ACT CLOSING THE GAP REPORT 2015

PROGRESS OUTCOMES FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE
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Terminology
The ACT Closing the Gap Report 2015 provides outcome reporting, and describes ACT Government funded initiatives, for people who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander in the ACT. The ACT Government generally describes Australia’s first peoples as ‘Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander’ and in this report describes Australians of other backgrounds as ‘non-Indigenous’. This report also uses the terms ‘Indigenous’ when discussing data in text or in tables, when quoting other sources, specific program or policy titles, or third party data. The term ‘Indigenous’ is understood to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, in the understanding that they are not a homogenous group.
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

The ACT Government acknowledges the Ngunnawal people as traditional custodians and custodians of the Canberra region and that the region is also an important meeting place and significant to other Aboriginal groups. The ACT Government respects the continuing culture and the contribution that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make to the life of this city and surrounding region.
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MINISTER’S MESSAGE

The ACT Government is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to close the gap between life outcomes and opportunities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their non-Indigenous peers in Canberra and the surrounding region.

As Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, I introduce the ACT Closing the Gap Report 2015, the third in a series of reports that provide the ACT context to the national Closing the Gap agenda agreed by all jurisdictions through the Council of Australian Governments.

As in previous ACT Closing the Gap reports, this report highlights programs, initiatives and key performance data on the ACT’s progress on improving outcomes for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

While there is still much work to be done, in the pages of this report you will also find much to be proud of and to celebrate, from the record growth in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the ACT public service; leading the country in closing the gap in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates; to the community bus which not only helps those most in need to reach essential services, but supports elders, young people and families to attend social, cultural and sporting events.

The ACT government continues to work collaboratively with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to find solutions to problems which are a legacy of past policies and decisions.

In April 2015, the Chief Minister; the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and the Chair of the Elected Body signed the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018. The Agreement is the result of extensive consultation with government and community stakeholders, led by the Elected Body. It recognises the unique context and aspirations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the ACT and commits the ACT Government to working in partnership with the community to build strong foundations and resilient families, and to support them to achieve their goals.

With the implementation of the Agreement, the ACT Closing the Gap reports will change, transitioning to become the annual performance reports for the Agreement. I look forward to the future Closing the Gap reports, which will chart progress towards achieving the quality life outcomes outlined in the seven key focus areas of the Agreement.

By working together, much can be achieved in the areas of cultural identity, health, education, safety, leadership, economic participation and a more connected community, a perspective I believe I share with all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of the ACT.

Dr Chris Bourke MLA
Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ELECTED BODY MESSAGE

On behalf of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB), I welcome the ACT Closing the Gap Report 2015.

Our unique model of representation was established under the ACT’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008 to enable our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the ACT to have a strong democratically elected voice that represents their interests and aspirations.

ATSIEB’s priorities for the remainder of our third term are:
• increased effective engagement with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
• addressing the high rates of incarceration
• addressing the high rates of children in the care and protection system
• developing a framework to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to address their complaints
• addressing systemic processes within the ACT government.

The signing of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018 committed the ACT Government to reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and non-Indigenous people in the ACT.

The Agreement sets out the commitment of the ACT Government, our service partners, ATSIEB, and most importantly the community, to work together to recognise and respond to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT and surrounding region.

The ACT Closing the Gap Report 2015 captures expenditure, a snapshot of the National Indigenous Reform Agreement performance targets, and the seven key focus areas of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018, but actual progress is slow.

We continue to acknowledge and emphasise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s needs, and that solutions to address those needs must come from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities here in the ACT.

ATSIEB cannot deliver change alone: we expect continued goodwill and collaboration from government and the broader community to achieve positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Ms Diane Collins
Chair
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body
The ACT Closing the Gap reports were commissioned by the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to provide a valuable evidence base on how the ACT is meeting its commitments and is accountable for improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.

These reports track progress against the Council of Australian Governments Closing the Gap targets and indicators, along with other ACT Government indicators of wellbeing. These reports also bring together a great breadth of information on ACT Governments policies, initiatives and funding commitments for services aimed directly at contributing to more equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities in the ACT.

Around 1.5 per cent of the ACT population are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. It is the fastest growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of any state or territory, and as elsewhere in Australia, it has a younger age structure and lower scores on socio-economic indices in comparison to non-Indigenous Canberrans.

On national comparisons of outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the ACT is doing well. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT are more likely to have higher levels of education and training, greater participation in the workforce, lower rates of unemployment and to own or to be purchasing a home compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people elsewhere in Australia. But even in the ACT serious disadvantage still persists. Particularly concerning, as elsewhere in Australia, is over-representation in the child protection, youth justice, and criminal justice systems; and higher rates of smoking and chronic illness, principally diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

In 2008, COAG endorsed six ambitious targets to ‘close the gap’ for health, education and economic participation outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians. All governments agreed that these targets are closely inter-related and that positive change would require long-term action across a range of areas as part of a holistic approach to addressing the needs and concerns of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities.

Most high level outcomes, like the Closing the Gap targets, are likely to take some time to improve, even if effective policies are implemented, because of the lag time between implementation and outcomes. For example, the positive effects of early childhood education are well documented, but the impact of a positive early childhood experience will be most apparent in later school achievement and employment outcomes.

COAG agreed to a number of underlying progress indicators, set trajectories for achieving the targets and endorsed the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) to frame the task of Closing the Gap. The NIRA sets out the policy principles, objectives and targets and performance framework that all governments have agreed on to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing.

National progress in achieving the National Indigenous Reform Agreement Closing the Gap targets

The latest available Closing the Gap data is from 2013–14. Nationally, this data indicates that the young child mortality target is on track. However, targets for life expectancy; reading, writing and numeracy; and employment are unlikely to be met. The gap in Year 12 attainment narrowed, with 60% of the target realised, but there are doubts about the definition of the measure and whether the current rate of progress can be maintained. Additionally, while the target for early childhood education was not met, good progress was being made.

ACT Closing the Gap progress highlights

The 2013–14 Closing the Gap results delivered some statistically significant positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT in comparison to other jurisdictions:

- In 2014, the ACT met the progress points on the trajectories to halving the gap in all years in reading and numeracy, except for Year 7 reading.
• The 2013–14 results showed significant progress in Year 12 attainment or equivalent for the ACT. Between 2008 and 2012–13, the gap for 20–24 year olds who had attained Year 12 or equivalent in the ACT decreased by 26.1 percentage points. The ACT was the only jurisdiction where the change in the gap was statistically significant.

• In 2012–13, the ACT was the only jurisdiction which was on track to closing the employment to population ratio gap.

• From 2008 to 2012, the smoking rate in the ACT reduced by two percentage points, from 29.8% to 27.6%. While the national gap was 26.1 percentage points in 2012–13, the ACT gap was the lowest of all jurisdictions at 15.0 percentage points.

Further information on ACT Closing the Gap results are set out in tables on pages 22 to 25.

Progress and ongoing challenges

Additional data findings
In addition to the Closing the Gap results, this report also includes ACT progress against a significant collection of administrative and population data for the ACT. A number of indicators show steady improvements; however, there are other areas where significant gaps in outcomes persist.

Employment in the ACT Public Service
• At June 2015, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees made up 1.43% (299 employees) of the total ACT Public Service workforce of 20,921 employees, coming close to the population ratio of the ACT.

• From June 2014 to June 2015 the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees increased 18.2%, the biggest single-year increase in the previous five years and a larger increase than the percentage increase of both the total ACT Public Service headcount (1.8%) and the total ACT Public Sector headcount (0.7%).

• Over the five years from 2011 to 2015, the average salary of ACT Public Service employees identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander increased by 23.2%, the biggest single-year increase in the previous five years and a larger increase than the percentage increase of both the total ACT Public Service headcount (1.8%) and the total ACT Public Sector headcount (0.7%).

• Over the five years from 2011 to 2015, the average salary of ACT Public Service employees identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander increased by 23.2% in salary over the five year period, and a 35% reduction in the pay gap.

• However, in 2015 the average salary for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander public servant was $6,631, or 8% less than the average ACT Public Service salary.

Leadership
• Increasing support for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB) was demonstrated at ATSIEB’s third term elections in July 2014. A total of 377 votes were admitted to the count, representing more than twice the number of votes cast (173) at the 2011 ATSIEB elections.

Health
According to the ACT Chief Health Officer’s Report 2014:
• Tobacco use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents in the ACT is declining, but remains consistently higher than that reported by other ACT residents.

• High smoking rates are persisting amongst young pregnant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (68% for those aged less than 20 years, and 59% for those aged 20–24 years).

• Significantly more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students report having ever used an illicit substance in their lifetime compared to their ACT counterparts.

• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were hospitalised for chronic kidney disease at around four times the rate of other ACT residents.

• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were hospitalised at almost four times the rate of their ACT counterparts for diabetes, and at almost twice the rate for circulatory diseases.

• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also had significantly more potentially preventable hospital admissions (33.7 per 1,000 population) than their ACT counterparts (17.4 per 1,000 population).

Feeling Safe
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and adults are still over-represented in the ACT statutory and justice systems:
• Around one quarter of the children and young people in care in the ACT are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for approximately 17.7% of people in the ACT criminal justice system.

• In 2013–14, although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people made up 3% of the population aged 10–17 in the ACT, they represented 26% of all young people under youth justice supervision on an average day. That is, they were 12 times as likely to
be under youth justice supervision during the year as compared with other young people. This was lower than the national rate (15 times as likely).

Despite these concerning statistics, progress has been made in diverting young people from the youth justice system. From 2011–12 to 2013–14 the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the youth justice system decreased across a number of categories:
- youth justice supervision down by 35%
- community-based supervision down by 35%
- youth in detention down by 47%
- the average time spent in custody (nights) reduced by 36%.

Homelessness

• In the ACT, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing homelessness services during 2014–15 was approximately 15% of the total number of people accessing the services. This is an increase of 1% from the 2013–14 rate of 14%.

Focused and effective services

Mainstream services such as health, education, legal, housing, and community services are the services principally responsible for achieving better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, to improve the effectiveness of mainstream services, it is important to invest in initiatives that are targeted and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities. The aim is to enhance accessibility, the way services are delivered and the rates at which they are utilised. The Council of Australian Governments has stipulated through the National Indigenous Reform Agreements that governments must maximise links between Indigenous-specific and mainstream services.

The 2014–15 period saw the implementation or consolidation of a number of key policies, initiatives and funding commitments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The main focus, Strong Families, and its underlying strategic outcome areas are a strong iteration of the needs and aspirations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the ACT.

Part Two of this report sets out ACT Government service information for the 2014–15 period in chapters addressing each of the seven key focus areas of the Agreement: cultural identity; healthy mind, healthy body; feeling safe; connecting the community; employment and economic independence; education; and leadership. These chapters are summarised below.

CULTURAL IDENTITY

Strong cultural identities underpin Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing and progress in other areas. The 2014–15 period saw a variety of programs across ACT Government directorates to strengthen understanding and conserve the cultural heritage of the region, and to support the diverse cultural identities of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have come to call the ACT home, including:

• heritage projects to promote the history of Aboriginal occupation and culture in the ACT, including coordinating and producing Aboriginal heritage interpretative sites
• progress on cultural heritage policies such as repatriation of Aboriginal artefacts, consultation with representative Aboriginal organisations, and requirements for archaeological investigations
• ‘on country’ programs, including the Murumbung (Aboriginal) rangers, Aboriginal ranger-guided tours, the Aboriginal Fire Management Framework, and the Namadgi Rock Art Working Group
• an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural grants program
• further work on a genealogy project, and consultations to develop culturally safe pathways for addressing disputes about traditional cultural identity
• targeted library services, programs and collections, including assistance to people searching for their family history, and implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services (the ATSILIRN Protocols).

In addition to these programs, ACT Government directorates worked to build respect for people, cultures, and survival through Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week activities, and through directorate Reconciliation Action Plans.
HEALTHY MIND, HEALTHY BODY
In 2014–15, the ACT Government pursued initiatives responding to higher levels of mental health concerns; chronic disease such as diabetes and cardio-vascular disease; smoking; and the need to overcome barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people using health care services:

• the development of an ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan for 2016–2020 to address chronic disease, mental health and social and emotional wellbeing, and community health, while also improving service delivery and access, and increasing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce and improving data quality
• further work on the establishment of a culturally safe, trauma-informed residential alcohol and other drugs rehabilitation service, the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm
• smoking cessation activities ranging from smoking in pregnancy research, though a youth outreach program, to a social marketing campaign, and an update of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tobacco Control Strategy
• Aboriginal liaison services across the government hospital and mental health service systems
• funding for Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service to provide hearing, dental, mental health, dual diagnosis, youth detox and corrections outreach services
• funding to Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation to provide outreach and case management services covering preventative health, mental health, and wellbeing
• implementation of the federally funded Indigenous Teenage Sexual and Reproductive Health and Young Parent Support Program, including the Core of Life pregnancy, birth and early parenting life education program; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexual Health Youth Outreach Project; and the Street Beat Youth Outreach Network
• maintaining the positive trend in infant and child health, the ACT continued its focus on child and maternal health services, through funding Winnunga’s dedicated antenatal service, the Aboriginal Midwifery Access Program (a benchmark program for parents and newborns) and the expansion of the Growing Healthy Families program in child and family centres
• implementing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Action Plan 2013–18.

FEELING SAFE
The ACT Government is working to reduce the significant over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, youth and adults in the ACT’s statutory care, and youth and criminal justice systems, and to provide better transitions back to family and community. In 2014–15, the ACT Government had in place or implemented a number of strategies that address these complex issues:

• The Second Implementation Plan (2IP) of the ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy 2011–17
• A Step Up for Our Kids—One Step Can Make a Lifetime of Difference (Out of Home Care Strategy 2015–2020)
• Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT 2012–22
• ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Partnership 2015–2018.

Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention or on community-based orders included support services at Bimberi Youth Justice Centre; Narrabundah House Indigenous Supported Residential Facility (NHISRF) intensive case management for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males on community-based justice orders in transition or being diverted from custody; the Children and Young people Official Visitor; and an Indigenous Guidance Partner to help young people optimise restorative justice processes.

During 2014–15, the ACT Government funded the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), the Women’s Legal Centre (ACT and Region), and Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service to provide support and legal assistance services, for example the voluntary surrender program, interview friends program, a duty lawyer at the ACT courts and pre- and post- Galambany Court support. (Galambany Court is a culturally appropriate court service provided by the ACT Magistrates Court.)

In addition to the educational, therapeutic, social and emotional programs available to all detainees, the Alexander Maconochie Centre and Community Corrections ran support programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees in 2014–15 covering case management, counselling and training support, a Yarning Circle, Elders and Community Leaders Visitation Program, Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management, and a Caring for Country men’s group.

Across the justice and policing sectors Indigenous liaison officers were, and continue to be, in place to assist individuals, families and community to interact with these services.
In 2014–15, the ACT Human Rights Commission led a number of human rights initiatives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the ACT and Jervis Bay.

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY
Well targeted, responsive and welcoming services keep people and families connected and participating in their communities. In 2014–15, the Community Services Directorate continued major reforms to how it works and partners with the community, in particular through the Better Services Human Services Blueprint, which aims to make it simpler for people to get the right support at the right time, especially when different service organisations are involved.

Dedicated ACT Government services or funding to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, children in care, people with disabilities, or those seeking housing focused on early intervention, intensive support when needed, and overcoming barriers to accessing services. Some examples of culturally proficient, early intervention, outreach or intensive support programming delivered during 2014–15 included:

- funding through the Child, Youth and Family Services Program to Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation for information, referral, counselling and remedial services, and an NDIS outreach service to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people get services and supports
- Growing Healthy Families program delivered at three child and family centres using a community development model to provide culturally safe services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the areas of health, early childhood development and parenting, including links to universal health and community services.
- funding to ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS) Gulanga program for targeted homelessness support and outreach services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness
- Funding to Inanna Inc. to deliver Indigenous Supported Accommodation Service and Boarding House Network to complement mainstream homelessness services.

At 30 June 2015, 8.6% of the total public housing tenancies (861) were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. During 2014–15, Housing ACT:

- committed $1 million for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Upgrade Project for home extensions for families experiencing overcrowding, or for those needing modifications for injury, disability or ageing
- further funding for the design of five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Older Persons Housing units for ‘aging in place’ to be completed in 2016.
- Funding to Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service for a Housing Liaison Service and a Home Maintenance Program to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access appropriate accommodation and sustain their tenancies.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE
During 2014–15, the ACT Government maintained focus on increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the ACT Public Service. The Head of Service set new annual diversity targets that will extend until 2018–19 and there was renewed emphasis on practical attraction and retention programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees through the Public Service Graduate Program and an Inclusion Employment Pathways (IEP) program pilot focused on traineeships, cadetships and school-based work experience programs.

In 2014–15, the ACT Government continued to fund grants and scholarships to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people gain skills or return to work, for example through the Women’s Return to Work grants program; 57 successful applications for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship grants program for professional study and training; and the ConnXtions, Job Readiness Support Program for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people at risk of homelessness, re-offending or long-term unemployment.

A number of directorates implemented dedicated employment strategies or included employment objectives in their Reconciliation Action Plans. For example, in 2015, Territory and Municipal Services Directorate (TAMS) implemented a range of employment strategies including identified positions, a professional development scholarship, and a place in the TAMS Manager Development Program.
During 2014–15, the ACT Government supported Indigenous enterprise initiatives such as continued sponsorship of the ACT NAIDOC Business of the Year Award, and funding for the Canberra Business Yarning Circle. Subsequently, the CBR Innovation Network developed an ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Development and Entrepreneurship Model with a workshop series, regional trade show, documentary series, and an Indigenous business chamber to begin in 2016.

The ACT Government also continued promotion of Supply Nation businesses which are small to medium Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander companies looking to supply government and private businesses. The ACT Government promotes ACT-based Supply Nation businesses through the Government Procurement and Capital Works website.

**EDUCATION**

In 2014–15, the ACT Education and Training Directorate had in place a strong suite of programs to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early childhood education, school attendance, literacy and numeracy and Year 12 achievement. To support literacy and numeracy development, the Tutorial Support Scheme and Supplementary Programs were available to students. The Action Inquiry Program was implemented to develop teacher expertise in literacy and numeracy.

To support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student engagement with learning and successfully complete Year 12 or an equivalent vocational qualification, ETD provided the Student Aspirations Program, Mura Achievement Awards, Senior Secondary Scholarship Program, Tertiary Scholarship Program, and Flexible Learning Options.

In 2014–15, a number of programs from primary through secondary school were developed to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories, cultures, and languages across all subject areas. The Directorate provided free-of-charge professional development cultural awareness workshops for Directorate and registered training organisation staff.

In 2014–15, the Koori Preschools were run at five sites in the ACT, along with the Early Entry Program for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander preschoolers. Therapy ACT provided speech and hearing therapy to all Koori Preschools, and speech and occupational therapy services to Jervis Bay School, aided by two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainee technical officers.

A key strategy of the ACT Government is to enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment participation, through a training system that delivers skills relevant to employment markets. During 2014–15, the Education and Training Directorate and the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) supported hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with vocational and education programs to overcome barriers to learning and achievement, most importantly through the Yurauna Centre, the CIT’s dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and student support centre.

**LEADERSHIP**

Leadership and participation in decision making are important factors in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The ACT Government is committed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans developing and consolidating the skills to lead an empowered, resilient community.

In 2014–15, the Community Services Directorate awarded four Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership scholarships and the Education and Training Directorate ran two diversity mentoring and Indigenous leadership and governance training programs.

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB), established by legislation in 2008, and unique in any Australian state or territory, gives the highly diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT a means to be heard and to hold government to account. During 2014–15, the ACT Government continued its secretariat support of ATSIEB as it pursued a comprehensive consultation, advocacy, and policy innovation schedule. ATSIEB also conducted hearings on ACT Government service delivery. ATSIEB’s third term election, held in July 2014, demonstrated increasing community support, with more than double the number of votes received at the 2011 elections.

In April 2015, ATSIEB and the ACT Government co-signed the *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018* and the *ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Partnership 2015–2018*, both of which were advocated by ATSIEB, and were developed and will be monitored through close partnership between government, ATSIEB and the community.
Going Forward

During 2016, the ACT Government will develop the whole-of-government implementation plan and outcomes framework for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–18. The implementation plan and outcomes framework will align with and build on existing initiatives and focus on actions that address the seven key focus areas and quality life outcomes of the Agreement.

The quality life outcomes of the Agreement are long term objectives, so priority areas for action may need to change over time, based on measured progress and considerations of what works. The ACT Government will continue to identify and monitor changes ‘on the ground’, and maintain an evidence-based approach to managing priorities through the outcomes framework.

Program, service use and expenditure information documented through this and the previous ACT Closing the Gap reports have begun the work of gathering the evidence about initiatives that make a difference and will help set meaningful ACT-specific targets and objectives.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Subcommittee, established by the ACT Public Service Strategic Board, is tasked with setting strategic directions and monitoring ACT Government performance and accountability in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The Subcommittee will oversee the development of the implementation plan and outcomes framework for the Agreement and will continue to auspice future performance reporting.

The national policy agenda

During 2014 and 2015, the national policy agenda refocused approaches to advancing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing, success and recognition as Australia’s first peoples. The Commonwealth launched the new Indigenous Advancement Strategy, with $4.8 billion funding aimed at improving school attendance, employment and community safety.

In May 2014 and December 2015, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), agreed to two more Closing the Gap targets aimed at lifting preschool enrolment and school attendance. At its December 2015 meeting, COAG endorsed a new strategic framework to put Indigenous economic participation at the heart of the national agenda, recognising that economic participation, underpinned by cultural participation, leads to improved social outcomes, and will contribute to several of the Closing the Gap targets.

In 2015, the Commonwealth also announced a Referendum Council to lead a national consultation process on recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Commonwealth Constitution.

The ACT is well placed to respond to these emerging national policy priorities. Through the implementation of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–18, and other targeted plans and strategies, the ACT Government has in place and will continue to promote a number of initiatives, providing health, education, cultural, leadership, employment and enterprise building opportunities. New initiatives funded through the 2015 and 2016 ACT budgets reflect this consolidation of focussed and effective services.

The ACT Government will also continue to refine its approach to service delivery, implementing more trauma-informed and culturally sensitive services.
PART ONE
ABOUT THIS REPORT

This is the third ACT Government Closing the Gap report. This series of reports was requested by the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs to bring together information on ACT Government programs and initiatives, and track progress towards better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT, information that is useful for policy analysis and planning.

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body similarly requested a report that would present, in a consolidated manner, the ACT’s progress towards the priorities of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the ACT, including useful data.

The 2012 and 2013 reports provided this information in the context of the ACT’s efforts and progress towards achieving the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) Closing the Gap targets. The 2012 and 2013 reports were structured around the NIRA’s seven strategic areas for action or ‘Building Blocks’—Early Childhood, Schooling, Health, Safe Communities, Economic Participation, Healthy Homes, Leadership and Governance.

The NIRA Closing the Gap targets focus national effort on improving health, education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, specifically addressing life expectancy; child mortality; early childhood education; literacy and numeracy; Year 12 attainment; and adult employment outcomes. The ACT Closing the Gap reports were an agreed way of building the evidence base and monitoring progress against these COAG targets, and monitoring delivery of initiatives associated with several National Partnership Agreements to ‘Close the Gap’, which have now expired.

This report, the 2015 ACT Closing the Gap report, continues the NIRA performance reporting for the ACT, but its structure has been adjusted to reflect the key focus areas of the new ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018, which now provides the strategic framework for all aspects of policy and service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.

Future ACT Government ‘Closing the Gap’ reports will be the reporting tool for the new Agreement’s implementation plan and outcomes framework, which will be developed during 2016.

Part One of this report provides the national and ACT context for this report through overviews on:
- the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the ACT
- COAG’s Closing the Gap targets and associated performance framework
- ACT progress towards the Closing the Gap targets
- the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018 and its relationship to the National Indigenous Reform Agreement.

Part Two reports on ACT Government priorities and initiatives undertaken in 2014–15, including where possible expenditure and service use information, and summaries of Closing the Gap data health, economic participation and education indicators and measures.

The chapters in Part Two are arranged according to the seven key focus areas of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018—cultural identity; healthy mind, healthy body; feeling safe; a connected community; employment and economic independence; education; and leadership. These focus areas incorporate the scope and focus of the NIRA ‘Building Blocks’, but in line with ACT community priorities, they also broaden the scope of the ACT Closing the Gap report to include aspects of government programming for the first time, for example cultural heritage programs, natural resource management and library programs and services.

Context for this report

It is important to monitor impacts and efforts towards improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people because they are over-represented among Australians facing disadvantage across a range of metrics. This disadvantage has proven to persist over time and across generations.

This kind of persistent disadvantage has immediate social, economic and cultural determinants, but also deeper underlying causes. We now acknowledge the intergenerational trauma resulting from the ongoing effects of colonisation including loss of oss of land and language, the erosion of cultural and spiritual identity, forced removal of children, and racism and discrimination. This is not unlike countries with similar colonial histories, for example of Canada, the United States, or New Zealand.
In 2006, ‘Closing the Gap’ began as a social justice campaign aimed at addressing unacceptable gaps in health and life expectancy between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians. It has since developed into a national long-term approach that acknowledges that improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians requires intensive and sustained effort from all levels of government, as well as the private and non-government sectors, communities and individuals.

Disadvantage can have multiple causes and multiple pathways to improvement. To achieve change, action is required across a number of areas as part of a comprehensive, holistic approach. Because of the lead time between the design and roll out of programs, and the time when improvements can be measured, analysed and reported, significant change cannot be expected in the immediate term; years of sustained effort and investment may be required before meaningful change is seen.

Since 2008, COAG has agreed and implemented the ‘Closing the Gap’ policy, as one of seven major national reform priorities. The National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) provides an integrated framework for the task of Closing the Gap, setting out the policy principles, objectives and targets and underlying performance framework/indicators that all governments have agreed on to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing.

While the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the ACT as a whole compares well with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations in other jurisdictions, significant disadvantage persists and is reflected for example in over-representation in the justice system, in children in out-of-home care, homelessness statistics, and income levels.

