

MEDIA RELEASE – 20 March 2025

Lowitja Institute urges governments to take stronger action to close the gap

The Close the Gap Campaign today calls on Australian governments to accelerate action to realise the objectives of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, with its four Priority Reform areas remaining a focal point of the [Close the Gap Campaign Report 2025](#).

Prepared by Lowitja Institute, this First Nations-centred, strengths-based report is published to coincide with National Close the Gap Day. Promoting the themes Agency, Leadership, and Reform. This year's report shares stories of the tireless work of communities who are achieving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It covers a year in review, highlighting some of the key issues and developments from the last 12 months.

Alongside demonstrating the critical work of our communities and organisations, the new report sends a clear message that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, leaders, organisations, and our allies will continue to hold governments to account for the limited progress towards meeting their commitments under the *National Agreement*.

Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart said reform and transformation in the way governments work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is clearly required.

'We encourage all governments to prioritise fostering meaningful relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples towards strengthening health, wellbeing and justice outcomes for our peoples,' Mr Stewart said.

Lowitja Institute urges governments to implement all 44 recommendations from the report. These include calls for governments to implement, in full, the recommendations made by the Productivity Commission in its 2024 [Closing the Gap review](#) – progress towards implementing these Priority Reforms has been inconsistent, disjointed, and slow.

The [Closing the Gap Dashboard](#), released in March 2024, demonstrated the need for urgent, committed, and sustained changes by governments. The recently published [Closing the Gap Commonwealth 2024 Annual Report](#) reaffirmed the need for a renewed systematic approach, with only 5 of 19 Closing the Gap targets on track to be met by 2031. Most notably, Closing the Gap targets relating to the rates of incarceration, suicides, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care have all worsened since previous years.

Mr Stewart heralded the success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health organisations in providing quality healthcare, which he described as, 'a powerful testament to the strength of self-determination, embedded in policy and program design to ensure culturally safe and effective outcomes'.

'The case studies featured in this year's *Close the Gap Campaign Report 2025* showcase that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health organisations continue to stand up strong to achieve positive grassroots impacts,' Mr Stewart said.

'The 2025 report demonstrates the necessity and the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' leadership for achieving sustainable outcomes and systemic change.

'An ongoing push to strengthen and grow the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled sector is paramount to driving reform and delivering on the Priority Reforms set out in the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.'

[Access the full report](#)

*For more information or to arrange an interview with a Lowitja Institute or another Close the Gap Campaign representative, please contact **Zara Pitt on 0433 416 555** or zara@naatsihwp.org.au*

ABOUT LOWITJA INSTITUTE

Lowitja Institute is Australia's only national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled health research institute, named in honour of its patron, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue AC CBE DSG. It is working for the health and wellbeing of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by facilitating high-impact quality research, tools, resources and knowledge exchange, and supporting a new generation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health researchers.

Established in January 2010, the Lowitja Institute operates on key principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, a broader understanding of health that incorporates wellbeing, and the need for the work to have a clear and positive impact.

The history of the Lowitja Institute dates back to 1997 when the first Cooperative Research Centre for Aboriginal and Tropical Health was established. Since then, the Institute and the CRC organisations have led a substantial reform agenda in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health research by working with communities, researchers and policymakers, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people setting the agenda and driving the outcomes.