



Australian Government  
Productivity Commission

July 2026

# Closing the Gap

## Annual Data Compilation Report



## About us

The Productivity Commission is the Australian Government's independent research and advisory body on a range of economic, social and environmental issues affecting the welfare of Australians. Its role, expressed most simply, is to help governments make better policies, in the long-term interest of the Australian community.

The PC's independence is underpinned by an Act of Parliament. Its processes and outputs are open to public scrutiny and are driven by concern for the wellbeing of the community as a whole.

For more information, visit the PC's website: [www.pc.gov.au](http://www.pc.gov.au).

## © Commonwealth of Australia 2026

With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms and content supplied by third parties, this copyright work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. In essence, you are free to copy, communicate and adapt the work, as long as you attribute the work to the PC (but not in any way that suggests the PC endorses you or your use) and abide by the other licence terms. The licence can be viewed at: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>. The terms under which the Coat of Arms can be used are detailed at: [www.pmc.gov.au/government/commonwealth-coat-arms](http://www.pmc.gov.au/government/commonwealth-coat-arms). Wherever a third party holds copyright in this material, the copyright remains with that party. Their permission may be required to use the material, please contact them directly.

ISBN 978-1-74037-836-9 (online)

ISBN 978-1-74037-835-2 (print)

## Attribution

This work should be attributed as follows, Source: Productivity Commission 2026, *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report*, July 2026, Canberra

If you have adapted, modified or transformed this work in anyway, please use the following, Source: based on Productivity Commission 2026 data, *Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report*, July 2026, Canberra

## Publication enquiries

Phone: (03) 9653 2244 | Email: [publications@pc.gov.au](mailto:publications@pc.gov.au)



## Acknowledgments

**For over 65,000 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have sustained thriving, diverse, and interconnected economies built on systems and knowledge grounded in deep relationships with Country, kin and community.**

**We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's first researchers, innovators, traders and knowledge holders, and honour their expertise and experience, built through an enduring connection to, and custodianship of, Country.**

**We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands, sea, and waters where we live, work and gather. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to Elders past and present.**

The PC thanks the Partnership Working Group, along with members of the community, organisations and government agencies who have provided feedback, data and other information for use in this report.

We also thank Distinguished Professor Maggie Walter, a Palawa woman, and founding member of the Maïam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective, for sharing her expert perspective on Indigenous Data Sovereignty and the role of data in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination.

## Content warning

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this report may contain the names of people who have since passed away.**

**This report contains material that can be confronting and disturbing. Sometimes information (words and data) can cause sadness or distress, or traumatic memories for people. For some people, these responses can be overwhelming. Support is available if you need to talk to someone.**

The following services are available 24 hours a day:

13YARN: 13 92 76

Beyond Blue: 1300 224 636

1800RESPECT: 1800 737 732

MensLine Australia: 1300 789 978

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Suicide Call Back Service: 1300 659 467



## About the artwork

### *From the artist – ‘Pathways of Progress: A Journey Towards Closing the Gap’*

In the timeless expanse of creation, the Productivity Commission embarked on a sacred journey, painting the story of progress across 3 artworks that echoed with the rhythms of the land and water, resonating with the heartbeat of the people.

Upon the first artwork, hand prints adorned the beginning, symbols of care and connection, intertwined with the essence of Target 1 – Life expectancy. Footprints traced the paths of ancestors, guiding the way forward. Leaves danced in the breeze, whispering tales of ancient ties to Country. The boomerang, a symbol of gathering the essence of information.

Throughout the artworks, dots of blue and orange shimmered, reflecting the land and water that sustains us. People symbols strode forward, their presence a testament to collective effort. Each symbol etched with stories of community, bridging the gap between past and present. Within, a sacred ring forms across each artwork, coloured orange and brown, heralding the Annual Data Compilation. Animal tracks of knowledge are placed representing the tracking of information and moving forward, guiding the way. And high above all, unity unfolded.

The top of the artwork portrayed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and government, connecting in partnership, minds united in purpose. As the journey unfolded across the remaining artworks, each milestone is marked with reverence. Through strokes of artistry, the Productivity Commission’s journey becomes a testament to resilience, to unity, to the enduring spirit of the land and its people. And in the end, it is not just a report, but a legacy – a testament to the power of collaboration, of understanding, and of hope. The colours used throughout the artwork were chosen to represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



2024



2025



2026

## About the artist

Lani Balzan is an Aboriginal artist and graphic designer specialising in designing Indigenous canvas art, graphic design, logo design, Reconciliation Action Plan design and document design.

Lani is a proud Aboriginal woman from the Wiradjuri people of the three-river tribe. Her family originates from Mudgee but she grew up all over Australia and lived in many different towns starting her business in the Illawarra NSW and recently relocating to Mid-North Queensland.

In 2016 Lani was announced as the 2016 NAIDOC Poster Competition winner with her artwork 'Songlines'. This poster was used as the 2016 NAIDOC theme across the country. Lani has been creating Aboriginal Art since 2013 and has continued success across the country.

One of her biggest goals and inspirations with creating Aboriginal art is to develop a better connection to her culture and to continue to work towards reconciliation; bringing people and communities together to learn about the amazing culture we have here in Australia.



## Foreword

The 2026 Annual Data Compilation Report (ADCR) is the sixth report by the Productivity Commission since the commencement of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the Agreement). It provides insights into the progress against national targets outlined in the Agreement, while also highlighting areas for further development, aiming to reduce overall disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Since 2020, the internal expertise and maturity of our data and reporting team has grown through the development of the ADCR, which has helped build public awareness of the Agreement. In addition, the PC has also provided robust and practical advice to all governments on how best to address the issues highlighted.

Unfortunately, we still have no nationally consistent way of measuring the four Priority Reforms. The Priority Reforms were designed and included in the Agreement at the insistence of the Coalition of Peaks to fundamentally shift the trajectory of disadvantage for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. While some work has commenced to identify and develop relevant data sources across jurisdictions, without any meaningful way of measuring these reform pillars, governments may not see the change required to improve outcomes.

In 2026, data is available for 18 of the 19 socio-economic targets, with progress assessed for 15. For the first time, the ADCR includes an end-point assessment: the target for preschool enrolment has been met. Unfortunately, four targets continue to worsen, including adult imprisonment; childhood development; out-of-home care; and, alarmingly, suicide rates. We have seen improvements in employment; and land and sea area subject to legal rights and interests. Other outcome areas are showing improvements, although not at a sufficient rate to meet the relevant target by 2031, including life expectancy; healthy birthweight; Year 12 or equivalent qualification; tertiary qualification; youth engagement; and appropriately sized housing. We are still unable to assess progress against access to essential services; family violence; languages being spoken; and digital inclusion.

Our team has continued to focus on developing a full data picture for each target through the use of additional supporting indicators, both government and community-sourced, to inform the fullness of each story. Enriching the data landscape is just as important as reporting on progress, as we continue building our understanding of the relationship between supporting indicators to improve progress against targets. We now have 60 supporting indicators across 19 socio-economic targets published on the dashboard and will continue to diversify sources in future years.

We are now at the half-way stage of meeting the agreement's targets, which are due to be achieved by 2031. The urgency to alter the trajectory of those targets not on track, or more importantly, those which are declining, is strikingly clear. As we prepare to commence the 2026 review of the Agreement, our focus will again be about equipping governments with the practical tools required to improve outcomes, including a particular focus on targets requiring urgent attention. Of equal importance, is our intention to provide communities with the information they need to engage decision makers in a true and meaningful partnership to achieve change.

**Selwyn Button, Commissioner**

**Danielle Wood, Chair**

July 2026

## About this report

The Productivity Commission plays an accountability role under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the Agreement) by reporting outcomes and monitoring progress. This report, the Annual Data Compilation Report (ADCR), is published annually and provides a snapshot of dashboard material published on the PC's Closing the Gap dashboard (PC CtG dashboard) in the last 12 months. It includes:

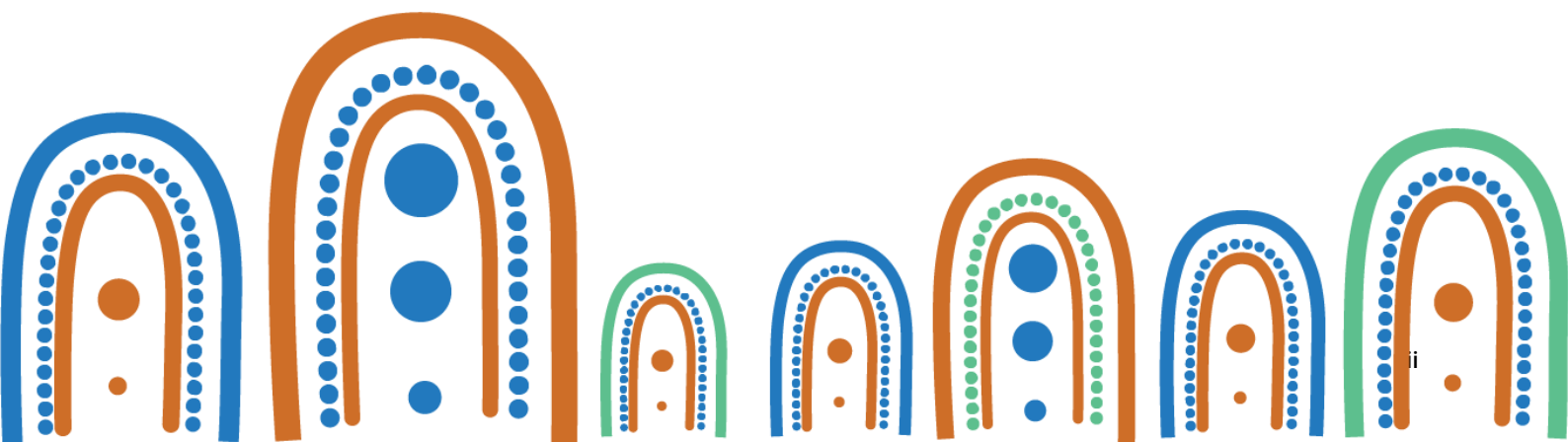
- **Part 1:** a high-level assessment of progress for outcomes, information on the data landscape and a closer look at the diverse experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- **Part 2:** an analysis of progress for all socio-economic outcomes and contextual information
- **Part 3:** attachments containing background information including a data collection summary table, a state and territory progress table and a glossary.

### Statement of Commitment

In 2025, the PC released a Statement of Commitment that described how we will transform to meet our obligations under the Agreement. As part of this, the PC is committed to strengthening its reporting to be relevant, responsive, strengths-based and accessible (PC 2025b).

The approach in this report is to:

- centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives by prioritising the knowledge, experience and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities
- contextualise the data by providing some historical and ongoing context not captured in quantitative data
- respect and communicate complexity by presenting mixed progress transparently and structuring the report thematically to reflect the interconnected nature of the socio-economic outcomes
- be transparent about data limitations by clearly identifying gaps and quality considerations, and outlining how these may shape interpretation
- support a strengths-based understanding by highlighting resilience, protective factors and community-led approaches alongside areas for improvement.

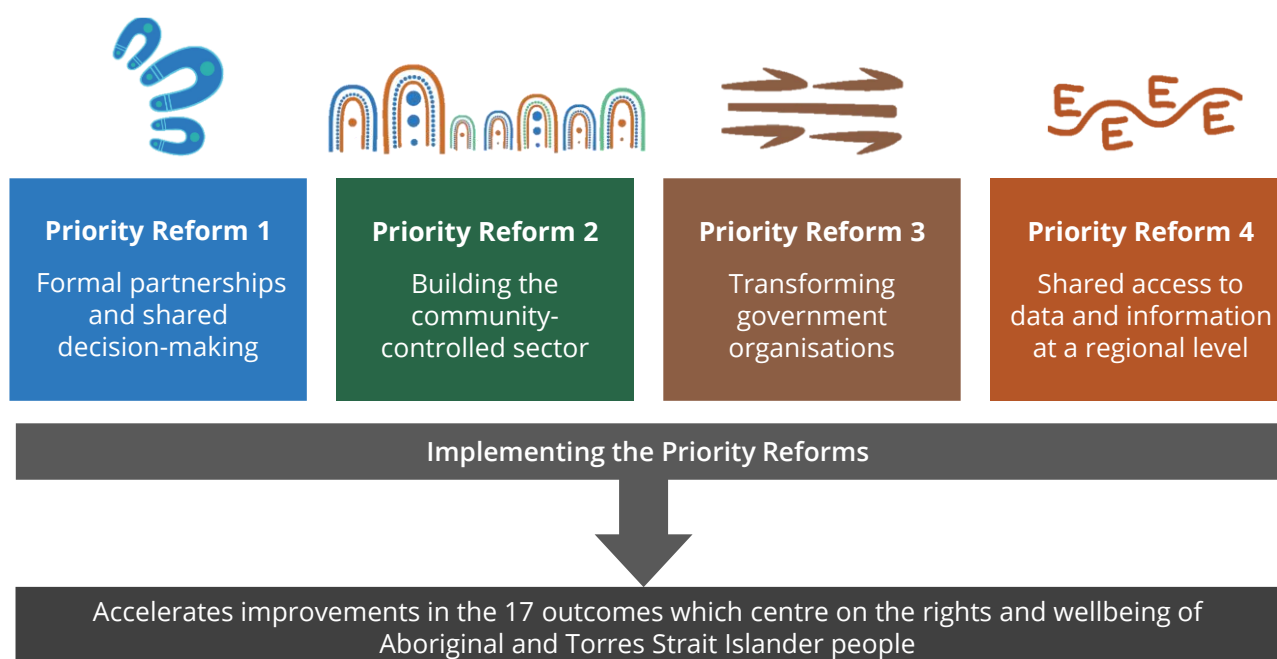




## National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The Agreement's objective is to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments to work together to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and achieve life outcomes equal to all Australians.

The parties (all Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations) established targets to measure progress (Joint Council 2020, clause 17). Implementing the 4 Priority Reforms is key to improving the 17 socio-economic outcomes, which are measured by 19 targets and over 160 supporting indicators that provide context and information on the drivers of the outcomes.



## Role of the PC

Parties to the Agreement and the Joint Council on Closing the Gap (Joint Council) agreed to the outcomes, targets, supporting indicators, methodologies and data sources for targets included in the Agreement.

The PC has 2 specific responsibilities under the Agreement:

1. **reporting:** develop and maintain a publicly accessible dashboard comprising data and associated supporting materials, as well as publishing an annual data compilation report to inform the reporting on progress on Closing the Gap (Joint Council 2020, clause 116, 117)
2. **reviewing:** complete a comprehensive 3-yearly review of progress against the commitments in the Agreement (Joint Council 2020, clause 121–123).

In delivering the Closing the Gap Reporting, the PC works in partnership with Partnership Working Group (PWG), which includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations and government members from across Australia (Joint Council 2020, clause 117). Through this shared governance approach, partners provide advice and feedback that informs workplans, analysis and published products (refer to attachment 1 – Closing the Gap governance frameworks).



# Contents

|                                                                                                             |            |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Acknowledgments                                                                                             | iii        |
| Content warning                                                                                             | iii        |
| About the artwork                                                                                           | iv         |
| About the artist                                                                                            | v          |
| Foreword                                                                                                    | vi         |
| About this report                                                                                           | vii        |
| <b>1. Overview</b>                                                                                          | <b>1</b>   |
| 1.1 Progress towards Closing the Gap                                                                        | 2          |
| 1.2 An evolving data landscape                                                                              | 7          |
| 1.3 A closer look at diverse experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait<br>Islander people and communities | 11         |
| 1.4 The report at a glance                                                                                  | 15         |
| <b>2. Progress in socio-economic outcomes</b>                                                               | <b>17</b>  |
| 2.1 Health, wellbeing and development                                                                       | 18         |
| 2.2 Families and kin                                                                                        | 44         |
| 2.3 Culture and language                                                                                    | 60         |
| 2.4 Education and training                                                                                  | 65         |
| 2.5 Economic participation                                                                                  | 86         |
| 2.6 Housing                                                                                                 | 93         |
| 2.7 Country                                                                                                 | 102        |
| 2.8 Justice                                                                                                 | 112        |
| 2.9 Digital inclusion                                                                                       | 127        |
| <b>Attachments</b>                                                                                          | <b>135</b> |
| Attachment 1 – Closing the Gap governance frameworks                                                        | 136        |
| Attachment 2 – Jurisdictional assessment of progress                                                        | 137        |
| Attachment 3 – Closing the Gap dashboard data collection summary (2026)                                     | 138        |
| <b>Glossary</b>                                                                                             | <b>150</b> |
| <b>References</b>                                                                                           | <b>152</b> |



# 1. Overview



## 1.1 Progress towards Closing the Gap

### 2026 updates

The 2026 ADCR includes new data for 9 socio-economic targets and 34 supporting indicators, with a further 12 supporting indicators included for the first time. Data is available for 18 of the 19 socio-economic targets, with progress assessed for 15 (table 1.1 and figure 1.1).

Nationally:

|                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                                                                     |                                                                                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  |  |  |  |                |
| 1 target is met<br>3 targets show good improvement and are on track               | 5 targets are improving but are not on track                                      | 4 targets are worsening                                                           | 2 targets show no change from the baseline                                          | 3 targets have data available but cannot be assessed<br>1 target does not have any data available |

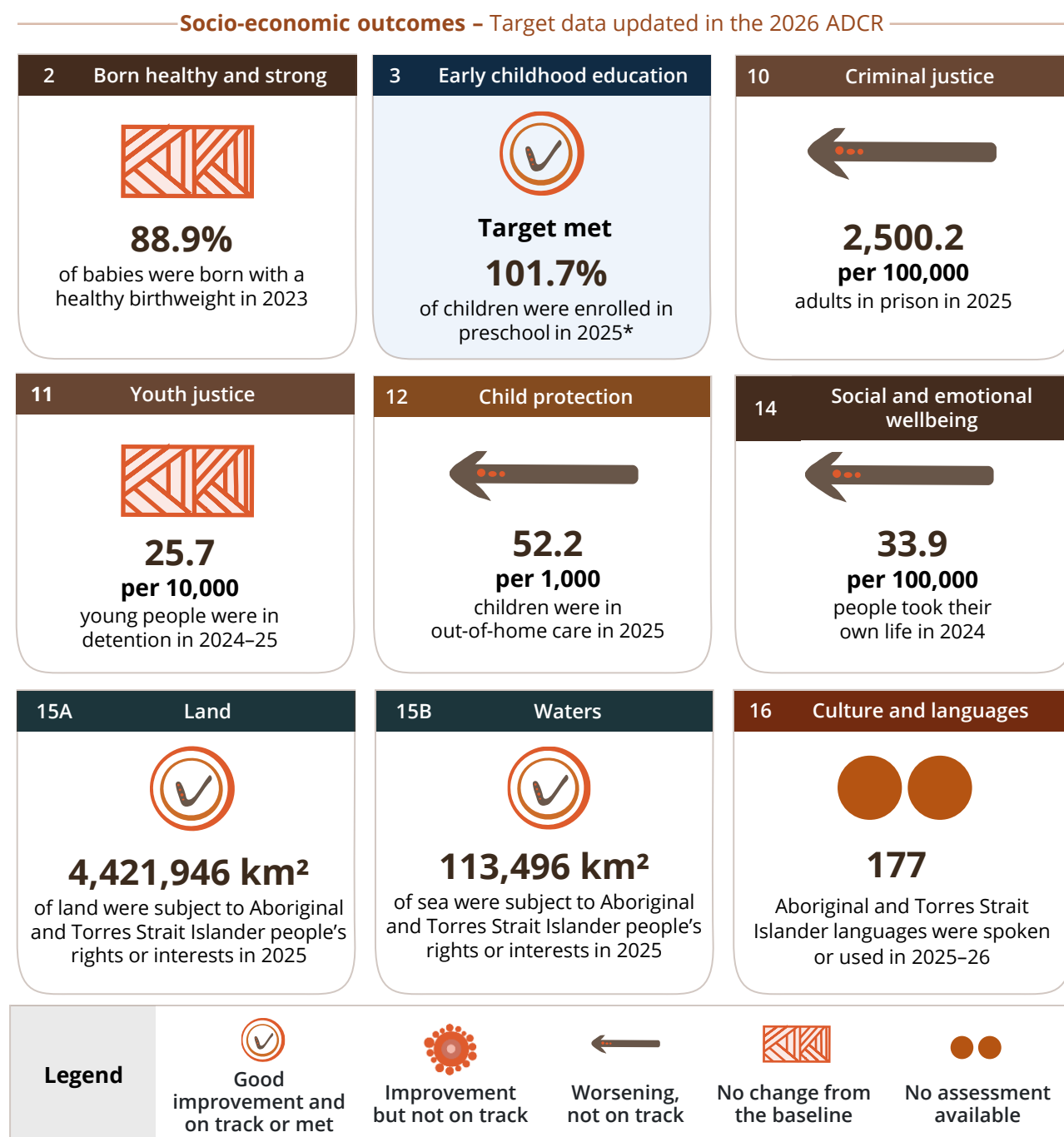
**Table 1.1 – Summary of progress grouped by themes, national**

|                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Health, wellbeing and development | Life expectancy is improving but not on track. Healthy birthweight shows no change from the baseline. Childhood development outcomes have declined slightly, and suicide rates are worsening.              |
| Families and kin                  | Rates of children in out-of-home care have increased. Progress for family safety cannot be assessed.                                                                                                       |
| Culture and language              | New data is available on the number and strength of languages spoken or used, but methodological changes impact progress assessment.                                                                       |
| Education and training            | The target for preschool enrolment has been met. Year 12 or equivalent qualification, tertiary qualification, and youth engagement in employment or education outcomes have improved but are not on track. |
| Economic participation            | Employment shows improvement and is on track.                                                                                                                                                              |
| Housing                           | The proportion of people living in appropriately sized housing has improved but is not on track. No data is available to report on access to essential services.                                           |
| Country                           | Legal rights and interests in land and sea area continue to show improvement and are on track.                                                                                                             |
| Justice                           | Adult imprisonment is worsening and youth detention outcomes show no progress.                                                                                                                             |
| Digital inclusion                 | Data is available, but progress for access to information cannot be assessed.                                                                                                                              |



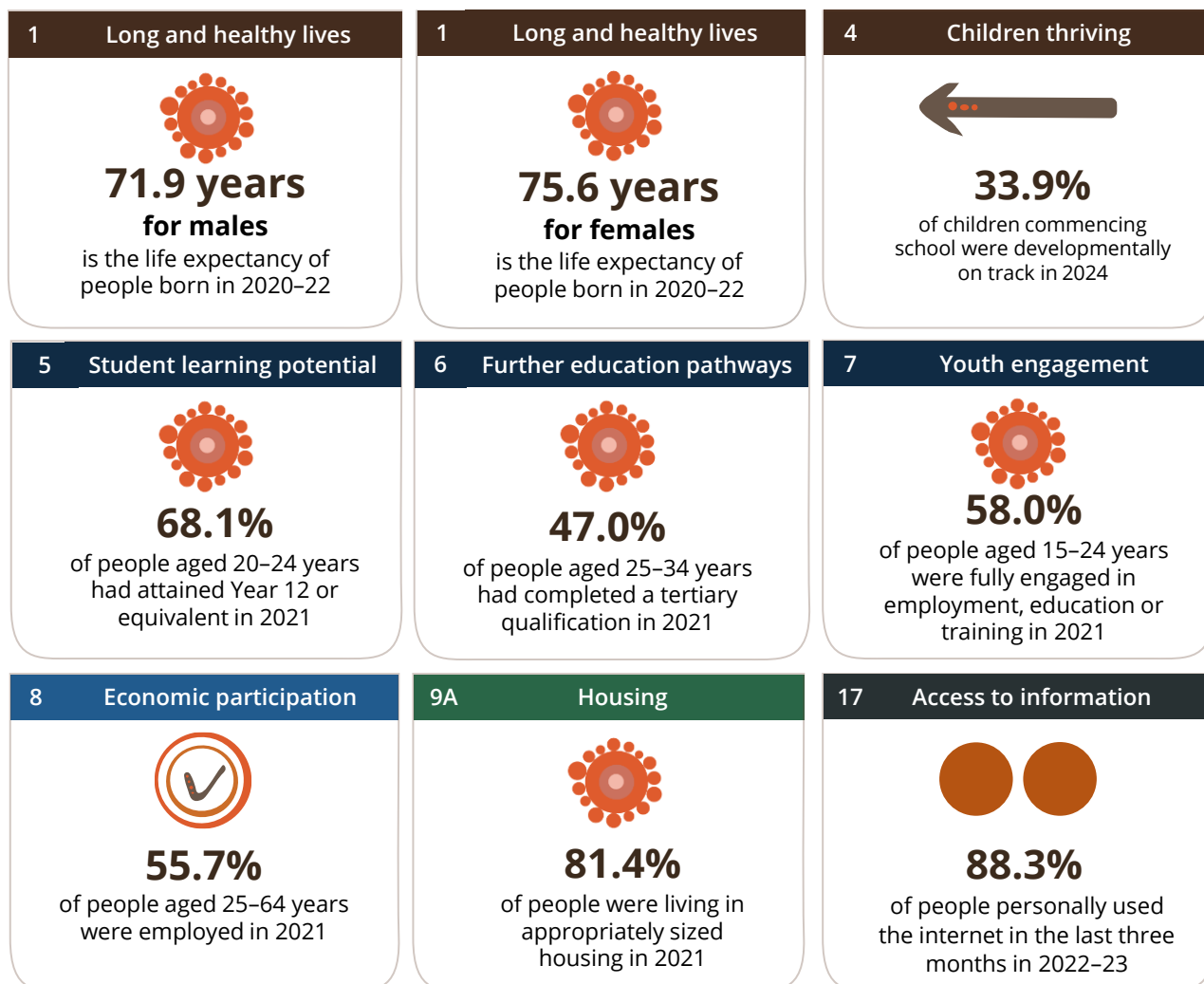
## National snapshot of progress

**Figure 1.1 – Priority Reforms and socio-economic outcomes – progress assessment**

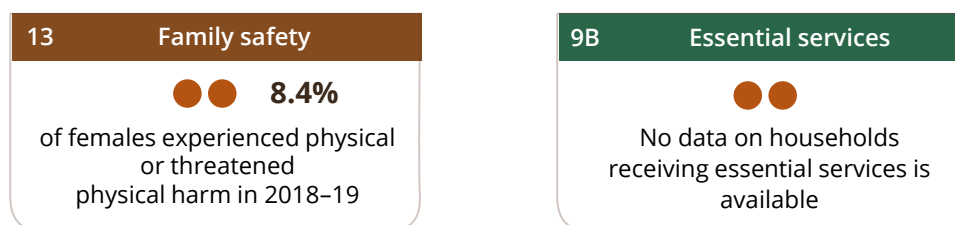


\*Preschool enrolment rates (Target 3) exceed 100% for the national figure and some jurisdictions because the numerator and denominator come from different data sources and are based on different assumptions. Refer to box 2.20 for more information.

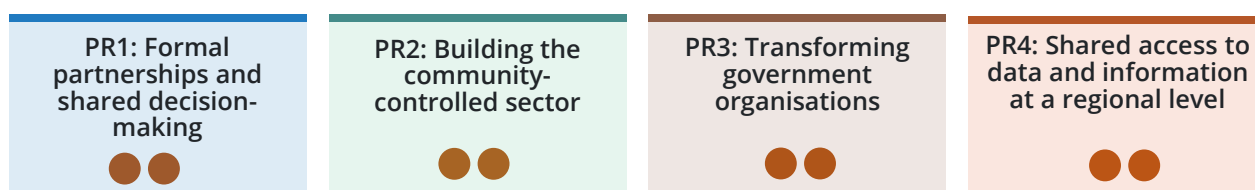
**Socio-economic outcomes** – Target data from a previous ADCR



**No data or no recent data**



**Priority Reforms** – No measurement to assess progress



## Progress varies across states and territories

All Australian governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations have committed to implementing the Agreement. While states and territories do not have formal targets, their progress contributes to national outcomes. All states and territories are showing improvement in at least half of the assessed targets (refer to attachment 2 – Jurisdictional assessment of progress). The Australian Capital Territory, Tasmania and the Northern Territory have the highest number of targets showing no change or worsening.

**Table 1.2 – State and territory progress across socio-economic targets**

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><b>New South Wales</b></p> <p><b>Improvement:</b> life expectancy; preschool enrolment; Year 12 or equivalent qualification; tertiary qualification; youth engagement; employment; appropriately sized housing; children in out-of-home care; and land mass subject to legal rights or interests</p> <p><b>Worsening:</b> childhood development; youth detention; and adult imprisonment</p>                              | <p><b>Victoria</b></p> <p><b>Improvement:</b> healthy birthweight; preschool enrolment; childhood development; Year 12 or equivalent qualification; tertiary qualification; youth engagement; employment; appropriately sized housing; youth detention; adult imprisonment; and land mass and sea area subject to legal rights or interests</p> <p><b>Worsening:</b> children in out-of-home care</p>                                              |
| <p><b>Queensland</b></p> <p><b>Improvement:</b> life expectancy; healthy birthweight; preschool enrolment; childhood development; Year 12 or equivalent qualification; tertiary qualification; youth engagement; employment; appropriately sized housing; and land mass and sea area subject to legal rights or interests</p> <p><b>Worsening:</b> youth detention; adult imprisonment; and children in out-of-home care</p> | <p><b>Western Australia</b></p> <p><b>Improvement:</b> life expectancy; preschool enrolment; Year 12 or equivalent qualification; tertiary qualification; youth engagement; employment; appropriately sized housing; youth detention; and land mass and sea area subject to legal rights or interests</p> <p><b>Worsening:</b> healthy birthweight; childhood development; and adult imprisonment</p>                                              |
| <p><b>South Australia</b></p> <p><b>Improvement:</b> healthy birthweight; preschool enrolment; Year 12 or equivalent qualification; tertiary qualification; employment; youth detention; appropriately sized housing; and land mass and sea area subject to legal rights or interests</p> <p><b>Worsening:</b> youth engagement; adult imprisonment; and children in out-of-home care</p>                                    | <p><b>Tasmania</b></p> <p><b>Improvement:</b> healthy birthweight; preschool enrolment; Year 12 or equivalent qualification; tertiary qualification; youth engagement; employment; and land mass subject to legal rights and interests</p> <p><b>Worsening:</b> childhood development; appropriately sized housing; adult imprisonment; and children in out-of-home care</p>                                                                       |
| <p><b>Australian Capital Territory</b></p> <p><b>Improvement:</b> preschool enrolment; Year 12 or equivalent qualification; tertiary qualification; youth engagement; employment; and children in out-of-home care</p> <p><b>Worsening:</b> childhood development; appropriately sized housing; youth detention; and adult imprisonment</p>                                                                                  | <p><b>Northern Territory</b></p> <p><b>Improvement:</b> life expectancy (males); preschool enrolment; Year 12 or equivalent qualification; tertiary qualification; appropriately sized housing; children in out-of-home care; and land mass and sea area subject to legal rights or interests</p> <p><b>Worsening:</b> life expectancy (females); childhood development; youth engagement; employment; youth detention; and adult imprisonment</p> |

### No agreed way to assess progress on the Priority Reforms

The parties to the Agreement have not yet agreed on a way to measure progress towards the Priority Reforms (table 1.3). Measuring progress is difficult because some Priority Reform targets rely on data that is not currently collected or not adequately collected (Commonwealth of Australia 2025).

In 2024, the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) developed a measurement framework that could be used to assess progress towards the Priority Reforms. The Data Policy Partnership will consider ANZSOG’s recommendations and provide options for implementing Priority Reform measurement (box 1.1).

**Table 1.3 – Current progress towards measurement of the Priority Reforms**

| Phase 1                                                                             | Phase 2                                                                             | Phase 3                                                                             | Phase 4                                                                               | Phase 5                                                                               |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Develop and agree on an approach for developing measurement                         | Develop and agree on the measurement concepts and computation                       | Develop data for reporting on the measures                                          | Collecting data for reporting                                                         | Report data and build the time series                                                 |
| Completed in 2022                                                                   | In progress                                                                         | Not commenced                                                                       | Not commenced                                                                         | Not commenced                                                                         |
|  |  |  |  |  |

**Box 1.1 – Data Policy Partnership**

The Data Policy Partnership (DPP), which includes representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations, and Australian state and territory governments, is working together to achieve better data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

The DPP agreed to 6 policy priorities for the next 4 years from 2025–26:

1. progress Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance, including providing options to establish a Bureau of Indigenous Data
2. provide options on implementing Priority Reform measurement
3. support action on Community Data Projects
4. identify gaps and opportunities to improve existing data access
5. embed Priority Reform 4
6. collaborate with other Policy Partnerships to address data gaps under the Agreement to ensure progress can be measured across outcomes, targets (especially those without data) and indicators.

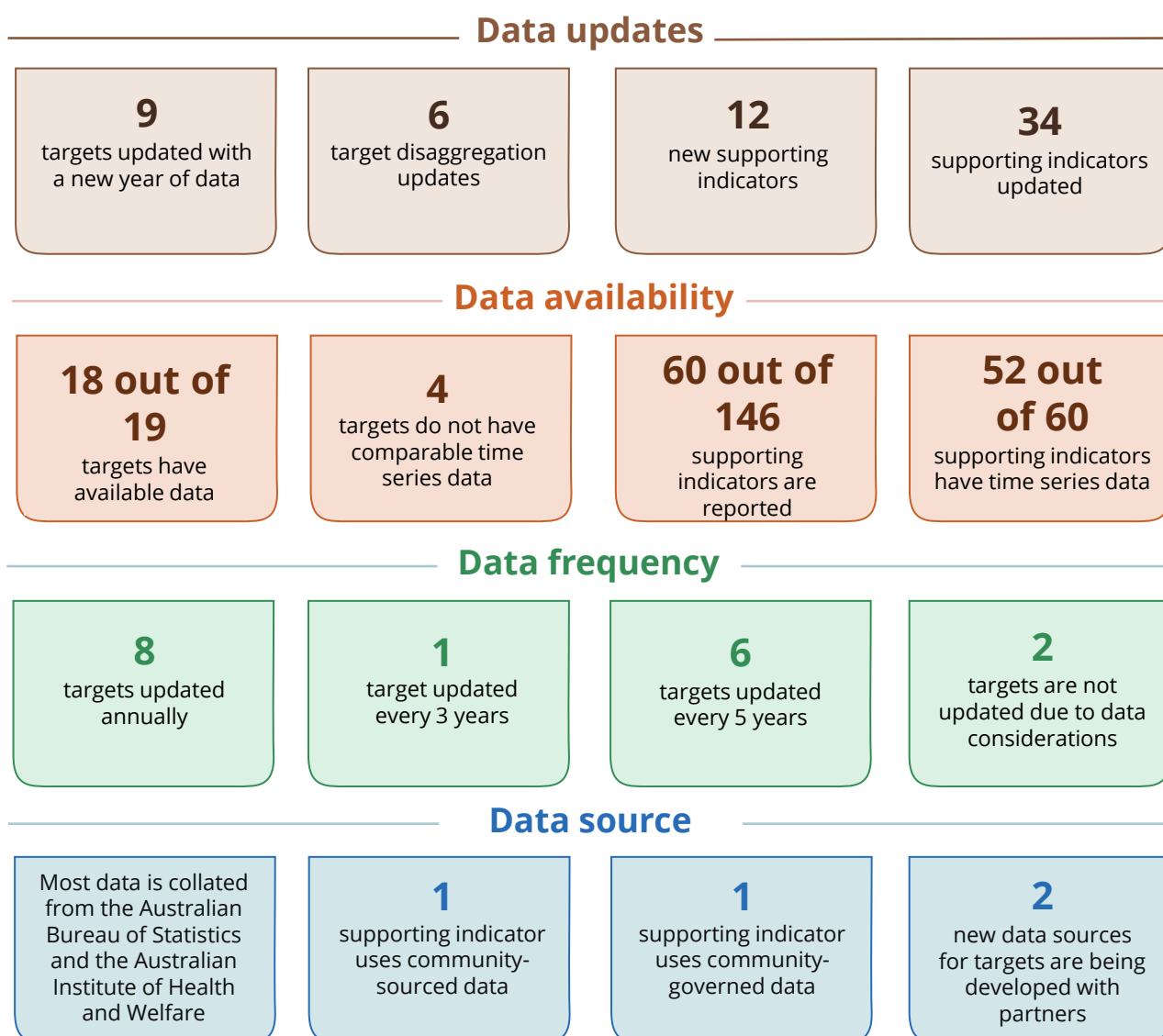
Source: Data Policy Partnership (2026).



## 1.2 An evolving data landscape

New data continues to be collected and developed, but gaps remain. The 2026 data updates include 9 targets, 12 new supporting indicators, and updates to 34 existing indicators. Data is available for 18 of the 19 targets, however 4 targets cannot be assessed due to a lack of comparable time series data.

**Figure 1.3 – Key details about socio-economic data**



## Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance of Indigenous Data

Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDSov) is a global movement which recognises the rights of Indigenous peoples to govern their data (Maiam nayri Wingara 2018). IDSov refers to:

... the right of Indigenous peoples to exercise ownership over Indigenous Data. Ownership of data can be expressed through the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of Indigenous Data (Kukutai and Taylor 2016; Maiam nayri Wingara 2018).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives on the use, collection and interpretation of data are important. Distinguished Professor Maggie Walter, a Palawa woman and a founding member of Maïam nayri Wingara, has shared her expert perspective on Indigenous Data Sovereignty and the role of data in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination (refer to p. 10).

Improving Closing the Gap outcomes requires Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have greater ownership, control and influence across the data lifecycle (PC 2024c). The Australian Public Service (APS) Framework for the Governance of Indigenous Data (the GID Framework) is intended to be a stepping stone to greater awareness and support for IDSoV across the APS (box 1.2).

### Box 1.2 – Implementing the Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data

The GID Framework supports APS agencies to improve how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data is governed and shared. APS agencies are required to implement the GID Framework through to July 2031. The GID Framework's 4 Guidelines for working with Indigenous data include:

1. partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
2. build data-related capabilities
3. provide knowledge of data assets
4. build an inclusive data system.

Implementation of the GID Framework aims to provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people greater agency over how their data is governed, so that government-held data better reflects their priorities and aspirations.

Source: Commonwealth of Australia (2024).

## Understanding the data in this report

Government agencies, and some other organisations, collect and hold the data used in this report (refer to attachment 3 – Data collection summary). However, data gaps and the limited inclusion of community-led and governed data affect how the report can describe some aspects of progress.

### Socio-economic outcomes and targets

Targets are specific and measurable goals for each of the outcome areas. The 2026 ADCR includes assessments of progress (for example 'on track' or 'not on track') for 15 of the 19 socio-economic targets, noting some assessments rely on data from 2021.

### Supporting indicators

Supporting indicators can help contextualise or provide further information to understand the drivers of outcomes. Supporting indicators can be useful when target data is missing or not assessable.

### Data considerations

The quality and comparability of data vary across years, sources and collections. For example, changes to methodology and jurisdictional differences in collection may limit assessment of progress. These issues may require new or improved data sources and collections. Data considerations are outlined in technical specifications on the PC CtG dashboard and throughout the ADCR.

---

### Self-identification and population updates

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people self-identify in most data collections. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) analysis shows that most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people identified consistently across the ABS Census of Population and Housing (Census) in 2011, 2016 and 2021 (ABS 2026). However, self-identification can change and is influenced by a range of historical, cultural, political, sociological and administrative factors.

For some Closing the Gap reporting, rates draw on 2 different data sources. For example, for Target 3 (preschool enrolment) the numerator is drawn from government services data, while the denominator is based on ABS estimates and projections derived from the Census, most recently the 2021 Census.

Estimates based on the 2021 Census show a larger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population than previously expected, except in the Northern Territory. Demographic factors account for less than half of this increase, with the remainder reflecting changes in other factors, including self-identification (ABS 2024b). ABS analysis found higher rates of self-identification in 2016 and 2021, particularly among children and young people and people living in major cities (ABS 2026).

Changes over time in data may partly reflect changes in the number and characteristics of people who identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person between data collection years. Given that the level of identification in these data sources are not fully aligned, changes in rates over time should be interpreted with caution and may reflect differences in self-identification across data collections, rather than changes in underlying outcomes. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard 'Revisions to population estimates' for more information.

### Community-level (or small-area) data

Community-level data can support place-based policy development and evaluation, but availability varies based on the outcome and the size of the population. Small Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations can make the data more volatile and harder to interpret, and data may be suppressed to protect privacy and reliability. Platforms such as the ABS Data by region, ABS Table Builder and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) Regional Insights for Indigenous Communities provide access to small-area data.

### Community-sourced data

Community-sourced data refers to data provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations for national reporting, but communities do not control the full data lifecycle. The PC reports on community-sourced data from SNAICC – National Voice of our Children for Indicator 3b – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused integrated early years services.

### Community-governed data

Community-governed data enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to control what data is measured, collected, interpreted and used. The Mayi Kuwayu Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing (MK Study) is an example of community-governed data, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders shape the priorities, methods and use of data, in accordance with the principles of IDSov (Lovett et al. 2020). For the first time, the PC CTG dashboard and ADCR include community-led and governed data from the MK Study for Indicator 14g – experiences of racism.

## Indigenous Data Sovereignty in Australia

Distinguished Professor Maggie Walter

The Indigenous Data Sovereignty movement was born at a 2015 Indigenous Data workshop. Frustrated at nation-state data practices that consistently portrayed Indigenous identity, ways of life and wellbeing as deficit, Indigenous scholars from Canada, the US, Australia and Aotearoa sought ways to disrupt this narrative while also meeting First Peoples' data needs. The outcome was a new data paradigm, Indigenous Data Sovereignty: the right of Indigenous people to exercise ownership over Indigenous data through the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of data.<sup>a</sup>

The Maïam nayri Wingara (MnW) Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective has led Australian advocacy since it was formed by workshop participants in 2017. At the 2018 MnW Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders authorised five MnW Principles and agreed definitions of *Indigenous Data Sovereignty* and *Indigenous Data Governance*. These principles and definitions continue to guide Indigenous Data Sovereignty policy and processes, nationally. At the 2023 MnW Indigenous Data Governance Summit the approved set of practices provided the blueprint for how Indigenous Data Governance could, and should, work.<sup>b</sup> The hosting of the 2025 *Global Indigenous Data Sovereignty Conference*, which shared advances and mapped future pathways, underscored Australia's Indigenous Data Sovereignty international leadership.<sup>c</sup>

Over the past decade, Indigenous Data Sovereignty has moved from an untested idea to an integrated aspect of the data environment. References and directions now feature across government agency strategies and frameworks. The data obligations in the *AIATSIS Code of Ethics* (2020), the Framework for the Governance of Indigenous Data (2024) instructions to government departments on the data they collect and hold, and the recommendation for a Bureau of Indigenous Data contained in the 2024 Productivity Commission Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, all attest to a structural shift.

The power driving this data revolution is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People/s. MnW Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles have been adopted, supported and increasingly demanded by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders and communities across the nation. Without this broad Indigenous led uptake, Indigenous Data Sovereignty could have remained academically bound, without the authority to challenge the how, why and what of Indigenous data in Australia. The 'on-the-ground' embedding of Indigenous Data Sovereignty into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander use, sharing and accessing of data, anchors the growing transformation of the Indigenous data environment.

Challenges, however, remain. Resistance via ongoing attempts to co-opt and/or redesign foundation principles and assert non-Indigenous expertise continue. The acceleration in the value of data via AI poses new and greater dangers. Data about us are increasingly being fed into predictive models, automated decision-making projects and machine learning systems, largely without Indigenous input and largely without recognition of the immense risks such data usage pose to the well-being of First Peoples. Indigenous data leadership is more critical now than ever.

**a.** The book from this workshop can be accessed at <https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/series/caepr/indigenous-data-sovereignty>. **b.** Refer to <https://www.maïamnayriwingara.org/mnw-resources>. **c.** Refer to <https://www.gida-global.org/>.

### 1.3 A closer look at diverse experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities

Outcomes and experiences vary across regions and population groups. Disaggregated data can support more tailored policies and programs, but data gaps can limit understanding of some priority groups and intersecting experiences. The Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review of the Agreement highlighted the need to strengthen shared access to data and information, including through disaggregation of data to better understand needs and service access across diverse communities (box 1.3).

#### Box 1.3 – Joint Council response to the Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The inaugural Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review) was conducted in the first half of 2025 and reported on the perspectives and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved in implementing Agreement. For Closing the Gap reporting, key recommendations included: embedding and actioning Indigenous Data Sovereignty, building community data capability and infrastructure, sharing data as a matter of priority and simplifying and demystifying data.

In May 2026, the majority of Joint Council members agreed to implement 11 Partnership Actions in response to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review to drive system reform under the Agreement. Parties agreed to investigate how the Closing the Gap Information Repository could be strengthened with the inclusion of disaggregated data (where appropriate) and stories from the survivors of the Stolen Generations.

Source: Joint Council (2026a, 2026b); Lavarch et al. (2025).

### Breaking down the data can provide additional insights, but intersectional analysis is not possible

Disaggregated data is available for many targets, including by age, sex, disability status, remoteness area and relative socio-economic disadvantage of the area. However, data is not available for some key priority groups, including Stolen Generations survivors (box 1.4) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Sistergirl, Brotherboy and more (LGBTQIASB+) people (box 1.5). People with multiple intersecting attributes, such as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person with disability who identifies as LGBTQIASB+, often experience more complex and compounding challenges, but outcomes by intersecting factors are not consistently reported.

#### Outcomes vary by age

Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people vary across the life course, highlighting the importance of age-relevant supports and services. Early life experiences, including access to appropriate housing and supportive family environments, provide important foundations for wellbeing.

Between 2016 and 2021, there was an increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (aged under 24 years) living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing, but young people are less likely than older adults to live in such housing (Target 9A). Contact with the child protection system



is lowest for infants aged under one year and has decreased since 2021, while out-of-home care rates remain higher and are increasing for children aged 10–14 years (Target 12).

Social and emotional wellbeing outcomes also vary by age. Suicide rates have decreased for children and young people aged 5 to 24 years since the baseline period (2018–2022) but remain highest among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25 to 34 years and have increased among adults aged 25 years and over (Target 14). This highlights the importance of social and emotional wellbeing supports across life stages, including during adulthood and key life transitions.

Employment outcomes improved across all age groups between 2016 and 2021, with the largest increases among people aged 25 to 34 (Target 8). In later life, chronic disease accounts for most deaths, with life expectancy reflecting accumulated health risks and experiences (Target 1).

### Box 1.4 – Data on experiences of Stolen Generations survivors

The Stolen Generations refers to the tens of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were systematically and forcibly removed from their families and communities, with the deliberate aim of erasing their cultural identities.

In 2018–19, AIHW estimated around 27,200 (around 1 in 5) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years or over were Stolen Generations survivors. The trauma of these policies continues to impact survivors and their descendants, including through poorer health, disability, mental health conditions, economic hardship and experiences of discrimination.

Disaggregation of socio-economic outcome data for Stolen Generations survivors is not yet available within existing agreed Closing the Gap datasets or collections. The Agreement and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review highlight the importance of stories and disaggregated data to understand intergenerational healing needs.

Source: AIHW (2021); Healing Foundation (2025); Joint Council (2020); Lavarch et al. (2025).

### People living in more remote areas typically experience poorer outcomes

Outcomes differ across remoteness areas, highlighting the role of place-based, community-led approaches that reflect local priorities and circumstances (Joint Council 2020; PC 2024c).

Improvements in health and wellbeing outcomes have been limited in remote and very remote areas, including for life expectancy (Target 1) and healthy birthweights (Target 2). Suicide rates are higher in regional and remote areas, but outcomes are worsening across all remoteness areas (Target 14).

In education and training, outcomes have improved across most remoteness areas, but at different rates. Preschool enrolment (Target 3) has improved across all remoteness areas since the baseline (2016), with the highest rates in regional areas, followed by major cities. Year 12 or equivalent qualification (Target 5) and other tertiary education outcomes (Target 6) have improved in most regions, but improvements have been more modest in very remote areas. Youth engagement in employment, education or training is improving in regional areas, but worsening in major cities, remote and very remote areas (Target 7).

Economic, housing and digital access outcomes vary by remoteness, reflecting differences in infrastructure and service access. Employment has increased most strongly in regional areas, although rates remain lowest in very remote areas (Target 8). People in remote and very remote areas are less

likely to live in appropriately sized housing (Target 9A) and digital inclusion remains lowest in more remote areas (Target 17).

### **Males and females experience differences in socio-economic outcomes**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females generally have better outcomes than males across life expectancy (Target 1), childhood development (Target 4), Year 12 or equivalent qualification (Target 5), tertiary qualification (Target 6), youth detention (Target 11), adult imprisonment (Target 10) and suicide (Target 14). Preschool enrolment (Target 3) and out-of-home care rates (Target 12) are similar by sex across jurisdictions with available data.

In contrast, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males are more likely than females to be employed (Target 8) and to be engaged in employment, education or training as a young person (Target 7). These differences in economic participation outcomes are likely shaped by intersecting factors. For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women more likely to undertake unpaid care, earn less, and work in insecure or culturally unsafe roles (Evans 2021; Jobs and Skills Australia 2025).

#### **Box 1.5 – Data on gender and the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQIASB+ people**

The PC CtG dashboard and ADCR report data disaggregated by sex, categorised as female and male, rather than gender. Gender and sex are not interchangeable – they refer to 2 distinct parts of a person's identity and experience.

Current government data collections and data reporting also do not capture the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQIASB+ people. Additional research and data are needed to support more responsive programs and services, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTQIASB+ people leading and shaping these approaches.

In 2026, the Census will include a new topic which will provide a Census population count based on gender and sex recorded at birth and a question on sexual orientation, which may provide new insights into some of these experiences.

Source: ABS (2025); AIHW (2022d).

### **Some outcomes are improving for people living in the most disadvantaged areas**

Outcomes across Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD) quintiles are shaped by social and economic factors such as income, education, employment and housing. Differences in outcomes reflect the need for policies that respond to the social determinants of health, alongside cultural determinants such as connection to Country, identity and self-determination (AIHW 2024b; Dudgeon et al. 2025).

Health, wellbeing and development outcomes remain stronger in less disadvantaged areas, including life expectancy (Target 1) and healthy birthweight (Target 2), and childhood development (Target 4).

