Submission to the Productivity Commission Closing the Gap Review 2026

Data Policy Partnership

Contents

Introduction 3
Overview of the Data Policy Partnership 3
2024 Review Recommended Action 2.2 5
Progress against commitments 5
Embedding Priority Reform Four 6
Progress against commitments 6
Actions to improve progress 7
Broaden how success is defined and measured under Priority Reform Four 7
Act now while pursuing longer-term system reform 8
Accelerating Priority Reform Three to progress Priority Reform Four 9
Closing the Gap Community Data Projects 9
Progress against commitments 9
Actions to improve progress 9
Policy Partnerships 10
Progress against commitments 10
Conclusion 11
Attachment A – Priority Reform Four linkages to other Priority Reforms 12
Attachment B – Priority Reform Four Government Member Progress Report Template 13
Attachment C – The role of the Data Policy Partnership with other Policy Partnerships 14
Attachment D – Data Policy Partnership Member Case Studies and Lessons Learned – New South Wales 16
An Australian-first initiative for improving access to Government-held data for Aboriginal Communities 16
Attachment E – Preamble to the Agreement to Implement the Data Policy Partnership 18
Complete Agreement to Implement 18
Attachment F – Closing the Gap Community Data Projects – Enablers and Barriers 19
Attachment G – Data Policy Partnership Member Case Studies and Lessons Learned – South Australia 23

Introduction

The Data Policy Partnership (DPP) welcomes the Productivity Commission's (PC's) second Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement).

The main purpose of this Submission is to provide information on the DPP's contribution to progressing Priority Reform Four (PR4) and Recommended Action 2.2 of the first PC Review of the National Agreement (2024 PC Review) on a Bureau of Indigenous Data (BOID). This Submission also provides some further information and relevant examples of how Parties to the agreement are embedding PR4.

Overview of the Data Policy Partnership

In July 2024, the Joint Council on Closing the Gap (Joint Council) discussed the need to accelerate progress on the implementation of PR4 and agreed more work was needed before deciding how to progress Recommended Action 2.2. As an interim measure, Joint Council agreed to the immediate establishment of a DPP, with in principle agreement by governments to resource this work.

The DPP was established in mid-2025. Key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and government stakeholders were consulted on the establishment documents, including the Agreement to Implement (Terms of Reference), between April and May 2025. The experiences and arrangements of existing Policy Partnerships informed these documents, which were endorsed by Joint Council in June 2025.

The DPP brings together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expert and peak organisation representatives and Australian, state and territory government partners. Together, the DPP is working to progress PR4 and strengthening data under the National Agreement. The DPP is an opportunity for Members to share expertise, experiences and decision-making to achieve better data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. Our approach is guided by the Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) Principles.[1]

It has now been over a year since the establishment of the DPP. The DPP has convened an induction workshop and four in-person meetings across Australia and made progress against the DPP's priorities endorsed by Members at DPP Meeting Two in February 2026. Further detail is included in the DPP's inaugural Annual Report.

[1] Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, 2018. Indigenous Data Sovereignty Communique, Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit. [Online] Available at: https://www.maiamnayriwingara.org/mnw-principles [Accessed 25 September 2026].

National Agreement for Closing the Gap **Priority Reform Four**: Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level

Data Policy Partnership

Coalition of Peaks representatives

Commonwealth government

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives



Government representatives

Independent representatives

State and Territory governments

Aim: share expertise, experiences and decision-making to achieve **better data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities** under the National Agreement for Closing the Gap

Approach: guided by the **Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles** ^

...in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to...

- **Exercise control of the data ecosystem** including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure.
- **Data that are contextual and disaggregated** (available and accessible at individual, community and First Nations levels).
- **Data that is relevant and empowers** sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance.
- **Data structures that are accountable** to Indigenous peoples and First Nations.
- **Data that is protective and respects** Indigenous peoples individual and collective interests.

