The state and territory governments need to further consider the roles and responsibilities of their local government councils when developing Sector Strengthening Plans to ensure that opportunities can be captured in the plan. For example, local government is the largest provider of childcare services in NSW, in Victoria the main provider of maternal and child health services and in some states and territories, councils provide housing in remote communities or provide community health services.</i></p> |
| <p><b>Key action PR2.2</b><br/> <b>State and territory local government associations (in association with the state and territory government where appropriate) to review procurement policies and guidelines to facilitate ACCOs participation in council tenders for goods, services, and construction/maintenance contracts.</b></p>   |    | <p><i>ALGA and state and territory associations have not identified any formal impediments to ACCO participation in council tender for goods, services, and construction/maintenance. However, in the NT the definition of ACCO excludes local governments even though there are fully Aboriginal-controlled councils. This is a matter for jurisdictions and local councils to continue to pursue.</i></p>  |
| <p><b>Key action PR2.3</b><br/> <b>The 2021- 22 Local Government Skills and Capability Project being led by ALGA with the state and territory local government associations to consider issues associated with employment and retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and opportunities for joint training and development with ACCOs in regional areas.</b></p> |  | <p><i>The 2021-22 Local Government Skills and Capability project was completed in late 2022. Data collected indicates an estimated 3.1 percent of the total local government workforce reported they were of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage. The implications of this work are being considered by workforce planning and training organisations and will inform discussions between state and territory local government associations and ACCOs in regional areas. (Data attached at Attachment 3)</i></p>        |



**Priority Reform Three: Transforming government organisations.**




**Outcome:** Improving mainstream institutions: Governments, their organisations and their institutions are accountable for Closing the Gap and are culturally safe and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through the services they fund.

**Target:** Decrease in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experiences of racism.

Addressing institutional racism and promoting cultural safety are essential elements for Closing the Gap. The Government parties to the National Agreement have committed to systemic and structural transformation to ensure government mainstream institutions and agencies are free of institutional racism and promote cultural safety. Further, they have committed to challenging unconscious biases that result in decisions based on stereotypes.

Many individual councils already have initiatives underway in relation to organisational transformation to eliminate racism and promote cultural safety. The initiatives are often as unique as the council and the community they serve. There may however be a benefit in ensuring that each local government has access to the same training and resources/toolkits which can then be tailored in partnership with members of the local Aboriginal community.



| <i>Key Action Area</i>  | <i>Progress</i>   | <i>Comments and further Action</i>  |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Key Action PR 3.1</b><br/> <b>State and territory local government associations to work with their respective jurisdictional governments to ensure that councils have access to toolkits (or the equivalent) and cultural awareness training to support a culturally capable workforce.</b></p>   |    | <p><i>Local government has extensive experience and involvement in managing council services and infrastructure to meet the needs of diverse communities. Many councils conduct regular cultural awareness training programs and training of new staff on service delivery for diverse community members. State and territory associations will continue to encourage state and territory governments to engage relevant local governments where appropriate.</i></p>   |
| <p><b>Key Action PR 3.2</b><br/> <b>ALGA and state and territory local government associations to encourage all councils to develop and implement a Reconciliation Action Plan.</b></p>   |    | <p><i>ALGA and state and territory associations have been strong advocates for the development of and implementation of Reconciliation Action Plans. Local government has been active in reconciliation for more than 30 years in response to the Royal Commission into Deaths in Custody. (1987- 91 Currently, many councils are reviewing their RAPs in the context of the changing landscape discussed earlier in this report including the referendum on a Voice to Parliament. It is expected that this work will continue to better align with CtG such as: Delivery of Aboriginal-focused Mentorship/Traineeship Programs, the Facilitation of Aboriginal Advisory Groups, and Celebrating key events such as NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week. Based on available data, 20 percent of all councils have adopted a RAP, and a number of others are working on them.</i></p> |
| <p><b>Key Action PR 3.1</b><br/> <b>ALGA and state and territory local government associations to showcase councils with Reconciliation Action Plans and/or undertaking other activities that improve the cultural appropriateness of council services. This could include the establishment of partnership opportunities with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to enhance quality and cultural safety of service delivery of projects, specific employment/recruitment programs to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment on or election to council, recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, histories, and cultures as an integral part of the local and regional area.</b></p> |  | <p><i>ALGA and State and the Northern Territory Association continue to work with Reconciliation Australia for many years and where possible have promoted council Reconciliation Plans at conferences and through newsletters to councils. Almost all councils with Reconciliation plans to publish them on their website and through social media.</i></p>  |