Some education and economic outcomes have improved across socio-economic areas. Year 12 or equivalent qualification rates have increased across all socio-economic areas, with stronger improvement in the middle and most disadvantaged quintiles (Target 5). Tertiary qualification rates have also improved across all quintiles (Target 6), while youth engagement in employment, education or training has not changed significantly in any quintile (Target 7). Employment rates have improved

across all areas, with stronger percentage point gains in the middle and second most disadvantaged quintiles (Target 8). The proportion of people living in appropriately sized housing has increased in all quintiles since the baseline (2016) (Target 9A). However, digital access is lowest in the most disadvantaged quintile (Target 17).

### Outcomes for people with disability are improving in some areas

Disability is understood in different ways across communities and data sources, highlighting the importance of approaches that recognise lived experience and the role of society in removing barriers to equal participation (box 1.6). In 2022–23, around 1 in 3 (37%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reported living with disability (AIHW 2024a).

Several target disaggregations show rising identification of disability and developmental support needs. The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) shows an increase in developmental support needs and children needing further assessment (Target 4). The proportion of children with disability has increased for children enrolled in preschool since 2020 (Target 3) and among children in out-of-home care (Target 12), although disability status is unknown for many children. As awareness and identification of disability and support needs increase, culturally safe and inclusive approaches can help strengthen mainstream and targeted disability services (FPDN 2026b; NDIA 2025).

Education, employment, housing and digital access outcomes show some progress for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability. Year 12 or equivalent qualification and tertiary qualification rates (Target 6) have increased at a slightly greater rate among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with disability. Employment outcomes have improved for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both with and without disability since 2016, but increases have been greater among people who do not need assistance with core activities (Target 8). People needing assistance with core activities are more likely to live in appropriately sized housing (Target 9A) than those who do not need assistance, while digital access (Target 17) remains lower for people with disability.

#### Box 1.6 – Recognising differing definitions and experiences of living with disability

Disability is defined differently across targets and data sources. Reported measures may reflect administrative or medical terminology rather than the lived experiences of people with disability. Definitions may also not align with how disability is understood in some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, where disability is seen not as a limitation but resulting from barriers to equal participation in the social and physical environment.

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031 recognises the responsibilities of all governments to support an Australian society where people with disability can fulfil their potential as equal members. These perspectives align more closely with the social model of disability, which understands disability as the interaction between people living with impairments and societal barriers across physical, attitudinal and communication experiences. This model places the responsibility on systems to change, rather than considering disability as a condition to be treated. The social model supports equal participation by recognising the reality of impairment, while emphasising society's role in removing barriers.

Source: AIHW (2024a); FPDN (2026a); PWDA (2022).

## 1.4 The report at a glance

The ADCR reports thematically on the progress for all 17 socio-economic outcome areas (figure 1.4).

**Figure 1.4 – Summary of progress and updates**

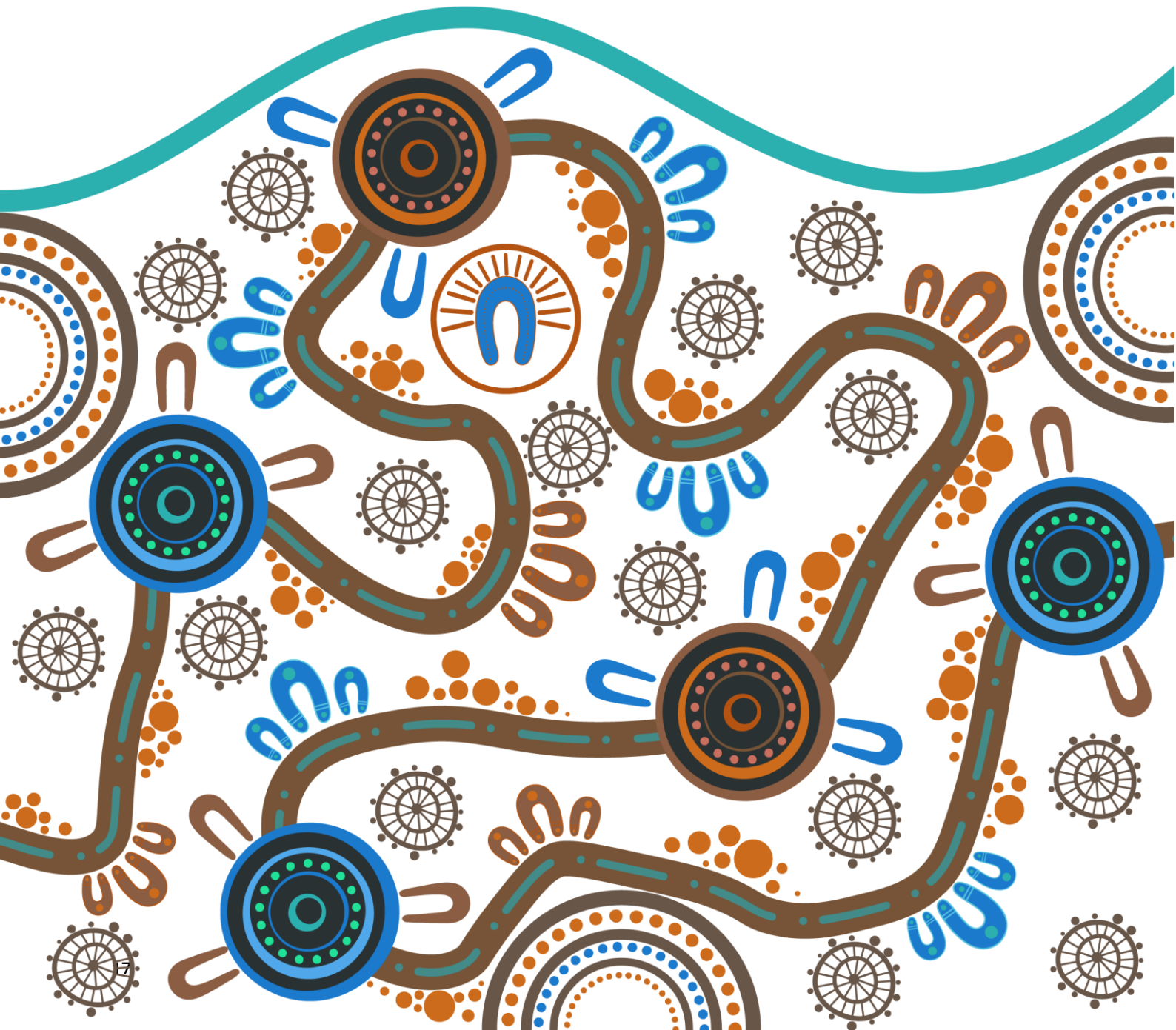
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Health, wellbeing and development                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | 2 target updates<br>7 supporting indicator updates<br>3 new supporting indicators |
| <p><b>Target 1:</b> The life expectancy gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people is improving but the target of a life expectancy gap of zero is not on track to be met by 2031.</p> <p><b>Target 2:</b> There is no change in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies being born at a healthy birthweight and the target of 91% is not on track to be met by 2031.</p> <p><b>Target 4:</b> The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track has declined and the target of 55% across all domains is not on track to be met by 2031.</p> <p><b>Target 14:</b> For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the rate of deaths by suicide is increasing and the target of a significant and sustained reduction is not on track to be met.</p>                                  |                                                                                   |
| Families and kin                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 1 target update<br>7 supporting indicator updates<br>3 new supporting indicators  |
| <p><b>Target 12:</b> The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care has increased since the baseline and the target of a 45% reduction is not on track to be met by 2031.</p> <p><b>Target 13:</b> There is no new data available to assess progress on the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and children who have experienced family violence.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                   |
| Culture and language                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | 1 target update<br>2 supporting indicator updates                                 |
| <p><b>Target 16:</b> New data is available on the number and strength of languages spoken or used, but methodological changes impact progress assessment.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                   |
| Education and training                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | 1 target update<br>8 supporting indicator updates                                 |
| <p><b>Target 3:</b> This target has been met. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Full-time Schooling (YBFS) early childhood education has exceeded the target of 95%.</p> <p><b>Target 5:</b> The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualification is increasing, but the target of 96% is not on track to be met by 2031.</p> <p><b>Target 6:</b> The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification is increasing, but the target of 70% is not on track to be met by 2031.</p> <p><b>Target 7:</b> The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15–24 years fully engaged in employment, education or training has increased but the target of 67% is not on track to be met by 2031.</p> |                                                                                   |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Economic participation</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | 1 new supporting indicator                                                        |
| <b>Target 8:</b> There has been an improvement in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 who are employed, and the target of 62% is on track to be met by 2031.                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                   |
| <b>Housing</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 1 supporting indicator update<br>1 new supporting indicator                       |
| <b>Target 9A:</b> There has been an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing, but the target of 88% is not on track to be met by 2031.<br><b>Target 9B:</b> The required data is not available to report progress on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households receiving essential services.                                 |                                                                                   |
| <b>Country</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 2 target updates<br>2 supporting indicator updates                                |
| <b>Target 15A:</b> The proportion of land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests is increasing and the target of a 15% increase is on track to be met by 2030.<br><b>Target 15B:</b> The proportion of sea area covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests is increasing and the target of a 15% increase is on track to be met by 2030. |                                                                                   |
| <b>Justice</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | 2 target updates<br>5 supporting indicator updates<br>4 new supporting indicators |
| <b>Target 10:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults continue to be incarcerated at increasing rates and the target of a 15% reduction by 2031 is not on track to be met.<br><b>Target 11:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people continue to be over-represented in the criminal justice system, and no progress has been made towards the target of a 30% reduction by 2031.                      |                                                                                   |
| <b>Digital inclusion</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | 2 supporting indicator updates                                                    |
| <b>Target 17:</b> Comparable data is not available to assess progress towards increased access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                   |





## 2. Progress in socio-economic outcomes



## 2.1 Health, wellbeing and development

Health for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is holistic, including not just physical health but also social, emotional, cultural, spiritual and ecological wellbeing for individuals and communities (Dudgeon et al. 2014). Social and emotional wellbeing has guided generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and provides an all-encompassing whole-of-life paradigm where both physical and mental dimensions of health are inextricably influenced by interconnections across Country, culture, family, community, mind and body, as well as cultural identity and self-determination (Dudgeon et al. 2025).

People and place are central to the intergenerational learning that sustains Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing. Colonisation and historical government policies have disrupted, and continue to disrupt, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of living (Dudgeon et al. 2014). Early colonists brought violence and disease, leading to widespread loss of life and trauma. The dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from Country and suppression of knowledges that followed, have impacted cultural practices including those related to food production, nutrition, ceremony and bush medicine (Andrews et al. 2024). Social and economic factors across housing, education, income and employment also impact health and health behaviours. Despite adaption, resilience and resistance, the impact of trauma and marginalisation continue to shape Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. Institutional racism and discrimination persist in mainstream health services, impacting access and quality of care (Dermant et al. 2025).

Strengthening and restoring social and cultural determinants of health can improve both individual and collective outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Dudgeon et al. 2025). Mainstream health programs often focus on individual physical and mental health outcomes and the absence of disease or ill-health. Supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing requires culturally safe, holistic, community-led services, strong and supported families, and broader structural reforms that address discrimination and support self-determination. Investing in the health of children in the prenatal and early childhood periods, including through maintaining cultural practices and ties to community and Country, can have particularly positive and long-lasting impacts for wellbeing (AIHW 2025b). Thriving children grow into engaged and healthy adults who contribute to nurturing communities. Over time, new generations of families and kin reinforce children's wellbeing and success (AIHW 2025b; Rogers et al. 2025). A social and emotional wellbeing approach, which reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities and worldviews, is essential for achieving sustained improvements in health outcomes (Dudgeon et al. 2025).



### Box 2.1 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2026 for socio-economic outcomes 1, 2, 4 and 14.

| Outcome                                                                                                             | Update               | Latest data |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Outcome 1:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long and healthy lives                         |                      |             |
| • Life expectancy (Target 1)                                                                                        |                      | 2020–2022   |
| • Leading causes of death (1b)                                                                                      | <i>New data</i>      | 2020–2024   |
| • Potentially avoidable mortality (1c)                                                                              | <i>New data</i>      | 2020–2024   |
| • Health risk factors (1d)                                                                                          |                      | 2022–23     |
| • Access/use of health services (1e)                                                                                | <i>New data</i>      | 2024–25     |
| <b>Outcome 2:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong                        |                      |             |
| • Healthy birthweight (Target 2)                                                                                    | <i>New data</i>      | 2023        |
| • Mothers who smoke during pregnancy (2a)                                                                           | <i>New data</i>      | 2023        |
| • Maternal health (2c)                                                                                              | <i>New indicator</i> | 2023        |
| • Use of antenatal care (2d)                                                                                        |                      | 2023        |
| <b>Outcome 4:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years                        |                      |             |
| • Childhood development (Target 4)                                                                                  |                      | 2024        |
| • Outcomes by AEDC domains (4c)                                                                                     | <i>New indicator</i> | 2024        |
| • AEDC Multiple Strengths Indicator (4d)                                                                            |                      | 2024        |
| <b>Outcome 14:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing |                      |             |
| • Suicide rates (Target 14)                                                                                         | <i>New data</i>      | 2024        |
| • Hospitalisations for self-harm (14a)                                                                              | <i>New data</i>      | 2023–24     |
| • Hospitalisations for mental health-related disorders (14c)                                                        | <i>New indicator</i> | 2024–25     |
| • Psychological distress (14d)                                                                                      |                      | 2022–23     |
| • Barriers accessing health services (14e)                                                                          |                      | 2022–23     |
| • Experience of racism (14g)                                                                                        | <i>New data</i>      | 2024        |

## Outcome 1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long and healthy lives



Life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is improving but the target to close the gap by 2031 is not on track to be met

The data for life expectancy was last updated in the 2024 ADCR using data for the period 2020–2022.<sup>1</sup> The next assessment of progress will be in 2029 using ABS data for the period 2025–2027.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people born in 2020–2022 are expected to live to 71.9 years (males) and 75.6 years (females). This is higher than the estimates of life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people born in 2005–2007. In 2020–2022 the gap in life expectancy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females was 8.8 years and 8.1 years, respectively. The estimated life expectancy gaps are lower in 2020–2022 than in 2005–2007 but are higher than the gaps estimated in 2015–2017. Nationally, the target to close the gap in life expectancy by 2031 is not on track to be met (box 2.2).

### Box 2.2 – Data considerations: caution with trends and estimation

The ABS recommends caution when interpreting trends by comparison of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy estimates or mortality rates. There have been changes in the life expectancy estimates resulting from increases in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, changes to self-identification and improvements to identification of Indigenous status in death records. It is not possible to determine how population changes and/or improved health outcomes have contributed to changes in the life expectancy estimates.

National mortality data is compiled by jurisdiction of usual residence for New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory only. These jurisdictions have been found to have a higher quality of identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin allowing more robust analysis of data over time. Data for Victoria, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory is unsuitable for comparisons of changes over time and has been excluded from national mortality data.

Source: ABS (2023).

<sup>1</sup> Refer to socio-economic outcome 1 on the PC CtG dashboard or pages 16–17 of the 2024 ADCR for more information including figures and progress assessment.

### Life expectancy is improving across most jurisdictions

While there are no jurisdictional targets, the progress made in each state and territory contributes to national outcomes. Estimates of male and female life expectancy were higher for people born in 2020–2022 across jurisdictions with available data, than life expectancy estimates for people born in 2005–2007 (baseline), except for females in the Northern Territory. Life expectancy and mortality data are not available for all jurisdictions due to issues with reliability in estimation and trends should be interpreted with a degree of caution (box 2.2).

#### State and territory assessment of progress (2005–2007 to 2020–2022)

| Target        | NSW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|----|
| 1 (Males)     | →                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | ••  | →   | →  | •• | ••  | ••  | →  |
| 1 (Females)   | →                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | ••  | →   | →  | •• | ••  | ••  | ←  |
| <b>Legend</b> |  Improvement  Worsening  No change  No assessment |     |     |    |    |     |     |    |

The assessments should be used with caution as they are based on a limited number of data points.

### Mortality rates are increasing for most age groups

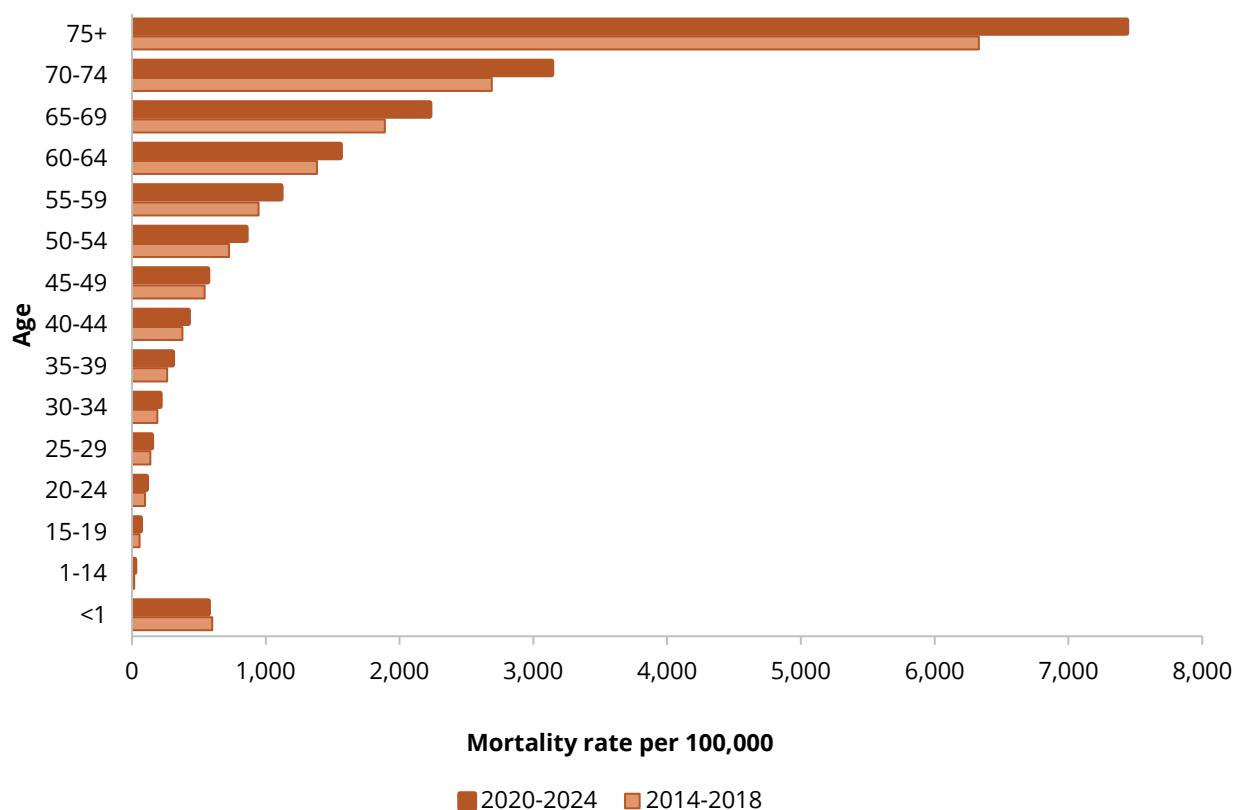
Mortality rates by leading cause of death – Indicator 1b – provide further insight into trends in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing.<sup>2</sup> Indicator 1b includes 3 measures for the leading causes of death in different populations: infant mortality, child mortality and adult mortality by 5-yearly age groups.

Mortality rates increased across most age groups (except for infants aged less than one year) from 2014–2018 to 2020–2024 (figure 2.1). For infants less than one year old, the mortality rate decreased. The largest mortality rate increases were observed for age groups above 50 years of age. These trends should be interpreted with a degree of caution (box 2.2).

<sup>2</sup> Mortality rate is the number of deaths in a population, scaled to the size of the population.

### Figure 2.1 – Mortality rates

All-cause mortality rates per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by age cohort, 2014–2018 and 2020–2024 (Indicator 1b)



Data is only available for New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Mortality rates for infants (children less than one year) are deaths per 100,000 live births, noting in figure 2.1 they have been rescaled from the mortality rates per 1,000 live births shown on the PC CtG dashboard. Mortality rates for other age cohorts are deaths per 100,000 people. Caution is required when interpreting trends in this data due to revised population estimates and recent changes to the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in reported deaths across jurisdictions. Enhancements to improve the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in reported deaths introduced a break in time series in 2022 and 2023. Source: Derived 2025 from ABS (unpublished) 2024 Causes of Death Australia. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE1b.1.

### Persistent leading cause of death across most age groups

Between 2014–2018 and 2020–2024, the leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remained largely the same across most age groups, although the rates associated with these causes changed for some groups (table 2.1).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Interpret time series data with caution. Breaks in the time series occur in New South Wales (from 2022) and Queensland (from 2015). Refer to box 2.2 and the PC CtG dashboard 'Leading causes of death' indicator data specifications for more information.



**Table 2.1 – Leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2020–2024**

| Age group                     | Leading cause of death                                                                                                                                                       |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Infants (aged under one year) | Conditions originating in the perinatal period remained the leading cause of death, with mortality rates declining from 3.4 to 3.1 per 1,000 live births.                    |
| Children aged 1–14 years      | Land-transport accidents continued to be the leading cause of death, with mortality rates increasing from 3.2 to 4.1 deaths per 100,000 children.                            |
| People aged 15–39 years       | Self-harm was the leading cause of death, with rates declining among young adults 15–24 years but increasing for people aged 25–39 years.                                    |
| People aged 40–69 years       | Ischemic heart disease continued to be the leading cause of death, with mortality rates increasing for most age cohorts, except for people aged 50–54 years and 55–59 years. |
| People aged 70–74 years       | Chronic lower respiratory disease overtook ischaemic heart disease for leading cause of death.                                                                               |
| People aged 75 years or over  | Dementia is the leading cause of death with 862.1 deaths per 100,000 people.                                                                                                 |

Caution is required when interpreting trends in this data due to revised population estimates and recent changes to the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in reported deaths across jurisdictions. Refer to box 2.2 for more information.

### Potentially avoidable mortality is rising

Avoidable mortality refers to deaths from preventable or treatable conditions such as diabetes, heart failure, asthma as well as transport accidents and assault. Reductions in potentially avoidable mortality can lead to increases in life expectancy.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged under 75 years in jurisdictions with available data (New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory) combined, rates of potentially avoidable mortality have been rising between 2012–2016 and 2020–2024 (figure 2.2). In the Northern Territory, rates have risen since the lower levels seen over 2016–2020.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Interpret time series data with caution. Breaks in the time series occur in New South Wales (from 2022) and Queensland (from 2015). Refer to box 2.2 and the PC CtG dashboard 'Potential avoidable mortality rates' indicator data specifications for more information.

**Figure 2.2 – Potentially avoidable mortality for available jurisdictions combined**

Mortality rate per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under 75 years for selected years (Indicator 1c)



Available jurisdictions include New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Mortality rates are not produced at the jurisdiction level for Tasmania, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory, due to small numbers reported in these jurisdictions. Caution is required when interpreting trends in this data due to revised population estimates and enhancements in the methodology to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in reported deaths across jurisdictions. Refer to box 2.2 for more information.

Source: Derived 2025 from ABS (unpublished) 2024 Causes of death Australia. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE1c.1.

### Some personal risk factors that promote holistic health and wellbeing are improving

There is no new data on personal health risk factors, but the most recent data showed some improvement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged 18 years or over. Between 2004–05 and 2022–23, the rate of daily smoking declined by about 19 percentage points, illicit drug use remained unchanged, and long-term risky alcohol consumption (2009 NHMRC guidelines) declined.<sup>5</sup> According to 2020 NHMRC guidelines, nationally in 2022–23, 36.3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults reported exceeding the lifetime alcohol risk consumption.

<sup>5</sup> The collection method for the substance abuse topic varied between non-remote and remote areas. Refer to PC CtG dashboard 'Health risk factors' Indicator data specifications.

Between 2012–13 and 2022–23, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults who are overweight or obese was similar, vegetable consumption remained broadly stable but fewer people reported meeting the recommended daily fruit intake. In 2022–23, 17.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in non-remote areas reported doing sufficient daily activity, based on the latest guidelines, which now include activity done at work.

### **Health service use shows minimal gains in health assessments with falling use of General Practitioner and chronic disease management items**

Use of health care services that are culturally safe and community-led can improve wellbeing and life expectancy (box 2.3). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people access health care in a range of ways, including annual health checks through Aboriginal Medical Services and General Practitioners (GPs) to support early detection and management of health conditions. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also use non-referred GP visits – appointments that do not require a specialist referral – for general health concerns, along with chronic disease management services that support coordinated and chronic care.<sup>6</sup>

Nationally, there has been some progress in health care use for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but the overall picture remains mixed. Since the baseline year (2016–17) the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific health assessments increased, but overall uptake remains low, with about 1 in 4 (254.6 per 1,000) people receiving one assessment in 2024–25 (figure 2.3).<sup>7</sup> From 2016–17 to 2023–24, access to non-referred GP services and chronic disease care services, including General Practitioner Management Plans and Team Care Arrangements, decreased. It is not possible to tell from the data alone whether this decline reflects higher barriers to access health care, or a reduced need for these services.

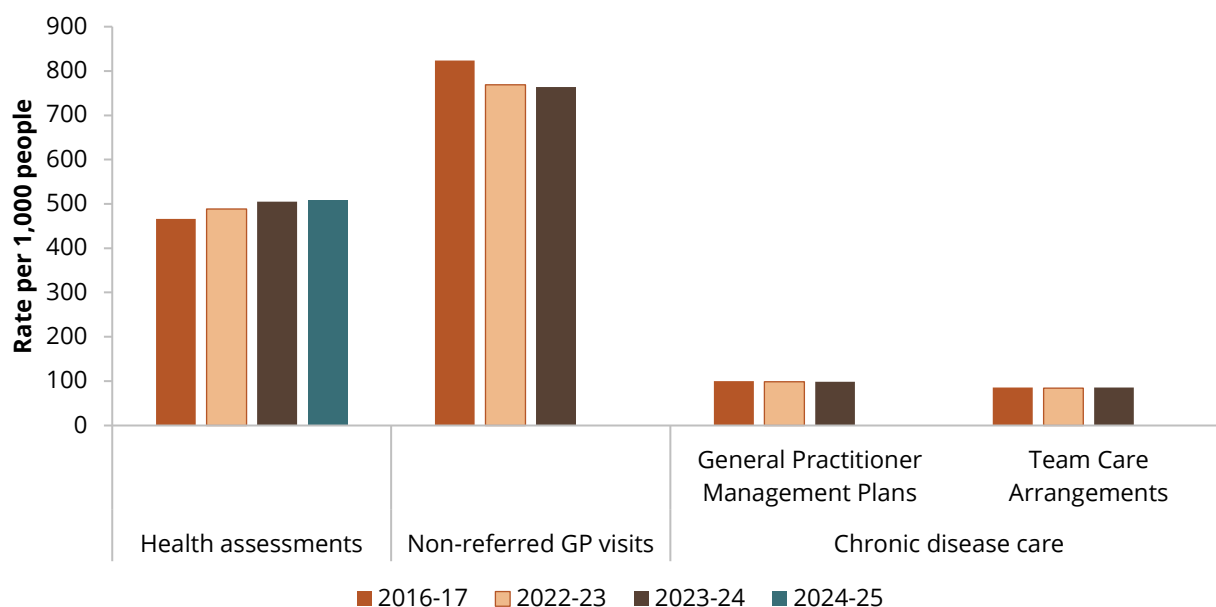
While the national rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific health assessments remains low, it varies significantly across jurisdictions. In 2024–25, Victoria had the lowest uptake, with about 1 in 8 people assessed. In Tasmania, rates of health assessments have nearly doubled since the baseline year. The Northern Territory had the highest uptake, with about 3 in 10 people assessed, but also saw the largest decline since 2016–17 (the baseline year). Across all states and territories, a lower rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is visiting the GP for standard consultations (non-referred GP visits).

<sup>6</sup> Indicator 1e reports on use of these services but it does not capture all care and support, such as health checks for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people outside of Medicare and services provided by Aboriginal and community-controlled health organisations.

<sup>7</sup> The number of health assessments may be underestimated due to a lack of awareness of the specific MBS item or that people may receive a health check outside Medicare.

**Figure 2.3 – National rate of health assessments, GP visits and chronic disease care items**

Rate of Medicare item utilisation per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people comparing recent years (2022–2025) to the baseline (2016–2017) (Indicator 1e)



Health assessments refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific health assessments. This data comes from the Department of Health, Ageing and Disability. 2024–25 data for non-referred GP visits and the chronic disease care items were not available from the ABS at the time of publishing.

Source: Derived from AIHW (unpublished) Medicare Benefits Schedule data (AIHW analyses); ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data tables SE1e.1–3.

### Box 2.3 – Improving access and cultural safety in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health care

Affordability, physical accessibility, individual need, and the cultural safety and acceptability can significantly impact service utilisation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health services are leading the way for delivering holistic comprehensive care that meets the unique cultural, health and wellbeing needs of the community.

Mainstream primary care service models could benefit from going beyond clinical care to centre the following in their approach: self-determination and empowerment, community control and participation, culturally appropriate and skilled workforce, holistic health care, accessible health services, responsive approach to care, comprehensive health promotion, relationship building and advocacy and continuous quality improvement. Adopting these elements in mainstream services can help improve cultural safety and access, helping to address systemic racism and discrimination and build trust.

Source: Dawson et al. (2025); Gomersall (2017); Watego (2021).

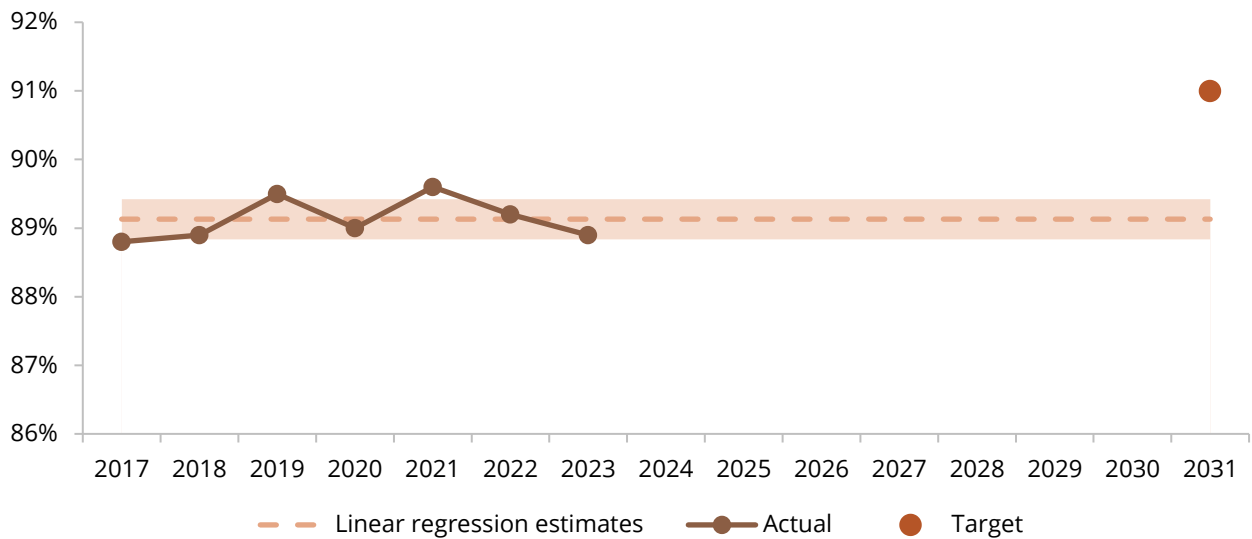
Outcome 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong



The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies being born at a healthy birthweight shows no change since the baseline, with the target not on track to be met by 2031

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies born at a healthy birthweight shows no change since the baseline (2017), with the target of 91% of babies born at a healthy birthweight by 2031 not on track to be met. In 2023, 88.9% of the 19,544 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies were born at a healthy birthweight, down slightly from 89.2% in 2022.

Figure 2.4 – Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait babies born at a healthy birthweight  
Live-born singleton babies of healthy birthweight (2,500-4,499g) (Target 2)



The shaded area represents 95% confidence intervals for the linear regression estimates.

Source: Derived from AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection (NPDC). Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table CtG2A.1.

Box 2.4 – Low confidence of assessment for Target 2

The target assessment (no change since baseline) is provided with a low level of confidence. The statistical provider, AIHW, gives a variability band of  $\pm 0.4$  when estimating the healthy birthweight proportions. This means the assessment of progress may not be reliable.

### Healthy birthweight is improving in some jurisdictions

The progress made in each state and territory contributes to national outcomes, but there are no state and territory targets. The proportion of babies born at a healthy birthweight shows small increases since the baseline in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania, while a decline was observed in Western Australia.

#### State and territory assessment of progress (2017 to 2023)

| Target           | NSW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Vic                                                                               | Qld                                                                               | WA                                                                                | SA                                                                                | Tas                                                                                 | ACT                                                                                 | NT                                                                                  |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Confidence level | Low                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Low                                                                               | Low                                                                               | Low                                                                               | Low                                                                               | Low                                                                                 | Low                                                                                 | Low                                                                                 |
| Legend           |  Improvement  Worsening  No change  No assessment |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |

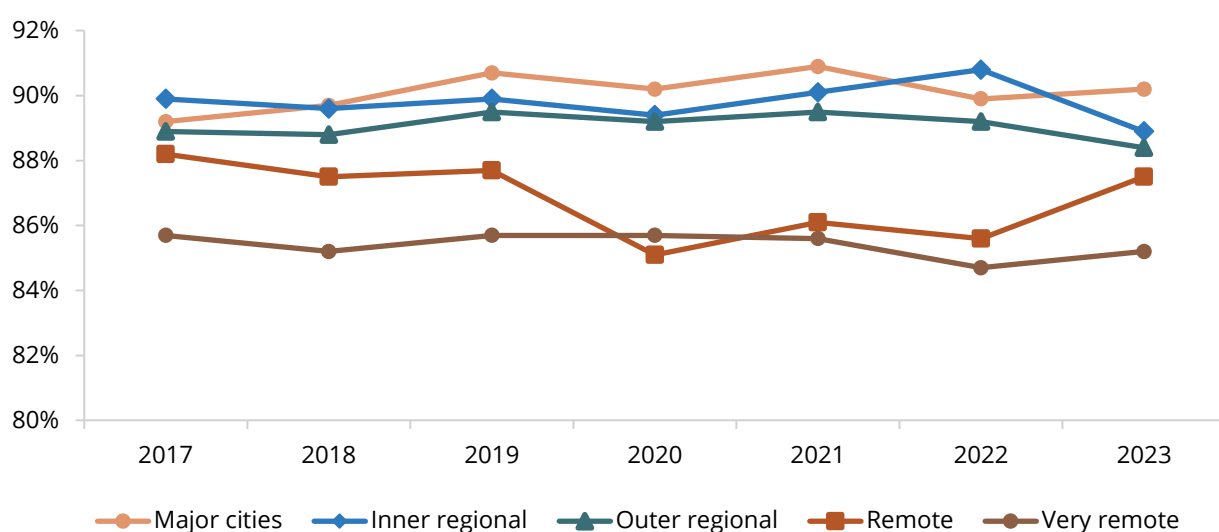
These assessments of progress are provided with a High or Low level of confidence. Refer to box 2.4 and Glossary in this report or 'How to interpret the data' page on the PC CtG dashboard for more information.

### Healthy birthweights remain more common in major cities and inner regional areas

Nationally in 2023, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies born at a healthy birthweight decreased with increasing remoteness, from 90.2% in major cities to 85.2% in very remote areas (figure 2.5).

#### Figure 2.5 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait babies born at a healthy birthweight by remoteness

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander live-born singleton babies born at a birthweight between 2,500–4,499g (Target 2)



Source: Derived from AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection (NPDC). Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table CtG2A.3.



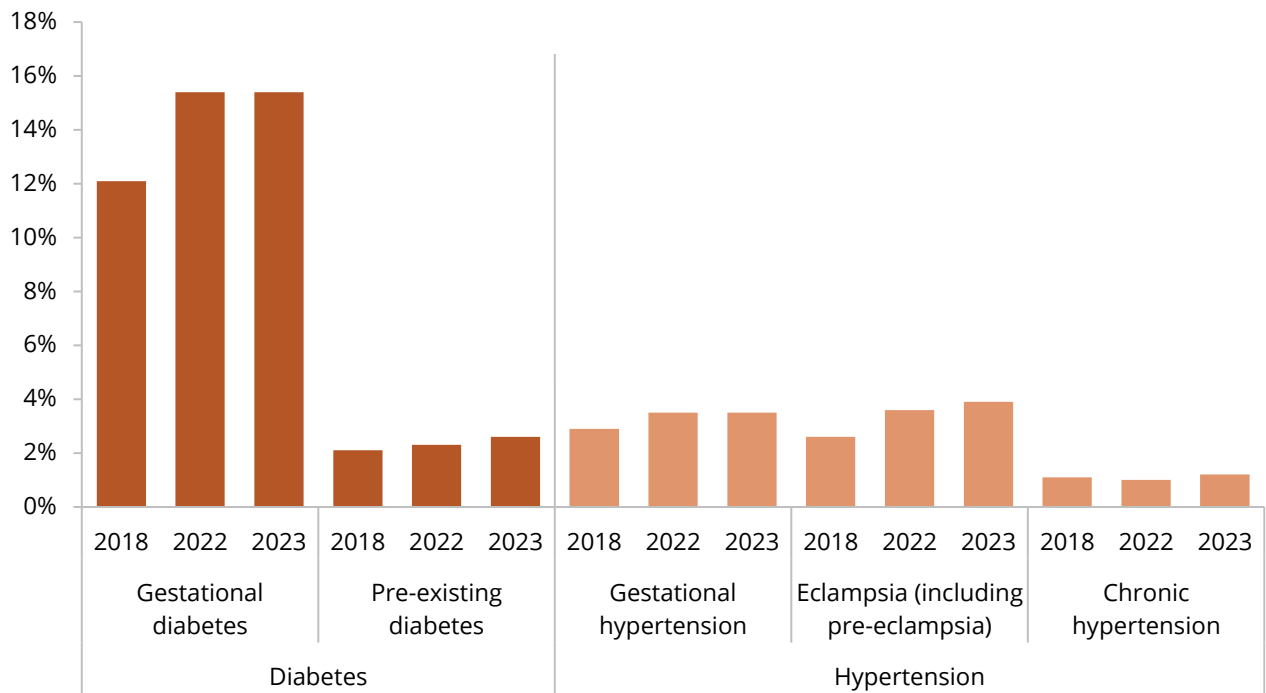
Maternal health is worsening slightly

Culturally responsive health care recognises and respects women’s experiences, including their pain, preferences and cultural needs, particularly when managing pre-existing health conditions and maternal health conditions (box 2.5). The new supporting indicator – Indicator 2c – measures the maternal health of mothers during pregnancy with selected pre-existing or pregnancy-onset conditions, including diabetes and hypertension. There is also a measure for the proportion of mothers who are defined (by Body Mass Index) as overweight or obese at the start of pregnancy.

In 2023, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers with selected pre-existing or pregnancy-onset conditions was similar to or slightly higher than earlier years (figure 2.6). Pre-existing diabetes was recorded for 2.6% of mothers in 2023, an increase from 2.1% in 2018. Gestational diabetes was recorded for 15.4% of mothers in 2023, an increase from 12.1% in 2018. Hypertension (including chronic hypertenion, gestational hypertension, eclampsia and pre-eclampsia) was recorded for 7.3% of mothers in 2023, slightly higher than 6.3% in 2018.

**Figure 2.6 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers with diabetes or hypertension during pregnancy**

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers with diabetes (Indicator 2c.1) and hypertension (Indicator 2c.3) (2018, 2022 and 2023)



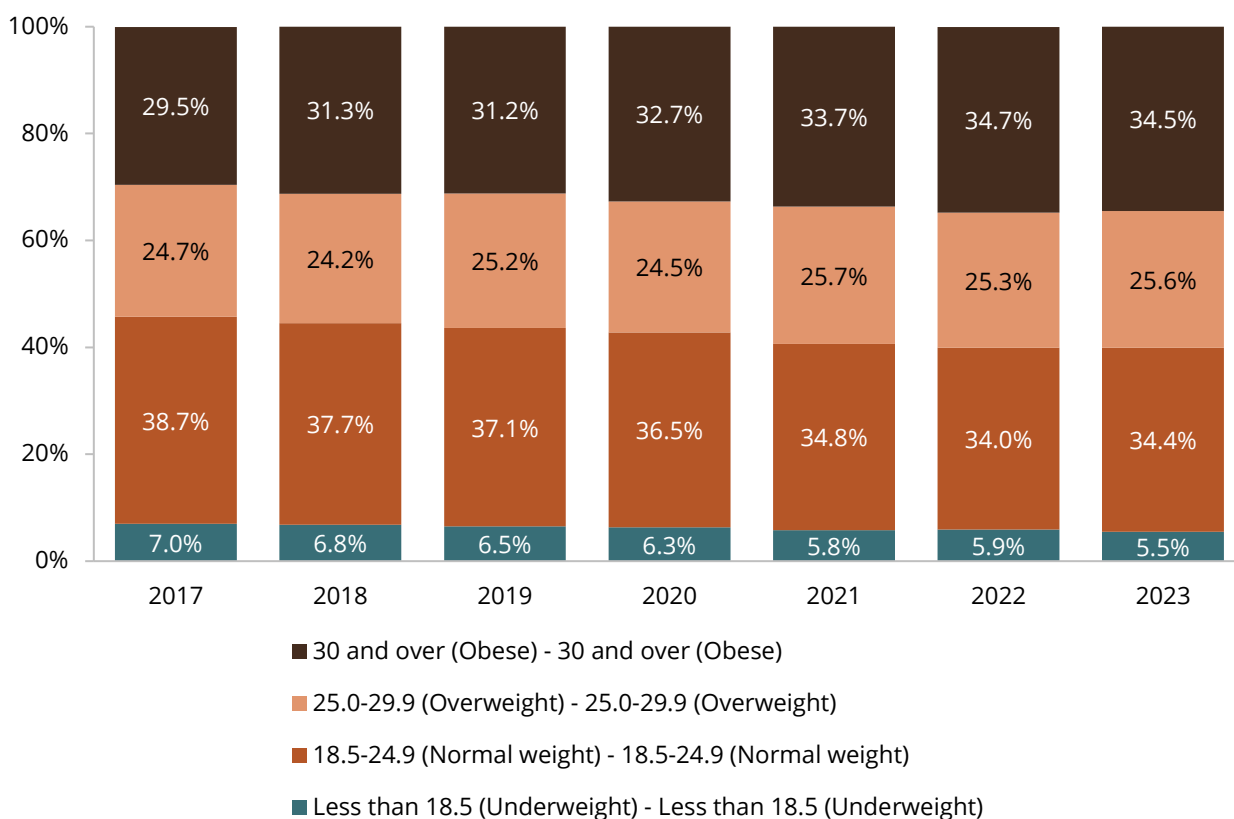
Australian totals exclude the Australian Capital Territory in 2023, which has no material impact on the national crude rates and age standardised rates. The national counts for 2023 are lower than other years, as Australian Capital Territory data was not included.

Source: Derived from AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection (NPDC). Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE2c.1 and SE2c.3.

In 2023, around 1 in 3 (34.4%) mothers were in the normal weight range at the start of pregnancy. The proportion of mothers who were overweight (25.6%; BMI 25.0–29.9) or obese (34.5%; BMI 30 and over) has increased slightly since 2017 (figure 2.7).

**Figure 2.7 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers' Body Mass Index (BMI) (kg/m sq)**

Proportion Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in BMI ranges (2017 to 2023) (Indicator 2c.2)



Caution should be used when considering BMI data due to collection differences between jurisdictions. Australian totals exclude the Australian Capital Territory in 2023, which has no material impact on the national crude rates and age standardised rates. The national counts for 2023 are lower than other years, as Australian Capital Territory data was not included. For more information refer to the PC CtG dashboard 'Data quality considerations' section of the indicator 'Maternal health' data specifications.

Source: Derived from AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection (NPDC). Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE2c.2.

## Rising rates of early antenatal care and falling smoking rates during pregnancy in jurisdictions with available data

In 2023, across the states and territories with data available<sup>8</sup>, between 35.6% (Tasmania) and 44.5% (the Northern Territory) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who gave birth reported smoking at any time during pregnancy (Indicator 2a). The rate of smoking at any time during pregnancy has decreased in all jurisdictions since the baseline year (2017).

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women receiving antenatal care during the first trimester of pregnancy (Indicator 2d) increased to 71.5% in 2022 from 63.5% in the baseline year (2017). Over recent years, there has been stability in the proportion of women who gave birth at 32 weeks or more gestation and attended 5 or more antenatal visits.

### Box 2.5 – Early and ongoing culturally responsive antenatal and maternal care is key to improving pregnancy outcomes

Culturally responsive and appropriate antenatal and maternal health services are crucial to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong. This includes:

- enabling birthing on Country, which can promote maternal social and emotional wellbeing and act as a protective factor against low birthweight
- providing ongoing access to antenatal care in community-controlled settings throughout pregnancy, which can address language and cultural barriers, as well as experiences of racism and discrimination
- recognising and valuing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, practices, and knowledges in the design and delivery of maternal health services.

The Birthing in Our Community (BiOC) model in South Brisbane provides holistic, family-centred care through an Indigenous-led partnership. Evidence shows the BiOC service has supported improved clinical outcomes. Women participating in the BiOC program were more likely to attend 5 or more antenatal visits, less likely to have an infant born preterm, and more likely to exclusively breastfeed, compared to women receiving standard care. This model indicates the potential impact of comprehensive, culturally informed antenatal and maternity care to support maternal and infant outcomes.

Source: Healing Foundation (2018); Hine et al. (2023); IUIH (nd); Kildea et al. (2021).

<sup>8</sup> Antenatal care and smoking status are not available for the Australian Capital Territory in 2023 due to a data system transition.

## Outcome 4: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years

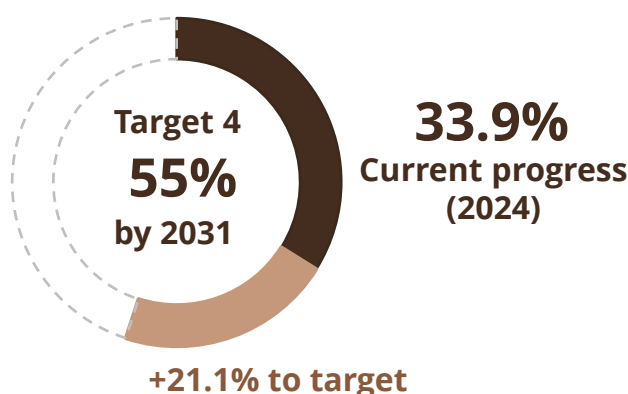


The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track has decreased and the target is not on track to be met by 2031

The target for socio-economic outcome 4 was last updated in 2025 using data for 2024. The next assessment of progress will be possible in 2028 using data for 2027.

Nationally in 2024, 33.9% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children commencing school were assessed as being developmentally on track in all 5 Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) domains (box 2.6).<sup>9,10</sup> This was a decline from 35.2% in 2018 (the baseline year). Based on the current trajectory, the target of 55% is not on track to be met by 2031 (box 2.7).<sup>11</sup>

Despite the recent decline, the long-term trend shows gradual and sustained improvement. In 2009, 25.5% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were assessed as developmentally on track in all 5 (AEDC) domains.



There has been a decline in the proportion of children assessed as developmentally on track across most jurisdictions

While there are currently no state and territory targets, the progress made in each state and territory does contribute to the national outcomes. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children commencing school who were assessed as developmentally on track across all 5 AEDC domains declined between 2018 and 2024 in New South Wales, Western Australia, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory. In Victoria and Queensland, the proportion of children developmentally on track increased, and in South Australia it remained stable.

<sup>9</sup> The AEDC is funded by the Australian Government Department of Education. The analysis in this report is by the PC and should not be attributed to the Department of Education.

<sup>10</sup> Across Australia, 12.6% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who participated in the 2024 AEDC did not have domain scores calculated.

<sup>11</sup> The target year is 2031, however the AEDC is currently only collected every 3 years. Progress assessment can be expected in 2031 using 2030 data. Data for the target year will not be available before 2033.

State and territory assessment of progress (2018 to 2024)

| Target | NSW                                                                                           | Vic                                                                               | Qld                                                                                         | WA                                                                                | SA                                                                                            | Tas                                                                                 | ACT                                                                                               | NT                                                                                  |
|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4      |              |  |            |  |             |  |                |  |
| Legend |  Improvement |                                                                                   |  Worsening |                                                                                   |  No change |                                                                                     |  No assessment |                                                                                     |

The assessments should be used with caution as they are based on a limited number of data points.

Box 2.6 – What is the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC)?

The AEDC is a population-based measure of child development. The AEDC provides evidence to support health, education and community policy and planning. National progress has been limited since 2018, with small declines recorded for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children between 2021 and 2024.

Teachers of children in their first year of full-time school complete a questionnaire that collects data on 5 key areas, or ‘domains’, of early childhood development. These domains have been shown to predict later mental health, wellbeing and academic outcomes:

- physical health and wellbeing
- social competence
- emotional maturity
- language and cognitive skills (school-based)
- communication skills and general knowledge.

AEDC data highlights what is working well and what can be improved to support children and their families.

Source: DoE (2025a).

The proportion of children assessed as developmentally on track varies across the population

In 2024, a higher proportion of female Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were assessed as developmentally on track (41.0%) compared to male children (26.5%). In 2024, the national proportion declined with increasing remoteness, with the largest decrease from remote (26.5%) to very remote areas (16.5%). The proportion of children assessed as developmentally on track in 2024 was highest in least disadvantaged areas (48.1%) and steadily decreased as disadvantage increased, with 26.2% of children assessed as developmentally on track in the most disadvantaged areas. Nationally, the proportion with a medically diagnosed special need rose from 6.4% in 2018 to 10.7% in 2024. Over the same period, the proportion identified by teachers as requiring further assessment for a developmental difficulty affecting their ability to do schoolwork in a regular classroom increased from 24.3% to 33.2%.

