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Commissioners
Closing the Gap Review 2026
Productivity Commission
GPO Box 1428
Canberra City ACT 2601

Lodged via online submission: www.pc.gov.au/inquiries-and-research/closing-the-gap-review-2026/make-submission

Dear Ambassador,

Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap 2026 – Call for submissions

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Productivity Commission's second review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) is Australia's largest national union and professional nursing and midwifery organisation. In collaboration with our state and territory branches, we represent the professional, industrial and political interests of more than 356,000 nurses, midwives and care workers across the country. Our members work in all settings where health and aged care is delivered, including Aboriginal community-controlled health services, public and private hospitals, primary health care, and residential and community aged care.

Nurses and midwives are the largest health workforce in Australia and are often the first, and sometimes the only, health professionals available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The ANMF is committed to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and regards closing the gap as a national priority. We write to register our ongoing interest in the Agreement and in the findings of this review, and to outline the areas of most relevance to our members.

A strong community-controlled health workforce (Priority Reform 2)
The ANMF supports Aboriginal community-controlled health services being funded and supported to function within, and advocate for, their communities. Nurses and midwives are central to the services that these organisations deliver, yet they are often paid less than colleagues in other primary health care settings. Addressing and rectifying this pay gap is a priority for the ANMF, and requires sustainable, adequate and long-term funding so that community-controlled services can attract and retain a skilled workforce.

We are particularly interested in how the review assesses the workforce actions in the sector-strengthening plans and whether current and future funding arrangements enable a stable, skilled workforce.

Culturally safe mainstream health and aged care services (Priority Reform 3)
Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People receive at least some of their care through mainstream health services. All health services must address institutional racism and provide culturally safe and respectful care, with the concept of community control and the cultural rights, beliefs and values of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples incorporated into how care is delivered. The ANMF supports mandatory, funded cultural safety training for all nurses, midwives and care workers, and the inclusion of the National Anti-Racism Framework in enterprise agreements. We welcome the review's focus on transforming government organisations and the services they fund.

Growing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery workforce
A larger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing and midwifery workforce is essential to culturally safe care and to the success of the Agreement. Advancing its growth is a priority for the ANMF. We support government commitment to incentives and assistance that attract Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People to nursing and midwifery careers, and continued mandated content on the history, culture and health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in nursing and midwifery education. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nurses and midwives should be part of curriculum and policy development at local, state and national levels. We recognise the Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) as the peak representative body and recommended provider of funded cultural safety education and training.

Maternal health and the early years
The ANMF welcomes the review's in-depth focus on outcomes for children and young people. Midwives, and child and family health nurses, are fundamental to supporting healthy mothers, babies, and to children thriving in their early years. We advocate for equitable access to safe, affordable and culturally safe health and maternity care, an urgent focus on prevention and primary health care, and the expansion of nurse- and midwife-led models of care, including community-led maternity care such as Birthing on Country.

Elders and aged care
The ANMF supports the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aged Care Commissioner as a permanent statutory office. We note the recommendation of the Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review that care for Elders and older people be considered for inclusion in the Agreement. Safe, culturally appropriate aged care depends on mandated staffing and skills mix on every shift, care minutes protected in legislation, and funding tied to care, including in remote and community controlled services.

The ANMF's commitment to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's health is ongoing. We look forward to the release of the draft report in April 2027. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this submission on behalf of our members. Should you require further information on this matter, please contact Catelyn Richards, Federal Assistant Secretary, ANMF Federal Office, Melbourne,

Yours sincerely

Catelyn Richards
Federal Assistant Secretary