



MEDIA RELEASE – 29 JULY 2020

**New National Agreement on Closing the Gap marks historic shift to improve
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' life outcomes**

Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APO NT) today welcomed the National Agreement on Closing the Gap as a turning point in the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and governments – one that is based on shared decision making on policies and programs that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's lives.

APO NT joined with more than fifty other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled peak bodies to steer the new Closing the Gap Agreement in the right direction.

The negotiations on the National Agreement with governments were hard fought, with targets now in place that can make a real difference to the lives of our people.

More than 4,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were consulted on what should be included in the new National Agreement, guiding us in our negotiations. The Agreement shows that they have been heard.

The four Priority Reforms were overwhelmingly supported during the community engagements led by the Coalition of Peaks late last year and will fundamentally change the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

The Reforms commit governments to new partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the country; strengthen community-controlled organisations to deliver closing the gap services; address structural racism within government agencies and organisations; and improve sharing of data and information with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to support shared decision making.

APO NT is pleased to see the National Agreement includes a new target for Priority Reform One, for formal partnership arrangements to support Closing the Gap to be in place in each state and territory. This enshrines agreed joint decision-making roles and responsibilities and the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to choose their own representatives.

John Paterson, spokesperson for APO NT, said "The new National Agreement is a critical step forward that acknowledges the voice of Aboriginal people here in the Territory. We want to see a greater improvement in educational outcomes, more jobs and training opportunities, reduction in incarceration rates and real investments in tackling the social determinants of health and creating more opportunities for Aboriginal people to establish businesses to become self-sufficient.

"Housing is critical to Closing the Gap and underpins key drivers of change, especially in terms health and education outcomes." said the Central Land Council's executive manager policy and governance, Dr Josie Douglas.

"Here in the Territory we look forward to working with the NT and Commonwealth governments on co-designing a new community-driven housing model that can solve our homelessness crisis and overcrowding in remote communities."

APO NT has long acknowledged that Aboriginal people have the solutions and should be the key drivers of change. “Working together with governments is the way we can ensure positive outcomes for our people”, said Mr Paterson.

To read the full new National Agreement on Closing the Gap, head to the Coalition of Peaks website: <http://coalitionofpeaks.org.au/final-national-agreement-on-closing-the-gap/>

For more information and media enquiries

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