Priorities

Structural reform to embed Priority Reform Four

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance and Indigenous Data Sovereignty
2. Priority Reform measurement

Priority Reform Four Implementation

3. Community Data Projects
4. Data sharing, access and capability
5. Embedding Priority Reform Four

Sector/target specific data development

6. Addressing data gaps

^ (Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, 2018)

DPP Submission to Closing the Gap Review 2026

2024 Review Recommended Action 2.2

A number of Closing the Gap reports referred to the DPP by Joint Council and Partnership Working Group (PWG) made recommendations to establish a national Indigenous data entity.[2] There are multiple viable models to support Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) and Closing the Gap data development, each with distinct implications for resourcing, legislative settings, governance arrangements, and implementation timeframes. To support informed decision-making, the DPP is undertaking work to examine these options in partnership with key stakeholders.

Progress against commitments

Joint Council has tasked the DPP specifically with considering the logistical, scope, roles and responsibilities, and resourcing complexities to support IDG and Closing the Gap data development, including examining the option of a BOID.[3]

In February 2025, DPP Members agreed to a proposal for progressing this work. There are three stages addressed in the project proposal:

- Stage 1: A desktop review of related international and Australian models and literature (undertaken by the Co-Secretariat).
- Stage 2: An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Entity Options Study. This will develop implementation options through research and stakeholder engagement and consultation that consider:
    - Roles and responsibilities
    - Resourcing and funding
    - Logistical and operational requirements
    - Legislative and policy environment
    - National coordination
    - Implementation timeframes.
- Stage 3: Recommendations for Joint Council from the DPP.

Stage 1 is near completion, and scoping work has commenced on Stage 2.

[2] Productivity Commission, 2024. Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, Study report, volume 1, Canberra. [Online] Available at: https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries-and-research/closing-the-gap-review/report/ [Accessed 25 September 2026].
[3] Joint Council on Closing the Gap, 2025. Joint Council Response to the Productivity Commission's Recommendations in the Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Final Report 2024, Canberra. [Online] Available at: https://www.closingthegap.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-08/Joint-Council-Response-to-the-2024-Productivity-Commission-Review.pdf [Accessed 25 September 2026].

Embedding Priority Reform Four

The DPP is working to deepen its understanding of how communities and governments can work together to achieve better data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The DPP covers a cross-cutting area of priority reform rather than a specific policy area with a socio-economic outcome or target under the National Agreement. Realising PR4, and its enabling benefits for the other Priority Reforms (see Attachment A), requires strong and consistent, cross-jurisdictional, cross-portfolio coordination. Compared to other national policy areas, data policy has unique technical and governance challenges that can make timely input and agreement across stakeholders difficult. Data is relevant across all sectors and departments. Data policy and custodianship are dispersed across public services. Data quality, consistency and handling practices are also diverse.

There are a number of relevant features of the national data landscape for the DPP. The Intergovernmental Agreement on Data Sharing (IGA) commits all jurisdictions to sharing public sector data across governments as a default position, where it can be done securely, safely, lawfully and ethically. The IGA is implemented through the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting (DDMM) and is supported by the National Data Sharing Work Program. It is planned for review to better align with expectations. The *Data Availability and Transparency Act 2022* (DAT Act) created a statutory data sharing scheme authorising Australian Government entities to share public sector data with accredited entities for three permitted purposes. However, a 2025 Statutory Review found that it had not been effective in achieving its objectives and a government response is pending. All of these represent opportunities to further progress PR4.

Progress against commitments

To deliver on its agreed priorities, the DPP must influence and have visibility of initiatives across its policy area. This involves effectively leveraging what exists and addressing gaps. A PR4 and Closing the Gap Community Data Project (CDP) progress monitoring template (see Attachment B) has been developed for completion by Government Members to support visibility of progress and challenges. Additionally, supporting materials like the DPP Data Definitions and Terminology Reference Document create a common language around concepts such as IDS, data governance and data access, and strengthen capability across both governments and the community-controlled sector.

Tools, services and capability supports have been developed across governments to improve data transparency, access and analysis. The central source of open government data is data.gov.au. Australian Government examples include the Australian Government Data Catalogue, the Digital Atlas of Australia, ABS TableBuilder for customised and flexible access to detailed data with extensive free options,

Australian Bureau of Statistics consultancy services for specialised requests, and secure data assets including ABS integrated data assets such as PLIDA and BLADE[4] and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's National Health Data Hub. State and territory government examples include DataACT, Data.NSW, NT Open Data Portal, Qld Open Data Portal, Data.SA, DataVic and dataWA.