### The proportion of children on track in the communication skills and general knowledge domain has increased, while progress is limited for other domains

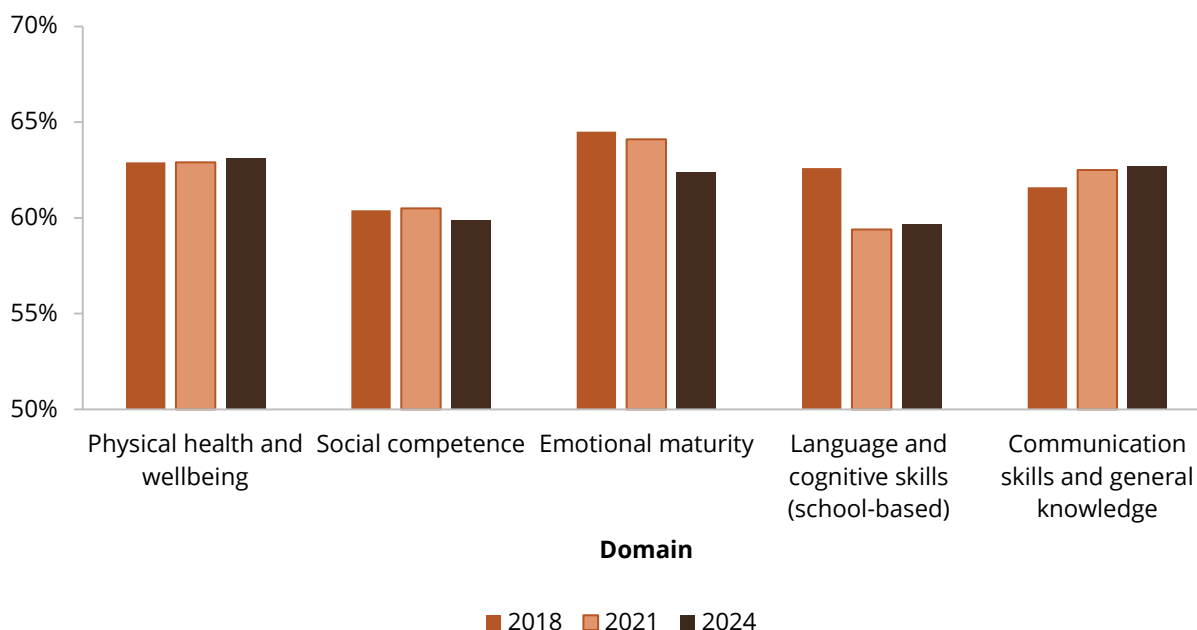
The new supporting indicator – Indicator 4c – measures the developmental outcomes of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in their first year of full-time schooling across the 5 AEDC domains: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school-based), and communication skills and general knowledge.

Nationally in 2024, around 3 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were developmentally on track across AEDC domains, while around 1 in 5 were assessed as vulnerable.<sup>12</sup> Progress since the baseline (2018) is mixed.

- A higher proportion of children were assessed as developmentally on track in the communication skills and general knowledge domain, which increased from 61.6% in 2018 to 62.7% in 2024.
- There were declines across social competence (60.4% to 59.9%), emotional maturity (64.5% to 62.4%) and language and cognitive skills (school-based) (62.6% to 59.7%) between 2018 and 2024.
- A similar proportion of children were assessed as on track in the physical health and wellbeing domain outcomes in 2024 (63.1%) compared to 2018 (62.9%).

**Figure 2.8 – Outcomes by AEDC domains**

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children developmentally on track in each domain (Indicator 4c)



The AEDC assigns each child a Domain Indicator score, which is a numerical score calculated for each AEDC Domain. For each domain, children receive a score between zero and 10, where higher scores denote better development.

Source: AEDC microdata file. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE4c.1-5.

<sup>12</sup> The test for statistical significance for AEDC data is the 'critical difference'. When comparing national results between 2018 and 2024, a difference is statistically significant if the percentage change is larger than (or equal to) 0.5%.



### The proportion of children assessed as having highly developed strengths has declined

The AEDC Multiple Strengths Indicator (MSI) – Indicator 4d – measures strengths in children regardless of whether they are developmentally on track in all 5 AEDC domains. Children are grouped into 3 categories: highly developed strengths, well-developed strengths or emerging strengths. In 2024, 37.3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children commencing school were assessed as having highly developed strengths, which is down from 39.0% in 2018. Over the same period, the proportion assessed as having well developed strengths increased slightly (0.3 percentage points), and the proportion assessed as having emerging strengths increased by 1.4 percentage points to 39.0% in 2024.

#### Box 2.7 – Improving early childhood outcomes requires holistic, community-led supports

High participation in early childhood education has not translated into more equitable outcomes, suggesting that participation is not enough to accelerate progress towards Target 4. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's physical and emotional development requires access to nutritious food, stable housing and culturally responsive services, alongside strong cultural, family and community ties. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are diverse, so programs that support one community, may not necessarily work in another. This means improving outcomes requires diverse, linked and complementary supports across early intervention, primary health care, community preschools and family support programs.

Shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in service design and delivery can help to ensure these supports are culturally grounded to assist families; preserve community ties; and contribute to improved lifelong health, learning and wellbeing outcomes. Collaborative approaches between government and non-government agencies, and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations help to ensure that the services and programs offered meet the community's specific needs in keeping children safe and supported.

Source: AIHW (2025b); SNAICC (2023, 2026).

## Outcome 14: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing



**The target for a significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero is not on track to be met**

In 2024, 298 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people died by suicide in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory – an increase from 196 people in 2018 (the baseline year). The age-standardised suicide rate rose to 33.9 per 100,000 people in 2024 from 23.6 per 100,000 people in 2018 (figure 2.9 and box 2.8). The increase in the suicide rate means the target for a significant and sustained reduction in suicide towards zero is not on track to be met (box 2.9).

### Box 2.8 – Data considerations: use caution when comparing deaths from suicide over time

The data used to assess progress for Target 14 is updated each year. The data includes a total based on single-year estimates across 6 jurisdictions (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory). Five-year aggregates are provided for point-in-time comparisons for jurisdictions and across age groups and remoteness areas.

Care is needed when comparing deaths by suicide over time. Changes to how causes of death are classified and improvements to identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status may affect comparability.

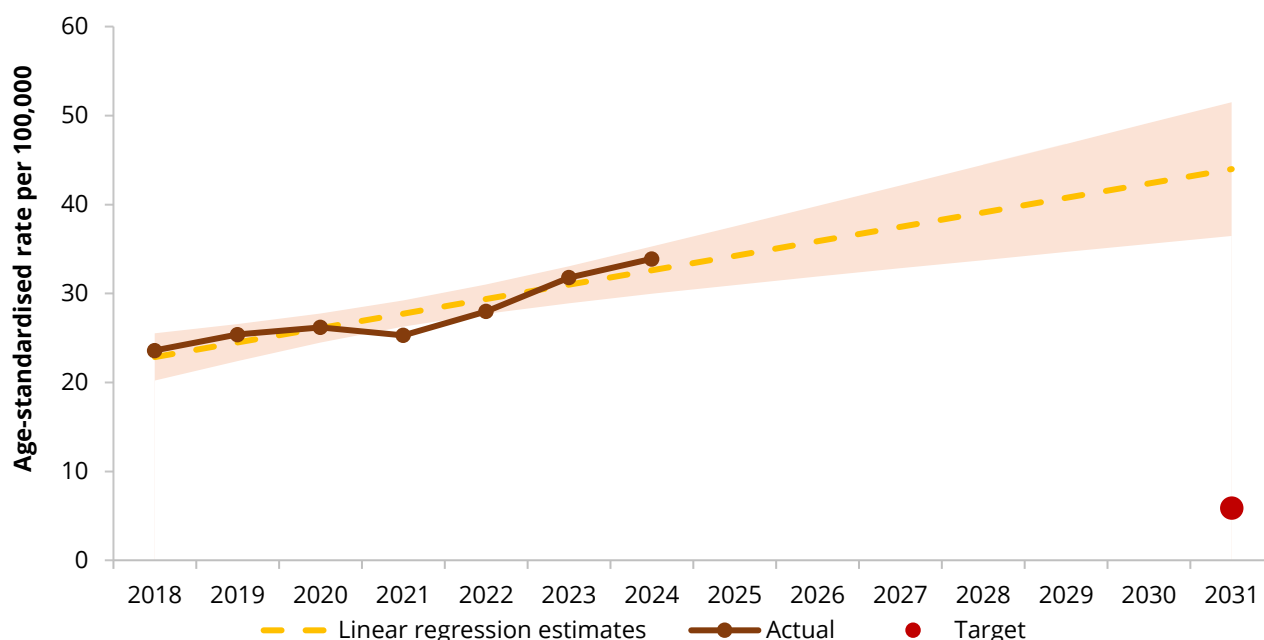
The introduction of the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death (MCCD) at different times across jurisdictions has led to increases in the number of reported deaths of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people, and a corresponding decrease in the number of deaths where the Indigenous status is unknown or not stated. Information from the MCCD and coronial reports have improved the derivation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identification in reporting of deaths by suicide over time. The ABS notes time series breaks as a result of these changes in 2022 and 2023. Victoria has been included in national reporting of deaths by suicide due to methodological changes and improvements used to revise data from 2018. Deaths referred to coroners are reviewed and updated with additional detail provided from coronial reports for up to 3 years. The number of deaths reported as being due to suicide may increase across the revisions process as coronial investigations progress and more complete information is made available to the ABS.

There have been no changes to the national assessments of progress (on track/not on track) as a result of the updated population estimates.

Source: ABS (2024a); AIHW (2025d).

**Figure 2.9 – Suicide rate per 100,000 people**

Age-standardised suicide rate per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the baseline (2018) to 2031 (Target 14)



The data presented is for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory combined only, in line with national reporting guidelines for this target. The shaded area represents 95% confidence intervals for the linear regression estimates. A trajectory of a 75% reduction in the suicide rate is presented as the target. As ABS population figures have increased over the entire time series, assessments of change over time are not substantially affected. Caution is required when interpreting trends in this data due to revised population estimates and enhancements in the methodology to identify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in reported deaths across jurisdictions. Refer to box 2.8 for more information. From 2022, the Medical Certificate of Cause of Death was introduced for derivation of Indigenous status in New South Wales.

Source: Derived 2025 from ABS (unpublished) 2024 Causes of Death Australia. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table CtG14A.1

### Data limitations prevent assessment of progress towards eliminating suicide across jurisdictions

Progress made in each state and territory contributes to national outcomes. For Target 14, state and territory assessments of progress cannot be provided as single-year data for each jurisdiction is not currently reported (refer to box 2.8 for data quality considerations).

The most recent 5-year aggregate data (2020–2024) shows that Western Australia had the highest rate of deaths by suicide with 39.9 per 100,000 people and New South Wales had the lowest with 25.4 per 100,000 people. Across the 6 jurisdictions with available data in the period, New South Wales recorded the highest number of deaths by suicide in 2020–2024, with 368 out of 1,253 deaths (29.4%).

State and territory assessment of progress

| Target | NSW                                                                                                                                        | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|----|
| 14     | ●●                                                                                                                                         | ●●  | ●●  | ●● | ●● | ●●  | ●●  | ●● |
| Legend | <div><div>→</div>Improvement</div> <div><div>←</div>Worsening</div> <div><div>▨</div>No change</div> <div><div>●●</div>No assessment</div> |     |     |    |    |     |     |    |

Suicide rates vary across age groups

Among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people aged 5–24 years, the rate of suicide declined in the period 2020–2024. Suicide rates have increased in older age groups since the baseline. For people aged 15–39 years, suicide was the leading cause of death, with people aged 25–34 years having the highest rate of death by suicide (figure 2.10).

Figure 2.10 – Rates of suicide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in 2020–2024

| 18–24 years      | 25–34 years      | 35–44 years      |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| 42.3 per 100,000 | 53.8 per 100,000 | 50.2 per 100,000 |

Deaths by suicide are higher for males than females, with a steeper rise among males

Suicide rates remain higher for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males than females. In 2024, in available jurisdictions (New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory) combined, after adjusting for differences in population age structures, the suicide rate for males was 4.1 times higher than for females – 55.1 per 100,000 males and 13.3 per 100,000 females. This is an increase for both groups from 2018 with a larger rise for males, from 36.6 per 100,000 males and 10.8 per 100,000 females.

|                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| In 2020–2024, the age-specific death rate by suicide was highest among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males aged 35–44 years<br>(81.0 per 100,000) | In 2020–2024, the age-specific death rate by suicide was highest among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females aged 25–34 years<br>(27.5 per 100,000) |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Death rates by suicide are increasing across all geographic areas and tend to rise with remoteness. In 2020–2024, the age-standardised death rate by suicide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males was 53.1 per 100,000 in remote and very remote areas and 40.4 per 100,000 in major cities. A similar geographic pattern was seen among females, with age-adjusted death rates by suicide of 17.7 per 100,000 females in remote and very remote areas and 12.4 per 100,000 females in major cities.

### There are declining rates of self-harm hospitalisations, but females are still most affected

In 2023–24, almost two-thirds (62.5%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hospitalised for intentional self-harm in Australia were female (1,654 of 2,647 admissions) (Indicator 14a). Nationally, rates of intentional self-harm hospitalisations declined among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people between 2018–19 and 2023–24. The decline was greater among females (15.2%) than males (13.2%).<sup>13</sup>

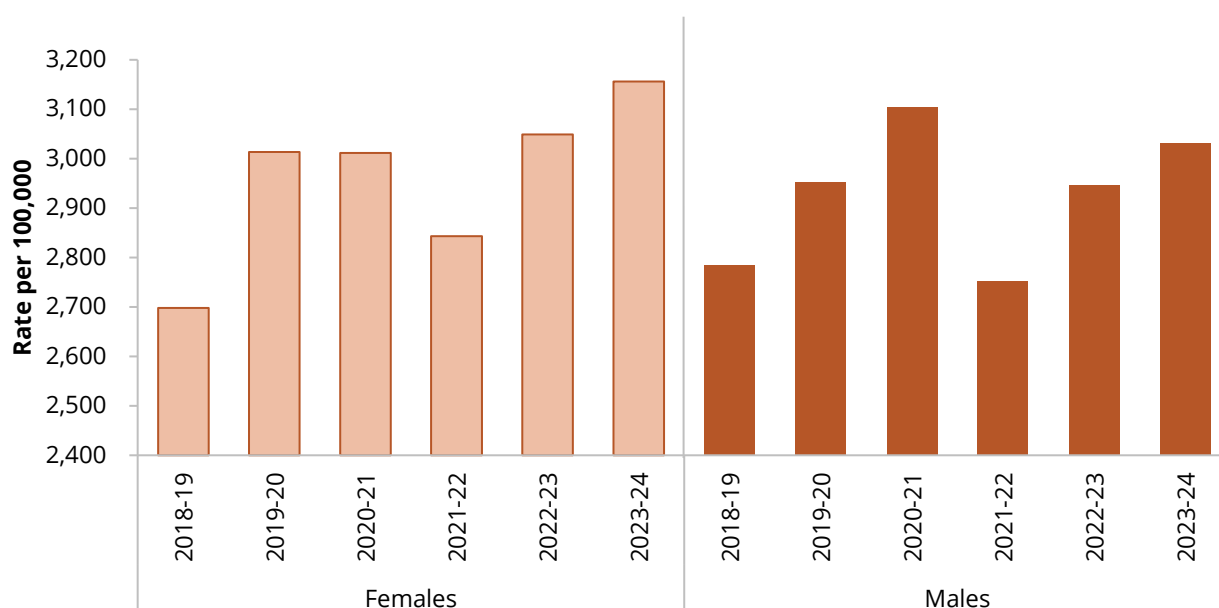
### Hospitalisations for mental health-related disorders are increasing

Accessible, affordable and culturally safe mental health care and crisis support can help prevent suicide. The new supporting indicator – Indicator 14c – hospitalisations for mental health-related disorders, provides additional context to the target of reducing suicide by capturing a broader picture of acute mental health support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Nationally in 2023–24, 3,030.8 per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males were admitted to hospital for a mental health-related diagnosis, while 3,156.2 per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females were admitted to hospital for a mental health-related diagnosis (figure 2.11). Hospitalisation rates have increased for both males and females since the baseline (2018–19).

#### Figure 2.11 – Hospitalisation rate for mental health-related disorders

Rate of hospitalisations per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, by sex (2018–19 to 2023–24) (Indicator 14c)



Source: Derived from AIHW National Hospital Morbidity Database and ABS Estimates and Projections for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE14c.1.

<sup>13</sup> This report uses the terms 'male' and 'female' to refer to data disaggregated by sex. Refer to box 1.5 for more information.

### Psychological distress remains prevalent

In 2022–23, around 1 in 3 (30.2%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experienced high or very high levels of psychological distress (Indicator 14d). The proportion has remained steady over time, highlighting how persistent and common these experiences are in communities across the country.

### While most people can access health care, more people are not seeing a doctor or counsellor when needed

Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people either accessed health care when they needed it or did not seek health care at all.

However, some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people did not receive care in the 12 months prior to 2022–23 when they needed it (Indicator 14e). This includes 16% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who did not go to the GP or clinic doctor, 12.1% who did not see another type of health professional and 5.3% who did not go to the hospital. In addition, 13.3% of adults (aged 18 years or over) did not see a counsellor and 21.3% of people aged 2 years or over did not go to the dentist. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who did not go to the doctor when needed, and adults who did not see a counsellor when needed, increased compared to 2018–19. However, there was no substantial change in access to dentists or hospitals.

The reasons why people do not always access health care when they need vary. Common barriers include cost, concerns about cultural safety, time constraints and physical access issues, being too busy, and other reasons such as feeling that care will not help.

#### Box 2.9 – Strengthening social and emotional wellbeing through community-led and co-designed approaches

Progress towards socio-economic outcome 14 depends not only on service delivery but also on coordinated, community-led and culturally grounded action across the mental health and suicide prevention system.

The Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration Framework and Implementation Plan provide a nationally agreed, community-led approach to reform. It promotes a ‘best of both worlds’ model that recognises the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander conceptions of wellbeing, mental health and healing, in addition to clinical perspectives. The Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration Framework has strong support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and aligns with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The PC’s Review into the National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement (the Review) highlighted limited progress in system reform, noting the need for practical alignment between mental health policy, the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and key frameworks such as the Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration Framework and Implementation Plan. To strengthen coordination and accountability, the Review recommended the next National Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Agreement should include a separate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing schedule. The schedule should be co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres



### Box 2.9 – Strengthening social and emotional wellbeing through community-led and co-designed approaches

Strait Islander people and supported by clarifying appropriate governance, funding and embedding community priorities and strengths-based measurement.

The Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership, which brings together governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, supports the development and future consideration of a separate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing schedule.

Source: DoHDA (2025); Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) (nd); PC (2025a); Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership (2025).

### Around half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults report experiencing racial discrimination in one or more forms

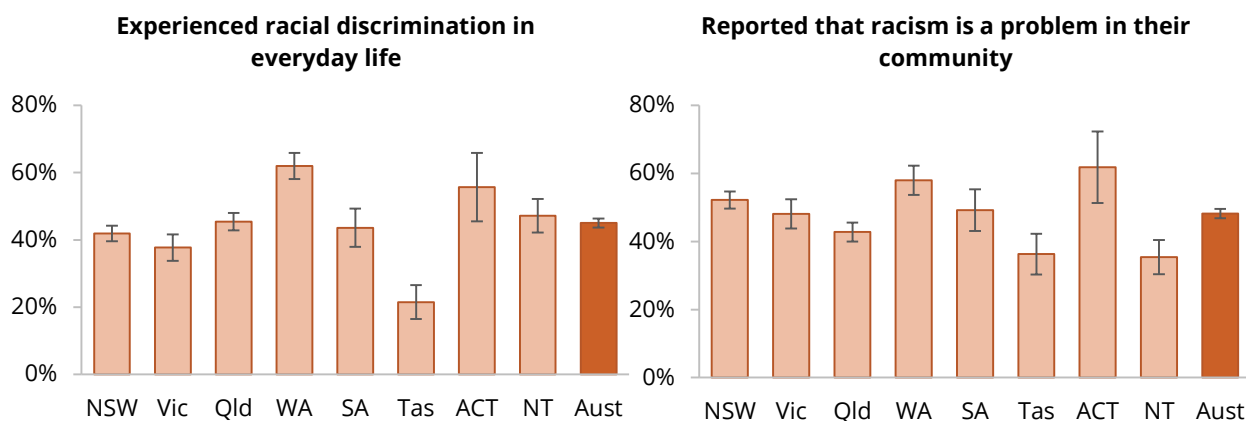
Racism negatively affects the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, increasing the risk of anxiety, depression, self-harm and death by suicide (AIHW 2022b; Dudgeon et al. 2014; Kairuz et al. 2021; Truong and Moore 2023). To report experiences of racism, Indicator 14g has 3 measures, one sourced from the Australian Reconciliation Barometer (ARB) and the other 2 from the Mayi Kuwayu Study (MK Study).

According to ARB data, nationally in 2024, about half (54.0%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 18 years or over reported experiencing racial prejudice in the past 6 months, compared to approximately one-quarter (26.0%) of the general community. This is a decrease from 60% in 2022, but still higher than the baseline of 43% in 2018.

The MK Study, the first community-led data source to be included on the PC CtG dashboard, asked participants 2 questions about racism: experiences of racial discrimination in one or more forms in everyday life, and reports that racism is a problem in their community (box 2.10). Nationally between 2019–2021, just under half (45.0%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 16 years or over experienced racial discrimination in everyday life. Over the same period, around half (48.2%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults reported that racism is a problem in their community (figure 2.12).

**Figure 2.12 – Community-governed data on experiences of racism**

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged 16 years or over who have experienced racism in daily life (left) and self-reported that racism is a problem in their community (right), by jurisdiction (2019–2021)



While the Mayi Kuwayu Study sample is not intended to be representative of the whole Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, survey weights have been developed and applied to the sample to make more appropriate whole-of-population estimates. The weighting applied in this report was based on 5 population benchmark variables (age, sex, remoteness, state/territory, Index of Relative Socio-economic Advantage and Disadvantage). The numerator for 14g.2 is the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 16 years or over who experienced 1 or more of 8 specific types of discrimination in everyday life more often than 'not at all' and attributed the experience to being Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

Source: Mayi Kuwayu: The National Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE14g.2-3.

#### Box 2.10 – Mayi Kuwayu: The National Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing

The MK Study is the largest national longitudinal study of the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged 16 years or over in Australia. It is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led and governed cohort study founded on extensive community engagement and conducted in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations. It is currently the only national data source for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing which follows the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

Since the MK Study started in 2018, over 13,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have responded by sharing their stories that recognise identity, spirituality, and connection to Country, community, and language as fundamental elements of culture. MK Study recruitment is ongoing through a 'living cohort' design, meaning participants can complete a survey at any time, regardless of participation in earlier waves, with new waves occurring about every 4 years. Follow-up surveys retain the baseline core components, with modifications made through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led redesign process that incorporates participant and community-researcher feedback, evidence of psychometric validity, and evolving community priorities.

Source: Lovett et al. (2020); Thandrayen et al. (2024).

## Summary: Health, wellbeing and development

Progress towards targets is mixed.

While life expectancy is improving, there is not a significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. There has been no change from baseline in healthy birthweights, and the latest assessment shows a lower proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track.



Life expectancy is improving but not on track **(Target 1)**.

Mortality rates are increasing for most age groups (1b).

Potentially avoidable mortality is rising (1c).

Some personal health risk factors are improving (1d).

Minimal gains in health checks and falling use of GP and chronic disease care (1e).



Healthy birthweights show no change from baseline and are not on track **(Target 2)**.

Smoking rates during pregnancy fell (2a).

Maternal health is slightly worsening (2c).

Early antenatal care rates are rising (2d).



Childhood development is worsening **(Target 4)**.

The proportion of children on track in the communication skills and general knowledge domain has increased, for other domains progress is limited (4c).

The proportion of children assessed as having highly developed strengths has declined (4d).



Significant and sustained reduction in suicide is worsening **(Target 14)**.

There are declining rates of self-harm hospitalisations (14a).

Hospitalisations for mental health-related disorders are increasing (14c).

More people are not seeing a health professional when needed (14e).

Psychological distress remains prevalent (14d).

Around half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults report experiencing racial prejudice (14g).

### Legend



Good improvement and on track or met



Improvement but not on track



Worsening, not on track



No change from the baseline



No assessment available

## 2.2 Families and kin

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities feature kinship systems that are foundational to all aspects of life, including roles and responsibilities, behaviours and connection to family, community and Country. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are raised in loving and secure families, with the support of extended kin. Kinship systems are essential for social and emotional wellbeing, learning and sharing knowledges and shaping cultural identity, particularly for children and their development (Dudgeon et al. 2024). Nurturing family environments and cultural connection matter for a safe and supported childhood, and for later wellbeing (Rogers et al. 2025).

Over the past two centuries, the kinship systems and the knowledge transfer of child rearing practices, have been systematically disrupted due to government policies of assimilation, displacement of families and forcible child removals (AIHW 2025c). Intergenerational trauma and the harms caused by government systems continue to impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. The legacy of forced dispossession, exclusion from land ownership and stealing of wages has also entrenched disadvantage in housing, employment and health outcomes. These interconnected economic, social and mental health factors continue to shape family wellbeing and safety and are closely linked to child removal and family violence. There are concerns that the child protection system today reflects the same grief, trauma and harm associated with the Stolen Generations, with the potential for similarly detrimental effects for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and community wellbeing (SNAICC et al. 2026).

There is a risk that the current system in place to protect children and families will perpetuate cycles of disadvantage, disconnection and violence, with potential impacts for entrances into juvenile justice and adult incarceration (ALRC 2017b). Breaking these cycles and ensuring the safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children requires addressing a range of structural and systemic factors. Determinants of family violence can be linked to inadequate criminal justice responses as well as gaps in health and community services (AIHW 2025c). Fear of child removal is also a significant barrier, with some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women choosing not to report family violence, or access a range of supports, due to concerns that children will be taken into out-of-home care (AIHW 2024c; Andrews et al. 2024).

Cultural healing and self-determination are critical to strengthening protective factors for young people, kinship systems and communities. These approaches support reconnection to culture, kin and Country, and can play an important role in breaking intergenerational cycles (Salmon et al. 2019a). Evidence shows that culturally grounded, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led models of care can strengthen family connections and improve outcomes for children (Beaufils et al. 2025). Prevention and early intervention, including access to culturally safe, holistic services led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, can play a critical role in supporting families and communities (SNAICC et al. 2026).



### Box 2.11 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2026 for socio-economic outcomes 12 and 13.

| Outcome                                                                                                                   | Update               | Latest data |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Outcome 12:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not over-represented in the child protection system |                      |             |
| • Child protection (Target 12)                                                                                            | <i>New data</i>      | 2025        |
| • Out-of-home care (12b)                                                                                                  | <i>New data</i>      | 2025        |
| • Care and protection orders (12c)                                                                                        | <i>New indicator</i> | 2025        |
| • Application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (12e)                                | <i>New data</i>      | 2025        |
| • Cultural support plans (12g)                                                                                            | <i>New data</i>      | 2024        |
| • Reunification (12k)                                                                                                     | <i>New indicator</i> | 2023–24     |
| • Rates of substantiation by type of abuse (12m)                                                                          | <i>New data</i>      | 2024–25     |
| <b>Outcome 13:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe                                 |                      |             |
| • Family safety (Target 13)                                                                                               |                      | 2018–19     |
| • Women reporting family violence is common in their communities (13d)                                                    |                      | 2021        |
| • Hospitalisations for family violence (13h)                                                                              | <i>New data</i>      | 2023–24     |
| • Barriers to support (13o)                                                                                               | <i>New indicator</i> | 2022–23     |
| • Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) Assistance – family violence (13p)                                               | <i>New data</i>      | 2024–25     |
| • SHS assistance – accompanied with children (13q)                                                                        | <i>New data</i>      | 2024–25     |

## Outcome 12: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not over-represented in the child protection system



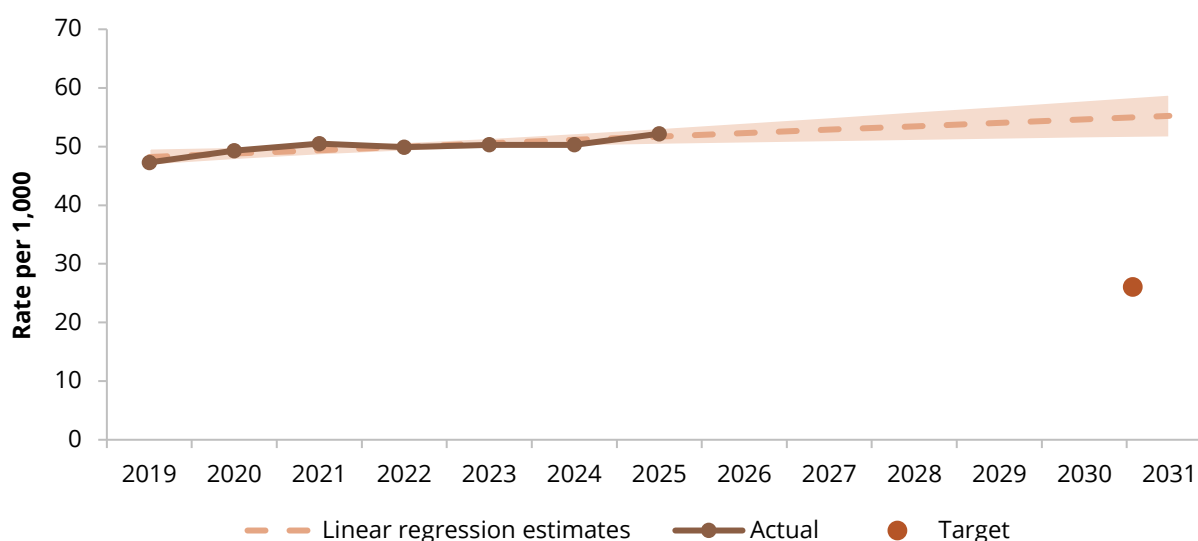
The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is increasing and the target is not on track to be met by 2031

The target of reducing the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45% is not on track to be met by 2031 (box 2.12)

In 2025, 20,842 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years were in out-of-home care – a rate of 52.2 per 1,000 children, up from 47.3 per 1,000 children in 2019 (figure 2.13). The increase means the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care is worsening.

### Figure 2.13 – Children in out-of-home care, nationally

Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care per 1,000 children, 2019 to 2031 (Target 12)



The shaded area represents 95% confidence intervals for the linear regression estimates.

Source: Derived from state and territory governments (unpublished); ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table CtG12A.1.

#### Box 2.12 – Data quality considerations

The 2025 national data used to measure progress towards Target 12 should be considered with caution. Queensland data for 2025 is preliminary due to a new client management system transition. For Queensland, an estimate of children subject to third-party parental responsibility orders has been subtracted from the total number of children in out-of-home care to report against the target.

Due to the system transition, Queensland data and national counts for 2024–25 are not available for target disaggregations and some supporting indicators. Data will be updated in future years, as more accurate data becomes available.

Out-of-home care rates vary by age group

The national rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care have increased for both young males and young females between the baseline year (2019) and 2024. In 2024, the rates were 50.4 and 50.1 per 1,000 young males and young females, respectively. In 2025, for all states and territories with available data, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care was similar for males and females.

Rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care vary by age group. Nationally, infants aged under one year experienced a decline in out-of-home care rates between 2019 and 2024 and had the lowest rates in 2025 across most states and territories with available data. In 2025, for states and territories with available data, rates were highest among children aged 5–9 years and 10–14 years in Victoria, Western Australia, South Australia and Tasmania and were highest among children aged 10–14 years and 15–17 years in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

Disability status is unknown for a large proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care (30.4% in 2024). Nationally, just over 1 in 5 (22.7%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care had a reported disability in 2024, up from 14.0% in 2020. Between 2024 and 2025, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care with disability increased across all states and territories with available data, except the Australian Capital Territory.

Many states see more children in out-of-home care, others see improvement

While there are currently no state and territory targets, the progress made in each state and territory does contribute to national outcomes. Similar to national trends, rates of out-of-home care increased from the 2019 (baseline year) to 2025 in Victoria, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania, reflecting worsening outcomes. In contrast, out-of-home care rates decreased in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, indicating improvement. Western Australia showed no significant change.

State and territory assessment of progress (2019 to 2025)

| Target           | NSW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Vic                                                                                 | Qld                                                                                 | WA                                                                                  | SA                                                                                  | Tas                                                                                   | ACT                                                                                   | NT                                                                                    |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 12               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Confidence level | High                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | High                                                                                | High                                                                                | Low                                                                                 | High                                                                                | High                                                                                  | Low                                                                                   | High                                                                                  |
| Legend           | <div>Improvement</div> <div>Worsening</div> <div>No change</div> <div>No assessment</div> |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |

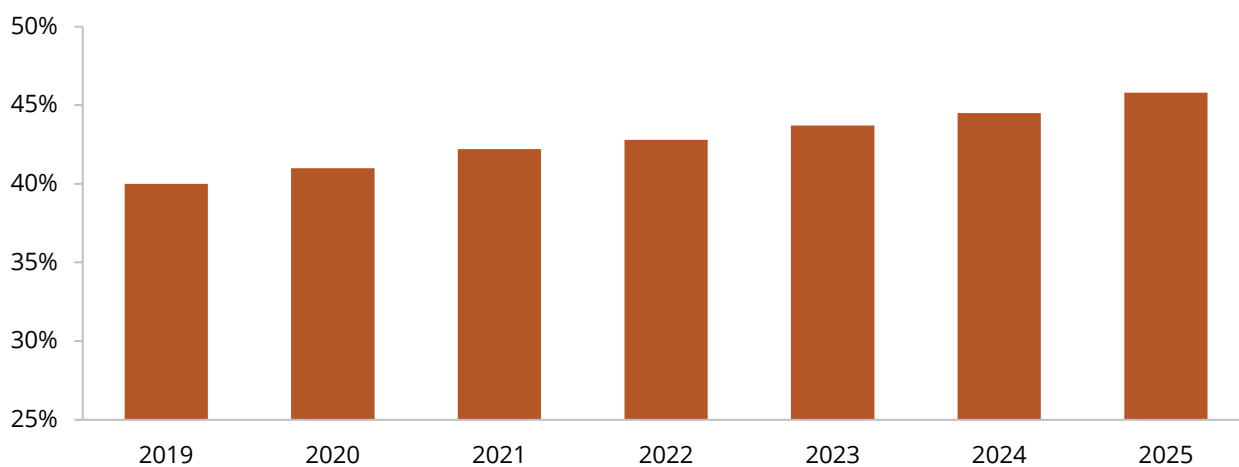
An assessment reported with a High level of confidence is considered to be more reliable than one reported with a Low level of confidence. Refer to the Glossary in this report or 'How to interpret the data' page on the PC CtG dashboard for more information.



Over-representation in out-of-home care continues to grow

The proportion of children aged 0–17 years in out-of-home care who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander has increased over time, from 40.0% in 2019 to 45.8% in 2025, highlighting a continued pattern of over-representation (figure 2.14). Both the proportion and the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care have increased since the baseline (2019).<sup>14</sup>

**Figure 2.14 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care**  
Proportion of children in out-of-home care who are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, 2019 to 2025 (Indicator 12b)



Source: AIHW (unpublished) Child protection Australia. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE12b.1.

Confirmed child protection notifications have decreased

The national rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who were the subject of a substantiated child protection notification increased between 2018–19 and 2020–21, but has since declined, falling below the baseline level by 2023–24. By 2023–24, the rate of substantiated child protection notifications was 32.8 per 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years. This downward trend suggests a reduction in confirmed cases of abuse or neglect. The rise in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care to 2024 may be influenced by earlier peaks in substantiations and the time it takes for placements to occur following a substantiation.

Of the states and territories with data available, in 2024–25 the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–17 years subject to a substantiated child protection notification was highest in Victoria (83.6 per 1,000 children), followed by Western Australia (46.9 per 1,000 children), South Australia (43.2 per 1,000 children), the Northern Territory (34.0 per 1,000 children), New South Wales (28.8 per 1,000 children), the Australian Capital Territory (19.7 per 1,000 children) and Tasmania (17.5 per 1,000 children) (figure 2.15).

<sup>14</sup> The proportion of children in out-of-home care that are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander may be influenced by changes to both the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous children in out-of-home care.

**Figure 2.15 – Substantiated child protection notifications**

Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children that were subject to a substantiated child protection notification per 1,000 children, by state and territory, 2024–25 (Indicator 12m)



Source: AIHW (unpublished) Child protection Australia; ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE12m.1.

The decline in overall substantiated child protection notifications between 2018–19 and 2023–24 was seen across most types of reported abuse or neglect. This includes reductions or no significant change in reported physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect. Emotional abuse was the exception, with rates increasing over time. By 2023–24, emotional abuse continued to be the most common type of substantiated notification for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (16.8 per 1,000 children), followed by neglect (9.6 per 1,000 children). In 2024–25, emotional abuse and neglect remain the most common types of substantiated abuse for states and territories with available data.

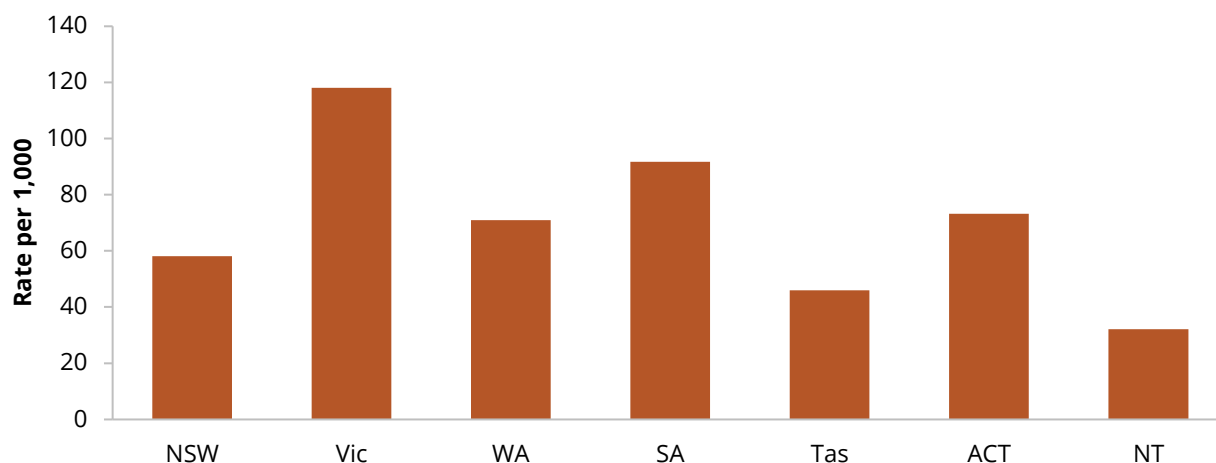
**2 in 5 children on care and protection orders are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander**

A new supporting indicator – Indicator 12c – reports on contacts with the child protection system beyond out-of-home care. The indicator has 2 measures; the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on care and protection orders and the proportion of children on care and protection orders that are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

In 2025, across the states and territories with available data, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on care and protection orders ranged from 32.1 per 1,000 children in the Northern Territory to 118.0 per 1,000 children in Victoria (figure 2.16). The latest national rate of children on care and protection orders was 63.0 per 1,000 children in 2024, increasing from 61.0 per 1,000 children in 2020.

**Figure 2.16 – Care and protection orders**

Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children on care and protection orders per 1,000 children, by state and territory, 2025 (Indicator 12c)



Source: AIHW (unpublished) Child protection Australia; ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE12c.1.

In 2024, nationally, 41.8% of children aged 0–17 years on care and protection orders were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. In 2025, for the states and territories with available data, the proportion of children on care and protection orders that were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander was highest in the Northern Territory (89.3%), followed by Western Australia (58.9%), New South Wales (44.9%), Tasmania (44.5%), South Australia (37.8%), the Australian Capital Territory (30.3%) and Victoria (27.2%). Between the baseline year (2020) and 2025, the proportion of children on care and protection orders that are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander increased in all states and territories with available data, except in the Australian Capital Territory.

### Box 2.13 – The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP)

The ATSICPP, originating from a community-led movement 3 decades ago, consists of guiding principles for decision-making within the child protection system. The 5 interconnected elements recognise the importance of safe, family-based care to support the wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and prevent actions like those that resulted in the Stolen Generations. The ATSICPP's components are:

- prevention of entry into out-of-home care
- partnership with community in service design, delivery and individual case decisions
- participation of family members in decisions regarding the care and protection of children
- placement in out-of-home care in line with a placement hierarchy (i.e. with family and kin first)
- connection to family, community, culture and Country for children in out-of-home care.

The full implementation of the ATSICPP requires embedding all Priority Reforms in the design, implementation and evaluation of legislation, policy and practice within the child protection system.

Source: DSS (2015); SNAICC (2018); SNAICC et al. (2023).

**3 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care continue to live with relatives, kin or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers**

Nationally, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care living with relatives or kin, or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers (the placement element of the ATSICPP) has remained steady between 2019 and 2024 (box 2.13). The proportion has held at 63.1%, or just over 3 in 5 children, since the baseline year. In 2025, for states and territories with available data, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care living with relatives, kin or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers ranged from 25.4% in the Northern Territory to 82.8% in Victoria. The remaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were living in other care arrangements, including with non-Indigenous carers or in residential care or family group homes.

Nationally, around 2 in 5 (40.7%) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care were living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives, kin or carers (the connection element of the ATSICPP) in 2024, which is a decline from 43.4% in 2019. In 2025, for states and territories with available data, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander relatives, kin or carers was highest in New South Wales (46.2%), followed by Victoria (42.7%), Western Australia (41.5%), the Australian Capital Territory (39.3%), South Australia (38.6%), Tasmania (26.2%) and the Northern Territory (23.9%) (figure 2.17).

**Figure 2.17 – Connection element of the ATSICPP**

**Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who were living with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family, kin or carers, by state and territory, 2025 (Indicator 12e)**



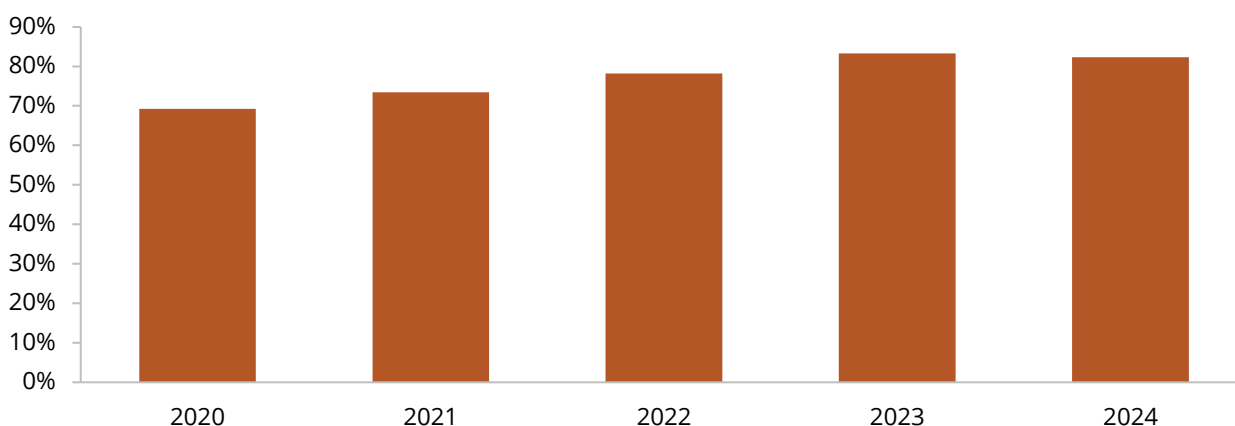
Source: State and territory governments (unpublished). Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE12e.1.

## Over 4 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care have a cultural care plan, where required

Legislation in each state and territory determines whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are required to have a cultural care plan. New data for 2024 shows that more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care are receiving a cultural care plan. Nationally, the proportion was 82.3% in 2024, up from 69.2% in 2020 (figure 2.18). The proportion of children in out-of-home care with cultural care plans increased every year between 2020 and 2023, but decreased in 2024.

### Figure 2.18 – Cultural care plans in place

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who have a cultural support plan, 2020 to 2024 (Indicator 12g)



Source: AIHW (unpublished) Child protection Australia. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE12g.1.

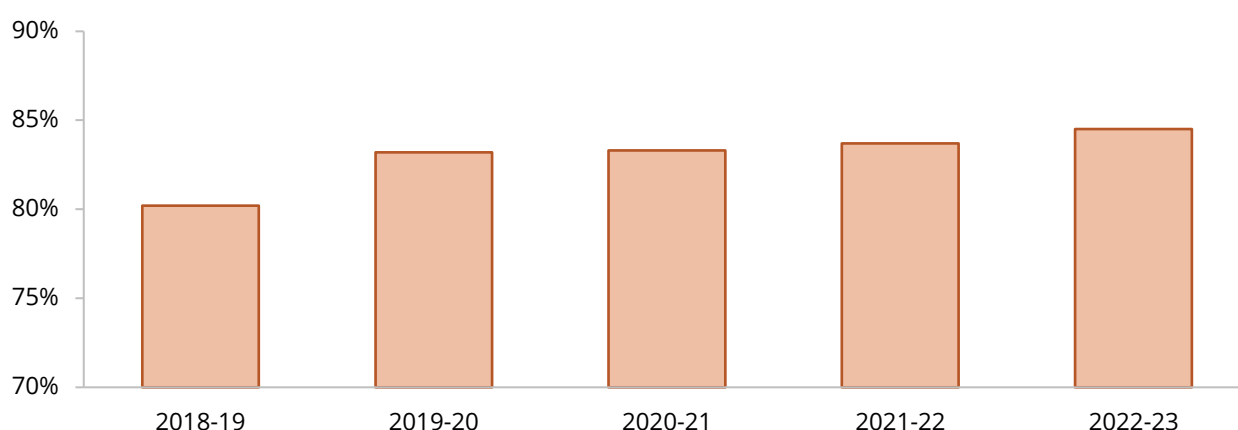
## More children are exiting out-of-home care to successful reunification

New indicator – Indicator 12k – reports on the success of reunification processes following out-of-home care. Reunification is a planned process of safely returning and enabling a child to remain at home with their birth parents, family or former guardian following a period of out-of-home care. The supporting indicator measures the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–16 years who exited out-of-home care to reunification in the previous year and did not return to out-of-home care in 12 months or less.

Nationally, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0–16 years who exited out-of-home care to reunification and did not return within 12 months has increased from 2018–19 (80.2%) to 2022–23 (84.5%) (figure 2.19). In 2023–24, of the states and territories with available data, the proportion of children who exited care to reunification and did not return within 12 months ranged from 74.1% in the Australian Capital Territory to 92.5% in South Australia.

**Figure 2.19 – Successful reunification outcomes**

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who exited care to reunification and did not return within 12 months, 2018–19 to 2022–23 (Indicator 12k)



Source: AIHW (unpublished) Child protection Australia. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE12k.1.

Supporting indicators and data insights can provide deeper context for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes, however, it remains clear that the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the child protection system requires change (box 2.14).

**Box 2.14 – Investing in prevention and community-led programs**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander childrearing practices, including kinship and community systems, play major roles in the creation of safe and nurturing environments for the holistic care of children and young people. Addressing the impacts of colonisation, and the Stolen Generations, supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families to engage with services that strengthen cultural connection and enable children to grow up safe, healthy and strong. Preventive, community-led approaches are central to reducing over-representation in child protection systems.

The Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA) deliver culturally safe, trauma-informed programs that focus on prevention and early intervention:

- The Bringing Up Aboriginal Babies at Home (BUABAH) program provides intensive Aboriginal-led support to expectant mothers at risk of child protection involvement, helping to prevent Aboriginal babies from entering out-of-home care.
- The Nugel program provides care and case management for children involved with the child protection system, centres family involvement and has reunification as the ultimate goal.

VACCA take a relational, strengths-based and non-judgemental approach, providing wrap-around services to support families. The focus is prevention, supporting families to generate solutions to protect children from harms and minimise the number of children entering care. These programs recognise that family, kinship and cultural connections are essential to children's identity, development and wellbeing.

Source: McDonald et al. (2025); SNAICC (2025).

## Outcome 13: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe



### No data is available to track all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children

No new data is available since the baseline year (2018–19) on the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females or children who have experienced family violence. This is due to concerns with how the data was collected and the potential risk of harm this data collection caused for participants. There is a need for ethical, fit-for-purpose data but no such future data source has been determined (ABS 2022). While the lack of new data makes assessing progress difficult, evidence from research and multiple inquiries makes it clear that family violence is a significant issue in Australia, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

#### Box 2.15 – Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices

Our Ways, Strong Ways, Our Voices 2026–2036 presents a 10-year national plan to end family, domestic and sexual violence affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The plan recognises that violence is shaped by historical and structural factors, including colonisation, intergenerational trauma, and systemic inequality.

The plan is grounded in 8 core principles of change; self-determination, truth-telling, lived experience, healing, systemic transformation, intersectionality, accountability and Indigenous Data Sovereignty. Its priority areas are conceptualised as interconnected threads that, when woven together, drive meaningful and lasting reform. These threads aim to:

- shift decision-making power to communities and increase investment in community-controlled organisations
- embed trauma-informed, culturally grounded approaches across prevention, early intervention, response and recovery services
- reform systems to address racism, improve cultural safety and reduce harm
- strengthen research and data systems under Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander control
- address housing insecurity and poverty as key drivers of violence to support long-term safety and independence.

The plan prioritises diverse groups and acknowledges intersecting vulnerabilities. Implementation will be supported through ongoing action plans, shared governance with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, and robust monitoring and evaluation. The plan represents a long-term shift from fragmented, government-led responses to coordinated, community-led systems focused on prevention, healing and structural change.

Source: DSS (2026).



**State and territory assessment of progress (2018–19 baseline)**

| Target        | NSW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|----|
| 13            | ●●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | ●●  | ●●  | ●● | ●● | ●●  | ●●  | ●● |
| <b>Legend</b> |  Improvement  Worsening  No change  No assessment |     |     |    |    |     |     |    |

**Women agree that family violence is a problem in their suburb or town**

Data for Indicator 13d from the National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey indicates that family violence is a problem in the communities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women surveyed. In 2021, of the 248 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women aged 16 years or over who participated in the survey, 170 agreed (68.5%) that violence against women was a problem in the suburb or town in which they live.

**Hospitalisations for family violence are declining**

Between 2018–19 and 2023–24, the rate of hospitalisations for family violence-related assaults fell 6.5% for males and 0.8% for females aged 15 years or over.<sup>15</sup> The rate of hospitalisations for females has increased since 2022–23, from 746.0 to 783.1 per 100,000 people. In 2023–24, the rate of hospitalisations for children under 15 years increased 48.6% to 43.7 per 100,000 people (figure 2.20). Care should be exercised when interpreting family violence data (box 2.16 outlines data considerations).

