



AUSTRALIAN
LOCAL GOVERNMENT
ASSOCIATION

ALGA
Closing the Gap
2022 Annual Report

Contents

ALGA.....	0
Closing the Gap	0
2022 Annual Report	0
Opening statement	2
Priority Reforms	5
Priority Reform One: Partnership and shared decision-making	5
Priority Reform Two: Building the community-controlled sector	8
Priority Reform Three: Transforming government organisations	9
Priority Reform Four: Shared access to data and information at a regional level	11

Attachments

Attachment 1 - Resolutions from the 2022 National General Assembly of Local Government.....	12
Attachment 2 – Case Studies	14

Opening statement

Councillor Linda Scott, President of the Australian Local Government Association

As President of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA), it is my great pleasure to present ALGA's Closing the Gap Annual Report.

This Report is a milestone for ALGA and is the first report on the progress of ALGA's Closing the Gap Implementation Plan (September 2021). It provides a high-level assessment of progress on each of the actions ALGA and member state and territory local government associations committed to undertake in partnership with the Coalition of Peaks and jurisdictions.

The report shows relatively good progress on 8 of the 14 specific actions in the first year of operation of the Implementation Plan and has helped the ALGA Board identify areas that need additional attention and additional resources.

Given ALGA's different roles, responsibilities and circumstances this report will look different to other jurisdictional Annual Reports. Our report uses a traffic light approach to indicate the level of progress that has been made for each action identified 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 little progress has been made to date and should be an area of future attention.

As I have indicated this is the first Annual Report by the Association. It has helped the Board immeasurably in monitoring and refining ALGA's work on its Implementation Plan.

In July 2022 the Productivity Commission released its second Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation report. It provides a snapshot of progress under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Disappointingly it shows that 5 of the Closing the Gap targets are not on track however there has been some improvement in 4 of the targets.

In responding to the report Minister Burney notes that the '... The Closing the Gap architecture can only work when all parties are invested and there is a coordinated effort from all jurisdictions in partnership with First Nations peoples.'

Closing the Gap across all local government areas is a work in progress. It is, as the Minister has indicated, a task for all parties and ALGA remains committed to working collaboratively with all partners to achieve our mutual goals.

I look forward to working with our Partners in progressing to 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

This document is the first Annual Report on the progress of the Australian Local Government Association's (ALGA) Closing the Gap Implementation Plan.

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.

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. ALGA's Annual Report, therefore, seeks to complement jurisdictional Annual Reports and does not report on the 537 individual local governments across the nation.

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.

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: Each year, ALGA conducts 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.¹

In 2021, ALGA invited Professor Tom Calma AO to address the Assembly on the Indigenous Voice and Donnell 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

¹ Local government attendance at the 2021 NGA was 750 and in 2022 attendance increased to 1012 delegates.

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.

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.

Assistance to State and Territory Governments: ALGA is a Federated organisation comprising state and territory local government associations. As a signatory to the Agreement, and a full member of the Joint Council and Partnership Working Group, ALGA is available for advice to all jurisdictions on matters related to local government. ALGA and all state and territory associations have sought active engagement with their respective jurisdictional leaders in pursuing Closing the Gap objectives. While engagement in some jurisdictions has been slow, the first Closing the Gap Northern Territory Implementation Plan provides an excellent example of effective collaboration between the Northern Territory Government, Aboriginal Peaks Organisations of the Northern Territory and the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory.

Support Shared Decision Making: As discussed above the NGA is the peak national forum for councils to inform national policy. The NGA provides Indigenous and non-Indigenous councillors from councils across the nation to directly participate and advocate for policy initiatives relevant to the sector. In 2022 five notices of motions on Indigenous issues were submitted for debate and resolved by the Assembly in the affirmative. These now have been incorporated into ALGA's national advocacy platform. (Relevant Resolutions of the 2022 NGA - Attachment 1)

There are 537 local governments in Australia, and each is critical in the provision of local services and infrastructure at the community level, albeit within limited, and mostly local resources. In most jurisdictions, councils are required to consult widely in the development of corporate plans, relevant documents and various plans. Many councils, with the encouragement of ALGA and state and territory associations, have developed strategies to support shared decision-making under the auspice of their Reconciliation Action Plans and/or through Indigenous land Use Agreements (ILUAs) under the Native Title legislative framework. Increasingly councils are developing improved community consultation processes, and the Closing the Gap Agreement highlights the importance of appropriate engagement of First Nations people in the development of plans and service delivery.

