



2025–2028

NSW Implementation Plan for Closing the Gap

October 2025



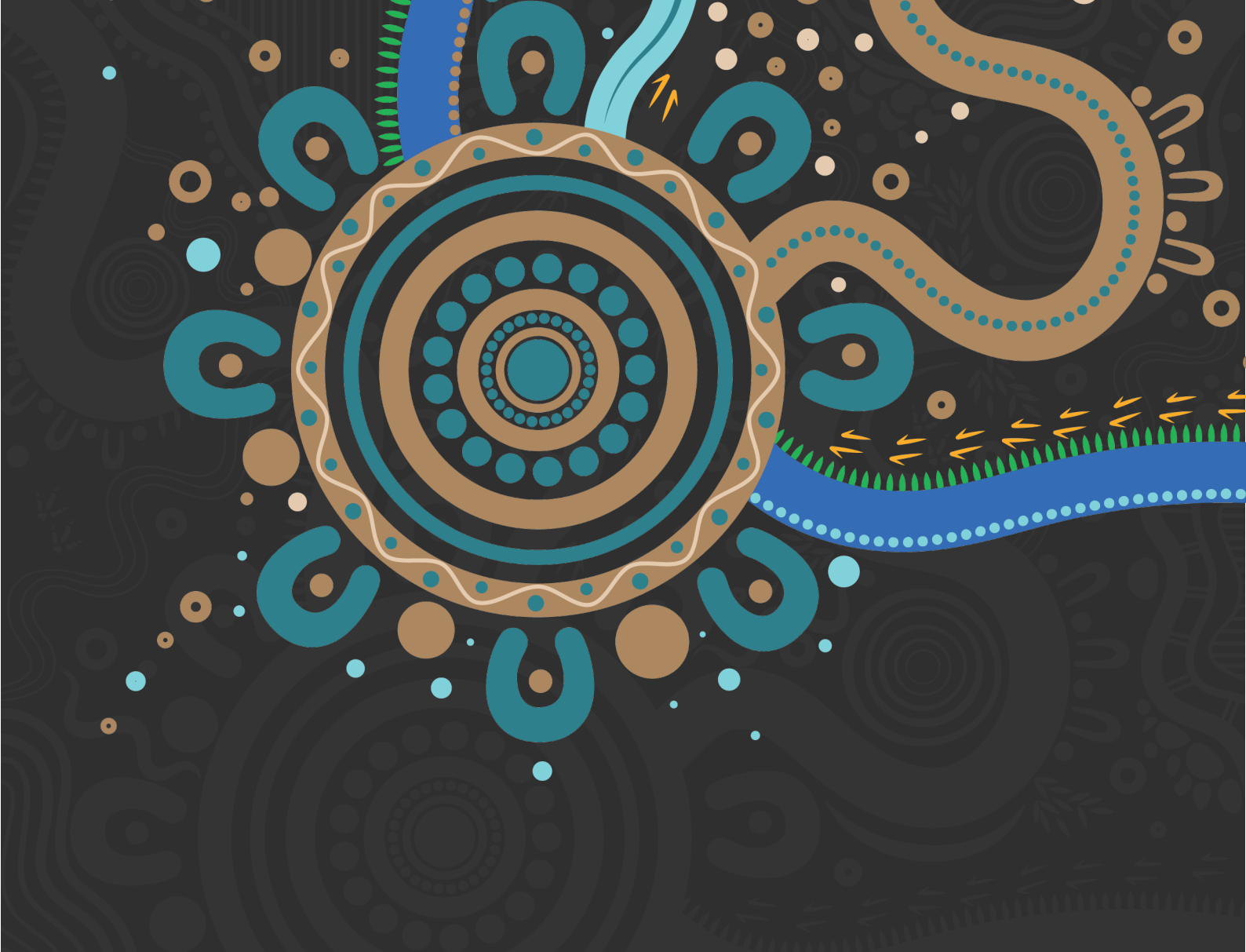
**NSW
CAPO**



**LOCAL
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NSW**

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands of New South Wales. We pay respect to Ancestors and Elders, past and present, and to future generations of Aboriginal Peoples. We recognise the unique cultural and spiritual relationship, and celebrate the contributions of Aboriginal Peoples to the state of New South Wales.

The artwork

The cover artwork was designed for the *2022–24 NSW Implementation Plan for Closing the Gap* by Lani Balzan, a proud Aboriginal woman from the Wiradjuri people of the three-river tribe. She has given permission for this artwork to be used for this *2025–28 Implementation Plan* to demonstrate both the continuity and ambition it reflects.

The artwork represents the connection to the land of NSW, from the red dirt and mountain ranges to the water.

The bottom part of the artwork symbolises the ocean that NSW is connected to, and its connection to Salt-water people. The rivers and creeks are symbolised throughout the artwork, along with the Freshwater people who regularly gathered along their banks.

NSW is known for its many mountain ranges and escarpments, which have also been illustrated – from mountain ranges close to the ocean to inland mountain ranges, including bushland and rainforests. The orange and brown areas symbolise the colours of the land elsewhere in NSW. Animal tracks are included throughout the artwork representing the wildlife that live and wander throughout NSW, including kangaroo, goanna and emu tracks. These animals are very significant to Aboriginal Peoples.

The centrepiece is the gathering of Aboriginal people and government, working together in Closing the Gap.

One of Lani's biggest goals and inspirations in creating her artwork is to develop a better connection to her culture and to continue to work towards reconciliation; bringing people and communities together to learn about what amazing culture we have here in Australia.



Councillor Charles Lynch and John Leha, Co-Chairs, NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations

Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations have long led the way in improving outcomes for our people – delivering services, creating opportunities, and advocating for change. Across the state, that work continues every day, often in the face of underfunding, systemic barriers, and slow-moving government reform.