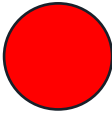
**Priority Reform Four: Shared access to data and information at a regional level**

**Outcome:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 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 and Torres Strait Islander communities to make decisions about Closing the Gap and their development.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations' access to location-specific data and information is crucial for achieving the first three priority reforms. It underpins the ability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to make informed decisions about the services and supports required at a local and regional level and to inform and influence policy and programs more broadly.

Local governments collect data for a multitude of purposes and use a multitude of data collection methodologies and processes. Given the scale of some local government areas, there may be challenges with council's ability to disaggregate data in a way that protects individuals' privacy. It is therefore important that the state and territory governments provide advice and assistance to their local governments about what and how data should be made available and data management approaches.

| <i>Key Action Area</i>  | <i>Progress</i>   | <i>Comments and further Action</i>  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Key Action PR 4.1</b><br>ALGA and state and territory local government associations to encourage councils who are involved in the Sites to capture their learnings so that these can be collated and made available to all local governments to inform their deliberations on data collection and sharing.                           |  | <i>ALGA understands that work has commenced on the Community Data Project Sites however it is at an early stage of development. This work has still not been developed sufficiently to provide advice to councils. All associations are keen to monitor progress in these projects and encourage state and the Northern Territory governments to share this information with them. Further, having regard to privacy considerations, we encourage jurisdictions to take into account relevant local government data and develop systems to collect and share this information between the parties and other councils.</i> |
| <b>Key Action PR4.2</b><br>ALGA and each state and territory local government association to work with the state and territory governments to ensure that advice is provided to councils about data sharing, data management approaches, data sovereignty and governance and what councils should do to help achieve priority reform 4. |  | <i>The work in this area is not sufficiently well developed to advance it across the local government sector. As the work progresses, ALGA and state and territory associations will use the evaluations from these sites to inform future work. More work is required in the coming years including addressing issues of privacy, scale, and resourcing.</i>   |

**Attachment 1 - Resolutions of the National General Assembly 2023.**

National General Assembly of Local Government (NGA) is the premier national gathering and policy forum for Mayors, Councillors, and senior decision-makers in local government across the nation. All NGA Resolutions are referred to the ALGA Board for consideration and inform the development of ALGA National Policy.

**Motion number 95 Brimbank City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly acknowledges the Australian Government's support of constitutional recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders through a Voice to Parliament and recognises what the Uluru Statement and the Voice to Parliament will mean for Australia's First Nations peoples and the broader Australian community.

**Motion number 95.1 City of Holdfast Bay SA**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to note the local government sector's respectful support for the wishes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in relation to the voice to parliament.

1. Provide resources and support to councils to actively pursue and promote community dialogue with their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
2. Meet the requests of the Uluru Statement from the Heart;
3. Ensure the adoption of an anti-racism policy in every federal agency, in line with the work being done by the Australian Human Rights Commission; and
4. Encourage all state and territory governments to adopt anti-racism policies across all agencies.

