PO Box 4093
Ainslie ACT 2602
T (02) 6230 1775
F (02) 6230 1704
anglicare@anglicare.asn.au
www.anglicare.asn.au

26 October 2026

Closing the Gap Review 2026
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601
By email: ctg.review.2026@pc.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2026

Anglicare Australia welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2026.

The Anglicare Australia Network is comprised of community service organisations working with people and communities across Australia. Our Network includes organisations that work alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community-controlled organisations to deliver services, build partnerships, and support community-led initiatives.

We welcome the Review's focus on the four Priority Reforms. Progress against the socioeconomic targets is important, but lasting change will depend on whether governments genuinely share decision-making power, strengthen the community-controlled sector, transform their own practices, and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to control information about them.

Our submission focuses on the Priority Reforms. It is informed by our experience working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community-controlled organisations, as well as our commitment to reconciliation with First Peoples and to their self-determination.[i] We call on governments to move beyond commitments to partnership and self-determination by transferring decision-making power, investing in the community-controlled sector, and strengthening accountability for implementing the Priority Reforms.

Priority Reform 1: Formal partnerships and shared decision-making

Anglicare Australia is committed to genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community-controlled organisations to enable shared decision-making and First Nations leadership.[ii] Across the country, organisations in the Anglicare Australia Network have local partnerships covering a range of areas.

Anglicare Northern Territory is a leader in partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community-controlled organisations. They have partnerships with several organisations delivering services for children and young people, housing and accommodation support, family violence prevention, and mental health support.[iii] Through their Partnership Support Service, they also support community-controlled organisations with co-design, project management, grant and report writing, policy and system support, and training and workforce development.[iv] In addition, their Staff Assistance, Learning and Training Program provides coaching to people working in regional and remote communities in the Northern Territory.[v]

Anglicare Western Australia's Derby Good Life Project was developed through a partnership with Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation and Nunga Group Women's Aboriginal Corporation.[vi] It aims to strengthen the wellbeing of children, families, and the broader community in Derby by supporting initiatives identified by local Aboriginal organisations and community members, including cultural healing activities, food security initiatives, community connection, and support for local leaders.[vii] The project is grounded in deep listening and community-led decision-making, with local Aboriginal organisations and leaders working together to identify priorities, shape responses, and guide implementation.[viii]

Brotherhood of Saint Laurence, another Anglicare Australia Network member, holds the license for the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY), and is committed to transitioning delivery of the program to community-controlled organisations to ensure it is culturally safe and meets the needs of First Nations communities across the country.[ix] HIPPY supports early-childhood learning in the home by working with families and children in the pre-school years.[x] Brotherhood of Saint Laurence developed a five-stage transition process, which has resulted in thirty-two community-controlled organisations now delivering HIPPY across forty-three First Nations focused sites.[xi]

These examples demonstrate that genuine partnerships require more than consultation. They work when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations have the authority to identify priorities, shape programs, and make decisions about how services are delivered. Governments should apply these lessons to their own partnerships. This means ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations have decision-making power from the outset, rather than being consulted after governments have already determined their priorities.

Anglicare Australia recommends that governments strengthen their partnership arrangements to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations have genuine authority over priorities, funding decisions, and service design, with resources to support their participation.

Priority Reform 2: Building the community-controlled sector

Anglicare Australia supports the transfer of services and decision-making power to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations. This is essential to self-determination and to building services that are culturally safe, accountable to communities, and responsive to local needs. However, governments must do more than redirect funding from mainstream providers to community-controlled organisations. They must invest in the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to take on and sustain these services.

This means providing long-term funding for workforce development, infrastructure, governance, and organisational capacity. It is particularly important when organisations are expanding their services or taking on specialised functions, such as financial counselling. In rural and remote communities, governments must also address barriers such as shortages of housing, transport, and infrastructure.

These challenges should not be used to delay the transition to community control. Instead, they demonstrate why governments need to invest in making these transitions successful. As SNAICC has argued, governments must move beyond transferring services on a case-by-case basis and adopt a more systematic approach to strengthening the community-controlled sector. [xii]

Anglicare Australia recommends that governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to develop and fund long-term transition plans, backed by dedicated investment in workforce development, infrastructure, and organisational capacity.

Priority Reform 3: Transforming government organisations

Transforming government organisations requires more than new programs or funding commitments. It requires governments to change the way they work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising that many of the inequalities experienced today are linked to the ongoing impacts of colonisation, dispossession, and racism. Governments should engage in truth-telling and ensure facts inform policy development, service design, and decision-making. They must also take active steps to identify and address systemic racism within their institutions, recognising its role in creating barriers to access, undermining trust, and contributing to poorer outcomes.

Too often, governments continue to make decisions about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples without adequately sharing power or accountability. Genuine transformation requires governments to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, cultural safety, and shared decision-making across their systems, rather than relying on consultation alone.

Anglicare Australia recommends strengthening accountability for the Priority Reforms by requiring departments and agencies to demonstrate how they are embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, cultural safety, truth-telling, anti-racism, and shared decision-making.

Priority Reform 4: Shared access to data and information at a regional level

Anglicare Australia supports the goal of enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have access to, and ownership of, data and information about their communities. Having control over the data and information that governments collect about them is essential to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and to ensuring that policies and services respond to community priorities.

Too often, governments collect and use information about communities without giving those communities meaningful control over how the information is interpreted or used to inform decisions. Shared access to data must therefore go beyond providing communities with government reports and statistics. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations must be able to shape what information is collected, how it is interpreted, and how it informs policies, services, and funding.

Anglicare Australia recommends that governments strengthen arrangements for Indigenous data sovereignty by ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community-controlled organisations have a leading role in collection, interpretation, ownership, and use of data.

Anglicare Australia thanks the Productivity Commission for undertaking this consultation and we look forward to continued engagement as the process progresses. We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss anything raised in this submission. Please do not hesitate to contact us at: anglicare@anglicare.asn.au.

Yours sincerely,

Kasy Chambers
Executive Director

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[i] Anglicare Australia (2025) Position Statement: First Nations Justice.
[ii] Ibid
[iii] Anglicare Northern Territory (2026) Partnerships.
[iv] Anglicare Northern Territory (2026) Partnership Support Service.
[v] Anglicare Northern Territory (2026) Staff Assistance, Learning and Training Program.
[vi] Anglicare Western Australia (2026) The Derby Good Life Project.
[vii] Ibid
[viii] Ibid
[ix] Brotherhood of Saint Laurence (2026) Lessons from the Transition of HIPPY to Local First Nations Organisations.
[x] HIPPY Australia (2026) Program Details.
[xi] Brotherhood of Saint Laurence (2026) Lessons from the Transition of HIPPY to Local First Nations Organisations.
[xii] SNAICC (2026) Doing Things Differently: Funding ACCOs to Keep Families Together.