Accountability, monitoring and reporting on progress

The National Agreement requires the parties to the Agreement to make public information on their progress on the Agreement and their Implementation Plan through Annual Public Reports (cl. 118). Jurisdictions are required to table their Public Report in their Parliaments (cl. 119) however, in the absence of a Parliament in which to table the report, the ALGA Annual Report has been received by the ALGA Board and will, as soon as practical be made available on the ALGA website.

The Board is comprised of an independent President and two representatives from each State and Territory Local Government Association (generally the President and Vice President of each association) and is the most influential local government decision-making body in Australia.

This Annual Report uses a traffic light approach to indicate the level of progress that has been made for each action identified in the Implementation Plan. Green indicates that 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 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 significant disruption due to COVID and natural disasters. This has in some instances 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. 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.

Priority Reform One: Partnership and shared decision-making

Outcome: People are empowered to share decision-making authority with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap through formal partnership arrangements.

Target: There will be formal partnership arrangements to support Closing the Gap in place between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments in place in each state and territory enshrining agreed joint decision-making roles and responsibilities and where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have chosen their own representatives.

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap recognises the critical importance of every level of government working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Under the Agreement, there are two forms of partnerships – the policy partnership and the place-based partnership.

Policy Partnerships:

There are five priority areas for the policy partnerships: 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.

In some of these priority areas, local governments have a very limited-service delivery role (eg. justice) and in others a more direct role such as early childhood care and development.² That said, local government plays an important role as advocates for their community and can help to identify gaps in services and infrastructure in their local government area. Local governments, via the state and territory local government associations, are committed to engaging in the relevant policy partnership at a jurisdictional level as far as possible. However, as member organisations, all associations operate within significant resource constraints and may require support to fill this role.

Place-based partnerships:

There are 5 place-based partnerships currently under development, and in these locations:






- Port Adelaide (South Australia)
- Maningrida (Northern Territory)
- Kimberley (Western Australia)
- Doomadgee (Queensland)
- Tamworth (New South Wales)

² Local government involvement in the selected policy reform areas of justice (adult and youth incarceration), social and emotional wellbeing (mental health), housing, early childhood care and development, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages may be limited or vary across jurisdictions and across councils.




It is also understood that data projects will be associated with some of these place-based partnerships as well as other locations such as Maningrida. (See priority reform area 4). ALGA encourages those responsible for the development of these partnerships to consider the development of appropriate data and information systems to support councils' decision-making.



Key Action Area	Progress	Comments and further action
<p>Key action PR1.1 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><i>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 are working with their jurisdiction to explore any limitations and or to develop strategies that councils may apply to progress this action.</i></p>
<p>Key action PR1.2 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><i>While in most jurisdictions local government has limited direct involvement in the 5 priority policy partnership areas identified in the Agreement. However, where applicable for example in NSW, relevant state and territory local government associations and individual councils have had some involvement in the stocktake.</i></p>
<p>Key action PR1.3 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><i>Work has commenced on collating case studies of effective partnerships involving local governments and associations. A deeper analysis will be undertaken to understand the factors of success and draft principles will be canvassed in relevant forums.</i></p>
<p>Key action PR1.4 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><i>After a slow start, all state and territory associations report that they have had some engagement in relevant policy partnerships with state jurisdictions. 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.</i></p>
<p>Key action PR1.5 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</p>		<p><i>There are 6 place-based partnerships currently under development. State and territory local government associations have reported that relevant local governments within</i></p>



governance arrangements for involvement of many councils.		<i>these place-based areas have been consulted.</i>
Key action PR1.6 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.		<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.</i>

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.