In committing to achieving the ‘Closing the Gap’ targets, the ACT Government has acknowledged that the objectives are long term and will require continuous improvement, financial investment and a whole-of-government approach.

In the ACT, this commitment is led by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Subcommittee to the ACT Public Service Strategic Board, which is tasked with monitoring ACT Government performance in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and leading whole-of-government approaches. The Subcommittee has overseen the development of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018 and is responsible for the ACT Closing the Gap reports.

Information in this report

There are two kinds of information in this report to inform design and delivery of policies:

- ACT performance data, principally against the NIRA Closing the Gap targets and indicators, and also other administration and population data for the ACT, illustrating the nature of disadvantage, and identifying sources of wellbeing
- descriptions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-specific ACT Government programs and initiatives, including service use and expenditure information where available.

Performance information

Key performance information in this report is largely from the NIRA Performance Reports on national and jurisdictional progress towards Closing the Gap targets. These reports assess whether changes in information are statistically significant and whether the pace of change, if maintained, is sufficient to meet the Closing the Gap targets.

It is important that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy similar levels of physical, emotional and social wellbeing as that enjoyed by other Australians. However, it is difficult to measure progress against such broadly stated outcomes, so it has been necessary to develop the targets, indicators and measures to track progress. The Closing the Gap targets and indicators provide a high level view of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing, indicating where progress is being made, where more change is needed, and importantly where action should be maintained in the long term.

The six Closing the Gap targets and six headline indicators make up the top layer of indicators. They measure important high level outcomes, which typically require coordinated, long term action to achieve significant change. A headline indicator is a direct indicator of progress against the target, and thus indicates progress towards an outcome.

The next level down of indicators, the progress indicators, measure shorter-term outcomes arising from targeted action in strategic areas for action. Progress indicators provide population and service information closely linked to achieving the targets. The logic is that improvement measured by these strategic change indicators will lead to changes in the high level targets, demonstrating progress toward the priority outcomes.
Progress indicators can also be useful proxies where data for the headline indicator may not be available. For example, in the ACT, due to low numbers it is not possible to report on infant mortality, but it is possible in the ACT to report on the underlying progress indicator, the proportion of low birth weight babies. Supporting measures are useful for interpreting and contextualising the headline results.

Summaries of the ACT’s overall Closing the Gap performance are on pages 22 to 25. The chapters on health, education and economic participation provide more detailed summaries of the latest available data for ACT progress against the NIRA Closing the Gap performance indicators, including comment on the quality of the indicators where appropriate, and trend data where it is available.

DATA SOURCES

Information in this report has been compiled both from several publicly available sources which are referenced in Appendix A, and also from unpublished ACT Government service use and expenditure data.

The Closing the Gap data is released by the Commonwealth Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGPS). Closing the Gap data comes from a variety of sources such as surveys, administrative collections and censuses. This means that the latest available data for each indicator and measure are available or updated according to different collection schedules. For example, Census data is collected every five years, whereas NAPLAN data is collected annually for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.

The data is aggregated and so cannot reflect the diversity of the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Territory.

Focused and effective services

Part Two of this report provides information on the broad range of government and community initiatives delivered directly, or funded by the ACT Government, specifically to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This information is set out in chapters based on each of the key focus areas of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018, which provides the reporting framework for this information.

These chapters do not include information about mainstream or ‘universal’ government services. However, it is acknowledged that achieving the Closing the Gap targets and improving life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is principally dependent on the effectiveness of mainstream services, particularly health, education, justice, housing and community services, which is where at least 70% of direct Indigenous expenditure in the ACT occurs.4

Targeted, specific initiatives responding to the unique characteristics and requirements of diverse population groups can enhance or complement the effectiveness of mainstream government services and ultimately help deliver more equitable outcomes. The aim is to enhance accessibility, the way services are delivered, and the rates at which they are utilised.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population of the ACT shares with the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population a younger age structure and lower socio-economic status. There are strong associations between these age and social factors, and requirements for, and utilisation of, mainstream services such as early childhood, health, education, housing, community and legal services.

The Closing the Gap targets and the quality life outcomes for each of the focus areas of the Agreement are long term commitments, so priority areas for action and Government initiatives may change over time, based on measured progress and considerations of what works.

The ACT Government seeks an evidence-based approach to identifying and responding to emerging priorities for action, and acknowledges that changes ‘on the ground’ must be identified and monitored through robust performance information.

Consideration of research findings, program logic and experience in implementation all contribute to decisions about which targeted policies will have the greatest impact and which should be maintained once implemented. Longitudinal research, and trend analysis of national data collections such as the Closing the Gap indicators, the Census, NAPLAN results and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data also contribute to the evidence base.

Experience in the ACT is demonstrating that well targeted Indigenous-specific programming to address gaps, barriers or unique requirements, will increase and ‘leverage’ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander access and utilisation of services across service sectors and contribute to better life outcomes.

In the ACT, targeted services are often initiated through dedicated strategies, such as the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Partnership 2015–2018, or the ACT Employment Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People 2011–2015, or as key outcomes of broader

strategies, for example Education Capital, the key strategy of the Education Directorate, A Step for Our Kids, the ACT’s out of home care strategy, or the ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy 2011–17.

THINGS THAT WORK

The Indigenous-specific, targeted initiatives described in this report have shown signs of positive impact, or are well designed to do so. Features of these initiatives include:

• evidence-based, responsive to and contributing to current research and wellbeing indicators
• integral part of broader strategies, polices and frameworks
• flexible design and delivery adapted to local needs and context
• community involvement in the design and delivery of the programs
• partnerships or relationships between government, service providers and the community
• culturally safe and trauma-informed services where appropriate
• continuity and coordination of services—one of the most important aspects of success—building up trust, reputation and expertise. This is often only achieved with ongoing government support.

Trauma-informed and culturally safe family services which respond to the impacts of the intergenerational trauma more likely to be present in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population will enhance engagement and subsequently greater utilisation of other services such as health, education or housing. The Growing Healthy Families program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families delivered through ACT child and family centres has provided pathways to learning and employment to clients initially seeking child and family services. It is anticipated that the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rehabilitation service, which will also be delivered according to trauma-informed and culturally safe principles, will have similar success.

Where progress in achieving an outcome is slow, action on the ground may need to intensify to accelerate achieving the outcome. Conclusive research has demonstrated that school attendance has a strong impact on school results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. However, publicly available data is indicating that the gaps in school attendance rates between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students widen as children age, both nationally and here in the ACT. The Education Directorate has put in place a number of dedicated engagement, participation and recognition programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Similarly, there are a number of scholarship and other supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in technical and further education, for example the Yurauna Centre and other dedicated funding and tutorial supports at the Canberra Institute of Technology.

Over time, broadly coordinated action can also lead to better outcomes. In 2010, the ACT Government launched the ACTPS Employment Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People developed with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body and the ACT Public Service Indigenous Network. The strategy enabled a ‘One ACTPS’ approach to the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This strategy has not only provided much needed employment and career opportunities, it has also brought the benefits of greater workforce diversity. The 2015 ACT State of the Service report reflects very strong results for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees, who were the fastest growing group in the ACT Public Service.

Sometimes a single, well-targeted action can lead to improvements across many areas. For example, there is strong research indicating that early childhood education positively influences the lifelong learning, behaviour and health, social and cognitive skills necessary for school and life achievement. Improvements in the delivery of early childhood education should yield better results in high school, Year 12 completion and employment outcomes.

While the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population make up 1.5% of the ACT population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children represented 5.7% of all preschool enrolments and a significant opportunity to provide targeted services to support families as they commence their journey through the school system and bring long term positive impacts. The ACT Koori Preschool Program, along with additional preschool hours for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander preschoolers, and dedicated speech and hearing therapy programs in Koori Preschools ensures that these children get a strong start. It is anticipated that the children attending the ACT’s Koori Preschools are the early cohorts who will turn up in later years’ NAPLAN testing, and Year 12 completions.

Performance information for the Closing the Gap targets and indicators, other ACT Government administrative and population data, and the performance frameworks of key strategies and initiatives will continue to provide useful measures of the effectiveness of mainstream and Indigenous-specific services and programs.
DEMOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CANBERRANS

Following the 2011 Census, 670,000 Australians identified as being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin. Overall, Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is relatively young, largely urbanised and fast growing. The median age of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population at 30 June 2011 was 21.8 years, compared to 37.6 years for the non-Indigenous population. It is also a highly diverse population, made up of many different nations, clans, cultures, languages, and histories. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are increasingly more likely to identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in surveys such as the Census as a means to seek recognition of their unique cultural identities and draw attention to issues of importance.

With an average growth rate of between 2.85% and 3.1% per year, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the ACT is the fastest growing of the states and territories and is projected to increase to 1% of the national population. It also shares characteristics with the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, most notably a younger age structure and lower socio-economic status as measured by a range of indices.

On national comparisons of outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the ACT performs well. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT are more likely to have higher levels of education and training, greater participation in the workforce, lower rates of unemployment and to own or to be purchasing a home compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living elsewhere in Australia. This is due in part to living in an urban area with a more educated population with higher incomes.

Data in this chapter is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing, 2011.

How many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live in the ACT?

On Census night 9 August 2011, there were 5,185 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people resident in the ACT, representing 1.5% of all ACT residents, the lowest proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia, relative to population.

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT increased 33.8% from the 3,875 counted in 2006 and was also above the 3,548 people counted in 2001. This was the fastest rate of increase in any state or the Northern Territory and is also substantially above the 9.2% increase between 2001 and 2006.

In the 2011 Census, just over half of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT were males (51.2%) with the balance (48.8%) females.

5 The information in this chapter is from the August 2011 Census. The next Census will be on 9 August 2016.
6 Productivity Commission, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage 2014
How old are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT?

Generally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in the ACT are younger than the non-Indigenous population with 44.2% aged less than 20 years at the 2011 Census (Figure 1). Six out of every ten of the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population were aged between 15 and 64 years. Only around 100 were aged 65 years or more (Figure 2).
Educational participation and achievement is relatively high

At the time of the 2011 Census, over 2,200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT were attending an educational institution. Reflecting the younger age structure, six out of every ten in education were at school with 31.4% at infants/primary school, 22.9% at secondary school and 6.2% at pre-school. Nearly one-quarter were attending either a technical or further education institution (9.9%) or university (13.4%).

Figure 3 shows that 46% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people resident in the ACT and aged 15 years or more had completed Year 12 at the 2011 Census. While this is smaller than the figure for the non-Indigenous population in the ACT (72.1%), it approached the national figure for the total population of 49.2%. It was the highest level of Year 12 completions among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in any state or territory across Australia.

Dwelling tenure

Over half (56.8%) of occupied private dwellings with at least one resident of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin were rented. In comparison, 30.1% of other households were renting.

One-quarter (25.9%) of dwellings with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander resident were rented from the Territory housing authority. For dwellings rented through a real estate agent, nearly half were separate houses, with 26.4% townhouses and 25.2% flats, units or apartments. While 42.8% of dwellings occupied by an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person were owned, 33% of dwellings were mortgaged compared with 39.6% of other households (Figure 4).
Households with at least one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person

Most households were comprised of one family, 63 households had multiple families and there were 309 lone person households. Household size averaged 3.1 persons compared with 2.6 in other households.

![Family composition (single family households) ACT 2011](image)

**FIGURE 5 FAMILY COMPOSITION (SINGLE FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS), ACT, 2011**

**Income**

Four out of every ten (39.6%) households in the ACT with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person resident at the time of the 2011 Census and stating an income had an income less than $1,250 per week (Figure 6). The comparable figure for other households was 30.9%.

![Weekly household income (proportion of households), ACT, 2011](image)

**FIGURE 6 WEEKLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME (PROPORTION OF HOUSEHOLDS), ACT, 2011**

*Note: only includes households in which all members aged 15 and over provided income details*
THE COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENTS (COAG) NATIONAL INDIGENOUS REFORM AGREEMENT

Targets to Close the Gap

The national Closing the Gap campaign began in 2006 after the then Human Rights Commissioner Dr Tom Calma called for a human-rights approach to closing the unacceptably wide gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous health and life expectancies.

On 20 December 2007, COAG agreed to a partnership between all levels of government to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to close the gap on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage and that commitment has continued.

During 2007 and 2008, COAG agreed to six ambitious targets to Close the Gap in Indigenous disadvantage by improving outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in the areas of life expectancy, health, education and employment:

• close the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2031
• halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five by 2018
• ensure access to early childhood education for all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities by 2013. This target is now expired.
• halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievement for Indigenous children by 2018
• halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020
• halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018.

In agreeing to the targets all governments recognised overcoming the legacy of disadvantage would require long term, generational commitment that would see major effort directed across a range of strategic areas for action or ‘Building Blocks’. COAG endorsed the following Building Blocks: Early Childhood; Schooling; Health; Economic Participation; Healthy Homes; Safe Communities; and Governance and Leadership.

In November 2008, COAG endorsed the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (NIRA) to establish the framework to work towards the six targets, setting out principles, objectives, outcomes, outputs, performance indicators, performance benchmarks and trajectories. In recognition that no strategy to achieve the targets would be successful in isolation, the NIRA was framed around the seven strategic ‘Building Blocks’. The NIRA continues to operate as the mechanism for government accountability for performance.

The NIRA was not separately funded, but it provided the overarching framework to achieve the targets across a broad scope of cooperative work under six Indigenous-specific and other relevant national mainstream National Partnership Agreements (NPAs) endorsed by COAG. Through the NPAs COAG committed $4.6 billion in Indigenous-specific funding for initiatives across early childhood, health, remote housing, economic participation and remote service delivery. Recognising that full participation in society requires access to important means of communication and information, in July 2009, COAG agreed to a $6.96 million Closing the Gap: National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access.

In May 2014, COAG agreed to another Closing the Gap target in recognition of the strong link between school attendance and school performance.

New targets and renewed commitment

Most of the Indigenous-specific partnership agreements have expired but all jurisdictions remain committed to ongoing work to achieve the Closing the Gap targets.

In 2014–15, the Commonwealth Budget invested $4.8 billion in the new Indigenous Advancement Strategy, which consolidated many different Australian Government programmes into five streamlined broad-based programmes with the objectives of achieving results in school attendance, employment and community safety.

In May 2014, COAG agreed to another Closing the Gap target in recognition of the strong link between school attendance and school performance.
This target is to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance within five years by 2018.

In December 2015, in recognition of early childhood and school education being critical in opening up future learning and economic opportunities for Indigenous children, COAG agreed to prioritise and accelerate efforts in this area, and set a new early childhood education Closing the Gap target of 95% enrolment for all Indigenous four year olds by 2025, extending throughout Australia the expired 2013 target for remote communities.

These new targets are discussed in the Education Chapter on page 92.

At the December 2015 Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting, leaders agreed to the development of a new strategic framework that puts Indigenous economic participation at the heart of the national agenda, recognising that economic participation underpinned by cultural participation leads to improved social outcomes. This new framework aims to drive genuine cooperation, including with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, to ensure a strong focus on learning from, and sharing what works. It is anticipated that increased economic independence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will help achieve the Closing the Gap targets. During 2016, leaders will discuss a range of actions featuring innovative approaches to procurement that promote entrepreneurialism and real jobs.

All jurisdictions have reaffirmed their shared commitment to the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Commonwealth Constitution, and have noted the Commonwealth’s announcement of a Referendum Council to lead a significant national consultation process on recognition. COAG noted the importance of state and territory governments being engaged in this national consultation process.

ACT Government expenditure on services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

A key source of information on services in the ACT are the national Indigenous Expenditure Reports (IER) released by the Productivity Commission. These reports present nationally comparable information on Australian, state, and territory government expenditure on services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, providing policy makers with an additional tool for targeting policies.

The IER includes all government recurrent expenditure disaggregated into service areas, including both the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander share of mainstream expenditure and targeted Indigenous-specific expenditure. The IER does not assess the adequacy, effectiveness or efficiency of expenditure—to do so would require detailed policy and program evaluations.

The third and most recent IER, Indigenous Expenditure Report (2014), which is based on 2012–13 financial year expenditure, indicates that total government direct Indigenous expenditure in the ACT was estimated to be $422 million, accounting for 4.8% of total government direct expenditure in the Territory. Of this $422 million:

- mainstream services accounted for $304 million (72%) of direct Indigenous expenditure, with the remaining $117 million (28%) provided through Indigenous-specific (targeted) services
- the Australian Capital Territory Government accounted for $230 million (54%) of direct Indigenous expenditure, with the remaining 192 million (46%) provided by the Australian Government
- over half of this expenditure ($236 million) was attributed to the key service use areas of healthcare and safe and supportive communities. Of this amount, $166 million was expended by the ACT Government and $70 million by the Australian Government.

The Indigenous Expenditure Report identifies that the majority of service use for the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population is in key frontline service use areas such as the justice system, health care and community support. These services are also used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from New South Wales and on occasion delivered to service users in NSW.

Improving national Indigenous reporting regimes

The NIRA requires annual performance reporting on national and jurisdictional progress towards the Closing the Gap targets, assessing whether any change in information is statistically significant and whether the pace of change, if maintained, is sufficient to meet the targets. The Productivity Commission produces a National Indigenous Reform Agreement Performance Report each year.

In framing the NIRA, all governments acknowledged that data improvements would be crucial to monitoring progress and all governments committed to improving data collection and quality, and refining data measures through the NIRA, including disaggregating many
indicators by Indigenous and non-Indigenous status. In recent years a number of significant improvements to Closing the Gap data measures have been made to ensure more effective progress indicators and therefore more effective government monitoring and accountability.

Apart from the annual National Indigenous Reform Agreement performance reports produced by the COAG Reform Council and now by the Productivity Commission, there are other national Indigenous reporting regimes, each of which has been commissioned to respond to different concerns about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing:

- the Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage (OID) report, commissioned by COAG in 2002, produced by the Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision Steering (SCRGSP) every two years
- Indigenous Expenditure Reports, produced every two years by the Productivity Commission
- Prime Minister’s Report Closing the Gap, produced annually by Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Health and Welfare of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Overview, produced by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare every two to three years
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Performance Framework report, produced by the Australian Health Ministers Advisory Council every two years.

In the latest National Indigenous Reform Agreement Performance Assessment 2013–14, the Productivity Commission also looked at how this broader reporting architecture could be improved to achieve more meaningful national reporting to inform governments and community.

The Productivity Commission advocated two main changes in approach—a greater emphasis on policy evaluation—knowing more about what works and why is the key to designing policies that achieve positive policy outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians—and rationalising the current extensive and overlapping reporting on Indigenous outcomes and disadvantage to avoid wasting further resources on duplicative, and often low value reporting. While there has been much focus on monitoring broad outcomes, little is known about the initiatives that bridge outcome gaps.

Action on the ground in the ACT

The ACT Government acknowledges that closing the gap objectives are long term and require continuous improvement, financial investment and commitment. The ACT Government is committed to working in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to find solutions to problems which are a legacy of past policies and decisions.

The ACT Government is committed to building on existing arrangements with the Australian Government and to working cooperatively and in good faith towards achieving mutually agreed objectives. The ACT Government particularly will work to support the Closing the Gap objectives through the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018.

Creating a specific ACT outcomes framework and implementation plan for the Agreement will provide the ACT the opportunity to monitor and be responsive, in collaboration with the community and service delivery partners, to the effects of different policy settings.

Through the development of the Agreement, some ACT-specific headline indicators have already been agreed for cultural identity; smoking cessation; Throughcare program support for sentenced offenders; rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children already in and coming into care; Year 12 completion rates; and enterprise development.

The following section sets out in summary the latest available data for the ACT’s performance against the Closing the Gap targets, performance indicators and measures for improving health, education and employment. More detailed target and indicator analysis is provided in each of the chapters covering health, education and economic participation.
THE GAP IN THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Summary of ACT 2013–14 results against the National Indigenous Reform Agreement performance indicator framework

Closing the Gap data is released by the Commonwealth Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGPS). The latest data available is from 2013–14 and more recent data will be released late in 2016. In 2013–14, the NIRA had six performance targets and 15 performance indicators.

Nationally, updated data were available for five of the six performance targets and 13 of the 15 performance indicators.

Change over time cannot be assessed for all the indicators—some indicators have no trend data; some indicators report on use of services and change over time might be due to changing access to services rather than changes in the underlying outcome (for example, child protection rates); and some indicators include related measures that have moved in different directions.

There are some targets and headlines indicators which the ACT does not report on because they cannot be reliably calculated due to small numbers, for example life expectancy and child mortality. However, the ACT is able to report on underlying measures, for example, tobacco smoking and antenatal visits.

Nationally, the 2013–14 data indicated that the young child mortality target was on track. However, targets for life expectancy, reading, writing and numeracy, and employment are unlikely to be met. The gap in Year 12 attainment narrowed, with 60% of the target realised, but there are doubts about the definition of the measure and whether the current rate of progress can be maintained. And, while the target for early childhood education was not met, good progress was made.

The 2013–14 NIRA results delivered some significant positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT in comparison to other jurisdictions:

• From 2008 to 2012, the smoking rate in the ACT reduced by 2 percentage points, from 29.8% to 27.6%. While the national gap was 26.1 percentage points in 2012–13, the ACT gap was the lowest of the jurisdictions at 15.0 percentage points.

• In 2014, the ACT met the progress points on the trajectories to halving the gap in all years in reading and numeracy, except for Year 7 reading.

• Between 2008 and 2012–13, the gap for 20–24 year olds who had attained Year 12 or equivalent in the ACT decreased by 26.1 percentage points.

• In 2012–13, the ACT was the only jurisdiction which was on track to closing the employment to population ratio gap.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance target¹</th>
<th>ACT²</th>
<th>Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Close the life expectancy gap by 2031</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>Gap: 10.6 years for males 9.5 years for females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five by 2018</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td>Gap: 100.6 deaths per 100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ensure all Indigenous four years olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education by 2013</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Enrolled in: Major cities – 66.7% Inner/outer regional areas – 73.9% Remote/very remote areas – 85.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 4. Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy by 2018 | Gap (percentage points):  
  Yr 3: 12.4  
  Writing: 8.4  
  Numeracy: 8.6  
  Yr 5: 13.0  
  Writing: 20.0  
  Numeracy: 11.9  
  Yr 7: 13.7  
  Writing: 24.5  
  Numeracy: 11.5  
  Yr 9: 14.9  
  Writing: 27.2  
  Numeracy: 12.5 | Reading: 20.0  
  Writing: 19.1  
  Numeracy: 17.5  
  Reading: 23.9  
  Writing: 28.6  
  Numeracy: 23.7  
  Reading: 23.9  
  Writing: 30.9  
  Numeracy: 16.6  
  Reading: 22.1  
  Writing: 34.2  
  Numeracy: 19.0 |
| 5. Halving the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020 | Gap: 8.1 percentage points | Gap: 28.0 percentage points |

¹ National targets not updated for 2013–14 are given in italics.
² The small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths means that life expectancy and mortality rates cannot be reliably calculated.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance target</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>ACT Indigenous</th>
<th>ACT Rank</th>
<th>Australia Indigenous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Close the life expectancy gap by 2031</td>
<td>1. Estimated life expectancy at birth, 2010–12</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td></td>
<td>Males: 69.1 years Females: 73.7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Mortality rate by leading cause, 2012, age standardised per 100,000</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td></td>
<td>Top 5 diagnoses: 790.3 All causes: 982.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3. Rates of current daily smokers, 2012–13</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4. Levels of risky alcohol consumption, 2012–13</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5. Prevalence of overweight and obesity (BMI of 25 or over), 2012–13</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>69.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five by 2018</td>
<td>6. Under 5 mortality rate (all causes), 2013</td>
<td>Not reported</td>
<td></td>
<td>184.7 deaths per 100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. Proportion of babies born of low birth weight, (2010-2012)</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. Tobacco smoking during pregnancy, 2012</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9a. Antenatal care: Indigenous women who gave birth who attended at least one antenatal visit in the first trimester, 2012</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9b. Antenatal care: Indigenous women who gave birth who attended five or more antenatal visits, 2012</td>
<td>69.7%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>85.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Ensure all Indigenous four year olds in remote communities have access to early childhood education by 2013</td>
<td>10. The proportion of Indigenous children (aged 4 and 5 years), who are enrolled in (and attending) a preschool program in the year before formal schooling, 2013</td>
<td>93.5% enrolled 95.7% attending</td>
<td></td>
<td>73.9% enrolled 69.9% attending</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Halve the gap for Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy by 2018</td>
<td>11a. Percentage of students at or above the national minimum standard in reading, writing and numeracy for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, 2014</td>
<td>Yr 3 Reading 83.4 Writing 86.7 Numeracy 88.1 Yr 5 Reading 83.1 Writing 73.5 Numeracy 84.7 Yr 7 Reading 83.1 Writing 66.9 Numeracy 85.1 Yr 9 Reading 79.4 Writing 57.5 Numeracy 82.8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11b. Rates of participation in NAPLAN reading, writing and numeracy tests for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9, 2014 (percentage)</td>
<td>Yr 3 Reading 85.2 Writing 84.4 Numeracy 85.9 Yr 5 Reading 87.1 Writing 84.4 Numeracy 84.4 Yr 7 Reading 83.6 Writing 85.2 Numeracy 84.4 Yr 9 Reading 72.3 Writing 77.7 Numeracy 72.3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 | ACT Closing the Gap Report 2015
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Performance target</th>
<th>Performance Indicator</th>
<th>ACT Indigenous</th>
<th>ACT Rank</th>
<th>Australia Indigenous</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5. Halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020</td>
<td>12. Proportion of 20–24 year olds having attained at least a Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate II, 2012–13</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13. Student attendance rates, government schools (percentage)</td>
<td>Year 1 90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Different definitions and methodologies are used by the jurisdictions so results cannot be aggregated to the national level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 2 87</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 3 89</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 4 87</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 5 88</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Year 6 87</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Year 7 84</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 8 82</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 9 76</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year 10 77</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Halving the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians by 2018</td>
<td>14a. Employment to population ratio for the working age population, 2012–13</td>
<td>69.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>47.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14b. Unemployment rate, 2012–13</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>14c. Labour force participation rate, 2012–13</td>
<td>74.7%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>60.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15. Proportion of 20–64 year olds with or working towards post school qualifications in AQF Certificate III or above, 2012–13</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 National indicators not updated are given in italics.
8 The small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths means that life expectancy and mortality rates cannot be reliably calculated.
9 A rank of 1 indicates the most desired performance while a rank of 8 is the least desired.