Since the National Agreement was signed, there has also been genuine partnership work in NSW between NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (NSW CAPO) and the NSW Government to progress initiatives under the Closing the Gap Socio-Economic Outcomes. That progress matters, and we acknowledge the effort of all those who have contributed.

But progress will only go so far unless we address the deep-rooted structural issues that continue to shape how government works. The Priority Reforms were designed to tackle those systemic barriers to change the rules of the system, not just the programs delivered within it.

The 2025 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-Led Review of the National Agreement is clear: Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations are still doing the heavy lifting – not just in service delivery, but in guiding government on how to implement Closing the Gap in ways that are culturally informed, accountable, and Community-led. That guidance reflects our strength and leadership – but it is time for government to fully match that effort and take responsibility for delivering the change it has committed to.

This Implementation Plan introduces a Change and Transformation Strategy that creates a path for government to embed structural, cultural, and relational change across its systems. The strategy is backed by a commitment to develop practical, sector-specific Transformation Plans. These plans will sharpen how reforms are delivered and make clear how success will be measured – not just through outputs, but through real, enduring change.

The NSW Audit Office report on the governance of the National Agreement in NSW made clear that stronger systems are needed to support transparency, decision-making and shared accountability under this partnership. The report provides an opportunity to improve how we operate as a partnership, and this plan is an opportunity to respond directly to those findings – to strengthen how we work together, not just in intention, but demonstrated in structure and practice.

We remain proud of the leadership shown by Aboriginal Communities and organisations, and of what our partnership has achieved so far. We appreciate the deep commitment of the Minns Government to working in partnership. We also acknowledge that test of this Implementation Plan lies in how effectively it drives structural reform, changes government practice and strengthens accountability to Aboriginal Communities.

We have delivered important work to build the foundation for implementing the National Agreement. If implemented with integrity and courage, this plan has the potential to reset the system so that positive change is being seen and experienced by Communities at the local level. That is the opportunity in front of us – and we are ready to work in genuine partnership to achieve it.



The Hon Chris Minns MP, Premier of New South Wales

NSW is proud to be home to the largest Aboriginal population of any state or territory in Australia. This presents a tremendous opportunity to harness the strength, resilience, cultural richness, and ingenuity of Aboriginal Peoples and Communities across the state.

Closing the Gap national goals to reduce inequality in life outcomes and life opportunities have existed for almost 20 years. While there are countless examples of success, the gap is still too wide. Our partnership exists to improve the lives of Aboriginal people in NSW, recognising that Aboriginal Communities and organisation know what works best for them.

This Implementation Plan reflects our unwavering commitment to working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal Peoples and Communities. Embedding the Priority Reforms of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap is critical to achieving the systemic change required to improve outcomes and ensure a better future for Aboriginal people in NSW. To this end, Transformation Plans will establish and embed a new way of working within the NSW Government, providing sustainability into the future beyond the National Agreement.

To support this work, we are investing \$206 million of new funding. Every project supported through this investment has been developed in partnership with Aboriginal leaders and will be delivered in partnership with Aboriginal organisations to produce more targeted, tangible outcomes for Aboriginal people across health, education, employment, criminal justice and economic development.

Across the government, ministers are ready to lean into this new plan and are deeply committed to improved outcomes for Aboriginal Communities. This will be our focus as we deepen the partnership with CAPO, and work with Aboriginal Communities throughout the state. I extend my gratitude to all who have contributed to the development of this plan. Together, we will work to achieve long-term, sustainable change that will benefit generations to come.

The Hon David Harris MP, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty

The focus of this Implementation Plan is to scale up the most effective approaches and implement strategic reforms to achieve impactful, whole-of-government change. This plan will introduce new transformational initiatives across the NSW Government to achieve improved outcomes for Aboriginal Communities, and lay foundations for future generations.

With this plan, I reaffirm my deep commitment to work in partnership with NSW CAPO and other Aboriginal stakeholders in meeting NSW's obligations under the National Agreement to create better outcomes with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in this state. This plan embeds a partnership approach and has been developed in partnership with NSW CAPO.

This is not a plan for the NSW Government alone, it is a shared responsibility that requires a whole-of-community commitment to partnership, across all levels of government and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, with Community at the centre.

Mayor Phyllis Miller OAM, President, Local Government NSW

Local Government NSW supports councils to advance the Priority Reforms under Closing the Gap and to help to deliver meaningful outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the state.

As the sphere of government closest to communities, councils are well placed to support locally led change and develop place-based solutions that reflect the aspirations of Aboriginal peoples.

This is a shared commitment: one that requires cultural understanding, collaboration, and sustained leadership. Local Government NSW is proud to work in partnership with the NSW Government and the NSW CAPO to support this long-term and vital effort – including on the development of the forthcoming Closing the Gap Toolkit for Local Government.



Executive summary



NSW's commitment to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement) sets a clear expectation: Aboriginal people must be at the centre of decisions that affect their lives, Communities and futures. This 2025–2028 Implementation Plan is the next step on that journey. Where our previous work has tested new approaches and built an evidence base, this plan builds on the foundations laid for more ambitious reform.

Delivered by the NSW Partnership – comprising the NSW Coalition of Aboriginal Peak Organisations (NSW CAPO), NSW Government and Local Government NSW – this plan is backed by a \$206 million investment in new funding for 14 initiatives. Detailing new and continuing initiatives across government and in the sectors of health and wellbeing, education and economic prosperity, families and justice, and housing, land and water – this plan will deliver tangible outcomes for Aboriginal Communities and support achievement of the aims of the National Agreement.

This plan is grounded in the principle of shared decision-making and genuine partnership with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). This includes ensuring that NSW CAPO has resourcing to participate in the NSW Partnership.

