



# Budget 2023–24

## Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

---

### Delivering a better future

The Government is working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve a better future by identifying ways to make a practical difference and help close the gap.

The Budget invests \$1.9 billion in initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Key areas of focus in this Budget include:

- further building community partnerships and the community-controlled sector
- protecting traditional knowledge and culture
- supporting economic opportunity through education, skills development and employment
- better care for long and healthy lives
- critical investments in housing, infrastructure and justice services
- strengthening efforts to end family violence
- support for the plan for *A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia*.

In addition to targeted investments, a range of programs aimed at supporting the broader population will include specific commitments to support Closing the Gap outcomes, particularly shared decision making and genuine partnerships.

The Government is delivering on its commitment to implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full.

The Voice Referendum will provide all Australians with a historic opportunity to recognise the First Peoples of Australia in the Constitution by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

The Voice will be empowered to make representations to the Parliament and the Executive Government about matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, enabling better decisions and outcomes.

The Government will also extend existing funding to enable the investment of \$20 million to progress Regional Voice arrangements.

This Budget builds on the \$1.2 billion invested in the October 2022 Budget to improve the lives and economic opportunities of First Nations Australians.

This included \$314.8 million for health and wellbeing initiatives, \$100 million for housing and essential infrastructure on Northern Territory homelands, \$99 million to improve justice outcomes and \$83.8 million to develop and deploy microgrid technology across First Nation communities.

Later this year, we will have an opportunity to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First peoples through a Voice to Parliament.

The Voice will help bring about practical change by providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a direct line of advice to the Australian Parliament and Government.

Listening to grassroots solutions will help Close the Gap and improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In 2023, constitutional recognition through a Voice can unite Australians and make a practical difference



**The Hon Linda Burney MP**  
**Minister for Indigenous Australians**  
**May 2023**

This year marks 30 years since the *Native Title Act 1993* passed the Parliament and 50 years since the establishment of the Northern Land Council.

This year also marks 15 years since Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered the National Apology to the stolen generations and the Government secured the agreement of all states and territories for the National Indigenous Reform Agreement, which set out the original Closing the Gap targets.

## The National Agreement on Closing the Gap

Closing the Gap requires a collective effort across all levels of government in partnership with First Nations people, communities and organisations.

A key element of the National Agreement is the 4 Priority Reforms that highlight the need to change the way governments work with First Nations people.

1. Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making
2. Building the Community-Controlled Sector
3. Transforming Government Organisations
4. Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level

This Budget re-affirms the Government's commitment to deliver on the Priority Reforms to deliver sustained, practical actions to improve the lives and economic opportunities of First Nations Australians.

The Government is investing in actions to meet the Closing the Gap socioeconomic targets and outcomes, which includes provision of funding to states and territories for regional initiatives.



## Working in partnership

To further the Government's commitment to enable self-determination, this Budget commits to establishing additional policy partnerships. These will build on existing partnerships across a range of areas, including justice, early childhood care and development, wellbeing, and housing.

The Government is also committing to meaningful engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on a range of initiatives across all portfolios. This includes engagement on the transition to a clean energy economy with First Nations communities. This Budget funds the establishment of a Net Zero Authority, which will facilitate this collaboration.

At the 2022 Jobs and Skills Summit, the Government committed to working with members of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap to examine a policy partnership on economic participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This work will continue throughout 2023.

### Building the community-controlled sector

Building a strong and sustainable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled sector will enable the delivery of high quality and culturally appropriate services to First Nations communities.

To support First Nations Elders, this Budget commits \$7.6 million to building the capacity of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) to potentially provide aged care services.

## Supporting First Nations Culture

*Closing the Gap Outcome 16: Cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing*

The Government is investing \$11 million to establish a First Nations Languages Policy Partnership and conduct a National Indigenous Languages Survey. The partnership coincides with the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022–2032. An Australian Action Plan will be presented at the Australian launch of the International Decade at the PULiiMA Indigenous Language and Technology Conference in August 2023.

On 30 January 2023, the Government announced its new National Cultural Policy – *Revive*, which recognises and respects the crucial place of First Nations stories and works in Australian arts and culture. As part of *Revive*, the Government will establish a new First Nations-led body within Creative Australia to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have autonomy over decisions and investments.

