**Submission to the 2026 Review of the Closing the Gap Policy**

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## Remoteness and the Gap

Over the life of the Policy, the annual reports by the Productivity Commission (PC) have stated that gaps in targets have proved harder to close in the remote regions of the country. More recently the PC has provided 'dashboards' that disaggregate the data, giving one figure for which a target is being met in the non-remote parts, and a second figure, for which the same target is being met in the remote. Invariably, the figure for the remote is lower than the figure for the non-remote. Let's call the figure for the non-remote N (the larger value) and the figure for the remote R (the lower value), by subtracting R from N gives us some notion of the 'size' of the difference across the remote/non-remote divide; it points to the effect or impact that remoteness has on meeting each target. We can think of this as the 'Remoteness Effect' (RE). Table 1 shows the targets data ranked by each target's RE, as calculated above.

Note that the RE varies considerably by target with the highest Remoteness Effect being on the housing target and the lowest on life expectancy. The impact of remoteness on achieving the Cert III target is almost eight time higher than that for improving life expectancy. This shows that remoteness does indeed impact on meeting targets and also that the impact may well vary by some *quality* of the target.

**Table 1. Percentage met of each Target met, ranked by remoteness (a high factor = strong influence of remoteness)**

| Target No. | Policy Target Name | N % Achieved Non-Remote | R % Achieved Remote | E Remoteness Factor N-R |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 9 | Have approp. sized housing | 87.8 | 45.0 | 42.8 |
| 6 | Complete Cert III | 56.6 | 17.4 | 39.2 |
| 7 | Youth in Emplt & Edcn | 64.1 | 30.2 | 33.9 |
| 5 | Achieving Year 12 | 75.7 | 41.7 | 34.2 |
| 8 | Econ participation | 62.1 | 35.0 | 27.1 |
| 4 | Thriving children | 36.9 | 16.5 | 20.4 |
| 17 | Digital/internet access | 92.5 | 71.7 | 20.8 |
| 3 | Are in childhood edcn | 96 | 88.1 | 7.9 |
| 1 | Life expectancy | 72.5 | 67.3 | 5.2 |

Notes

1. Other targets do not have the data disaggregated by remoteness.

## Non-remote/remote existence

The Closing the Gap Policy (CGP) assumes that all Indigenous and non-Indigenous people live within the same economic regime. This is manifestly not so. Most Indigenous

people and all non-Indigenous people live in the towns and cities of the *industrialised* and non-remote Australia, where they exist by selling their labour; i.e. within the same economic system. However, a significant minority of Indigenous people live in discrete, remote Indigenous communities where there are no industries and therefore an extremely constrained labour market. (Art is possibly the only Industry for which remote communities are renowned. However not all communities produce art, and in those communities that do, not all residents are artists.) Indigenous remote communities are not identified with any other commercial output or industry. As a result, in these communities, people have existed under a benign form of colonialism, based on a series of government remote make-work or survival[1] programs and subsidies.

Hence, although all non-Indigenous people live under the same economic regime, Indigenous people do not. Indigenous peoples exist under two very different economic regimes: the non-remote industrialised regime and the remote, community and non-industrialised regime. The Gap Policy does not recognise and consider this difference and therefore will never be able to explain the Policy's results nor make any sensible recommendations to meet the intended outcomes.

The PC will only ever be able to make sensible and logical comments on closing the so-called gaps if it first recognises the two-part economic Indigenous reality. Indeed, it should consider splitting the present policy in two: the remote sector and the non-remote sector.

[1] Given the absence of industries, these strategies can only ensure people survive, not thrive.