**Motion number 95.2 Merri-bek City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to acknowledge the gift of the Uluru Statement from the Heart given by our First Nations communities and so ensuring:

1. A strong campaign is delivered to amend the national constitution establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice to parliament and the executive government on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and;
2. 'Makarrata Commission' to supervise a process of agreement-making and truth telling between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

**Motion number 95.3 Newcastle City Council NSW**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to continue to demonstrate strong leadership in support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by supporting constitutional recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, implementing the 'Uluru Statement from the Heart,' and pursuing a national referendum regarding the Indigenous voice to parliament in the following terms: "Do you support an alteration to the constitution that establishes an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice?".

**Motion number 95.4 Maribyrnong City Council VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to better acknowledge First Nation people's





1. Support the Uluru Statement from the Heart’s call for Indigenous constitutional recognition through a Voice to Parliament and hold a referendum in the new term of federal parliament to achieve it; and
2. Request that the Australian Local Government Association work with the Uluru Statement from the Heart’s campaign to develop a resource kit for councils seeking to host public forums to inform their communities about the proposed referendum.

**Resolution number 57 Central Desert Regional Council NT**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to allocate additional/continued funding towards remote community housing in the Northern Territory to address housing inequity and overcrowding.

**Motion number 58 Darebin City VIC**

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

1. Continue advancing all co-design efforts to establish a National Indigenous Voice on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities;
2. Partner with the local government sector, through ALGA’s national agreement on Closing the Gap Partnership, to help facilitate outcomes across the agreed Closing the Gap priority reform targets, including around education, employment, health, and well-being outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Communities; and
3. Formally partner with ALGA and the local government sector, including through the establishment of an ongoing advisory or representative voice for local government comprising of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to guide the broad work relating to First Nations peoples, truth-telling sovereignty, and treaty-making.

The ALGA Board supported this motion. However, it was not debated at the NGA due to time constraints.

## Attachment 2 - Case Studies

The following case studies reflect the diversity and scope of actions taken by Local Governments to progress Closing the Gap objectives across Australia. Local Government Case studies are not comprehensive or systematically collected due to resource constraints.

### Case Study 1 - Reconciliation Action Plans:

Reconciliation Action Plans reflect councils and First Nations People's commitment to work together. As of June 2020, there were 86 local governments with an endorsed RAP and actively engaged in the program. Many of the stakeholders interviewed by Reconciliation Australia highlighted the role of local government in truth-telling and historical acceptance and there are numerous case studies of local government initiating name changes and other ways of honouring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories. (Source: 2021 State of Reconciliation in Australia Report).

**Case Study 2 – Yarra City Council** (Victoria) supports the Keele Street Children's Centre to connect children to Country and nature through a place-based [Bush Kinder program](#) that responded to children's' emerging interest in flora and fauna. Landcare custodians showed children how to treat Country with respect when visiting, and wildlife safety experts shared practical skills and knowledge about the wildlife the children could encounter at Yarra Bend. This program was developed by Keele Street's staff in consultation with the Wurundjeri Land Council, Parks Victoria, and the Merri Creek Management Committee.

**Case Study 3 – Frankston City Council** (Victoria) funds a dedicated outreach-based Aboriginal maternal and child health liaison worker to attend Aboriginal yarning groups, as well as provide maternal and child health services to families who attend. This role also liaises, collaborates, and works in partnership with other Aboriginal services, programs, and stakeholders. The council also celebrates and promotes Indigenous culture in its maternal and child health centres, with one centre featuring wall decals with an Aboriginal birthing tree. A Bunurong artist designed the art which now forms the basis of the maternal and child health and immunisation service branding, including staff uniforms, brochures, and printed materials. As well as providing an inviting and welcoming place for Aboriginal parents and children, they also celebrate and promote Aboriginal culture with other local families.