To support immediate action on PR4 while also progressing long-term reform, the DPP is developing a guide on existing government data access pathways and services. This is targeted to stakeholders including Community and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and will outline support available and mechanisms and requirements for data access across Australian, state and territory governments. The DPP has leveraged Australian Government and cross-jurisdictional data governance forums under the Secretaries Digital and Data Committee and DDMM to raise awareness and to seek input on this guide.

A key DPP priority is to work with, and provide advice to, other Policy Partnerships. The focus of this collaboration is to close priority data gaps under the National Agreement, led by sector specific needs and expertise. Members have agreed the DPP has a role in providing advice to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance, consistent with the CARE[5], FAIR[6] and Maiam nayri Wingara principles, and co-design across all stages of the data lifecycle (see Attachment C). The DPP Co-Chairs participated in Policy Partnership Co-Chair Forums and engaged with the Justice Policy Partnership (JPP) and Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP).

Actions to improve progress

Broaden how success is defined and measured under Priority Reform Four

A national Policy Partnership presents fundamental tensions for policy reform that requires tailored and contextualised implementation at the local level. While general guiding principles for shared data access are possible to propose nationally, tailoring their application at a local and regional level is a critical for self-determination. The way PR4 is measured shapes understanding of progress. Increasing the number of regional data projects at the expense of other initiatives to improve data access can limit the scalability of solutions and potentially miss innovative and systemic ways to realise the broader intent of PR4.

[4] PLIDA (Person-Level Integrated Data Asset); BLADE (Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment).
[5] Global Indigenous Data Alliance, 2019. CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance. [Online] Available at: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5d3799de845604000199cd24/t/6397b363b502ff481fce6baf/1670886246948/CARE%2BPrinciples_One%2BPagers%2BFINAL_Oct_17_2019.pdf [Accessed 28 September 2026].
[6] Wilkinson, M., Dumontier, M. & Aalbersberg, I., 2016. The FAIR Guiding Principles for scientific data management and stewardship. Scientific Data, Volume 3.

The work of the NSW Government and NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations to reform data policy and access over a number of years (see Attachment D) illustrates how significant and targeted investment in a range of reform initiatives can deliver strong progress towards the outcomes of PR4 (particularly through Priority Reform Three or PR3 on transforming government organisations) and could be replicated in other jurisdictions. PR4 progress measurement must manage reporting burden and respect communities' cultural authority. Rethinking quantitative and qualitative measures of success for PR4 could strengthen its contribution to achieving Closing the Gap outcomes.

Act now while pursuing longer-term system reform

Significant challenges remain within the government data ecosystem. Supporting IDS and IDG is a long-term goal that will require sustained effort and reform across governments and communities. Full realisation of IDS and IDG requires community-led, -owned and -controlled data systems and governance. The scale and complexity of this task is significant, but not a reason for government to defer action. The examples and attachments included in this submission demonstrate the immediate and practical steps jurisdictional governments can take while broader system reform is underway. Legislative and structural reforms take time, policy and administrative changes can be quicker. Governments and public servants can therefore play a practical role in supporting IDS and IDG by transforming public administration mechanisms. Progress towards IDS and IDG will be incremental, but incremental does not mean insignificant. Practical improvements today can establish the foundations for more transformational reform in the future.

This will also support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance required to address the issue that much of the government data collected does not accurately measure or explain progress for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples (see Attachment E). The PC has started presenting Indigenous data on the Closing the Gap Information Repository with accompanying written content by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data scholars, illustrating the interconnectedness of data with culture and storytelling. Some Indigenous reporting frameworks and data collections have governance arrangements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation, and the Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data supports this. Examples include the Roundtable on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics, Indigenous Statistical and Information Advisory Group, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services Data Advisory Group, but this can be expanded. Immediate prioritisation of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities on what data is collected and shared at a local, regional, state and national levels is needed to genuinely incorporate IDG.

Accelerating Priority Reform Three to progress Priority Reform Four

Cultural capability in government organisations is an element of PR3. All government entities, across jurisdictions and portfolios, are responsible for realising PR3. Given the interrelationship between the Priority Reforms, slow progress on PR3 can hinder shared access to data. Sustainably improving data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities requires culturally safe government environments informed by and respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership. Cultural capability, and PR3 transformation more broadly, are critical for building momentum on PR4.