The new and continuing initiatives reflect a strong investment in Community-led solutions that embed cultural safety and shift decision-making power to Aboriginal Communities. New funding supports prevention and early intervention in health, education and justice. There is a clear focus on revitalising language and culture, expanding access to land and water, and ensuring Aboriginal people and organisations have the tools, resources and authority to shape decisions that affect their lives.

Economic prosperity is another priority, with initiatives supporting Aboriginal business development, employment pathways and procurement reform. Housing reforms aim to reflect Community needs through culturally responsive design and land activation. From improving data access and governance to growing the ACCO sector, these initiatives reflect Aboriginal Communities' priorities and represent a meaningful step toward long-term structural reform.

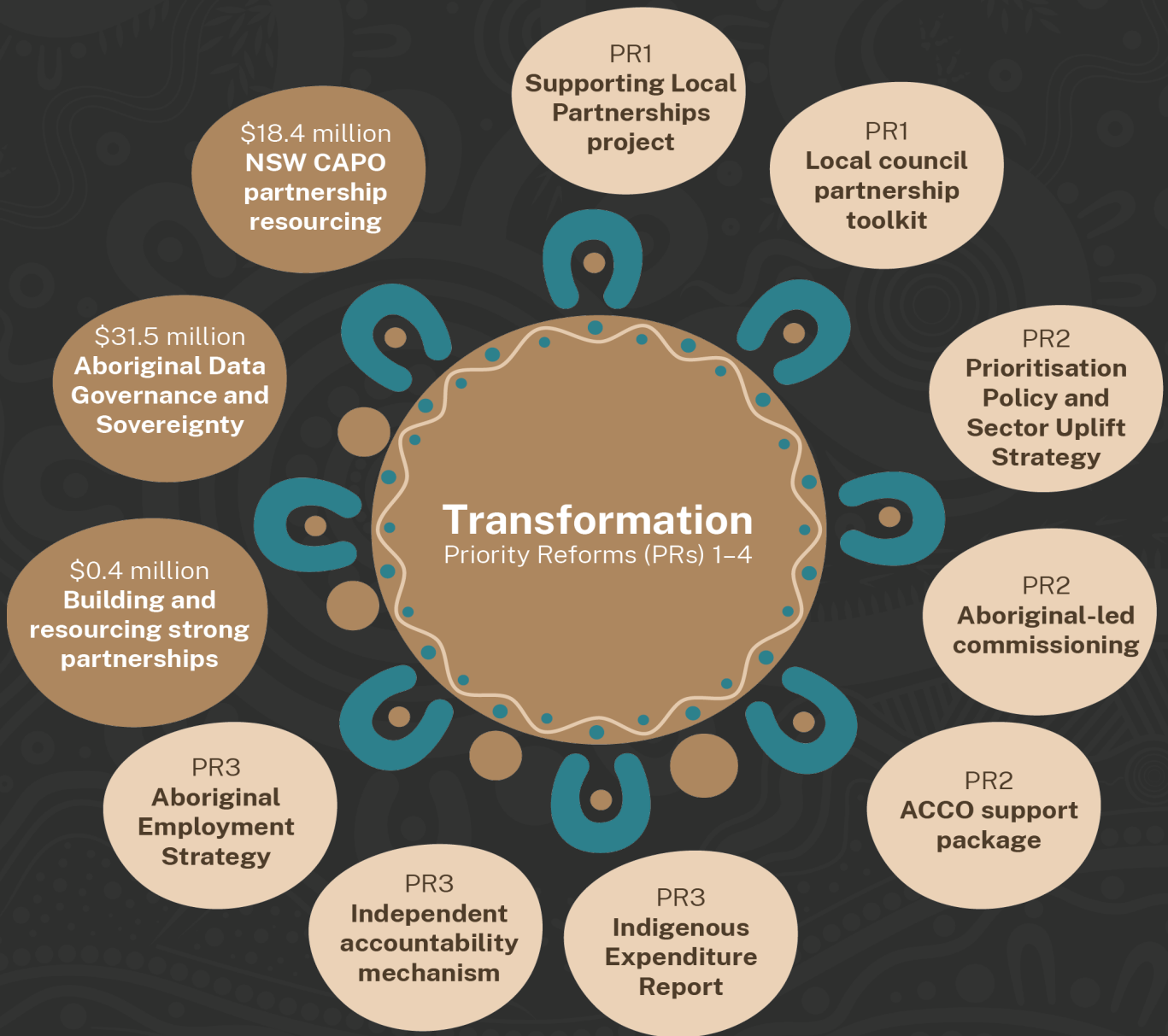
The following diagrams represent a snapshot of what is being delivered by each sector committee to progress the Socio-Economic Outcomes and Priority Reforms – including newly funded and continuing initiatives.

Section 1 outlines how the NSW Partnership will deliver transformative change across government called for by the Priority Reforms. It introduces 6 elements to be delivered through a Change and Transformation Strategy including:

- ⇒ defining the path ahead through an Accountability Framework
- ⇒ understanding how we 'measure up' through a gap analysis
- ⇒ implementing Transformation Plans
- ⇒ elevating Community voices through a coordinated engagement approach
- ⇒ evaluating
- ⇒ building knowledge and capability around the Priority Reforms.

Section 2 details 14 significant, newly funded initiatives from mid-2025. Some build directly on projects delivered under previous implementation plans and others are new policy initiatives.

Section 3 is an appendix of the significant and continuing work from previous implementation plans, including the objectives, next steps and funding to date for 31 initiatives. They represent meaningful and substantial ongoing efforts towards the 17 Socio-Economic Outcomes and 5 Priority Reforms.