Key Focus Areas

**Shared Vision**

The signatories of this Agreement are committed to pursuing equitable outcomes for members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT. The signatories are committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, the community and their organisations to develop the opportunities, knowledge and skills to build an empowered, resilient and sustainable future.
The ACT Government’s central goal is to help every person reach their full potential as a member of a diverse, inclusive and creative community. The ACT’s social inclusion and equality program means implementing policies and practices that respond to disadvantage, as well as cultural and systemic problems. The Agreement is an initiative under this program and will bring together a number of new initiatives along with previous initiatives.

The Agreement was signed at the Legislative Assembly on 23 April 2015 by the Chief Minister, Andrew Barr MLA, the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, Yvette Berry MLA, the Chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, Mr Rod Little, and the Head of the ACT Public Service, Ms Kathy Leigh.

The signing of the Agreement strengthens the ACT Government’s commitment to work collaboratively with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT to improve service delivery in health, housing, education, economic development, justice and social services.

The signatories to the agreement committed to a shared vision of:

- pursuing equitable outcomes for members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the ACT
- supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, their communities and their organisations to develop the opportunities, knowledge and skills to build an empowered, resilient and sustainable future.

The Agreement was developed through comprehensive government and community consultation. During consultation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities of the ACT identified Strong Families as the key quality life outcome for the Agreement.

Seven strategic key focus areas and associated quality life outcomes were identified as contributing to Strong Families:

- cultural identity, which is valued and celebrated by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and the non-Indigenous communities of the ACT
- healthy mind, healthy body, which is achieved through culturally appropriate holistic delivery of health, education, justice and community services
- feeling safe, which is an important aspect of living in a safe community and is best achieved through prevention, and early intervention approaches
- connecting the community, which helps to build resilient families, communities and support networks that support involvement with the ACT Government and other service partners
- employment and economic independence, which is key to improving access to opportunities for individuals and families
- education, which is essential for improving an individual’s life outcomes and is achieved when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have opportunities to be life-long learners
- leadership, which recognises the wealth of experience that exists in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community of the ACT and the need to pass on the skills and knowledge to empower people, create confidence and develop tomorrow’s leaders.

The Agreement links to other key ACT Government strategies and initiatives:

- ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Partnership 2015–2018
- Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT 2012–22
- Education Capital: Leading the Nation ACT Education and Training Directorate Strategic Plan 2014–2017
- ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body: Community Priorities 2014–2017
- Human Services Blueprint
- Confident and Business Ready: Building on our Strengths
- ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan: Priorities for the Next Five Years 2016–2020.
Five of the Agreement focus areas—healthy mind, healthy body; feeling safe; employment and economic independence; and education—align with five of the NIRA Closing the Gap ‘Building Blocks’.

Two of the Closing the Gap ‘Building Blocks’—healthy homes and early childhood—are now addressed under the Agreement’s priority outcomes of focused services, life-long learning, positive generational experiences and a community connected to strong family, social and support networks.

Significantly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT identified Cultural Identity and Connecting the Community as strong priorities. This is in line with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander concepts of individual and community wellbeing, which stress the importance of knowing the story of, and being connected to, one’s ‘country’, language, family and community.

### Governance and accountability

For the ACT Government, the Agreement now provides the strategic framework for all aspects of policy and service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, underpinned by ACT Government and ATSIEB plans, strategies and priorities. It ensures that the ACT Government and ATSIEB work collaboratively towards achieving desired outcomes through a systemic approach.

During 2016, a whole-of-government reference group will work on the implementation plan for the Agreement. The reference group will also develop an outcomes framework to report ACT Government performance in achieving the vision of the Agreement. The outcomes framework will develop performance measures that respond to the unique context of the ACT’s diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

The Agreement also includes a statement of commitment to reconciliation and wellbeing of communities, which recognises the impact of European settlement on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the right for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development in line with the right to self-determination.

The Agreement was developed by the ACT Government in acknowledgment of the need for intense, integrated and coordinated effort across all ACT Government directorates to achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

As we improve the quality of life outcomes across the focus areas, we will build strong families and realise our shared vision of equitable outcomes. The Agreement will play an active role in guiding this work over the coming years.
The 2015–16 ACT Budget

The 2015–16 ACT Budget reaffirmed the ACT Government’s commitment to pursuing equitable outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in conjunction with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, providing funding for new and ongoing initiatives. Outcomes for these initiatives will be reported in the next Closing the Gap report.

CULTURAL IDENTITY
- $63,000 for general cultural grants supporting community activities celebrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures especially National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week
- continued funding of ACT Heritage Grants to promote understanding of Aboriginal heritage in the ACT, including $22,620 for Aboriginal heritage projects
- $76,000 for the conservation and interpretation of an Aboriginal scarred tree at the Namadgi Visitor’s Centre.

HEALTHY MIND, HEALTHY BODY
- continued support for health services such as the Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service to deliver primary health services, and an ACT Government contribution of $212,000 (in addition to Commonwealth Government funding) for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Smoking Cessation Program
- $10.7 million to construct the Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and other drug residential rehabilitation facility to implement culturally appropriate support, prevention and education programs
- in excess of $3.6 million in continued support for leading community organisations, such as Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, and Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation.

FEELING SAFE
- $529,000 over four years for an Indigenous Liaison Officer at the Women’s Legal Centre
- approximately $631,000 to the Aboriginal Legal Service to provide law and justice support services and a duty lawyer at the ACT Magistrates Court
- $4.1 million for domestic violence crisis services ($250,000), education programs ($615,000), increased Legal Aid base funding ($867,000), legal outreach homelessness services ($358,000), and expansion of restorative justice programs to adults ($2.058 million) as part of a continuum of services that have a culturally inclusive approach to delivering services.

CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY
- $1.3 million over two years to expand the Growing Healthy Families Program at the Gungahlin, West Belconnen and Tuggeranong Child and Family Centres to support engagement, inclusion and access to culturally informed services by the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community
- $2.0 million to deliver culturally appropriate housing including for elderly members of the community, and capital upgrades to rental properties for larger families, supporting targeted accommodation services, including the Innana Inc. Indigenous Supported Accommodation Services and Gugan Gulwan Supported Housing Assistance
- $440,000 to assist organisations to enhance provision of culturally sensitive services to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community through the National Disability Insurance Scheme
- $38.9 million over four years to fund the out of home care system, including an investment of $16 million in new services and reforms through the implementation of A Step Up for Our Kids.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE
- inclusive ACT Public Service (ACTPS) recruitment and retention employment initiatives, such as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Traineeship Program ($1,018,795), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Graduates in the ACTPS Graduate Program ($1,018,795), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific Enterprise Development programs, such as the Canberra Business - Yarning Circle, Indigenous Community Engagement forum; the ACT NAIDOC Indigenous Business of the Year Award sponsorship; the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Development and Entrepreneurship Support Model and membership of Supply Nation
- $203,000 for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Grants Program including study and training scholarships, leadership development and community programs
- $220,000 for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Job Readiness Support Program (also known as the ConnXtions Program) to provide nationally recognised job-ready training and wrap-around support.
EDUCATION

• approximately $500,000 to five Koori Preschools whose targeted early learning programs help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children (aged 3–5 yrs) develop strong language, numeracy and cultural understanding

• $130,000 for resourcing and delivery of the Student Aspirations Program to guide students in Years 5 to 12 to successful completion of secondary school, and progression into further education, training and employment options

• funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education officers to assist teachers to improve attendance, support transitions, establish connections and build relationships between schools, families and communities.

LEADERSHIP

• $407,000 for administrative support and resources for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.
"Each day is different and exciting. One day I could be doing maintenance work or running cultural tours... I love being outdoors, being on country with Adrian, teaching people about culture and the bush. I get inspired when I see kids' faces when they learn something they'll remember for the rest of their lives."

Kie Barratt, General Services Officer, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

"It brings back that cultural pride to our community and gives us a sense of belonging, knowing that we’re back, restoring our country."

Adrian Brown, Senior Ngunnawal Ranger, conducting a smoking ceremony before a prescribed burn-off at Gibraltar
KEY FOCUS AREA: CULTURAL IDENTITY

Supporting the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to freely determine their political status and to freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development in line with the right to self-determination.

Community members celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018

INTRODUCTION

The ACT Government recognises the importance of strong cultural identities for better life outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Strong positive cultural identities are essential for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing, and are a crucial element in overcoming the ongoing effects of trans-generational trauma caused by past government policies.

Culture as a key aspect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander wellbeing is both knowledge and practice of culture by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and respect for that culture among the wider community. Survey findings are indicating that increasing understanding brings respect. In 2012, four out of five general community respondents regarded Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture (81%) and history (85%) as important, and half (50%) reported feeling personally proud of the culture. These were similar to responses to the same survey in 2008.10

The ACT Government’s commitment to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural rights is expressed in the ACT’s Human Rights ACT 2004 and is acknowledged in the statement of commitment to reconciliation and wellbeing in the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018.

This chapter sets out activities conducted in 2014–15 which worked to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identities and heritage across a number of government service sectors. Bringing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander values, recognition and respect into the way government does business, not only provides valuable employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ‘cultural economy’, it also enriches the entire community.

The ACT has a rich Aboriginal cultural heritage spanning 20,000 years. All Aboriginal places and objects have cultural value for Aboriginal people. So, discovering, preserving and sharing the record of Aboriginal presence in the land and habitat is fundamental to strengthening cultural identity.

In addition to initiatives listed in this chapter, a number ACT Government directorates celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture, heritage and survival every year by arranging NAIDOC Week and Reconciliation Week activities, conducting cultural awareness programs and very importantly, through activities designated under directorate Reconciliation Action Plans; for example, purchasing and displaying art works, recruitment strategies or renaming sites and venues in Ngunnawal language.

The ACT Government will continue to deliver cultural identity programs, including those that focus on elders, children and young people, and people involved with the justice system. This will build on the continuing resilience and self-determination in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and contribute to the ‘connecting the community’ focus area of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018.

10 Productivity Commission, Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage: Key Indicators 2014
KEY ACT GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE

ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURAL GRANTS PROGRAM

The aim of the cultural grants program is to showcase the cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in the ACT. In 2014–15, a total of $15,000 was provided to the ACT NAIDOC Committee through the Cultural Grants Program.

THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURAL CENTRE

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Centre promotes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture toCanberrans and visitors to the ACT.

The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, CSD, provides facilities management and hiring of the function room and theatrette for the Cultural Centre. Property management for the Cultural Centre transferred from CSD to the ACT Property Group on 1 July 2015.

NAIDOC WEEK FLAG RAISING CEREMONY

The ACT held NAIDOC Week Flag Raising Ceremonies and receptions in 2014 and 2015. These ceremonies feature as official activities each year in the ACT’s NAIDOC Week celebrations. They are the ACT Government’s formal acknowledgement of the importance of NAIDOC Week. The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, CSD, coordinates the Flag Raising Ceremony each year.

THE ACT GENEALOGY PROJECT

As elsewhere in south-east Australia, European settlement has had a devastating impact on the traditional cultures and social groups of Aboriginal populations of the ACT and surrounding region. In the context of the comprehensive dispossession and depopulation of the original Aboriginal inhabitants, re-establishing traditional identity is a complex and sensitive matter.

In support of creating a better understanding of Aboriginal contributions to the cultural heritage of the region, the ACT government has been working with a group of representatives from regional Aboriginal kinship networks to help them document their families’ genealogies. Genealogy is a crucial first step in providing evidence for a family’s cultural heritage and will be important for generations into the future.

In 2011–12, genealogy experts were engaged to work with the families and research birth, death and marriage archives and other sources. The research resulted in a significant cultural heritage collection for the Aboriginal kinship networks of the region, including over 2,000 primary source records and a genealogy database.

For each of the family representatives who took part in the project, a family genealogy book is being prepared. During 2014–15, seventy-five per cent of the draft family genealogy books were reviewed and verified by participating families and the database was updated accordingly. The final versions of the genealogy books will be published during 2016.

RECOGNITION OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

The ACT Government recognises that there are questions about traditional Aboriginal identity for the ACT and surrounding region. The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, CSD, is working on the design of a deliberative whole-of-government and community process to assist in resolving traditional owner issues. This will assist Aboriginal families, and other stakeholders, to deepen their appreciation, and come to agreement about, Aboriginal people’s role and place in the history and heritage of the region.

Initial family consultations were conducted from 28 November 2014 to 5 December 2014 to inform the ACT Government of Aboriginal perspectives on traditional custodianship for the ACT, and begin to discuss ways forward. The method of engagement was small family group consultations with Ngunnawal, Walgalu and Ngango family representatives from Canberra and the surrounding region. There were approximately eleven family group consultations. The ACT Government now has a better foundation for developing culturally safe engagement practices where there are disputes about traditional Aboriginal heritage.
ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING DIRECTORATE

Natural Resource Management

NGUNNAWAL PLANT USE BOOK
The Ngunnawal Plant Use Book, a field guide that introduces Ngunnawal history and natural resource use, was published in late 2014. Developed through a partnership between the United Ngunnawal Elders Council, ACT Government and Greening Australia, the book has been highly successful. Of 4,000 printed copies, over 2,000 were sold during 2015. The book was distributed to every school in the ACT and is included in the curriculum in some schools. Proceeds from the book sales are being reinvested into Aboriginal Natural Resource Management.

CULTURE AND LAND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM
A pilot Aboriginal culture and land management program commenced in August 2014 at the Alexander Maconochie Centre. The program engaged up to 20 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees in subjects such as identifying Aboriginal scarred trees, growing native plants, identifying and using bush tucker plants, processing native seeds, identifying heritage artefacts and the impacts of feral animals on biodiversity. The program was implemented by the ACT Aboriginal Natural Resource Management facilitator in partnership with Greening Australia's Indigenous restoration officer. The program assisted a number of detainees to successfully complete their Conservation and Land Management Certificate II.

ACT Heritage

CONSERVING ABORIGINAL HERITAGE
During 2014–15, ACT Heritage, in conjunction with the ACT Heritage Council, facilitated numerous heritage projects to recognise and promote the history of Aboriginal occupation and culture in the ACT, including coordinating and producing Aboriginal heritage interpretative sites throughout the ACT.

ABORIGINAL PROJECTS FUNDED BY THE ACT HERITAGE GRANTS PROGRAM 2014–15
The Southern ACT Catchment Group was granted $9,000 for interpretation of significant sites of Aboriginal heritage in the Tuggeranong area through: a series of six guided walks conducted by Ngunnawal people in the urban landscape; three audiovisual web presentations; and an event in the 2015 Heritage Festival, described below in relation to tribal conflict and the two world wars.

The Molonglo Catchment Group received $13,670 for a partnership with local Aboriginal groups providing a program which integrated social, cultural and environmental perspectives through a public lecture, walk and talk events, a boat cruise and bus tour. The Molonglo Catchment Group, together with Friends of Black Mountain, received $5,304 for a seven-month exhibition of the natural heritage of Black Mountain on the lower ground floor of the Telstra Tower. This included an event during the 2015 Canberra and Region Heritage Festival.

Ginninderra Catchment Group received $6,000 for a series of four interpretive walks at sites of significance. Through this grant, Ngunnawal guides facilitated public awareness and appreciation of Aboriginal heritage in the Ginninderra catchment area.

Cultural Heritage Management Australia received $24,000 to continue archaeological investigations within the Lanyon Precinct to investigate archaeological evidence of contact between Aboriginal and European settlers at the site.

ABORIGINAL EVENTS IN THE CANBERRA AND REGION HERITAGE FESTIVAL 2015
Three Aboriginal heritage events relating to Ngunnawal involvement in tribal conflict and the two world wars tied directly into the theme for the Canberra and Region Heritage Festival, Conflict and Compassion. Other festival events with an Indigenous component included the Black Mountain exhibition and a show at the Canberra Glassworks staged by Aboriginal artist Jenni Kenmarre Martinello. Cultural Heritage Management Australia and the Canberra Archaeological Society led archaeological tours at Lanyon and Springbank Island during the Heritage Festival in connection with their heritage grant.

CONSERVATION WORKS
During 2014–15, the ACT Heritage Council considered conservation works for a number of Aboriginal sites. Detailed archaeological investigations involving the Representative Aboriginal Organisations (RAOs) were completed by Cultural Heritage Management Australia. The Heritage Act 2004 includes provisions for the declaration of RAOs. RAOs are declared by Notifiable Instrument NI2006-298. Under the Act, the ACT Heritage Council is responsible for consulting with RAOs on a range of matters relating to Aboriginal places and objects in the ACT. There are currently four RAOs:

• Buru Ngunawal Aboriginal Corporation
• Little Gudgenby River Tribal Council
• King Brown Tribal Group
• Ngarigu Currawong Clan.

RAOs assessed the significance of Aboriginal heritage sites in the development footprint of the planned Taylor Estate. The ACT Heritage Council approved a conservation management plan for this project in September 2014 and issued further advice in November.
In 2014 on the archaeological testing methodologies and heritage site management outcomes. Test excavations and collection of Aboriginal sites involved all RAOs. Assessment has been ongoing on significant heritage places such as an Aboriginal scarred tree, which will be protected from development impacts.

Detailed archaeological investigations were ongoing within the development footprint of the planned Throsby Residential Estate, with the final stage of archaeological salvage completed by Biosis and RAOs during the reporting period. Detailed planning for the long-term protection of two Aboriginal heritage sites within the estate area were undertaken, with an Aboriginal scarred tree and area of archaeological deposit to be conserved due to their high significance values.

The ACT Heritage Council also provided ongoing advice on heritage matters concerning the Denman Prospect residential development, with particular focus on the conservation of an Aboriginal grinding groove site of high cultural and heritage significance.

The Council continued to provide advice to the National Capital Authority on a range of projects, one being a proposed solar farm in the Majura Valley. On-site discussions were held with the developer and RAOs. As a result, the developer actively sought to reduce the project’s impact footprint and, where impacts cannot be avoided, will undertake archaeological investigations and management in accordance with Heritage Council advice.

HERITAGE REGISTRATIONS
During 2014–15, the ACT Heritage Council processed 143 applications for historic places to be registered. Among them, three Aboriginal sites received provisional registration:

- Molonglo Valley grinding grooves, Denman Prospect
- Onyong’s Grave Site, Tharwa
- Birrigai Rock Shelter, Paddys River

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE POLICIES
In 2013, the ACT Heritage Council approved project briefs for four policies concerning the conduct of cultural heritage reporting, repatriation of Aboriginal artefacts, consultation with RAOs, and methodological requirements for archaeological investigations in the ACT. In 2014, independent consultant reports to inform each policy were submitted to ACT Heritage with recommendations for adoption into future ACT Heritage Council policies. The inclusion of these report recommendations into future policies will help streamline the approval of methodologies and assist in making decisions under the Heritage Act 2004 more transparent and more comparable.

The background research documents for the four policies have been submitted to the Council for its consideration.

Consulting with Representative Aboriginal Organisations (RAOs)
The Heritage Act 2004 formally recognises RAOs, who provide input into cultural heritage investigative processes. This policy will formalise requirements and protocols surrounding RAO consultation on heritage matters in circumstances which are not clearly outlined under the Act. It will also provide clarity for RAOs, heritage consultants, government agencies and developers with regard to the consultation process.

Return to Country: Repatriation of Aboriginal Artefacts
It is the preference of the RAOs that Aboriginal cultural material remain on, or be ‘returned to country’, in direct contact with soil. However, in the absence of a return to country protocol, it is informal practice for Aboriginal cultural material salvaged during archaeological excavations to be placed with ACT Heritage for temporary keeping. A new policy is being developed to address the cultural preference for Aboriginal material to remain on, or be returned to country, in addition to section 115 of the Heritage Act 2004 that stipulates the requirement for a suitable repository.

Reporting and Structural Requirements for Cultural Heritage in the ACT
It is an offence under section 75 of the Heritage Act 2004 to damage an Aboriginal place or object other than where there are exceptions permitted, as detailed in section 76. These exceptions include, for example, having an excavation permit, a statement of heritage effect or a conservation management plan approved by the ACT Heritage Council in place. In most instances, a cultural heritage assessment report will also be prepared prior to development to inform applications for ACT Heritage Council approvals.

On 9 April 2015, the ACT Heritage Council endorsed the Cultural Heritage Reporting Policy, which came into effect on 1 July 2015. This policy reflects amendments made to the Heritage Act 2004 in September 2014. In particular, the policy helps clarify important changes that streamline processes for early investigative works at proposed development sites through the introduction of excavation permits and statements of heritage effect. It addresses the structural and content requirements of various cultural heritage reports submitted to the ACT Heritage Council and provides clarity to consultants and RAOs on the Council approvals process.
Methodological Review of Sub-Surface Testing and Excavations in the ACT

This policy will entail a review of methodologies used in archaeological investigations over the previous three years, and will clearly establish a defined rationale for selection of appropriate methodologies for projects in the ACT. The recommendations will be considered in the drafting of a policy for conducting Aboriginal and historic heritage investigations.

TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE

Territory and Municipal Services Directorate (TAMS) is committed to improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT through a wide variety of programs.

LIBRARIES ACT PROGRAMS

Libraries ACT is uniquely placed to support revitalisation and promotion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural identities. Ongoing collaboration with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB), Aboriginal liaison officers, the Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and other key stakeholders aims to deliver targeted library services, programs and collections for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; and also the multicultural communities, of the ACT community.

Staff at the ACT Heritage Library offer support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people searching for their family, including offering free copies of relevant material. Each year NAIDOC Week and Indigenous Literacy Day are key events in the Libraries ACT calendar celebrated with special activities, for example story time sessions as a way of increasing cultural awareness in the community.

In 2015, Libraries ACT participated in Tracks to Reconciliation, an event organised by the West Belconnen and Gungahlin Child and Family Centres for Reconciliation Week. This event is described in detail in the Connecting the Community chapter of this report.

An ongoing activity for Libraries ACT is the implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services (the ATSILIRN Protocols) as a tool for organisational, collection, service and program development. One example of how the library is implementing the protocols is by establishing a collection framework for content created by and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This will involve consultation with the local community through the library reference group selected with advice from ATSIEB.

In November and December 2014, Libraries ACT hosted an exhibition of 50 artworks by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees in the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC). The exhibition, Sharing Culture, was a collaboration between AMC, which was working on rehabilitation and improving detainees’ literacy skills, and the ACT Heritage Library, which helps tell the stories of Canberra and its people.

ACT PARKS AND CONSERVATION SERVICE

ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS), is responsible for the sustainable management of the ACT’s national park, nature reserves, commercial forests, water catchments and rural lands—including Namadgi National Park, Canberra Nature Park, Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, Murrumbidgee River Corridor, Googong Foreshores, Jerrabomberra Wetlands and Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary.

As part of a broad range of cultural and natural resource management programs implemented across the parks estate, PCS delivers targeted community engagement programs focused on educating people about the cultural landscape and facilitating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing and working ‘on country’.

Traditional custodians and others in the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community contribute to the development of management plans and are engaged to assist with the delivery of various events and projects. This includes the annual Tidbinbilla Extravaganza, cultural burns for the ACT Aboriginal Fire Management Framework, Welcome to Country speeches and cultural activities at various locations with PCS, Parkcare and Catchment groups, the Murra Bidgee Mullingar River Ceremony in 2013 and Aboriginal youth ranger program in 2012–13.

In addition to their daily operational land management duties, PCS Aboriginal rangers help facilitate all of the projects described above, conduct regular ranger-guided activities for the public, and host field trips for local and visiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups. Funding and support of Aboriginal ranger programs has increased over the past few years in response to an increasing demand for services and in recognition that engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people ‘on country’ has proven to have a direct impact on the financial, emotional and physical wellbeing of their communities, playing a vital role in ‘Closing the Gap’.
ACT Aboriginal Fire Management Framework
In 2015, PCS developed the ACT Aboriginal Fire Management Framework in consultation with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. Endorsed by the ACT Bushfire Council, it includes a series of deliverables in the 2015–16 Bushfire Operations Plan such as rejuvenating cultural burning practices, improvements to the protection of cultural sites, training of local tradition custodians and employment of an Aboriginal fire project officer.

ACT Parks Aboriginal Advisory Group
In response to a commitment in the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018, PCS will work to establish an ACT Parks Aboriginal Advisory Group (AAG) during 2016. The AAG will formalise a new partnership with the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to manage ‘country’ together. The PCS Director sits on the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018 Implementation reference group.

Namadgi Rock Art Working Group
The Namadgi Rock Art Working Group (NRAWG), formed in 2008, is a collaborative partnership between PCS, the United Ngunnawal Elders Council (UNEC) and the four ACT Heritage Representative Aboriginal Organisations (RAOs)—King Brown Tribal Group, Buru Ngunawal Aboriginal Corp, Little Gudgenby River Tribal Council and Ngangu Currawong Clan. The NRAWG developed and implements a conservation management plan and monitoring program for several rock art sites in Namadgi and were recipients of the 2011 ACT Leighton Indigenous Landcare Award and 2012 ACT NAIDOC—Caring for Country Award in recognition of their work.

Murumbung Yurung Murra Network
In 2009, PCS established the Murumbung Yurung Murra network to facilitate greater peer support for its Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff. Now commonly known as the Murumbung Rangers, they are well regarded for their work ‘on country’. In addition to a variety of land management, heritage and conservation projects, they run ranger-guided activities and assist with events such as Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, the ACT Heritage Festival and the Tidbinbilla Extravaganza. They have received several ACT NAIDOC—Caring for Country Awards.
"I am a non-smoker because I want to stay fit and healthy. When people offer me a smoke, I refuse. I just tell them I don’t smoke. My friends were shocked to see me on the bus, and would ask me why? I would say, it was fun, and I was proud to be a part of the campaign with the other community members. My family would always tell me when they saw me on the bus. People I didn’t know, young and old, would ask me if I was on a bus."