The Government is investing \$13.4 million to protect First Nations cultural expression and artists through the introduction of stand-alone legislation. This investment will also provide artist mentorship and training programs.

To protect traditional knowledge, the Government is providing \$3.8 million for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to digitise and store at-risk audio-visual material.

## Economic Opportunities

The Government is committed to economically empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This involves ensuring equal choice and access to education, labour force participation and financial independence.

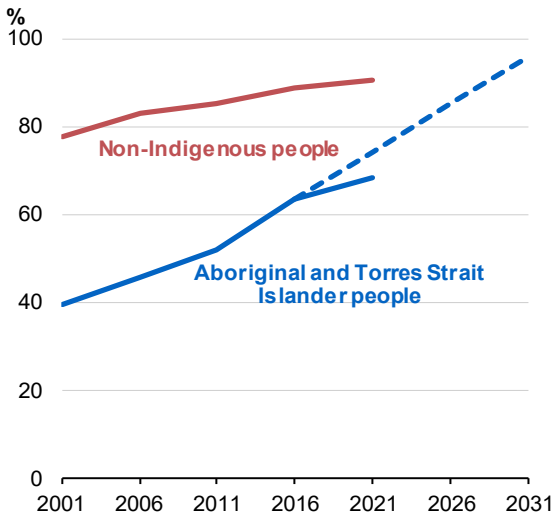
### Education

*Outcome 5: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full potential*

*Outcome 7: Youth are engaged in employment or education*

Recent productivity Commission analysis shows improvement in the proportion of First Nations people attaining year 12 or equivalent qualifications. Still, more progress is needed to meet the target of 96 per cent by 2031.

### 20–24 years old attainment of year 12 or equivalent qualification with trajectory to target



Source: ABS, Productivity Commission

### Supporting improved educational outcomes

To deliver equitable education outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the Government works with communities, states and territories, education authorities and schools.

The Government provides recurrent funding for every student enrolled at school through the Quality Schools package, which includes a specific loading for First Nations students. In 2023, the Commonwealth will provide an estimated \$500 million under this loading.

This Budget, the Government is investing in specific activities to support First Nations students.

- \$38.4 million to support high quality, culturally appropriate primary and secondary education for First Nations children, with a focus on remote areas.
- \$21.6 million in 2023–24 to extend the *Indigenous Boarding Providers* grants program to provide tailored support to First Nations students completing schooling away from home in 2024.
- \$32.8 million to support the Clontarf Foundation to continue to engage First Nations young men in school through sport.
- Refining the scope for the Building Boarding Schools on Country Program to support the construction of a new boarding school at Windjana Gorge, and an upgrade to the Yiramalay Studio School in the Kimberley Region, Western Australia.

The scope of the City-Country Partnerships Program will also be expanded to support partnerships between high performing metropolitan schools and remote schools with a high proportion of First Nations students.

### Real Jobs and Economic Opportunities

*Outcome 6: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways*

*Outcome 7: Youth are engaged in employment or education*

*Outcome 8: Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities*

The Government is investing in several specific measures to support the strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- \$46.0 million will be provided to support ACCOs to deliver locally tailored foundation skills training projects for up to 2,000 First Nations people each year by mid-2027.
- As part of its election commitment, the Government will replace the Community Development Program with a new and improved program to support job seekers in remote Australia. \$97.7 million is being provided to support development of a New Jobs Program trial and to meet the sustained service demand that arose during COVID-19.
- \$40.6 million will support the continuation of the *Indigenous Ranger Biosecurity Program*, which provides employment opportunities for First Nations people carrying out caring for Country activities in Northern Australia.
- \$0.9 million in 2023–24 will be provided to the Australian Indigenous Doctors’ Association to continue to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander doctors and medical students.
- \$5.7 million to extend the *Time to Work Employment Services* program in non-remote areas for one year.