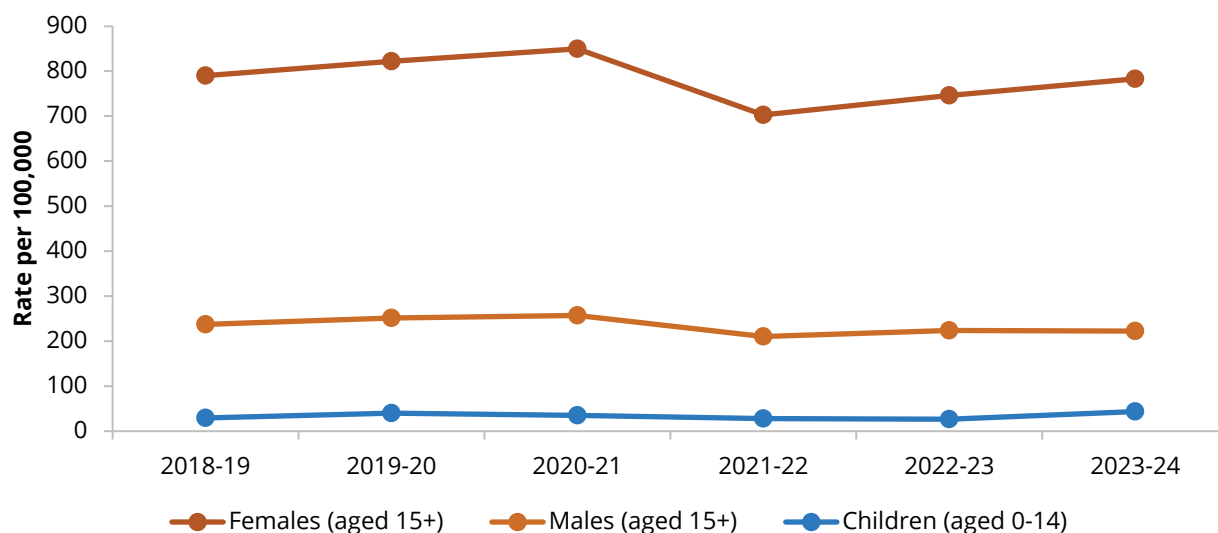
In 2023–24, 783.1 per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females aged 15 years or over were hospitalised for family violence related assaults.

In 2023–24, 221.9 per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males aged 15 years or over were hospitalised for family violence related assaults.

<sup>15</sup> This report uses the terms 'male' and 'female' to refer to data disaggregated by sex. Data disaggregated by gender is not yet available for this indicator. For more information on gender and sex in the ADCR, refer to box 1.5.

**Figure 2.20 – National hospitalisation rates for family violence**

Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females, males and children hospitalised for family violence per 100,000 people, 2018–19 to 2023–24 (Indicator 13h)



Source: Derived from AIHW (unpublished) National Hospital Morbidity Database; ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data tables SE13h.1 and SE13h.3.

In 2023–24, 70.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females hospitalised for family violence reported the perpetrator was an intimate partner (548.1 per 100,000 out of a total of 783.1 per 100,000) and 30.0% reported the perpetrator was a parent or family member (235.0 per 100,000). For males hospitalised due to family violence, parents or other family members (63.5%) were more often reported as the perpetrators than intimate partners (36.5%). In 2023–24, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children hospitalised for family violence was not disaggregated by the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator.

#### Box 2.16 – Data considerations: family violence may be under-reported

Care should be taken in interpreting the data on hospitalisations for family violence. Not all people who sustain injuries or conditions from family violence may seek or receive treatment in a hospital or report that the injuries sustained are a result of family violence. It is estimated that more than 90% of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women goes unreported. Low and decreasing rates of family violence are desirable. However, an increase in the rate may indicate that more people who sustain injuries or conditions from family violence have felt safe to receive medical treatment and to report the perpetrator.

Source: PC (2024d).

## More females than males seek assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services because of family violence

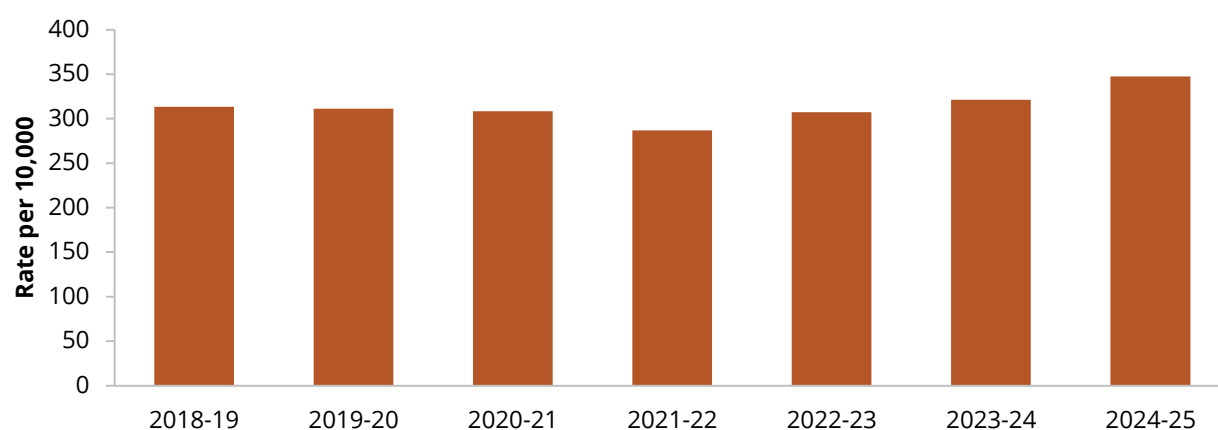
In 2024–25, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females experiencing family and domestic violence sought assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services (SHS) 6.5 times more often than males.<sup>16</sup> In 2024–25, 540.8 per 10,000 females and 83.1 per 10,000 males aged 15 years or over sought SHS assistance and had experienced family and domestic violence.<sup>17</sup>

The rate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have experienced family and domestic violence and are seeking assistance from SHS has increased since the baseline year. In 2018–19, 467.4 per 100,000 females and 69.4 per 100,000 males aged 15 years or over sought SHS assistance and had experienced family and domestic violence.

A greater proportion of males seeking SHS assistance attended with children than females. In 2024–25, 67.7% of males seeking SHS assistance attended with children compared to 40.4% of females. In 2024–25, 347.6 per 10,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged under 15 years sought SHS assistance and experienced family and domestic violence. The rate decreased from 2018–19 to 2021–22 and has increased since (figure 2.21).

### Figure 2.21 – Children seeking assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services

Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children seeking assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services who have experienced family and domestic violence per 10,000 people, 2018–19 to 2024–25 (Indicator 13q)



Source: AIHW SHSC Demographics; ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data tables SE13q.2.

<sup>16</sup> Differences in Specialist Homelessness Services Collection data over time and between jurisdictions may be influenced by state and territory policies, programs or systems. Comparisons of population rates should be used with caution. Increasing rates may reflect improving identification within homelessness service administrative data.

<sup>17</sup> This report uses the terms 'male' and 'female' to refer to data disaggregated by sex. Data disaggregated by gender is not yet available for this indicator. For more information on gender and sex in the ADCR, refer to box 1.5.

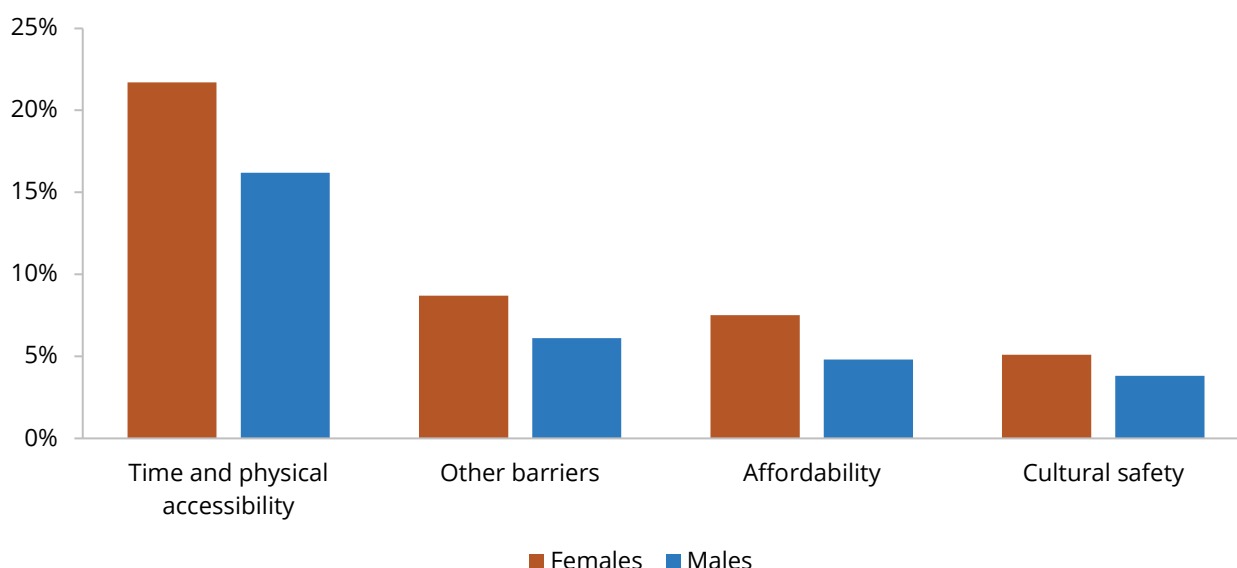
### Barriers to accessing support services exist

New supporting indicator – 13o – reports on the experiences of people accessing support services and the barriers faced. Support services include financial institutions, doctors and hospitals, disability services, alcohol and other drug services, legal services, employment services and housing services. Barriers to accessing support from these and other services include affordability, time and physical accessibility, cultural safety and other barriers, such as poor customer service.

In 2022–23, around 1 in 4 (23.6%) females and 1 in 5 (18.0%) males reported problems accessing support services. The most common barrier for both females and males reported was time and physical accessibility of the services (21.7% and 16.2%, respectively), followed by other barriers, affordability and cultural safety (figure 2.22).

#### Figure 2.22 – Support service barriers

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females and males experiencing barriers to accessing support services, by barrier type, 2022–23 (Indicator 13o)



Source: ABS (unpublished) National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data tables SE13o.1.

## Summary: Families and kin

Children continue to be over-represented in the child protection system and data is not available to assess progress for family safety.



Over-representation of children in the child protection system is worsening **(Target 12)**.

Over-representation in out-of-home care is growing, despite fewer confirmed child protection notifications (12b and 12m).  
2 in 5 children on care and protection orders are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (12c).  
3 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care continue to live with relatives, kin or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers (12e).  
Over 4 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care have a cultural care plan, where required (12g).  
Over 4 in 5 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who exit out-of-home care to reunification do not return within 12 months (12k).



No assessment of progress for family safety **(Target 13)**.

Women agree that family violence is a problem in their suburb or town (13d).  
Hospitalisations for family violence are declining (13h).  
Time and physical accessibility of services are the most common barrier to accessing support services (13o).  
More females than males seek assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services because of family violence (13p).  
More males attended with children when seeking assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services because of family violence (13q).

Legend



Good improvement and on track or met



Improvement but not on track



Worsening, not on track



No change from the baseline



No assessment available

## 2.3 Culture and language

Language shapes our understanding of, connection to, and place within the world (Tudor-Smith et al. 2024). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, language plays a central role in cultural identity and conceptions of Country, facilitating intergenerational transmission of complex, local and valuable cultural practices, traditions and knowledges (AIATSIS 2023; First Languages Australia nd; IDILDG and Australian Government 2023). For tens of thousands of years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages flourished, with over 250 languages comprising more than 800 dialects spoken pre-colonisation (AIATSIS 2023).

Cultural practices and languages were disrupted and oppressed by colonisation (AHRC 2011; Commonwealth of Australia 2020; Tudor-Smith et al. 2024). The maintenance and revival of language is vital to the physical, social, emotional, cultural, spiritual, ecological and economic wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities (Commonwealth of Australia 2020; Dudgeon et al. 2014; Marmion et al. 2014; Salmon et al. 2019b; Sivak et al. 2019). The rights to revitalise, use, develop and transmit traditional languages, oral traditions, writing systems and literatures to future generations are enshrined internationally (UN 2007).

Across Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are leading language maintenance and revitalisation activities that use and enrich language and culture in various ways (Simpson et al. 2019; Sivak et al. 2019). These include preserving linguistic knowledge, providing accessible media in language through community-controlled organisations, delivering services in language, teaching language and cultural knowledge, and partnering with governments to establish language institutions (Commonwealth of Australia 2020; FNMA nd; IDILDG and Australian Government 2023; Leslie-O'Neill et al. 2026; NSW Government 2019; Reed et al. 2024; Simpson et al. 2019).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have led strategies to advance language maintenance and revitalisation such as truth-telling, centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, intergenerational knowledge transfer, bilingual education and caring for Country programs (IDILDG and Australian Government 2023). New technologies are used to revitalise languages and reach broader audiences. There are also Indigenous Language Centres that facilitate activities to establish and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language skills. Further opportunities to lay long-term foundations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages to flourish include formal agreements, protocols and legislation (Janke et al. 2023).



Box 2.17 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2026 for socio-economic outcome 16.

| Outcome                                                                                                               | Update          | Latest data |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| <b>Outcome 16:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing |                 |             |
| • Languages (Target 16)                                                                                               | <i>New data</i> | 2025–26     |
| • Number and age profile of language speakers (16c)                                                                   | <i>New data</i> | 2025–26     |
| • Speak language (16d)                                                                                                |                 | 2022–23     |
| • Accessing Commonwealth funded language centres (16e)                                                                | <i>New data</i> | 2024–25     |

**Outcome 16: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing**



**New data is available on the number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages, but progress cannot yet be assessed**

For the first time since the baseline was established, new data from the National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS) is available to report against Target 16. The new data cannot yet be used to assess progress towards the target because the 2025–26 Fourth National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS4) data may not be completely comparable to the 2018–19 Third National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS3) baseline due to differing samples of languages captured in each collection and changes in methodology (box 2.18). The 2025–26 NILS4 data will be used to establish a new baseline for the number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.

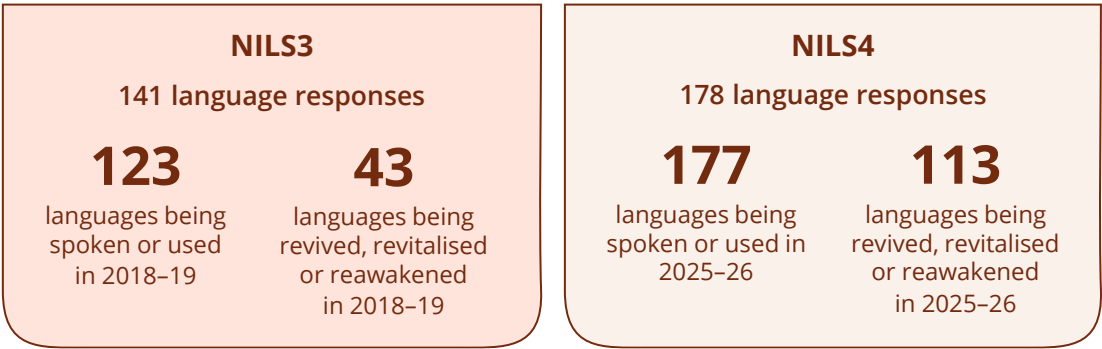
The NILS4 introduces updates to the methodology used to measure the strength of languages reported.<sup>18</sup> These changes were developed through co-design to better reflect community perspectives and understandings of language strength. The number of strong languages is counted entirely based on how survey respondents describe them, whereas in previous collections, languages may have been grouped together based on mutual intelligibility. The assessment of language strength has changed to include criteria including number of speakers or users, multigenerational use and use across domains of life (box 2.18).

In 2025–26, there were 177 languages spoken or used. Of the total languages spoken or used, 13 were new languages. In 2025–26, of the 45 languages considered strong, 9 were new languages.

<sup>18</sup> For complete data specifications refer to the PC CtG dashboard.



Supporting context of language data over 2 surveys



Data for 2018–19 (NILS3) is provided for context only. The previous data may not be directly comparable to the 2025–26 data due to differing samples of languages captured in each collection.

State and territory assessment of progress

| Target | NSW                                                                                                | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|----|
| 16     | ●●                                                                                                 | ●●  | ●●  | ●● | ●● | ●●  | ●●  | ●● |
| Legend | <div>→ Improvement</div> <div>← Worsening</div> <div>▤ No change</div> <div>●● No assessment</div> |     |     |    |    |     |     |    |

Box 2.18 – Fourth National Indigenous Languages Survey

The Fourth National Indigenous Languages Survey (NILS4) was the first National Indigenous Languages Survey to be co-designed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. More than 150 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language representatives across Australia, from every state and territory, were involved in the design. This included Elders, teachers, interpreters, sign language users, linguists, language workers, and government representatives.

The definition of a strong language was expanded within the NILS4. The new measurement is based on the definition used by the Languages Policy Partnership in their Data Policy Position and was also supported by other stakeholders throughout the broader co-design process. The new definition focuses on the people who use a language and the ways that they use it:

- a strong language should have a high number of speakers or users, be used by the majority of the community who identify with the language and be used by people in all generations
- a strong language should also be conversational, used every day across all domains of life, and used in phrases or sentences (not just nouns).

The NILS4 has been designed to more accurately represent the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages and embed Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles in all aspects of the research. In addition to its reporting function, the NILS4 also provides an opportunity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to obtain data on their own languages to share with and beyond their own communities.

Source: AIATSIS (2025); Languages Policy Partnership (2026).

### Almost 1 in 7 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages do not have speakers under 20 years of age

In 2025–26, the majority of languages reported (108 of the total 178) have fewer than 500 speakers or users in total, with just one language having zero speakers or users (Indicator 16c). Forty-eight languages have more than 1,000 speakers or users in total and 22 languages have between 501 and 1,000 speakers or users in total.

The absence of speakers or users in younger age groups may indicate a risk to the future use of a language. More than 6 in 7 languages have speakers or users aged 0–19 years. However, 24 languages have zero speakers or users aged 0–19 years and 18 languages have zero speakers or users aged 20–39 years.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language use at home remained stable

The proportion of people who used an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language at home remained stable between 2016 (10.3%) and 2021 (10.0%) (Indicator 16d).<sup>19</sup> In 2022–23, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who reported speaking an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language was 13.2%, with a further 22.4% able to speak some words. Of those surveyed, 16.0% of people reported learning an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander language.<sup>20</sup>

### Activity at Commonwealth funded Indigenous Language Centres has tripled

The total number of Commonwealth funded Indigenous Language Centres has increased nationally from 18 in 2019 to 24 in 2025 (Indicator 16e). There has also been an upward trend in the number of activities accessed at these centres across Australia, with the total number of activities accessed increasing from 19,723 in 2018–19 to 63,893 in 2024–25.

New South Wales has shown the largest increase in the number of activities accessed (15,057) from 2018–19 to 2024–25, increasing from 7,689 to 22,746 activities accessed. This was followed by Western Australia which had an increase of 12,783 activities accessed in 2024–25 (3,742 in 2018–19 to 16,525 in 2024–25) (figure 2.23).

<sup>19</sup> Data for the proportion of language users at home under Indicator 16d is sourced from the 2021 Census.

<sup>20</sup> Data for language learning and proficiency is sourced from the ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2022–23. This report does not cover data from previous years of the survey.

Figure 2.23 – Activity at Commonwealth funded Indigenous Language Centres

Number of times people accessed an activity at Commonwealth Funded Indigenous Language Centres, by state and territory, 2024–25 (Indicator 16e)



Source: Australian Government Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (unpublished) SmartyGrants grants management system. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE16e.1.

Summary: Culture and language

There is new data available but an assessment cannot yet be made on progress towards a sustained increase in the number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.



A new baseline has been established for the number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages **(Target 16)**.

- Almost 1 in 7 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages do not have speakers under 20 years of age (16c).
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander language use at home remained stable (16d).
- Activity at Commonwealth funded Indigenous Language Centres has tripled (16e).

Legend



Good improvement and on track or met



Improvement but not on track



Worsening, not on track



No change from the baseline



No assessment available

## 2.4 Education and training

For thousands of years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have sustained and developed intricate systems of learning and education, deeply rooted in cultural wisdom and oral tradition, and refined through experience and observation across generations (Burridge and Chodkiewicz 2012; NATSIEC 2024). Government policies of assimilation sought to replace Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges with a Eurocentric model of education and values (Morrison et al. 2019). As a result, the Australian education system has historically valued Western knowledges above Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing (Bodkin-Andrews and Carlson 2016). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may define learning in broader terms that recognise responsibilities to Country; language maintenance and revitalisation; as well as family, kin and community.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children engaged in early childhood education and care can experience advantages such as improved school readiness and cognitive development (Biddle and Bath 2013; Elek et al. 2020). Beyond enrolment, ensuring access to holistic, culturally safe and responsive early childhood education is essential for supporting the development and identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, helping them to be strong members of their families and communities (SNAICC 2022, 2024; SNAICC et al. 2023).

Primary and secondary school education that recognises the strengths, potential, and self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students is vital. This includes a focus on high expectations, helping students understand the social and political factors affecting their lives, building respectful and trusting teacher-student relationships and recognising cultural diversity as a strength (Morrison et al. 2019). Intersectional approaches centre diversity, and consider overlapping factors, such as environmental, physical or social barriers. For example, considering accessibility and inclusion may support engagement of young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability and/or living in remote areas.

Academic confidence, cultural connectedness and educational culture can impact engagement in higher education and training (Howard et al. 2021). Student aspiration and motivation are personal choices which shape numerous social and economic factors in a young person's life (NATSIEC 2024, 2025; PC 2020). Higher education can play a crucial role, supporting improved health and wellbeing, increased access to housing as well as future employment and earning opportunities (AIHW 2022a; Venn and Biddle 2018). Higher education may not be the preferred option for some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with alternate pathways better aligning with their personal cultural context (Gore et al. 2017).

Culturally safe and responsive education practices can support student achievement through enacting cultural competency and valuing a student's cultural frame of reference, including their knowledges, beliefs and skills (Perso and Hayward 2020). Maintaining strong connections to culture, family, and community can support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students of all ages to reach their full potential. Systemic changes within education systems such as improvements to curricula and support services can also make a difference.



### Box 2.19 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2026 for socio-economic outcomes 3, 5, 6 and 7.

| Outcome                                                                                                                                                             | Update          | Latest data |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| <b>Outcome 3:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years |                 |             |
| • Early childhood education (Target 3)                                                                                                                              | <i>New data</i> | 2025        |
| • Attendance in early childhood education (3a)                                                                                                                      | <i>New data</i> | 2025        |
| • Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care service providers (3b)                                                                   | <i>New data</i> | 2025        |
| <b>Outcome 5:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential                                                              |                 |             |
| • Attainment of Year 12 or equivalent qualification (Target 5)                                                                                                      |                 | 2021        |
| • School attendance (5a)                                                                                                                                            | <i>New data</i> | 2025        |
| • NAPLAN levels (5c)                                                                                                                                                | <i>New data</i> | 2025        |
| <b>Outcome 6:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways                                      |                 |             |
| • Completion of a tertiary qualification (Target 6)                                                                                                                 |                 | 2021        |
| • Higher education commencement, attrition and completion rates (6a)                                                                                                | <i>New data</i> | 2024        |
| • Higher education applications, offers and acceptance rates (6b)                                                                                                   | <i>New data</i> | 2024        |
| • Certificate III and above VET commencements, attrition and completion rates (6c)                                                                                  | <i>New data</i> | 2024        |
| • VET graduate outcomes and satisfaction levels (6g)                                                                                                                | <i>New data</i> | 2025        |
| <b>Outcome 7:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment or education                                                                |                 |             |
| • Youth fully engaged in employment, education or training (Target 7)                                                                                               |                 | 2021        |
| • Proportion of youth not engaged in employment, education or training (7a).                                                                                        |                 | 2021        |

## Outcome 3: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years



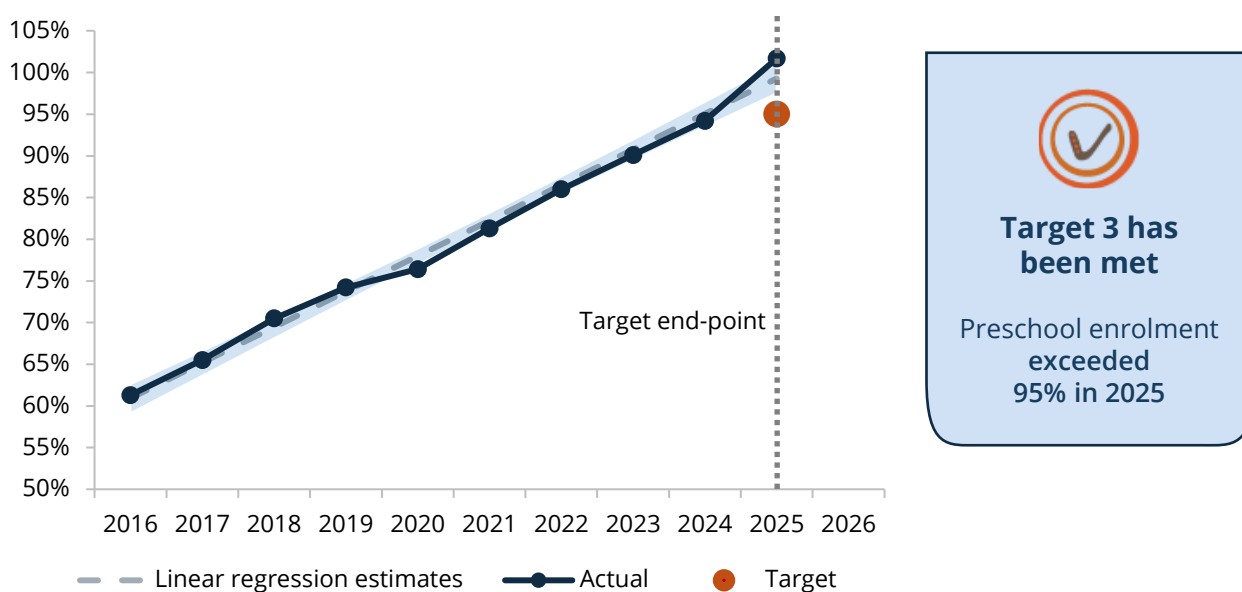
**In 2025, more than 95% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Year Before Full-time Schooling (YBFS) age cohort were enrolled in early childhood education**

The target for socio-economic outcome 3 has been met. Nationally in 2025, 101.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the YBFS age cohort were enrolled in early childhood education. Data considerations impact measurement for this target (box 2.20 outlines data considerations and box 2.21 outlines a performance audit of Targets 3, 4 and 5). The proportion has increased by 40.4 percentage points since the baseline year (2016), when 61.3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were enrolled in a preschool program (figure 2.24).

Work is underway to establish a new Target 3, following the process set out in the Agreement.

### Figure 2.24 – Early childhood education enrolment rate

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the state-specific YBFS age cohort who are enrolled in a preschool program nationally, 2016 to 2025 (Target 3)



The shaded area represents 95% confidence intervals for the linear regression estimates. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population estimates are recalculated following each Census, which may impact interpretation of trends over time. Refer to 'Revisions to population estimates' within the 'Explaining the data' section of the PC CtG dashboard for more information.

Source: Derived from ABS (unpublished) Preschool Education Australia. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data table CtG3A.1.

#### Box 2.20 – Data considerations: why enrolment rates exceed 100%

Enrolment rates exceed 100% for the national figure and some jurisdictions because the numerator and denominator come from different data sources, and are based on different assumptions. The numerator is administrative data for preschool enrolment reported annually. The denominator, the potential population of children aged in the state-specific YBFS cohort, is based on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population projections. These projections are the best available data, however they underestimate the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the years after the 2021 Census. Over time, identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been increasing, and this is not accounted for in current population projections.

For more information, refer to the data specifications for Target 3 on the PC CtG dashboard and the 'How to interpret the data' page.

### Outcomes across population groups have improved

Disaggregated data is available for Target 3 that enables analysis of outcomes among diverse populations.<sup>21</sup> Between 2016 and 2025, the proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in early childhood education increased for male and female children, children in regional and remote areas, children living in the most disadvantaged communities and children with disability.

There is no national level data available to report on the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children with disability enrolled in preschool programs, but some jurisdictional data is available. For jurisdictions with available data over multiple years (Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory), enrolment rates of children with disability have increased in all states and territories, except for South Australia. The Northern Territory has seen the largest increase (16.4 percentage points from 2019 to 2025). Data is only available for 2025 in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, both of which report enrolment rates of around 1 in 4 children with disability in the YBFS age cohort. Data is not published for New South Wales.

### Preschool enrolments have improved across all jurisdictions

While there are currently no state and territory targets, the progress made in each state and territory contributes to the national outcomes. From 2016 to 2025, the proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in state-specific YBFS have increased across every jurisdiction, with the largest increases in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

---

<sup>21</sup> Refer to the PC CtG dashboard for more information on available target disaggregation data.



**State and territory assessment of progress (2016 to 2025)**

| Target           | NSW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Vic                                                                               | Qld                                                                               | WA                                                                                | SA                                                                                | Tas                                                                                 | ACT                                                                                 | NT                                                                                  |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Confidence level | High                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | High                                                                              | High                                                                              | High                                                                              | High                                                                              | High                                                                                | High                                                                                | Low                                                                                 |
| <b>Legend</b>    |  Improvement  Worsening  No change  No assessment |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |

The state and territory assessments reflect the progress from the baseline to the end-point (improved, worsened or no change from baseline). There are no state and territory targets. An assessment reported with a High level of confidence is considered to be more reliable than one reported with a Low level of confidence. Refer to the Glossary in this report or 'How to interpret the data' page on the PC CtG dashboard for more information.

**Box 2.21 – The Australian National Audit Office performance audit of Targets 3, 4 and 5**

In January 2026, the Australian National Audit Office released a performance audit examining Australian Government arrangements supporting Closing the Gap targets related to early childhood development and schooling, spanning Targets 3, 4 and 5. For Target 3, the audit found that partnership arrangements and funding design activities are largely effective, but that reporting is becoming less transparent and less meaningful over time due to measurement issues. The audit highlighted the importance of reliability and completeness in reporting data for Target 3. The PC responded to the audit, stating that it recognises the ongoing need to address data limitations for Target 3.

Source: ANAO (2026).

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are spending more hours in preschool**

For 2025, national level data for Indicator 3a is not available, but updated data is available for New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

Since 2016, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in a preschool program who attended for 15 hours or more has increased in New South Wales (by 18.5 percentage points), the Northern Territory (by 15.7 percentage points) and in Victoria (by 13.3 percentage points). The proportion has decreased in Tasmania (by 1.1 percentage point). Full attendance ranged from 81.2% of the cohort in New South Wales to 44.9% in the Northern Territory.

Over the same period in those jurisdictions where data was available, proportions of children who attended 10 to 14 hours; 1 to less than 10 hours; and children who did not attend, decreased in New South Wales and Victoria. The proportion of children who did not attend increased in Tasmania (by 1.9%) and in the Northern Territory (by 11.7%).

### The number of community-controlled early years services continues to grow

Nationally, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused integrated early years services that are controlled by community has increased year-on-year since 2016 (Indicator 3b). In 2025, there were 109 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled early years services, representing an increase of 26.7% from 86 services in 2016 (figure 2.25). Of the 168 total services in 2025, 64.9% of these were provided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled services.

**Figure 2.25 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education and care service providers**

Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused integrated early years services nationally, by governance structure, 2016 to 2025 (Indicator 3b)



The data for government and/or non-Indigenous controlled services is not available prior to 2022.

Source: SNAICC (unpublished) Register of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused integrated early years services. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data table SE3b.1.

In 2025, 100% of integrated early years services were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled in Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory. Other jurisdictions where most services were community-controlled included New South Wales (82.4%), Queensland (71.8%), Western Australia (53.8%) and Tasmania (66.7%).

Supporting community-controlled organisations to design and deliver integrated early childhood education and care encourages culturally inclusive learning environments in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people can flourish (box 2.22).

### Box 2.22 – Examples of embedding culture and community in early childhood education

Socio-economic outcome 3 recognises the importance of supporting and elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander connection to family, culture and identity in early childhood education. These efforts are already successfully underway in some places.

#### **SNAICC's Early Years Support Program**

SNAICC's Early Years Support Program is a community-controlled intermediary program that represents and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early years services.

An independent evaluation found that SNAICC's program successfully:

- built trust and culturally safe relationships, according to 86% of surveyed services
- reduced isolation and strengthened connections within the community-controlled sector
- improved service quality by tailoring responsive support, stronger cultural practices and improved performance against the National Quality Standard
- improved back-office operations, including compliance, administration, workforce development and funding support.

#### **Connected Beginnings Lutruwita**

Connected Beginnings Lutruwita – part of the national Connected Beginnings initiative – is an early years service associated with SNAICC's Early Years Support Program. Connected Beginnings Lutruwita is a place based, Aboriginal led program located in Tasmania that integrates early childhood, health and family services, enabling children and families to access culturally appropriate support services. The program has contributed to better developmental outcomes across numerous areas, including physical health and wellbeing; social competence; and emotional maturity.

Both of these examples highlight that embedding culture and community enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to engage in early childhood education, supporting their future development and helping children to be strong members of their families and communities.

Source: Australian Government (2026); Connected Beginnings Lutruwita (2025); Deloitte Access Economics (2025); Freeborn et al. (2023); PC (2024a); SNAICC (2019).

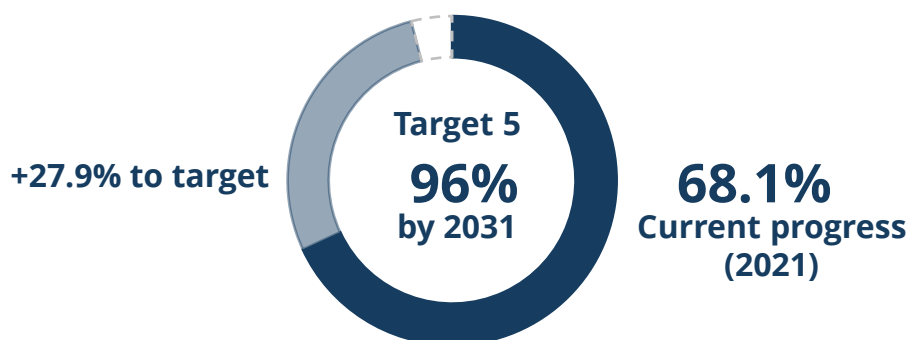
## Outcome 5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential



In 2021, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who had attained Year 12 or equivalent had increased, but the target was not on track to be met by 2031

The data for Year 12 or equivalent attainment was last updated in 2022 using data from the 2021 Census.<sup>22</sup> The next assessment of progress will be possible in 2028 using data from the 2026 Census.

The target for socio-economic outcome area 5 is that, by 2031, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20–24 years attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualification will increase to 96%. Nationally in 2021, 68.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20–24 years had attained Year 12 or equivalent qualification.<sup>23</sup> This proportion mainly comprised of people who had completed schooling at Year 12 or equivalent (59.5%), followed by people who had not completed school but had obtained a non-school qualification at Certificate III level or above (8.6%).



### All jurisdictions have seen some level of improvement in senior secondary attainment

There are currently no state and territory targets, but progress made in each state and territory contributes to the national outcome. The assessment shown below reflects an improvement in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20–24 years attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualification, in every state and territory from 2016 to 2021.

#### State and territory assessment of progress (2016 to 2021)

| Target | NSW           | Vic | Qld         | WA | SA          | Tas | ACT              | NT |
|--------|---------------|-----|-------------|----|-------------|-----|------------------|----|
| 5      | →             | →   | →           | →  | →           | →   | →                | →  |
| Legend | → Improvement |     | ← Worsening |    | ▨ No change |     | •• No assessment |    |

The assessments should be used with caution as they are based on a limited number of data points.

<sup>22</sup> Refer to the PC CtG dashboard for more information (including figures) regarding socio-economic outcome 5.

<sup>23</sup> The assessments should be used with caution as they are based on a limited number of data points.

Building a fuller picture of learning potential

There are 2 supporting indicators that build a broader picture of progress towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students achieving their full learning potential. Indicator 5a reports on student attendance rates. Indicator 5c records the results of the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) assessments, aimed at identifying student progress in reading, writing and numeracy.<sup>24</sup>

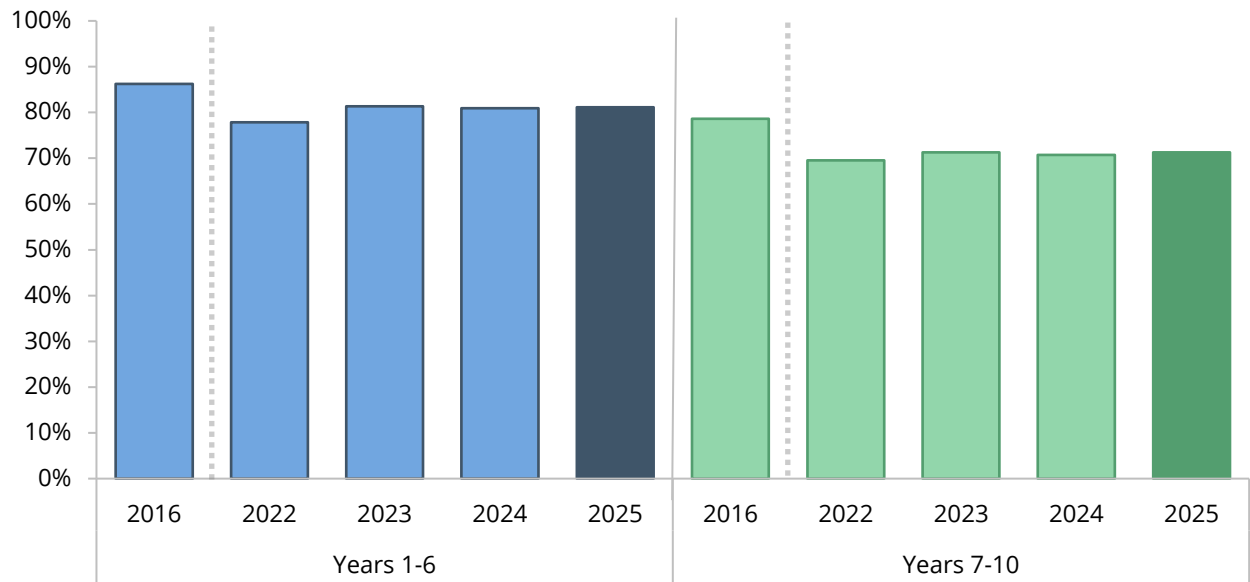
School attendance rates are decreasing

Students who consistently attend school are more likely to successfully develop core skills and less likely to leave the education system early (Hunter et al. 2025). Inclusive and flexible schooling practices can ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are supported in accessing educational pathways and do not experience significant disruptions from school non-attendance.

New data shows that school attendance rates have decreased from the baseline year (2016) for all Year levels, at the national level and across all jurisdictions. Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students in Years 1–6 had an attendance rate of 81.1% in 2025, representing a decrease of 5.1 percentage points since 2016. The attendance rate for students in Years 7–10 has declined by 7.3 percentage points to 71.3% over the same period (figure 2.26).

Figure 2.26 – National school attendance rate, by Year level

School attendance rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 1–6 and Years 7–10 for selected years (Indicator 5a)



Attendance rates are calculated as the proportion of full-time equivalent student-days attended by full-time students in semester one of the year. School attendance data for 2020 has not been published due to inconsistencies resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), National Student Attendance Data Collection. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data table SE5a.1.

<sup>24</sup> Refer to the PC CtG dashboard for more information.

In all jurisdictions in 2025, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school students in Years 1–6 attended school more frequently than students in Years 7–10. Generally, lower Year group attendance rates have been decreasing more slowly than those in higher Year levels. From 2016 to 2025, Year 7 students' attendance rates declined by 5.6 percentage points (to 77.7%) while Year 10 students' rates decreased by 8.4 percentage points (to 66.4%).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in non-government schools have higher attendance rates (which are decreasing at a slower rate) than students in government schools. Since 2016, student attendance across Years 1–6 decreased 5.6 percentage points (to 80.3%) at government schools and 2.1 percentage points at non-government schools (to 85.8%). For students in Years 7–10 over the same time period, attendance rates have fallen by 9 percentage points (to 68.7%) at government schools and 1.9 percentage points (to 80.4%) at non-government schools. Implementing strategies to support regular school attendance and engagement can assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve their full learning potential (box 2.23).

### Box 2.23 – Examples of supporting student engagement through culturally inclusive schooling practices

Exposure to culturally unsafe school environments can impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children's educational engagement, physical absence, stress levels, memory and concentration (Lowitja Institute 2026).

In some schools, culturally inclusive schooling practices are already underway. One example is the Learning on Country Program – a joint initiative between Aboriginal Ranger groups and 14 remote schools across the Northern Territory. The 'two toolbox approach' encompasses both Western and Aboriginal knowledge systems to deliver culturally appropriate education and training for remote students. Both Aboriginal communities and education providers have found that the Learning on Country Program delivers significant educational, cultural and employment outcomes for young people. The program has:

- improved school attendance and engagement among secondary school students, particularly among female students
- strengthened intergenerational transfer of cultural knowledge and connection to Country, successfully supporting young Aboriginal people to keep and maintain a strong sense of identity
- increased awareness and access to pathways into vocational education and training (VET) qualifications, ranger employment and further training.

Source: Australian Government (2023); Fogarty et al. (2022); Lowe et al. (2025); Lowitja Institute (2026); Northern Land Council (2026); PC (2023); Torre (2025); Turner and Children's Ground (2023).

## Some NAPLAN results have improved

NAPLAN is an annual nationwide assessment of literacy and numeracy skills for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 (box 2.24 and box 2.25). NAPLAN data shows that between 2023 and 2025, there has been some improvement in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students assessed in the top 3 achievement levels of 'developing', 'strong' or 'exceeding':

- Writing has improved slightly in all Year levels, especially among Year 9 students, with those achieving in the 'exceeding' level increasing from 4.3% to 6.6%.
- Numeracy has improved for all Year levels, especially in Year 5.
- Reading has improved for Year 7 and 9, but declined for Years 3 and 5.

Overall, for Year 3 the highest proportion of students assessed in the top 3 achievement levels was in the Writing domain. For Years 5, 7 and 9, the highest proportion of students assessed in the top 3 achievement levels was in the Reading domain.

In the reading assessment, student achievement at the 'developing' level or above in 2025 ranged from 63.2% in Year 3 to 69.3% in Year 5 (figure 2.27). In the writing assessment, student achievement at the 'developing' level or above in 2025 ranged from 62.0% in Year 9 to 72.7% in Year 3. In the numeracy assessment, student achievement at the 'developing' level or above in 2025 ranged from 62.8% in Year 9 to 67.6% in Year 5 (box 2.24 outlines data considerations).

In 2025, Victoria was the jurisdiction that most consistently had the highest proportion of students assessed as being in the 'exceeding' proficiency level, followed by the Australian Capital Territory. Across all assessment areas and year levels, the Northern Territory was the jurisdiction with the highest proportion of students assessed as being in the 'needs additional support' proficiency level.

### Box 2.24 – Data considerations: NAPLAN proficiency levels

A new system for reporting students' NAPLAN results against 4 proficiency levels was introduced in 2023, meaning that results after that year cannot be directly compared to results from 2008 to 2022. Student achievement in NAPLAN is reported using unique proficiency standards for each year level and for each assessment area.

Readers are urged to be cautious when comparing proficiency level data between jurisdictions and/or over time. The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) reports on the statistical significance of differences in NAPLAN achievement (mean scores) to ensure that reported differences are not merely caused by chance but reflect real differences. However, statistical significance of differences in the NAPLAN proficiency levels are not available.

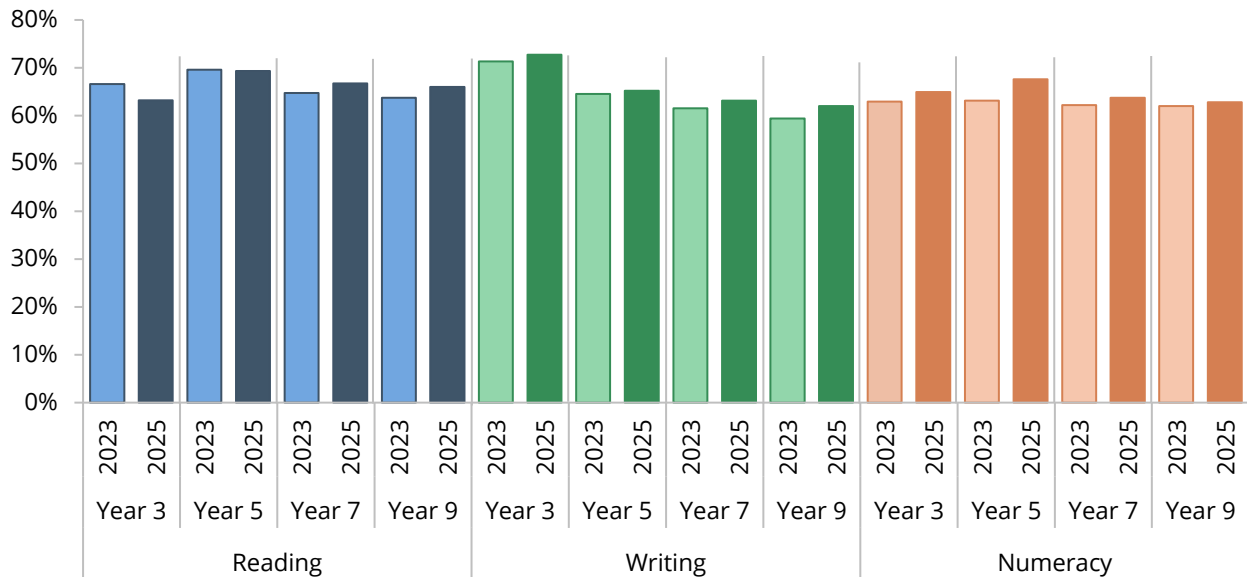
The 4 proficiency levels are 'exceeding', 'strong', 'developing' and 'needs additional support'. While a range of adjustments are available for students, exemption from NAPLAN proficiency ratings may be suitable for some students living with disability, or with a language background other than English. Students who are exempt are not assessed but are included in NAPLAN results.

Absent and withdrawn students are considered non-participating. The proportion of participating students varies across jurisdictions, with participation ranging from 43.0% to 95.9% across Year levels and domains. Student participation in NAPLAN testing for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, by Indigenous status and testing domain, is presented in table SE5c.4 on the PC CtG dashboard.



**Figure 2.27 – National student proficiency in NAPLAN**

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 assessed as ‘developing’, ‘strong’ or ‘exceeding’ in reading, writing and numeracy, 2023 and 2025 (Indicator 5c)



Since 2023, around 3% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were exempt from NAPLAN assessment across each year level and testing area. Refer to table SE5c.3 on the PC CtG dashboard for more information.

Source: ACARA National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy national results. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data tables SE5c.1–3.

**Box 2.25 – National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)**

Under the Agreement, school attendance and NAPLAN proficiency are listed as drivers of progress towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reaching their full learning potential and achieving Year 12 (or equivalent) attainment.

NAPLAN is a valuable general measure of educational attainment, but it may not recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, learning and demonstrating achievement. For example, some students in remote communities learn English as a second, third, or fourth language, and assessment items may rely on cultural experiences that are not universal. This means the metrics included in the assessment framework may limit how accurately students’ strengths are reflected. These and related concerns have been raised across the education sector calling for reforms to NAPLAN’s measurement approach and for broader systemic change.

Source: Anderson et al. (2024); ASPA (2025); DoE (2025b); Wigglesworth et al. (2011).

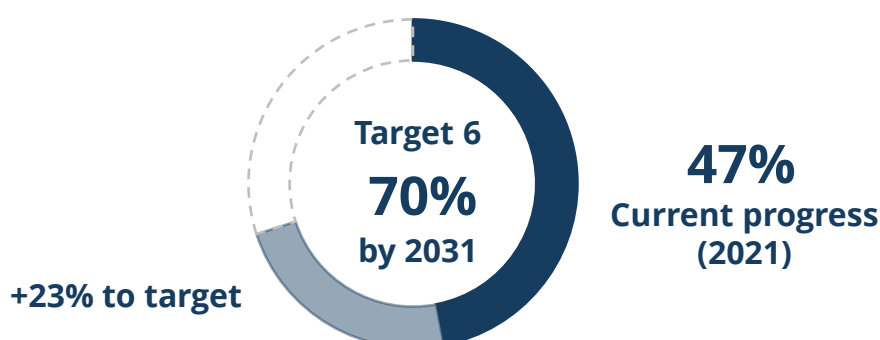
## Outcome 6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways



In 2021, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years who completed a tertiary qualification had increased, but was not on track to meet the target by 2031

The data for tertiary education completion was last updated in 2023 using data from the 2021 Census.<sup>25</sup> The next assessment of progress will be possible in 2028 using data from the 2026 Census.

The target for socio-economic outcome area 6 is that, by 2031, 70% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years will have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above). Nationally in 2021, 47.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years had completed a vocational and/or higher education qualification of Certificate level III or above, up by 4.7 percentage points since 2016. This proportion mainly comprised of people who had completed a Certificate III or above (29.5%), followed by a Bachelor degree (7.8%), an Advanced Diploma and Diploma (7.4%), a Postgraduate degree (1.3%), and a Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate (1.1%).



### All jurisdictions have seen some level of improvement in tertiary qualification completion

While there are currently no state and territory targets, the progress made in each state and territory does contribute to the national outcomes. The assessment shown below reflects an improvement in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification in every state and territory since 2016 (baseline year).

#### State and territory assessment of progress (2016 to 2021)

| Target | NSW           | Vic | Qld         | WA | SA        | Tas | ACT           | NT |
|--------|---------------|-----|-------------|----|-----------|-----|---------------|----|
| 6      | →             | →   | →           | →  | →         | →   | →             | →  |
| Legend | → Improvement |     | ← Worsening |    | No change |     | No assessment |    |

The assessments should be used with caution as they are based on a limited number of data points.

<sup>25</sup> Refer to the PC CtG dashboard for more information (including figures) regarding socio-economic outcome 6.