Calvin Huddleston, local champion for Beyond Today, a community-based social marketing campaign promoting healthy lifestyle behaviours.
INTRODUCTION

The ACT Government has a shared responsibility through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to implement the National Indigenous Reform Agreement (Closing the Gap). ACT Government priorities and actions towards improving health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people include three of the Closing the Gap targets:

• close the gap in life expectancy by 2031
• halve the gap in mortality for Indigenous children under five by 2018
• halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade by 2018.

Across Australia work commenced towards meeting these targets through the National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes and the National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development. While these Agreements ceased on 30 June 2013, all jurisdictions are committed to continuing action to ‘Close the Gap’. This chapter includes a summary of ACT activities and progress towards the Closing the Gap health outcomes in the 2014–15 period.

Survey results give some indication of overall self-reported health status for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. For example, almost half (45.6%) of ACT respondents aged 15 years and over in the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey 2012–13 (AATSIHS) reported their health to be excellent or very good, compared to 39.2% at the national level. A further third (33.9%) reported their health to be good.

However, the ACT Chief Health Officer’s Report 2014 further indicates that:

• Tobacco use by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents in the ACT is declining but remains consistently higher than that reported by other ACT residents.
• High smoking rates amongst young pregnant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are particularly concerning (68% for those aged less than 20 years, and 59% for those aged 20–24 years).
• Significantly more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students report having ever used an illicit substance in their lifetime compared to their ACT counterparts.
• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were hospitalised for chronic kidney disease at around four times the rate of other ACT residents.
• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were hospitalised at almost four times the rate of their ACT counterparts for diabetes, and at almost twice the rate for circulatory diseases.
• Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people also had significantly more potentially preventable hospital admissions (33.7 per 1,000 population) than their ACT counterparts (17.4 per 1,000 population).

Aboriginal health means not just the physical wellbeing of an individual but refers to the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole Community in which each individual is able to achieve their full potential as human beings, thereby bringing about the total wellbeing of their Community. It is a whole-of-life view and includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life.

National Aboriginal Health Plan 1989
While some progress has been made, further work is needed to close the gaps in health outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other ACT residents. In addition to mainstream health services, the ACT Government has implemented a number of initiatives to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT and surrounding region.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, health is defined not just as the physical wellbeing of the individual, but also the social, emotional, and cultural well-being of the whole community.
ACT GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

HEALTH DIRECTORATE

DEVELOPMENT OF THE ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH PLAN: PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS 2016–2020

A draft ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan: Priorities for the Next Five Years 2016–2020 has been developed. The draft plan incorporates feedback from initial consultations held in August and December 2014, and has been drafted to align with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018. The draft plan includes priority themes, consistent with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander view of health, and the values and principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The five priority themes in the draft plan are:

- mental health and social and emotional wellbeing
- chronic disease
- community health
- cooperation and sustainability, service delivery and culturally skilled workforce
- health performance, quality improvement and reporting.

Common priorities shared across the focus areas include:

- working together to improve health and wellbeing
- improving access to health services and programs
- providing cultural training for staff
- increasing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce
- improving the quality of data collection.

The draft plan is expected to go to public consultation early in 2016.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION SERVICE (NGUNNAWAL BUSH HEALING FARM)

The Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm will be a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, aged 18 years and older, from the ACT and surrounding region. The service will work to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by providing an environment that is safe and supportive of people's recovery from problems associated with alcohol and other drugs, including provision of culturally appropriate education and rehabilitation programs.

The initial service will be an eight-bed facility, with scope to increase to sixteen beds subject to future funding decisions.

Progress on establishing the service has included:

- May 2015, site remediation work commenced and will be ongoing
- June 2015, early earth works commenced
- October 2015, Ministerial construction commencement event held at the site.

ACT Health intends to procure an external organisation to deliver the service and a Request for Proposal has been issued to the market. The service is expected to be operational in 2016–17.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM NAME</th>
<th>ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION SERVICE (NGUNNAWAL BUSH HEALING FARM)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:</td>
<td>The Ngunnawal Bush Healing Farm will be a residential drug and alcohol rehabilitation service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, aged 18 years and older, from the ACT and surrounding region. The service will work to improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by providing an environment that is safe and supportive of people's recovery from problems associated with alcohol and other drugs, including provision of culturally appropriate education and rehabilitation programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPENDITURE INFORMATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Amount (GST ex)</td>
<td>$582,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERVICE USER INFORMATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total service users (no.)</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SMOKING CESSATION ACTIVITIES

Beyond Today

‘The Beyond Today...it’s up to you’ social marketing campaign was implemented in the ACT during 2014–15 under the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tobacco Control Strategy 2010–14.

Campaign implementation included advertising on buses and in bus shelters, radio advertising, and production of a range of promotional material, which used the images and stories of local Beyond Today champions.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations and a limited number of mainstream organisations were also actively involved in promoting the campaign through a small grants program to deliver projects and activities that focused on smoking prevention and cessation and the uptake of healthy lifestyle behaviours.

Smoking in pregnancy research report

The Alcohol Tobacco & Other Drug Association ACT (ATODA) was commissioned to write a report, Reducing smoking in the ACT among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are pregnant or who have young children. ATODA provided the report to ACT Health in January 2015. The report included recommendations to improve the provision of, and access to, smoking cessation advice, and quit maintenance and support to the target group, in both community and mainstream settings.

Tackle Smoking program

ACT Health continued to fund Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service to provide a Tackle Smoking Program. This includes employment of a dedicated tobacco control worker to provide outreach and other services to address priority areas of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tobacco Control Strategy 2010–14.

Street Beat Youth Outreach Network

ACT Health continued to fund Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation through a Service Funding Agreement to provide the Street Beat Youth Outreach Network, which included provision of information, education and referral to young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about health issues including smoking cessation.

Further funding of $212,000 in the ACT Budget 2015–16, has been provided to support initiatives targeting smoking cessation amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. This includes funding to update the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tobacco Control Strategy, apply the lessons learned from the strategy, and strengthen information resources and awareness in relation to the harms of smoking, including a focus on smoking during pregnancy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM NAME</th>
<th>ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SMOKING CESSATION ACTIVITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:</td>
<td>To reduce smoking rates among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT and support quit attempts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Beyond Today Campaign</td>
<td>• Smoking in pregnancy research report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tackle Smoking Program</td>
<td>• Street Beat Youth Outreach Network</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR</th>
<th>EXPENDITURE INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Amount (GST ex)</td>
<td>$534,938 (combined amount for all activities)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICE USER INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total service users (no.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tackle Smoking program—41 smoking cessation groups were run, assisting 137 clients including 7 family groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Street Beat Youth Outreach Network – 54 patrol nights provided with 624 young people accessing the service.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LIAISON SERVICES

Hospital Liaison Services

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officers are employed in both of the ACT’s public hospitals. The liaison officers provide a support and liaison service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and their families, including arranging family meetings with doctors and other health staff; working to improve communication between hospital staff and patients/family members/carers; offering emotional, social and cultural support; providing information about the hospital and other health services; and assisting patients with referrals to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations, and other health, housing and external services.
Alcohol and Drug Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer

The alcohol and drug liaison officer works and supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients with case management, support, referral, and advocacy when accessing alcohol and other drug sector services. This includes assistance to negotiate and develop appropriate and achievable plans with these services. The liaison officer also provides support and education to alcohol and drug services to promote appropriate care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.

Mental Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Liaison Officer

The mental health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officer provides consultation and liaison services to other mental health teams, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, youth and adult medical services and other stakeholders as required. This includes assisting in the delivery of services that are sensitive to the social and cultural beliefs, values and practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander consumers, their families, and their communities in the ACT. The mental health liaison officer is based at Gugan Gulwan.

WINNUNGA NIMMITYJAH ABORIGINAL HEALTH SERVICE (WINNUNGA)

ACT Health currently holds a service funding agreement with Winnunga, which provides holistic health services including medical care and a range of programs to promote good health and healthy lifestyles. Winnunga services are provided to clients free of charge. Services provided under this agreement include: Aboriginal midwifery access program; hearing health program; dental health program; mental health liaison service; dual diagnosis program; youth detox support service; administrative and business support; corrections outreach services; Sorry Day Bridge Walk and Holistic Health Day event. Total funding for 2014–2015 was $1,739,485.

GUGAN GULWAN YOUTH ABORIGINAL CORPORATION (GUGAN GULWAN)

ACT Health currently holds a service funding agreement with Gugan Gulwan. Services provided under this agreement include: Street Beat Youth Outreach Network; harm reduction—information and education; support and case management; preventative health program; and mental health and wellbeing outreach service. Total funding for 2014–2015 was $882,719.

INDIGENOUS TEENAGE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND YOUNG PARENT SUPPORT PROGRAM

In the 2014–2015 Federal Budget, the Government committed funding to implement the Indigenous Teenage Sexual and Reproductive Health and Young Parent Support Program. This funding allowed for continuation of some elements delivered under the former COAG Indigenous Early Childhood Development initiative. Implementation of the Indigenous Teenage Sexual and Reproductive Health and Young Parent Support Program in the ACT in 2014–2015 included the Core of Life pregnancy, birth and early parenting life education program; the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexual Health Youth Outreach Project; and the Street Beat Youth Outreach Network.

Core of Life Sessions

Core of Life is a life education program that focuses on the realities of pregnancy, birth and early parenting. The program aims to support strong healthy community outcomes for future parents and their children.

From July 2014 to 30 April 2015, a total of 17 Core of Life sessions were conducted involving 238 participants. Sessions were conducted at Ted Noffs, Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation, Erindale College, Namadgi College and the Yurauna Centre, Canberra Institute of Technology.
The ACT Core of Life Program was presented at the Indigenous Women’s Conference, 13–15 October 2014 in Cairns, and an article promoting the program appeared in the November 2014, Issue No: 385 of the Indigenous Times.

In September 2014, ACT Health launched the Young Parenting: a new beginning DVD, which featured local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people sharing their parenting stories. This DVD was broadly distributed and was uploaded to the national HitNet Interactive Kiosk network.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexual Health Youth Outreach
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexual Health Youth Outreach program is delivered by the Canberra Sexual Health Centre (CSHC). The program includes information, education and opportunistic sexual health testing for young people, via an outreach model.

For the reporting period 1 July 2014 to April 2015 there were: 30 sexual health outreach sessions presented; 534 participants, of which 483 were under 20 years with approximately 34% identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; and 17 opportunistic testing sessions were attended. CSHC has continued to report a significant increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people presenting for services.

Street Beat Youth Outreach Network
The Street Beat Youth Outreach Network provides two youth workers to undertake night patrols two nights a week at identified at-risk times and in risk areas. The service generally operates between 9pm and 3am, mostly rotating over Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. The service is delivered by Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation.

Street Beat provides culturally appropriate health information on contraception and prevention of sexually transmissible infections, along with information on other health issues such as smoking. Street Beat staff are trained in first aid, dealing with co-morbidity, sexual and reproductive health, smoking cessation and drug and alcohol issues. Referrals are made to appropriate services for many at risk young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

For the period July 2014 to June 2015, there were a total of 54 patrol nights, 624 young people accessed the service, and 1,973 condom, information and referral packs were distributed.

**Program Name**

**Indigenous Teenage Sexual and Reproductive Health and Young Parent Support Program**

**Purpose/Description of Program:**

- Core of Life Program
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sexual Health Youth Outreach Program
- Street Beat Youth Outreach Network

**2014–15 Financial Year**

**Expenditure Information**

| Total Amount (GST ex) | $202,000 combined amount for all activities |

**Service User Information**

| Number of people assisted | • Core of Life—17 Core of Life sessions were conducted involving 238 participants
| • Sexual Health Outreach—30 sexual health outreach sessions presented, involving 534 participants
| • Street Beat—54 patrol nights provided with 624 young people accessing the service. |

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Action Plan 2013–2018**

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Workforce Action Plan 2013–2018 is a formal part of the ACT Health Workforce Plan 2013–2018 and focuses on increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment in the health sector.

Employing, recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the health workforce strengthens ACT Health’s ability to provide an effective, responsive and culturally safe health system, which is of mutual benefit to the community and the organisation.

There are four focus areas of the plan:

- Employment and recruitment
- Culturally competent health services
- Support and development opportunities
- Growth and development.

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, employed in ACT Health as at June 2015 was 86, a total of 1.19% of the total number of staff (7,225).\(^{11}\)

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\(^{11}\) The Health Directorate numbers cited here are slightly higher than State of the Service Health Directorate numbers in Table 8. This is because they reflect the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and total staff employed in ACT Health in the month of June 2015. The State of the Service numbers reflect the number of total staff employed in the final pay of June 2015.
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ENROLLED NURSING SCHOLARSHIPS

The ACT Government offers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nursing scholarships to undertake an Enrolled Nurse qualification. The Nursing and Midwifery Office manages the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Enrolled Nursing Scholarships for the ACT Chief Nurse.

Scholarships are offered twice per year, February and July, to coincide with commencement of semesters. The scholarship provides financial assistance for course tuition, administration fees and the purchase of recommended text books.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM NAME</th>
<th>ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ENROLLED NURSING SCHOLARSHIPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADMINISTERING DIRECTORATE: ACT HEALTH</td>
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<td>EXPENDITURE INFORMATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Amount (GST ex)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERVICE USER INFORMATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of people assisted</td>
<td>1 participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CULTURAL AWARENESS AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

ACT Health’s Cultural Awareness and Skills Development Program contains three elements: orientation presentation; eLearning module; and skills development workshops.

During the reporting period, 1,163 staff and volunteers participated in staff orientation sessions; and 442 staff completed the eLearning module (available to all staff and essential training for clinical and clinical support staff).

Progress has been made on developing a new eLearning module that responds to staff feedback on how to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients and clients. The new module has been tested for uploading onto the ACT Health electronic learning system.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH IMPACT STATEMENTS

The ACT Health Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Impact Statement is a key tool available to assist staff in their work and assist the organisation in pursuing its goal of closing the gap.

Health Impact Statements are required as part of ACT Health’s policy management process and are to be completed for all new policies, programs and strategies that are considered to have any potential impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

During the reporting period, twenty-two ACT Health draft policy documents were reviewed and nine draft documents were assessed as having an impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients/clients.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CLIENT IDENTIFICATION

To improve the collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander client data, progress has been made on implementing the national best practice guidelines for collection of Indigenous status in health data sets (AIHW 2010), as required under the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) National Indigenous Reform Agreement.

During the reporting period, ACT Health developed and implemented a new Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Client Identification Policy.
### Health data summary

**Closing the Gap target—Close the gap in life expectancy by 2031**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 3 LIFE EXPECTANCY INDICATORS</th>
<th>CHANGE IN GAP AND/OR OVERALL INDIGENOUS NUMBERS AND CHANGE</th>
<th>DATA DEVELOPMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEADLINE INDICATOR:</strong> ESTIMATED LIFE EXPECTANCY AT BIRTH</td>
<td>ACT DATA NOT CURRENTLY AVAILABLE.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Life expectancy estimates cannot be calculated for the ACT because they are based on mortality rates. The small number of annual Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander deaths in the ACT means these calculations would be based on mortality rates that are not statistically reliable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRESS INDICATOR 1:</strong> MORTALITY RATE BY LEADING CAUSE</td>
<td></td>
<td>The ACT has a plan to improve identification and recording of Indigenous status in administrative data sets. However, in relation to mortality rates, achieving more accurate identification would not increase numbers to a year-to-year statistically reliable level. There may be scope for aggregating data on a multi-year basis to lift the statistical reliability of mortality rates to support trend analysis over the course of this generational target.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRESS INDICATOR 2:</strong> RATES OF CURRENT DAILY SMOKERS</td>
<td>On an age standardised basis, the ACT had the lowest rate across the jurisdictions of adult Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander smokers in both 2008 (29.8%) and 2012–13 (27.6%). However, during that time period the gap increased slightly from 13.8 to 15.0 percentage points1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRESS INDICATOR 3:</strong> LEVELS OF RISKY ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION</td>
<td>The age standardised rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults whose alcohol consumption put them at both lifetime risk of harm and alcohol related harm on a single occasion, based on the National Health and Medical Research Council guidelines, was 15.5% in 2012–13. These rates were less than for non-Indigenous adults2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRESS INDICATOR 4:</strong> PREVALENCE OF OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY</td>
<td>Nearly three-quarters (72.8%) of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults were obese or overweight in 2012–13, compared with 62.5% of non-Indigenous adults3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. PC 2015 Table 2.6, page 39
3. PC 2015 Table 2.5, page 38
Closing the Gap target—*Halve the gap in child mortality by 2018*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE 4 CHILD MORTALITY INDICATORS</th>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS AND/OR MEASURES</th>
<th>CHANGE IN GAP AND/OR OVERALL INDIGENOUS NUMBERS AND CHANGE</th>
<th>DATA DEVELOPMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEADLINE INDICATOR:</strong> UNDER 5 MORTALITY RATE BY LEADING CAUSE</td>
<td>ACT data not currently available. Child mortality rates are not calculated for the ACT because the very small number of annual Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander child deaths on which they are based means the rates are unreliable.</td>
<td>The ACT has a plan to improve identification and recording of Indigenous status in health administrative data sets. However, in relation to child mortality rates, achieving more accurate identification would not increase numbers to a year-to-year statistically significant level. There may be scope for aggregating data on a multi-year basis to lift the statistical significance of mortality rates to support trend analysis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| PROGRESS INDICATOR 1: PROPORTION OF BABIES BORN OF A LOW BIRTHWEIGHT | Data are available for five three year periods (2005–07 to 2010–12) and show that generally around 10% of babies born to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers are of low birthweight. This compares to around 4% for non-Indigenous mothers. Data are aggregated across three years due to the small number of low birthweight babies in a single year. However, even then, the data should be treated with caution. There are only three data points within the period of the NIRA (2008–10 to 2010–12) so a trend analysis of either the gap or proportion of low birthweight babies is not appropriate.¹ | |

| PROGRESS INDICATOR 2: TOBACCO SMOKING DURING PREGNANCY | Age standardised rates (which form the basis for comparing the gap) were not produced in 2010 due to small numbers in some of the age groups. While the crude rate increased from 52.2% in 2007² to 59.4% in 2010³, this change is not statistically significant. However, that over half of all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander new mothers smoked during pregnancy is a concern. | |

| PROGRESS INDICATOR 3: ANTENATAL CARE | ACT data not considered of sufficient quality to publish. | The ACT data in relation to antenatal care is not reliable as antenatal visits are only recorded from public hospital antenatal clinics and previous visits to GPs and/or other health clinics are not taken into account. |

¹. Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) various years
². SCRGSP various years, with statistical analysis by CSD
³. SCRGSP 2012, page 182
"The indigenous detainees have got a lot of displacement in their own communities, with their own families, and that’s a by-product of the stolen generations. Displacement could lead to crime. It leads to a lot of things, mental breakdown. I’m a product of that, and lot of these guys are too. If they can see me doing the job that I’m doing and being a positive role model... I didn’t fall through the cracks, you don’t have to fall through the cracks."

Ida Hanley, Indigenous corrections officer, Alexander Maconochie Centre
Photo: Elesa Kurtz / Fairfax Syndication
KEY FOCUS AREA: FEELING SAFE

It is widely acknowledged that numerous social and economic factors contribute to the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the justice system. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have suffered a long history of social disadvantage, cultural displacement, trauma and grief, and poor health and living conditions.

Simon Corbell MLA
Attorney-General
Forward, ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Partnership 2015–2018

INTRODUCTION

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people come into contact with statutory and justice systems more frequently than non-Indigenous Australians. They may also have difficulties accessing services that will keep them safe, or be supported.

It is of concern that around one quarter of the children and young people in care in the ACT are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander. This significant over-representation in the ACT child protection system is similar to other Australian jurisdictions and is a matter of great unhappiness to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and the broader community across the nation. A number of elements of the new out of home care strategy, A Step Up For Our Kids—One Step Can Make a Lifetime of Difference will assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people and families.

In 2013–14, there were an estimated 58,790 young people in the ACT aged 10–21 years. Of these young people, 0.26% were under community-based supervision and 0.15% were in detention. Although Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people make up 3% of the population aged 10–17 in the ACT, they represented 26% of all young people under youth justice supervision on an average day in 2013–14. That is, an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander young person in the ACT was 12 times as likely to be under youth justice supervision during the year as compared with other young people. This was lower than the national rate (15 times as likely).12

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are significantly over-represented in the criminal justice system as both victims and offenders due to poverty and disadvantage stemming from historical social exclusion. While accounting for 1.5% of the ACT population, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people account for approximately 17.7% of people in the ACT criminal justice system.

According to national survey data Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience higher levels of physical violence than non-Indigenous women. (See for example the ABS, 4714.0—National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014–15.)

This chapter provides an overview of targeted services in the ACT that help Aboriginal families, women, children, youth and adults reduce the amount of contact, and stay safe and supported when they do come in contact, with statutory services or the justice systems.

12 AIHW Australian Capital Territory, Youth Justice Supervision in 2013–14, p2
One of the primary objectives of the Women’s Plan is that ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children are supported and safe in their communities’. Also, a priority action is to ‘support best practice initiatives that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys to feel strong and respected in their cultural identity by continuing to consult with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body about how to engage and create such opportunities’.

In August 2014, the Office for Women commenced engagement with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB) as part of consultation for the development of the 2IP. Two workshops were hosted by ATSIEB and the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre. ATSIEB advised the Office for Women to consider the *We Don’t Shoot Our Wounded* Report along with the feedback from both workshops when developing the 2IP.

ATSIEB proved to be a valuable mechanism for the Office for Women to consult broadly with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The Office for Women has continued to meet with ATSIEB to develop their Action Plan under the 2IP.

The 2IP was developed with the assistance of the expert advice given at a special meeting of the Domestic Violence Prevention Council held in April 2015. One of the important points made at that meeting was the need to ensure that government can monitor the implementation of actions under the plan. As a result, a robust reporting structure has been implemented with all directorates required to develop action plans and to report against those plans annually. These reports will be collated by the Office for Women and presented to the Social Inclusion and Equity Cabinet Subcommittee for their information.

**A STEP UP FOR OUR KIDS—ONE STEP CAN MAKE A LIFETIME OF DIFFERENCE (OUT OF HOME CARE STRATEGY 2015–2020)**

*A Step Up For Our Kids*, the ACT government’s new five year strategy to reform out of home care in the ACT, was developed by the Community Services Directorate (CSD) in consultation with young people, carers, out-of-home care agencies, peak bodies, non-government and government services over a two-year period from 2012 to 2014. Extensive research was undertaken to support the strategy. Many of the reports of these activities can be found on the CSD website at: www.communityservices.act.gov.au/ocyfs/out-of-home-care-strategy-2015–2020

Officially launched in January 2015, *A Step Up for Our Kids* is an additional $16 million investment in the future of our most vulnerable children and young people. It is about breaking the intergenerational cycle of disadvantage and keeping children safe at home. *A Step Up for Our Kids* is designed to:

- stem the rate of entry into care through new placement prevention and reunification services
- improve outcomes for children and young people in care
- place children and young people in care with permanent alternative families in a timely way.

It will see the development of a therapeutically oriented service system that provides a trauma informed response to vulnerable children and young people. *A Step Up for Our Kids* represents a major departure from current practice and will reduce duplication in the role of government services and non-government services, and improve the way the system supports children, parents and carers.

Under *A Step Up for Our Kids* a new service system of intensive, individualised support for families has been commissioned to prevent children coming into care or return them home as soon as it is safe to do so. From January 2016, Uniting NSW/ACT began delivering new services to vulnerable families in the ACT community through the Strengthening High Risk Families domain under *A Step Up for Our Kids*. This program includes specialist support to children, young people and families in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander local communities across the ACT, through its Aboriginal Services and Development Unit, Jaanimili. This service system has a specific focus on keeping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families together with a view to reducing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children coming into care.

Youth Justice

THE BLUEPRINT FOR YOUTH JUSTICE IN THE ACT 2012–2022

The Blueprint for Youth Justice in the Act 2012–22 sets the strategic direction for youth justice in the ACT. The Blueprint is a ten-year whole of government and community initiative that aims to reduce offending, re-offending, and detention rates, as well as the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the youth justice system. It achieves this by addressing the underlying causes of youth crime and promoting early intervention, prevention and diversion initiatives. The Blueprint was developed following a Human Rights Commission (HRC) review into the ACT youth justice system, and encompasses the key elements of a quality youth justice system identified in the HRC report.

In 2013–14, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 10 to 17 years comprised about one quarter (27%) of young people under youth justice supervision on an average day in the ACT.

The Progress Report 2012–15 for the Blueprint demonstrates that progress has been made against the objective to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people in the youth justice system. From 2011–12 to 2013–14:

- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under youth justice supervision decreased by 35%
- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people under community-based supervision decreased by 35%
- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in detention decreased by 47%
- the average time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people spent in custody (nights) reduced by 36%.

BIMBERI YOUTH JUSTICE CENTRE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

Bimberi Youth Justice Centre (Bimberi) is a human rights compliant youth detention facility. Bimberi provides safe and secure accommodation for young people between the ages of 10 and 21 years who are remanded in custody or sentenced to a period of detention by the ACT Children’s or Supreme Courts. Bimberi facilitates rehabilitation and promotes the reintegration of children and young people into the community through a range of programs and services.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM NAME</th>
<th>BIMBERI YOUTH JUSTICE CENTRE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OFFICER</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:</td>
<td>The Family Engagement Officer supports engagement between families and young people and promotes an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective into the daily functions and management of the Centre. The role of the Family Engagement Officer is to:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• support and engage the families of young people and to be active and supporting of the young person</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• be a point of contact and communication for services wishing to engage and support young people, in particular services supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• provide advice to staff and services about the cultural and other needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• identify gaps in services for young people and their families, in particular those of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent and, where possible, assist in developing strategies to address these gaps.</td>
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2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENDITURE INFORMATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure ($)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICE USER INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total service users (no.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous service users (no.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUPPORTING POLICIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice Guideline: Role of the Family Engagement Officer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROGRAMS WITHIN BIMBERI YOUTH JUSTICE CENTRE FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER YOUNG PEOPLE

The Bimberi Youth Justice Centre runs a number of specific programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in their care, which includes case management, cultural advice and counselling and training support. These programs focused on art, sports and fostering positive identity and connection to culture and community.