Whilst 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.

Key Action Area	Progress	Comments and further Action
Key action PR2.1 ALGA and state and territory local government associations to participate in the development and implementation of Sector Strengthening Plans as appropriate.		<i>The state and territory governments need to consider the roles and responsibilities of their 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, and in some states and territories, councils provide housing in remote</i>



		<i>communities or provide community health services.</i>
Key action PR2.2 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.		<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.</i>
Key action PR2.3 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.		<i>This project is currently on track and will report at the completion of the project and in accordance with the funding agreement with the Commonwealth. It is expected that this will be reported on in next year's Annual Report.</i>

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.



Key Action Area	Progress	Comments and further Action
<p>Key Action PR 3.1 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.</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. More can be done.</i></p>
<p>Key Action PR 3.2 ALGA and state and territory local government associations to encourage all councils to develop and implement a Reconciliation Action Plan.</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). Many councils today fly the Aboriginal Flag and Torres Islander Flags at council buildings and acknowledgement of country is now commonplace in council operations. Currently, many councils are reviewing their RAPs 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.</i></p>
<p>Key Action PR 3.1 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.</p>		<p><i>ALGA and State and the Northern Territory Association have worked 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>


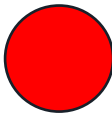
Priority Reform Four: Shared access to data and information at a regional level

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.

Key Action Area	Progress	Comments and further Action
<p>Key Action PR 4.1 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.</p>		<p>ALGA understands that work has commenced on the Community Data Project Sites however it is at an early stage of development. This work has 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.</p>
<p>Key Action PR4.2 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.</p>		<p>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.</p>

Resolutions of the National General Assembly 2022.

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.

Resolution number 41 Roper Gulf Regional Council NT

This National General Assembly call on the Federal Government to acknowledge the lack of services and infrastructure in Indigenous communities and the need to address the lack of:

- 1) Regional Health access to aged care, primary, specialist, and the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- (2) Affordable Housing and Land availability
- (3) Child Care access and affordability
- (4) Skill shortage in regional areas
- (5) Local skills and capability development
- (6) Education system -School leavers not job-ready for local jobs as required and available locally; and
- (7) Lack of coordinated governance across all tiers of government in regional areas.

Resolution number 55 East Arnhem Regional Council NT

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to ensure collaboration of all levels of Government, including partnerships, policy and program development and implementation responsible for issues affecting Indigenous Australians.

In addition, the National General Assembly reaffirms its commitment as a national priority to call on the federal, state and territory governments to commit to and progress nationally consistent recognition of Indigenous local government councils – where First Nations people are a majority presence on council and among electors – as Aboriginal Community Controlled local governments across Australia at all levels of government. The motion continues a shared value and commitment of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) that aligns with the Closing the Gap Agreement, policy development, principles and practices of indigenous procurement and implementation affecting Indigenous Australians, Indigenous communities, and Indigenous Local Government Councils.

Resolution number 56 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 a constitutionally enshrined voice to Parliament for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and endorsing the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

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 56.1 Inner West Council NSW

This National General Assembly calls on the Australian Government to:

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.

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 1: 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 2 & 3 - 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 2 - Hume City Council (Victoria) runs an early parenting program "Boorais and Beyond" which links Aboriginal parents to early years services (see p 9 of Hume City Council's [RAP](#)). Hume City Council also did a Stolen Generations Marker (see p16 [Annual Report](#)).

