

## Policy context

### NIHEC

NIHEC was established in 2008 to bring together the Australian Government; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community including the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health sector; and the broader health sector to work towards the attainment of equal health status between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous peoples.

NIHEC's role is to provide national leadership in responding to the Government's commitment to closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage by:

- Assisting in the development and monitoring of health related goals and targets; and
- Providing advice to Government on working towards the provision of equitable and sustainable health outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

Please follow this link to view the [NIHEC Terms of Reference](#).

### National Congress of Australia's First Peoples

On 22 November 2009, the Australian Government announced the establishment of a national representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the [National Congress of Australia's First Peoples](#). The purpose and role of the body is:

- Formulating policy and advice
- Advocacy and lobbying
- Ensuring the presence of, and contributing to, mechanisms to monitor and evaluate government performance.

### Close the Gap Coalition

In 2006 a coalition of Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations was formed. In December 2006 the Coalition published an Open Letter calling for an end to Indigenous health inequality in 25 years. The Coalition now includes over 40 organisations and is working on a [Close the Gap Campaign](#).

### Council of Australian Governments

In December 2007, the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) committed to closing the gap in Indigenous disadvantage. COAG set 6 targets to monitor progress:

- "Closing the life expectancy gap within a generation
- Halving the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade
- Ensuring all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education within five years
- Halving the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy within a decade
- Halving the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent rates by 2020
- Halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non - Indigenous Australians within a decade."

COAG has established 6 National Agreements including two of direct relevance to Indigenous health:

- The [National Indigenous Reform Agreement](#) sets out a plan of action across a range of service areas: health, early childhood, schooling; economic participation (skills and workforce development); healthy homes; safe communities; governance and leadership.
- The new [National Healthcare Agreement](#) includes a focus on Indigenous health.

COAG has established a number of National Partnership Agreements committing \$4.6 billion to Indigenous affairs. Partnership Agreements of specific relevance to Indigenous health include:

- [National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes](#)
- [National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development](#)
- [National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery](#)
- National Partnership Agreement on the Northern Territory
- National Partnership Agreement on the East Kimberley

## **Reforming the health system**

Australian governments are currently considering a number of reforms to the Australian health system. Key documents of relevance include:

- [National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission](#)
- [National Primary Health Care Strategy](#)
- [National Preventative Health Strategy](#)

## **Reporting and monitoring progress**

The reporting environment for Indigenous health includes:

- [Reports to the Council of Australian Governments \(COAG\)](#)
- [The Prime Minister's annual statement to Parliament](#)
- [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework](#)
- [Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage.](#)

NIHEC has developed a *National Target Setting Instrument* for monitoring progress towards the health related goals and targets that support the Government's commitment on closing the gap in Indigenous health. Monitoring will be conducted through a range of targets identified by NIHEC.