PROGRAM NAME
PROGRAMS WITHIN BIMBERI YOUTH JUSTICE CENTRE FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER YOUNG PEOPLE

PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
These programs provide additional support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who are placed in the Bimberi Youth Justice Centre. Programs included:
• culturally safe counselling delivered by an Indigenous counsellor from Relationships Australia
• mental health presentations from the Yurauna Centre
• sporting programs supported by youth workers from Winnunga Aboriginal Sports Program
• sporting and arts programs delivered by Gugan Gulwan Aboriginal Youth Corporation. This includes individual support to young people within Bimberi who have established relationships with staff from Gugan Gulwan.
• a touch football event hosted by the NAIDOC Week Committee with local Indigenous young people who play for the ACT Indigenous Community.

2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR
EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($): Included as part of the Bimberi budget

SERVICE USER INFORMATION
Total service users (no.) N/A
INDIGENOUS SERVICE USERS (NO.) 26 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in Bimberi were eligible to access the programs over the year

NARRABUNDAH HOUSE

Narrabundah House Indigenous Supported Residential Facility (NHSRF) supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, 15 to 18 years of age, who are on community based justice orders. The program provides intensive case management for a small group of high risk offenders, and support to residents with a focus on community participation and integration.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community has a member on the NHSRF Governance Group to help guide and advise on the continued development of the program and to assess referrals. The operational model for NHSRF is embedded in the operational functioning of Bimberi Youth Justice Centre and supported by Child and Youth Protection Service who oversee and supervise the resident’s case management.

Referrals to NHSRF are coordinated via Youth Justice Case Management and then submitted for consideration to the Governance Group which is made up of government and community members.

PROGRAM NAME
NARRABUNDAH HOUSE

PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
Narrabundah House is an Indigenous Supervised Residential Facility. Residents are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander males, 15 to 18 years of age, who are on community based justice orders.

Residents may be:
• transitioning from custody
• being diverted from custody
• at risk of homelessness.

The program aims to provide intensive support to residents with a focus on community participation and integration. All residents are expected to be employed, undertaking training or attending school. Three beds are provided for short to medium term placements of three to six months. A fourth bed is provided for overnight diversionary placements upon referral from the Child and Youth Protection Services After Hours team.

2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR
EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($): $672,000

SERVICE USER INFORMATION
Total service users (no.) 14*
Indigenous service users (no.) 9*

SUPPORTING POLICY/IES
Practice Guideline:Narrabundah House Admissions Criteria
*Please note: indicates number of placements.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OFFICIAL VISITORS

The Attorney-General appoints designated Children and Young People Official Visitors, including an Official Visitor who is an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person. Ms Tracey Whetnall was appointed to this position on 1 March 2014. Responsibilities of the Official Visitors include visiting and inspecting designated facilities, hearing complaints and, where required, enquiring into and reporting complaints to the Minister for Children and Young People.

PART TWO

KEY FOCUS AREA: FEELING SAFE

ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP 2015–2018

Signed on 27 July 2015, the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Partnership 2015–2018 represents a major ongoing commitment by the ACT Government to improve access to law and justice support services, and to address the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT law and justice systems, as both victims and offenders.

The Partnership follows on from the work of the previous Justice Agreement (which expired in 2013) and extensive consultation with community and stakeholders through 2013 and 2015. Being a partnership, it embodies the need for the government and community to work together. Under the Partnership there are 21 action items, which are being implemented across government and the community sector.

This Partnership focuses on three key objectives which detail targets, measures, actions and areas of accountability. The three objectives are:

- reducing over-representation by:
  - reducing recidivism; and
  - increasing access to diversionary programs
- improving access to justice services
- improving data collection and reporting.

In taking this targeted approach, the Partnership seeks to build on cross-government work to address the contributing factors that lead people into contact with the justice system. These factors include improvements in health, education, employment and engagement with the human services system. This holistic cross-government work is essential to achieving the Partnership’s aims.

Coupled with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018, the Justice Partnership articulates continued and shared commitment and responsibility to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and an intent to make a real difference.

GALAMBANY COURT

Galambany Court has been part of the ACT Magistrates Court jurisdiction since 2004 and celebrated its tenth anniversary in August 2014. The aim of the Court is to provide a culturally sensitive framework that recognises the ongoing disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system. The presiding Galambany Court Magistrate during 2014–15 was Magistrate Boss.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and community members, known as panel members, assess the defendants’ suitability to have their matter heard before the Galambany Court and provide recommendations to the presiding magistrate on sentencing options. When a defendant is considered unsuitable, the matter is returned to the mainstream Magistrates Court.

Galambany Court procedure continues to strengthen relationships between the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and the ACT criminal justice system. Referrals to Galambany Court are made at the request of a magistrate, defendant or their lawyer. Currently every young Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who is charged will automatically be referred to the Restorative Justice Unit by ACT Policing. As this is a voluntary process, the young person has the choice, and may or may not decide to proceed. If they do choose the restorative justice process, this is an alternative to referral to Galambany Court.

TABLE 5 2014–15 GALAMBANY COURT REFERRALS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ADULTS</th>
<th>YOUNG PEOPLE</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YTD sub total</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YTD percentage</td>
<td>74.2%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YTD total</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YTD percentage</td>
<td>96.8%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YTD TOTAL</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YTD percentage</td>
<td>77.4%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
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</table>

Source: Justice and Community Safety, Annual Report 2014–15
THE ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE (ACT/NSW) SUPPORT PROGRAMS

During 2015, arrangements were finalised and the contract commenced for the Aboriginal Legal Service (ACT/NSW) to operate the following programs on behalf of the ACT Government:

Front-Up Voluntary Surrender Program

This is a voluntary program where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in breach of bail, or otherwise breaches of the law, can surrender to the Court and have their matter heard, without having to be arrested by police and processed through the Watchhouse.

Interview Friends Program

The Crimes Legislation Amendment Act 2015 introduced provisions requiring an interview friend to be provided for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who is a suspect, serious offender or volunteer under the Crimes (Forensic Procedures) Act 2000. These provisions commenced on 3 March 2015.

The Interview Friends Program provides volunteers to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are arrested and being interviewed by ACT Policing.

Pre and Post Galambany Circle Court Support

The Galambany Circle Court Support program ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people attending Galambany Circle Court are supported before, during and after the sentencing process.

Extended Throughcare Program Support

This program provides support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees at the Alexander Maconochie Centre as they transition back into the local community to ensure they comply with court orders and attend relevant training programs. For more detail about the Extended Throughcare Program refer to the entry on page 60.

IMPROVED ACCESS TO LEGAL ADVICE FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

As part of the 2014–15 Budget the ACT Government allocated $0.1m per annum (indexed) towards the provision of additional legal service assistance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.

The funding aimed to assist in the reduction of the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT coming into contact with the criminal justice system, as both victims and offenders, through the provision of culturally appropriate legal services. Under a funding agreement with the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) the primary focus was on the employment of one or more people in its Canberra office to undertake a duty lawyer role in the ACT courts.

Any surplus funding could be used to:

a. aid with improving the effectiveness of legal and related support services working to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who become involved in the criminal justice system in the ACT
b. assist clients with transport to and from appointments related to a matter before the ACT courts. This includes attendance at mandated appointments and assessments and other relevant commitments such as counselling, vocational education and training, housing and medical appointments.

c. liaise and coordinate with government, key agencies, service providers and other bodies in relation to justice issues impacting on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to improve and maximise the availability of culturally appropriate service provision to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people within the ACT justice system
d. promote awareness, understanding and acknowledgement of the diversity of Aboriginal culture and the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT, and undertake education and community awareness activities to achieve this

e. promote awareness of all systems and services targeted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT to allow them to access the same entitlements and rights that are available to the wider community

f. provide culturally appropriate legal support services aimed at improving access and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in relation to legal needs, and law and justice services in the ACT.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE INDIGENOUS GUIDANCE PARTNER

The Restorative Justice Indigenous Guidance Partner (IGP) is a full-time identified position in the Justice and Community Safety Directorate. This position is dedicated to building rapport and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families to maximise their opportunities for participation in restorative justice processes. This includes provision of information about restorative justice principles and processes, encouragement and guidance to young people throughout preparation and conference, and supporting and monitoring any agreement tasks that follow.

The IGP service includes funding for a vehicle as the service provides outreach support and also liaises extensively with a network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officers, agencies and organisations to build connections and life changing opportunities for young people engaged in restorative justice processes.
These include Gugan Gulwan, Winnunga, Habitat, Belconnen Family and Children’s Services, Relationships Australia (Dhunlung Yarra’s Therapeutic Services for Indigenous clients), Northside Community Service, ACT Policing, Child Youth and Protection Services (CSD), Bimberi Youth Justice, the Aboriginal Legal Service, and ACT Education centres such as Yurauna at CIT Reid.

In the 2014–15 financial year the IGP participated in a five day ‘Using Loss and Grief to Attain Cultural Competency’ workshop in Canberra (November 2014) and a three day ‘Indigenous Women’s Leadership Summit’ in Brisbane (April 2015).

Participation rates for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people have risen to 44% from 38% over 2014–15. Compliance for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander young people who have negotiated restorative justice agreements was 93% in 2014–15 compared with 89% for the 2013–14 financial year.

### PROGRAM NAME

**INDIGENOUS GUIDANCE PARTNER**

PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:

Full time position dedicated to building rapport and supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and their families.

2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR

EXPENDITURE INFORMATION

Expenditure ($): 1 FTE and vehicle with parking = $128,578

SERVICE USER INFORMATION

Total service users (no.) 27 agencies and organisation contacts 72 community participants etc

Indigenous service users (no.) 43 young Indigenous offenders experienced contact with the IGP; 21 of the 43 were assisted through a conference process.

### SUPPORT TO THE ACT WOMEN’S LEGAL CENTRE

The Women’s Legal Centre receives funding from the ACT Government to support the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women’s Access to Justice Program. This funding is supplemented by the Centre to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’s access to specialised support and legal advice, and to ensure that the employment of Aboriginal workers is supported and sustained.

Current ACT Government funding allows for 1.1 Aboriginal workers in the Program and assists clients from across the Canberra region. In the July 2014 to June 2015 period the Centre assisted 100 clients.

### ACT Corrective Services

**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ELECTED BODY ELECTIONS**

In preparation for the 2014 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Elections, the Indigenous Liaison Officer at the Alexander Maconochie Centre (AMC) organised an information session conducted by the Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs and the ACT Electoral Commission.

In July 2014, polling for the Elected Body was offered inside the prison for the first time (historically only postal voting was offered to detainees for such elections). The in-prison polling was well received with a high number of detainees who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander participating in the voting process. Information sessions will continue to be provided at the AMC for future elections as it encourages detainee awareness of, and participation in, the electoral process.

### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER NAIDOC WEEK ART EXHIBITION

During NAIDOC Week in 2014, Southside Community Services partnered with ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) within the JACS Directorate to organise an exhibition of detainees’ and community corrections clients’ artwork. This was the second ACTCS NAIDOC Week art exhibition and was again a great success.

The exhibition, Serving Country, was based on the 2014 NAIDOC theme Serving Country—Centenary and Beyond, and honoured Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women who have fought to serve our country.

Ms Yvette Berry MLA opened the exhibition on 4 July 2014, with the Welcome to Country given by Ngunnawal Elder Susan Barry, and a didgeridoo performance by Andrew Horne of Southside Community Services. There were 52 works on display, 29 of which were available for sale and 15 were sold; that is, more than half of the available works were sold. The exhibition ran for two weeks, was well attended and received excellent media coverage and paved the way for a third NAIDOC Week art exhibition, ‘We All Stand on Sacred Ground,’ in 2015.

### CERTIFICATE II CONSERVATION AND LAND MANAGEMENT THROUGH THE CULTURE AND LAND MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

ACTCS delivers the Certificate II Conservation and Land Management through the Culture and Land Management (CALM) program which was enhanced during 2014–2015 by the Culture and Country Pilot Program. The program integrates aspects of traditional culture, art, music, horticulture and land management with embedded
language, literacy and numeracy skills. This was delivered in conjunction with external agencies including Greening Australia and Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service. This expanded engagement now caters for more than eighty per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees in the AMC. ACTCS and the Environment and Planning Directorate will conduct an informal evaluation of the pilot program. Current plans are to extend the Culture and Country Program for an additional two years.

EXTENDED THROUGHCARE PROGRAM

The ACTCS Extended Throughcare program amplifies the existing Throughcare model by extending it for 12 months beyond the end date of a detainee’s prison custodial sentence. Extended Throughcare is a voluntary initiative offered to sentenced male detainees, and to all women detainees, whether remanded or sentenced. Clients are assisted to reintegrate back into the community including provision of support with accommodation, health care, basic needs, income, and community connections, with the aim of a supported reintegration to the community influencing the reduction of recidivism. Brokerage funding of an average of $1500 per person is available to lead agencies to support clients.

As part of the 2014–15 Budget, the Government committed over $2 million to fund the Extended Throughcare model for two years. This was in addition to $1.137 million granted for the Throughcare program in the 2012–2013 Budget.

Approximately 270 people have participated in the Extended Throughcare pilot program. At this early stage, the program appears to be delivering very significant benefits for clients including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Since commencement, 100% of eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees released from the AMC have engaged with the program.

INDIGENOUS OFFICIAL VISITOR

The Minister for Justice appoints the Indigenous Official Visitor who visits and inspects the AMC and any places where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees are directed to work. The Visitor also inquires into complaints by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees, and conducts inquiries into complaints. The current Indigenous Official Visitor is Ms Tracey Whetnall.

In 2014–15 up to the end of March, Ms Whetnall visited ACT adult correctional centres on 43 occasions. In the Justice and Community Safety Annual Report 2014–15, Ms Whetnall noted the following key issues: a significant rise in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees in the AMC, complaints about access to free art equipment outside of classes and interaction with Indigenous case managers. Ms Whetnall wrote that complaints often related to unreasonable detainee expectations and that Corrections staff have addressed complaints to the best of their abilities both at an officer level and where necessary at management level.

The Indigenous Official Visitor also attends a regular oversight working group that includes the Human Rights Commissioner; the ACT Ombudsman, the Public Advocate, representatives of ACT Health and AMC Management to discuss matters pertaining to the operation of the AMC.

INDIGENOUS PROGRAMS WITHIN ALEXANDER MACONOCHIE CENTRE

The AMC runs a number of specific programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees. In 2014–15, these programs covered case management, counselling, and training support. The Cultural and Land Management Program (CALM) is a holistic program that provides detainees the opportunity to engage in education covering literacy and numeracy, land care and art. Mainstream literacy and numeracy classes are also available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees. In addition to the educational and therapeutic programs available to all detainees, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees have access to the following programs:

- a weekly social and emotional well-being program delivered by Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service
- the Elders and Community Leaders Visitation Program which provided cultural connection through visits by local community Elders and other leaders
- fortnightly counselling provided by Relationships Australia which includes counselling by Indigenous counsellors
- culturally relevant pastoral care under the specific Indigenous chapel service.

### PROGRAM NAME

**ELDERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS VISITATION PROGRAM**

**PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:**

This initiative provides cultural connection through visits by local Indigenous Elders and community leaders.

**2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR**

**EXPENDITURE INFORMATION**

| Expenditure ($) | $1800 funded separately |

**SERVICE USER INFORMATION**

| Total service users (no.) | 90 (approximately) |
| Indigenous service users (no.) | As above |

| ACT Closing the Gap Report 2015 |
INDIGENOUS YARNING PROGRAM
The Indigenous Yarning Program provided the opportunity for detainees to meet in a safe, culturally appropriate environment, created a sense of belonging and pride to assist rehabilitation, and encouraged detainees to engage with services in order to assist with community reintegration.

In August 2015, the Indigenous Yarning Program expanded into the Indigenous Traditional Culture Healing Arts Program (ITCHY) which has been popular among male Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander detainees, with between 14–18 men attending each session and organisers and participants providing positive feedback.

PROGRAM NAME
ART PROGRAMS FOR INDIGENOUS DETAINEES
PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
Art Programs for Indigenous detainees
2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR
EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($) : $5000
SERVICE USER INFORMATION
Total service users (no.) : 40 participants across the 2014–15 financial years
Indigenous service users (no.) : As above

NAIDOC FAMILY DAY
The AMC facilitated a NAIDOC barbeque and family day in July 2014. The event was attended by approximately 150 people, comprising government and community leaders, Elders, detainees and their family members, and ACTCS staff. The guests, staff and detainees enjoyed lunch and family time together with background singing and music. The visits area of the AMC was the venue for the event, which was decorated with detainee art, Indigenous symbols and native flowers. A group of detainees performed dances from both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. The AMC’s NAIDOC 2014 organising committee received positive feedback following the event. Similar events are planned for future years.

PROGRAM NAME
NAIDOC FAMILY DAY
PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
NAIDOC Family Day
2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR
EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($) : $1098 for catering
SERVICE USER INFORMATION
Total service users (no.) : 150
Indigenous service users (no.)

TRANSITIONAL RELEASE CENTRE
ACTCS also facilitates an Indigenous program which is provided through the AMC’s Transitional Release Centre (TRC), where detainees whose period of incarceration is almost complete are allowed approved day release to attend various programs and services. Once a month, the ACT Aboriginal Natural Resource Management Facilitator organised a cultural or caring-for-country activity with the Winnunga Men’s Group, which included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ex-detainees who had previously participated in training within the prison.

Community Corrections

ABORIGINAL CLIENT SERVICES OFFICER
In 2014, ACTCS introduced the position of Aboriginal Client Services Officer (ACSO) within Community Corrections. This Officer works closely with the Community Corrections Officers to assist in the case management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders and is also a liaison person between the community and ACTCS. Community Corrections Officers undertake home and field visits accompanied by the ACSO as part of the case management and supervision process. This space has been regularly utilised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients since its inception and not only acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture but has provided a culturally safe environment for such clients.

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS RECEPTION
A culturally sensitive interview space has been established within Community Corrections to encourage agencies such as the Aboriginal Legal Service to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander offenders and Community Corrections Officers on site.

REPORTING CENTRE
ACTCS has partnered with Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service to create a community based reporting hub for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adult offenders on Community Based Orders. The intention is for Winnunga staff and ACTCS to develop closer communication around support and referral practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander shared clients. The centre opened on Thursday 27 November 2015.

PART TWO | KEY FOCUS AREA: FEELING SAFE |
ACT Policing

INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER
ACT Policing has a dedicated Indigenous Community Liaison Officer, whose duties involve liaison with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to establish and maintain positive relationships and foster mutual understanding.

Additionally, the ACT Policing Indigenous Community Liaison Officer implements crime prevention strategies as they relate to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community, such as family violence intervention and the MPower program. The Indigenous Community Liaison Officer also assists in Australian Federal Police recruitment processes, providing advice when sought in relation to the development and implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recruitment, retention, career management and development strategies.

PROGRAM NAME
ACT POLICING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER

PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
A dedicated liaison officer who engages directly with the Indigenous community on policing matters.

2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR

EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($): $83,872

SERVICE USER INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total service users (no.)</th>
<th>Indigenous service users (no.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100 community contacts</td>
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</table>

ACT Human Rights Commission

JERVIS BAY TERRITORY VISITS
During 2014–15, the ACT Human Rights Commission, Children and Young People’s Commissioner (CYP) visited the Jervis Bay Territory (JBT) several times to meet and talk with children and young people, the Wreck Bay Aboriginal Community Council, community Elders, service providers, and the broader Wreck Bay and Jervis Bay communities. Between November 2014 and February 2015, the CYP facilitated four community forums to discuss the proposed changes to the administration of the JBT. In March 2015, the CYP provided the report on the outcomes of these discussions to: the ACT Chief Minister, Mr Andrew Barr MLA; the NSW Premier, The Hon Michael Baird MP; the Assistant Minister for Infrastructure and Regional Development, The Hon Jamie Briggs MP; and the Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Senator the Hon Nigel Scullion.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CULTURAL RIGHTS LEGISLATION
During 2014–15, the Commission was involved in ongoing discussions with the ACT Government and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB) to progress the addition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural rights to the ACT’s Human Rights legislation. Implementing principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People, the Human Rights Commissioner worked with ATSIEB and ACT Government to develop amendments to the Human Rights Act 2004 to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural rights. The Act was amended in early 2016 to add this new protection, which recognises the material and economic relationships Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have with land and waters and other resources.

During 2015–16, the ACT Human Rights Commission:
• launched the Deadly Advice website (http://deadlyadvice.hrc.act.gov.au), a joint project with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Access to Justice Program at the Women’s Legal Centre, to provide relevant legal and human rights information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women living in the ACT and region. The final resource (in the form of a mobile friendly website) was launched at the end of 2015. It includes information from a range of organisations including Care Inc, Aboriginal Legal Service, and Legal Aid.
• launched the Diversity Goes with our Territory campaign, which celebrated the success of the ACT’s diverse population and included several Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander champions
• celebrated International Human Rights Day in December 2015 with a joint forum with Amnesty International, Global to Local, about working together to improve human rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
• the Health Services Commissioner completed a Closing the Gap project on the access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to the Women’s and Children’s Centenary Hospital.
PART TWO | KEY FOCUS AREA: FEELING SAFE | 63
“I joined the Strong Women’s Group at West Belconnen Child and Family Centre in 2013 and it made a huge difference to my life. I had the opportunity to participate in weaving workshops at the Centre and I loved it. The Centre helped me register as a business and successfully apply for a Women’s Return to Work Grant. Since then I’ve run weaving workshops for local schools and community groups. I have an exhibition planned at the Strathnairn Gallery and I am finishing a Certificate II in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Arts. I’m proud of where I am now.”

Angela Piscotta
KEY FOCUS AREA:
CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY

Canberra is a place where all people reach their potential, make a contribution and share the benefits of an inclusive community.

Canberra Social Plan 2011

INTRODUCTION

The Canberra Social Plan sets out a vision for Canberra based on the themes of connection, belonging and collaboration. These themes underline the commitment to keeping people and communities at the centre of the ACT Government’s work. It’s about keeping people connected with each other and the place they live, ensuring they have a say in decisions that affect them, and they have the opportunities and resources they need to participate and reach their full potential.

Participation in the community needs to be supported by responsive and welcoming services. It is an ongoing responsibility of the ACT Government to make sure that no-one is left out or left behind. We all share the responsibility as a community to overcome structural barriers and discrimination, as well as social and personal factors.

Working together is the most effective way of building an inclusive community. Strong partnerships and collaborative approaches across all sectors underpin this work. The ACT Government continues to provide leadership in working with its partners in new and flexible ways. This includes aligning effort towards seamless service systems.

Consultation during 2014–15 with families, community organisations and service providers towards the development of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018 identified a connected community through strong family, social and support networks as a key platform to support the Agreement’s key focus on Strong Families. Maintaining strong networks is also integral to maintaining cultural identity, which is critical to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing, and strong families and communities.

A basic requirement for participation in community, for feeling safe and connected, and for achieving better health, education and employment outcomes is having a home. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3.0% of the Australian population yet continue to be overrepresented in both the national homeless population and as users of specialist homelessness services.

Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people represented 23% of those accessing specialist services in 2013–14; an estimated 58,420 clients. This represents an increase of 6% of clients compared with the previous year¹⁴. In the ACT, the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people accessing homelessness services during 2014–15 was approximately 15% of the total number of people accessing the services. This is an increase of 1% from the 2013–14 rate of 14%¹⁵.

The ACT Government is committed to continuing services that reduce the risk of homelessness for all vulnerable people and families in the ACT. The ACT Government continues to fund targeted services to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have culturally safe pathways to housing and accommodation services.

¹⁴ AIHW’s Specialist Homelessness Services Report 2013–14
¹⁵ ACT statistical profile—Specialist Homelessness Online Report (SHOR)
The Community Services Directorate (CSD) involves many different, dedicated services working to support Canberrans to live the best life they can, whether by delivering new ways of supporting children in care, reforming services for people with disability, ensuring housing for the most vulnerable, or providing help when needed to families.

In 2014–15, CSD continued major reforms to how it works and partners with the community, in particular the Better Services Human Services Blueprint, which aims to make it simpler for people to get the right support at the right time, especially when different organisations are involved.

The Better Services approach builds on the work that CSD has already done in the community through services such as the three Child and Family Centres and the Child Youth and Family Services Program where a range of services have been provided in one location.

Children’s and family services

CHILD, YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES PROGRAM

All services funded under the Child, Youth and Family Services Program work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families. Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation receives dedicated funding to deliver a range of initiatives under this program.

GROWING HEALTHY FAMILIES (CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRES)

Growing Healthy Families provides culturally specific, safe and informed services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the ACT in the areas of health, early childhood development and parenting. Growing Healthy Families uses a community development model to build community capacity, with an integrated focus on the three elements of children, families and local communities. Specific outcomes of the program are:

- the development of a preschool engagement initiative through the recruitment of two early years engagement officers (one north and one south)
- enhanced access by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their parents to Child and Family Centres and partner programs and services. These services include case management, group programs, community activities and events, advocacy, counselling, group and community development activities
- providing support and services to address community-identified needs of children, families and the local community
- improved engagement with Aboriginal communities through local governance and the development of a partnership approach to service delivery.

Culturally proficient and early intervention programming for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families began at the West Belconnen Child and Family Centre through Commonwealth funding under the Indigenous Early Childhood Development National Partnership Agreement. This Agreement ceased on 30 June 2014. To increase support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families in their local communities, in the 2015 budget, the ACT Government provided $1.2 million over two years to expand the Growing Healthy Families Program across Canberra to all three Child and Family Centres.
PROGRAM NAME
GROWING HEALTHY FAMILIES
(CHILD AND FAMILY CENTRES)

PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
Growing Healthy Families is a community building program delivered out of Child and Family Centres in consultation with service providers and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The program offers a range of culturally informed health, early childhood development and parenting services which support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. Services include:
• case management
• children’s groups
• play groups
• men’s and women’s groups
• community activities and events
• linking families to universal health and community services.