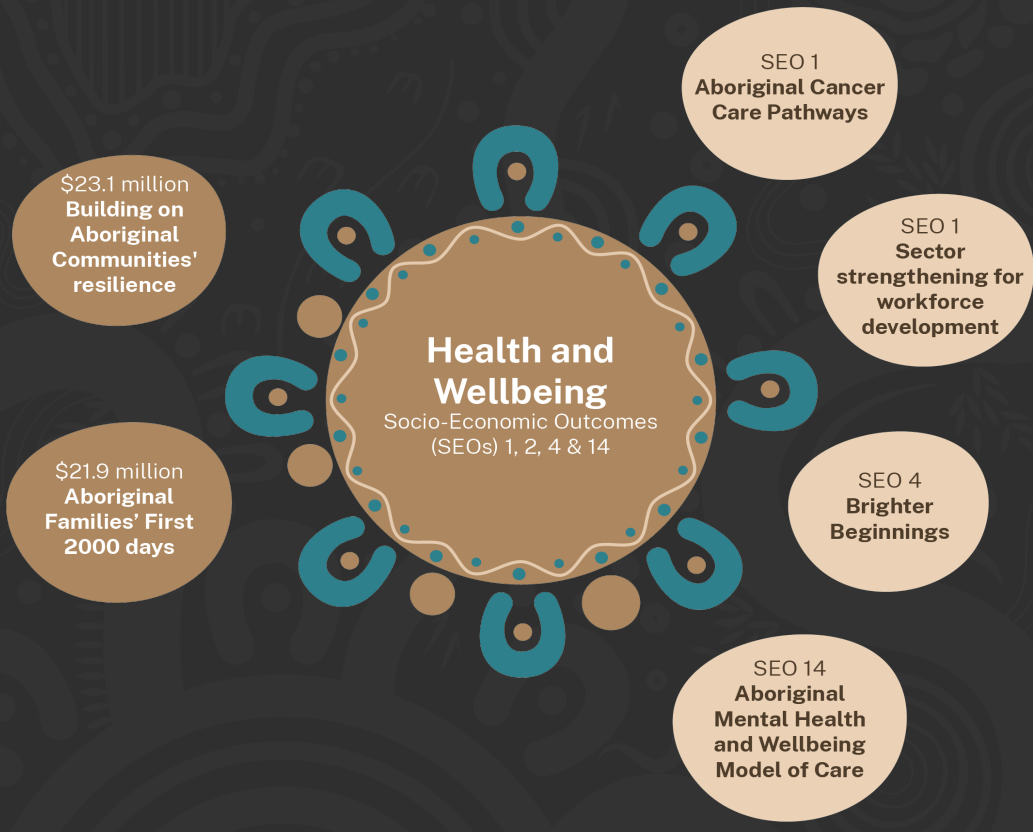
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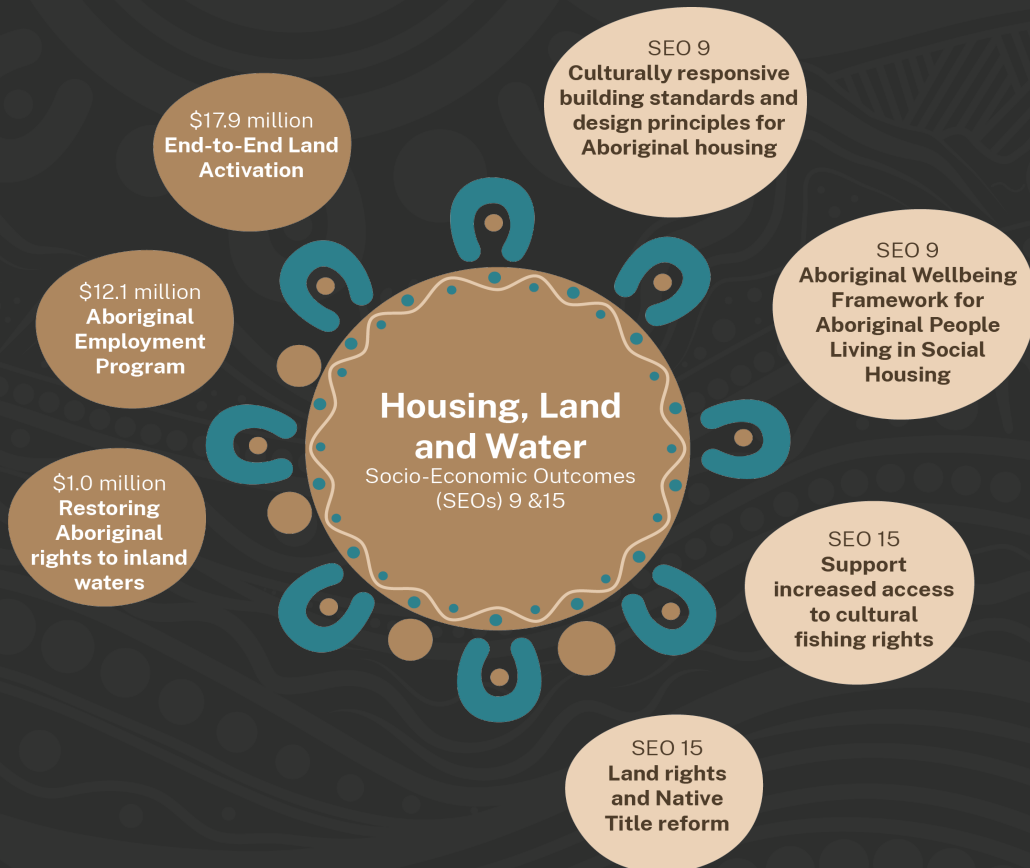
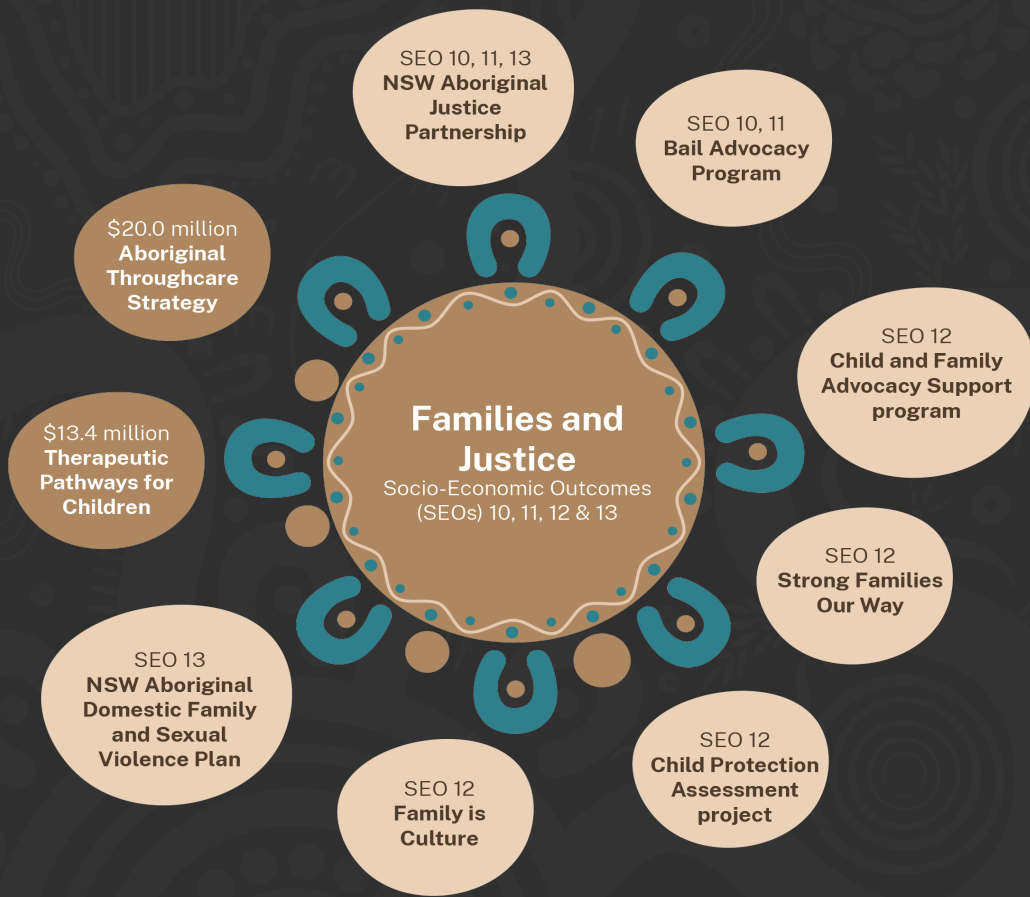