Closing the Gap Community Data Projects

Progress against commitments

Since Meeting One, DPP Government Members have reported to the DPP on CDP progress. This reporting provides insights on project status, lessons learned, and actions taken to address challenges. The CDPs are at varying stages of implementation, from not yet established, to priority areas of interest identified and/or baseline data requested. The DPP considered the CDP Lessons Learned report commissioned by the NIAA which identified drivers of project success and challenges including governance, consultation, data access and capability, funding, and partnership arrangements. The report provided recommendations across each of these areas.

Drawing on these learnings and the expertise from its Members, the DPP has developed a resource that identifies enablers, barriers and actions for CDPs, noting they are only one model that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who wish to enter into formal data sharing arrangements to access government-held data (see Attachment F). DPP Members highlighted the key relationships between Place-Based Partnerships (PBP) and CDPs and the interconnected nature of all Priority Reforms, including Priority Reform One (PR1 on formal partnerships and shared decision making), noting deeper consideration of remediating CDP and PBP approaches is needed. The DPP continues to strengthen efforts and discuss ways to ensure measurements for PR4 initiatives, including and in addition to CDPs, focus on data governance, access, capability and use.

Actions to improve progress

Sustainable resourcing and shared decision-making under PR1 and CDPs under PR4 have been identified by the DPP as central to achieving meaningful community driven outcomes. Community partners have consistently emphasised that partnerships and data sharing cannot be treated as separate reforms. The experience in South Australia demonstrates how closer alignment between community priorities, partnership governance and data access can support progress. The PBP and CDP are co-located in

the Western Suburbs of Adelaide, and this has created a practical opportunity to align community priorities, partnership governance and data access. The South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations Network (SAACCON) and the South Australian Government have worked together to build a cohesive approach, with each initiative reinforcing the other (see Attachment G).

Policy Partnerships

Progress against commitments

The DPP has been designed to meet the strong partnership elements set out in Clause 32 of the National Agreement with membership from around the country. These are embedded in the DPP's signed Agreement to Implement and having completed its first year of operation, the DPP has continued to strengthen the foundations laid for a strong and enduring partnership. Key elements contributing to this include:

- Accountability and representation – ensuring that all partners are actively engaged and reflective of the communities they serve.
- Shared decision-making – enabling governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to jointly shape priorities and outcomes through decisive and inclusive processes.
- Agreed priorities and Forward Work Plan – ensuring consensus and shared understanding of accessible work program, deliverables and outcomes.
- Openness and safety – enabling open, honest and respectful discussion of complex issues.

While the full impact of these elements will continue to emerge over time, their consistent application throughout 2025 and 2026 has reinforced trust, transparency, and mutual respect across the partnership. The DPP's priorities were developed and agreed by consensus and consider Policy Partnership obligations, Joint Council and PWG taskings, alignment of priorities with the scope of the DPP, estimated level of resourcing and estimated level of impact. Our priorities and forward work plan over the next three years allow for continued progress and for advancing the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in shaping, governing and using data that affects their lives and communities. Expanded government accountability for related commitments will support progress, genuine partnership and shared decision-making.

The DPP has engaged with other Policy Partnerships and existing government data governance forums to progress, collaborate on and build visibility of its work. This includes the cross-jurisdictional DDMM Data and Analytics Working Group, Commonwealth Chief Data Officers Group, and Commonwealth Deputy Secretaries

Data Group. Meeting communiques are published online and related briefings held. This is a planned area of continued expansion for the DPP.

Conclusion

The DPP has supported progress under PR4 by creating a formal shared decision-making mechanism between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and governments to improve data access and governance (including CDPs), agreeing six strategic priorities to advance data under the National Agreement, and working to improve data access, sharing, capability and performance measurement. While challenges remain, the DPP appreciates the opportunity to provide this submission and contribute to delivering and accelerating data outcomes under the National Agreement.

Attachment A – Priority Reform Four linkages to other Priority Reforms

PR4 Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have **access** to, and the **capability to use**, **locally relevant data and information** to set and monitor the implementation of efforts to close the gap, their priorities and drive their own development.

Data and information enable...