2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR
EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($) : $624,000

SERVICE USER INFORMATION
Total service users (no.) 340*
Indigenous service users (no.) 282*
* Number variant includes non-Indigenous parents/carers of Indigenous children (accessing services)

SUPPORTING POLICIES
Human Services Blueprint; West Belconnen Local Services Network; Australian Early Development Census; A Step Up for Our Kids—One Step Can Make a Lifetime of Difference, the Out of Home Care Strategy 2015–20; the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018; ACT Government’s Budget ‘Healthy and Smart’ / ‘Liveability and Opportunity’ priorities.

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS
Output performance reporting, Output 3.1 CSD Annual Report

STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

Strengthening Families is an initiative under the Better Services program that extends early intervention and targeted support for up to 50 families with the greatest need. Strengthening Families actively supports building Strong Families—the main focus of the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018. The Agreement seeks to build strong foundations, resilient families, and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to achieve their personal life goals.

A central component of the Strengthening Families initiative is the Lead Worker Model where one officer acts as the sole point of contact for a family for their needs across different services. This is a different way of working and requires training, which has also been offered to non-government workers.

The Strengthening Families initiative works closely with community services, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander services, to co-design tailored family plans to overcome service barriers and exclusions. All participating families are supported by a trained lead worker to co-design family plans. Strengthening Families works with each family’s support network to identify an appropriate lead worker.

PROGRAM NAME
STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
Strengthening Families is an intensive service offer for families with complex needs. The initiative matches families with a trained lead worker to assist in tailoring a service offer to their unique needs, including identifying goals, and addressing service system barriers that make it difficult for families to move forward.

2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR
EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($) : $445,000

SERVICE USER INFORMATION
Total service users (no.) 30 families
Indigenous service users (no.) 8 families

CULTURAL SUPPORT FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Cultural Services Team within Child and Youth Protection Services provides Child and Youth Protection Services with support and advice when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait children, youth and families. The Team also provides assistance in engaging with other community agencies.

The Cultural Services Team and Child and Youth Protection Services work in partnership with out-of-home care service providers to put in place cultural plans for all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children and young people in out of home care. A cultural plan is a living document that supports the child or young person’s cultural identity by:
• facilitating and maintaining their connection to family including extended kin, and
• encouraging their connection with culture through existing community relationships.

In November 2014, CSD began a trial of independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural advisors within the care and protection system. In June 2015, the Office for Children Youth and Family Services facilitated a workshop to undertake analysis of the progress of the
model and inform system improvements. This role is now incorporated in the Cultural Services Team and provides immediate access to advice on decisions that affect Aboriginal children.

Disability services

NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

To genuinely exercise choice and control and get the best from the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members need the option to access culturally sensitive services. Community members should be able to choose from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander managed disability services, as well from culturally sensitive mainstream disability services.

In 2014–15, advice was sought from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body in relation to the development of two new programs seeking to improve NDIS outcomes for members of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in the ACT.

There are two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander human service providers in the ACT; at this time, neither provides disability services. A small number of mainstream disability providers have good connections and are working well for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the local community. However, in general, community members have expressed concern about the lack of culturally sensitive services to choose from.

In July 2014, the NDIS outreach service delivered by Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation was extended to run through to December 2016 with funding of $355,000 (GST ex). The increased funding to the program enabled an additional staff member to be employed, providing community members with the choice of a male or female worker. The program has been working successfully across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the ACT to:

- build understanding about the NDIS
- assist community members with disabilities and their families to think about the types of supports and services the NDIS might provide them
- assist eligible people to consider their whole-of-life needs and make a plan that outlines their goals and their disability related needs
- support people to engage with the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to get the best package of supports and services to achieve the goals in their individual support plans
- promote the benefits and successes of the NDIS for local community members.

In 2015, Community Services Directorate sought proposals for a provider to develop and deliver a program to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community organisations to prepare for the NDIS. The program will also work with general disability services to enhance their provision of culturally sensitive services.

Local provider Nous Group was selected through an open tender to deliver this program, which will run through to December 2016. Nous Group has partnered with Lifestyle Solutions, an Aboriginal organisation which is delivering disability services in other NDIS trial sites, and with First People’s Disability Network.

Housing services

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ENGAGEMENT SERVICE—GULANGA PROGRAM

Housing and Community Services funds the ACT Council of Social Services (ACTCOSS) to support community organisations which provide homelessness services, and child, youth and family services. The Gulanga program supports these organisations to improve cultural competency in order to promote access to, and use of, services by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families. Through the Gulanga program ACTCOSS has developed resources for the community sector; such as a cultural awareness self-assessment toolkit, good practice guides and the provision of cultural awareness seminars and workshops. The Gulanga program also includes support for a network of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers in the community sector.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM NAME</th>
<th>ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ENGAGEMENT SERVICE (GULANGA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:</td>
<td>A program to develop and improve the cultural competency of services working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to promote the access and engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with mainstream services through supporting Indigenous community service workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR</td>
<td>EXPENDITURE INFORMATION</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure ($)</td>
<td>$112,787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERVICE USER INFORMATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total service users (no.)</td>
<td>63 community organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous service users (no.)</td>
<td>Not separately identified in reporting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER OLDER PERSONS HOUSING

In the 2013–14 Budget, $0.075 million was allocated to undertake design work for suitable culturally appropriate accommodation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ‘age in place’. A further commitment of $1.5 million from Housing ACT was provided for the construction of the project.

The key focus of the design is to ensure that the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are met. The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body provided substantial input into the development of the project, including endorsement of the location—a site in Kambah—and the final design, which is a cluster of five two-bedroom adaptable units.

Construction of the units commenced in early February 2016 and is expected to be completed by September 2016.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION SERVICE AND BOARDING HOUSE NETWORK

The ACT Government provides funding to Inanna Inc. for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Supported Accommodation Service (ISAS) and Boarding House Network, which provides supported accommodation options for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in and visiting the ACT. The services have the capacity to accommodate up to 12 Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families at any one time. Between July 2014 and June 2015, the services provided a total of 13,379 supported accommodation nights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. In addition to recurrent funding for ISAS and the Boarding House Network, in 2014–15 Inanna Inc. received one-off funding of $34,545 for brokerage funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients. Brokerage funding includes support, food and other living expenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM NAME</th>
<th>INANNA INC.—INDIGENOUS SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION SERVICES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:</td>
<td>Inanna Inc.’s Indigenous Supported Accommodation Service provides supported accommodation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This includes outreach support to families in a case management framework. These accommodation services are tailored specifically towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and are in addition to mainstream services for homeless people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR</td>
<td>EXPENDITURE INFORMATION</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expenditure ($)</td>
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<td>SERVICE USER INFORMATION</td>
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<td>Total service users (no.)</td>
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<td>Indigenous service users (no.)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM NAME</th>
<th>INANNA INC. — INDIGENOUS BOARDING HOUSE NETWORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:</td>
<td>Inanna provides crisis support and transitional supported accommodation to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander families who require temporary accommodation in order to improve their access to various services including health and education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR</td>
<td>EXPENDITURE INFORMATION</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Expenditure ($)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SERVICE USER INFORMATION</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Total service users (no.)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indigenous service users (no.)</td>
</tr>
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</table>
ACCESS TO HOUSING/ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER TENANCIES

At 30 June 2015, there were 861 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public housing tenancies, housing a total of 1,826 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents, representing 8.6% of the total public housing tenancies.

During 2014—15, 83 new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public housing tenancies were created:

- 69 tenancies from the priority housing list, involving 128 residents
- 13 tenancies from the high needs housing list, involving 15 residents
- one tenancy from the standard housing list, involving two residents

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER UPGRADE PROJECT

In 2014–15, Housing ACT committed $1 million for modifications or improvements to public housing properties for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants. The program will provide for a broad range of property modifications and improvements to assist in improving the suitability and liveability of properties to meet specific needs. The range of modifications may include:

- additions or extensions for families who are experiencing overcrowding
- adaptations or modifications to provide accommodation that better meets the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tenants throughout their lifetime, such as tenants experiencing injury, disability or ageing. This could include installation of grab rails, ramps or modifications to kitchens and bathrooms.

In 2015, Housing ACT identified an initial suite of 17 properties where the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander residents suggested a possible shortage of at least two bedrooms in each property. Following closer examination of each property and the needs of the families involved, it is expected that upgrades and/or extensions to three properties may be delivered with this funding.

HOUSING LIAISON AND HOME MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

The ACT Government provides funding to Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service to facilitate a Housing Liaison Service and a Home Maintenance Program. These services are available to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to access appropriate accommodation and sustain their tenancies.

The Home Maintenance Program receives funding to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people involved in the criminal justice system. The program aims to mentor service users and provides practical home maintenance support to sustain their tenancy and participate in the community. In 2014—15, an additional amount of $90,909 was funded on top of the recurrent funding of $115,135 for the Home Maintenance Program.

### PROGRAM NAME
 **Winnunga Nimmityjah—Housing Liaison**

**PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:**
Winnunga Nimmityjah provided information, advice and assistance to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people access appropriate housing options, facilitate linkages with legal and mainstream support services and support people to maintain their tenancies.

**2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR**

**EXPENDITURE INFORMATION**

Expenditure ($): $125,219

**SERVICE USER INFORMATION**

Total service users (no.) 293 instances of housing support
Indigenous service users (no.) Not separately identified in reporting

### PROGRAM NAME
 **Winnunga Nimmityjah—Home Maintenance Program**

**PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:**
Winnunga Nimmityjah assisted young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women at risk of homelessness to develop life skills in home maintenance, increasing their self-confidence and employment options. Winnunga also provided practical home maintenance assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households at risk of eviction from public housing.

**2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR**

**EXPENDITURE INFORMATION**

Expenditure ($): $206,044

**SERVICE USER INFORMATION**

Total service users (no.) 382 instances of home maintenance
Indigenous service users (no.) Not separately identified in reporting
SUPPORTED HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Gugan Gulwan receives funding through Social Housing and Homelessness Services, CSD, for the provision of outreach assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness. In 2014–15, an additional amount of $45,455 was funded for outreach services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth in addition to recurrent funding of $73,797.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM NAME</th>
<th>GUGAN GULWAN – SUPPORTED HOUSING ASSISTANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:</td>
<td>Gugan Gulwan provided outreach support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people who were at risk of experiencing homelessness, or who may be transitioning to stable housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXPENDITURE INFORMATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure ($)</td>
<td>$119,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERVICE USER INFORMATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total service users (no.)</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous service users (no.)</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LIBRARIES ACT

Staff at the ACT Heritage Library offer support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people searching for their family, including free copies of relevant material.

In 2015, Libraries ACT participated in Tracks to Reconciliation, an event organised by the West Belconnen and Gungahlin Child and Family Centres for Reconciliation Week. The event won a Community Services Directorate Reconciliation Week Award in the category of partnerships. Over the two days, Tracks to Reconciliation brought together eight local agencies and provided family activities at each location. Library staff shared with the children who attended stories and songs including ‘Heads, Shoulders, Knees and Toes’ in the Wiradjuri language.

Each year, during NAIDOC Week and Indigenous Literacy Day, special story time sessions are held as an initiative to increase cultural awareness within the community.

In 2016, Libraries ACT recruited a learning coordinator to work collaboratively with library staff and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to:

- develop and deliver best practice literacy and learning programs and services, encouraging use of the library
- facilitate networking and partnerships across the ACT Government, community and professional library sector
- act as a central point of contact, liaison and knowledge for enquiries and activities related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

PART TWO | KEY FOCUS AREA: CONNECTING THE COMMUNITY

TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY BUS SERVICE

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Bus service began in June 2013 and continues to provide on demand transport for local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who lack access to regular public transport. The bus is supported and driven by a paid ACT Government driver and an Indigenous trainee who are both from the local community. The bus is also driven by volunteers outside business hours to support local Indigenous groups, from elders to youth, to attend social, cultural and sporting events.

The bus is far more than a simple lift from one point to another. It is an opportunity to enhance social inclusion for members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who are experiencing difficulties accessing transport. Of particular note, the bus travelled to Cherbourg in Queensland for a gathering of elders who were from the Stolen Generation.

During the 2014-2015, the service provided 3,165 passenger trips, excluding those trips undertaken where the bus was driven by volunteers.
"I had no idea I was Aboriginal until about four years ago and then I found out my grandfather was one of the first Indigenous men to fight in World War I."

Winning the NAIDOC Business of the Year Award in 2015 was very emotional—it showed that I had been accepted by the Indigenous community here in Canberra.

The underlying ethos of Dilkara is to do what we can to give back to the communities."

Julie Okely, Dilkara, Winner NAIDOC Business of the Year Award 2015

"My business is Darkies Designs. Using 'darkies' is all about reclaiming the name and doing it with a bit of humour—definitely part of my personality."

The NAIDOC Business of the Year Award in 2014 really was huge in pushing the business to the next level. It meant to me, 'yeah, I can do this' and I hope it says the same to other Indigenous people. If you're thinking of starting a business, just go for it."

Dion Devow, Darkies Designs, Winner NAIDOC Business of the Year Award 2014
Employment is critical to the economic freedom of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As levels of employment rise, so too does our capacity to participate fully in our communities, make our own choices and determine our own futures.

Terry Williams Chair (2008–2011), ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body

ACT Public Service Employment Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

INTRODUCTION

Historically, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have had lower employment and economic participation rates compared to other Australians, but with substantial increases since the 1990s, particularly in the private sector. The ACT Government acknowledges the importance of employment and Indigenous enterprise development as pathways to economic independence. As the level of employment and economic participation rises, so does the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to participate fully in the Canberra community.

Since 2011, the ACT Public Service has had in place a whole-of-government strategy to increase the number Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees to 2% of all employees. Across the ACT Government, directorates have implemented proven policies to increase employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; for example, programs to increase skill levels, customised job-ready training, specialised recruitment strategies, employer cultural awareness training and setting explicit employment goals. By June 2015, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people made up 1.43% of all ACT Public Service employees.

Although the 2% target was not achieved, good progress was made for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander public service employment. From June 2014 to June 2015 the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees increased 18.2%, the biggest single-year increase in the previous five years, and a larger increase than the percentage increase of both the total ACT Public Service headcount (1.8%) and the total ACT Public Sector headcount (0.7%).

An important way to create sustainable employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is through fostering a supportive Indigenous business development environment. Indigenous businesses are 100 times more likely than non-Indigenous businesses to hire Indigenous employees. Increasing the market share of Indigenous businesses is therefore likely to be an effective way of creating jobs for Indigenous people. In the 2014–15 period, the ACT Government put in place a number of enterprise building initiatives.

The ACT Government's commitment to achieving employment and economic independence continues into the future and is set out in the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018. The Agreement, developed with the community, has strong commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economic development. The implementation plan to the Agreement will bring to bear policy levers that will impact government purchasing, infrastructure spend and public service employment targets.

Through the reaffirmed Confident and Business Ready—Building on Our Strengths (the ACT Government’s business development strategy), the ACT Government will continue to raise awareness, facilitate local business connections into broader networks, and promote and celebrate successes in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU College of Social Arts and Social Sciences, CAEPR Working Paper No. 95/2014
ACT GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

CHIEF MINISTER, TREASURY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE

Employment

ACT PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE

The ACT Public Service (ACTPS) Employment Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People was launched in April 2011. It aimed to attract, recruit and retain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT Public Service through enhanced education and training opportunities, mentoring, dedicated employment programs and the use of ‘identified’ positions. The vision of the Strategy was to overcome inequities in employment patterns and more than double, by 2015, the employment rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT Public Service, from a public sector headcount at 30 June 2010 of 0.9% (176 employees) to 2% (407 employees).

The Strategy formed part of the ACT Government’s overarching Respect, Equity and Diversity (RED) Framework, which was established in 2010 to create positive workplace cultures where all employees have opportunities to participate, innovate, and perform to their full potential, thereby enhancing the productivity and sustainability of the ACT Public Sector.

In 2014, a review of the RED Framework was conducted to assess its success in promoting a positive workplace culture. One of the six recommendations arising from the review was to redesign the ACTPS Employment Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People as a standalone strategy.

During 2014–15, there was a renewed focus on the implementation of practical attraction and retention programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. Nineteen Inclusion positions were identified for the 2016 ACT Public Service Graduate Program to support the placement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with disability, and an Inclusion Employment Pathways (IEP) program began a pilot phase.

The IEP is a centrally coordinated program focusing on traineeships, cadetships and school-based work experience programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

In February 2015 the Head of Service advised all Directors-General of revised, directorate-specific, annual diversity targets, which will extend until 2018–19.

In April 2015 1.5 (full-time equivalent) employment inclusion manager positions were appointed within CMTEDD to focus on whole-of-government inclusion initiatives and provide support to directorates to build cultural awareness and disability confidence.

ACT PUBLIC SERVICE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYMENT RATES

At June 2015, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees made up 1.43% (299 employees) of the total ACT Public Service workforce of 20,921 employees. This can also be expressed as 271.3 (FTE) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees out of a total of 18,581.90 (FTE) (Table 6 and Table 7).

**TABLE 6 ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYEES SNAPSHOT, JUNE 2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACT PS EMPLOYEES</th>
<th>ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYEES</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total employees (headcount)</td>
<td>20,921</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total employees (FTE)</td>
<td>18,581.90</td>
<td>271.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

17 Please note that the headcount used in the Employment Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People was inclusive of the Canberra Institute of Technology and the ACT Auditor-General’s Office.
**PART TWO | KEY FOCUS AREA: EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE**

TABLE 7  ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE, DIVERSITY BY DIRECTORATE (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DIRECTORATE</th>
<th>ACT PS EMPLOYEES (headcount)</th>
<th>ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYEES (headcount)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Capital Metro Agency</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Minister; Treasury and Economic Development Directorate</td>
<td>2,408</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>1.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Services Directorate</td>
<td>1,244</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>3.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Training Directorate</td>
<td>6,175</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elections ACT</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment and Planning Directorate</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Directorate</td>
<td>7,064</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>1.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justice and Community Safety Directorate</td>
<td>1,649</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territory and Municipal Services Directorate</td>
<td>1,862</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>1.99%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>20,921</strong></td>
<td><strong>299</strong></td>
<td><strong>1.43%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1. This data is for directorates only and excludes Canberra Institute of Technology, the ACT Audit Office, Cultural Facilities Corporation and Calvary Health Care (Public).
2. Chief Minister Treasury and Economic Development Directorate includes Exhibition Park in Canberra, the Gambling and Racing Commission, the Independent Competition and Regulatory Commission, the Land Development Agency and the Long Service Leave Authority.
3. Education and Training Directorate includes the ACT Teacher Quality Institute.

The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees increased 18.2% from June 2014 to June 2015, the biggest single-year increase in the previous five years (Table 8). This increase was larger than the percentage increase of both the ACT Public Service headcount (1.8%) and the ACT Public Sector headcount (0.7%).

Annual diversity targets for each directorate have been set by the Head of Service. It is envisaged that the progress made in the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific cultural awareness, and attraction and retention programs will enable the Service to meet and exceed its employment strategy targets by the end of the 2018–19 financial year.

TABLE 8  ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES 2011–2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Headcount</td>
<td>193</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of total workforce</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
<td>1.04%</td>
<td>1.19%</td>
<td>1.23%</td>
<td>1.43%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**ACT PUBLIC SERVICE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYEE SNAPSHOT**

Table 9 shows that by June 2015, of the 299 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees in the ACT Public Service:

- generation Y comprised the largest age group (138 employees) making up 46% of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees. By comparison, generation Y made up 31.60% of all ACT Public Service employees.
- there was a higher proportion of full-time Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees (231 employees making up 77%) in comparison to the numbers of full-time employees in the ACT Public Service population (14,631 making up 69.93%).
- the separation rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees was higher than the separation rate for the whole ACTPS (9.4% compared to 6.9%).
- the average salary for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees was less than the average ACT Public Service salary ($76,107 compared to $82,739).

TABLE 9  ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE BY AGE, FULL TIME/PART TIME EMPLOYMENT, SALARY AND SEPARATION RATES, 2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>ACT PS EMPLOYEES (headcount)</th>
<th>ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYEES (headcount)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation Y</td>
<td>6,611</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation X</td>
<td>7,908</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baby Boomers</td>
<td>6,276</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Baby Boomers</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**EMPLOYMENT TYPE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Permanent</th>
<th>Temporary or Casual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>16,226</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part time</td>
<td>4,921</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>1,369</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**SALARY AND SEPARATION RATE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Salary</th>
<th>Median Salary</th>
<th>Separation rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$82,739</td>
<td>$76,107</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$74,082</td>
<td>$71,207</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$76,107</td>
<td>$71,207</td>
<td>5.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


18 Please note: From 7 July 2014, the ACT Public Sector comprised eight ACT Public Service directorates, approximately ninety% of the workforce, and six ACT Public Sector entities, which operate independently of the ACT Public Service, and which comprise approximately 10% of the workforce.
ACT Public Service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee salaries

Over the five years from 2011 to 2015, the average salary of employees identifying as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander increased noticeably from $61,791 in 2011 to $76,108 in 2015. This represents a 23.2% increase in salary over the five year period, and a 35% reduction in the pay gap (Table 10). In 2015 the average salary for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander public servant was $6,631, or 8% less than the average ACT Public Service salary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>ACT PS</th>
<th>ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$71,883</td>
<td>$61,791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$75,181</td>
<td>$66,410</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$78,061</td>
<td>$70,137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$80,432</td>
<td>$74,415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$82,739</td>
<td>$76,108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Enterprise development

SPONSORSHIP OF ACT NAIDOC BUSINESS OF THE YEAR AWARD

The ACT Government sponsors the ACT National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) Business of the Year Award to promote and celebrate business achievements during the NAIDOC week. The 2014 winner was Darkies Design and the 2015 Winner was Dilkara, Essence of Australia.

CANBERRA BUSINESS YARNING CIRCLE

The ACT Government provided funding for the Canberra Business Yarning Circle, a community engagement initiative to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander business development and economic participation in the ACT. This initiative was led by the CEO, Darkies Designs, 2014 ACT NAIDOC Business of the Year Award winner, and delivered in collaboration with the CBR Innovation Network (CBRIN) and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.

ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP MODEL

Building on the success of the initial Yarning Circle forum, CBRIN developed a proposal to create an ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Business Development and Entrepreneurship Model, which will be progressed in 2016. The proposal contains a range of initiatives to support and promote Indigenous enterprises into the future including:

- a series of targeted workshops specifically designed and sourced to meet the needs of ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and businesses
- a trade show to gather the ACT and region’s Indigenous businesses and promote local Indigenous service providers to procurement officers from the ACT and Australian Governments as well as the private sector
- promotion of ACT and region Indigenous business stories through a documentary series of interviews
- investigating the feasibility of establishing an ACT Indigenous business chamber.

SUPPLY NATION MEMBERSHIP

The ACT Government is a founding member of and a signatory to Supply Nation (formerly the Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council). Supply Nation is a business-to-business membership body dedicated to growing diversity within supply chains. The aim is to ensure that small to medium Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses have the opportunity to be integrated into the supply chains of Australian companies and government agencies.

The ACT Government has a policy on social tendering, encouraging agencies to consider the inclusion of social objectives and outcomes during the procurement process. A listing of ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses registered with Supply Nation has been published on the ACT Government Procurement and Capital Works website to encourage and promote the utilisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander service providers and business owners across the ACT Government.
## COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE

### ACT WOMEN’S RETURN TO WORK GRANTS PROGRAM

The ACT Women’s Return to Work Grants Program was launched on 5 February 2008 allocating up to 160 grants per year (at $1000 each) to women returning to work. The program provides significant opportunities to women, particularly those experiencing significant disadvantage or marginalisation.

In 2014–15, 142 grants were approved, taking the total number of allocated grants to 967 since the program’s commencement. Of the 142 grants approved, 13 grant recipients were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

The program is open throughout the year and procedures have been reviewed and improved to make it more accessible and easier to apply.

### ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS

The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs manages the scholarship grants program for education, professional and personal development. The aim is to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people undertake study and training to further develop skills and qualifications and enhance employment prospects.

In 2014–15, a total of $100,000 Scholarship Grants funding was available through two funding rounds. Twelve applicants were successful during the first funding round. The second round of the 2014–15 Scholarship Grants closed on 30 June 2015.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM NAME</th>
<th>ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:**
Provides funding to support ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to undertake further study and training.

**2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXPENDITURE INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure ($)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICE USER INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total service users (no.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous service users (no.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Total grants expenditure of $191,127 in 2014–15 was due to funds rolled over.

### INCLUSION OF ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER OUTCOMES IN THE TOTAL FACILITIES MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS

A key initiative of Housing and Community Services is to encourage sustainable economic engagement and participation of specific cohorts (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people). The Total Facilities Management contract acknowledges this through a minimum employment target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Spotless manages this contract.

In 2014–15, the Spotless contract had a minimum target to employ 10 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people. Spotless and its subcontractors exceeded the target by employing 13 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The ACT Government continues to work with service providers to provide incentives to encourage individuals from specific groups to seek employment opportunities.