## Building a fuller picture of further education pathways

Further education in Australia is made up of multiple sectors. Higher education occurs at universities, while vocational education and training (VET) can be undertaken at a registered training organisation such as a private provider, a Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institute, a community education provider, or through on-the-job training in an apprenticeship or traineeship. Four supporting indicators provide more information on how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are engaging with further education. Indicator 6a reports on university commencement, attrition and completion rates. Indicator 6b reflects application, offer, and acceptance rates. Indicator 6c shows VET commencement, attrition and completion rates. Indicator 6g reports on the outcomes and satisfaction levels of VET qualification completers.<sup>26</sup>

### More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people commenced university, and fewer left after the first year

More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are commencing university. In 2024, 5,355 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people commenced a Bachelor degree at an Australian university – a 10.1% increase from the baseline year (2016), but less than the peak of 5,460 people in 2021.

At the national level, 21.4% of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who commenced a Bachelor degree in 2023 did not return the following year. In comparison to the baseline year of 2016, this is a 2.8 percentage point improvement. Despite moderate annual fluctuation, this is the lowest attrition rate since the baseline year. First-year attrition rates fell across all jurisdictions, except for the Northern Territory (figure 2.28). Between 2016 and 2023, attrition rates improved the most in the Australian Capital Territory, decreasing by 20.8 percentage points. Rates also improved by decreasing 7.5 percentage points in Tasmania.

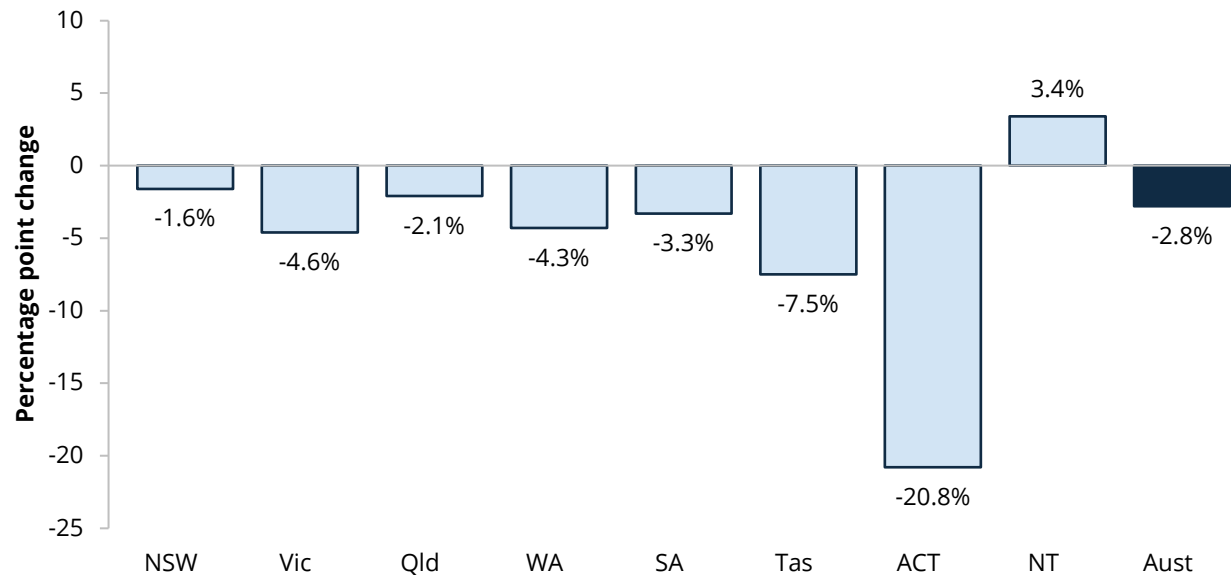
Higher education may be accessible, but it is not always desirable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Decisions to pursue or continue study are shaped by cultural safety and students' sense of belonging and inclusion (Gore et al. 2017). For some, attending university involves a departure from Country and kin into largely Western ways of thinking, being and connecting with others. While attrition is influenced by multiple factors, evidence suggests experiences of racism and unsafe learning environments impact decisions to continue study (box 2.26).

---

<sup>26</sup> Refer to the PC CtG dashboard for more information.

**Figure 2.28 – Change in first-year attrition rates, by jurisdiction**

Percentage point change in first-year university attrition rates from 2016–2023 (Indicator 6a)



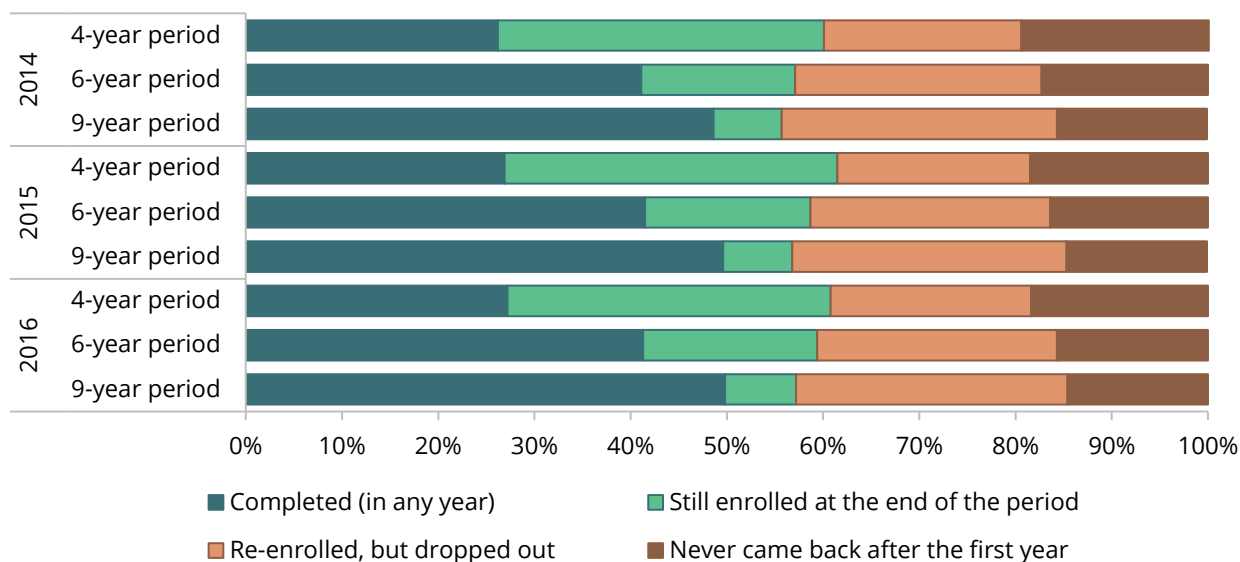
Source: Derived from Australian Government Department of Education (unpublished) Higher Education Statistics Collection. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data table SE6a.2.

**The time that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students take to finish their degree has largely stayed the same**

There are many ways to complete a higher education degree – some students progress steadily and complete a degree within 4 years, while others study part-time, take breaks or retake courses. For this reason, university completion is measured over 4, 6 and 9 years in Indicator 6a. For example, 27.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who commenced study in 2016 had completed their degree within 4 years. More students (41.3%) had completed their degree within 6 years, and 49.8% had finished their degree within 9 years (figure 2.29).

**Figure 2.29 – University completion rates, by year of and time since commencement**

4-year, 6-year and 9-year completion rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who commenced study in 2014, 2015 and 2016 (Indicator 6a)



The proportion of students who finished their degree increased from the 4, 6 and 9-year marks, as these cumulative completion rates naturally rise the longer students have to complete their courses.

Source: Australian Government Department of Education (unpublished) Higher Education Statistics Collection. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data tables SE6a.3–5.

### Box 2.26 – Creating culturally safe higher education institutions

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students encounter culturally unsafe university environments. Multiple recent reports – including the Call It Out Racism Register and the Australian Human Rights Commission’s Respect at Uni Study (the Study) – have identified ongoing structural and interpersonal racism. The Study gathered evidence from 2,227 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survey respondents, which contributed to the following recommendations:

- developing a national framework for anti-racism supported with data collection
- adopting whole-of-institution anti-racism strategies that ensure culturally safe, inclusive environments across all aspects of campus life
- strengthening complaints processes so they are trusted, accessible, effective, supported by independent oversight, and anonymous, if required
- embedding anti-racism across curriculum material, teaching, and staff capability, in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and practitioners.

Other similar research has recommended the establishment and sustainable resourcing of an on-campus space dedicated to delivering culturally appropriate, wrap-around support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Such centres could offer, or link to, academic, personal and health services, creating more inclusive and supportive tertiary institutions.

Source: Allison et al. (2025); Australian Human Rights Commission (2026); Beaufils et al. (2026).

---

## More people applied to university, and offer rates remained steady

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are making more applications to Australian universities to study for an undergraduate degree. In 2024, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made 7,372 applications, which represents a 6.8% increase from the baseline year (2016). The number of applications has increased since 2016 in all jurisdictions except for South Australia and the Northern Territory.

Since the baseline year, the number of undergraduate applications has increased for females but decreased for males. Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander females made 5,071 applications in 2024, showing a 9.5% increase since 2016. Over the same period, the number of applications made by males decreased by 1.8% to 2,232 applications. Males also made proportionately fewer university applications – in 2016, males represented 32.9% of applications, while in 2024 they represented 30.6% of applications.<sup>27</sup>

There are different ways to apply for entry into university. People who completed Year 12 may enter university with the required Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) or other criteria. Others may enter university through bridging courses or VET pathways.

Most of the increase in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applications to university has come from pathways that do not require an ATAR or Year 12 certificate. Nationally in 2024, there were 5,853 undergraduate applications from these pathways, constituting a 12.8% increase from 2016. By 2024, 79.4% of all applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were from non-Year 12 or ATAR pathways, up from 75.1% in 2016 (figure 2.30).

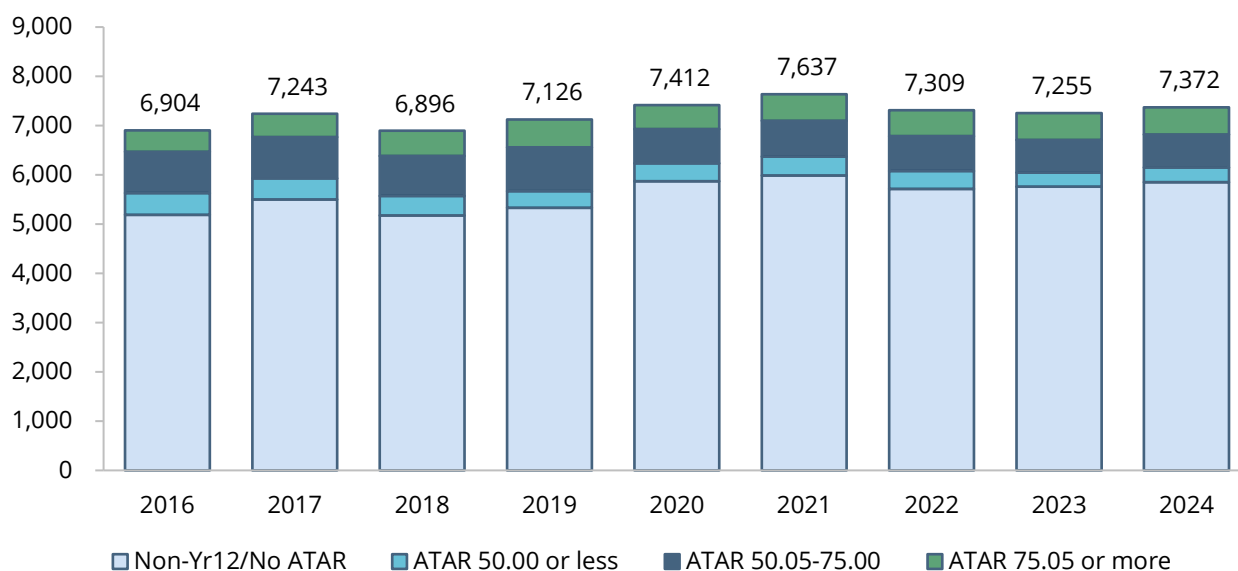
While an increasing number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are offered a place for an undergraduate university degree, the offer rate (relative to the number of applications) has remained relatively steady since the baseline year of 2016. In 2024, 82.2% of applications from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people resulted in an offer, which is marginally higher than in 2016 (0.7 percentage points). In previous years, this amount has been slightly below the baseline year, and 2024 is the first year of upward change.

---

<sup>27</sup> This report uses the terms 'male' and 'female' to refer to data disaggregated by sex. Data disaggregated by gender is not yet available for this indicator. Refer to box 1.5 for more information on gender and sex in the ADCR.

**Figure 2.30 – Higher education applications, by ATAR range or pathway**

Count of total applications by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for a domestic undergraduate university place from each ATAR range or pathway, 2016 to 2024 (Indicator 6b)



A small number of people apply to more than one tertiary admission centre, which may result in some double counting of the number of applications from the same person.

Source: Australian Government Department of Education (unpublished) Higher Education Statistics Collection. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data table SE6b.4.

### VET commencements have increased recently, and projected completion rates are higher than ever before

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged under 35 years are commencing more VET qualifications. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who commenced VET qualifications at Certificate level III or above has increased from 39,735 in 2016 to 40,360 in 2024. This is lower than the peak of 43,650 VET qualifications commenced in 2019.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students aged under 35 years who commenced a VET qualification in 2022, more students are expected to complete their qualification within 4 years than ever before (38.4%). This is an increase from previous years, where actual completion rates for students who started between 2016 and 2021 fluctuated between 34.3% and 35.6%.



**VET qualification completer goal achievement or satisfaction levels have seen little change<sup>28</sup>**

Although results vary slightly from year to year, there has been no significant change in the proportion of VET qualification completers who felt their training helped them achieve their goals or were satisfied with its quality since 2016. Nationally in 2025, most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students aged 15–34 years (87.2%) stated that they had achieved their main reason for undertaking a VET qualification. This proportion is almost the same as the baseline year, but has increased from a low of 83.2% in 2020. Nationally in 2025, more than 9 in 10 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students aged 15 to 34 years (91.5%) who completed a VET qualification were satisfied with the overall quality of training. Student satisfaction in the quality of training has remained at about 90% or above each year since 2016.

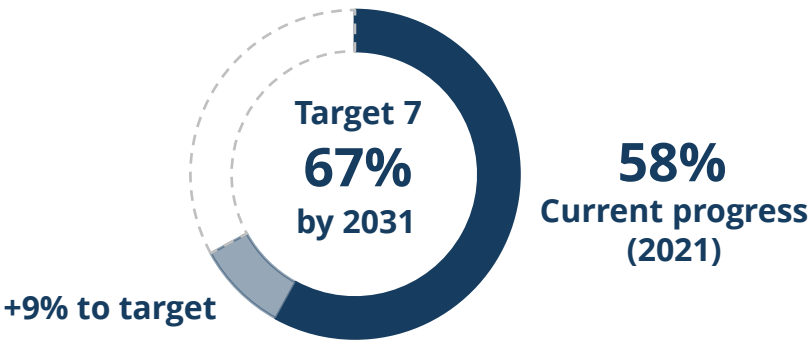
**Outcome 7: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment or education**



**In 2021, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people fully engaged in employment, education or training had increased but the target was not on track to be met by 2031**

The data for outcome 7 was last updated in 2023 using 2021 data.<sup>29</sup> The next assessment of progress will be possible in 2028 using 2026 Census data.

The target for socio-economic outcome area 7 of the Agreement is that, by 2031, 67% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are engaged in employment, education or training. Nationally, 58.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15–24 years were fully engaged in employment, education or training in 2021. There has been an increase (0.8 percentage points) since the baseline year (2016) but the target is not on track to be met.



<sup>28</sup> This supporting indicator, as set out in the Agreement, refers to 'VET graduate outcomes and satisfaction levels'. This report uses the term 'VET qualification completer' rather than VET graduate for consistency with the data provided by National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

<sup>29</sup> Refer to the PC CtG dashboard for more information (including figures) regarding socio-economic outcome 7.

## Most jurisdictions have seen improvements in youth engagement

While there are currently no state and territory targets, the progress made in each state and territory contributes to the national outcome. The assessment shown below reflects an improvement (positive progress) in the outcomes for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people since 2016 (baseline year) in most states and territories.

### State and territory assessment of progress (2016 to 2021)

| Target | NSW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Vic                                                                               | Qld                                                                               | WA                                                                                | SA                                                                                | Tas                                                                                 | ACT                                                                                 | NT                                                                                  |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Legend |  Improvement  Worsening  No change  No assessment |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                                                                   |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |                                                                                     |

The assessments should be used with caution as they are based on a limited number of data points.

## Among young people who are not fully engaged in study or work, many work part time or provide unpaid care and assistance

National data for supporting Indicator 7a shows that, in 2021, 42.0% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15-24 years were not fully engaged in employment, education or training. Almost one-third of young people not fully engaged were providing unpaid care and assistance, and almost half were either employed part time or searching for work. Three percent of young people reported that they were not fully engaged and that they had at least one long-term health condition.

### Box 2.27 – Ngaramura ‘See the Way’ Program

Starting in 2018, the Ngaramura ‘See the Way’ Program is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led education initiative delivered by the Coomaditchie United Aboriginal Corporation, an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation in New South Wales. The program supports Aboriginal students in Years 7–12 who have been suspended, or are at risk of suspension, to re-engage with education through a culturally grounded learning model.

The program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in a strengths-based, high-expectations approach, using a mix of cultural activities, academic support, mentoring, and wellbeing services. It also provides practical learning opportunities such as art, cooking and outdoor activities.

An evaluation found that the program improved attendance, retention and engagement and inspired more positive attitudes to school and learning. The program demonstrates that students engage when young people are supported to connect to culture and identity; institutions create safe learning spaces; and curriculum recognises the value and role of Elders as knowledge holders.

Source: Clapham et al. (2022).

## Summary: Education and training

Progress towards targets is mixed.  
Most outcomes are improving but not on track to meet targets.  
New data shows that the early childhood education target has been met.



The early childhood education target has been met  
**(Target 3).**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are spending more hours in preschool (3a).

The number of community-controlled early years services continues to grow (3b).



Student learning potential is improving but not on track  
**(Target 5).**

School attendance rates are decreasing (5a).

Some NAPLAN results have improved (5c).



Further education pathways are improving but not on track  
**(Target 6).**

More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people commenced university, and fewer left after the first year (6a).

The time that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students take to finish their degree has largely stayed the same (6a).

More people applied to university, and offer rates remained steady (6b).

VET commencements have increased recently, and projected completion rates are higher than ever before (6c).

VET qualification completion goal achievement or satisfaction levels have seen little change (6g).



Youth engagement is improving but not on track  
**(Target 7).**

Among young people who are not fully engaged in study or work, many work part-time or provide unpaid care and assistance (7a).

### Legend



Good improvement  
and on track or met



Improvement  
but not on track



Worsening,  
not on track



No change from  
the baseline



No assessment  
available

## 2.5 Economic participation

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the right to define and pursue their own self-determined economic futures (Coalition of Peaks 2025; Eva et al. 2023). Community-led approaches are key to enabling meaningful economic participation and development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities (Coalition of Peaks 2025). When economic participation is supported, benefits can flow to families and communities through employment opportunities, strong social networks, intergenerational wealth accumulation and lasting economic security (Eva et al. 2023; Norman 2021). For tens of thousands of years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have participated in economic activity according to their Lore and Law, designed to sustainably support the needs of their communities (Langton and Corn 2023). Traditional economic activity included trading, hunting, fishing, foraging, storing and cultivating plants, managing the landscape and waterways for harvesting and sharing resources between community members (Crabtree et al. 2021; Neale and Kelly 2020; Pascoe and Gammage 2021; Rose et al. 2016; Koungoulos et al. 2024).

Indigenous peoples have internationally recognised rights to full participation in economic development, yet Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people often face ongoing structural and policy barriers (Coalition of Peaks 2025; UN 2007). Historically, government policies excluded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the benefits of economic growth through laws on land use, employment, income and working conditions (Barnett et al. 2023; Coalition of Peaks 2025; Pearson 2021). Today, economic exclusion persists in some policy settings. Constrained use of land rights and native title; limited access to capital; education and training that is not fit for purpose; and a lack of culturally safe employment opportunities all continue to prevent the accumulation of wealth and entrench economic inequality (Australian Government et al. 2025; Barnett et al. 2023; Evans et al. 2024; JSCATSIA 2024; Liddle 2018; VACCA 2024).

Despite these difficulties, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to strengthen their role in the economy. Activity and employment within the Indigenous business sector have grown substantially, delivering material benefits to communities. Recent data from the Indigenous Business and Corporation Snapshot shows Indigenous businesses contribute more than \$16 billion a year to the economy and employ 135,733 people, with approximately one-third of roles held by Indigenous employees (Evans et al. 2024; Polidano et al. 2025). Beyond employment, Indigenous businesses promote self-determination, share Indigenous knowledges, deliver culturally responsive services to communities and build trust within the community (Evans et al. 2024). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to act and partner with governments to help ensure greater economic participation and development opportunities for individuals and communities (Coalition of Peaks 2025). Further efforts to support improved outcomes include local employment programs and promotion of culturally inclusive education and workplaces (Eva et al. 2023; Liddle 2018), comprehensive Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property and cultural rights (Janke 2021; PC 2022a) and legal and financial assistance to achieve stronger land ownership rights (Sangha et al. 2020).



Box 2.28 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2026 for socio-economic outcome 8.

| Outcome                                                                                                                         | Update               | Latest data |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Outcome 8:</b> Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities |                      |             |
| • Employment (Target 8)                                                                                                         |                      | 2021        |
| • Caring responsibilities (8c)                                                                                                  |                      | 2021        |
| • Employment by occupation (8d)                                                                                                 |                      | 2021        |
| • Self-managed business ownership (8i)                                                                                          | <i>New indicator</i> | 2021–22     |

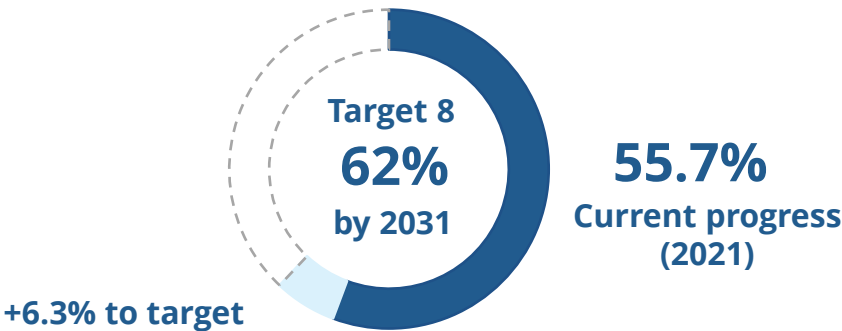
**Outcome 8: Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities**



In 2021, there was an improvement in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people employed, with the target on track to be met by 2031

The target for socio-economic outcome 8 was last updated in 2023 using data for 2021.<sup>30</sup> The next assessment of progress will be possible in 2028 using data from the 2026 Census.

The target for socio-economic outcome area 8 is that, by 2031, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 who are employed will increase to 62%. In 2021, 55.7% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 years were employed nationally, which is an increase of 4.7 percentage points from the baseline year (2016). The latest assessment of progress indicates that the target of 62% by 2031 is on track to be met.



<sup>30</sup> Refer to the PC CtG dashboard for more information (including figures) for socio-economic outcome 8.

Almost all jurisdictions have seen improvements in employment

While there are currently no state and territory targets, progress made in each jurisdiction contributes to national outcomes. The employment rates in all states and territories have significantly improved since the baseline, except in the Northern Territory.

State and territory assessment of progress (2016 to 2021)

| Target | NSW         | Vic | Qld       | WA | SA        | Tas | ACT           | NT |
|--------|-------------|-----|-----------|----|-----------|-----|---------------|----|
| 8      |             |     |           |    |           |     |               |    |
| Legend | Improvement |     | Worsening |    | No change |     | No assessment |    |

The assessments should be used with caution as they are based on a limited number of data points.

Box 2.29 – The First Nations Economic Partnership has been established

The First Nations Economic Partnership 2025–2030 (the Partnership) was established in September 2025 and reflects an agreement between the Australian Government, the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (the Coalition of Peaks), and the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance. The Partnership is founded on the strong partnership elements of Priority Reform 1. The Partnership’s purpose is to advance the economic empowerment and lasting economic security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities and organisations.

The Partnership will focus on all policy levers available to governments, including strengthening representation across government decision-making forums, increasing employment, supporting business growth, improving data collection, and enabling financial independence. In October 2025, 3 Working Groups were established, with an immediate focus on co-designing an economic empowerment framework; improving access to capital; and developing programs to foster secure employment in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector.

Source: The Australian Government, the Coalition of Peaks and First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance (2025); First Nations Economic Partnership (2025b, 2025a, 2026).

### More people who provided unpaid care or assistance were employed

Many people provide unpaid care or assistance to their spouses, children, family members, kin or other people in their community. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, care is often embedded in culture through complex and overlapping kinship systems that determine mutual relationships, responsibilities and obligations within communities (Brinckley et al. 2022; SNAICC 2008).

Nearly 160,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25–64 years provided unpaid care or assistance in 2021. Nationally, 61.1% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people providing unpaid care to a child were employed, which is a 5.6 percentage point increase from 2016. Over the same period, there was a 6.2 percentage point increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were employed while providing unpaid assistance to a person with disability, with a health condition or due to old age.

### The proportion of adults in professional occupations has increased

Nationally in 2021, the occupation contributing most to the employment rate for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was community or personal service worker, followed by professional. Since 2016, the employment rate has increased for all occupation groups, with the largest increase for managers (1.3 percentage points).

### Self-managed business ownership has increased

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses employ one-fifth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workforce, while constituting less than 1% of total firms Australia-wide. These businesses are up to 12 times more likely to employ an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person (Polidano et al. 2025). New supporting indicator – Indicator 8i – measures the number of actively trading businesses and corporations with at least 50% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership. There is also a measure reporting the number of people employed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses.

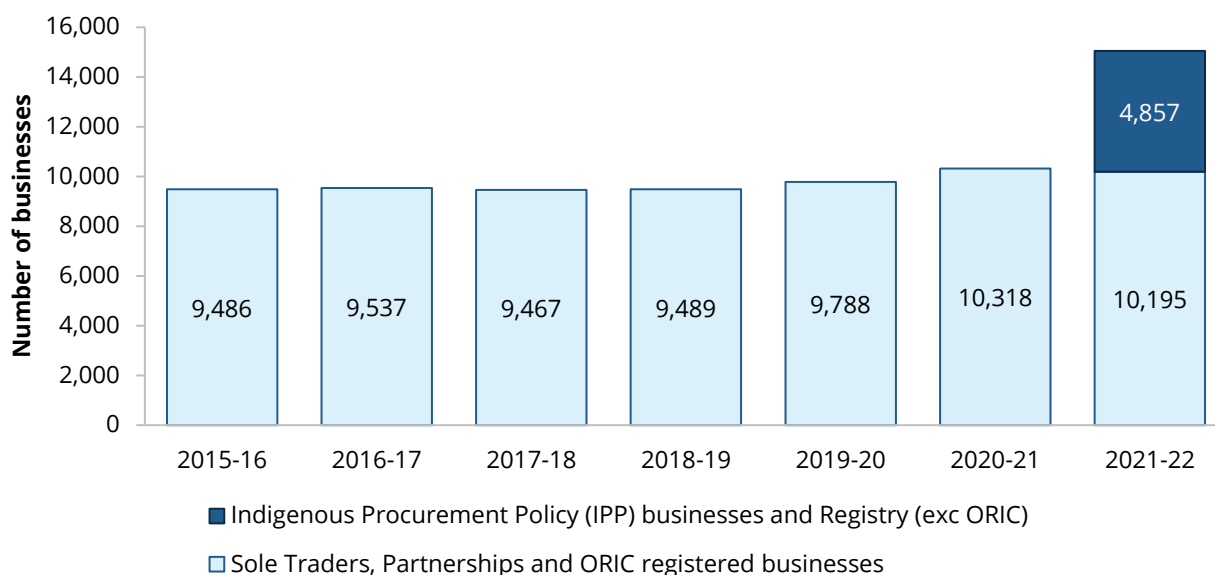
Nationally in 2021–22, there were 15,052 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses (figure 2.31), with most being sole traders (40.2%), followed by businesses listed on an Indigenous registry (excluding the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations [ORIC]) (29.0%), followed by partnerships (21.5%) (box 2.30). Only some business types (sole traders, partnerships and ORIC registered businesses) can be measured over time. Together in 2021–22, these 3 business types accounted for 10,195 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses, representing an increase of 7.5% from 2015–16 (the baseline year), but a decrease from 2020–21.

In 2021–22, 143,752 people around Australia were employed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses (figure 2.32). Of these, more than 1 in every 3 employees (35.9%) were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. In major cities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up more than 1 in 5 employees (23.7%) in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses. This increased to around 1 in 2 employees (49.5%) in regional and remote areas.



**Figure 2.31 – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses**

Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses, 2015–16 to 2021–22 (Indicator 8i.1)

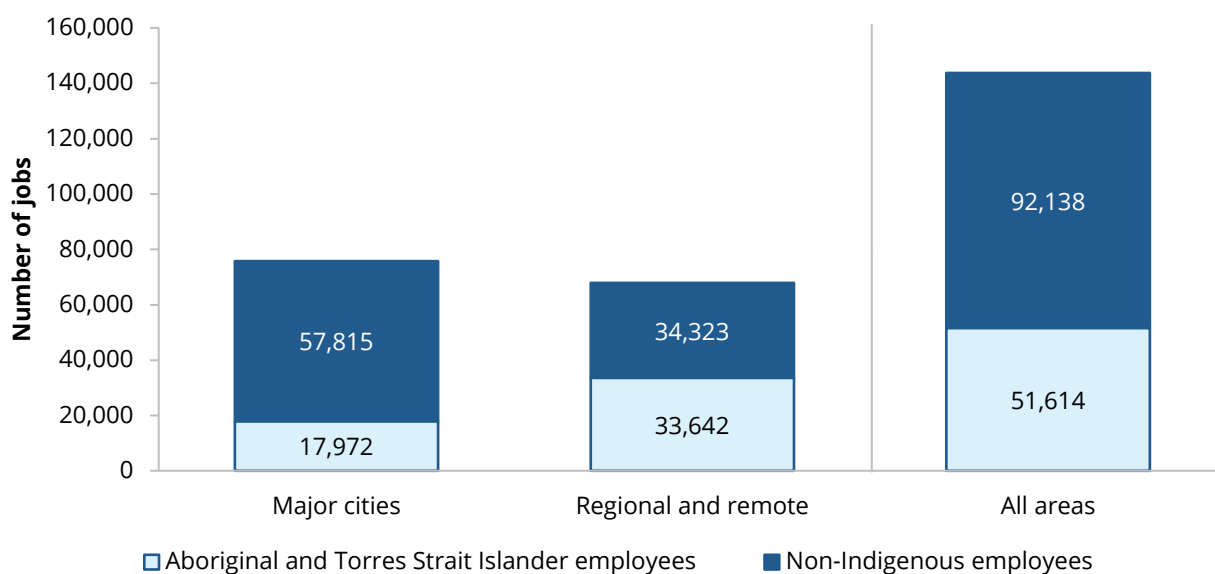


Estimates of alive and active Registry and IPP businesses are not comparable over time and are included for the latest year only.

Source: Derived from Dilin Duwa analysis of Integrated data assets. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data table SE8i.1.

**Figure 2.32 – Jobs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses**

Number of jobs with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses, by remoteness and by Indigenous status of employee, 2021–22 (Indicator 8i.2)



Source: Derived from Dilin Duwa analysis of Integrated data assets. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data table SE8i.2.

### Box 2.30 – Data definitions: types of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-owned businesses

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses are Australian businesses that have at least 50% Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander ownership, based on self-identification in administrative data and/or registered on public registries.

Alive and active firms are those reporting to the Australian Taxation Office either through Business Activity Statements or Pay-as-you-go wage summaries, and is approximately equal to firms currently trading.

Definitions of business types are presented below.

#### **Sole Traders**

Sole trader is a sole owner who is legally responsible for all aspects of the business.

#### **Partnership**

Partnership is a group of owners who run a business together and who agree in writing how the business shares income, losses and how it is managed.

Sole traders and partnerships for Indicator 8i are identified via:

- the Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing
- Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment (BLADE)
- Person Level Integrated Data Asset (PLIDA)
- Centrelink.

#### **The Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC) registered**

ORIC registered businesses are corporations identified on the ORIC registry that were established under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (Cth) (CATSI Act) with an Australian Business Number (ABN).

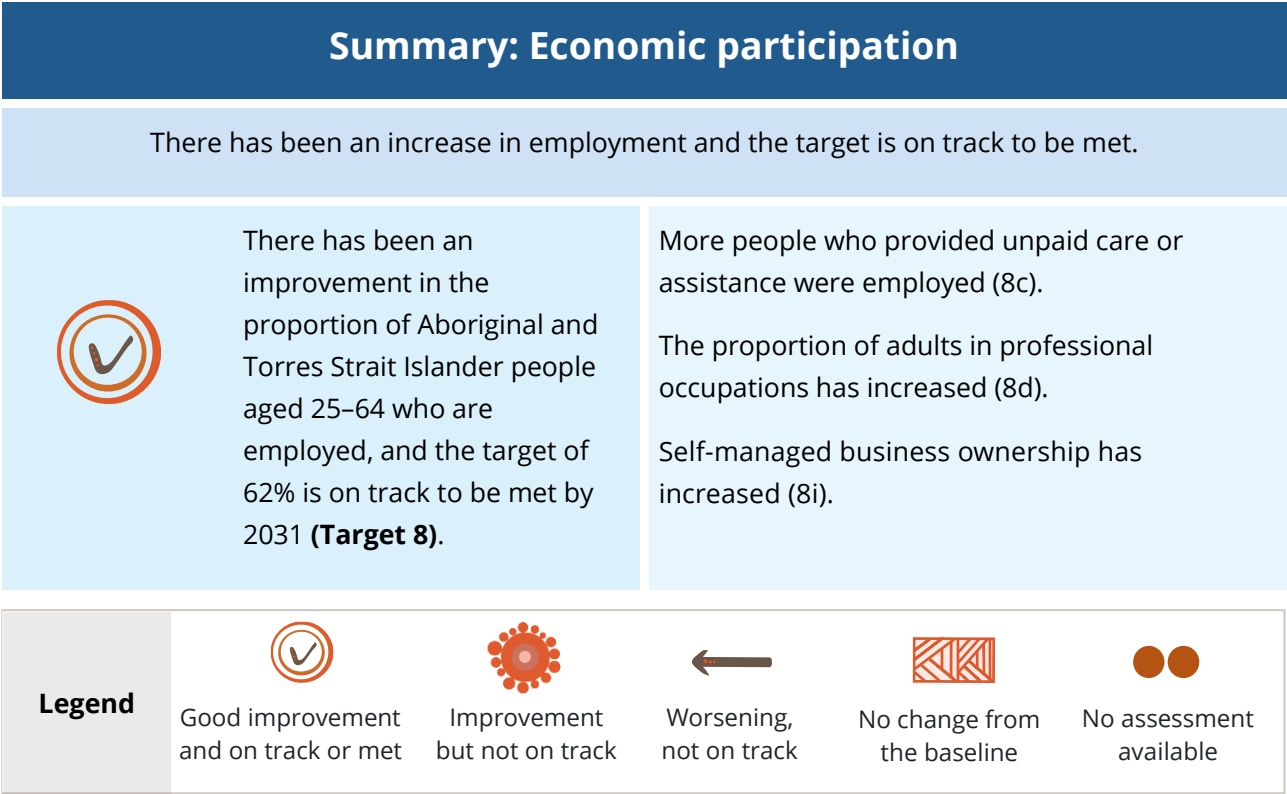
#### **Registry (excluding ORIC)**

Registry (excluding ORIC) businesses are those that voluntarily register their business as being at least 50% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander owned on public registries to promote their business. Business registries include:

- National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) Indigenous Business Directory
- Industry Capability Network Ltd Gateway
- Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Resources Victorian Aboriginal Business Directory
- Waalitj Foundation Aboriginal business list
- Melbourne Business School Murra Indigenous Business Master Class Alumni list.

#### **Indigenous Procurement Policy (IPP)**

IPP businesses are businesses receiving an IPP contract between 2015 and 2022 that are not counted in any of the categories above.



## 2.6 Housing

Housing and homes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represent more than just shelter – they are intimately tied to relationships with Country, kinship, identity and culture (Anderst et al. 2024; Lowitja Institute 2022). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander definitions of ‘home’ and ‘homelessness’ are culturally distinct (Tually et al. 2022). For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to thrive in reliable and affordable housing, supports must be informed by the community, their culture and their needs (Moskos et al. 2022).

Ongoing colonisation has shifted conceptions of ‘suitable’ housing from being tied to the land and seasonal cycles to being primarily associated with a fixed, permanent dwelling (Sanders 2000). More than 50 years since laws restricting freedom of movement were repealed across Australia, access to appropriate housing remains an enduring issue. Meaningful change requires an understanding of the structural and systemic barriers to housing access, culturally safe services and investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led responses (Moskos et al. 2025b; Tually et al. 2022).

Housing is essential to physical and mental health. Two primary mechanisms that impact this are poor housing conditions and overcrowding (AIHW 2019; Bailie et al. 2010; PC 2022b). Poor housing conditions, such as inadequate infrastructure, can increase the risk of health issues by facilitating the transmission of infections, limiting temperature control, and reducing food safety (Bailie et al. 2010; NATSIHA 2018). Overcrowding increases interpersonal contacts within the household, which can impact infection transmission, privacy, disturbances, and household conflict (Bailie et al. 2010).

Government data and strategies typically centre on addressing overcrowding, as defined by the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (PC 2022b). However, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander household sizes tend to be larger compared to other households, influenced by a desire for greater connection to family, kin and culture, and the limited supply of affordable housing (Brackertz and Wilkinson 2017). Co-designing housing measures that capture the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander household structures, living arrangements and cultural preferences, would improve the cultural relevance of housing data and better inform policy and planning (Moskos et al. 2025a).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need self-determined housing supports that reflect cultural practices, extended kinship structures and community priorities. Housing design and conditions should also support the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and be resilient to the effects of extreme temperatures and climate events (Lowitja Institute 2022). Land Councils and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led housing services continue to be powerful advocates, vital service providers and essential partners in increasing access to appropriate and affordable housing. A culturally informed and holistic approach may help to overcome the entrenched housing inequity faced by too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.



Box 2.31 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2026 for socio-economic outcome 9.

| Outcome                                                                                                                                      | Update               | Latest data       |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Outcome 9:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing aligned with their priorities and need |                      |                   |
| • People living in appropriately sized dwellings (Target 9A)                                                                                 |                      | 2021              |
| • Access to and quality of essential services (Target 9B)                                                                                    |                      | TBC <sup>31</sup> |
| • Homelessness (9d)                                                                                                                          | <i>New indicator</i> | 2021              |
| • Acceptable standard of housing (9e)                                                                                                        |                      | 2022–23           |
| • Social housing (9g)                                                                                                                        | <i>New data</i>      | 2025              |

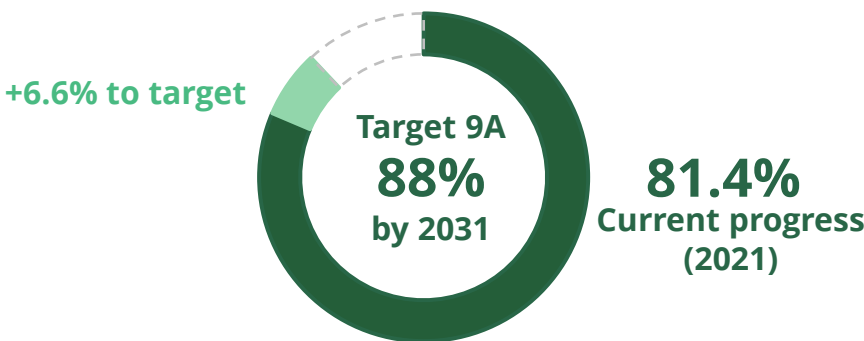
**Outcome 9: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need**



There are 2 targets for socio-economic outcome area 9 of the Agreement, however, data is only available for Target 9A (people living in appropriately sized housing).

**In 2021, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing was not on track to meet the target by 2031**

Target 9A was last updated in 2023 using data from 2021. The next assessment of progress will be possible in 2028 using data from 2026.<sup>32</sup>



<sup>31</sup> To be confirmed.

<sup>32</sup> The data used to assess progress for Target 9A is updated every 5 years and is sourced from the Census. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard and pages 86–92 of the 2025 ADCR for more information (including figures) for socio-economic outcome 9.

The first target for socio-economic outcome area 9 (Target 9A) is that by 2031, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing will increase to 88% (box 2.32). Nationally, 81.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were living in appropriately sized housing in 2021, a 2.5 percentage point increase since the baseline (2016).

### Most jurisdictions have seen improvements in appropriately sized housing

While there are currently no state and territory targets, progress from each jurisdiction contributes to reaching national targets. Since 2016, access to appropriately sized housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in most states and territories has improved (except for people living in Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory).

### State and territory assessment of progress (2016 to 2021)

| Target        | NSW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|---------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|----|
| 9A            | →                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | →   | →   | →  | →  | ←   | ←   | →  |
| <b>Legend</b> | <div>  Improvement  Worsening  No change  No assessment </div> |     |     |    |    |     |     |    |

The assessments should be used with caution as they are based on a limited number of data points.

### Box 2.32 – Data considerations: appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing

The ABS uses the Canadian National Occupancy Standard (CNOS) to measure overcrowding. The CNOS is widely used in Australia and internationally. However, the relevance and appropriateness of CNOS in depicting dwelling utilisation and overcrowding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has not been assessed. According to the CNOS, overcrowding is defined as a situation in which one or more additional bedrooms would be required to adequately house its inhabitants, given the number, age, sex and relationships of household members. The CNOS relies on Western nuclear family norms and assumptions rather than incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives and views. It specifies that:

- there should be no more than 2 people per bedroom
- children aged less than 5 of different sexes may reasonably share a bedroom
- children aged 5 or over of the opposite sex should have separate bedrooms
- children aged less than 18 of the same sex may reasonably share a bedroom
- single household members aged 18 or over should have a separate bedroom, as should parents and couples
- a lone person household may reasonably occupy a bed sitter.

Classification of 'Levels of overcrowding specific to Australian conditions' is to be considered under the Data Development Plan endorsed by the Joint Council on Closing the Gap in August 2022. More information is available on the PC CtG dashboard.

Source: AIHW (2025a).

There is no data to establish a baseline or assess progress toward Target 9B

The second target for socio-economic outcome area 9 (Target 9B) is that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households have access to essential services that meet or exceed jurisdictional standards by 2031. Work is currently underway with parties to the Agreement to develop a data source that includes all of the required data elements (Commonwealth of Australia 2026). A baseline has not yet been confirmed, and progress cannot be assessed.

Box 2.33 – Upgrading community infrastructure through the Roads to Home program

The Roads to Home program is a New South Wales Government initiative designed to address long-standing infrastructure and service inequalities in discrete Aboriginal communities. It is a community-led planning and infrastructure program that empowers Aboriginal communities to identify their own priorities and participate in decision-making. The program focuses on upgrading essential infrastructure to improve access to municipal services, generate economic opportunities, and enhance community wellbeing.

Upgrades and new installations across communities include paved roads, kerbs, guttering and stormwater drains, boundary fencing, street and public lighting, landscaping, sewerage and water meters, electrical services, and NBN connections.

An evaluation of 4 participating communities found that the program has been effective in delivering new and improved infrastructure, which has enhanced service delivery and improved living conditions. The program also generated positive social and employment outcomes, including job creation, training opportunities, and increased community pride.

Source: Clear Horizon (2024).

State and territory assessment of progress

| Target | NSW           | Vic | Qld         | WA | SA          | Tas | ACT              | NT |
|--------|---------------|-----|-------------|----|-------------|-----|------------------|----|
| 9B     | ●●            | ●●  | ●●          | ●● | ●●          | ●●  | ●●               | ●● |
| Legend | ➡ Improvement |     | ⬅ Worsening |    | 🔲 No change |     | ●● No assessment |    |

Building a fuller picture of housing

New supporting indicator – Indicator 9d – helps to build a fuller picture of housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by presenting data on experiences of homelessness or living in insecure housing arrangements. It includes 3 measures: the rate of homelessness, the rate of homelessness by age group and the rate of people experiencing homelessness who are also receiving support from Specialist Homelessness Services.

### Homelessness rates are decreasing across all age groups

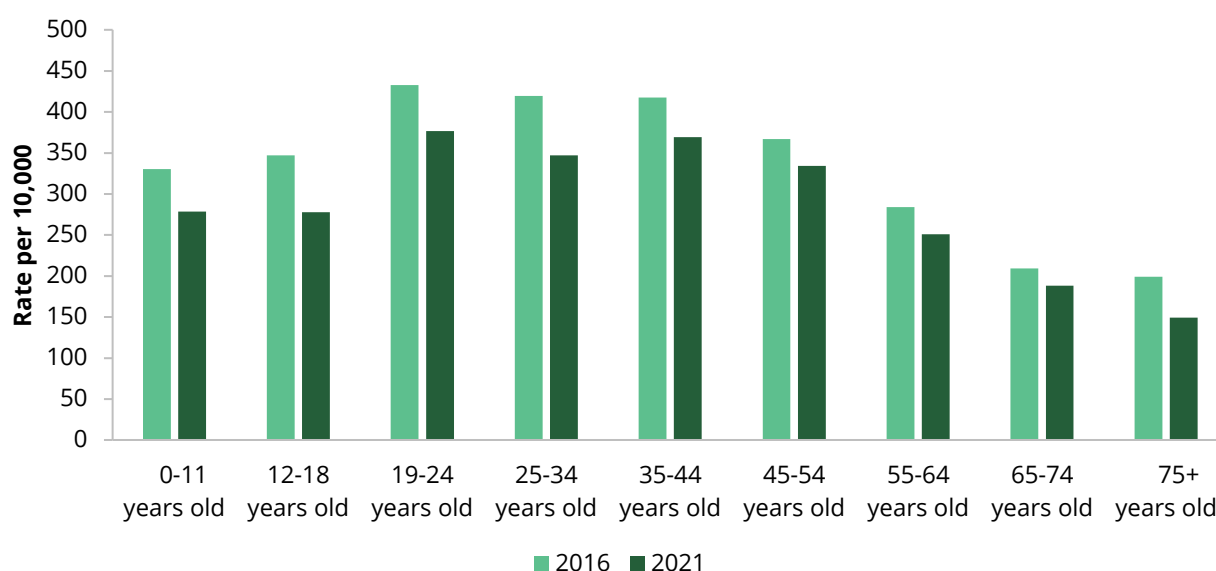
Nationally in 2021, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness was 306.8 per 10,000 people. The rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness has decreased by 15.0% since the baseline year (from 361.0 per 10,000 people in 2016).

Nationally in 2021, the rates of experiencing homelessness were highest for those aged 19–24 years and those aged 35–44 years (376.6 and 369.3 per 10,000 people, respectively). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 75 years and over had the lowest rate of experiencing homelessness (149.4 per 10,000).

Since the baseline year of 2016, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness has decreased across all age groups (figure 2.33).

#### Figure 2.33 – People experiencing homelessness

Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness, by age group, 2016 and 2021 (Indicator 9d)



Source: ABS (unpublished) Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data table SE9d.2.

Of the 24,930 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness in 2021, around 3 in 5 (60.0%) were living in 'severely' crowded dwellings, 1 in 5 (18.9%) were in supported accommodation for the homeless, and 1 in 10 (9.3%) were in improvised dwellings, tents or sleeping out.

### More people experiencing homelessness are receiving specialist homelessness support

Nationally in 2024–25, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness and receiving specialist homelessness support was 404.8 per 10,000 people. This rate was highest for people aged 35–44 years (572.4 per 10,000 people), followed by people aged 20–24 years (563.9 per 10,000 people). Since 2016–17 (the baseline year), the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing homelessness and receiving specialist homelessness support has increased across all age groups.



**Box 2.34 – Data definition: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households**

The data source for Indicator 9e is the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey. The data for Indicators 9d and 9g comes from the Census and the AIHW National Housing Assistance Data Repository data collections. In these data sets, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander household is defined as any household in which at least one resident identifies as being of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin.

**The quality of housing remains consistent**

In 2022–23, the majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households were living in housing of an acceptable standard (Indicator 9e). Specifically, 81.6% met the defined threshold of having 4 working facilities (for washing people, for washing clothes or bedding, for storing or preparing food, and a working sewerage system) and no more than 2 major structural problems, which is similar to 2018–19.

Further data is available to provide context on specific aspects of housing quality. In 2022–23, more than 9 in 10 households had working facilities for washing people (97.5%), washing clothes or bedding (95.8%), storing or preparing food (92.0%) and sewerage (98.5%), and 69.1% lived in dwellings with no major structural problems. All of these proportions were similar to 2018–19.

**More households are renting through social housing programs<sup>33</sup>**

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in social housing programs has been consistently increasing since the baseline year (2016). From 2016 to 2025, the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households residing in all types of social housing increased by 51.9% at the national level, reaching a high of 87,320 households.

This increase in social housing was reflected across all 4 types of housing (box 2.35). From 2016 to 2025, there was a 135.2% increase in the number of households in community housing, which is the biggest increase over this period, followed by state owned and managed Indigenous housing (66.1%), public housing (39.1%) and Indigenous community housing (36.1%).

The distribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households living in social housing, across social housing types, has shifted over time. By 2025, the proportion of households living in Indigenous community housing and public housing had declined, falling by 2.4 and 4.3 percentage points since 2016, respectively. These were offset by increases in the share of households living in community housing and state owned and managed Indigenous housing, which rose by 5.1 and 1.6 percentage points, respectively. In 2025, public housing remained the most common social housing arrangement at 46.7% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in social housing, followed by Indigenous community housing at 20.5% (figure 2.34).

<sup>33</sup> Data on the proportion of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households that were residing in social housing (SE9g.1–2) was last updated in July 2024. Between 2016 and 2021, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households that were residing in a social housing dwelling decreased 4 percentage points to 18.5%. Refer to PC CtG dashboard for more information and figures.

