

MEDIA RELEASE – 19 March 2025

Lowitja Institute supports calls from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities for public sector reform and increased accountability on Closing the Gap

The [Close the Gap Campaign 2026 Report](#) calls on all Australian governments to immediately accelerate action and public sector reform to enable genuine self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and to deliver on commitments agreed to in the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

Subtitled 'Community Voices: The Pathway to Justice, Equality and Healing', the 2026 report identifies public sector reform as critical to achieving meaningful progress towards the goals of the *National Agreement*. Enabled by ongoing and enduring power imbalances, government institutions continue to retain control over decision-making, funding, and accountability, which undermines progress across the Priority Reform areas and Targets of the Agreement.

All levels of government must commit to action to dismantle entrenched power imbalances and shift decision-making authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

This year's report, prepared by the Close the Gap Campaign Alliance, focuses on the key themes of Justice, Equality and Healing, with its case studies demonstrating how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities, and organisations continue to lead the way with best practice.

Lowitja Institute wholeheartedly supports the recommendations put forward in the report. The scope of its recommendations includes a focus on Australia's international legislative responsibility to enshrine the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) into domestic law; full legislation and funding of the implementation of the *National Anti-Racism Framework*; establishment of accountability mechanisms; and securing long-term, needs-based funding for ACCOs, among other important calls to action.

Lowitja Institute has consistently called for the establishment of independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led accountability mechanisms to strengthen oversight of government policies, programs, and services that affect the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart said the report's recommendations send a clear message to Commonwealth, state and territory governments that the Aboriginal community controlled sector will continue to hold them accountable to their commitments under the *National Agreement*.

'The health and wellbeing of our mob can be improved through increased coordination across government agencies and levels of government. We need greater transparency and robust accountability to ensure Government meet their partnership commitments under the *National Agreement*,' Mr Stewart said.

The nine case studies featured in the *Close the Gap Campaign 2026 Report* demonstrate that when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are resourced appropriately and empowered to lead, stronger impacts and better outcomes eventuate.

'Our communities have shown over generations that they are best placed to understand and support community needs. I would encourage everyone to read these case study examples that highlight the incredible work our ACCOs are engaged in and the outcomes achieved within their communities', Mr Stewart said.

ENDS/

[Access the full report](#)

For more information or to arrange an interview with Lowitja Institute CEO Paul Stewart, please contact Jo Cackett at communications@lowitja.org.au

To speak to a representative of the Close the Gap Campaign, please contact Zara Pitt, Executive Officer, Close the Gap Campaign, 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.

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