

MEDIA RELEASE

2 August 2024

To Close the Gap, governments and their bureaucracies must change the way they do business

The update by the Productivity Commission on key closing the gap targets shows a worrying trend. The data says that the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians imprisoned, taking their own life and losing children to out-of-home care have all increased in the first Closing the Gap report since the voice referendum was defeated.

The [National Health Leadership Forum](#) endorsed all of the recommendations in the Productivity Commission's final report on its Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (released January 2024). This Report highlighted the ongoing failure of governments and their bureaucracy to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

"The vision and outcomes sought within health and the other social determinants under the proposed National Agreement to Closing the Gap is possible. The continuation of a 'do as I say' approach, and not accepting that current business practices by government and their public services needs to change is hurting us" said Karl Briscoe, Chair of the NHLF. "The Productivity Commission Report and the recent data demonstrates the public sectors' inability to think and act differently."

Partnership and shared decision-making arrangements were central to the development of the National Agreement and are intrinsic to the outcomes being sought under each Priority Reform Area. The failures and the continuing health gaps are largely due to government decision-makers not accepting that they do not know what is best for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. "It is time for all Governments to step back and let Aboriginal peoples to decide how to solve the problems and to deliver the solutions and for governments to support us in this work" said Karl Briscoe, Chair of the NHLF and CEO of NAATSIHWP.

The [2021-2031 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan](#) is about a new way of doing business by governments. The Health Plan is a key milestone in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health policy focus with its focus on culture, and the relationship between culture and good health and wellbeing. The National Agreement on Closing the Gap goes further and highlights a new way of doing business across all areas of government and to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and our ways of doing business.

"The Productivity Commission's Report validates strengths-based approaches and by accepting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations as part of the process we can finally start to close the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples", Mr Briscoe said.

The NHLF calls for government agencies to respect self-determination, culture, and to partner with Indigenous-led organisations to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The community-led Close the Gap Campaign [annual reports](#) showcase successful self-determination and community-led services, programs and initiatives that improve life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The way to change the data is to change the way we do policy in practice to ensure the National Agreement on Closing the Gap can be achieved.

NHLF Chair: Karl Briscoe – Chief Executive Officer – National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners (NATSIWHP)

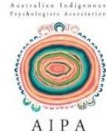


NHLF Leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander healthcare
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MEMBERS



Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association
<https://aida.org.au/>



Australian Indigenous Psychologists' Association
<https://indigenoupsychology.com.au/>



Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives
<https://catsinam.org.au/>



Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia
<https://www.gayaadhuwi.org.au/>



The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Foundation
<https://healingfoundation.org.au/>



Indigenous Allied Health Australia
<https://iaha.com.au/>



Indigenous Dentists' Association of Australia



The Lowitja Institute
<https://www.lowitja.org.au/>



National Association Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workers and Practitioners
<https://www.naatsihwp.org.au/>



Torres Strait Regional Authority
<https://www.tsra.gov.au/>



National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council

Association of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Physiotherapists