### TECHNICAL OFFICER TRAINEESHIPS AT THERAPY ACT

In 2014–15, Therapy ACT created two contract technical officer traineeships (identified positions). These officers worked in the Therapy Assistants in Schools Program, Jervis Bay School and Koori Preschools. The aim was to maximise engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and their communities.
ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER JOB READINESS SUPPORT PROGRAM—CONNXTIONS PROGRAM

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Job Readiness Support Program, known as the ConnXtions Program, provides nationally recognised job-ready training and ongoing wrap-around support to members of local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Of the 16 participants enrolled in the 2014–15 program, 14 completed the course with 10 achieving Certificate III qualifications in Community Services. Eleven of the 14 participants who completed the course went on to engage in full-time or part-time employment, further studies or work experience.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM NAME</th>
<th>ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER JOB READINESS SUPPORT PROGRAM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:</td>
<td>The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Job Readiness Support Program, known as the ConnXtions Program, is targeted towards those who are deemed to be at risk of homelessness, re-offending or facing long-term unemployment. The aim is to run the program twice a year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure ($)</td>
<td>$223,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SERVICE USER INFORMATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total service users (no.)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous service users (no.)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUPPORTING POLICIES</td>
<td>The ACT Young People’s Plan 2009–2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ACT Public Service Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REPORTING REQUIREMENTS</td>
<td>Election Policy Commitments (60.2) reporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CSD Annual Report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TERRITORY AND MUNICIPAL SERVICES DIRECTORATE

EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES

In 2015, responding to the Head of Service diversity employment targets, TAMS implemented a range of employment strategies to focus on attracting, recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Some of these strategies included:

- delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training
- identifying positions for Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people
- funding a scholarship for a current TAMS Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employee to build capability for progression to more senior roles
- allocating a place in the TAMS Manager Development Program for an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander employee
- identifying further opportunities to increase the representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

DEVELOPMENT OF A RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

In 2015, in support of the ACT Government’s strategic direction to improve employment, education and social outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans as outlined in the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018, TAMS committed to the development of a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

A TAMS RAP working group consisting of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous employees was established to work on the development of the RAP. The working group is co-chaired by the RAP Executive Champion and a Ngunnawal ranger from Parks and Conservation Services.
## Closing the Gap target—*Halve the gap in employment outcomes by 2018*

### TABLE 11 EMPLOYMENT INDICATORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS AND/OR MEASURES</th>
<th>CHANGE IN GAP AND/OR OVERALL INDIGENOUS NUMBERS AND CHANGE</th>
<th>DATA DEVELOPMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEADLINE INDICATOR:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEVEL OF WORKFORCE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPATION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMPLOYMENT TO POPULATION</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RATIO FOR THE WORKING</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>AGE POPULATION, 2012–13</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Between 2008 and 2012–13 there was a slight, but not</td>
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<td>significant, deterioration in the gap in the proportion</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of the working age (15–64) population employed. But the</td>
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<td></td>
<td>ACT was still on track to close the gap.1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SUPPORTING MEASURE TO</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HEADLINE 1:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>UNEMPLOYMENT RATE</td>
<td>There was an apparent improvement in the unemployment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>rate between 2008 and 2012–13, but the outcome was not</td>
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<td>statistically significant.3</td>
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<td><strong>SUPPORTING MEASURE TO</strong></td>
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<td><strong>HEADLINE 2:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION</td>
<td>Between 2008 and 2012–13 the labour force participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>RATE</td>
<td>rate decreased by 5.2 ppts to 74.7% and the gap</td>
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<td>widened to 8.7 ppts. However, neither change was</td>
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<td>statistically significant.4</td>
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<td><strong>PROGRESS INDICATOR 1:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>PROPORTION OF INDIGENOUS</td>
<td>There was an increase in the proportion of the</td>
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<tr>
<td>20–64 YEAR OLDS WITH OR</td>
<td>population aged 20–64 with or working towards a</td>
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<tr>
<td>WORKING TOWARDS POST</td>
<td>Certificate III or above between 2006 (49.8%) and 2012–</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCHOOL QUALIFICATION</td>
<td>13 (65.1%).5</td>
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<tr>
<td>IN AQF CERT III LEVEL OR</td>
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<tr>
<td>ABOVE</td>
<td>Reporting against progress indicator 1 (proportion of</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Indigenous 20–64 year olds with or working towards post</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>school qualification in AQF Cert III level or above)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>should be disaggregated to include reporting against</td>
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<td></td>
<td>both categories ‘with’ or ‘working towards’ a post–school</td>
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<td>qualification. This issue will be referred to the</td>
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<td>review of the National Agreement for Skills and</td>
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<td>Workforce Development (NASWD) performance indicator</td>
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<td>framework for further consideration as there may be</td>
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<td>conceptual and data issues in splitting the indicator in</td>
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<td>this way.</td>
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1. Productivity Commission, National Indigenous Reform Agreement, Performance Assessment 2013–14 (PC 2015), Figure 7.5, page 156
2. PC 2015, page 139
4. SCRGSP 2009, Table NIRA.27.1 and SCRGSP 2014, Table NIRA.15.1
5. SCRGSP 2009, Table NIRA.27.1 and SCRGSP 2014, Table NIRA.15.1
The Education Directorate provides scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students interested in a career in Education or Health. In 2014–15, six students were awarded scholarships.

Young leaders from the Students Aspirations program attending the Halogen National Young Leaders Day in Sydney to hear prominent Australians speak about the challenges and rewards of being a leader.
KEY FOCUS AREA: EDUCATION

Every child in the ACT deserves the opportunities provided through an excellent education irrespective of where they live, their circumstances, or the school they attend. In short, students must believe, “I can achieve. I am confident. My future is exciting.”

Education Capital: Leading the Nation
ACT Education and Training Directorate Strategic Plan 2014–17

INTRODUCTION

The ACT has the highest levels of educational achievement of all Australian states and territories and strives to unequivocally maintain this lead and have the ACT acknowledged as the ‘Education Capital’. The Education Directorate prioritises ‘high expectations’ for all, while meeting the learning needs of all students. This should result in raising the standards of all students and decreasing the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and other students.

The Education Directorate recognises that often Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students face additional barriers to achievement, and has implemented a suite of programs and strategies to provide additional support and assistance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across the education spectrum. These programs and strategies aim to address the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students and are measured by the following specific performance indicators:

- halve the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students in literacy and numeracy
- increase commencements of higher level qualifications (Certificate III and above) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018 specifically references the Education Capital: Leading the Nation Strategic Plan 2014–17 commitments to increase the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Year 12 completion rates and commencement of high level qualifications.

The Education Data Summary section page 89 to 91 reports and discusses ACT performance against the two education targets agreed by Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2008 to reduce the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous student achievement:

- halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy by 2018
- halve the gap for Indigenous people aged 20–24 in Year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

The Education Data Summary section also provides a brief discussion of the two additional education targets agreed by COAG in 2014 and 2015 to address school attendance and preschool enrolments.

CANBERRA SCHOOL CENSUS

The February 2015 Canberra School Census identified 1,663 Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students enrolled in ACT public schools, representing 3.8% of total enrolments and an increase of 95 students since 2014. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in all schools across the ACT, with the largest enrolments at Namadgi School, Wanniassa School, Melrose High School, Caroline Chisholm School, Ngunnawal Primary School, Harrison School and Jervis Bay School.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait student enrolments represented 5.7% of all preschool enrolments.
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
A key strategy of the ACT Government is to deliver a training system that enhances the workplace participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and delivers skills relevant to employment markets.

In the reporting period, the Education and Training Directorate and the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) provided a range of VET programs that included measures to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to overcome barriers to learning and achievement.

ACT GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

EDUCATION AND TRAINING DIRECTORATE

LITERACY AND NUMERACY INITIATIVES
A key focus for the Education Directorate is to support all students to develop and advance their literacy and numeracy skills. Proficiency in these key educational building blocks is pivotal to people’s economic and social wellbeing, as well as to the cohesiveness of the community more generally.

While the capacities of individual students vary, the gaps between overall Indigenous and non-Indigenous achievement in these key competency areas are both symptomatic of Indigenous disadvantage and a key impediment to reducing that disadvantage. To address this, COAG has committed to halving the gap in reading, writing and numeracy outcomes by 2018.

Programs in 2014–15 that assisted schools in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students included:

• the Tutorial Support Scheme
• Supplementary Programs
• the Action Inquiry Program.

Acknowledging that teachers make the difference, programs and initiatives to develop capacity to meet the needs of students during this reporting period included the employment of literacy and numeracy field officers and coordinators in schools, Count me in Too and Middle Years Mental Computation facilitator training, as well as the Principal as Literacy Leaders in Schools program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM NAME</th>
<th>TUTORIAL SUPPORT SCHEME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:</td>
<td>The Tutorial Support Scheme is accessed by schools in order to implement targeted strategies and programs to meet the individual learning needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Some students, particularly those at college, access tutorial support on a one-on-one basis, and in high schools tutorial support is generally provided in small group settings. The tutoring is provided by qualified teachers or tutors through an accredited tutoring agency. Tutorial support is best utilised when aligned with students’ personal learning goals and students are involved in the planning of the tutoring during the application process. There are two funding rounds for the Tutorial Support Scheme occurring in semesters 1 and 2. The amount allocated per student was increased from $250 in 2014 to $275 in 2015. In the 2014–15 financial year, $245,600 was distributed to 27 schools to provide tutorial support. This was a significant funding increase from 2013–14 during which $140,395 was distributed to 20 schools.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PROGRAM NAME</th>
<th>SUPPLEMENTARY PROGRAMS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:</td>
<td>Supplementary funding is available to primary and secondary schools to implement a broad range of programs and strategies aimed at improving learning outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Literacy and numeracy skills acquisition is the focus of the majority of the programs and strategies. During the reporting period, 25 proposals for supplementary funding totaling $103,571 were supported by the Directorate. The projects and strategies included additional one-on-one support, small group reading programs and targeted classroom support.</td>
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<tr>
<th>2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR</th>
<th>EXPENDITURE INFORMATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expenditure ($)</td>
<td>$245,600</td>
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<tr>
<th>SERVICE USER INFORMATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total service users (no.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous service users (no.)</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR</th>
<th>EXPENDITURE INFORMATION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Expenditure ($)</td>
<td>$103,571</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total service users (no.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Indigenous service users (no.)</td>
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</table>
PROGRAM NAME
ACTION INQUIRY PROGRAM
PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
In 2014, eight schools in the Action Inquiry Program conducted inquiries with a focus on literacy and numeracy. School-based staff participated in a year-long process of reflection, planning, data collection and analysis, research, and collaboration to enhance their capacity to assess the effectiveness of programs, and implement improvement at individual, team, school and cluster level.

2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR
EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($): $62,638

SERVICE USER INFORMATION
Total service users (no.) 66
Indigenous service users (no.) Data not collected

ENCOURAGE AND MAINTAIN INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING
As outlined in the Education Directorate’s Strategic Plan 2014–17, the Directorate aims to increase the number of high performing students and reduce the number of students who are not achieving.

During the reporting period, the Directorate had a range of programs and strategies in place to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students engage with their learning and successfully complete Year 12 or an equivalent vocational qualification. These programs included:

• Student Aspirations Program
• Mura Achievement Awards
• Senior Secondary Scholarship Program
• Tertiary Scholarship Program
• Flexible Learning Options.

PROGRAM NAME
STUDENT ASPIRATIONS PROGRAM
PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
The Student Aspirations Program supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 5 to 12 who show high academic achievement, engagement in school and strong leadership potential through their schooling and into further study post-Year 12. In December 2014, 21 students participated in the first Student Aspirations Year 5 and 6 Leadership Day at Birrigai.

2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR
EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($): $29,295

SERVICE USER INFORMATION
Total service users (no.) 180
Indigenous service users (no.) 180

PROGRAM NAME
MURA ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS
PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
The Mura Achievement Awards were introduced in 2014. These awards acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in Years 4 to 10 for excellent attendance, strong commitment or greatly improved engagement in learning, good academic progress and/or active involvement in the school community and extra-curricular activities. Successful students receive a small bursary from $180 for Year 4 recipients to $600 for Year 10 recipients to cover educational costs. In 2014, there were 62 award recipients from 24 ACT public schools.

2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR
EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($): $16,040

SERVICE USER INFORMATION
Total service users (no.) 62
Indigenous service users (no.) 62

PROGRAM NAME
SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM
PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
Senior Secondary Scholarships are available to students in Years 11 and 12 who are interested in a career in teaching or in the health field. Students are able to apply in Years 10 or 11 for scholarships worth $5,000 per annum.

2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR
EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($): $50,000

SERVICE USER INFORMATION
Total service users (no.) 6 (3 for teaching and 3 for health) in the 2015 cohort and 7 in the 2014 cohort.
Indigenous service users (no.) 13
PROGRAM NAME
TERTIARY SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
Tertiary scholarships worth up to $20,000 are available each year to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying teaching or a health related field. Successful applicants must be enrolled in an ACT university and studying an approved education or health course. As part of the Tertiary Scholarship Program, recipients are required to volunteer a minimum of eight hours per semester to assist with an approved school program in an early childhood, primary or secondary school. Once the initial voluntary placement has been successfully completed the Directorate supports schools to provide casual employment for the recipients as learning support assistants. During 2014, four past and current tertiary scholarship recipients worked in part-time learning support assistant roles in ACT public schools. During 2015, two recipients were completing their voluntary placements, taking the number of scholarship recipients who were also casual employees of the Directorate to five.

2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR
EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($) 80,000

SERVICE USER INFORMATION
Total service users (no.) 4
Indigenous service users (no.) 4

PROGRAM NAME
FLEXIBLE LEARNING OPTIONS (FLO)

PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:
Flexible Learning Options (FLO) personalise learning for students by providing career guidance, work experience and mentoring. FLO are delivered by external training providers, in partnership with schools and community agencies to assist students engage with vocational education and career pathways.
In semester 2, 2014, nine students completed competencies toward qualifications in construction, community services, hairdressing, business and/or hospitality taking the total number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who received a Statement of Attainment in 2014 to 22. In semester 1, 2015, 16 students enrolled in FLO. Of these 16 students, 14 received competencies towards a vocational qualification.

2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR
EXPENDITURE INFORMATION
Expenditure ($) 13,000

SERVICE USER INFORMATION
Total service users (no.) 38
Indigenous service users (no.) 38

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) FOR SECONDARY STUDENTS

Vocational Education and Training (VET) for Secondary Students enables secondary school students to acquire workplace skills through nationally recognised training described within an industry-developed training package, while completing their ACT Senior Secondary Certificate. In addition to the Flexible Learning Options program, the Education and Training Directorate provided a range of other VET opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, including Australian school-based apprenticeships (ASBA), or traineeships, which involve an employment and training contract with an employer. An ASBA provides students with the opportunity to combine practical paid work with structured training to achieve a nationally recognised qualification. An ASBA at a Certificate II qualification involves a minimum of eight hours paid employment in the workplace and three hours off-the-job training per week, while still attending school. An ASBA at Certificate III level has a greater time and work commitment and may require further work and study after the completion of Year 12.

KOORI PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

The ACT Government provides preschool programs specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through the Koori Preschool Program. The Koori Preschool Program is offered at five sites across the ACT: the Narrabundah Early Childhood School, Wanniassa Primary School, Richardson Primary School, Ngunnawal Primary School, and Kingsford Smith School.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the ACT can enrol in both their local preschool and a Koori Preschool Program. They may have up to 24 hours per week free preschool education. At Jervis Bay School, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have access to preschool from the age of three, with access to 12 hours free preschool education per week.

The Koori Preschool Program provides an early childhood education program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged three to five years. Children under three are able to attend the Koori Preschool Program when a parent or adult carer accompanies them. The Directorate’s Early Entry for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children supports early enrolment into kindergarten and preschool in ACT public schools. Children using Early Entry can access an additional six months of mainstream preschool before commencing primary school.

To support students diagnosed with varying degrees of chronic middle ear infection and hearing loss, Soundfield hearing systems were installed in classrooms at the five
Koori Preschool Program sites. The installation of these systems supports student participation in class activities. Therapy ACT speech pathologists and occupational therapists have continued to provide services to the five Koori Preschool Programs. (See the Therapy ACT entry which follows on page 86.)

In 2016, the program is being delivered as part of the new ACT Child Development Service administered through the Community Services Directorate.

During 2016, an evaluation of the early childhood schools and the Koori Preschool Program will be completed. The evaluation will examine the effectiveness of the models in use at each site, with a focus on supporting vulnerable and disadvantaged families and children in accordance with integrated service delivery, family support, participation and sustainability principles.

**PROGRAM NAME**

KOORI PRESCHOOL

**PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:**
Provision of preschool education in an Indigenous only school setting.

**2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR**

**EXPENDITURE INFORMATION**

Expenditure ($): $596,000

**SERVICE USER INFORMATION**

Total service users (no.) 79 (February 2015 student census)

Indigenous service users (no.) 79

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**Professional development**

**FOUNDATION SKILLS AND CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING**

In 2013–14, the Education and Training Directorate developed a number of free-of-charge professional development workshops offering foundation skills training to registered training organisations (RTO) staff and cultural awareness training. These workshops, delivered by CIT’s Yurauna Centre, support the capacity of RTOs to provide appropriate training and support to diverse student groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Further workshops in 2015 provided cultural awareness training to ensure RTO staff and Education and Training Directorate officers are able to effectively engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, with more being conducted in 2016. This includes an accredited Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Competence Training Course with the Centre for Cultural Competence Australia, to be delivered to the Directorate’s Liaison and Engagement Unit, to supports the unit’s ongoing engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and community members.

**PROGRAM NAME**

FOUNDATION SKILLS AND CULTURAL AWARENESS TRAINING

**PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:**
Two cultural awareness workshops, one for all staff in the Training and Tertiary Education Branch, Education and Training Directorate, and one offered to ACT RTOs for their staff.

**2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR**

**EXPENDITURE INFORMATION**

Expenditure ($): $8,500

**SERVICE USER INFORMATION**

Total service users (no.) 44

Indigenous service users (no.) Not reported

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**Curriculum development**

**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PERSPECTIVES**

One of the three Cross-Curriculum Priorities of the Australian Curriculum is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures. Schools continue to work towards embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, histories, cultures, and languages across all subject areas.

The Gungahlin cluster of schools (preschool to Year 12) developed an online collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teaching and learning resources for use within their schools. A community forum in May 2015 at Ngunnawal Primary School provided an opportunity for the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to view and give feedback on the website and the resources.

Schools also engaged with *Yarning Strong*, a series of learning and teaching resources for reading for 8 to 14 year olds. This curriculum resource develops cultural awareness and understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and culture. In addition to the reading resources, a suite of online resources was also made available. In 2014, twenty-one teachers from four primary schools trialled and evaluated the comprehensive Yarning Strong resource package with approximately 690 students in Years 3 to 6 classes. Feedback was very positive and indicated that schools will continue to use the Yarning Strong resource package to support learning in culture, heritage and identity.

In March 2015, 22 teachers from 15 schools participated in a workshop called ‘Resources for teaching the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander curriculum priority—a reliable guide’. The Directorate partnered with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies to present a wide range of resources including key Ngunnawal resources. The presentation was aligned with the Australian Curriculum and covered kindergarten to Year 12 learning. A number of effective teaching strategies were identified and links to additional resources were provided to the participants.
Therapy ACT provides a flexible service delivery model to increase access to services for clients who do not typically access clinic-based services. Allied health support in schools allows reasonable adjustments to be made to the curriculum and physical environment to ensure students who have developmental delays or a disability reach their potential educational outcomes. These school-based services increase access for children who would not usually receive services outside of school, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

In 2014–15, Therapy ACT speech pathologists and occupational therapists continued to provide services to the five Koori Preschool Programs in Canberra at Wanniassa, Narrabundah, Richardson, Kingsford Smith and Ngunnawal. The allied health professionals work with teachers and students within the curriculum of the Koori Preschool Programs.

The aim of Therapy ACT is to support the students’ individual needs through the development of key skills, such as communication, hand skills and play development, within the classroom environment. A whole class approach is the focus of the first half of the calendar year, with more emphasis on offering individual screenings at parent/carer request as the year progresses. Teachers and therapists work together to develop programs targeting the teacher’s goals for their students and identified needs across the group, for example, targeting hand skills in craft activities, or increasing the children’s listening and participation in group time. New referrals of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to Therapy ACT are considered a high priority for assessment.

Therapy ACT’s TAP program provides school-based therapy programs to students with developmental delays or disabilities to enhance functional skills in communication, learning, mobility and self-care. The model utilises allied health assistants to implement individual and class-based therapy programs that are developed and monitored by allied health professionals.

One of the goals of the program is to increase the number of children accessing services. In 2015, the TAP program was run in Isabella Plains Early Childhood School, Bonython Primary, Richardson Primary and Theodore Primary Schools. Schools are chosen based on the number of children identified as having a disability, the Australian Early Development Index data for the area, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the schools’ identified need for support.

In 2012, Therapy ACT commenced services at Jervis Bay School and continues to provide speech pathology and occupational therapy services including assessment and intervention for students identified by staff as having particular developmental delays.

During 2014–15, a speech pathologist and occupational therapist visited Jervis Bay School, aided by two Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainee technical officers. The focus of intervention in 2014 was language skills. In 2015 therapists worked with a new group of children with particular difficulties engaging with the curriculum.

Therapy ACT has supported staff to set up the classroom environment and implement visual aids to support communication, and has collaborated with staff to problem solve, work on skill development and encourage participation and engagement. At June 2015, there were 14 students receiving Therapy ACT services. In term 4 of 2014, Therapy ACT also participated in the school’s 100 year celebrations.

In 2016, the program will be delivered as part of the new ACT Child Development Service that will be administered through the Community Services Directorate.
VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Economic participation increases with higher levels of education and training. An individual with a Certificate III or above has improved employment outcomes, supporting their full participation in the ACT economy. With a Certificate III or above qualification, a person of working age is able to do skilled work in varied contexts and use their knowledge as a pathway to future learning.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING DIRECTORATE

The ACT Government administers government-subsidised VET programs specifically designed to overcome disadvantage or disengagement and help individuals develop skills that lead to employment or other meaningful engagement in society. This includes strategies to ensure the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are addressed. These programs included the Australian Apprenticeships program and the Skilled Capital initiative.

AUSTRALIAN APPRENTICESHIPS PROGRAM

The ACT Government is aware that participation in apprenticeships or traineeships can have a positive effect on employment outcomes and earnings. The unique benefit of a traineeships and apprenticeships is that they combine paid work with training towards a nationally recognised qualification.

The Australian Apprenticeship program provides subsidised nationally recognised training for apprentices and trainees. In 2014–15, the program provided additional loadings of $500 per Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student to support successful completion of qualifications. The ACT Government is further aware of the value of mentoring in assisting in overcoming cultural barriers to learning. Thus the Australian Apprenticeships program also provided up to $3,000 for additional learning support such as mentoring and tutoring.

In addition, the ACT Building and Construction Industry Training Fund Authority provided financial incentives to eligible employers who commenced a first year apprentice in selected building and construction occupations, with further financial incentives for employers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander apprentices.

SKILLED CAPITAL INITIATIVE

In designing the ACT’s new training entitlement initiative—Skilled Capital—the Education and Training Directorate was conscious that new, innovative approaches were needed to address the gaps that remain between the economic participation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous working age Canberrans. Thus, provisions to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to gain post-school qualifications in occupational areas experiencing skills shortages were built into the Skilled Capital initiative. These provisions include additional subsidies of $500 towards the cost of training plus additional funding for foundation skills development.

A lack of adequate foundation skills can create a barrier for a person seeking to participate in a VET course to develop their skills. Foundation skills training enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to successfully complete non-school VET qualifications at Certificate III or IV level that bring better employment opportunities, higher wages, and the opportunity to achieve higher skills and qualifications.

While CIT also provides an entitlement to government-subsidised training that considers the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, the Skilled Capital and Australian Apprenticeships provisions are in addition to the supports already available through the Yurauna Centre for students studying at CIT.

CANBERRA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

YURAUNA CENTRE

The Yurauna Centre is the Canberra Institute of Technology’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education and student support centre. The mission of the Yurauna Centre is to encourage and promote the development of quality Aboriginal ways of learning for staff and students through strategies designed on community development principles.

The Yurauna Centre provides a range of pastoral care and educational programs to meet the needs of a diverse range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners, and is committed to achieving positive outcomes for its students.

CIT, through the Yurauna Centre, offers a range of culturally appropriate courses to enhance employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aiming to improve literacy, numeracy, communication and other vocational skills. The inclusion of an Aboriginal language, literacy and numeracy teacher in many of its programs has resulted in excellent outcomes for participants and assisted them to gain entry to vocational programs and/or apprenticeships/traineeships. Accredited programs ranging from Certificates I to IV in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Cultural Arts, General Education, Alcohol and Other Drugs, Community Development, Aboriginal Mental Health First
Aid and Youth Mental Health First Aid are also available through the Yurauna Centre. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students also access the full range of courses on offer across CIT.

**PROGRAM NAME**
**YURAUNA CENTRE – INDIGENOUS TARGETED PROGRAMS**

**PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:**
The Yurauna Centre provided educational programs specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

**2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR**

**EXPENDITURE INFORMATION**
Expenditure ($) : $621,000 for commercial training contracts

**SERVICE USER INFORMATION**
- Total service users (no.) : 172
- Indigenous service users (no.) : 172

**CANBERRA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY**
**aboriginal and torres strait islander scholarships**

CIT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarships provide specific financial support so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people may have access to vocational programs at CIT. The scholarships also cover recognition fees so that work skills are recognised for attainment of qualifications. The scholarship is not means tested and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff are encouraged to access the scholarship, or a CIT Equity Scholarship, to attain further qualifications.

**PROGRAM NAME**
**CIT INDIGENOUS SCHOLARSHIPS**

**PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:**
The program provided scholarships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to attend CIT.

**2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR**

**EXPENDITURE INFORMATION**
Expenditure ($) : $41,493

**SERVICE USER INFORMATION**
- Total service users (no.) : 90
- Indigenous service users (no.) : 90

**INDIGENOUS PROGRAM ENROLMENTS**

CIT provides access to programs to enhance employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people wishing to improve or gain vocational skills. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students can access a full range of courses on offer across CIT with the opportunity for financial support through the CIT Indigenous Scholarship program, ACT Government Fee Assistance, VET Fee Help, Payment Plans and Waiver of Outstanding Fees (where such requests meet the policy requirements).

**PROGRAM NAME**
**INDIGENOUS PROGRAM ENROLMENTS**

**PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:**
This program supported Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in vocational education and training courses across CIT.