**Case Study 4: The City of Stirling** (Western Australia): The need to acknowledge Australia's history of colonisation, dispossession and racist policies is integral to a successful process of reconciliation. It can help build stronger relations between First Peoples and the broader community. A partnership between the City of Stirling local government and the Wadjak Northside Community Resource Centre is progressing such a historical acknowledgement in Western Australia and working to progress the race relations dimension, alongside historical acceptance. The partnership has seen the creation of Mooro Country Tours to allow local schools, residents, and tourists to gain an improved understanding of the city's rich Noongar history. Established in 2013, the tours give participants a brief opportunity to experience the culture, bush foods, medicines, and stories of the Wadjak people, who lived on Country for tens of thousands of years before the City of Stirling. The tours and the resultant deepening relationship between the City and the Wadjak Northside Community Resource Centre contributed to Stirling winning the WA Premier's "Improving Aboriginal Outcomes" award. More recently this relationship has been enhanced with the naming of key new developments in Noongar language names. One such new park was named Bina meaning "light of the morning." The City of Stirling Reconciliation Action Plan continues to play a part

in the City's improving relationship with the local Wadjak people. The City of Stirling is named after Governor James Stirling, the man behind the notorious 1834 Pinjarra massacre, in which dozens of Noongar civilians were murdered. The City is now considering commencing a conversation about changing its name as part of a new RAP development process.

#### **Case Study 5 & 6 - Policy Partnerships Early Childhood Care and Development**

Local government involvement in the selected policy reform areas of justice (adult and youth incarceration), social and emotional well-being (mental health), housing, early childhood care and development, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages may be limited or vary across jurisdictions and across councils. In Victoria for example councils are the main deliverer of maternal and child health services across the state. All council maternal and child health nurses are required to undertake Aboriginal and Torres Strait cultural safety training as standard procedure. Many also undertake innovative programs. A core priority of councils delivering running central registration and enrolment schemes for kindergarten and preschool programs is ensuring that Priority of Access is implemented – this is a primary way of supporting Aboriginal families and children to access early childhood education.

**Case Study 7 – Yarra City Council** (Victoria) supports the Keele Street Children's Centre to connect children to Country and nature through a place-based [Bush Kinder program](#) that responded to children's' emerging interest in flora and fauna. Landcare custodians showed children how to treat Country with respect when visiting, and wildlife safety experts shared practical skills and knowledge about the wildlife the children could encounter at Yarra Bend. This program was developed by Keele Street's staff in consultation with the Wurundjeri Land Council, Parks Victoria, and the Merri Creek Management Committee.

**Case Study 8 – Frankston City Council** (Victoria) funds a dedicated outreach-based Aboriginal maternal and child health liaison worker to attend Aboriginal yarning groups, as well as provide maternal and child health services to families who attend. This role also liaises, collaborates, and works in partnership with other Aboriginal services, programs, and stakeholders. The council also celebrates and promotes Indigenous culture in its maternal and child health centres, with one centre featuring wall decals with an Aboriginal birthing tree. A Bunurong artist designed the art which now forms the basis of the maternal and child health and immunisation service branding, including staff uniforms, brochures, and printed materials. As well as providing an inviting and welcoming place for Aboriginal parents and children, they also celebrate and promote Aboriginal culture with other local families.

#### **Case Study 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13 - Partnership and shared decision making**

Local Government New South Wales, Aboriginal Affairs NSW and the NSW Office of Local Government have worked together to support and encourage councils to participate in the stocktake of partnerships.

**Case Study 9 - Canterbury Bankstown Council** (NSW) has established a council Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee led by local First Nations People rather than elected members. The Council has also developed a Reconciliation Action Plan within council, with deliverables addressing relevant Closing the Gap reform areas. It has employed an Aboriginal-specific Indigenous Community Development Officer and has also developed a Street Naming Policy and dual names of local flora and fauna in the local language for the council wards.