Newly funded initiatives



Ongoing initiatives





Nationally, progress against the 17 Socio-Economic Outcomes is reported in regular updates to the Closing the Gap Dashboard at www.pc.gov.au/closing-the-gap-data/dashboard. This also includes state-specific data. Detailed NSW Closing the Gap annual reports are published on the NSW Government Closing the Gap website at www.aboriginalaffairs.nsw.gov.au and tabled in Parliament annually in line with NSW's commitment under the National Agreement.

The Implementation Plan is intended to be a live document and may be updated from time to time, with the agreement of the NSW Partnership and with approval from the Closing the Gap Joint Council.



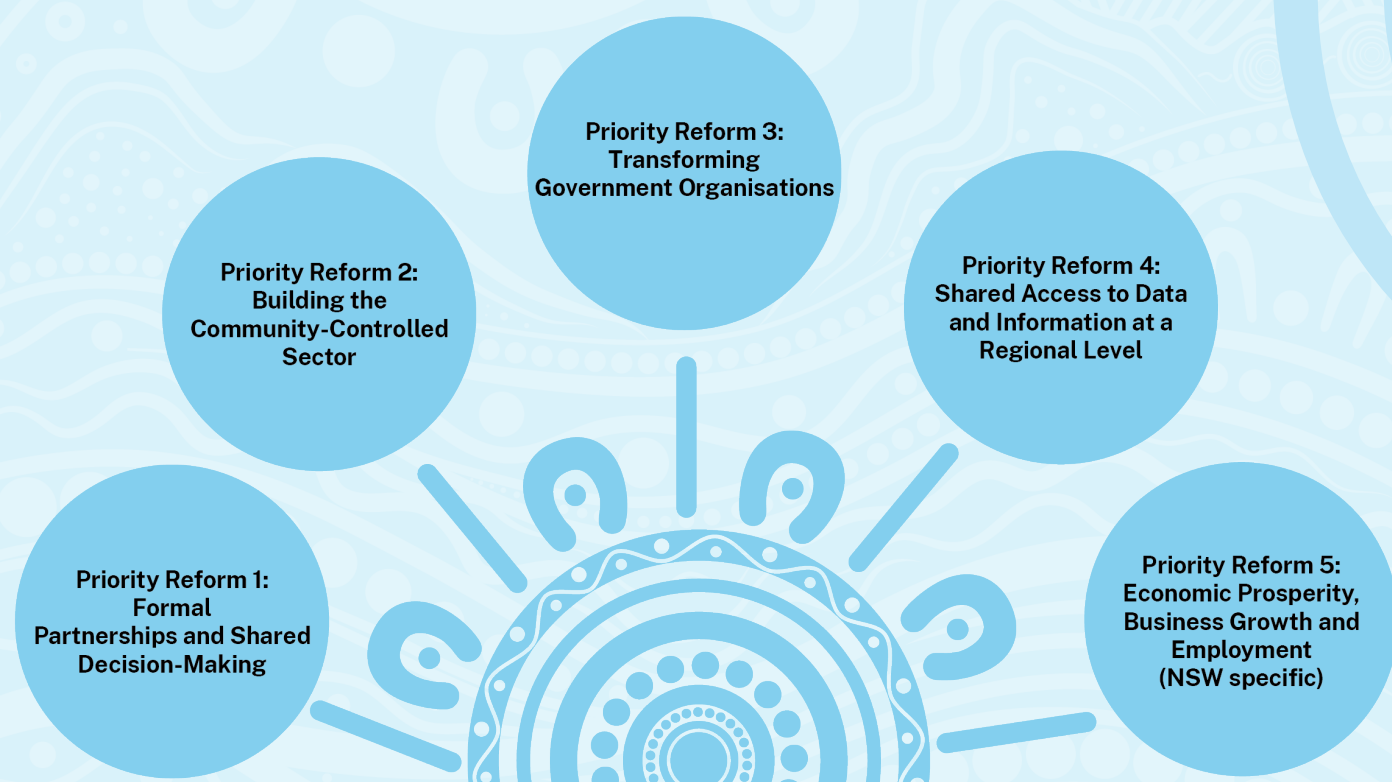
How we are delivering transformative change in NSW