**2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR**

**EXPENDITURE INFORMATION**
Expenditure ($) : $1,860,000

**SERVICE USER INFORMATION**
- Total service users (no.) : 531
- Indigenous service users (no.) : 531

**FOUNDATION SKILLS TRAINING**

CIT provides an accredited learning support through the Certificate II Foundation Skills to all Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander students enrolled at CIT to assist them with their studies.

**PROGRAM NAME**
**STUDENT SUPPORT**

**PURPOSE/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM:**
The program provided targeted support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying at CIT.

**2014–15 FINANCIAL YEAR**

**EXPENDITURE INFORMATION**
Expenditure ($) : $204,000

**SERVICE USER INFORMATION**
- Total service users (no.) : 531
- Indigenous service users (no.) : 531

**ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER SCHOLARSHIP GRANTS**

The Scholarship Grant is to encourage and support ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to undertake study and training to enhance their employment prospects. Further detail about these scholarships is in the Employment and Economic Independence chapter in this report.
EDUCATION DATA SUMMARY

Closing the Gap target—*Halve the gap in reading, writing and numeracy achievement by 2018*

The National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) measures proportions of children in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 meeting national minimum standards (NMS) and their average scores. Nationally, between 2008 and 2014, the proportion of Indigenous students at or above the national minimum standards (NMS) in reading and numeracy did not improve. In 2014, the proportion of students at or above the NMS in reading, writing and numeracy was lower for Indigenous Australians across every Year level and in all jurisdictions.

The gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students NAPLAN performance varies significantly by remoteness. In 2014, 85.7% of all Indigenous students in metropolitan areas met or exceeded the NMS for Year 7 reading compared to only 34.9% of Indigenous students in very remote areas.

**ACT’s progress**

From 2008 to 2014, there were generally no significant changes in the NAPLAN performance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the ACT in either reading or numeracy across all years—with the exception of Year 7 reading, where there was a significant decline in results.

However, in 2014, compared with the national average, the ACT had a higher proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students who achieved at or above the NAPLAN national minimum standards (NMS) for reading and numeracy at all year levels tested (Figures 7 and 8).

More than 80% of ACT Years 3, 5 and 7 Indigenous students achieved above the NMS. Generally, the reading and numeracy results for ACT Indigenous students were similar to the achievement of Indigenous students in metropolitan centres in Victoria and NSW.

**Rates of participation in NAPLAN**

Nationally, and in the ACT, Indigenous student participation in NAPLAN testing is uniformly below non-Indigenous students. In 2014, the Australia-wide NAPLAN participation rate for Indigenous students was around 89% for reading, writing and numeracy for Years 3 and 5; was lower for Year 7 (around 87%) and lower again for Year 9 (around 77%). In comparison, the rate for non-Indigenous students was around 95% for reading, writing and numeracy for Years 3, 5 and 7, decreasing to around 93% for Year 9. In the ACT, NAPLAN participation rates were lower in 2014 than many other states and territories.


**FIGURE 7** PROPORTION OF INDIGENOUS STUDENTS AT OR ABOVE NMS IN READING, ACT AND AUSTRALIA, 2014
**TABLE 12 READING, WRITING AND NUMERACY INDICATORS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS AND/OR MEASURES</th>
<th>ACT CHANGE IN GAP AND/OR OVERALL INDIGENOUS NUMBERS AND CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEADLINE INDICATOR 1:</strong> READING—STUDENTS AT OR ABOVE THE NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD</td>
<td>The proportion of Year 7 students at or above the national minimum standard was substantially lower and statistically significantly different from 2008 (the base year). The proportion of Indigenous students achieving at the NMS declined by 11 percentage points (ppts) (from 94% in 2008 to 83% in 2014). In all other years there was no statistically significant change. Between 2008 and 2014 the gap decreased in Year 5 by 1.1 ppts (ppts) and increased in Years 3 (2.5 ppts), 7 (1.6 ppts) and 9 (2.2 ppts). The progress points on the trajectory to meeting the target of closing the gap were met in Years 3, 5 and 9.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEADLINE INDICATOR 2:</strong> WRITING—STUDENTS AT OR ABOVE THE NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD</td>
<td>Trend analysis from 2008 to 2014 is not possible due to a change in the NAPLAN writing genre in 2011. However, between 2011 and 2014 there was a significant decline in the proportion of students at or above the national minimum standard in Year 5. Between 2011 and 2014 the gap increased in all years, most noticeably in Year 5, by 13.1 ppts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEADLINE INDICATOR 3:</strong> NUMERACY—STUDENTS AT OR ABOVE THE NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD</td>
<td>Between 2008 and 2014 there was no statistically significant change in the proportion of students at or above the national minimum standard in any year. Between 2008 and 2014 the gap decreased in Year 5 by 1.1 ppts and in Year 9 by 0.6 ppts. However, the gap increased by 0.3 and 4.5 ppts in Years 3 and 5, respectively. The progress points on the trajectory to meeting the target of closing the gap were met in all years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SUPPORTING MEASURE 1:</strong> RATES OF PARTICIPATION IN NAPLAN*</td>
<td>Between 2008 and 2014, participation rates increased in some areas, for example, in writing in both Year 9 (7.1 ppts) and Year 7 (by 4.7 ppts). However, rates declined in other areas, for example in Year 5 numeracy and writing both by 8.0 ppts. The gap in participation rates decreased in all learning domains in Year 7 and in Year 9, but there were noticeable increases in Year 5 in writing and numeracy, although the changes have not been tested for statistical significance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2. PC 2015, Table 5.3, page 94
3. PC 2015, page 101
4. PC 2015, Table 5.13, page 121
5. PC 2015, Table 5.14, page 121
6. PC 2015, Table 5.6, page 99
7. PC 2015, Table 5.7, page 100
8. PC 2015, Table 5.9, page 105
9. Derived from Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)
Closing the Gap target—Halve the gap in Year 12 attainment by 2020

A very important marker of educational achievement is successful completion of Year 12 (or a vocational equivalent). Successfully completing Year 12 can be a stepping stone to further education and training. For those who move straight into the workforce, it can materially improve their job prospects and lifetime earnings compared with those who leave school earlier.

Between 2008 and 2012–13, higher levels of Indigenous attainment, in combination with generally much more stable levels of non-Indigenous attainment, saw the national-level gap decline to 28 percentage points, more than 11 percentage points lower than in 2008. Consistent with this gap reduction at the national level, the gap also declined in all jurisdictions. In the ACT, the gap fell by more than 26 percentage points.

### TABLE 13 YEAR 12 OR EQUIVALENT ATTAINMENT INDICATORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDICATORS AND/OR MEASURES</th>
<th>ACT CHANGE IN GAP AND/OR OVERALL NUMBERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>HEADLINE INDICATOR 1:</strong> ATTAINMENT OF YEAR 12 OR EQUIVALENT</td>
<td>In 2012–13, 87.2% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20–24 had attained Year 12 or equivalent or AQF Certificate II or above. Between 2008 and 2012–13, the gap narrowed by more than 26 percentage points (ppts). The ACT was the only jurisdiction in which the change in gap was significantly different.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRESS INDICATOR 1:</strong> YEAR 12 CERTIFICATION</td>
<td>Data not currently available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PROGRESS INDICATOR 2</strong> ATTENDANCE RATES*</td>
<td>Over the period 2008 to 2013, attendance rates in Years 1 to 6 varied between 85% and 91% while attendance rates in Years 9 and 10 ranged between 72% and 80%. Attendance in Years 9 and 10 has improved since 2012. The gap in attendance rates for Years 1 to 6 was generally between three and seven ppts. However, the gaps ranged between seven and 15 ppts in Years 7 to 10. The gap in Years 9 and 10 have declined since 2012, consistent with the improvement in attendance rates.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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2. PC 2015, page 128
3. PC 2015, Figure 6.2, page 134
4. CSD analysis of Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision (SCRGSP) data (various years)
New National Indigenous Reform Agreement Closing the Gap targets for education

Close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance by 2018

In May 2014, COAG agreed to a new target to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance within five years. This is to be accomplished by all schools achieving a minimum 90% attendance rate for Indigenous students. Trajectories are yet to be developed to monitor progress on this new school attendance target. From the 2014 school year onwards, nationally comparable student attendance data has been collected.

‘Attendance and participation’ is an indicator of governments’ objective to develop fully the talents and capacities of young people through equitable access to, and participation in, education and learning, to complete school education to Year 12 or its equivalent.

Although numerous interrelated factors influence attendance and achievement in complex ways, national and international research confirms a link between attendance and student achievement. In addition, attendance and participation rates for special needs groups are an indication of the equity of access to school education.

While the available student attendance data cannot be directly compared across jurisdictions or school sectors (government, independent or Catholic), the national data showed that in 2013:

- Indigenous students had lower attendance rates than non-Indigenous students across all year levels (1–10)
- the gap between Indigenous student attendance and non-Indigenous student attendance was the widest in Year 10.

Based on statistical modelling, it is anticipated that the ACT may reach over 91% Indigenous attendance by 2018. A straight line trajectory was considered to be appropriate in the ACT given the relatively small size of the ACT gap and that the current target represents the continuation of an ongoing focus to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student attendance.

Ninety-five per cent enrolment in preschool for all Indigenous four year olds by 2025

Early childhood is a time of growth in physical health and wellbeing, language and cognitive skills, social skills and general knowledge. Nurturing healthy environments at home, in the community and through early childhood education are important for school readiness, educational achievement and school completion — benefits that can be particularly pronounced for children from low socio-economic or otherwise disadvantaged backgrounds.

Reflecting this, in December 2015, COAG set a target of ensuring that 95% of Indigenous four year olds are enrolled in preschool by 2025.

At the national level, Indigenous children were less likely to attend preschool than non-Indigenous children. In 2013:

- 74% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were enrolled in preschool nationally, compared with 91% for non-Indigenous children
- 70% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were attending preschool, compared with 89% attendance for non-Indigenous children.

These gaps are expected to contribute to different learning outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in future years.

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19 It should be noted that school attendance data has been collected and used as a supporting measure in support of the 20–24 year 12 or equivalent attainment Closing the Gap target

20 NIRA 2013–14 Report, Section 5 ‘Literacy and Numeracy’, pg 111
"There is so much that still needs to be done to get equality between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It’s really important to get young people into those leadership roles and step up and fight like our elders have done in the past."

INTRODUCTION

Leadership and participation in decision making are important factors in improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, whether it be in internal governance of organisations, having a voice on important community issues, or being heard and understood by government decision makers.

The ACT Government is committed to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans to develop the opportunities, knowledge and skills to build an empowered, resilient and sustainable community, for example through scholarship grants for leadership development and training opportunities.

In line with ACT Government Social Inclusion principles the ACT Government provides opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans to take the lead and develop and share their local knowledge, expertise, and professional skills, and to collaborate on creating solutions to the issues affecting their communities. The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, established by legislation in 2008 and unique in any Australian state or territory is an example of the ACT’s commitment to supporting and partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. This body provides a means for the highly diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in the ACT to have a say and hold government to account. In July 2014, the third ATSIEB elections had a record number of votes.

ACT GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

Community Services Directorate

SUPPORT FOR THE ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ELECTED BODY

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body (ATSIEB) was established under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body Act 2008 to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT a strong, democratically elected voice. ATSIEB provides an important service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Canberrans and the wider ACT community by receiving, and passing on to ACT Government Ministers the views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on issues of concern to them.
ATSIEB consists of seven members elected by the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community through a formal election process (conducted by Elections ACT) to act as representatives for a term of three years.

In addition to considerable community and other consultation work, advocacy and partnering with government to initiate important service innovations, ATSIEB meets with ACT Public Service Directors-General and members of the Legislative Assembly, and conducts annual hearings on government services and programs.

The Office of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, CSD, provides secretariat support to ATSIEB. The Secretariat team provides high level secretariat, administrative, research and policy support to assist ATSIEB members undertake their roles and responsibilities.

Support for the third Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body elections

On 19 May 2014, Elections ACT declared the start of the third ATSIEB elections. Fourteen candidates from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities of the ACT nominated for the election.

Polling occurred during 5–12 July 2014 at ten polling locations across Canberra. Any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person aged 18 or over, living in the ACT, was eligible to vote in the election.

The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs, CSD, provided support for the elections with an extensive community engagement program that included a meet the candidates forum and assistance in managing the ten polling booth locations at: the 2014 NAIDOC Week Ball, the Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) Luncheon, the AIATSIS Family Day, NAIDOC on the Green, Winnunga Nimmityjah, West Belconnen Child and Family Centre, Belconnen Library, Tuggeranong Child and Family Centre, Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation and the Alexander Maconochie Centre.

Counting for the election took place on Tuesday 22 July 2014 using the Hare-Clark proportional representation system. A total of 377 votes were admitted to the count.21 This number of votes cast represents more than twice the number of votes cast (173) at the 2011 ATSIEB election.22

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ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER LEADERSHIP GRANTS

The Leadership Grants program provides funding support for both formal and informal leadership training and development opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. A total of $60,000 was available in the 2014–15 funding round and four grant applications were successful.

SUPPORT FOR THE UNITED NGUNNAWAL ELDERS COUNCIL

The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs provided secretariat support to the United Ngunnawal Elders Council (UNEC). UNEC met twice during the 2014–15 financial year and discussed a number of subjects including: Centenary Column—Time Capsule, Guidelines for acknowledgment and welcome to country, the Secure Mental Health Unit Model of Care and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018.

Education and Training Directorate

ACT ADULT COMMUNITY EDUCATION (ACE) GRANTS PROGRAM

Through the Adult Community Education Grants Program, the Education and Training Directorate funded the delivery of two training programs to develop leadership capabilities in the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Both programs were delivered by the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre in September 2014.
APPENDIX A REFERENCES

ACT Government
ACT Government, ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2015–2018
ACT Government directorate annual reports
ACT Health: (2014), Australian Capital Territory Chief Health Officer’s Report 2014, ACT Government, Canberra, ACT.
ACT Education and Training Directorate, Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education 2014–15, Report to the Legislative Assembly of the Australian Capital Territory
ACT Government, For strong families: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community and the ACT Budget, 2015–16 Budget
Commissioner for Public Administration; Chief Minister; Treasury and Economic Development Directorate, ACT Public Service, State of the Service Reports (various years)
Elections ACT, 2011 ATSIEB Election Report
Elections ACT, 2014 ATSIEB Election Report

Australian Government
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), Census of Population and Housing, 2011
ABS, 4714.0—National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2014–15,
ABS, 4727.0.55.001—Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey: First Results, Australia, 2012–13,
Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) for NAPLAN results
Cat. no. HOU 276. Canberra: AIHW.
AIHW, ACT statistical profile—Specialist Homelessness Online Report (SHOR). Restricted access
Juvenile justice series no. 37. Cat. no. JUV 55. Canberra: AIHW
Youth justice fact sheet no. 56. Cat. no. JUV 79. Canberra: AIHW
Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU College of Social Arts and Social Sciences, CAEPR Working Paper No. 95/2014
Council of Australian Governments, National Indigenous Reform Agreement
Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Closing the Gap - Prime Minister’s Report 2015
Australian Government, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, Closing the Gap - Prime Minister’s Report 2016

Other
Close the Gap progress and priorities report 2016
APPENDIX B
USEFUL RESOURCES

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ELECTED BODY (ATSIEB)

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body was established so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT have a strong democratically elected voice. It consists of seven people who are elected to represent the interests and aspirations of the local Indigenous community.

*Fourth Report from the ACT Torres Strait Islander Elected Body hearings*

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body has released their fourth report to the ACT Government. The report lists five priority areas to improve the lives of locals in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The report, and other ATSIEB reports and strategies, can be found on the ATSIEB website under publications.

Secretariat and administrative support for the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body is provided by the ACT Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs. Please contact the secretariat on (02) 6205 2551 or by e-mail at atsieb@act.gov.au for further details.

The Elected Body website is at: www.atsieb.com.au

ACT GOVERNMENT

**Canberra Institute of Technology**

**YURAUNA CENTRE**

The Yurauna Centre is CIT’s dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander support centre. Yurauna is a Wiradjuri word meaning ‘to grow’.

The CIT Yurauna Centre helps students grow in their knowledge, abilities and confidence and helps students along the path to the career of their choice through skills training, advice and cultural support.

http://cit.edu.au/study/yurauna_centre

**CHIEF MINISTER, TREASURY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTORATE**

**ACTPS EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE**

This Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Strategy 2011–2015 formed part of the ACT Public Service overarching Respect, Equity and Diversity Framework and established the actions to be used by Directorates to increase and maintain employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.


**CONFIDENT AND BUSINESS READY: BUILDING ON OUR STRENGTHS**

Confident and Business Ready, the ACT Government’s business development strategy is focused on continuing to create effective business environments and using the ACT’s competitive strengths to accelerate innovation and investment. A commitment in this strategy is to work in partnership to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Enterprise Development.

COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE

COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTORATE HOMEPAGE
All Community Services Directorate policies, programs and services can be found on the Community Services Directorate homepage (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander; Disability; Children; Youth and Families; Housing and Community; Therapy; Women, Ageing and Community; and Child Development Services—Top Menus).

STRATEGIES
A Step Up for Our Kids: One Step can Make a Lifetime of Difference: Out of Home Care Strategy 2015–2020

Blueprint for Youth Justice in the ACT 2012–2022

Human Services Blueprint

The Second Implementation Plan (2IP) of the ACT Prevention of Violence Against Women and Children Strategy 2011–17

GROWING HEALTHY FAMILIES PROGRAM

Child and Family Centres
Child and Family Centres are managed by the Community Services Directorate. The early years of a child’s life set the foundation for their future health, development and learning. The centres are a ‘one-stop-shop’, supporting families during this important time. The centres are staffed by professionals and are designed to provide a range of support programs to assist parents and young children (pre-birth to 8 years), including services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. These include:
• drop-in information and support
• case management
• individual, group and family programs
• community activities and events
• links to other services and the community
• advocacy
• school based programs
• community development projects.

Where: Gungahlin, Tuggeranong, West Belconnen Child and Family Centres
How: Please contact your local centre for information regarding current programs

OFFICE FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER AFFAIRS

The Office for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs provides strategic advice to the Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs on issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT. The Office coordinates a whole-of-government approach to issues affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and provides secretariat and administrative support to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.

The Office administers the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Grants Program consisting of three streams:
• Leadership
• Cultural
• Scholarship.
RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN 2014–17 (RAP)

The Community Services Directorate plays an important role in supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families. We work closely with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and community partners, to build an empowered, resilient and sustainable future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Reconciliation is an important part of that goal.

As an organisation commencing its third RAP we have matured and broadened our commitment to reconciliation. This has been acknowledged by Reconciliation Australia in achieving a ‘Stretch’ RAP status.


EDUCATION DIRECTORATE

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION REPORT TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY 2014–15

This is the ninth report to the ACT Legislative Assembly on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education in ACT public schools and covers the period July 2014 to June 2015.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Report to the Legislative Assembly 2014-15

ACT ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE GROUP

The Group is made up of parent and community representatives. The Group consults with ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, groups and organisations and provides advice to the ACT and Australian governments on education and training programs and initiatives. http://www.betteroutcomestogether.org.au/

CONNECTION, COLLABORATION, CAREERS, LEADERSHIP: ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYMENT ACTION PLAN 2014–2017

Connection, Collaboration, Careers, Leadership: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan 2014-2017 provides a new pathway to link education, employment, choice and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT.


EDUCATION CAPITAL: LEADING THE NATION EDUCATION AND TRAINING DIRECTORATE STRATEGIC PLAN 2014–17

The Education and Training Directorate Strategic Plan 2014–17 sets out the Directorate’s priorities and strategies to increase the number of high performing students; reduce the number of students who are not achieving; increase the number of children who benefit from early childhood education and care; and increase qualification levels of the ACT community. Woven throughout the plan is the Directorate’s dedication to addressing the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and non-Indigenous students in reading, writing and numeracy accomplishments; and increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students receiving their Year 12 certificate or an equivalent vocational qualification.


NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EDUCATION STRATEGY

The National Strategy outlines the key priorities of education ministers to address the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and identifies issues where collaborative action between state and federal governments and non-government sectors can strengthen local actions.

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING DIRECTORATE

ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING DIRECTORATE PORTAL

HEALTH DIRECTORATE

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH HOMEPAGE
The Portal provides information on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing and associated services for Health Directorate staff and the wider ACT community. The content of the website and mailbox is reviewed monthly. The plan can be accessed at: http://health.act.gov.au/our-services/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-health

ACT HEALTH ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER HEALTH WORKFORCE ACTION PLAN 2013–2018

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN
The Health Directorate’s Reconciliation Action Plan 2012–2015 was launched by Director-General, Dr Peggy Brown, on 4 July 2012, during NAIDOC Week. The action plan aims to help bring about change by creating a health environment that is culturally sensitive, and aware that reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians is an important element of the organisation’s commitment to closing the life expectancy gap. http://www.health.act.gov.au/our-services/aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-health/reconciliation-action-plan

JUSTICE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY DIRECTORATE

INDIGENOUS JUSTICE AFFAIRS PORTAL

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
The Restorative Justice Unit (RJU) undertakes additional activities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth through restorative justice processes, including provision of outreach information sessions and assessments, home visits and holistic rapport building with families, support with travel to and from appointments and community based volunteer work placements involving culturally safe and appropriate support. The RJU strives to meet the needs of people affected by crime in ways that foster a shared understanding of their common humanity and their ability to resolve conflict in ways that raise accountability and promote positive outcomes.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER EMPLOYMENT ACTION PLAN 2016–2019
The Justice and Community Safety Directorate’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Employment Action Plan sets out how the Directorate will increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees and keep them employed within the service.

The Plan builds on the previous ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement (AJA), ACT Public Service Respect, Equity and Diversity Framework, and the ACT Public Service Employment Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and will be complemented by the Directorate’s Reconciliation Action Plan.

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER JUSTICE DATA

The ACT Criminal Justice Statistical Profile is a historical series of crime data. The Profile contains data from ACT Policing, ACT Law Courts, ACT Corrective Services, Restorative Justice Unit, Galambany Court, Office of Children, Youth and Family Support and Victim Support ACT. It provides Government, community agencies and the public, with data on crime in the ACT and the response to crimes by the criminal justice system.


ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP 2015–18

The Partnership provides a higher level of understanding and mutual commitment to addressing the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the ACT law and criminal justice system, improving their community safety, and overcoming barriers to social inclusion. It is a joint partnership between the ACT Government and the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body.


ABORIGINAL LEGAL SERVICE (NSW/ ACT) LIMITED

A number of important functions that used to be provided by the Aboriginal Justice Centre (AJC) are now being provided by the Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) under a funding agreement with the Justice and Community Safety Directorate. The services being provided by the Aboriginal Legal Service include the Front Up Program, Interview Friends, Galambany Court Support and the Throughcare Program.

http://www.alsnswact.org.au/offices/act

RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

The Reconciliation Action Plan is a tool to help improve the Justice and Community Safety Directorate’s engagement, consultation and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, clients and stakeholders. It sets out how the Justice and Community Safety Directorate can contribute to ‘closing the gap.’ The Reconciliation Action Plan is also about embedding cultural change across the organisation through building good relationships, respecting the special contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, organisations and leaders, and providing employment and development opportunities.

The Justice and Community Safety Directorate Reconciliation Action Plan complements the aims of the ACT Government’s Respect, Equity and Diversity (RED) Framework and a number of actions under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Justice Agreement.

Galambany Circle Sentencing Court

The specialist Galambany Circle Sentencing Court is to provide a culturally sensitive framework that gives recognition to the ongoing disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the criminal justice system. It is for both adults and young people, and gives the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to work collaboratively with the ACT criminal justice system to address over-representation issues and offending behaviour.


ACT Corrective Services

ACT Corrective Services (ACTCS) has worked in conjunction with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community to develop a range of initiatives to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women in the criminal justice system.


ACT Policing

ACT Policing employs one Indigenous liaison officer to interact with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community in order to establish and maintain positive relationships and foster mutual understanding.

ACT Human Rights Commission

The ACT Human Rights Commission promotes the human rights and welfare of all people living in the ACT. The Commission is an independent statutory agency established by the Human Rights Commission Act 2005.

The role of the Commission is to:

• independently handle complaints in relation to a range of services, and under discrimination law
• promote understanding of human rights and the welfare of all people in the ACT
• encourage service improvement and increase awareness of the rights and responsibilities of service users and providers
• provide advice to government and others regarding their human rights obligations
• advocate for the interests of victims of crime
• provide advocacy for vulnerable children, young people and adults

The Commission has recently expanded to include a number of additional responsibilities.

It now includes a President, a Human Rights Commissioner, Discrimination, Health Services, Disability and Community Services Commissioner, a Victims of Crime Commissioner and a Public Advocate and Children and Young People Commissioner:

Under its Reconciliation Action Plan, the Commission is undertaking a range of activities and actions with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

www.hrc.act.gov.au

Recent research: Challenging Racism: The Anti-Racism Research Project based at the University of Western Sydney. Go to the project website and click on the 'national level findings' link to see results for the ACT.

DEADLY ADVICE WEBSITE

The Human Rights Commission also hosts a legal advice site specifically for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people covering: care and protection, discrimination at work, contact with police and security guards, and problems with debt.


Public Trustee and Guardian

The Public Trustee and Guardian (PTG) for the ACT (PTG) provides Free Wills for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People. There is a fact sheet on the website.

TRANSPORT CANBERRA AND CITY SERVICES

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER COMMUNITY BUS
Members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community can apply to use or travel on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community bus. It is a wheelchair accessible mini bus available for a range of uses by local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people including for transport to activities that promote cultural and community connections, sporting and recreational activities for both youth and seniors. The bus is far more than a simple lift from one point to another: it is an opportunity to enhance social inclusion for members of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community who are experiencing difficulties accessing transport.

LIBRARIES ACT
Policies and protocols concerning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library Services and Collections can be found on the Libraries ACT website. http://www.library.act.gov.au/how_to_use_the_library/library_policies

A Pathfinder to library resources by, for and about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is on the Libraries ACT website. http://www.library.act.gov.au/library_services/aboriginal_and_torres_strait_island_pathfinder