Decision-making based on shared evidence

Sustained and targeted sector capacity building and investment

Accountability for culturally safe and responsive government

PR1 Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making	**PR2** Building the Community-Controlled Sector	**PR3** Transforming Government Organisations
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are **empowered to share decision-making authority** with governments to accelerate policy and place-based progress on Closing the Gap through formal partnership arrangements.	There is a **strong and sustainable** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander **community-controlled sector** delivering high quality services to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country.	**Governments**, their organisations and their institutions are **accountable** for Closing the Gap and are **culturally safe and responsive** to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, including through the services they fund.

Attachment B – Priority Reform Four Government Member Progress Report Template

PR4 Government Member Progress Report: [Jurisdiction]

Report number	##	Reporting period	Mmm-Mmm YY	Report date	DD/MM/YY

Context:

- [Provide any relevant background about major consequential events or initiatives that might inform or influence progress or activities relating to your reporting – e.g. state election period, key milestones for a joint initiative, significant advancement of a policy initiative]

System-wide PR4 barriers	Wins	Challenges & Opportunities	Priorities
5. a. v.* Improving cross-jurisdiction data sharing, access and use for the community-controlled sector, including addressing systems-wide barriers to shared access to government-held data.	• [what successes from the reporting period can you share?]	• [what is making progress in this area challenging for government?] • [what opportunities might government take up to support future progress in this area?]	• [what key priorities have been identified in your jurisdiction to further progress in this area?] • [If your jurisdiction includes a CDP, please ensure your progress report includes an update on its progress]

Alignment to IDS & IDG	Wins	Challenges & Opportunities	Priorities
5. a. vi.* Embedding the Maiam nayri Wingara^ principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty across the Australian data system, including through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Governance and governance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data.	•	•	•

How can DPP help?

- [Outline either some key questions or the type of support the DPP might be well placed to provide your jurisdiction, to assist meeting your agreements under the National Agreement for Closing the Gap]

* Agreement to Implement the Data Policy Partnership - Data Policy Partnership | Australian Bureau of Statistics

^ Maiam nayri Wingara. (2018)

Attachment C – The role of the Data Policy Partnership with other Policy Partnerships

Role description	What this might look like	DPP involvement
Strategic advice: *to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance and self-determination, consistent with the CARE and FAIR principles, and Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles.*	DPP and DPP Co-Secretariat to: • ensure other Policy Partnerships are aware of available resources, e.g. Maiam nayri Wingara, Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data | NIAA. • promote alignment with the principles and, where appropriate, facilitate connections between Policy Partnerships and relevant stakeholders, including through the sharing of implementation examples and good practice.	DPP and DPP Co-Secretariat provide advice and information on request. Project led by relevant Policy Partnership.
Data governance advice: *to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance, self-determination and co-design are embedded in decisions about detailed aspects of the data lifecycle.*	DPP to: • connect and provide support to other Policy Partnerships and relevant data custodians on the implementation of technical advice in line with Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance principles across the data lifecycle. • provide advice on data project plans, strategies, progress updates and issues as requested. • connect other Policy Partnerships with the right technical experts.	DPP and DPP Co-Secretariat provide advice and information on request. Project led by relevant Policy Partnership.
Leadership: *in providing and promoting consistency in data approaches, principles, and standards that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance and self-determination and leverage work at the Community/grass-roots level.*	DPP to: • identify and agree appropriate data approaches, principles and standards and communicate these to other Policy Partnerships. • maintain an understanding of data-related projects across sectors, facilitate connections between stakeholders and share relevant examples and learnings where appropriate.	DPP and DPP Co-Secretariat provide advice and information on request. Project led by relevant Policy Partnership.
Leadership: *in promoting data custodian and data ecosystem accountability for data sharing and access, as well as Aboriginal and Torres Strait*	DPP to work with Policy Partnerships, relevant data custodians and other stakeholders to: • build capability to manage, share, and use data in ways that support Priority Reform Four, including culturally safe data practices and respectful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	DPP and DPP Co-Secretariat may drive cross-cutting system changes as appropriate. Project led by relevant Policy Partnership.

Role description	What this might look like	DPP involvement
Islander governance and self-determination across the data lifecycle.	• identify and address barriers to data access, availability and sharing, including cross-jurisdictional issues and challenges affecting the community-controlled sector. • promote accountability for data sharing and access across the data ecosystem and support consistent approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance.	