In this Budget, a number of mainstream skills development and workforce initiatives will prioritise support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

- As part of its commitment to build, support and retain the early childhood education and care workforce, support will be prioritised for First Nations educators to increase representation in the sector.
- Support for First Nations businesses will be provided through the Buy Australian Plan, which will reform the approach to Government procurement and assist Aboriginal and Torres

Strait Islander businesses to win more government contracts.

- The Government is delivering on its commitment from the Jobs and Skills Summit to re-design the Australian Apprenticeships Support Services to assess and meet the needs of First Nations apprentices.

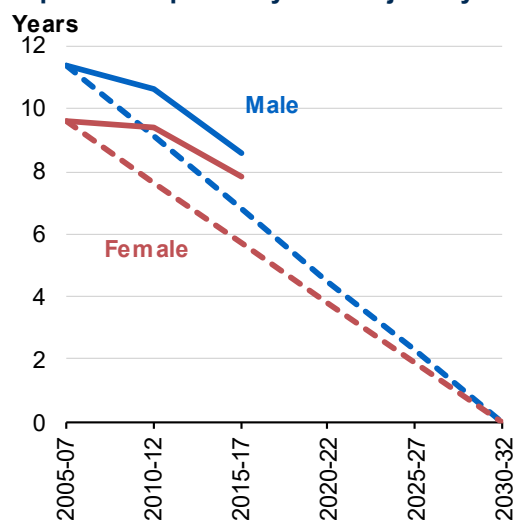
## Better Health Care

*Outcome 1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long and healthy lives*

*Outcome 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong*

Progress to close the gap in life expectancy by 2030 is currently not on track. The Government is committed to accelerating progress to close the gap in health outcomes.

### Gap in life expectancy with trajectory to target



Source: ABS, Productivity Commission

The Government is investing \$3.5 billion to triple the bulk billing incentive to support more doctors to bulk bill consultations for children under the age of 16 and Commonwealth concession card holders. This will have a positive impact for the over 310,000 First Nations concession card holders.



The Budget is providing \$141.2 million to expand the *Tackling Indigenous Smoking* program to prevent the uptake and reduce the prevalence of vaping.

\$57.3 million of funding has also been allocated to extend COVID-19 testing and vaccinations for First Nations Australians to 30 June 2024.

The Government is investing in a range of other measures to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

- \$238.5 million to improve First Nations cancer outcomes through building capability and growing the healthcare workforce.
- \$28.2 million to support the delivery of 30 dialysis units for First Nations peoples in regional and remote Australia with end-stage kidney disease.
- \$16.7 million to promote increased uptake of health assessments by First Nations people, which has reduced since the start of COVID-19. This will assist more First Nations people to receive essential support for the management of chronic and mental health conditions.
- \$1.4 million to expand the delivery of the Strong Born program to provide information about fetal alcohol spectrum disorder.
- \$14.1 million for a 2-year partnership with the Northern Territory Government and the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory to enhance and develop activities supporting community safety and social emotional wellbeing on alcohol and drug use.

### Aged care and disability support

To support aged care services that meet the needs of our Elders and enable them to remain connected to community, the Government will provide \$4.1 million to develop mandatory cultural awareness training for aged care staff and \$1.7 million in 2023–24 to appoint an interim First Nations Aged Care Commissioner. A further \$52.1 million will increase funding available to aged care providers in very remote areas under

the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flexible Aged Care Program.

The Government is also investing \$8.1 million to support providers to transition to new accountability measures and obligations under the proposed new Aged Care Act.

\$7.6 million of funding will be provided to support piloting alternative approaches to commissioning National Disability Insurance Scheme services to improve access to support in remote and First Nations communities. The Government will also extend individual advocacy support for First Nations people with a disability.

## Critical Investments

This Budget will provide funding to support a range of critical investments in housing, infrastructure and justice initiatives for First Nations Australians.

### Housing

*Outcome 9: People can secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need*

This Budget provides targeted housing and accommodation assistance.

- \$111.7 million will support a new one-year partnership with the Northern Territory Government to accelerate building of new remote housing to address the worst overcrowding.
- \$20.8 million is being provided to prevent the decline of Aboriginal Hostels Limited, which is a critical provider of culturally safe accommodation for First Nations people who need to travel to regional and urban areas to access services.
- \$45.1 million over 8 years from 2023–24 is being delivered for housing and related infrastructure works in Wreck Bay Village, Jervis Bay.