The 2024 Productivity Commission Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap ('Productivity Commission Review'), the 2025 Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-Led Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap ('Independent Aboriginal-led Review') and the 2025 NSW Audit Office Performance Audit Report on Closing the Gap Governance ('Audit Office Report') all found that progress on the Priority Reforms has been slow and uneven. These reviews call for urgent action from government to embed the Priority Reforms into core systems –including decision-making, budgeting and service delivery. The Productivity Commission emphasised the need for a clear and actionable plan to change how policies and programs are created and delivered with Aboriginal Communities.

The Priority Reforms

The key to achieving the ambition of the National Agreement is the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms, which form the core principles underpinning the way we work together with Aboriginal Communities. We know that the Priority Reforms and Socio-Economic Outcomes work hand in hand to strengthen and support each other. Therefore, the Priority Reforms must be embedded into all aspects of our services, policies and programs. This ensures that change is Aboriginal-led, informed by shared data and supported.



Purpose of the Change and Transformation Strategy

The Change and Transformation Strategy responds directly to findings of the Productivity Commission Review, Independent Aboriginal-Led Review and Audit Office Report. It provides a structured pathway to measure and ensure accountability for the Priority Reforms. This means shifting the structures, practices and thinking of government so that change is systemic and enduring through:

- ➔ **structural change:** changing policies and resource flows so they support Aboriginal-led solutions.
- ➔ **relational change:** building honest, respectful relationships between government and Aboriginal Communities, where decision-making power is shared.
- ➔ **transformative change:** shifting mindsets, behaviours and values. Moving away from a system shaped by colonisation, and toward one that honours Aboriginal culture, knowledge, and leadership.

Kania, J., Kramer, M., & Senge, P. (2018). The Water of Systems Change. FSG.

Setting a shared vision

To achieve this, the NSW Partnership will start by defining what success looks like under each Priority Reform and outlining the practical steps necessary to deliver that change. A shared understanding of meaningful change – culturally, structurally and operationally – is essential.

Transformation Plans: a living pathway for change

Over the life of this Implementation Plan, the NSW Partnership will develop and publish **Transformation Plans**. These include a whole-of-government plan (led by the Transformation Sector Committee), and 4 sector-specific plans (led by the committees for health and wellbeing, education and economic prosperity, families and justice, and housing, land and water).

Transformation Plans will build on and set a clear vision for reform in each sector. Their aim is to:

- ➔ provide a clear and coordinated structure to incorporate existing work within each sector and align it with broader transformation goals.
- ➔ create space for new and emerging initiatives, including those not yet identified, that reflect community priorities, new insights, and strengthened partnerships.
- ➔ support systemic change within government – ensuring that transformation is not limited to funded initiatives, but extends to how government operates, makes decisions, and shares power with Aboriginal Communities.

Together, these plans form part of the broader **Change and Transformation Strategy** that allows us to reframe how we deliver reform – not just by adding new initiatives, but by sharpening our focus on the Priority Reforms and building a more strategic, coordinated approach. This means bringing together existing pieces of work, identifying what's missing, and building an evidence base for what works. But most importantly, it sets out a path to fundamentally **change the way government operates** – how decisions are made, how funding is negotiated and distributed, how success is defined, and how accountability is shared with Aboriginal Communities.

This is the real work of transformation: embedding the Priority Reforms into the systems, behaviours and practices of government so they are no longer treated as add-ons, but as the foundation of how government works in partnership with Aboriginal people.

The plans will be continuously updated and improved through Aboriginal Community feedback loops and evaluation processes. They will be living documents, shaped by regular reflection, reporting, and continuous improvement undertaken by government agencies to ensure that reforms are not only implemented – but are working.

The diagram on the following pages show the 6 steps on the way to deliver the strategy in a way that is grounded in strengths, aspirations and collective responsibility for long-term outcomes.

Pathway to reform

1. Define the path ahead

- ⇒ We will develop an Accountability Framework with a set of clear success criteria to create a shared understanding that supports Community, government and services to deliver the Priority Reforms.
- ⇒ The Framework will take a strengths-based approach to accountability, driven by what Aboriginal Communities aspire to see in their futures.



4. Deliver a coordinated, Aboriginal-led Community engagement approach

- ⇒ This approach, led by NSW CAPO, will ensure Community voices drive how we embed the Priority Reforms.
- ⇒ Community input will build a picture of progress, forming the basis of evidence of how government is delivering against the Priority Reforms.