**Case Study 10 – Albury City Council** (NSW) has worked closely with the local Wiradjuri Elders, to facilitate the establishment of a local Aboriginal custodian group, who provide a voice in the decision-making processes regarding Council business and for other sectors. Albury City Council has an informal arrangement with the Wiradjuri Elders Group, to ensure there is a traditional custodian lens over projects, especially for land redevelopment and cultural activation projects. Albury City Council also formally supports the Wiradjuri Elders



Group, by way of a community and cultural grant. The development and implementation of the inaugural Albury City Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan provides a framework that helps Albury City connect with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, by demonstrating a commitment to a greater understanding and appreciation of culture and aspiration that contribute to the future of the Albury community. Albury City is working together with others towards enhancing the health and well-being of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

**Case Study 11 – Inner West Council** (NSW) have established the Inner West Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee that provides feedback, guidance and recommendations to council and contributes to local knowledge. The Committee meets quarterly and is refreshed annually. Minutes are publicly available via the Inner West Council website - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Committee - Inner West Council (nsw.gov.au). The Council is drafting the new Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan aligned with Closing the Gap initiatives. It employs 2 full-time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, giving strategic advice on cultural matters and also supports an Aboriginal Employees Network which also includes external organisations. Inner West Council has committed in its Community Strategic Plan to develop an Anti-Racism strategy and an accompanying Action Plan to support its delivery.

**Case study 12 - Wagga Wagga City Council** (NSW) has developed and is implementing its Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan. Council supports community-led NAIDOC and Reconciliation Week activities for decisions and curation by the local Wiradjuri and First Nations community. The council has increased employment and apprenticeship/trainee opportunities for First Nations People across the organisation. Council commits to regular consultation through the Mawang Gaway group and established mechanisms to consult with the local Wiradjuri Women’s Group on decisions for new developments around issues such as sacred sites. It has delivered mandatory staff cultural awareness training, that has been developed and delivered by local Wiradjuri Elders and cultural knowledge holders. Acknowledgement of Wiradjuri Country has been translated into Wiradjuri language, situated at council’s front entrance and all cultural facilities. It is embedded into new corporate documents, visitor guides and signage.

**Case Study 13 - Shellharbour** (NSW) is developing Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan aligned to Closing the Gap targets. The draft has been submitted and the first round of feedback received. This action addresses priority 3: Transforming government organisations to decrease the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experiences of racism. As part of the deliverables of the RAP, the council has committed to the development of an Action plan to further address the priority reform areas and socioeconomic targets for the NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan.

**Case Study 14 - City of Greater Bendigo** (VIC) and the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation signed an agreement called Yilingga Marna” (‘shake hands’ in Dja Dja Wurrung language) on 7 December 2022. This 12-month agreement will assist council-led projects to deliver on the legal entitlements of the Dja Dja Wurrung people, including a new partnership builder role to facilitate the smooth implementation of the agreement and maximise its opportunities.

**Case Study 15 - Shire of Halls Creek** (WA): Through their Olabud Doogethu suite of programs the Shire of Halls Creek aims to provide local employment while improving the safety of Halls Creek. Programs focus on: youth justice, youth engagement, youth case intervention, alternative education re-engagement, human rights, community justice and tribal affairs.

- **Community Justice Program:** It is the first justice reinvestment project in Western Australia. It is co-led and codesigned by 11 Aboriginal communities. Through community-led solutions, the project aims to create a new justice system in Halls Creek which prioritises Aboriginal Law and culture.
- **Alternative Education:** Through their Mibala project the Shire aims to guide and support disengaged children back into mainstream education. The project aims to provide re-connection to culture and Country to instil a sense of identity and pride within children.
- **Employment:** With a previous unemployment rate of 40% the Shire committed its own resources to create new jobs and to upskill those struggling to find re-employment. In partnership with the State Government and Main Roads, the Shire established its own local roads team and purchased equipment to undertake works. In collaboration with North Regional Tafe, the Shire also employed Trainees to complete their certificate III in Civil Construction Plan Operations.