Attachment D – Data Policy Partnership Member Case Studies and Lessons Learned – New South Wales

An Australian-first initiative for improving access to Government-held data for Aboriginal Communities

Launched in July 2026 as the first of its kind in Australia, the Shared Access to Data for Aboriginal Communities Policy (the Policy) was established to improve Aboriginal Communities' access to government-held data.

Developed in partnership with Aboriginal and government stakeholders through extensive consultation and shared decision-making processes, the Policy is the first key deliverable under the NSW 2025-28 Priority Reform 4 (PR4) and Aboriginal Data Sovereignty and Governance (ADS&G) program of work. It establishes a consistent, transparent, and culturally-responsive approach to data sharing across NSW Government.

Key features of the Policy include "yes-first" approach to data sharing; clear guidance on who can request data and the types of data that may be shared; and transparent timeframes for responding to data requests based on request complexity.

The Policy will support NSW Government's commitment to share data and information at a regional level with Aboriginal Communities. Access to timely and meaningful data is critical for self-determination, as it enables Communities to better understand local needs, identify priorities and make evidence-based decisions that improve the lives of their people.

Alongside the Policy, access to data is enabled by the ongoing NSW Data Connector Service for Aboriginal Communities (the Service) and the Aboriginal Data Discovery Portal. Since the Service was established in January 2023, it has received over 235 data requests from Aboriginal Peoples and Communities. 63% of these requests have been from ACCOs.

In addition, the NSW PR4 and ADS&G program of work are commencing delivery of all other key milestones under the NSW 2025-28 NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan.



Figure 2 - Uncle Brendan's Smoking Ceremony at the Policy Launch Event, Bangarra Dance Theatre

Attachment E – Preamble to the Agreement to Implement the Data Policy Partnership

Our people carry the stories of our Ancestors. These stories hold more than sixty thousand years of knowledge: of the seasons, the stars, the movement of waters and winds, and the ways we live with each other and with Country. They tell us where we have been and guide us towards where we need to go.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, data is more than numbers or reports. It is our knowledge, our stories, and our aspirations for the future. Data is layered, interconnected, and intrinsically linked to every element of our lives and being. Yet governments have traditionally used our data to tell stories about us, stories that are not ours.

Through this Partnership, we will share our knowledge so governments can better understand how we see data, and how it connects to the needs of our communities. We will continue to tell our stories in ways that celebrate our strengths and empower our people to shape the path ahead.

At the heart of this work is our drive to uphold the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance. By placing our people at the centre of how data is governed, we ensure it becomes a foundation for truth-telling and better outcomes.

Together with our government agency partners, we will work to build what is needed to make this work real, so that data has a positive impact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. In this Partnership, we will walk forward together, with trust and respect.

Complete Agreement to Implement

The full DPP Agreement to Implement can be accessed online, at:

https://www.abs.gov.au/about/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/data-policy-partnership

Attachment F – Closing the Gap Community Data Projects – Enablers and Barriers

Themes	Enablers	Barriers	Actions for consideration
Partnerships and governance	**Clear accountabilities** • Appropriate lead organisation identified by community. • Appropriate lead government agency (or agencies with clearly defined roles) identified. • Clear authorising environment for the appropriate level of shared decision making. **Foundational governance** • Communities build successful governance foundations before specifying data priorities. • Appropriate investment to establish the partnership relationship before delivery. **Government readiness** • Lead government agency can support data sharing and/or access that meets community needs – e.g. appropriate and meaningful disaggregation, formats that are usable and useful for community. • Government partners are transforming to support culturally safe partnerships. **Shared goals** • Communities and government can agree on the priority data needs and objectives.	• Lack of clear partnership and decision-making arrangements stalls most meaningful progress. • Western knowledge systems and government processes prioritised at the expense of valuing communities' contributions. • Community unsure of the role and value-add of government partners. • Government holding the power for decision making and resourcing, leading to communities being disempowered and disengaged. • Community data needs are not well understood, and the government partners are not appropriately resourced to improve this understanding.	• Government agencies to provide a detailed list of resources, including what funding is available for CDP lead Government and community partners. • Share evidence of effective practices so that organisations can support informed business cases to secure funding. • Have a clear Terms of Reference where each participating partner's role and responsibilities are clarified. • Identify where power sits for decision making, make clear the authorising environment within the partnership. • Before establishing a CDP, consider if a CDP is the best mechanism to meet community data needs, or if other initiatives are more appropriate. • If establishing a new CDP, consider existing place-based initiatives that already have an emerging data need. • Ensure that time to establish the partnership foundations is factored in when starting any new CDP.