## Clean Drinking Water and Food Security

In addition to the \$150 million in funding for the National Water Grid fund, the Government is providing \$9.2 million to consult on and design an enduring arrangement for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to own, access and manage water in Australia.

\$92.8 million is also supporting essential water, sewerage and electrical services to Mutitjulu, a remote community on the lands of the Anangu people.

The Government is also investing \$11.8 million for the National Strategy for Food Security in Remote First Nations communities to make essential food more affordable and accessible.

## Justice Support Services

*Outcome 10: Adults are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system*

*Outcome 11: Young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system*

*Outcome 12: Children are not overrepresented in the child protection system*

This Budget extends the Closing the Gap Evidence and Outcomes Fund, which provides funding to Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations to deliver improved and co-designed projects that reduce the rates of over-representation of First Nations children in out-of-home care and violence against First Nations women and children.

\$3.4 million has been allocated to extend funding for one year for the 4 Custody Notification Service (CNS) Providers whose contracts expire this year. These CNS Providers are delivering services across 5 states and territories to ensure First Nations people taken into police custody get legal advice and a health and wellbeing check to reduce deaths in custody.

## Family Safety

*Outcome 13: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe*

*Outcome 14: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing*

The Government is committing \$194 million to support the dedicated *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan*, which is part of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*.

This will provide \$145.3 million for activities to address immediate safety concerns for First Nations women and children and \$17.6 million for community-led family safety initiatives.

The Government is also investing \$23.2 million to deliver 7 place-based, trauma-aware and culturally responsive healing programs aimed at early intervention and recovery.

Funding of \$11.8 million will be provided to develop a standalone First Nations National Plan for Family Safety, including to establish a national Peak Body for First Nations family safety. The Plan is being developed in partnership to ensure the voices and perspectives of First Nations people are at the centre of all efforts to end family violence.

The Government will also provide \$68.6 million over 2 years to support Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Providers to deliver legal and non-legal support for First Nations victim-survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence. These services have long-standing relationships with the communities in which they operate and deliver culturally safe services to First Nations victim-survivors of violence.

## Investing in Central Australia

In addition to the Government's \$48.8 million investment announced on 24 January 2023, the Government has committed \$250 million to deliver the plan for *A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia*.

This investment in the Northern Territory will be delivered in partnership with the local community because we know the most effective solutions come from the local community. Funding to support the Plan includes a wide range of initiatives, including:

- \$50 million under the Infrastructure Investment Program for community and regional infrastructure in Central Australia.
- \$40.4 million for On-Country learning to improve school attendance, engagement and learning outcomes for students in Central Australian schools.
- \$23.5 million to expand the Child and Youth Assessment and Treatment Service and fund the building of a Health Hub in Alice Springs.
- Justice reinvestment projects, youth services, community safety, junior rangers and digital connectivity improvements, including new and upgraded broadband or mobile services.



*Treasury acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.*

## Transforming Government

The Government recognises that it must lead system-wide change to transform government organisations by partnering with and elevating the voices of First Nations Australians.

### Ambassador for First Nations People

On 7 March 2023, the Government announced the appointment of Australia's inaugural Ambassador for First Nations People. This new position ensures, for the first time, that Australia will have dedicated Indigenous representation in our international engagement.

### Wiyi Yani U Thangani National Summit

The first ever Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) National Summit will be held from 9 to 11 May 2023. The Summit is stage 3 of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) project, which will bring together over 900 First Nations women delegates for decision-making, innovation and celebration. This work will inform whole-of-government policies and strategies to support social and economic security for First Nations women and girls, and work towards the development of the National Framework for Action.

### Working towards making the Australian Public Service (APS) a model employer

The Government has committed \$3.4 million to increase First Nations employment in the APS to 5 per cent by 2030. The Government is also delivering a range of strategies and publications in 2023 that will consider the opportunities and challenges faced by First Nations Australians. These include the National Gender Equality Strategy, the Early Years Strategy, Measuring What Matters and the Employment White Paper.