**Case Study 16 - City of Melville and City of Cockburn (WA):** The neighbouring cities of Melville and Cockburn partnered together to develop and deliver their ‘Let's Talk About Racism’ Workshop to their staff. It is a unique and evolving program that tackles racism, its impacts, causes and solutions. For non-Aboriginal staff - the workshops are about helping them become an agent of change in their organisation and to understand the important role that allies to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can play in supporting colleagues. The workshops also give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people the power to speak out and share their history, experience, and truth. It’s an opportunity to discuss and teach non-Aboriginal people about the harsh reality of the not-so-recent past, the current hurdles and what the future looks like right now for the next generation.

**Case Study 17 - City of Canning (WA):** In partnership with three Aboriginal organisations the City of Canning delivers a free Ngalang Kadjin Moorditj (our spirit strong) mentoring program. The program is specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged between 18-26 and covers topics such as;

- Job readiness
- Cultural strength and resilience
- Social and emotional well being
- Cultural appropriate employment and enterprise skills.

**Case Study 18 - City of Belmont (WA):** The City of Belmont is the first WA Local Government to develop an Aboriginal Strategy that aims to directly address three key Aboriginal policies; the National Agreement on closing the Gap 2020, Western Australian Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy and Reconciliation Australia Reconciliation Action Plan Framework. The City is currently in a consultation phase working in partnership with its local Aboriginal community to deliver a Strategy developed by the community, for the community. It will address the following six priority areas;

- Country and climate Land, water, and air
- Celebrating and recognising cultural and heritage
- Racism-free and culturally safe environment
- Creating long Healthy lives through accessible, culturally appropriate services
- Jobs, training, and education
- Economic participation and empowerment.







### **Case Study 30 - Elected members in the Northern Territory**

Consistent with Priority Reform 3: Transforming Government Organisations in the Northern Territory, nearly 60% of all local government elected members in the NT are Aboriginal, and approximately 89% of regional council elected members are Aboriginal. Of the 154 elected members in the NT (as at August 2023), 92 are Aboriginal elected members. Nine of the NT's 17 councils have majority Aboriginal elected members, and 4 of those are entirely Aboriginal elected members.

There are 67 Local Authorities across regional and remote communities in the NT. Local Authorities, operated by regional councils, are involved in planning, giving feedback on service delivery, and identifying priority community projects. Although no official data collected, it is estimated most Local Authority members are Aboriginal.

### **Case Study 31 - LGAQ – Indigenous Leaders Forum**

The Indigenous Leaders Forum (ILF) was established to provide a collective voice for Queensland's First Nations councils through discussion, interaction, and collaboration amongst participating elected leaders, State and Federal Government representatives, and other key stakeholders.

The ILF has been convened bi-annually since 2012, with circa 80 mayoral and councillor delegates from the seventeen (17) discrete First Nations local governments regularly in attendance.

The ILF serves as a platform for first nations councils to discuss issues that may require a larger policy and advocacy response or to bring directly to State or Federal Ministers. There is also the opportunity to discuss motions for the LGAQ conference and panel sessions to share challenges and progress shared advocacy opportunities.

### **Case Study 32 - TSIRC Marine Infrastructure**

After a successful campaign, the Commonwealth and Queensland Governments have committed to a combined \$80 million to overhaul Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula area marine infrastructure. The most significant investment in the Torres Strait and Northern Peninsula area marine infrastructure in 30 years.

The marine infrastructure program will take place over six years and create up to 100 jobs. This announcement was welcome by The Torres Strait Island Regional Council (TSIRC) as Australia's most northernly municipality, representing 15 unique island communities, spread across 42,000km<sup>2</sup> of sea, and an international border with Papua New Guinea.

Access to the island communities is constrained. Essential supplies (food, water, medical) and services (emergency services, medical, construction) must all be delivered to the islands either via air or sea. The islands are typically small, which limits the size of the airstrips that can be constructed on the island, therefore requiring any larger items to be delivered by sea. Jetties are the primary marine based infrastructure used throughout Torres Strait for travel, trade, and recreation between the islands.

### **Case Study 33 - The Palm Island Night Patrol**

Residents on Palm Island have taken spiralling youth crime issues into their own hands by developing a Night Patrol. The night patrol was developed through a Local Leadership Group in discussions with Councillors, Council executive and Rangers. There is very strong support within the community for this initiative and widespread discussion on how positive it is.

