16 December 2022

**Ninth meeting of the Joint Council on Closing the Gap**

**Communique**

Joint Council members were welcomed to Gadigal Country by Brendan Kerin of the Sydney Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Joint Council members shared updates on Closing the Gap and outlined strategies for embedding the Priority Reforms in 2023 within their respective jurisdictions, with a particular focus on Priority Reform Three – *Transforming Government Organisations*.

Members considered and approved the establishment of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages Policy Partnership and a Housing Policy Partnership. Policy partnerships identify opportunities to work more effectively across governments, reduce gaps and duplication, and improve outcomes under Closing the Gap*.*

Justice Policy Partnership co-chairs submitted their first Annual Report reflecting on the lessons learned. The Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership co-chairs provided an update on its first meeting.

A high level analysis of all Parties’ Annual Reports was considered by Joint Council, highlighting where Parties could work better together to achieve outcomes under the National Agreement. It was agreed that ownership of the National Agreement must be built across all areas of government, particularly through the development of Implementation Plans and Annual Reports.

Members agreed urgent action is required to accelerate progress in relation to:

* + identifying an independent mechanism(s) with oversight of the transformation of mainstream agencies and institutions
  + progressing data and information sharing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities at a regional level
  + addressing Closing the Gap targets that are currently identified as *not on track*, through developing and embedding jointed up approaches between Parties.

Joint Council was updated on the progress of government parties reviewing spending on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs and services to inform reprioritisation opportunities to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, particularly to community-controlled organisations.

Government Parties updated Joint Council of their progress working with jurisdictional Peaks to confirm the scope, treatment, allocation and partnership actions towards achieving the inland waters target in their jurisdiction, as well as treatment of Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves.

Government Parties agreed to make genuine efforts to look for opportunities to promote and embrace shared decision-making through structural and process changes.

Government Parties agreed to work closely with, and regularly reviewing opportunities to ensure resourcing and capacity constraints faced by their respective jurisdictional Peak are alleviated in an effort to encourage genuine partnership and promote effective decision-making.

Joint Council were provided an update from the Productivity Commission on the three-yearly review of Closing the Gap.

Joint Council agreed to provide an update to First Ministers on the work of the Council, particularly in relation to the implementation of the Priority Reforms, and calling on First Ministers to embed partnership and shared-decision making approaches, as well as embedding changes to the way governments collect and share data at the regional level with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

Parties agreed to hold next year’s Joint Council meetings in Darwin in June and Melbourne in November.

**Attendees – Coalition of Peaks representatives**

| **Name** | **Representing** | **Organisation** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Pat Turner AM | Joint Council  Co-Chair | Coalition of Peaks Lead Convenor |
| Robert Skeen | NSW | Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council New South Wales |
| Nerita Waight | VIC | Victorian Aboriginal Executive Council (AEC) |
| Wynetta Dewis | QLD | Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service |
| Vicki O’Donnell OAM | WA | Aboriginal Health Council of Western Australia (AHCWA) |
| Scott Wilson | SA | South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON) |
| Graeme Gardner | TAS | Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre (TAC) |
| Paula McGrady | ACT | ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ACT ATSIEB) |
| Dr John Paterson | NT | Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Council Northern Territory (APONT) |
| Muriel Bamblett AO | Education and Families | SNAICC – National Voice for our Children |
| Donnella Mills | Health and Wellbeing | National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) |
| Jamie Lowe | Economic Development | National Native Title Council (NNTC) |

**Attendees – Government Parties**

| **Name** | **Jurisdiction** | **Title** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hon Linda Burney MP | Commonwealth | Minister for Indigenous Australians |
| Hon Ben Franklin MLC | NSW | Minister for Aboriginal Affairs |
| Ms Christine Couzens MLA | VIC | Parliamentary Secretary, First Peoples |
| Hon Craig Crawford MP | QLD | Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships |
| Hon Dr Tony Buti MLA | WA | Minister for Aboriginal Affairs |
| Hon Kyam Maher MLC | SA | Minister for Aboriginal Affairs |
| *Apology from Hon Roger Jaensch MP* | TAS | Minister for Aboriginal Affairs |
| *Apology from Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA* | ACT | Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Torres Strait Islander Affairs |
| Hon Selena Uibo MLA | NT | Minister for Aboriginal Affairs |
| Cr Linda Scott | Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) | President, Australian Local Government Association |