### Box 2.35 – Data definition: Social housing

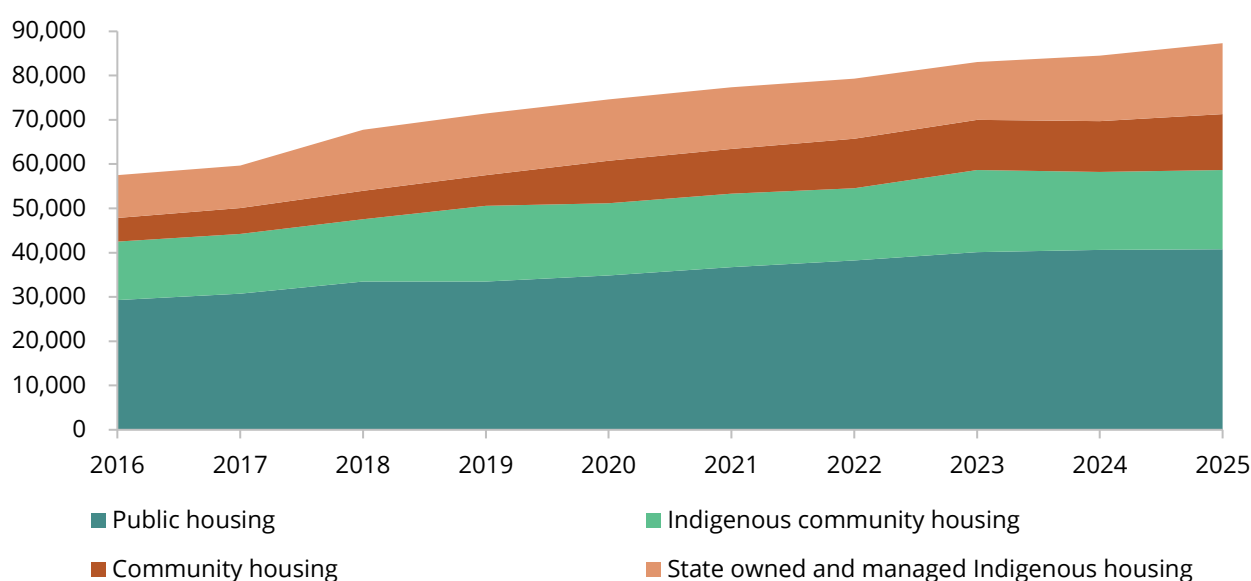
Social housing refers to government-subsidised short-term and long-term dwellings rented through a social housing provider. There are 4 types of social housing reported for Indicator 9g:

- **public housing** – dwellings owned (or leased) and managed by state and territory housing authorities
- **state owned and managed Indigenous housing** – dwellings owned and managed by state and territory housing authorities and government Indigenous housing agencies that are allocated only to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants
- **community housing** – rental housing managed by community-based organisations that lease properties or have received a capital or recurrent subsidy from government
- **Indigenous community housing** – dwellings owned or leased and managed by Indigenous community housing organisations and community councils.

A high or increasing number of households in social housing may be seen as desirable, as it can indicate greater availability or access to social housing. However, it is important to consider this in the broader context of social housing supply and demand, and the socio-economic factors that contribute to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in social housing. Refer to socio-economic outcome 9 on the PC CtG dashboard for more information.

### Figure 2.34 – Households renting through a social housing program

Number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in social housing, by type of social housing provider, 2016 to 2025 (Indicator 9g)



Source: Derived from AIHW (unpublished) National Housing Assistance Data Repository. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data table SE9g.3.

Increases in households renting through social housing programs varied by remoteness area. Between 2016 and 2025, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households in social housing increased the most in very remote areas (69.5%), followed by major cities (66.2%), remote areas (48.4%), inner regional areas (47.2%) and finally outer regional areas (29.3%).

### Box 2.36 – Place-based co-design creates housing that reflects residents' needs

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders continue to call for deeper community involvement in the design and delivery of housing, emphasising that long-term solutions must be developed in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives. Working alongside communities ensures that housing incorporates culturally appropriate design principles and provides the amenities needed to reflect local values, aspirations and ways of living. When homes are designed, built and maintained through community partnership, guided by local decision-making and cultural relevance, they strengthen equity, resilience and opportunity. For these solutions to be effective and sustainable, community-led housing initiatives must be actively supported and enabled by governments.

Community leaders in Tennant Creek are advancing housing innovation and climate adaptation through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led design. The Wilya Janta project promotes co-designed, culturally safe and climate-appropriate housing, establishing a framework that centres quality of life and care for Country. Its primary objective is to reduce poverty and disadvantage by supporting the development of affordable homes that reflect residents' needs. This is achieved through climate and culture-focused design guidelines, strong partnerships, industry engagement, and cost-conscious construction.

Source: AIHW (2026); NHSAC (2025); NIAA (2023); Wilya Janta (2026).

## Summary: Housing

There has been an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized housing.

There is still no data available to report on the target for access to essential services.



There has been an increase in the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing, but this target is not on track to be met **(Target 9A)**.

Homelessness rates are decreasing across all age groups (9d).

The quality of housing remains consistent (9e).

More households are renting through social housing programs (9g).



It is not possible to report progress on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander household access to essential services as the required data is not available **(Target 9B)**.

### Legend



Good improvement  
and on track or met



Improvement  
but not on track



Worsening,  
not on track



No change from  
the baseline



No assessment  
available

## 2.7 Country

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold deeply-rooted connections to Country, which encompass ancestral lands, skies, beings, seas, rivers and groundwater systems. This profound relationship forms the foundation of cultures, identities, belonging and custodianship (Hartwig et al. 2021; Lowitja Institute 2020). Country is not only a physical place or resource, but a relational, spiritual and cultural system that sustains life, knowledge, language and identity (Biles et al. 2024). Being physically and culturally present on Country, through activities such as caring for Country, birthing on Country, ceremony, and engaging in land-based healing, supports wellbeing across physical, social, emotional, cultural and ecological dimensions (Biles et al. 2024; Dudgeon et al. 2020; Schultz et al. 2018; Zubrick et al. 2014).

Colonisation and subsequent government policies of dispossession and alienation from traditional lands, seas and waters have prevented and limited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities from practicing culture on Country (Butler et al. 2019). This disconnection from Country is associated with poorer physical health outcomes, higher distress and lower social and emotional wellbeing (Biles et al. 2024; Zubrick et al. 2014).

In response, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have led sustained campaigns for greater land rights and recognition for enduring laws, practices and responsibilities to Country (Hartwig et al. 2020). Recognition of native title and land claims are a result of these campaigns and reflect one of multiple important steps towards restoring cultural authority, strengthening self-determination and enabling reconnection, all of which are recognised as essential to cultural health and wellbeing (ANTAR 2022; Biles et al. 2024).

Additional factors that support and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationships with their land and waters include embedding Indigenous knowledges into environmental and natural resource management; and enabling Indigenous ownership and governance of land and water titles (AHRC 2020; Barber and Jackson 2017; Lowitja Institute 2020).



**Box 2.37 – What data will you find in this section?**

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2026 for socio-economic outcome 15.

| Outcome                                                                                                                                                                   | Update          | Latest data |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| <b>Outcome 15:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters |                 |             |
| • Land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests (Target 15A)                                                                    | <i>New data</i> | 2025        |
| • Sea mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests (Target 15B)                                                                     | <i>New data</i> | 2025        |
| • Land and water ownership (15a)                                                                                                                                          | <i>New data</i> | 2025        |
| • Indigenous Land Use Agreements (15d)                                                                                                                                    | <i>New data</i> | 2025        |
| • People who recognise and live on homelands/traditional Country (15i)                                                                                                    |                 | 2022–23     |

## Outcome 15: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters

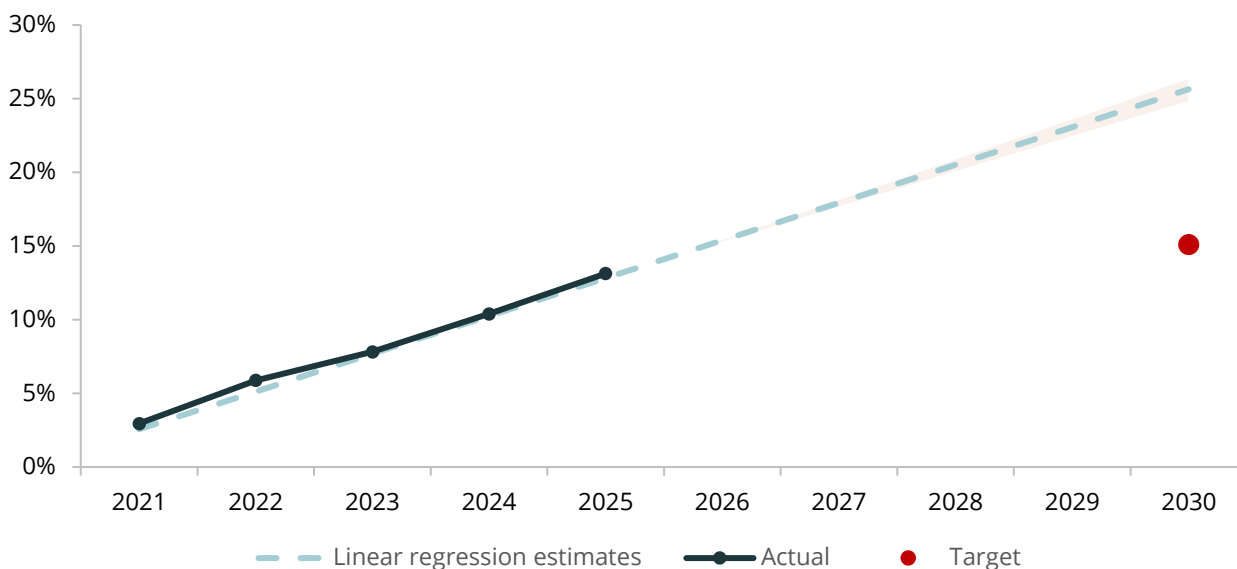


**The target to increase land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests remains on track to be met by 2030**

As at June 2025, 4,421,946 km<sup>2</sup> of Australia's land mass was subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests. This reflects a 13.1% increase in land area subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests between 2020 and 2025. Based on this trend, the target of a 15% increase in land area by 2030 is on track to be met (figure 2.35).

### Figure 2.35 – Change in land mass subject to rights or interests

Percentage change in total area subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's land rights or interests nationally against the baseline year (2020), 2021 to 2030 (Target 15A)



Source: (NNTT) (unpublished) Native Title Determinations Outcomes; Indigenous estate. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data tables CtG15A.1.

### Most jurisdictions have seen increases in the total land area subject to rights or interests

There are currently no jurisdictional targets, but the progress made in each state and territory contributes to national outcomes. Nationally, the progress towards the target continues to be driven by large increases in Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory. South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria have reported some increases, while the Australian Capital Territory has not reported any change. Tasmania has reported an increase of 3 square kilometres, to a total of 634 km<sup>2</sup>, or 0.9% of its total land mass.

The proportion of Australia's total land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights and interests increased from 50.9% in 2020 to 57.6% in 2025, representing an increase of 6.7 percentage points. At the jurisdictional level, Western Australia continued to have the largest increase (10.2 percentage points) in land area covered by rights or interests as a proportion of total state land mass (65.7% in 2020 to 75.9% in 2025). Over the same period, there were similar increases in the total proportion of land mass covered in Queensland (9.5 percentage points) and the Northern Territory (5.2 percentage points). The proportion of total land mass covered increased in South Australia (1.2 percentage points) and Victoria (0.6 percentage points) over the 2020–25 period. In New South Wales, the proportion of total area covered remained the same every year since 2020 but increased by 0.6 percentage points to 1.4% in 2025.

Progress is being made towards the target in all jurisdictions except the Australian Capital Territory, which has shown no change in land subject to legal rights or interests since the baseline year.

### State and territory assessment of progress (2020 to 2025)

| Target           | NSW                                                                                           | Vic                                                                               | Qld                                                                                         | WA                                                                                | SA                                                                                           | Tas                                                                                 | ACT                                                                                               | NT                                                                                  |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 15A              |              |  |            |  |             |  |                |  |
| Confidence level | High                                                                                          | High                                                                              | High                                                                                        | High                                                                              | High                                                                                         | Low                                                                                 | Low                                                                                               | High                                                                                |
| Legend           |  Improvement |                                                                                   |  Worsening |                                                                                   |  No change |                                                                                     |  No assessment |                                                                                     |

An assessment reported with a High level of confidence is considered to be more reliable than one reported with a Low level of confidence. Refer to the Glossary in this report or the 'How to interpret the data' page on the PC CtG dashboard for more information.

### The target of a 15% increase in sea area covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests remains on track to be met by 2030

As at June 2025, 113,496 km<sup>2</sup> of sea area was subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests, already above the 2030 target of 103,790 km<sup>2</sup> of sea area. Therefore, the target of a 15% increase in sea area covered remains on track to be met.<sup>34</sup>

### National progress on sea area has mostly been driven by 3 jurisdictions

Nationally, the Australian and Queensland Governments have driven the increase in sea area subject to legal rights or interests (figure 2.36), with expansions of 61.7% and 36.6% respectively since the baseline year (2020). South Australia reported a high percentage increase (174.8%), but its overall contribution to the national change since the baseline year was relatively modest (652 km<sup>2</sup> additional sea area covered by legal rights and interests). Between 2024 and 2025, a decrease in sea area covered by legal rights and interests was reported by the Australian Government (25 km<sup>2</sup>) and Western Australia (7 km<sup>2</sup>). This does not reflect any reversal or removal of native title. It is due to improved mapping methods which have provided more precise calculations.

In the remaining jurisdictions, Western Australia and Queensland continue to have the highest proportion of sea area subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests compared to all other jurisdictions – 34.4% of sea area in Western Australia and 27.0% of sea area in Queensland. The Northern Territory reported only a 1 km<sup>2</sup> increase and Victoria reported a 30 km<sup>2</sup> increase since 2020.

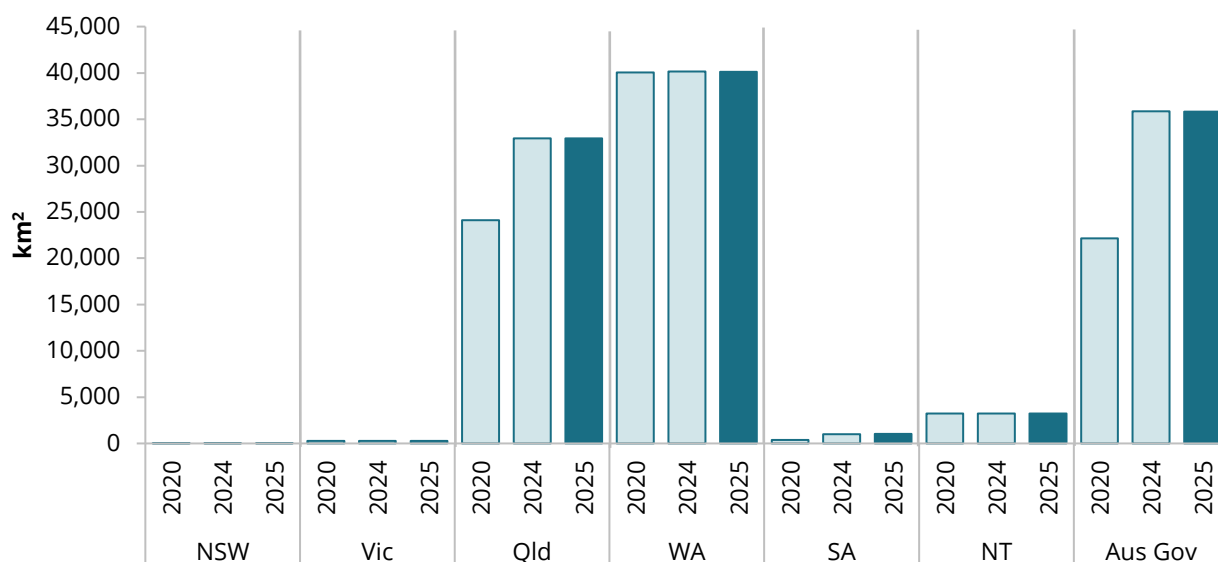
Overall, progress continues to be made toward the target across all jurisdictions except Tasmania and New South Wales, which have shown no increase in area of sea area subject to legal rights and interests since the baseline year. There is no assessment for the Australian Capital Territory because legal rights and interests in sea area are not applicable.

<sup>34</sup> While the assessment for the sea area target is provided with a low level of confidence based on the assessment methodology, it is recognised that sea area native title determinations already exceed the specified target for 2030, and that once a determination has been made, it is unlikely to be changed.



**Figure 2.36 – Sea area subject to legal rights or interests**

Sea area subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal rights or interests as at 30 June, by jurisdiction and year, comparing recent years to the baseline (2020) (Target 15B)



Legal rights and interests in sea area are not applicable to the Australian Capital Territory, and Tasmania has reported zero km<sup>2</sup> of sea area subject to rights and interests for every year since 2020. Therefore, these jurisdictions have not been included. Australian Government (Aus Gov) jurisdiction sea area is distinct from the states and territories – it extends from the 3 nautical mile limit out to the Exclusive Economic Zone surrounding the mainland states and territories.

Source: NNTT (unpublished) Native Title Determinations Outcomes; Indigenous Estate. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table CtG15B.1.

### State and territory assessment of progress (2020 to 2025)

| Target           | NSW                                                                            | Vic  | Qld  | WA  | SA   | Tas | ACT | NT  | Aus Gov |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|---------|
| 15B              |                                                                                |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |         |
| Confidence level | Low                                                                            | High | High | Low | High | Low | ..  | Low | High    |
| <b>Legend</b>    | Improvement            Worsening            No change            No assessment |      |      |     |      |     |     |     |         |

An assessment reported with a High level of confidence is considered to be more reliable than one reported with a Low level of confidence. Refer to the Glossary in this report or the 'How to interpret the data' page on the PC CtG dashboard for more information.

**Box 2.38 – Development of an Inland Waters Target (15C)**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold a deep connection to Country, which includes Australia's river systems. Many communities depend on river and groundwater systems, which support health, social and economic wellbeing. Research shows there are hundreds of remote and regional communities that lack access to safe and reliable drinking water (Balasooriya et al. 2023; PC 2024b). Despite making up 4% of the population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people own and control less than 0.2% of Australia's surface water entitlements. Investing in sustainable and culturally responsive water infrastructure is one way that access to healthy water can be improved.

A new target – Target 15C – was agreed upon in 2022, aimed at increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's ownership of inland waters and influence in water policy decisions, such as the new National Water Agreement.

In July 2024, the Joint Council on Closing the Gap decided not to progress with a national target. Instead, each state and territory is now working to develop their targets in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Work under Target 15C remains ongoing, including data development to identify a nationally consistent measure for inland waters.

Source: Balasooriya et al. (2023); DCCEEW (2025); Joint Council (2025); PC (2024b).

**Building a fuller picture of Country**

Three supporting indicators provide further insights into progress in socio-economic outcome area 15. Indicator 15a reports on land owned or controlled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through exclusive rights, while Indicator 15d shows the number and types of Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) in place. Indicator 15i reports on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who recognise, live on and visit their homelands.

**The amount of land owned or controlled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remained roughly the same**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can hold a variety of legal rights over land and waters, including native title rights that may be either exclusive or non-exclusive, as well as exclusive rights through other forms such as freehold tenure (box 2.39). Data for Indicator 15a.1 shows that the amount of land owned and controlled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through exclusive rights outside of native title has remained around the same over the last 5 years.

Nationally in 2025, 1,239,990 km<sup>2</sup> of land was owned or controlled by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation or owned by governments and held exclusively for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to use, constituting 16.1% of the total land mass of Australia. This had changed very little since the baseline year (2020), with only a 0.2% increase in land area owned and controlled under non-native title exclusive rights.

More land has come under the ownership or control of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people since 2020 in Queensland (an additional 2,649 km<sup>2</sup>) and in South Australia (an additional 3,083 km<sup>2</sup>). The Northern Territory had the largest amount of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled or owned land at 605,154 km<sup>2</sup>, or 44.9% of all land in this jurisdiction.

**Box 2.39 – Data definitions: types of legal rights and interests in land and waters**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have rights as custodians and stewards of their land, water, culture and heritage. In some cases, these rights are formally recognised in Australian law. The nature of rights depends on the legislation and recognition processes under which they are recognised or granted. Definitions for the main types of legal rights and interests are provided below.

**Native title**

Native title refers to the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in land and waters based on their continued connections to an area stemming from traditional law and custom that are recognised by Australian law. Native title can be applied for and determined in court through mediation or litigation under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth). Successful native title determinations can grant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people exclusive rights of possession over an area, or non-exclusive rights that exist alongside non-Indigenous property rights and allow traditional owners to undertake certain activities in the area.

**Indigenous owned and controlled land**

Land owned and controlled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people refers to areas of land exclusively owned by registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporations or legally owned by governments and held exclusively for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to use. This includes the following tenure types that grant exclusive rights over land: freehold, leasehold, crown, license, and Aboriginal Deed of Grant in Trust. It does not include land held by individual Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people or any rights or interests granted by native title.

**Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs)**

ILUAs are voluntary agreements about the use and management of land and/or waters made between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander native title holders and other parties. An ILUA can be about any native title matter, including land management, future development, mining, cultural heritage or compensation for loss or impairment of native title. The PC CtG dashboard and ADCR report on 2 types of ILUAs: area agreements, which are made when there is no registered native title prescribed body corporate (PBC); and body corporate agreements, which are made when there is one or more registered native title PBC for the area.

On 1 October 2024, the *Native Title (Indigenous Land Use Agreements) Regulations 2024* (Cth) replaced the *Native Title (Indigenous Land Use Agreements) Regulations 1999* (Cth).

Refer to the PC CtG dashboard for further specifications regarding the data in this section.

Source: NNTT (2024).

### Box 2.40 – Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa Country Programs

Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (KJ) is a not-for-profit created by the Martu people to work, strengthen and sustain their communities. The Martu people have Native Title Claims in the East Pilbara region. With the support of Commonwealth and state governments and corporations, KJ operates multiple programs which are responsible for preserving the significant cultural and natural resources on Martu Country. Martu expertise in traditional land management techniques is complemented by assistance from specialists from Western Australia's Parks and Wildlife Service and ecologists.

There are 3 Country programs: the Ranger program, the Waru (fire) program and Threatened species management. The Ranger program is made up of more than 300 Martu people who are engaged in a wide range of on-Country activities during the field season. These include cultural learning, fulfilment of cultural obligations and the deep connection with Country that is fundamental to Martu life.

The programs have increased vegetation diversity and reduced the impact and extent of unplanned fires, as well as enriched Western ecologists' knowledge of rare species, habitats and desert management. In addition to the direct impact to Country, both Martu and non-Martu people have found that KJ's Country programs have provided significant social, cultural and economic value for Martu people.

Source: Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa (2024a, 2024b); SVA Consulting (2025).

### More Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) are in place

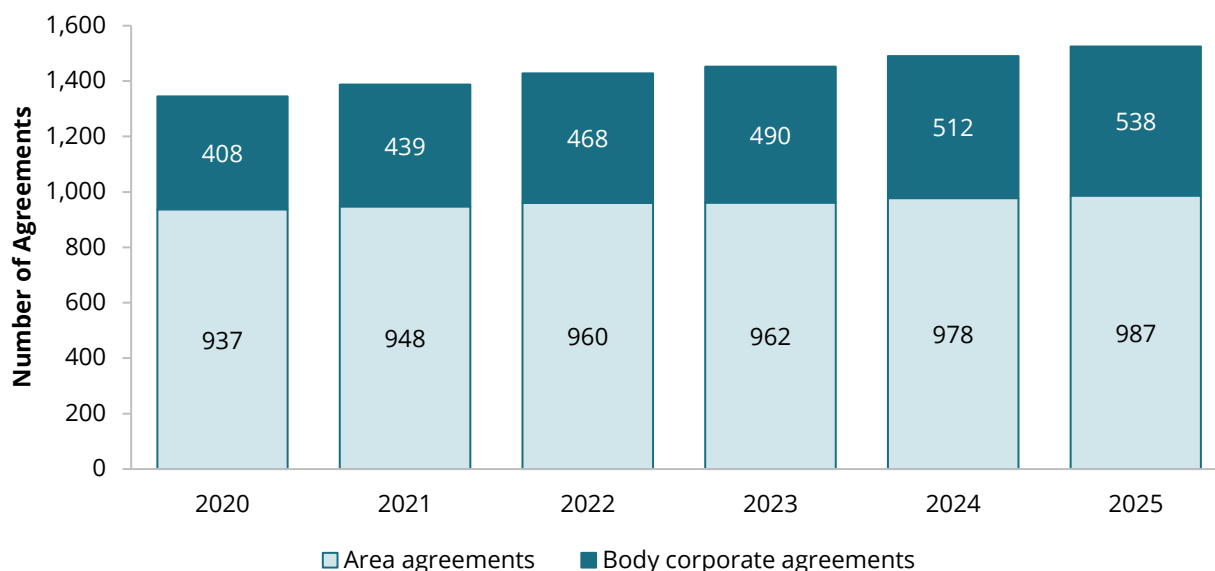
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander native title holders can sign an ILUA with other parties to decide how and for what purposes their land and waters can be used and managed.

Since 2020, the number of ILUAs increased by 13.4% to 1,525 agreements in 2025. Most of this growth was driven by a 31.9% increase in body corporate agreements, from 408 in 2020 to 538 in 2025, compared to an increase of just 5.3% in the number of area agreements. This has shifted the composition of total ILUAs, with body corporate agreements now making up more than one third (35.3%) of all agreements in 2025 – 5.0 percentage points more than in 2020 (figure 2.37).

From 2020 to 2025, the total land area covered by ILUAs of any type increased by 3.9% to 2,695,788 km<sup>2</sup>, and total sea area covered increased 30.3% to 52,806 km<sup>2</sup>. Despite the overall trend, this is a reduction from 2024, which had increased by 7.2% between 2020 and 2024. This is because the total number and land area ILUAs change as the agreements expire and new agreements are put in place. Overall, ILUAs covered 35.1% of all land area in Australia in 2025, up 1.3 percentage points from 2020. South Australia and Queensland had the highest coverage among the jurisdictions in 2025 – 60.9% and 49.6% of the land in each respective state.

**Figure 2.37 – Indigenous Land Use Agreements, by type of agreement**

Number of Indigenous Land Use Agreements nationally, 2020 to 2025 (Indicator 15d)



Source: NNTT (unpublished) Register of Indigenous Land Use Agreements. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data table SE15d.1.

### Fewer people live on homelands, but more visit

Data for Indicator 15i shows that although more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people recognise and visit their homelands, fewer people live there. In 2022–23, 77.2% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people recognised their homelands or traditional Country, representing an increase of 2.8 percentage points from 2018–19. Between 2018–19 to 2022–23, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who lived on their homelands decreased by 4.9 percentage points to 22.3%. The proportion of people who visited their homelands but did not live there increased by 7.7 percentage points to 55.0%.

| Summary: Country                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                         |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| There is clear progress on outcomes for Country.                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                         |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
| The targets for increasing the land mass and sea areas subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights and interests are on track to be met. |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                         |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
|                                                                                    | The proportion of land mass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests is increasing and the target is on track to be met <b>(Target 15A)</b> . |                                                                                     | The amount of land owned or controlled by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remained roughly the same (15a). |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                     | There were more Indigenous Land Use Agreements in place (15d).                                                          |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
|                                                                                  | The proportion of sea area covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights or interests is increasing and is on track to be met <b>(Target 15B)</b> .                   |                                                                                     | Fewer people live on homelands, but more visit (15i).                                                                   |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
|                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                     |                                                                                                                         |                                                                                       |                                                                                       |
| Legend                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                       |  |                                      |  |  |
|                                                                                                                                                                     | Good improvement and on track or met                                                                                                                                                     | Improvement but not on track                                                        | Worsening, not on track                                                                                                 | No change from the baseline                                                           | No assessment available                                                               |

## 2.8 Justice

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have maintained sophisticated and diverse systems of Lore and Law for tens of thousands of years. These systems are central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, guiding community life, decision-making, mechanisms of social order and the moral and ethical codes that dictate daily interactions and responsibilities (Dodson 1995). Strict protocols govern ceremony, trade, dispute resolution and movements across Country (Yoorrook Justice Commission 2023). Colonisation did not recognise these established systems of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Lore and Law. The colonial legal framework displaced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance structures, contributing to dispossession and the forced removal of children from their families (Walker et al. 2023).

Maintaining strong connections to family, culture and Country, and continuing to practise Lore and Law actively support wellbeing and social connection (Dudgeon et al. 2025). Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people grow up in loving and supportive homes, and many communities actively pursue justice, advocacy and self-determination (Dudgeon et al. 2014; Hall et al. 2020). A range of structural factors contribute to the disproportionate exposure of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the child protection and justice systems.

Risk factors include intergenerational trauma (AHRC 2020; ALRC 2017b), adverse childhood experiences (ALRC 2017b; Malvaso et al. 2022) and neurodevelopmental impairment (Bower et al. 2018). These risk factors intersect with the child protection system which is linked to greater exposure to the juvenile justice system and adult incarceration (ALRC 2017b). Limited access to secure and adequate housing can also mean that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on remand are exposed to longer periods of incarceration (ALRC 2017b). Together, these systems create cumulative impacts on young people, families and communities.

Bias embedded in justice and protection systems perpetuates cycles of harm. Evidence shows that children in residential out-of-home care are criminalised more frequently for behaviour that, within a family setting, would go unreported (Yoorrook Justice Commission 2023). Over-policing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, heightened arrests for low-level offending (ALRC 2017a), racial profiling (Cunneen 2020; O'Brien 2021) and mandatory sentencing laws (ALRC 2017a) all contribute to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system. Overcoming these systemic factors may reduce incarceration rates.

Factors that protect against the incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people include access to culturally safe resources, community and health services, and improved outcomes in education and employment (McCausland and Baldry 2023). The provision of community-led and culturally appropriate programs and services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people can also lead to increased engagement with youth diversionary programs, which can disrupt cycles of incarceration (Cunneen et al. 2021).



**Box 2.41 – What data will you find in this section?**

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2026 for socio-economic outcomes 10 and 11.

| Outcome                                                                                                                       | Update               | Latest data |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| <b>Outcome 10:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are not over-represented in the criminal justice system       |                      |             |
| • Adult imprisonment rate (Target 10)                                                                                         | <i>New data</i>      | 2025        |
| • People charged by police (10a)                                                                                              | <i>New data</i>      | 2024–25     |
| • Proportion convicted and sentenced (10b)                                                                                    | <i>New indicator</i> | 2024–25     |
| • Prisoner legal status (10d)                                                                                                 | <i>New data</i>      | 2025        |
| • Prisoner health (10g)                                                                                                       |                      | 2022        |
| • Time on remand (10j)                                                                                                        | <i>New indicator</i> | 2025        |
| <b>Outcome 11:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not over-represented in the criminal justice system |                      |             |
| • Young people in detention (Target 11)                                                                                       | <i>New data</i>      | 2024–25     |
| • Un-sentenced detention (11a)                                                                                                | <i>New data</i>      | 2024–25     |
| • Time in detention (11b)                                                                                                     | <i>New indicator</i> | 2024–25     |
| • Alleged young offenders (10–17 years) involved in police proceedings (11c)                                                  | <i>New data</i>      | 2024–25     |
| • Transition to detention (11f)                                                                                               | <i>New indicator</i> | 2022–23     |
| • Young people first coming into youth justice system aged 10–13 (11h)                                                        | <i>New data</i>      | 2024–25     |

## Outcome 10: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are not over-represented in the criminal justice system



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are being incarcerated at an increased rate and the target of a 15% reduction is not on track to be met by 2031

Nationally, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults incarcerated is increasing and the target of a 15% reduction by 2031 is not on track to be met. As at 30 June 2025, the age-standardised rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners was 2,500.2 per 100,000 adults.<sup>35</sup> This is an

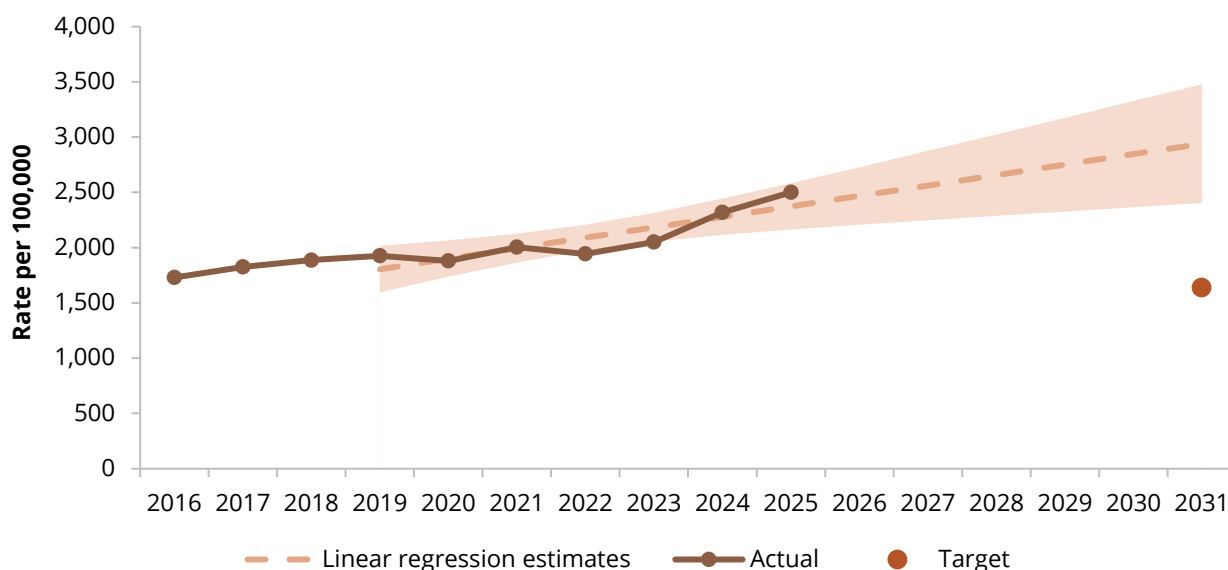
<sup>35</sup> In 2025, the age-standardised rate of imprisonment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults was 16.8 times higher than for non-Indigenous adults, compared to 11.2 times higher in 2019.



increase from the previous year (2,318.4 per 100,000 adults) and more than 550 more prisoners per 100,000 adults than the baseline year (1,925.4 per 100,000 adults in 2019) (figure 2.38).

**Figure 2.38 – National age-standardised imprisonment rates**

Age-standardised imprisonment rate per 100,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 18 years or over at 30 June, 2019 to 2031 (Target 10)



In Queensland, prior to 2018, 'adult' referred to people aged 17 years or over. From February 2018 onwards, people aged 17 years are being transitioned from adult correctional facilities into the Queensland juvenile justice system over a 2-year period. In 2019, there were no people aged 17 years in Queensland adult correctional facilities. The shaded area represents 95% confidence intervals for the linear regression estimates. As the updated population has increased over the entire time series, assessments of changes over time are not substantially affected. There have been no changes to the national assessments of progress (on track/not on track) as a result of the updated populations.

Source: Derived from ABS Prisoners in Australia. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table CtG10A.1.

### Imprisonment rates have increased across most jurisdictions

While there are currently no state and territory targets, the progress made in each state and territory does contribute to national outcomes. The rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people imprisoned per 100,000 adults have increased across most jurisdictions since the baseline year (2019). From 2019 to 2025, the imprisonment rate in Victoria has decreased by 101.3 per 100,000 adults. The Australian Capital Territory was the only state to experience a decrease in the rate of imprisonment between 2024 and 2025, with imprisonment rates decreasing slightly by 11.9 per 100,000 adults.

Of all jurisdictions with an increasing imprisonment rate and worsening progress, the Northern Territory had the largest increase. Between 2019 and 2025 the age-standardised rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people imprisoned in the Northern Territory increased by 1,609.7 per 100,000 adults.

### State and territory assessment of progress (2019 to 2025)

| Target           | NSW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Vic | Qld  | WA   | SA   | Tas  | ACT | NT   |
|------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|------|------|------|------|-----|------|
| 10               | ←                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | →   | ←    | ←    | ←    | ←    | ←   | ←    |
| Confidence level | High                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Low | High | High | High | High | Low | High |
| <b>Legend</b>    |  Improvement  Worsening  No change  No assessment |     |      |      |      |      |     |      |

An assessment reported with a High level of confidence is considered to be more reliable than one reported with a Low level of confidence. Refer to the Glossary in this report or 'How to interpret the data' page on the PC CtG dashboard for more information.

### Decreases in the rate of young adult imprisonment

Imprisonment rates went down between 2019 and 2025 for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults (aged 18–24 years) across most states and territories (except Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory for young males and Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory for young females). Between 2019 and 2025, the rate of young males per 100,000 people decreased by 59.2 to 3,679.8 and the rate of young females increased by 55.5 to 450.5 per 100,000 people.

### Increasing rates of imprisonment in older age groups

Nationally, adults aged 45–49 years have experienced the largest increase in imprisonment rates. Between 2019 and 2025, the rate for females aged 45–49 years increased by 202.2 to 532.0 per 100,000 and the rate for males of the same age increased by 2,569.5 to 5,589.1 per 100,000 – the largest increase for any sex or age group.

Overall, the rate of imprisonment has increased for both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males and females, with male imprisonment rates being consistently higher than female rates across all years. In 2025, the male imprisonment rate was more than 8 times higher than the female imprisonment rate.

### More people were charged by police (across most jurisdictions with data)

Queensland, New South Wales, and the Australian Capital Territory are the only jurisdictions that report enough data on the rates of people charged by police to construct a time series from 2018–19 to 2024–25, but data is also available for South Australia for 2022–23 and 2024–25.

In Queensland, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 18 years or over charged by police has decreased from 8,607.7 per 100,000 adults in 2018–19 to 6,787.4 per 100,000 adults in 2024–25. In New South Wales over the same period, the rate increased by 2,555.3 to 7,888.8 per 100,000 adults. In the Australian Capital Territory, the rate was 5,232.9 per 100,000 adults in 2024–25, which is 728.6 per 100,000 higher than in 2018–19 but lower than the peak of 5,335.3 per 100,000 adults in 2021–22. In South Australia rates increased by 1,268.8 to 10,179.3 per 100,000 adults between 2022–23 and 2024–25.

Police can initiate different types of legal action when commencing proceedings against an alleged offender. Court actions include laying charges that must be answered in court while non-court actions include issuing infringements, counselling and formal or informal cautions and warnings. From 2018–19

to 2024–25, the proportion of proceedings by police against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults that were court actions decreased 1.9 and 8.8 percentage points to 96.8% and 88.2% in New South Wales and Queensland, respectively, and increased by 0.6 percentage points to 94.3% in the Australian Capital Territory. In South Australia, court actions made up 89.0% of police proceedings against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in 2024–25 – a 1.5 percentage point decrease from 2022–23.

### Most criminal court defendants are found guilty

New supporting indicator – Indicator 10b – is a driver indicator that reports on the circumstances of finalised court outcomes, including the principal offence, method of finalisation and the principal sentence for defendants found guilty. The indicator has 3 measures: the number of criminal court defendants with a finalised court outcome by principal offence, the proportion of defendants with a finalised court outcome by method of finalisation and the proportion of defendants with a finalised court outcome of guilty by principal sentence.<sup>36</sup> Data is available for all states and territories excluding Victoria and Western Australia.

In 2024–25, the most frequent principal offence was assault across all states and territories with available data, except Queensland where the most frequent principal offence was offences against justice procedures and orders. Principal offences of assault constituted between 21.9% and 51.6% of all finalised court outcomes. The second most frequent principal offence was offences against justice procedures and orders in New South Wales, Tasmania and the Northern Territory. The second most frequent principal offence was assault in Queensland, theft in South Australia and burglary in the Australian Capital Territory. The total number of finalised court outcomes increased from 2023–24 in all states and territories except Queensland.

The proportion of criminal court defendants with a finalised court outcome of guilty varied between 60.1% in the Australian Capital Territory to 84.0% in the Northern Territory. Most guilty outcomes across all states and territories resulted from a guilty plea by the defendant.

In 2024–25, the proportion of criminal court defendants finalised with a guilty outcome who were sentenced to custody in a correctional institution ranged from 23.9% in Tasmania to 70.3% in the Northern Territory.

### The proportion of unsentenced prisoners has increased

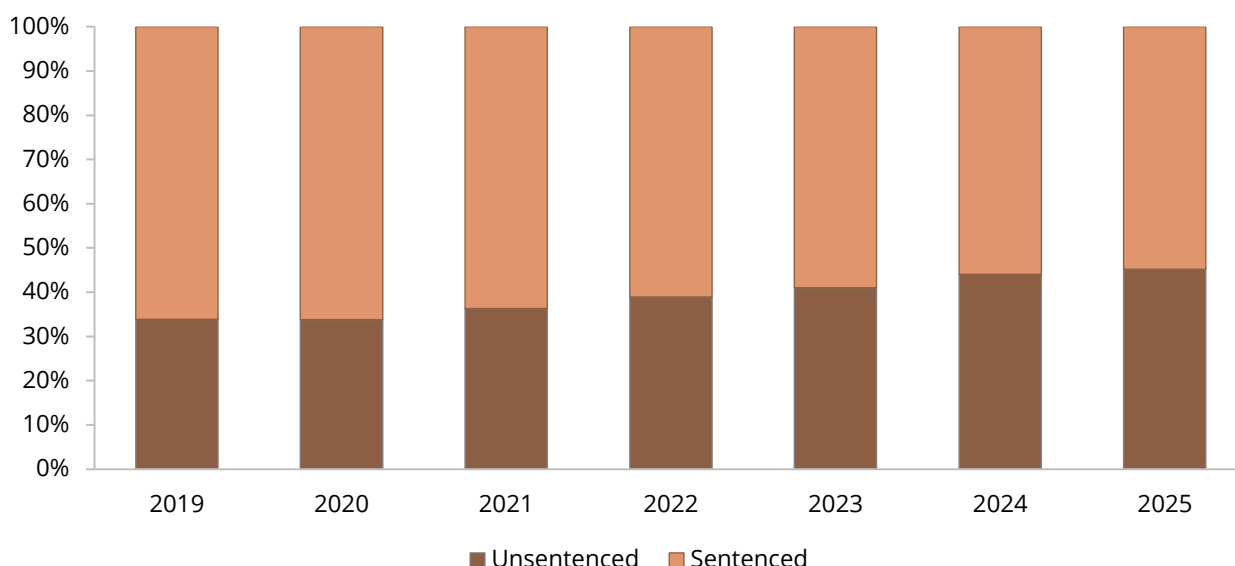
People in prison custody can have differing legal status, as some prisoners may be unsentenced and on remand awaiting their court appearance, while others may have already been sentenced. Indicator 10d provides information on the legal status of people in prison. Nationally, the proportion of unsentenced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prisoners has risen 11.3 percentage points since 2019, reaching 45.1% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison custody in 2025 (figure 2.39). Between 2019 and 2025 the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in prison custody who were unsentenced has increased in all states except Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory.

---

<sup>36</sup> Data for the number of criminal court defendants with a finalised court outcome by principal offence excludes transfers and traffic offences.

**Figure 2.39 – Prisoner legal status**

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults in prison custody as at 30 June, by legal status, 2019 to 2025 (Indicator 10d)



In Queensland, prior to 2018, 'adult' referred to people aged 17 years or over. From February 2018 onwards, people aged 17 years are being transitioned from adult correctional facilities into the Queensland juvenile justice system over a 2-year period. In 2019, there were no 17-year-olds in Queensland adult correctional facilities.

Source: ABS Prisoners in Australia. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE10d.1.

Between 2019 and 2025, there was a 5.1% decrease in the number of prisoners with sentences shorter than 6 months. Over the same period, there was a 20.6% increase in the number of prisoners who had sentences between 6 months and 2 years and an 18.5% increase in the number who had sentences between 2 and 10 years.

Between 2019 and 2025, the proportion of unsentenced Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults on remand for less than 6 months decreased by 1.9 percentage points. The proportion on remand for between 6 and 12 months increased 0.6 percentage points and the proportion on remand for one year or more increased by 1.6 percentage points. In 2025, the number of unsentenced people on remand was 91.0% higher than in 2019 and the number with more than a year on remand had more than doubled.

### Among people discharged from prison, the rate of engagement in paid employment within 2 weeks of release has more than doubled

Indicator 10g reports on some of the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people entering and leaving incarceration (box 2.42 outlines data considerations). Comparing 2022 results to 2018, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander prison entrants that used illicit substances in the previous 12 months increased to 71%. A higher proportion of entrants reported being told that they had a mental health condition at some stage in their life (42.6%) and a lower proportion had at least one parent or carer in prison during their childhood (27.9%). Among people discharged from prison, the rate of engagement in paid employment within 2 weeks of release more than doubled (from 16.5% to 38.5%) and the proportion who had been physically assaulted or attacked while in prison slightly reduced (from 8.7% to 8.5%).

#### Box 2.42 – Data considerations: the characteristics of people entering and leaving incarceration presented above are not representative of the entire prison population

The data presented on the characteristics of people entering and leaving incarceration is sourced from the National Prisoner Health Data Collection (NPHDC). Data from 2018 includes 62 out of 70 public and private prisons in all states and territories, excluding New South Wales. Data from 2022 includes 73 public and private prisons, for all states and territories, excluding Victoria.

Not all people in prison, prison entrants and dischargees, have been involved in the data collection. This may have been due to prison staffing constraints, the physical or mental limitations of people in prison, or uncertain release dates. Of those who could be approached, some did not provide consent to participate.

The response rate for the 2022 NPHDC entrants survey was 18% (23% in 2018). Of the entrants that completed the form, 49.3% were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

For dischargees, the response rate for the 2022 NPHDC survey was 23% (17% in 2018). Of the dischargees that completed the form, 46.4% were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

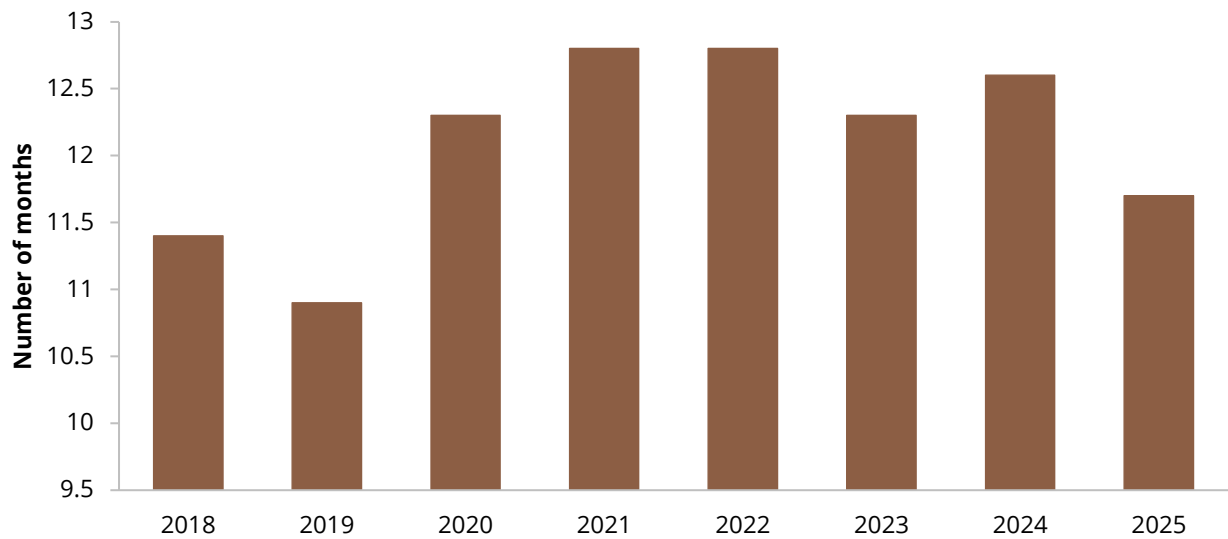
Source: AIHW (2022c).

### The duration of time spent on remand has increased

New supporting indicator – Indicator 10j – is a contextual indicator that reports the duration of time spent on remand. Prisoners are held on remand while awaiting sentencing and may have been refused bail. In 2025, 90% of prisoners spent up to 11.7 months on remand, an increase from 11.4 months in 2018 (figure 2.40). In 2025, the median duration of time spent on remand was 3 months, an increase from 2.7 months in 2018.

**Figure 2.40 – Time spent on remand**

Duration of time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults spent on remand, 90<sup>th</sup> percentile, 2018 to 2025 (Indicator 10j)



Source: ABS (unpublished) Prisoners in Australia. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE10j.1.

**Box 2.43 – Justice reinvestment programs provide community-defined interventions**

Justice reinvestment recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people possess the solutions to the issues that affect their communities. It aims to address the drivers of contact with the justice system and improve place-based justice outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Interventions focus on community-led prevention and early intervention initiatives aimed at breaking the cycle of offending.

Justice reinvestment begins with communities and local organisations. Local representatives identify targeted strategies to prevent and reduce contact with the criminal justice system. Communities also use data to design initiatives and evaluate progress. Communities define local strategies, with youth diversion, cultural mentoring, community outreach, school-retention and mental health support programs established as key tools for addressing crime.

Justice reinvestment centres on self-determination, shifting decision making power and authority to the community level. This approach draws upon the strengths of community, their cultural knowledge and lived experience.

Source: AGD (2026); Bryant and Spies-Butcher (2024).