5. Evaluate and improve our approach

- ⇒ Departments and sector committees will regularly assess their progress and update Transformation Plans to ensure they are meeting Community needs and expectations.
- ⇒ Using evaluation and learning we will ensure Aboriginal people are shaping the transformation of government services and systems, and will build an evidence base about what drives real impact.
- ⇒ This evidence base will shape policies and programs in real time, so that government is continuously improving its approach and outcomes.

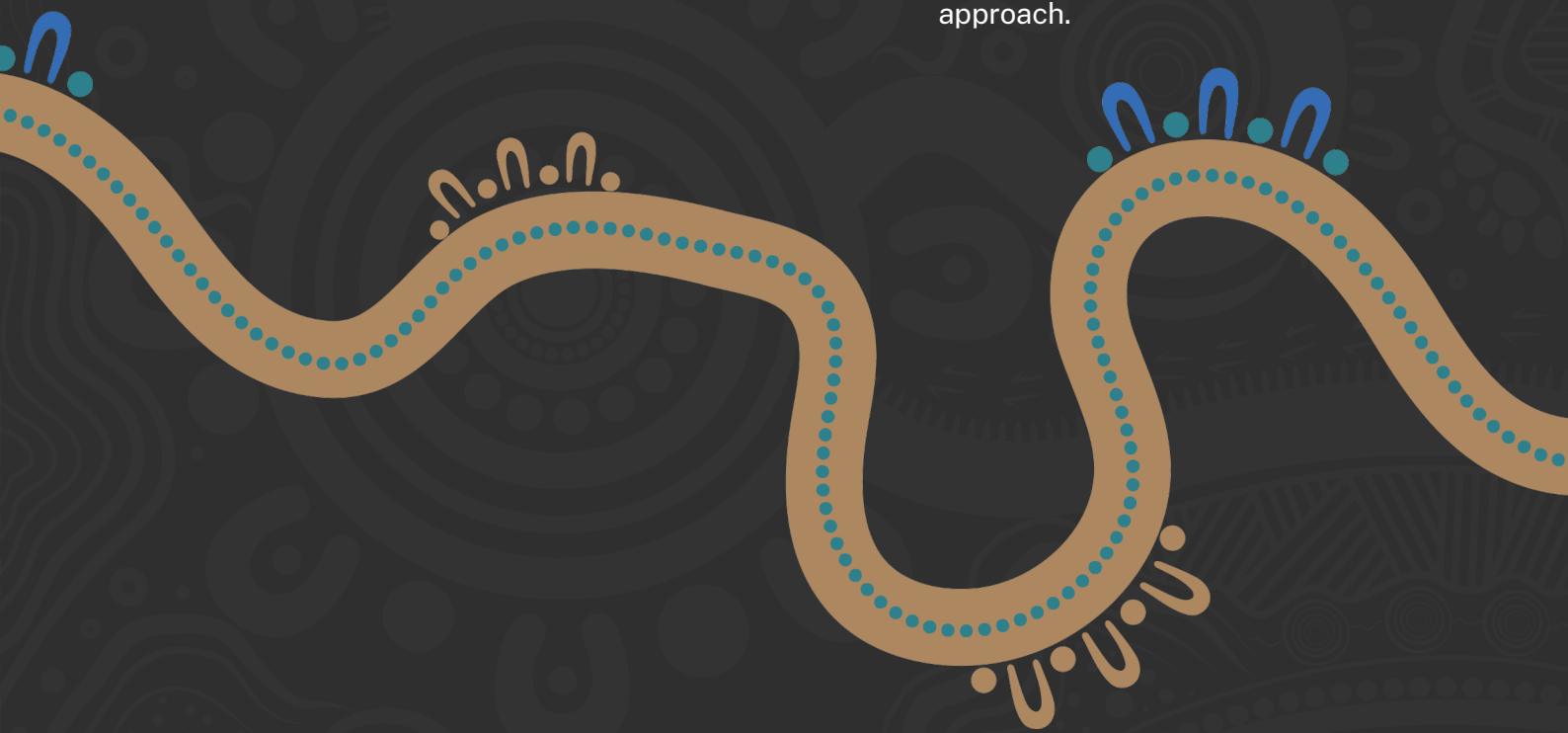


2. Understand how we measure up through a gap analysis

- ⇒ We will use the framework to do a gap analysis across each NSW Government department, linking these to relevant sectors.
- ⇒ The results will show how we compare against the success criteria and help us to plan the next steps to deliver on the Priority Reforms.
- ⇒ This is a critical step towards accountability and ensuring that no sector is left behind in the transformation journey.

3. Design and implement Transformation Plans

- ⇒ Sector-specific Transformation Plans will outline how the Priority Reforms will be implemented to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Communities in specific sectors.
- ⇒ A whole-of-government Transformation Plan will define how the Priority Reforms will be implemented to improve outcomes for Aboriginal Communities across sectors.
- ⇒ The Plans will be developed in partnership, informed by Community priorities and backed by an evaluation & learning approach.



6. Build knowledge and capability around the Priority Reforms through an awareness campaign

- ⇒ We will implement an awareness campaign to improved knowledge and understanding of the Priority Reforms across government and Community, including how they can be embedded in our ways of working to ensure a partnership approach to transformation.
- ⇒ This empowers Aboriginal Communities and Aboriginal-led organisations to use the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, including the Priority Reforms, as a tool to drive change with their stakeholders.
- ⇒ It also ensures that all of government understands their responsibilities and commitments under the National Agreement.



How we are delivering on the outcomes and reforms

Under the NSW Closing the Gap Partnership governance arrangements, 5 sector committees bring together representatives from ACCOs (through NSW CAPO) and NSW Government agencies to drive action in key policy areas. Each committee is responsible for identifying priorities, guiding initiatives, and overseeing progress within its sector — ensuring that work is aligned with the National Agreement and delivered in genuine partnership.