Each night teams of volunteers take part in the night patrol based in the town centre, talking to wandering children and encouraging them to go home. The night patrol members record their actions with who was out, what action was taken etc – where necessary they go and approach parents and families the day after to follow up. Within a matter of weeks, the initiative had a “massive impact” on property crime on the island.



**Case Study 34 - Cultural Centre at Mapoon**

The successful launch of the Cultural Centre has been a source of pride for the entire Mapoon community. It's a tangible representation of the community's progress and growth.

The Cultural Centre's focus on indigenous knowledge and cultural preservation can help the Mapoon community maintain its rich heritage, traditions, and stories. The Cultural Keeping Place and Indigenous Knowledge Center serve as repositories of historical artifacts, documents, and oral traditions.

The Art Gallery and Art Studio provide local artists with a platform to showcase their creative work. This exposure not only benefits individual artists but also contributes to the broader cultural identity of the community.

The presence of a cultural centre with various amenities like a cafe and art gallery will attract tourists and visitors to Mapoon. This influx of visitors will boost the local economy through increased tourism-related activities, such as dining at the cafe and purchasing artworks. To ensure the ongoing success of the cultural centre, it's important to engage community members in its activities, maintain regular programming, and continue fostering a sense of ownership and involvement among all stakeholders. This cultural centre has the potential to become a cornerstone of community life, contributing to the social, cultural, and economic development of Mapoon.



### Attachment 3 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Workforce in Local Government

Extract 2022 Local Government Workforce Skills and Capacity Survey unpublished work:

The participation levels of employees who identified as being Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin varied across local governments. All 8 of the responding local governments in the Northern Territory employed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers, followed by 83.9% of responding local governments in NSW. In the NT, local government is the largest employer of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Note that this data may be under-reported as not all local governments collect this information, and it is also voluntarily provided by employees.

**TABLE 6: TOTAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYEES IN RESPONDING LOCAL GOVERNMENTS, 2022**

| Jurisdiction       | # total employees with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin in responding local governments | # total employees in responding local governments | % of total employees who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin in responding local governments |
|--------------------|---|---|---|
| New South Wales    | 590   | 28,060  | 2.1%  |
| Northern Territory | 886   | 1,764   | 50.2%   |
| Queensland         | 1,155   | 17,238  | 6.7%  |
| South Australia    | 27  | 4,364   | 0.6%  |
| Tasmania           | 5   | 1,870   | 0.3%  |
| Victoria           | 106   | 29,382  | 0.4%  |
| Western Australia  | 158   | 10,346  | 1.5%  |
| <b>Australia</b>   | <b>2,927</b>  | <b>93,024</b>                                     | <b>3.1%</b>   |

Source: 2022 LG Survey

#### Commentary on employment in the Northern Territory

The 2022 Australian Local Government Workforce Skills and Capability Survey NT Report found that the sector, like many others, is grappling with skills shortages and challenges in relation to recruitment and retention and accessing training opportunities. Insights gleaned from the survey show some local government councils are making progress by adapting existing organisational structures and changing conventional work processes in response to their changing social, economic, and environmental context.

The local government sector in the NT collectively employs around 3,000 people and is often the largest employer of Aboriginal people in remote and regional areas. The 2022 local government workforce report mentioned above confirmed the NT has the highest proportion of Aboriginal employees in the sector nationally.



According to the NT Government’s Indigenous Jobs Development Fund data, as of June 2023, the NT’s nine regional councils and Belyuen Community Government Council employed a total of 879 Aboriginal people. The 2022 local government workforce report states that the highest proportions of Aboriginal participation are in the 30-44 year and 20–29-year age groups in operational and trade positions. The report also states that almost 60% of the trainees and apprentices in the respondent councils identify as being of Aboriginal origin.