## Outcome 11: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not over-represented in the criminal justice system

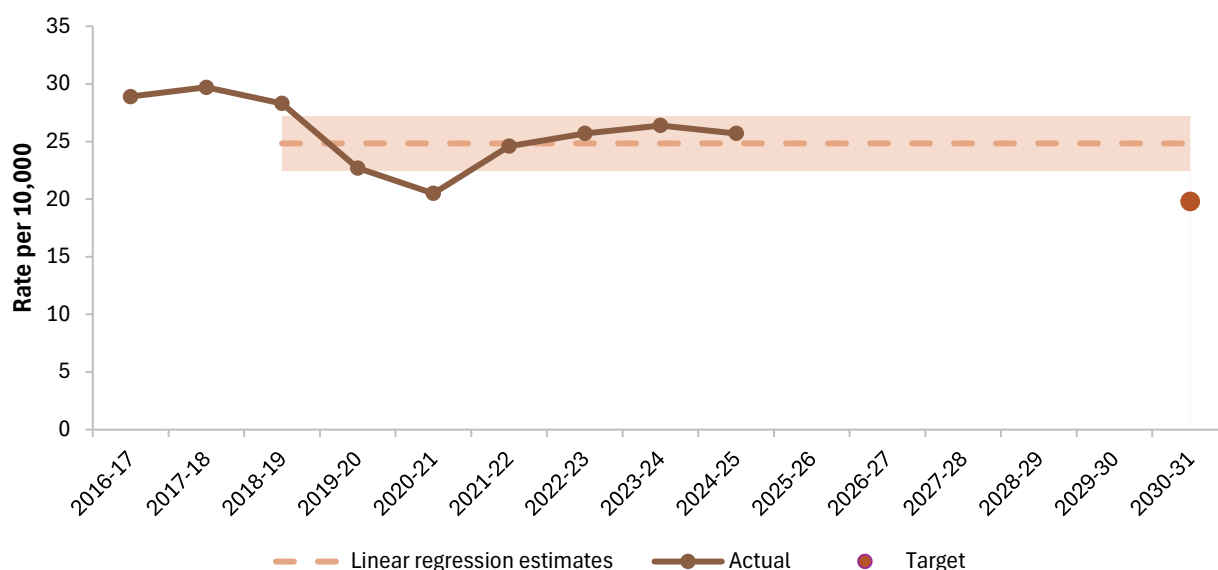


### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people continue to be over-represented in the criminal justice system

The target to reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention by at least 30% by 2031 is not on track to be met. Nationally, in 2024–25, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 10–17 years in detention on an average day was 25.7 per 10,000 young people (figure 2.41). Since 2023–24, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention has decreased from 26.4 per 100,000 people, however, an initial decline in youth detention followed by recent increases means the trend of the national target shows no change from the baseline (2018–19).

**Figure 2.41 – National youth detention rate**

Rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention on an average day per 10,000 young people aged 10–17 years, 2016–17 to 2030–31 (Target 11)



The shaded area represents 95% confidence intervals for the linear regression estimates.

Source: AIHW (unpublished) Youth Justice National Minimum Dataset; ABS Estimates and Projections Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table CtG11A.1.

### The age of criminal responsibility is not consistent across the country

The minimum age of criminal responsibility in the Commonwealth is 10 years of age. It varies across states and territories and is affected by changes to legislation (table 2.2).<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Exceptions to the minimum age of criminal responsibility exist across jurisdictions, including where crimes relate to serious offences.

**Table 2.2 – Minimum age of criminal responsibility**

| State/Territory           | Current minimum age of criminal responsibility |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| NSW, Qld, WA, SA, Tas, NT | 10 years of age                                |
| Vic                       | 12 years of age                                |
| ACT                       | 14 years of age                                |

### Progress to reduce the rate of young people in detention varies across states and territories

There are currently no state and territory targets for young people's representation in the criminal justice system. However, progress made in each state and territory contributes to the national outcome. The assessment below shows positive progress in outcomes for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia between 2018–19 (the baseline year) and 2024–25. During the same time, the rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention in New South Wales, Queensland, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory have increased. In Tasmania, there has been no significant change from the baseline.

### State and territory assessment of progress (2018–19 to 2024–25)

| Target           | NSW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Vic  | Qld  | WA   | SA  | Tas | ACT  | NT  |
|------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|------|-----|-----|------|-----|
| 11               | ←                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | →    | ←    | →    | →   | ■   | ←    | ←   |
| Confidence level | Low                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | High | High | High | Low | Low | High | Low |
| <b>Legend</b>    |  Improvement  Worsening  No change  No assessment |      |      |      |     |     |      |     |

An assessment reported with a High level of confidence is considered to be more reliable than one reported with a Low level of confidence. Please see the Glossary in this report or 'How to interpret the data' page on the PC CtG dashboard for more information.

### Young males are more likely than young females to be in detention

Nationally, in 2024–25, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young males were 7.3 times more likely than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young females to be in detention.<sup>38</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 14–17 years were 13.1 times more likely to be in detention than those aged 10–13 years.

<sup>38</sup> This report uses the terms 'male' and 'female' to refer to data disaggregated by sex. Data disaggregated by gender is not yet available for this indicator. For more information on gender and sex in the ADCR, refer to box 1.5.



The majority of young people in detention were unsentenced

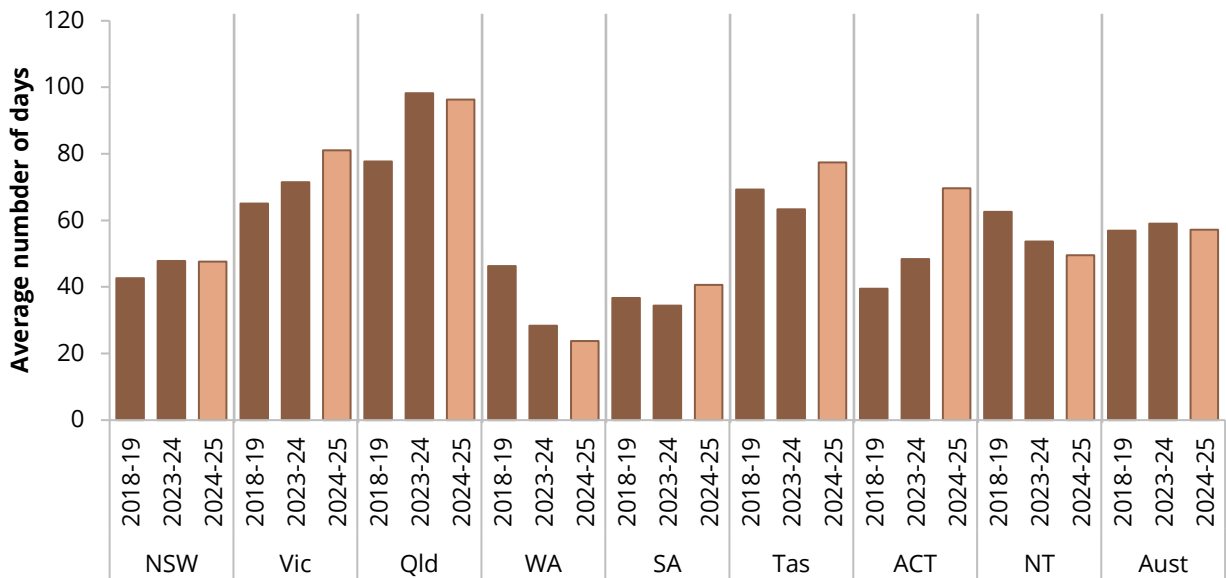
The proportion of young people in detention who are unsentenced has varied over the years but is consistently above 50.0% across most states and territories. Nationally, on an average night, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention who were unsentenced was 69.4% in 2018–19 and 76.1% in 2023–24.<sup>39</sup> Queensland consistently has the highest number of unsentenced young people in detention (between 2018–19 and 2024–25 numbers ranged from 108 to 198). The proportion of unsentenced young people in detention in Queensland is also consistently high, ranging from 80.6% to 90.9% between 2018–19 and 2024–25.

Time in unsentenced detention varies across states

The new supporting indicator – Indicator 11b – reports on the average time (number of days) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth spent in unsentenced youth detention during the year. In 2024–25, at a national level the average length of time spent in unsentenced detention was 57.2 days, with the highest average in Queensland (96.3 days) and Victoria (81.1 days), and the lowest in Western Australia (23.8 days) and South Australia (40.6 days). Since 2018–19, time unsentenced in detention has increased in New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory but decreased in Western Australia and the Northern Territory (figure 2.42).

Figure 2.42 – Time spent in unsentenced detention

Average length of time (days) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people spent in unsentenced detention during the year, by state and territory, 2018–19 to 2024–25 (Indicator 11b)



Source: Derived from AIHW 2026 (and previous issues), Youth justice in Australia, 2024–25 (and previous years). Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data table SE11b.1.

<sup>39</sup> Data for the June quarter across years is used as a comparator.

## Young people were proceeded against by police multiple times in most jurisdictions

Data on alleged young offenders involved in police proceedings is available for 5 jurisdictions – New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

Between 2018–19 and 2024–25, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 10–17 years proceeded against by police declined in Queensland and South Australia but increased in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.

In 2024–25, across the 5 jurisdictions with available data, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people proceeded against by police, the proportion proceeded against once ranged from 38.1% to 52.5%. By comparison, between 14.5% and 18.7% were proceeded against twice, and between 29.7% and 43.4% were proceeded against 3 or more times.

### Box 2.44 – Community-led diversion initiative

The Victorian Aboriginal Youth Cautioning Program (AYCP) is a community-led diversion initiative designed to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal young people in the criminal justice system. It enhances police cautioning by integrating Aboriginal community involvement, cultural principles, and early intervention strategies.

Under the AYCP, eligible young people receive a police caution and are referred to a community-led panel as an alternative to formal charges. Panel members include Elders, community members and support workers. The panel provides a culturally safe space for young offenders to reflect on their behaviour, understand the impacts of their actions and receive guidance from trusted parties. The process is informal, supportive and focused on accountability rather than punishment.

The AYCP also provides an effective referral pathway. The panels assess the individual needs of the young person and connect them with culturally appropriate services that address the underlying causes of offending.

Source: Onademuren et al. (2025).

## More young people under community-based supervision are transitioning to detention

New supporting indicator – Indicator 11f – reports on young people under community-based supervision transitioning to detention. The measure is defined as the proportion of young people aged 0–16 years released from community-based supervision that return to detention within 12 months. A community-based supervision sentence requires the young person to be supervised by a youth justice agency within the community, whereas a detention sentence requires the young person to be detained in a youth justice facility.

Nationally, 21.3% of young people who were released from community-based supervision in 2021–22 returned to detention within 12 months. This represents a 3.6 percentage point increase from 17.7% in the baseline year (2018–19).

Data for young people released in 2022–23 is only available for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Western Australia and South Australia. Since the baseline year, for states with available data, the proportion of young people who were released from community-based supervision in 2022–23 who returned to detention within 12 months increased in Victoria, Queensland and South Australia and decreased in New South Wales and Western Australia.

### Young people are entering the youth justice system later

The proportion of entries into the justice system who are young people aged 10–13 years has decreased, which means the average age at entry has increased (Indicator 11h). There are 2 main types of supervision in the youth justice system: community-based supervision and youth detention.

The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under youth justice supervision that first entered supervision when aged 10–13 years has decreased each year, from the baseline rate of 38.0% in 2018–19 to 29.8% in 2024–25. The proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in youth detention has also decreased. In 2024–25, 34.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in youth detention entered aged 10–13 years, which is lower than the baseline of 39.2% in 2018–19.

Data reporting the age at entry for youth justice supervision is available for all states and territories, except for Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory. For reporting states, between 2018–19 and 2024–25, the proportion of young people aged 10–13 years entering youth justice supervision decreased in most states, between 5.8 percentage points (in Queensland) and 16.5 percentage points (in South Australia). In Tasmania, the proportion increased by 0.9 percentage points.

For youth detention, the proportion of young people in detention in 2024–25 who were aged 10–13 years when they first entered youth detention decreased in most states and territories, with decreases ranging from 0.6 percentage points in Queensland to 16.1 percentage points in South Australia. In Tasmania, the proportion increased by 12.5 percentage points.

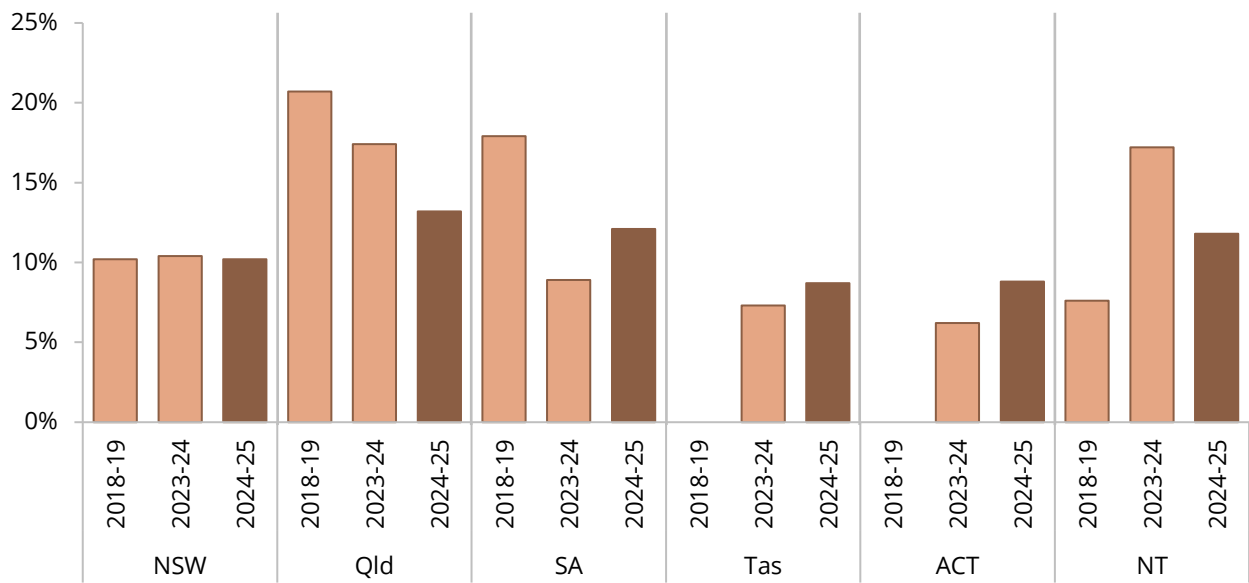
In 2024–25, across the 6 jurisdictions with available data, the proportion of young defendants at criminal court aged 10–13 years ranged between 8.7% in Tasmania to 13.2% in Queensland (figure 2.43).<sup>40</sup> Relative to the baseline year (2018–19), when 4 jurisdictions had data, the proportion of young defendants whose cases were finalised in the criminal courts increased in the Northern Territory, declined in Queensland and South Australia and remained the same in New South Wales.

---

<sup>40</sup> Data for Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory should be considered with caution due to small underlying counts.

**Figure 2.43 – Young defendants at criminal courts, by jurisdiction**

Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander defendants (aged 10–17 years) at criminal court who were aged 10–13 years by state and territory, 2018–19 to 2024–25 (Indicator 11h)



Source: Derived from ABS Criminal Courts Australia. Refer to the PC CtG dashboard data table SE11h.3.

Summary: Justice

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and adults continue to be over-represented in the criminal justice system. No progress has been made toward meeting the targets set in 2020.



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults are being incarcerated at an increased rate and the target of a 15% reduction by 2031 is not on track to be met **(Target 10)**.

- More people were charged by police (10a).
- Most criminal court defendants are found guilty (10b).
- The proportion of unsentenced prisoners has increased (10d).
- Among people discharged from prison, the rate of engagement in paid employment within 2 weeks of release has more than doubled (10g).
- The duration of time spent on remand has increased (10j).



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people continue to be over-represented in the criminal justice system – there has been no progress towards this target **(Target 11)**.

- The majority of young people in detention were unsentenced (11a).
- Time in unsentenced detention varies across states (11b).
- Young people were proceeded against by police multiple times in most jurisdictions (11c).
- More young people under community-based supervision are transitioning to detention (11f).
- Young people are entering the youth justice system later (11h).

Legend



Good improvement and on track or met



Improvement but not on track



Worsening, not on track



No change from the baseline



No assessment available

## 2.9 Digital inclusion

Access to information and digital inclusion are fundamental to the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Information and technology can facilitate significant economic development and social opportunities, particularly for young people and those living in remote areas (NACCHO 2021). This expansion of social and cultural networks provides a mechanism to explore emerging ideas, industries and innovations (Kral and Schwab 2012). Digital inclusion and the use of technologies can also be a powerful tool for learning; boosting language proficiency and literacy in remote, community-based learning spaces (Kral and Schwab 2012). As technology increasingly facilitates improved access to health, education, government and utility services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities stand to benefit (NACCHO 2021; Rennie et al. 2019).

Structural barriers such as lack of infrastructure, poor connectivity and socio-economic factors limit access to health, education and employment services and opportunities (FNDIAG 2023; NACCHO 2021). Issues such as affordability, education, unstable housing and economic participation can further widen the digital inclusion gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people (McCallum and Papandrea 2009; NACCHO 2021). Further, experiences of racism and discrimination on social media and online platforms may isolate individuals and discourage them from engaging with digital technologies (Allison et al. 2025).

Addressing these challenges by improving digital literacy and ensuring reliable, affordable and safe telecommunication services is essential for ensuring full participation in today's digital society. Connections to new technologies enable innovation, communication, information-sharing, network building and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, especially in rural or remote communities and among young people (Kral and Schwab 2012). Assisting individuals to explore diverse learning experiences, produce a broader range of works and engage in new employment spaces supports a range of socio-economic outcomes (Kral and Schwab 2012). Enhanced access to information and strengthened digital literacy enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to make informed decisions to improve their overall wellbeing (FNDIAG 2023).



Box 2.45 – What data will you find in this section?

This section provides a snapshot of the latest data available in 2026 for socio-economic outcome 17.

| Outcome                                                                                                                                                                              | Update          | Latest data |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|
| <b>Outcome 17:</b> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives |                 |             |
| • Access to information (Target 17)                                                                                                                                                  |                 | 2022–23     |
| • Levels of digital inclusion (17a)                                                                                                                                                  | <i>New data</i> | 2024        |
| • Internet for government services (17e)                                                                                                                                             |                 | 2022–23     |
| • Employed in media (17f)                                                                                                                                                            |                 | 2021        |
| • Community radio broadcasting license (17g)                                                                                                                                         | <i>New data</i> | 2025        |

**Outcome 17: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives**



No assessment is available to measure whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion by 2026

New data to assess progress towards Target 17 has not been available since the 2014–15 baseline was established in 2021.

A supplementary target indicator was last reported in 2025, using data for 2022–23, however this data is not directly comparable to the target baseline. The 2022–23 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey (NATSIHS) supplementary target indicator, which estimates personal use of the internet in the last 3 months, is not directly comparable to the previous target indicator based on the 2014–15 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (NATSISS), which instead collected data on use of the internet at home within the last 12 months. In addition, comparable non-Indigenous data on internet use does not exist.

In 2014–15, 325,700 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years or over accessed the internet in their home. Since then, access to the internet has increased, fuelled by the COVID-19-related lockdowns and by people increasingly accessing the internet using a mobile phone (ACMA 2022).

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia who access the internet is now measured without reference to the home. A greater proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 5–14 years had personally used the internet in the past 3 months than those aged 15 years or over. In 2022–23, 91.1% (196,700) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 5–14 years, and 88.3% (589,700) of those aged 15 years or over had personally used the internet in the past 3 months. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years or over (81.3%) used the internet daily.

### State and territory assessment of progress

| Target        | NSW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Vic | Qld | WA | SA | Tas | ACT | NT |
|---------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|----|
| 17            | ●●                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | ●●  | ●●  | ●● | ●● | ●●  | ●●  | ●● |
| <b>Legend</b> |  Improvement  Worsening  No change  No assessment |     |     |    |    |     |     |    |

### Internet use varies across the population

In 2022–23, the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in each state and territory aged 15 years or over who had not personally used the internet in the last 3 months varied from 6.2% in Victoria to 29.9% in the Northern Territory. People who live in remote and very remote areas, those aged 65 years or over, and people living with a profound/severe core activity limitation were less likely to have used the internet in the last 3 months.<sup>41</sup>

### Digital inclusion gaps exist for remote and very remote areas

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) – Indicator 17a – is a relative measure of digital inclusion based on 3 dimensions (Access, Affordability and Digital Ability) (box 2.46). In 2024, the greatest gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people was seen in the Affordability score, followed by the Access score. The smallest gap was for the Digital Ability measure, with the level of Digital Ability increasing since 2022 from 60.7 to 68.6 (figure 2.44). In 2024, the total ADII score was greatest for those living in major cities (67.7) and lowest in remote (57.4) and very remote (51.1) areas (figure 2.45).

<sup>41</sup> Refer to PC CtG dashboard data tables CtG17A.3, CtG17A.4 and CtG17A.6.



#### Box 2.46 – Data considerations: The 2024 Australian Digital Inclusion Index

The Australian Digital Inclusion Index (ADII) measures the extent to which people in Australia can access, afford and have the ability to benefit from digital technologies. The ADII tracks 3 dimensions (Access, Affordability and Digital Ability) across population groups and geographic areas. A score between 0 and 100 is provided for each group or region, with higher scores indicating greater digital inclusion.

- The Access dimension considers opportunities to gain a reliable internet connection and use various digital devices, alongside the frequency of online access.
- The Digital Ability dimension considers skills, literacies, knowledge and confidence to participate in the digital world.
- The Affordability dimension is defined by the share of a household's monthly income needed to buy an ideal internet bundle tailored to household composition and remoteness.

##### **Data updates**

In 2024, the Affordability dimension was revised to consider the changing needs across households and to accommodate more varied household composition and geography. A residual income approach was taken when measuring household expenditure relative to income. The residual income, once internet costs are subtracted, is then transformed and normalised to provide a score out of 100 consistent with all dimensions. For this reason, the Affordability dimension is not comparable to previous ADII data.

In 2022, the ADII was supplemented with a sample of 495 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from 10 remote and very remote communities in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, and the Northern Territory through the Mapping the Digital Gap project. Because of the sampling technique used, estimates made for this group should be treated as indicative and not as reflecting the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population.

In 2024, the Mapping the Digital Gap project was expanded and data from the Measuring Digital Inclusion for First Nations Australians project was included to generate a nationally representative sample of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households.

Source: Thomas et al. (2025).

**Figure 2.44 – Levels of digital inclusion**

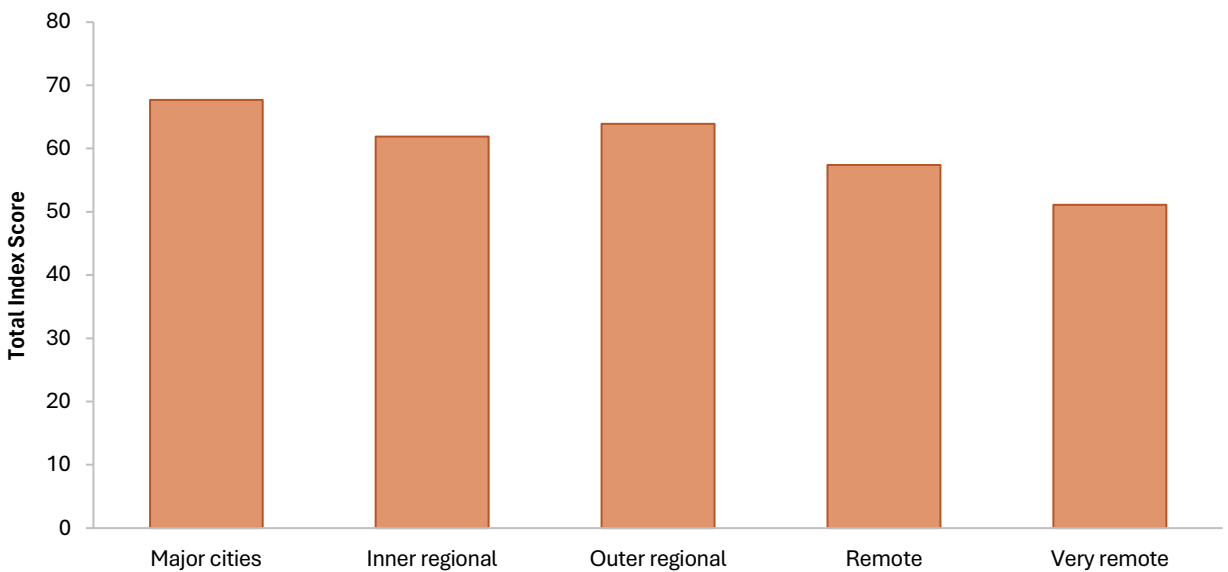
ADII score for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people by dimension, 2024 (Indicator 17a)



Source: Australian Research Council Centre for Excellence for Automated Decision-making and Society (unpublished) Australian Digital Inclusion Index. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE17a.1.

**Figure 2.45 – Digital inclusion by remoteness**

Total ADII score for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by remoteness, 2024 (Indicator 17a)



Source: Australian Research Council Centre for Excellence for Automated Decision-making and Society (unpublished) Australian Digital Inclusion Index. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE17a.2.

### Over half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use the internet to access government information or services

Nationally in 2022–23, 52.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years or over had used the internet to access government information or services in the past 3 months (Indicator 17e).

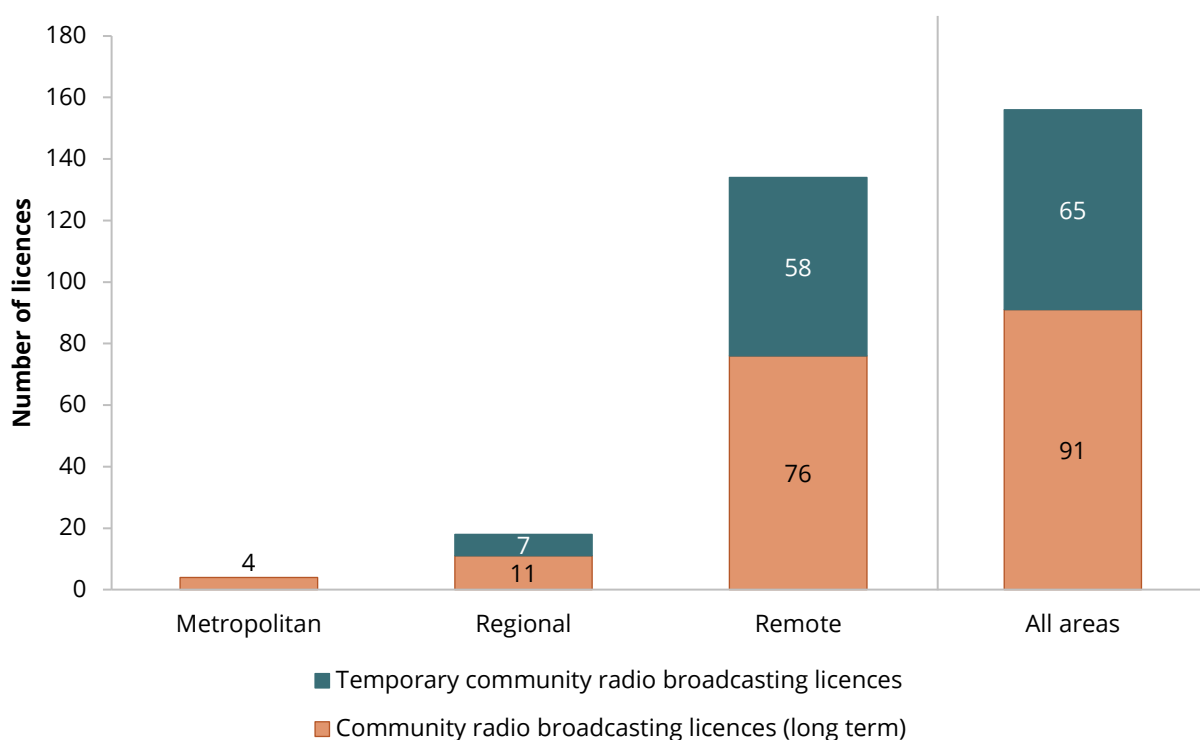
### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the media and community broadcast licences are growing

In 2021, 458 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years or over were employed in media or multimedia services compared to 364 in 2016 (Indicator 17f). Over 40% of those employed were in New South Wales.

The latest data for community radio broadcasting licences with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander interest (Indicator 17g) shows that at 30 June 2025, there were 156 community radio broadcasting licences, 91 of which were long term and 65 were temporary community licences. The majority of the licences were in remote (85.9%) and regional (11.5%) areas (figure 2.46).

**Figure 2.46 – Community broadcasting licences**

Number of community broadcasting licences with an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interest at 30 June 2025, by region (Indicator 17g)



Source: Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) Community Radio Broadcasting Licences. Refer to PC CtG dashboard data table SE17g.1.

## Summary: Digital inclusion

There is still no data to assess the progress of digital inclusion since the target was established in 2021.



There is no new data available to report on the progress for increased access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people **(Target 17)**.

Digital inclusion gaps exist for remote and very remote areas (17a).

Over half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use the internet to access government information or services (17e).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the media and community broadcast licences are growing (17f and 17g).

### Legend



Good improvement  
and on track or met



Improvement  
but not on track



Worsening,  
not on track



No change from  
the baseline



No assessment  
available



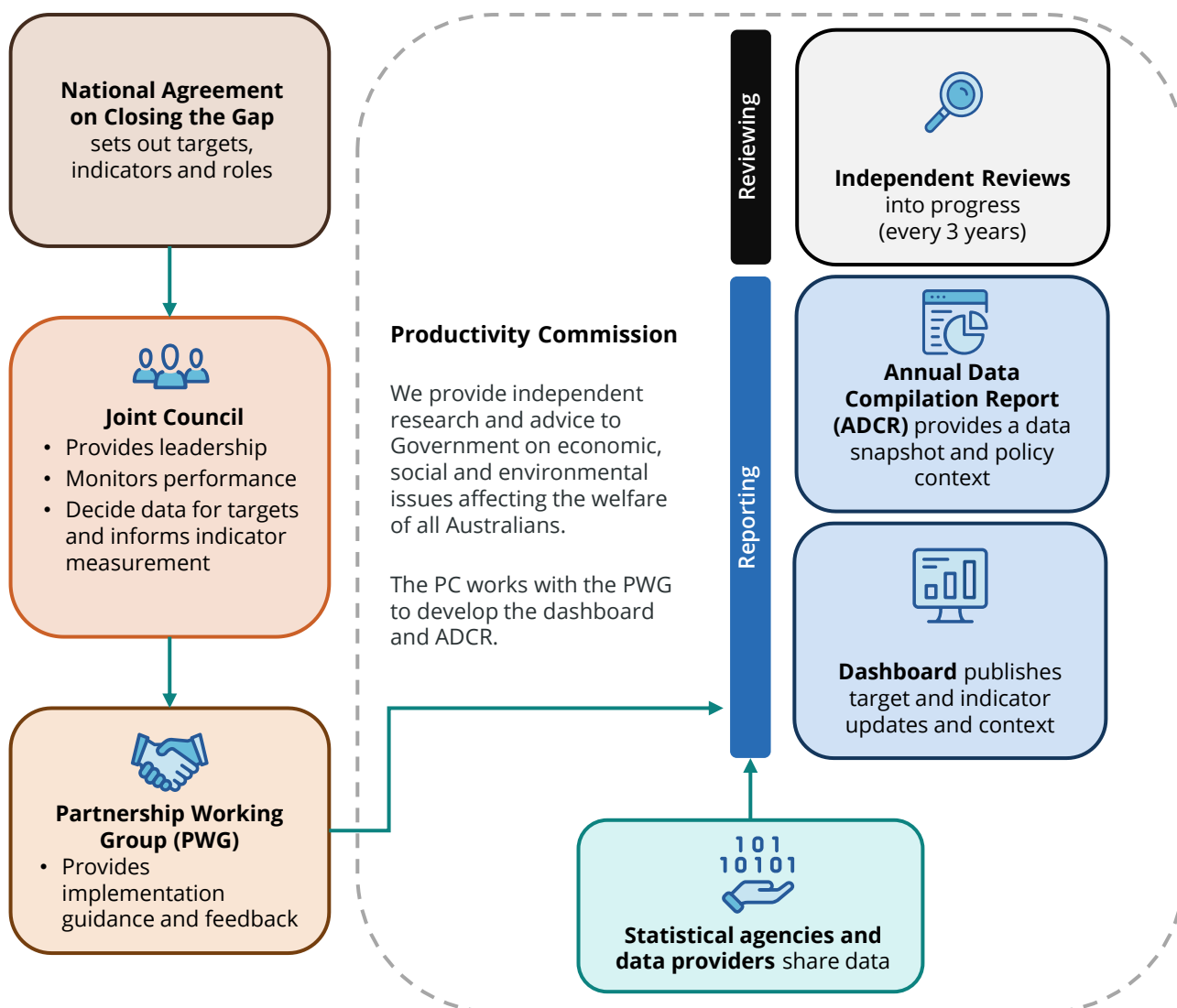
Attachments



## Attachment 1 – Closing the Gap governance frameworks

The public implementation and accountability frameworks under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap comprise a number of elements (figure A1). Together these elements commit the parties – the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments, the Australian Local Government Association and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations – to implement and be accountable for the agreed actions and progress under the Agreement. The primary governance frameworks for the parties include Joint Council and the Partnership Working Group.

**Figure A1 – The role of the Productivity Commission under the Agreement**



## Attachment 2 – Jurisdictional assessment of progress

There are currently no agreed state and territory targets. The state and territory assessments in table A1 reflect progress from the baseline year (improving, worsening or no change). The assessments for Australia reflect progress from the baseline towards the national target.

**Table A1 – Assessment of progress across the national socio-economic targets by jurisdiction**

| Target               | NSW                                          | Vic                                       | Qld                                      | WA          | SA        | Tas       | ACT           | NT | Aust |
|----------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|---------------|----|------|
| SEO 1 - males        | →                                            | ..                                        | →                                        | →           | ..        | ..        | ..            | →  | •    |
| SEO 1 - females      | →                                            | ..                                        | →                                        | →           | ..        | ..        | ..            | ←  | •    |
| SEO 2                | ■                                            | →                                         | →                                        | ←           | →         | →         | ■             | ■  | ■    |
| SEO 3                | →                                            | →                                         | →                                        | →           | →         | →         | →             | →  | (✓)  |
| SEO 4                | ←                                            | →                                         | →                                        | ←           | ■         | ←         | ←             | ←  | ←    |
| SEO 5                | →                                            | →                                         | →                                        | →           | →         | →         | →             | →  | •    |
| SEO 6                | →                                            | →                                         | →                                        | →           | →         | →         | →             | →  | •    |
| SEO 7                | →                                            | →                                         | →                                        | →           | ←         | →         | →             | ←  | •    |
| SEO 8                | →                                            | →                                         | →                                        | →           | →         | →         | →             | ←  | ✓    |
| SEO 9A               | →                                            | →                                         | →                                        | →           | →         | ←         | ←             | →  | •    |
| SEO 9B               | ..                                           | ..                                        | ..                                       | ..          | ..        | ..        | ..            | .. | ..   |
| SEO 10               | ←                                            | →                                         | ←                                        | ←           | ←         | ←         | ←             | ←  | ←    |
| SEO 11               | ←                                            | →                                         | ←                                        | →           | →         | ■         | ←             | ←  | ■    |
| SEO 12               | →                                            | ←                                         | ←                                        | ■           | ←         | ←         | →             | →  | ←    |
| SEO 13               | ..                                           | ..                                        | ..                                       | ..          | ..        | ..        | ..            | .. | ..   |
| SEO 14               | ..                                           | ..                                        | ..                                       | ..          | ..        | ..        | ..            | .. | ←    |
| SEO 15A              | →                                            | →                                         | →                                        | →           | →         | →         | ■             | →  | ✓    |
| SEO 15B <sup>a</sup> | ■                                            | →                                         | →                                        | →           | →         | ■         | ..            | →  | ✓    |
| SEO 16               | ..                                           | ..                                        | ..                                       | ..          | ..        | ..        | ..            | .. | ..   |
| SEO 17               | ..                                           | ..                                        | ..                                       | ..          | ..        | ..        | ..            | .. | ..   |
| Legend               | (✓)                                          | ✓                                         | •                                        | →           | ←         | ■         | ..            |    |      |
|                      | Target met and end-point reached (Aust only) | Good improvement and on track (Aust only) | Improvement but not on track (Aust only) | Improvement | Worsening | No change | No assessment |    |      |

a. The Australian Government also contributes to meeting Target 15B and have shown improvement since the baseline.



### Attachment 3 – Closing the Gap dashboard data collection summary (2026)

Table A2 provides a timeline of socio-economic target data updates for each Annual Data Compilation Report (ADCR) publication year, which spans from the first ADCR to the relevant outcome year. For each ADCR publication year, the table shows the latest available data year used (or expected to be used) for assessing progress of socio-economic targets. Orange boxes show when updated assessments of progress were enabled in the ADCR by new available data and grey boxes indicate when this is expected.

**Table A2 – Socio-economic targets: updated data reported in ADCR and currently expected data (up to and including target years)**

| Targets | 2021      | 2022 | 2023 | 2024      | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029      | 2030 | 2031 | 2032 | 2033 | 2034      |
|---------|-----------|------|------|-----------|------|------|------|------|-----------|------|------|------|------|-----------|
| 1       | 2015–2017 |      |      | 2020–2022 |      |      |      |      | 2025–2027 |      |      |      |      | 2030–2032 |
| 2       | 2018      | 2019 | 2020 | 2021      | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025 | 2026      | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 | 2031      |
| 3       | 2020      | 2021 | 2022 | 2023      | 2024 | 2025 |      |      |           |      |      |      |      |           |
| 4       | 2018      | 2021 |      |           | 2024 |      |      | 2027 |           |      | 2030 |      |      | 2033      |
| 5       | 2016      |      | 2021 |           |      |      |      | 2026 |           |      |      |      | 2031 |           |
| 6       | 2016      |      | 2021 |           |      |      |      | 2026 |           |      |      |      | 2031 |           |
| 7       | 2016      |      | 2021 |           |      |      |      | 2026 |           |      |      |      | 2031 |           |
| 8       | 2016      |      | 2021 |           |      |      |      | 2026 |           |      |      |      | 2031 |           |
| 9A      | 2016      |      | 2021 |           |      |      |      | 2026 |           |      |      |      | 2031 |           |
| 9B      |           |      |      |           |      |      |      |      |           |      |      |      |      |           |

| Targets | 2021    | 2022 | 2023 | 2024 | 2025    | 2026    | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 | 2031 | 2032 | 2033 | 2034 |
|---------|---------|------|------|------|---------|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 10      | 2020    | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024    | 2025    | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 | 2031 |      |      |
| 11      | 2020    | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024    | 2025    | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 | 2031 |      |      |
| 12      | 2020    | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024    | 2025    | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 | 2031 |      |      |
| 13      | 2018–19 |      |      |      |         |         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 14      | 2019    | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 | 2023    | 2024    | 2025 | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 | 2031 |      |
| 15A     | 2020    | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024    | 2025    | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 |      |      |      |
| 15B     | 2020    | 2021 | 2022 | 2023 | 2024    | 2025    | 2026 | 2027 | 2028 | 2029 | 2030 |      |      |      |
| 16      | 2018–19 |      |      |      |         | 2025–26 |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| 17      | 2014–15 |      |      |      | 2022–23 |         |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |

|        |                                  |                                             |
|--------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Legend | Latest year of data when updated | Latest year of data expected to be reported |
|--------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|

**Table A3 – Socio-economic target and supporting indicator data summary**

| Socio-economic outcome | Target/Indicator                                                                                                | Table reference | Collection name                                                                                                                            | Data frequency | Disaggregation                                                 |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b>               | <u>Life expectancy</u>                                                                                          | CtG1A.1–3       | <u>ABS Life Tables for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians</u>                                                               | 5-yearly       | By sex, remoteness area and IRSD* quintile.                    |
| <b>1b</b>              | <u>Leading causes of death</u>                                                                                  | SE1b.1-3        | <u>Causes of death</u>                                                                                                                     | Annual         |                                                                |
| <b>1c</b>              | <u>Potentially avoidable mortality</u>                                                                          | SE1c.1          | <u>Causes of death</u>                                                                                                                     | Annual         |                                                                |
| <b>1d</b>              | <u>Health risk factors</u>                                                                                      | SE1d.1-9        | <u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey</u><br><u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey</u> | 3-6 yearly     |                                                                |
| <b>1e</b>              | <u>Access/utilisation of health services</u>                                                                    | SE1e.1-3        | <u>Medicare Benefits Schedule</u>                                                                                                          | Annual         |                                                                |
| <b>2</b>               | <u>The proportion of babies with a healthy birthweight</u>                                                      | CtG2A.1–3       | <u>National Perinatal Data Collection</u>                                                                                                  | Annual         | By sex, remoteness area and IRSD* quintile.                    |
| <b>2a</b>              | <u>Smoking during pregnancy</u>                                                                                 | SE2a.1–3        | <u>National Perinatal Data Collection</u>                                                                                                  | Annual         |                                                                |
| <b>2c</b>              | <u>Maternal health</u>                                                                                          | SE2c.1–3        | <u>National Perinatal Data Collection</u>                                                                                                  | Annual         |                                                                |
| <b>2d</b>              | <u>Use of antenatal care</u>                                                                                    | SE2d.1–4        | <u>National Perinatal Data Collection</u>                                                                                                  | Annual         |                                                                |
| <b>3</b>               | <u>The proportion of children in the state-specific YBFS age cohort who are enrolled in a preschool program</u> | CtG3A.1–7       | <u>Preschool Education</u>                                                                                                                 | Annual         | By sex, remoteness area, IRSD* quintile and disability status. |
| <b>3a</b>              | <u>Attendance in early childhood education</u>                                                                  | SE3a.1          | <u>Preschool Education</u>                                                                                                                 | Annual         |                                                                |

| Socio-economic outcome | Target/Indicator                                                                                                                                    | Table reference | Collection name                                                                                  | Data frequency | Disaggregation                                                                                 |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>3b</b>              | <u>Early childhood education and care service providers</u>                                                                                         | SE3b.1          | <u>Register of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused integrated early years services</u> | Annual         |                                                                                                |
| <b>4</b>               | <u>The proportion of children assessed as developmentally on track in all 5 domains of the AEDC</u>                                                 | CtG4A.1–6       | <u>Australian Early Development Census</u>                                                       | 3-yearly       | By sex, remoteness area, IRSD* quintile and disability status.                                 |
| <b>4c</b>              | <u>Outcomes by AEDC domains</u>                                                                                                                     | SE4c.1          | <u>Australian Early Development Census</u>                                                       | 3 yearly       |                                                                                                |
| <b>4d</b>              | <u>AEDC Multiple Strengths Indicator</u>                                                                                                            | SE4d.1          | <u>Australian Early Development Census</u>                                                       | 3 yearly       |                                                                                                |
| <b>5</b>               | <u>The proportion of people aged 20 to 24 years who completed Year 12 or equivalent, or attained a Certificate level III or above qualification</u> | CtG5A.1–6       | <u>Census of Population and Housing</u>                                                          | 5-yearly       | By sex, remoteness area, IRSD* quintile, disability status and attainment category.            |
| <b>5a</b>              | <u>School attendance</u>                                                                                                                            | SE5a.1–3        | <u>National Student Attendance Data Collection</u>                                               | Annual         |                                                                                                |
| <b>5c</b>              | <u>NAPLAN achievement</u>                                                                                                                           | SE5c.1–4        | <u>National Assessment Program – Literacy and numeracy</u>                                       | Annual         |                                                                                                |
| <b>6</b>               | <u>The proportion of people aged 25 to 34 years who have completed qualifications at Certificate level III or above</u>                             | CtG6A.1–6       | <u>Census of Population and Housing</u>                                                          | 5-yearly       | By sex, remoteness area, IRSD* quintile, disability status and highest educational attainment. |
| <b>6a</b>              | <u>Higher education commencement, attrition, and completion rates</u>                                                                               | SE6a.1–3        | <u>Higher Education Statistics Collection</u>                                                    | Annual         |                                                                                                |

| Socio-economic outcome | Target/Indicator                                                                                              | Table reference | Collection name                                                              | Data frequency | Disaggregation                                                                                            |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>6b</b>              | <u>Higher education application, offers and acceptance rates (by gender, SES and ATAR levels)</u>             | SE6b.1–3        | <u>Higher Education Statistics Collection</u>                                | Annual         |                                                                                                           |
| <b>6c</b>              | <u>VET commencements, attrition and completion rates</u>                                                      | SE6c.1–2        | <u>Total VET students and courses and VET qualification completion rates</u> | Annual         |                                                                                                           |
| <b>6g</b>              | <u>VET grad outcomes</u>                                                                                      | SE6g.1–2        | <u>National Student Outcomes Survey</u>                                      | Annual         |                                                                                                           |
| <b>7</b>               | <u>The proportion of youth aged 15 to 24 years who are fully engaged in employment, education or training</u> | CtG7A.1–7       | <u>Census of Population and Housing</u>                                      | 5-yearly       | By sex, age group, remoteness area, IRSD* quintile, disability status and category of engagement.         |
| <b>7a</b>              | <u>Proportion of youth not engaged in employment, education or training</u>                                   | SE7a.1–4        | <u>Census of Population and Housing</u>                                      | 5 yearly       |                                                                                                           |
| <b>8</b>               | <u>The proportion of people aged 25 to 64 years who are employed</u>                                          | CtG8A.1–8       | <u>Census of Population and Housing</u>                                      | 5-yearly       | By sex, age group, remoteness area, IRSD* quintile, disability status and highest educational attainment. |
| <b>8c</b>              | <u>Caring responsibilities</u>                                                                                | SE8c.1–3        | <u>Census of Population and Housing</u>                                      | 5 yearly       |                                                                                                           |

| Socio-economic outcome | Target/Indicator                                                                                                       | Table reference | Collection name                                                                                                             | Data frequency                 | Disaggregation                                                                                                |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8d                     | <u>Proportion of people aged 25-64 years who are employed, by occupation</u>                                           | SE8d.1          | <u>Census of Population and Housing</u>                                                                                     | 5 yearly                       |                                                                                                               |
| 8i                     | <u>Self-managed business owners</u>                                                                                    | SE8i.1-3        | Measure 1 and 2: <u>Dilin Duwa analysis of Integrated data assets</u><br>Measure 3: <u>Census of Population and Housing</u> | M1-2: Periodic<br>M3: 5-yearly |                                                                                                               |
| 9A                     | <u>The proportion of people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing</u>                                | CtG9A.1-8       | <u>Census of Population and Housing</u>                                                                                     | 5-yearly                       | By sex, age group, remoteness area, IRSD* quintile, disability status, extra bedrooms needed and tenure type. |
| 9B                     | Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households receive equal or better essential services (Community Infrastructure) | -               | To be confirmed#.                                                                                                           | -                              | -                                                                                                             |
| 9d                     | <u>Homelessness</u>                                                                                                    | SE9d.1-3        | Measure 1 and 2: <u>Census of Population and Housing</u><br>Measure 3: <u>Specialist Homelessness Services Collection</u>   | M1-2: 5-yearly<br>M3: Annual   |                                                                                                               |
| 9e                     | <u>Structural problems including functional health hardware</u>                                                        | SE9e.1-3        | <u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey</u>                                                         | Periodic and 3-6 yearly        |                                                                                                               |
| 9g                     | <u>Social housing</u>                                                                                                  | SE9g.1-4        | Measure 1: <u>Census of Population and Housing</u>                                                                          | M1: 5 yearly                   |                                                                                                               |

| Socio-economic outcome | Target/Indicator                                                                          | Table reference | Collection name                                               | Data frequency          | Disaggregation        |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|
|                        |                                                                                           |                 | Measure 2: <u>National Housing Assistance Data Repository</u> | M2: Annual              |                       |
| <b>10</b>              | <u>Age-standardised imprisonment rate</u>                                                 | CtG10A.1–6      | <u>Prisoners in Australia</u>                                 | Annual                  | By sex and age group. |
| <b>10a</b>             | <u>People charged by police</u>                                                           | SE10A.1–2       | <u>Recorded Crime – Offenders</u>                             | Annual                  |                       |
| <b>10b</b>             | <u>People convicted and sentenced</u>                                                     | SE10b.1–2       | <u>Criminal Courts, Australia</u>                             | Annual                  |                       |
| <b>10d</b>             | <u>Prisoner legal status</u>                                                              | SE10d.1–3       | <u>Prisoners in Australia</u>                                 | Annual                  |                       |
| <b>10g</b>             | <u>Prisoner health</u>                                                                    | SE10g.1–5       | <u>National Prisoner Health Data Collection</u>               | Periodic and 2–3 yearly |                       |
| <b>10j</b>             | <u>Time spent on remand</u>                                                               | SE10j.1         | <u>Prisoners in Australia</u>                                 | Annual                  |                       |
| <b>11</b>              | <u>The rate of young people aged 10 to 17 years in detention</u>                          | CtG11A.1–4      | <u>Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set</u>                | Annual                  | By sex and age group. |
| <b>11a</b>             | <u>Unsentenced detention</u>                                                              | SE11a.1         | <u>Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set</u>                | Annual                  |                       |
| <b>11b</b>             | <u>Average time in detention for unsentenced youth</u>                                    | SE11b           | <u>Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set</u>                | Annual                  |                       |
| <b>11c</b>             | <u>Proportion of alleged young offenders (10–17 years) involved in police proceedings</u> | SE11c.1–3       | <u>Recorded crime – offenders</u>                             | Annual                  |                       |

| Socio-economic outcome | Target/Indicator                                                                                                 | Table reference | Collection name                                                                                                       | Data frequency | Disaggregation                           |
|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------|------------------------------------------|
| <b>11f</b>             | <u>Proportion of youth under community supervision transitioning to detention</u>                                | SE11f.1f        | <u>Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set</u>                                                                        | Annual         |                                          |
| <b>11h</b>             | <u>Proportion of young people (10-13) first coming into youth justice system</u>                                 | SE11h.1-4       | Measure 1 and 2: <u>Youth Justice National Minimum Data Set</u><br>Measure 3 and 4: <u>Criminal Courts, Australia</u> | Annual         |                                          |
| <b>12</b>              | <u>The rate of children aged 0 to 17 years in out-of-home care</u>                                               | CtG12A.1-4      | <u>Child Protection National Minimum Data Set</u>                                                                     | Annual         | By sex, age group and disability status. |
| <b>12b</b>             | <u>Proportion of children in out-of-home care (0 to 17 years) that are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</u> | SE12b.1         | <u>Child Protection National Minimum Data Set</u>                                                                     | Annual         |                                          |
| <b>12c</b>             | <u>Proportion of children on care and protection order that are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</u>        | SE12c.1         | <u>Child Protection National Minimum Data Set</u>                                                                     | Annual         |                                          |
| <b>12e</b>             | <u>Application of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP)</u>              | SE12e.1         | <u>Child Protection National Minimum Data Set</u>                                                                     | Annual         |                                          |
| <b>12g</b>             | <u>Children with a cultural care plan</u>                                                                        | SE12g.1         | <u>Child Protection National Minimum Data Set</u>                                                                     | Annual         |                                          |
| <b>12k</b>             | <u>Proportion of children that are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander</u>                                     | SE1k.1          | <u>Child Protection National Minimum Data Set</u>                                                                     | Annual         |                                          |



| Socio-economic outcome | Target/Indicator                                                                                                                                             | Table reference | Collection name                                                               | Data frequency   | Disaggregation |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|----------------|
|                        | <u>aged 0-16 who exited out-of-home care to reunification in the previous year and did not return to out-of-home care in 12 months or less</u>               |                 |                                                                               |                  |                |
| <b>12m</b>             | <u>Rates of substantiation of a notification by type of abuse</u>                                                                                            | SE12m.1         | <u>Child Protection National Minimum Data Set</u>                             | Annual           |                |
| <b>13</b>              | <u>Proportion of females aged 15 years or over who experienced domestic physical or threatened physical harm in the last 12 months</u>                       | CtG13A.1-2      | <u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey</u>           | To be confirmed# | -              |
| <b>13c</b>             | <u>Rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children entering out-of-home care and receiving protection orders, where family violence is indicated</u> | -               | -                                                                             | -                |                |
| <b>13d</b>             | <u>Women reporting family violence is common in their communities</u>                                                                                        | SE13d.1-2       | <u>The National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey</u> | Annual           |                |
| <b>13h</b>             | <u>Rates of hospitalisation for family violence</u>                                                                                                          | SE13h.1-3       | <u>National Hospital Morbidity Database</u>                                   | Annual           |                |
| <b>13o</b>             | <u>Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women reporting</u>                                                                                   | SE13o.1         | <u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey</u>           | Periodic         |                |

| Socio-economic outcome | Target/Indicator                                                                                                | Table reference | Collection name                                                                                                                                                | Data frequency  | Disaggregation                                                                 |
|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                        | <u>barriers in seeking help from support services</u>                                                           |                 |                                                                                                                                                                |                 |                                                                                |
| <b>13p</b>             | <u>Assistance from Specialist Homelessness Services for reasons of family violence</u>                          | SE13p. 1        | <u>Specialist Homelessness Services Collection</u>                                                                                                             | Annual          |                                                                                |
| <b>13q</b>             | <u>Specialist Homelessness Services for family violence with children</u>                                       | SE13q.1–2       | <u>Specialist Homelessness Services Collection</u>                                                                                                             | Annual          |                                                                                |
| <b>14</b>              | <u>Suicide death rate</u>                                                                                       | CtG14A.1–11     | <u>Causes of Death</u>                                                                                                                                         | Annual          | By sex, age group, remoteness area and state and territory (5-year aggregate). |
| <b>14a</b>             | <u>Hospitalisations for self-harm</u>                                                                           | SE14a.1         | <u>National Hospital Morbidity Database</u>                                                                                                                    | Annual          |                                                                                |
| <b>14c</b>             | <u>Hospitalisations for mental health related disorders</u>                                                     | SE14c.1         | <u>National Hospital Morbidity Database</u>                                                                                                                    | Annual          |                                                                                |
| <b>14d</b>             | <u>Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people reporting experiencing psychological distress</u> | SE14d.1         | <u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey</u>                                                                                            | Periodic        |                                                                                |
| <b>14e</b>             | <u>Barriers accessing health services</u>                                                                       | SE14e.1–3       | <u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey</u>                                                                                            | Periodic        |                                                                                |
| <b>14g</b>             | <u>Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing racial prejudice</u>                 | SE14g.1-3       | Measure 1: <u>Australian Reconciliation Barometer</u><br>Measure 2 and 3: <u>Mayi Kuwayu National Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing</u> | M1:<br>Biannual |                                                                                |

| Socio-economic outcome | Target/Indicator                                                                                         | Table reference       | Collection name                                                                                                                      | Data frequency               | Disaggregation |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
|                        |                                                                                                          |                       |                                                                                                                                      | M2-3:<br>Periodic            |                |
| <b>15</b>              | <u>Area of Australian land mass and sea waters that is subject to people's legal rights or interests</u> | CtG15A.1 and CtG15B.1 | <u>Native Title Determinations Outcomes: Indigenous Estate</u>                                                                       | Annual                       |                |
| <b>15a</b>             | <u>Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's owned land and water titles</u>                        | SE15a.1               | <u>Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation Indigenous held land dataset</u>                                                              | Annual                       |                |
| <b>15d</b>             | <u>Indigenous Land Use Agreements</u>                                                                    | SE15d.1–2             | <u>Register of Indigenous Land Use Agreement</u>                                                                                     | Annual                       |                |
| <b>15i</b>             | <u>Recognise homelands</u>                                                                               | SE15i.1–2             | <u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey</u>                                                                  | Periodic                     |                |
| <b>16</b>              | <u>The number and strength of languages being spoken</u>                                                 | CtG16A.1              | <u>National Indigenous Languages Surveys</u>                                                                                         | Periodic                     |                |
| <b>16c</b>             | <u>Number and age profile of the speakers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages</u>         | SE16c.1–3             | Measure 1: <u>National Indigenous Languages Surveys</u><br>Measure 2: <u>Census of Population and Housing</u>                        | M1: Periodic<br>M2: 5 yearly |                |
| <b>16d</b>             | <u>Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who speak an Indigenous language</u>       | SE16d.1–3             | Measure 1: <u>Census of Population and Housing</u><br>Measure 2: <u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey</u> | M1: 5 yearly<br>M2: Periodic |                |
| <b>16e</b>             | <u>Accessing Commonwealth funded Indigenous language centres</u>                                         | SE16e.1               | <u>SmartyGrants grants management system</u>                                                                                         | Annual                       |                |

| Socio-economic outcome | Target/Indicator                                                                                                                    | Table reference | Collection name                                                     | Data frequency   | Disaggregation                                                            |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>17</b>              | <u>Proportion of people aged 15 years or over who have accessed the internet at home in the last 12 months</u>                      | CtG17A.1-7      | <u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey</u> | To be confirmed# | By sex, age group, remoteness area, IRSD* quintile and disability status. |
| <b>17a</b>             | <u>Digital inclusion</u>                                                                                                            | SE17a.1         | <u>Australian Digital Inclusion Index</u>                           | Biannual         |                                                                           |
| <b>17e</b>             | <u>Proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using internet to access government services for private purposes</u> | SE17e.1-2       | <u>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey</u> | Periodic         |                                                                           |
| <b>17f</b>             | <u>Number of people employed in media</u>                                                                                           | SE17f.1-3       | <u>Census of Population and Housing</u>                             | 5 yearly         |                                                                           |
| <b>17g</b>             | <u>Number and location of community broadcast licenses with an Indigenous interest</u>                                              | SE17g.1         | <u>Community Radio Broadcasting Licences</u>                        | Periodic         |                                                                           |

# Data collection for Target 9B, Target 13 and Target 17 is to be confirmed. \*IRSD = Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage.