Themes	Enablers	Barriers	Actions for consideration
	• Community views are heard and given equal weight by government partners. **Ways of working** • All partners follow the Closing the Gap strong partnership elements. • Stable resourcing over time to build strong relationships between people.		
Evaluation	• Measures of success are defined with communities and have full community buy-in, including with community specific adaptation as needed. • Communities are supported to lead culturally appropriate evaluation for their CDP. • Governments increasing understanding of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance, supporting more meaningful impact evaluation.	• Rigid requirements to use nationally standard and prescriptive measures of success, meaning that these measures do not reflect community expectation or experience. • No involvement with community to define success measures or evaluation. • Poor choice or inappropriate implementation of evaluation methods.	• Communities are resourced by government to undertake self-evaluation of their CDP. • Governments should ensure flexibility in evaluation approaches, within consistent principles. • Government partners to evaluate effectiveness of data sharing pathways for CDPs, with consideration to what data was shared and the length and complexity of the data sharing process.
Funding and sustainability	• Clear funding source identified. • Funding supports the long-term nature of partnership. • Responsible government portfolio(s) remain aware of their accountabilities for their CDP. • Funding is provisioned to communities in a timely manner.	• Government budget cycles that do not support CDPs. • Lack of clarity around government funding availability and accountability for CDPs. • Funding tied to a specific or rigid model that may not be appropriate for the community.	• Governments should re-consider the current funding allocation for CDPs and extend sustainably. • Governments could adopt a co-portfolio sponsored arrangement, such as the NSW Shared Data Access Policy.
Community voice	• Community engagement, involvement, assessment and reflection on CDPs. • Resourcing for community members, including investment in their capability, to	• Community members not having sufficient access to CDPs, resourcing or meaningful ways to participate in CDPs.	• Identify and resource greater community engagement in CDPs and other PR4 community data initiatives.

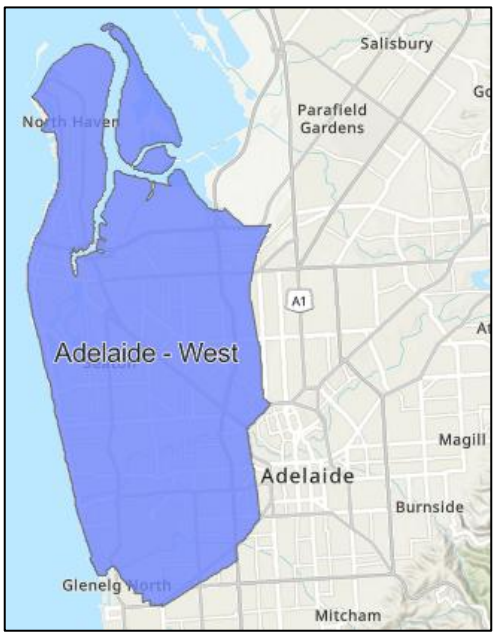
Themes	Enablers	Barriers	Actions for consideration
	actively engage in the establishment and ongoing running of CDPs. • Government partners with strong cultural capability to appropriately and effectively respond to community needs.	• Inflexibility to tailor CDP approaches to meet the data needs of communities. • Standardised reporting that doesn't appropriately reflect community voices.	• Invest in government cultural capability to improve the identification of opportunities to elevate community voices in decision-making for CDPs and other PR4 community data initiatives.
Data literacy and capability	• Communities are confident and know what data they need to ask for. • Communities collecting their own data where appropriate. • Direct community involvement and leadership in storytelling with data. • Government partners understanding community data needs, enabling them to offer alternatives if suggested data does not exist. • Government partners sharing experience of CDPs and other PR4 community data initiatives, to upskill other government agencies.	• Governments and communities thinking and speaking differently about data, with limited efforts to find the 'common ground'. • Governments not understanding community data capability needs.	• Relevant government staff attend workshops on data needs of First Nations communities to improve their understanding of: ○ what data is needed and why ○ how to support communities to identify and locate relevant data. • Hold community workshops on pathways for understanding the available government held data that could align with their community priorities, and how community can access and use these datasets. • Invest in capability building (Priority Reform Two or PR2) for communities so that data initiatives can be community-led and self-determined.
Policy and Legislation	• Ability to work within current legislation to provide access to data and share data with communities with appropriate protections and safeguards. • Strong understanding of the policy context and authorising environment to deliver practical and innovative solutions. • Fit-for-purpose and flexible data solutions that meet community needs while	• The data sharing legislative landscape is highly complex and reform is yet to improve this outlook, making it challenging for CDPs and other cross-jurisdictional data initiatives to navigate. • Government agencies not actively identifying, designing and implementing solutions to data access.	• Identify where policy alternatives may support community data access or sharing for CDPs while legislative reform progresses. • Raise understanding about the legislative provisions that make data sharing more challenging for CDPs by sharing case studies.