Case Study 3 - Mornington Peninsula Shire Council (Victoria) has adopted "The First 1000 days" framework across its early years' programs. Extract from 2022 Reconciliation Action Plan 'Journey: First 1000 Days Australia First 1000 Days Australia is

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an evidence-based model to foster resilience, leadership and innovation in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. The Shire's Senior Social Planner, Aboriginal Culture and Community Development, Deb Mellett, is a member of the esteemed First 1000 Days Australia Council. Professor Kerry Arabena chairs the Council. First 1000 Days Australia aims to enhance the health, well-being and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, adolescents and families from (pre)conception and conception until a child's second birthday. First 1000 Days Australia has the view that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have a rightful expectation to be born to parents who can provide them with every opportunity to become competent, happy and healthy adults. Deb Mellett worked with the Shire's Early Years team (including the Maternal & Child Health and Education & Care units) to adopt the First 1000 Days framework to ensure that its services are culturally safe, inclusive and accessible for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children. Through her role on the First 1000 Days Council (including forging partnerships with Indonesia to adopt the model) and the implementation of the First 1000 Days framework in the Early Years team, Deb Mellett has been recognised as a leader in the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and children.'

Case Study 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8 - 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 4 - 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 5 – Albury City Council 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 AlburyCity Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan provides a framework that helps AlburyCity 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. AlburyCity is working together with others towards enhancing the health and well-being of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Case Study 6 – 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 7 - 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 8 - 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 9 - Supporting truth-telling and reflection: The Chair of the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission is presenting at the MAV's Annual Conference in October 2022 on the topic "Journey Towards Truth and Treaty". The Commission was established in May 2021 by agreement between the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria and the Victorian Government as a formal truth-telling process into past and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria as a result of colonisation. It aims to acknowledge the truth of Victoria's history and lay the foundations for new, positive relationships between the State, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians.


Case Study 10 - 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 11 - 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 12 - 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 13 - 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 14 - Local Government New South Wales (LGNSW) has worked closely with the NSW Office of Local Government and Aboriginal Affairs NSW to produce a [Closing the Gap factsheet](#) for local government. The factsheet provides suggestions and examples of how councils can contribute to Closing the Gap priority reform areas and socio-economic outcomes including through council plans and delivery programs under the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework.

During 2021/22 LGNSW held two information sessions for mayors, councillors and council staff in August 2021 (online) and February 2022 (in person at the LGNSW Special Conference), with representation from the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations, NSW Aboriginal Land Council and Reconciliation NSW, to update councils on Closing the Gap priority areas and how councils can contribute to achieving Closing the Gap targets.

LGNSW also consults with and supports the NSW Local Government Aboriginal Network (LGAN) – this is an autonomous peer network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander councillors and council staff. In 2021/22, LGNSW.

Case Study 15 - Western Australian Local Governments with Aboriginal communities are supportive of efforts to improve the living conditions and governance in these communities. There are 280 discrete Aboriginal communities in Western Australia spanning 26 Local Governments. In WA the Local Government Reconciliation Network Google Group brings together WA Local Government Officers working in reconciliation and Aboriginal projects, including experienced Aboriginal Community Development Officers who can provide advice and guidance on Aboriginal engagement. The main purpose of the Google Group is to share peer-to-peer advice and learnings, offer support and encouragement, explore opportunities for partnership and collaboration between Local Governments, and coordinate meetings and events. Membership of the Google Group is open to all Local Government staff, employees of State, Commonwealth and not-for-profit departments, and organisations with shared interests upon receipt of approval from the secretariat of the WA Local Government Reconciliation Network.

Case Study 16 The working relationship between the WA Government and local governments is predominately overseen by the State-Local Government Partnership Agreement. This State-Local Government Partnership Agreement recognises the complementary strengths of each level of government and acknowledges that in a large and diverse state, working together is necessary to address challenges and realise opportunities, and it promotes the effective and efficient use of public resources. WALGA is actively promoting Reconciliation Action Plans through a range of initiatives such as the annual Aboriginal Engagement Forum, facilitation of an Aboriginal Officer Network Group and through supporting Reconciliation WA.

Case Study 17 - Australian Local Government Association Election Priorities. Throughout the 2021 Federal election ALGA advocated for \$100 million per annum over four provided directly to local governments to support the capabilities of indigenous councils and implementation of the Closing the Gap local/regional voice.