## Glossary

### Age-standardised rate

Age-standardised rates are used when populations have different age structures (for example, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population has a younger age structure than the non-Indigenous population) and the topic of the data varies with age (for example, older people are more likely to access chronic disease care). Age differences are adjusted across populations using the Australian Estimated Resident Population at 30 June 2001, in accordance with the agreed principles for direct age-standardisation. For more information on the principles used for the age standardisation in this report, refer to AIHW (2011b).

### Confidence interval

Confidence intervals (CIs) are the range where the 'true' result – the result we would get if the data included the whole population, not just a sample – is likely to be found with a given level of probability. Confidence intervals in this report use a 95% level of probability. This means we are 95% confident that the range specified by the CIs contains the 'true' result. A larger range indicates a larger sampling error (see: **sampling error**).

### Confidence of assessment

The confidence of assessment provides the level of reliability (or the confidence level) of the progress of target outcomes with 5 or more data points. The confidence level is considered either 'Low' or 'High' depending on a set of conditions. Assessments with a high level of confidence are more likely to reflect the future outcome in the target year, based on the available data. Assessments with a low level of confidence indicate the most likely outcome in the target year but there is greater uncertainty in this prediction, based on the available data.

Refer to [Method for estimating the assessments of progress and their reliability](#) for more information.

### Gender/Sex

A person's sex is based upon their sex characteristics, typically based upon the sex characteristics observed at birth or during infancy. Gender may be informed by an individual's identity, self-expression, or experience and does not always align with sex characteristics recorded at birth (ABS 2021).

Currently, most data sources used to inform the Closing the Gap dashboard collect and report on data by sex. However, Australian statistical agencies are starting to introduce methods to collect a person's gender. Information on how sex and/or gender is collected and reported for each target/indicator is provided within the target/indicator data specifications on the PC CtG dashboard (where sex/gender is reported).

The terms "male" and "female" are used in this report to reflect the available data, which is primarily based on sex assigned at birth. Where the data is collected by gender, the terms "men" and "women" are used instead.

### Supporting indicator

Supporting indicators are the concepts, experiences, or activities that are being measured. For socio-economic areas, 2 types of supporting indicators are reported.

- *Contextual information indicators*: provide insight into the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people under each socio-economic outcome.

- *Driver indicators*: measure the factors that significantly impact the progress made against a socio-economic target.

### Linear regression estimate

Linear regression is a technique used to estimate the relationship between variables by fitting a linear equation to a dataset.

For information on how regression techniques are used to assess state, territory and national progress against the Closing the Gap targets, see: [Method for estimating the assessments of progress and their reliability](#).

### Measure

For each **indicator**, there may be one or more measures. Measures allow us to create or locate the right datasets and are a more detailed and concrete understanding of what each indicator means.

### Percentage points

Percentage points are used to refer to changes and differences between one percentage and another. For example, an increase from 11% to 14% constitutes an increase of 3 percentage points.

### Relative standard error

The relative standard error (RSE) measures the sampling error and is expressed as a percentage of the estimate. Estimates with a low RSE have a low sampling error. Estimates with larger RSEs (between 25% and 50%) should be used with caution. Estimates with RSEs of 50% or more are considered unreliable for most purposes.

### Sampling error

The variation that is expected when data is collected from a subset of a population – the results will not be perfectly identical to the results obtained from collecting data from an entire group. Larger sampling errors are associated with higher relative standard errors (see: **relative standard error**) and/or wider confidence intervals (see: **confidence intervals**).

### Socio-economic quintiles

In this report, socio-economic status is usually classified according to the ABS Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA): Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage (IRSD), which classifies geographic areas into 5 'quintiles' - most disadvantaged, second most disadvantaged, middle 20%, second least disadvantaged and least disadvantaged - each representing approximately 20% of geographic areas across Australia. For more information on socio-economic quintiles, refer to ABS (2023b).

### Target

Targets are specific and measurable goals for each of the outcome areas. Targets focus on an 'end point' and are a way to determine if a desired outcome has been achieved.

### Trajectory

Trajectories show the direction and speed of change needed from today to meet the target in the future.

### Variability bands

Rates derived from administrative data are not subject to sampling error, but might still be subject to natural random variation, especially for small counts. Variability bands account for this variation and are similar to confidence intervals (see: **confidence interval**) in that they provide a specified range for an estimate which is very likely (95 times out of 100) to contain the 'true' value.

## References

ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics) 2022, *Submission to Productivity Commission Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries-and-research/closing-the-gap-review/submissions/> (accessed 25 June 2026).

— 2023, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander life expectancy, 2020 - 2022* | Australian Bureau of Statistics.

— 2024a, *Causes of death, Australia*.

— 2024b, *Understanding change in counts of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians: Census, 2021*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/understanding-change-counts-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-australians-census/latest-release> (accessed 1 May 2026).

— 2025, *Outcomes of the 2026 Census topic review*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/research/outcomes-2026-census-topic-review> (accessed 15 July 2025).

— 2026, *Identification as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person in the Census over time, 2011 to 2021*, <https://www.abs.gov.au/articles/identification-aboriginal-and-or-torres-strait-islander-person-census-over-time-2011-2021> (accessed 1 May 2026).

ACMA (Australian Communications and Media Authority) 2022, *How we use the internet: Executive summary and key findings*, Communications and media in Australia.

AGD (Attorney-General's Department) 2026, *Justice Reinvestment* | Attorney-General's Department, <https://www.ag.gov.au/legal-system/justice-reinvestment> (accessed 10 April 2026).

AHRC (Australian Human Rights Commission) 2011, *Social Justice Report 2011*.

— 2020, *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's voices) securing our rights, securing our future report*.

— 2026, *Respect at Uni: Study into Antisemitism, Islamophobia, racism and the experience of First Nations people*, February.

AIATSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) 2023, *Languages alive*, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/languages-alive> (accessed 25 June 2026).

— 2025, *National Indigenous Languages Surveys*, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, <https://aiatsis.gov.au/research/languages/national-indigenous-languages-surveys> (accessed 14 May 2026).

AIHW (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare) 2019, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people: a focus report on housing and homelessness*, Canberra: AIHW, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/housing-assistance/indigenous-people-focus-housing-homelessness> (accessed 25 June 2026).

— 2021, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Stolen Generations aged 50 and over: updated analyses for 2018–19*, Cat. no. IHW 257., Canberra.

— 2022a, *2.05 Education outcomes for young people*, AIHW Indigenous Health Performance Framework, <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-05-education-outcomes-young-people> (accessed 9 April 2024).

— 2022b, *An overview of Indigenous mental health and suicide prevention in Australia*, <https://www.indigenoushmhs.gov.au/publications/overview> (accessed 2 May 2026).

— 2022c, *Prisoner Health NBEDS, 2022; Data Quality Statement*, <https://meteor.aihw.gov.au/content/784297> (accessed 16 March 2026).

— 2024a, *1.14 Disability*, AIHW, AIHW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework, <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/1-14-disability> (accessed 4 May 2026).

— 2024b, *Determinants of health for First Nations people*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

— 2024c, *Family, domestic and sexual violence: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/population-groups/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-people> (accessed 25 June 2026).

— 2025a, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework: Summary report*.

— 2025b, *Closing the Gap targets: key findings and implications – Children thriving*, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

— 2025c, *Closing the Gap targets: key findings and implications -12 - Child protection*, Canberra.

— 2025d, *Suicide and intentional self-harm hospitalisations among First Nations people*, Suicide & self-harm monitoring, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/suicide-self-harm-monitoring/population-groups/first-nations-people> (accessed 15 April 2026).

— 2026, *2.02 Access to functional housing with utilities*, AIHW Indigenous HPF, <https://www.indigenoushpf.gov.au/measures/2-02-access-to-functional-housing-with-utilities> (accessed 15 May 2026).

— 2022d, *Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander LGBTQIASB+ people and mental health and wellbeing*, Catalogue number IMH 15, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Allison, F, Cunneen, C, Whyman, A, Lewis, B and Selcuk, A 2025, 'Everywhere I go no matter where, if it's around non-Indigenous people I feel a hate vibe. It feels like I'm being watched'. *The Call It Out Racism Register 2024-2025*, Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, University of Technology, Sydney.

- ALRC (Australian Law Reform Commission) 2017a, *Mandatory sentencing*, ALRC, <https://www.alrc.gov.au/publication/incarceration-rates-of-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-dp-84/4-sentencing-options/mandatory-sentencing/> (accessed 25 June 2026).
- 2017b, *Pathways to justice: An inquiry into the incarceration rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*.
- ANAO (Australian National Audit Office) 2026, *Closing the Gap in Schooling and Early Childhood Development — Partnership and Reporting*, January.
- Anderson, P, Forbes, O, Mengersen, K and Diamond, ZM 2024, 'Patterns of Educational Performance among Indigenous Students in Australia, 2010-2019: Within-Cohort, Peer Matching Analysis for Data-Led Decision-Making', *Australian Journal of Education*, vol. 68, no. 1, pp. 54–77.
- Anderst, J, Hunter, K, Coombes, J, Trindall, A, Porykali, B, Kairuz Santos, C and Mackean, T 2024, 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' meanings of home: a systematic scoping review', *Housing Studies*, pp. 1–27.
- Andrews, S, Eades, S and Stanley, F 2024, *First Knowledges Health – Spirit, Country and Culture*, Neale, MN (ed), First Knowledges.
- ANTAR (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation) 2022, *Native Title Act Factsheet*.
- ASPA (Australian Secondary Principals' Association) 2025, *ASPA Responds to 2025 NAPLAN Results: Time to Move Beyond Test Scores to Address Systemic Inequities*, <https://www.aspa.asn.au/aspa-responds-to-2025-naplan-results> (accessed 2 April 2026).
- Australian Government 2023, *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Final Report - Volume 9, First Nations people with disability*, September.
- 2026, *Commonwealth Annual Report 2025. Commonwealth Implementation Plan 2026*.
- , Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Peak Organisations, and First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance 2025, *First Nations Economic Partnership Agreement: An Agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Peak Organisations and the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance 2025–2030*, August.
- Bailie, R, Stevens, M, McDonald, E, Brewster, D and Guthridge, S 2010, 'Exploring cross-sectional associations between common childhood illness, housing and social conditions in remote Australian Aboriginal communities', *BMC Public Health*, vol. 10, p. 147.
- Balasooriya, BMJK, Rajapakse, J and Gallage, C 2023, 'A review of drinking water quality issues in remote and indigenous communities in rich nations with special emphasis on Australia', *Science of The Total Environment*, vol. 903, p. 166559.
- Barber, M and Jackson, S 2017, 'Identifying and categorizing cobenefits in state-supported Australian Indigenous environmental management programs: international research implications', *Ecology and Society*, vol. 22, no. 2, p. 11.
- Barnett, R, House, P, McClements, P and Thomas 2023, *Muru waaruu (On Track) Economic Development Seminar Series: Seminar 3, What has the past 235 years of policy cost Australia's First Peoples, the Nation and its Economy*, First Nations Portfolio, ANU, [https://firstnationsalliance.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/23.06\\_Seminar3\\_Background-Paper\\_Final-1.pdf](https://firstnationsalliance.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/23.06_Seminar3_Background-Paper_Final-1.pdf) (accessed 19 May 2026).
- Beaufils, J, Taylor, R and Edwards, D 2026, 'First Nations students' progress into and through university (Small Grants Research Program final report)', Australian Centre for Student Equity and Success, Curtin University.
- Beaufils, JC, Krakouer, J, Kelly, AL, Kelly, AM and Hogg, D 2025, 'We all grow up with our mob because it takes all of us': First Nations collective kinship in Australia', *Children and Youth Services Review*, vol. 169, p. 108059.
- Biddle, N and Bath, J 2013, *Education Part 1: Early childhood education*, CAEPR Indigenous Population Project - 2011 Census Papers, Paper 7.
- Biles, BJ, Serova, N, Stanbrook, G, Brady, B, Kingsley, J, Topp, SM and Yashadhana, A 2024, 'What is Indigenous cultural health and wellbeing? A narrative review', *The Lancet Regional Health: Western Pacific*, vol. 52, p. 101220.
- Bodkin-Andrews, G and Carlson, B 2016, 'The legacy of racism and Indigenous Australian identity within education', Routledge, *Race Ethnicity and Education*, vol. 19, no. 4, pp. 784–807, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2014.969224> (accessed 3 July 2024).
- Bower, C, Watkins, RE, Mutch, RC, Marriott, R, Freeman, J, Kippin, NR, Safe, B, Pestell, C, Cheung, CSC, Shield, H, Tarratt, L, Springall, A, Taylor, J, Walker, N, Argiro, E, Leitão, S, Hamilton, S, Condon, C, Passmore, HM and Giglia, R 2018, 'Fetal alcohol spectrum disorder and youth justice: a prevalence study among young people sentenced to detention in Western Australia', *British Medical Journal Publishing Group, BMJ Open*, vol. 8, no. 2, p. e019605.
- Brackertz, N and Wilkinson, A 2017, *Research synthesis of social and economic outcomes of good housing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20190330204745/https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/publications/research-synthesis-social-economic-outcomes-housing.pdf> (accessed 25 June 2026).
- Brinckley, M, Jones, R, Batterham, P, Calear, A and Lovett, R 2022, 'The development and validation of a family functioning measure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults', *BMC Public Health*, vol. 22, no. 1976.
- Bryant, G and Spies-Butcher, B 2024, 'From marketisation to self-determination: Contesting state and market through "justice reinvestment"', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, vol. 56, no. 1, pp. 216–234, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0308518X221125797> (accessed 16 April 2026).
- Burridge, N and Chodkiewicz, A 2012, 'An historical overview of Aboriginal education policies in the Australian context', in Burridge, N, Whalan, F and Vaughan, K (eds), *Indigenous education: A learning journey for teachers, schools and communities*, Sense Publishers, pp. 11–21.
- Butler, TL, Anderson, K, Garvey, G, Cunningham, J, Ratcliffe, J, Tong, A, Whop, LJ, Cass, A, Dickson, M and Howard, K 2019, 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's domains of wellbeing: A comprehensive literature review', *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 233, pp. 138–157.
- Clapham, K, Harwood, V, Sheppeard, F and Wellington, K 2022, *Evaluation of the Ngaramura "See the Way" Program - Community Report*, Ngarruwan Ngadju First Peoples Health & Wellbeing Research Centre, University of Wollongong, Wollongong, [https://www.coomaditchie.org.au/\\_files/ugd/](https://www.coomaditchie.org.au/_files/ugd/)



59ef4f\_310213d4d4f64bf9ae330bd398b06036.pdf (accessed 16 April 2026).

Clear Horizon 2024, 'Roads to Home Outcome Evaluation – Findings and Recommendations Summary', <https://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-02/roads-to-home-outcome-evaluation-findings-recommendations.pdf> (accessed 25 June 2026).

Coalition of Peaks 2025, *Informing a partnership on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic development engagement report*, [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62ebb08a9ffa427423c18724/t/67d77569a8b7b4226366786d/1742173589609/Peaks\\_EngagementReport\\_Mar2025.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62ebb08a9ffa427423c18724/t/67d77569a8b7b4226366786d/1742173589609/Peaks_EngagementReport_Mar2025.pdf) (accessed 8 December 2025).

Commonwealth of Australia 2020, *National Indigenous Languages Report*.

— 2024, *Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data*.

— 2025, *Closing the Gap – Commonwealth 2024 Annual Report and Commonwealth 2025 Implementation Plan*.

— 2026, *Closing the Gap – Commonwealth Annual Report 2025 and Implementation Plan 2026*.

Connected Beginnings Lutruwita 2025, *Connected Beginnings Program*, <https://www.connectedbeginningslutruwita.com/connected-beginnings-program> (accessed 6 May 2026).

Crabtree, S, White, D, Bradshaw, C, Saltr  , F, Williams, A, Beaman, R, Bird, M and Ulm, S 2021, 'Landscape rules predict optimal superhighways for the first peopling of Sahul', *Nature Human Behaviour*, vol. 5, pp. 1303–1313.

Cunneen, C 2020, *Conflict, politics and crime: Aboriginal communities and the police*, Routledge.

—, Russell, S and Schwartz, M 2021, 'Principles in diversion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people from the criminal jurisdiction', Routledge, *Current Issues in Criminal Justice*, vol. 33, no. 2, pp. 170–190, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10345329.2020.1813386> (accessed 25 June 2026).

Data Policy Partnership 2026, *DPP Meeting Two Communique*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, <https://www.abs.gov.au/about/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/data-policy-partnership/DPP%20Meeting%20Two%20Communique.pdf> (accessed 18 May 2026).

Dawson, A, Lyons (Jaadwa), L, Morey, K, Pearson, O, Harfield, S, Brand (Eastern Arrente), T, DeMasi (Barkindji), K, Mulholland (Torres Strait Islands – ERUB), E, Aromataris, E, Braunack-Mayer, A and Brown (Yuin), A 2025, 'Ways of working in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Organisations: describing a conceptual model of comprehensive primary healthcare characteristics', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, vol. 49, no. 4, p. 100267.

DCCEEW (Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water) 2025, *First Nations water policy*, <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/water/policy/first-nations> (accessed 2 February 2026).

Deloitte Access Economics 2025, *Final Report – SNAICC Early Years Support evaluation update (January 2025 – July 2025)* SNAICC – National Voice for Our Children, August, <https://www.snaicc.org.au/resources/snaicc-early-years-support-evaluation-final-report/> (accessed 15 April 2026).

Dermant, D, Manton, D, Manton, J, Saliba, B and Avery, S 2025, *Health Inequities in Australia: A Scoping Review on the Impact of Racism on Indigenous and Other Negatively*

*Racialised Communities' Health Outcomes and Healthcare Access*, Commissioned by the Australian Human Rights Commission, Sydney, NSW.

Dodson, M 1995, 'Opinion: From "Lore" to "Law": Indigenous rights and Australian legal systems', *Aboriginal Law Bulletin*, <http://www8.austlii.edu.au/cgi-bin/viewdoc/au/journals/AboriginalLawB/1995/1.html#Heading1> (accessed 25 June 2026).

DoE (Australian Government Department of Education) 2025a, *Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) National Report 2024*, Canberra.

— 2025b, *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement – Full and Fair Funding 2025–2034*.

DoHDA (Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing) 2025, *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration Framework and Implementation Plan*, Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/gayaa-dhuwi-proud-spirit-declaration-framework-and-implementation-plan?language=en> (accessed 22 April 2026).

DSS (Commonwealth of Australia Department of Social Services) 2015, 'Third three-year action plan, 2015–2018 – Driving Change: Intervening Early'.

— 2026, *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic, and Sexual Violence 2026–2036*.

Dudgeon, P, Blustein, S, Bray, A, Calma, T, McPhee, R and Ring, I 2024, 'Connection between family, kinship and social and emotional wellbeing', Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Indigenous Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Clearinghouse*.

—, Bray, A, Darlaston-Jones, D and Walker, R 2020, *Aboriginal participatory action research: An Indigenous research methodology strengthening decolonisation and social and emotional wellbeing*, Lowitja Institute.

Dudgeon, P, Gibson, C, Walker, R, Bray, A, Agung-Igusti, R, Derry, K, Gray, P, McPhee, R, Sutherland, S and Gee, G 2025, *Social and emotional wellbeing: a review*, Lowitja Institute, <https://www.lowitja.org.au/resource/social-and-emotional-wellbeing-a-review/> (accessed 21 January 2026).

Dudgeon, P, Wright, M, Paradies, Y, Garvey, D and Walker, I 2014, 'Aboriginal Social, Cultural and Historical Contexts', *Working Together: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health and Wellbeing Principles and Practice*, 2nd edn, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, pp. 55–68.

Elek, C, Gubhaju, L, Lloyd-Johnsen, C, Eades, S and Goldfeld, S 2020, 'Can early childhood education programs support positive outcomes for indigenous children? A systematic review of the international literature', *Educational Research Review*, vol. 31, p. 100363.

Eva, C, Bodle, K, Foley, D, Harris, J and Hunter, B 2023, 'The importance of understanding Indigenous employment in the Indigenous business sector', *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, vol. 58, pp. 494–522.

Evans, M, Polidano, C, Dahmann, C, Kalera, Y, Ruiz, M, Moschion, J and Blackman 2024, *Indigenous Business and Corporation Snapshot Study 3.0*, The University of Melbourne.

Evans, O 2021, *Gari Yala (Speak the Truth) Gendered Insights*, WGEA Commissioned Research Report in partnership with the Jumbunna Institute of Education and Research and Diversity Council Australia, Sydney, Australia, <https://internationalwim.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/>

- gari\_yala\_genderedinsights2021\_output\_74e891d02edc4f1b953f5140ae1abda8.pdf (accessed 4 May 2026).
- First Languages Australia nd, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages*, First Languages Australia, <https://www.firstlanguages.org.au/languages> (accessed 2 May 2024).
- First Nations Economic Partnership 2025a, *Meeting Communiqué - 8 December 2025*, December.
- 2025b, *Meeting Communiqué - 21 October 2025*, October.
- 2026, *Meeting Communiqué - 18 February 2026*, February.
- FNDIAG (First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group) 2023, *First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group initial report*.
- FNMA (First Nations Media Australia) nd, *Language and culture*, <https://firstnationsmedia.org.au/resources/language-and-culture> (accessed 2 November 2025).
- Fogarty, WP, Bulloch, H, Bellchambers, K and Brachtendorf, L 2022, *Learning on Country Program: Progress Evaluation 2.0*, Commissioned Report No. 5/22, Centre for Indigenous Policy Research, Australian National University, Canberra, ACT, <https://cipr.cass.anu.edu.au/research/publications/learning-country-program-progress-evaluation-report-20> (accessed 1 April 2026).
- FPDN (First Peoples Disability Network) 2026a, *Fact Sheet Australia's Disability Strategy*, <https://fpdn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/FPDN-Fact-Sheet-Australias-Disability-Strategy.pdf> (accessed 4 May 2026).
- 2026b, *Fact Sheet First Nations Disability*, [https://fpdn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/FPDN-Fact-Sheet-First-Nations-Disability\\_1.pdf](https://fpdn.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/FPDN-Fact-Sheet-First-Nations-Disability_1.pdf) (accessed 4 May 2026).
- Freeborn, C, Mardhani-Bayne, A and Soetaert, C 2023, 'Quality and educator dispositions for indigenous families in the urban early learning and child care context: a scoping review', *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, vol. 17, no. 1, p. 6.
- Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) nd, *Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Declaration*, Gayaa Dhuwi, <https://www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/gayaa-dhuwi-declaration> (accessed 22 April 2026).
- Gomersall, JS, Gibson, O, Dwyer, J, O'Donnell, K, Stephenson, M, Carter, D, Canuto, K, Munn, Z, Aromataris, E and Brown, A 2017, 'What Indigenous Australian clients value about primary health care: a systematic review of qualitative evidence', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, vol. 41, no. 4, pp. 417–423, <https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S1326020023010233> (accessed 20 February 2026).
- Gore, J, Patfield, S, Holmes, K, Smith, M, Lloyd, A, Gruppeta, M, Weaver, N and Fray, L 2017, 'When higher education is possible but not desirable : widening participation and the aspirations of Australian Indigenous school students', *Australian Journal of Education*, vol. 61, no. 2, pp. 164–183.
- Hall, S, Fildes, J, Tiller, E, Di Nicola, K and Plummer, J 2020, *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Youth Report: Youth Survey 2019*, Mission Australia.
- Hartwig, LD, Jackson, S, Markham, F and Osborne, N 2021, 'Water colonialism and Indigenous water justice in south-eastern Australia', *International Journal of Water Resources Development*, pp. 1–34, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/07900627.2020.1868980> (accessed 16 January 2026).
- , — and Osborne, N 2020, 'Trends in Aboriginal water ownership in New South Wales, Australia: The continuities between colonial and neoliberal forms of dispossession', *Land Use Policy*, vol. 99, <https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S0264837719319799> (accessed 16 January 2026).
- Healing Foundation 2018, *Working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families*.
- 2025, *Fact Sheet - National Sorry Day*, [https://healingfoundation.org.au/media/wbyo43ay/thf\\_sorry\\_d\\_ay\\_2025\\_fact\\_sheet\\_a4\\_flyer-2.pdf](https://healingfoundation.org.au/media/wbyo43ay/thf_sorry_d_ay_2025_fact_sheet_a4_flyer-2.pdf) (accessed 4 May 2026).
- Hine, R, Krakouer, J, Elston, J, Fredericks, B, Hunter, S-A, Taylor, K, Stephens, T, Couzens, V, Manahan, E, DeSouza, R, Boyle, J, Callander, E, Cunningham, H, Miller, R, Willey, S, Wilton, K and Skouteris, H 2023, 'Identifying and dismantling racism in Australian perinatal settings: Reframing the narrative from a risk lens to intentionally prioritise connectedness and strengths in providing care to First Nations families', *Women and Birth*, vol. 36, no. 1, pp. 136–140.
- Howard, J, Jeffery, J, Walters, L and Barton, E 2021, 'Rural Aboriginal high school students' views of their future tertiary education', *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, vol. 50, no. 2, pp. 293–303, <https://ajie.atsis.uq.edu.au/ajie/article/view/307> (accessed 5 May 2026).
- Hunter, J, Haywood, A and Chapman, M 2025, *Every day matters: Improving school attendance in Australia*, December, Grattan Institute, <https://grattan.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Every-day-matters-policy-brief-Grattan-Institute-2025.pdf> (accessed 23 February 2026).
- IDILDG, (International Decade of Indigenous Languages Directions Group) and Australian Government 2023, *Voices of Country: Australia's action plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022–2032*.
- IUIH (Institute for Urban Indigenous Health) nd, *History of BiOC*, Institute for Urban Indigenous Health, <https://www.iuih.org.au/services/history-of-bioc/> (accessed 6 May 2026).
- Janke, T 2021, *True tracks: Respecting Indigenous knowledge and culture*, University of New South Wales Press.
- , Curtis, L and Shul, A 2023, *Language Revitalisation and the Law: an overview*, <https://www.terrijanke.com.au/post/language-revitalisation-and-the-law-an-overview> (accessed 16 January 2025).
- Jobs and Skills Australia 2025, *New perspectives on old problems: Gendered Jobs, Work and Pay*, Gender Economic Equality Study, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra.
- Joint Council (Joint Council on Closing the Gap) 2020, *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.
- 2025, *Fourteenth meeting of the Joint Council on Closing the Gap - Communique*, June, <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-06/joint-council-communique-20-06-2025.pdf> (accessed 28 April 2026).
- 2026a, *Joint Council Response to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review*.
- 2026b, *Sixteenth meeting of the Joint Council on Closing the Gap - 22 May 2026*, <https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/sites/default/files/2026->

05/Communique-Joint-Council-on-Closing-the-Gap-22-May-2026.pdf (accessed 26 May 2026).

JSCATSI (Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs) 2024, *Inquiry into economic self-determination and opportunities for First Nations Australians*, Report, November, Parliament of Australia, <https://apo.org.au/node/329149> (accessed 20 May 2026).

Kairuz, CA, Casanelia, LM, Bennett-Brook, K, Coombes, J and Yadav, UN 2021, 'Impact of racism and discrimination on physical and mental health among Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander peoples living in Australia: a systematic scoping review', *BMC Public Health*, vol. 21, no. 1, p. 1302.

Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa 2024a, *About KJ*, Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, <https://www.kj.org.au/about-kj> (accessed 4 February 2026).

— 2024b, *Country Programs*, Kanyirninpa Jukurrpa, <https://www.kj.org.au/country-programs> (accessed 30 January 2026).

Kildea, S, Gao, Y, Hickey, S, Nelson, C, Kruske, S, Carson, A, Currie, J, Reynolds, M, Wilson, K, Watego, K, Costello, J and Roe, Y 2021, 'Effect of a Birthing on Country service redesign on maternal and neonatal health outcomes for First Nations Australians: a prospective, non-randomised, interventional trial', *Elsevier, The Lancet Global Health*, vol. 9, no. 5, pp. e651–e659, [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(21\)00061-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(21)00061-9/fulltext) (accessed 6 May 2026).

Koungoulos, L, Balme, J, O'Connor, S and Ingre, S 2024, 'Late Holocene hunting economies in coastal southeastern Australia: Insights from the archaeological fauna of Curraurrang 1 Rockshelter, Royal National Park', *Archaeology in Oceania*, vol. 59, pp. 305–381.

Kral, I and Schwab, RG 2012, *Learning Spaces: Youth, Literacy and New Media in Remote Indigenous Australia*, ANU Press.

Kukutai, T and Taylor, J 2016, *Indigenous Data Sovereignty: Toward an agenda*, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR), ANU Press.

Langton, M and Corn, A 2023, *Law: The way of the ancestors*, First Knowledges, Thames & Hudson.

Languages Policy Partnership 2026, *LPP Data Policy Position: Measuring success for First Languages*.

Lavarch, L, Coombes, L, Gray, K, Anthony, C and Nolan-Smith, S 2025, *Closing the Gap Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review*, UTS CRICOS 00099F, Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, University of Technology Sydney.

Leslie-O'Neill, H, Davey, K and Mount, A 2026, *Stronger together: Perspectives from the Australian Languages Workshop 2024*, AIATSIS Research Publications.

Liddle, C 2018, 'Introduction – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment policies and repeating colonial histories', *Journal of Australian Political Economy*, no. 82, pp. 5–8.

Lovett, R, Brinckley, M-M, Phillips, B, Chapman, J, Thurber, K, Jones, R, Banks, E, Dunbar, T, Olsen, A and Wenitong, M 2020, 'Marrathalpu mayingku ngiya kiya. Minyawaa ngiyani yata punmalaka; wangaaypu kirrampili kara [Ngiyampaa title]. In the beginning it was our people's law. What makes us well; to never be sick. Cohort profile of Mayi Kuwayu: the National Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing [English title]', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*.

Lowe, K, Weuffen, S, Woods, A, Burgess, C and Vass, G 2025, 'Conceptualising culturally nourishing pedagogies for

professional learning in Australian schooling', *The Australian Educational Researcher*, vol. 52, no. 1, pp. 627–646, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-024-00733-0> (accessed 3 July 2025).

Lowitja Institute 2020, *We Nurture our Culture for our Future, and our Culture Nurtures us.*, 19 March, Australian Human Rights Commission.

— 2022, *Transforming power: Voices for generational change - 2022 Close the Gap Report*, [https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/2022\\_close\\_the\\_gap\\_report.pdf](https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/document/publication/2022_close_the_gap_report.pdf) (accessed 25 June 2026).

— 2026, *Racism and the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children: the need for targeted policy interventions to protect the health and wellbeing of our future generations*, January, [https://www.lowitja.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Racism-and-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-children\\_position-paper-1.pdf](https://www.lowitja.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2026/01/Racism-and-the-health-and-wellbeing-of-Aboriginal-and-Torres-Strait-Islander-children_position-paper-1.pdf) (accessed 13 February 2026).

Maiaim nayri Wingara 2018, 'Indigenous Data Sovereignty Communique', presented at the *Maiaim nayri Wingara*, Canberra, ACT, 20 June, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5b3043afb40b9d20411f3512/t/63ed934fe861fa061eb9202/1676514134724/Communique-Indigenous-Data-Sovereignty-Summit.pdf> (accessed 14 May 2026).

Malvaso, C, Day, A, Delfabbro, P, Cale, J, Hackett, L and Ross, S 2022, *Adverse childhood experiences and trauma among young people in the youth justice system*, 14 June, Australian Institute of Criminology, <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/tandi/tandi651> (accessed 25 June 2026).

Marmion, D, Obata, K and Troy, J 2014, *Community, identity, wellbeing: the report of the Second National Indigenous Languages Survey*, AIATSIS.

McCallum, K and Papandrea, F 2009, 'Community business: the internet in remote Australian Indigenous communities', *New Media & Society*, vol. 11, no. 7, pp. 1230–1251, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1461444809342059> (accessed 3 May 2024).

McCausland, R and Baldry, E 2023, 'Who does Australia lock up? The social determinants of justice', *Journal of Crime, Justice and Democracy, International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 37–53, <https://www.crimejusticejournal.com/article/view/2504> (accessed 25 June 2026).

McDonald, K, Bamblett, M, Curtis, L, Ponchard, K, Riviello, N, Stanton, N and Salamone, C 2025, 'Aboriginal Children in Aboriginal Care: Transforming the Landscape of Child Protection in Australia', *Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, Genealogy*, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 66, <https://www.mdpi.com/2313-5778/9/3/66> (accessed 16 April 2026).

Morrison, A, Rigney, L-I, Hattam, R and Diplock, A 2019, *Toward an Australian culturally responsive pedagogy: a narrative review of the literature*, University of South Australia - Document Services, Underdale.

Moskos, M, Isherwood, L and Baker, E 2025a, *A Comprehensive Review and Assessment of Indigenous Housing Data*, National Indigenous Australians Agency, University of Adelaide.

—, —, Dockery, M, Baker, E and Pham, A 2022, '“What works” to sustain Indigenous tenancies in Australia', *AHURI Final Report*, no. 374,



- <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/374> (accessed 25 June 2026).
- , Milligan, V, Benedict, R, Habibis, D, Isherwood, L and Van De Nouwelant, R 2025b, 'Indigenous housing support in Australia: the lay of the land', *AHURI Final Report*, FR 434, <https://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/434> (accessed 16 March 2026).
- NACCHO (National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation) 2021, *Indigenous Digital Inclusion Plan discussion paper*, Submission.
- NATSIEC (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation) 2024, *Scoping a policy partnership on First Nations economic development*, 29 August, <https://natsiec.edu.au/posts/publication/scoping-a-policy-partnership-on-firstnations-economic-development> (accessed 13 February 2026).
- 2025, *Our Pathway Our Future. NATSIEC Strategic Plan 2025-2029*, August.
- NATSIHA (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Housing Association) 2018, *Submission on the Closing the Gap Refresh Targeting Housing and Homelessness*, <https://www.natsiha.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/Submission-on-Closing-the-Gap-Refresh.pdf> (accessed 28 January 2026).
- NDIA (National Disability Insurance Agency) 2025, *First Nations Strategy 2025-2030*, NDIA, <https://www.ndis.gov.au/strategies/first-nations-strategy> (accessed 4 May 2026).
- Neale, M and Kelly, L 2020, *Songlines: The power and promise*, Thames & H.
- NHSAC (National Housing Supply and Affordability Council) 2025, 'State of the Housing System 2025'.
- NIAA (National Indigenous Australians Agency) 2023, 'Review of the National Partnership for Remote Housing Northern Territory'.
- NNTT (National Native Title Tribunal) 2024, *Indigenous Land Use Agreements*.
- Norman, H 2021, 'Aboriginal words Australian capitalism', *Labour History*, no. 121, pp. 57–72.
- Northern Land Council 2026, *Learning on Country Program*, Learning on Country, <https://learningoncountry.com/> (accessed 1 April 2026).
- NSW Government (New South Wales Government) 2019, *Aboriginal Languages Act 2017 No 51*, <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/curr/ent/act-2017-051> (accessed 15 January 2025).
- O'Brien, G 2021, 'Racial profiling, surveillance and over-policing: The over-incarceration of young First Nations males in Australia', *Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute, Social Sciences*, vol. 10, no. 2, p. 68.
- Onademuren, J, Pittaway, S and Arabena, K 2025, *Aboriginal Youth Cautioning Program (AYCP) Review. A project funded by Victoria Police, Karabena Consulting, Melbourne*.
- Pascoe, B and Gammage, B 2021, *Country: Future fire, future farming*, Thames & Hudson.
- PC (Productivity Commission) 2020, 'Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2020 - Report'.
- 2022a, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander visual arts and crafts*, Study report.
- 2022b, *In need of repair: The National Housing and Homelessness Agreement*, Study report.
- 2023, *Strengthening outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, Review of the National School Reform Agreement*, Factsheet.
- 2024a, *A path to universal early childhood education and care*, vol. 2, Inquiry report no. 106, Canberra.
- 2024b, *National Water Reform 2024*, Inquiry Report no. 105, Canberra.
- 2024c, *Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, Study report, vol. 1, Canberra.
- 2024d, *Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.
- 2025a, *Mental health and suicide prevention agreement review*.
- 2025b, *Statement of Commitment: our transformation journey under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, Productivity Commission, <https://www.pc.gov.au/about/governance/statement-of-commitment/> (accessed 8 May 2026).
- Pearson, N 2021, *Mission: Essays, speeches & ideas*, Black Inc.
- Perso, T and Hayward, C 2020, *Teaching Indigenous students: Cultural awareness and classroom strategies for improving learning outcomes*, Routledge.
- Polidano, C, Evans, M, Dahmann, S, Manganda, A, Kalera, Y, Moschion, J, Ruiz, M and Murray-Noble, B 2025, *Indigenous Business and Corporation Snapshot Study 4.0*, The University of Melbourne, <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/609c5b6fed6253178f23bdff/t/691d07bfe62a604f6fb64842/1763510207483/Indigenous+Business+and+Corporation+Snapshot+Study+4.0.pdf> (accessed 31 March 2026).
- PWDA (People with Disability Australia) 2022, *Social model of disability*, Social model of disability, <https://pwd.org.au/resources/models-of-disability/> (accessed 4 May 2026).
- Reed, L, Mount, A and Angelo, D 2024, *Strengthening Australian languages: between policy and practice*, Report on the Language Policy Symposium, 26–27 September 2022, AIATSIS.
- Rennie, E, Thomas, J and Wilson, C 2019, 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and digital inclusion: what is the evidence and where is it?', *Communication Research and Practice*, vol. 5, no. 2, pp. 105–120, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/22041451.2019.1601148> (accessed 17 April 2024).
- Rogers, J, Ekberg, S, Laurens, K, Carpendale, EJ, Williams, KE, Berthelsen, D and Piltz, LM 2025, *Footprints in time: the Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children (LSIC) early childhood report*, Report, 7 October, Queensland University of Technology, <https://apo.org.au/node/332436> (accessed 26 January 2026).
- Rose, D, Bell, D and Crook, D 2016, 'Restoring habitat and cultural practice in Australia's oldest and largest traditional aquaculture system', *Reviews in Fish Biology and Fisheries*, vol. 26, pp. 589–600.
- Salmon, M, Doery, K, Chapman, J, Gilbert, R, Williams, R and Lovett, J 2019a, *Defining the indefinable: descriptors of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and their links to health and wellbeing*, National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health, Canberra, p. 56.
- , Doery, K, Dance, P, Chapman, J, Gilbert, R, Williams, R and Lovett, R 2019b, *Defining the indefinable: Descriptors of Aboriginal*

and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultures and their links to health and wellbeing, The Lowitja Institute and Mayi Kuwayu.

Sanders, W 2000, 'Understanding the past, looking to the future: The history of Australian Indigenous housing', in null, R, P (ed), *Settlement: A History of Australian Indigenous Housing*, vol 1, Aboriginal Studies Press, Canberra, pp. 237–248.

Sangha, KK, Duvert, A, Archer, R and Russell-Smith, J 2020, 'Unrealised economic opportunities in remote Indigenous communities: Case studies from northern Australia', *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, vol. 2, no. 1, p. 100093.

Schultz, R, Abbott, T, Yamaguchi, J and Cairney, S 2018, 'Indigenous land management as primary health care: qualitative analysis from the Interplay research project in remote Australia', *BMC Health Services Research*, vol. 18, no. 1, p. 960.

Simpson, J, Disbray, S and O'Shanessy, C 2019, 'Setting the Scene: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages learning and teaching', *Babel*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 7–10.

Sivak, L, Westhead, S, Richards, E, Atkinson, S, Richards, J, Dare, H, Zuckermann, G, Gee, G, Wright, M, Rosen, A, Walsh, M, Brown, N and Brown, A 2019, "Language breathes life"—Barngarla community perspectives on the wellbeing impacts of reclaiming a dormant Australian Aboriginal language', *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, vol. 16, no. 20, p. 3918.

SNAICC 2008, *Foster their culture: Caring for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care*.

— 2018, *The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A guide to support implementation*.

— 2019, *Successful strategies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation in early childhood education and care*, [https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Successful\\_strategies\\_to-support\\_Aboriginal\\_and\\_Torres\\_Strait\\_Islander\\_participation\\_in\\_early\\_childhood\\_education\\_care.pdf](https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Successful_strategies_to-support_Aboriginal_and_Torres_Strait_Islander_participation_in_early_childhood_education_care.pdf) (accessed 15 April 2026).

— 2022, *Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for early childhood education*.

— 2023, *Stronger ACCOs, Stronger Families Final Report*.

— 2024, *Our ways – strong ways – our voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan engagement public submissions discussion paper*.

— 2025, 'Family Matters Report 2025'.

—, Family Matters Leadership Group, Monash University, and University of Technology Sydney 2023, *Family Matters Report 2023*.

—, University of Technology Sydney, Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, and National Family Matters Leadership Group 2026, *Family Matters Report 2025 – Strong communities. Strong culture. Stronger children.*, SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership 2025, *Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership communique – Meeting 7*, Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/social-and-emotional-wellbeing-policy-partnership-communique-meeting-7?language=en> (accessed 22 April 2026).

SVA Consulting 2025, *Walking the talk: What government can learn from the KJ Model*, August, <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:AP:954126d0-8efb-4c90-b367-4441a9f4150b> (accessed 30 January 2026).

Thandrayen, J, Walker, J, Chapman, J, Lovett, R and Thurber, KA 2024, 'Sampling approaches and geographic coverage in Mayi Kuwayu: the national study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing', *BMC Research Notes*, vol. 17, p. 26, <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10792777/> (accessed 30 April 2026).

Thomas, J, McCosker, A and Parkinson, S 2025, *Measuring Australia's Digital Divide: 2025 Australian Digital Inclusion Index*, ARC Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society, <https://apo.org.au/node/332322> (accessed 4 March 2026).

Torre, G 2025, 'Northern Land Council's Learning on Country Program hits record participation', *National Indigenous Times*, 18 August, <https://nit.com.au/18-08-2025/19707/northern-land-councils-learning-on-country-program-hits-record-participation> (accessed 1 April 2026).

Truong, M and Moore, E 2023, *Racism and Indigenous wellbeing, mental health and suicide*, <https://www.indigenoussmhspc.gov.au/publications/racism> (accessed 24 May 2026).

Tually, S, Tedmanson, D, Habibis, D, McKinley, K, Akbar, S, Chong, A, Deuter, K and Goodwin-Smith, I 2022, *Urban Indigenous homelessness: much more than housing*, August, <http://www.ahuri.edu.au/research/final-reports/383> (accessed 25 June 2026).

Tudor-Smith, G, Williams, P and Meakins, F 2024, *Bina: First Nations languages, old and new*, La Trobe University Press.

Turner, MK and Children's Ground 2023, *Apmerengentyele. The M.K. Turner Report: A plan for First Nations-led and designed education reform in Australia*.

UN (United Nations) 2007, *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*.

VACCA (Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency) 2024, *Yoorrook Justice Commission Inquiry into Economic Prosperity*, April, [https://www.vacca.org/content/Document/VACCA\\_Yoorrook\\_Economic\\_Submission\\_April.pdf](https://www.vacca.org/content/Document/VACCA_Yoorrook_Economic_Submission_April.pdf) (accessed 31 March 2026).

Venn, D and Biddle, N 2018, *Employment outcomes*, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research.

Walker, S, Doyle, M, Stooové, M, Combo, T and Wilson, M 2023, 'Experiences of Kinship and connection to family for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young men with histories of incarceration', *Journal of the Australian Indigenous Health*, vol. 4, no. 4.

Watego, Singh, and Macoun 2021, *Partnership for Justice in Health scoping paper on race, racism and the Australian health system*, Lowitja Institute.

Wigglesworth, G, Simpson, J and Loakes, D 2011, *NAPLAN language assessments for Indigenous children in remote communities*, John Benjamins, *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 320–343.

Wilya Janta 2026, *Wilya Janta (Standing Strong) Housing Collaboration*, <https://www.wilyajanta.org/protocol> (accessed 31 March 2026).

Yoorrook Justice Commission 2023, *Report into Victoria's child protection and criminal justice systems*.

Zubrick, SR, Shepherd, CC, Dudgeon, P, Gee, G, Paradies, Y, Scrine, C and Walker, R 2014, 'Social determinants of social and emotional wellbeing', *Working Together*.