Themes	Enablers	Barriers	Actions for consideration
	balancing government obligations – e.g. a high-level dashboard of community defined indicators vs access to de-identified unit-record level data. • Early, ongoing and resourced community involvement in the policy process, including problem identification, goal setting and solution design. • Some growing recognition of Indigenous data needs in legislation – e.g. in recent review of DAT Act.	• Lack of government transparency on CDPs progress. • Low risk appetite in government to try new approaches. • Lack of involvement from communities in early policy design.	• Identify what government policy change needs to occur to improve access to government-held data for communities. • Bring communities in early to help identify and understand policy problems and possible solutions.

Attachment G – Data Policy Partnership Member Case Studies and Lessons Learned – South Australia

The relationship between Place-Based Partnerships (PBPs) under Priority Reform 1 (PR1) and Closing the Gap Community Data Projects (CDPs) under Priority Reform 4 (PR4) is central to achieving meaningful community driven outcomes. Community partners have consistently emphasised that partnerships and data sharing cannot be treated as separate reforms.

In South Australia, the PBP and CDP are co-located in the Western Suburbs of Adelaide. This has created a practical opportunity to align community priorities, partnership governance and data access. The South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations Network (SAACCON) and the South Australian Government (SA Gov) have worked together to build a cohesive approach, with each initiative reinforcing the other.



Shared governance arrangements between SAACCON and the SA Gov underpin both the PBP and CDP. Community and government representatives work together to identify priorities, guide data activities and oversee implementation. This approach supports transparency, shared accountability and ensures that data sharing is driven by community priorities.

The PBP has provided a mechanism for community-identified priorities to be agreed and progressed through a shared decision-making process. Through the CDP, SAACCON has undertaken community consultation to identify priority data needs for Aboriginal communities in the Western Suburbs, informing discussions with government agencies about what data should be shared, why it is needed and how it can be used to support local aspirations. Early data-sharing activities are helping build a stronger evidence base to support local planning, monitor outcomes and inform decision-making on issues including child and family wellbeing, youth engagement and community safety.

This work has strengthened the relationship between community and government, while also supporting shared learning about data literacy, local needs and community-led evidence. By explicitly linking data provision to community priorities, the South Australian approach helps ensure that data sharing is not driven simply by what is available to government, but by what communities have identified as useful and

necessary. This supports the intent of PR4 by promoting data that is relevant, granular and able to inform decisions at the regional and local level.

A Community Data Project that is not embedded in PR1 principles may struggle to achieve legitimacy, relevance and impact. Without formal partnership arrangements and shared decision-making, control over data can remain with government, increasing the risk of misaligned priorities, reduced community trust and limited use of data for local decision-making.

Equally, partnerships that operate without integrated data may lack a shared evidence base, making it harder to demonstrate progress, identify emerging issues and hold all parties accountable for collective outcomes. When partnership and data are brought together, communities are better positioned to shape priorities, test solutions and track progress in ways that reflect local aspirations. Separation of PBP and CDP also increases duplication and inefficiency, reinforces power imbalances by distancing communities from data decisions, and weakens accountability for collective outcomes.

Ongoing engagement between SAACCON and the SA Gov is building trust through regular dialogue, shared decision-making and a commitment to community-led priorities. Bringing the PBP and CDP together creates a consistent forum to review progress, discuss data insights and agree on future actions, strengthening relationships and supporting Aboriginal self-determination over the long term.