The 5 sector committees are:

- ⇒ Transformation
- ⇒ Health and Wellbeing
- ⇒ Housing, Land and Water
- ⇒ Families and Justice
- ⇒ Education and Economic Prosperity

The following section outlines newly funded initiatives that were developed and agreed through these sector committees. These initiatives were prioritised because they are Aboriginal Community-led, place Community priorities at the centre, and are designed to deliver meaningful and lasting outcomes. Each initiative is grounded in a strong evidence base, supports the structural changes outlined in the Priority Reforms, and reflects the shared commitment to transforming the way government works with Aboriginal Communities.



Transformation

The Transformation Sector Committee focuses on achieving the 4 national Priority Reforms relating to partnership, the ACCO sector, government transformation, and data sovereignty. There are 3 significant, newly funded initiatives with total funding of \$50.3 million that will ensure the way government works with Aboriginal people and Communities is fundamentally transformed.



The NSW Partnership on Closing the Gap will continue to implement the National Agreement in NSW. NSW CAPO resourcing is a core driver of all other work outlined in this plan – as it provides operational funding for NSW CAPO Secretariat and positions across NSW CAPO to engage in genuine partnership and shared decision-making with the NSW Government, support governance and implementation of Closing the Gap in NSW and participate in governance forums as joint decision-makers and delivery partners.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

The National Agreement tells us that ACCOs must be the driving force behind real change, as government-led change has not been effective. All NSW Closing the Gap consultation since then have made clear this change is still a priority.

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

The NSW Government has committed to continuing to resource NSW CAPO's role in the NSW Partnership. This work will support progressing from the establishment phase of Closing the Gap in NSW to delivering greater outcomes at the local community level in NSW. Measurable improvements in the delivery of the Priority Reforms is a key outcome of NSW CAPO resourcing.

Transformational impact

NSW CAPO's participation in the NSW Partnership will drive delivery and transformation, enabling NSW CAPO to engage in partnership and shared decision-making that is aligned with the priorities and perspectives of Aboriginal Communities in NSW as set out in the Priority Reforms.

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Deliver in partnership with government a project management approach for the Joint Secretariat in line with Recommendations 2a of the Audit Office of NSW Performance Audit Report	August 2025	February 2026
2. Complete scoping on what capacity and capability is required for the ongoing partnership with NSW CAPO including options for proportional funding to meet full implementation of Closing the Gap	August 2025	November 2025
3. Deliver in partnership with government the Closing the Gap Partnership Communications Strategy and Closing the Gap Partnership Engagement Strategy	November 2025	June 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, NSW CAPO, Aboriginal Affairs NSW

Priority Reform 4 implementation and Aboriginal Data Sovereignty reform development

2025-28 Implementation Plan funding: \$31.5 million

2022-24 Implementation Plan funding: \$21.5 million

Deliver key commitments on Priority Reform 4 by:

- ⇒ setting up a Shared Data Access Service for Aboriginal Communities and organisations to access government-held data across all portfolios
- ⇒ establishing cross-government shared decision-making forums around data
- ⇒ building knowledge and understanding across government and Community regarding data and the principles of Aboriginal Data Sovereignty and Governance
- ⇒ developing a sustainable Aboriginal Data Sovereignty and Governance model for NSW.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

From 2022 to 2025, a robust evidence base was formed through community consultation, research and policy analysis, engagement with Aboriginal data experts, and the piloting of the NSW Data Connector Service. This has informed the next iteration of this initiative, including its milestones and projected benefits.

'Aboriginal Data Sovereignty & Governance] will be gold for Aboriginal Communities, because it gives us our power back to tell our story, and [to highlight] everything that we're going through now...' – Participant, Second Series NSW CAPO PR4 Community Roundtables, April – May 2024.

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

Benefits will accrue for Aboriginal Communities across NSW, including ACCOs, local Aboriginal groups, and individuals engaged in data stewardship, service delivery, governance, and advocacy. The Shared Access to Data Service will support Communities at different levels of data readiness, including those with established Aboriginal Data Governance structures and those seeking capacity development. The reform program will develop proposals for Joint Council consideration regarding how to best provide Aboriginal Communities and organisations with sustainable opportunities and tools through which they can exercise their Aboriginal Data Sovereignty and Governance rights.

Transformational impact

The initiative directly implements NSW's commitments under Priority Reform 4. The initiative moves beyond business-as-usual to deliver systems reform around normalising shared data access and shared decision-making with respect to government-held data. It also continues NSW's Community-led approach to developing proposals for new mechanisms for Aboriginal leadership and oversight in how Community-controlled data is used, governed and invested in.

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Establish a Shared Access to Data for Aboriginal Communities service, policy and foundations to support service effectiveness	2025	2027
2. Establish shared decision-making forums regarding government-held data about Aboriginal peoples and Communities	2025	2028
3. Develop a program to build knowledge about data and Aboriginal Data Sovereignty and Governance principles and practical application across NSW agencies and Aboriginal Communities	2025	2028
4. Deliver a design process that ensures a Community-driven and expert-informed design of Aboriginal governance for Aboriginal Community data	2025	2027
5. In partnership build on the design for Aboriginal governance for Aboriginal Community data and develop reform proposals to implement a sustainable NSW model of Aboriginal Data Sovereignty and Governance	2027	2028

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, NSW CAPO, Aboriginal Affairs NSW, Department of Customer Service

This initiative will build awareness and support across the ACCO and government sectors to establish the partnership costing tool, developed under the 2022-2024 Implementation Plan, as an agreed and transparent framework for negotiating partnerships funding. This will ensure Aboriginal organisations are supported to negotiate funding that properly resources participation in formal partnerships and shared decision-making.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

When developing the partnership costing tool, we heard from more than 45 Aboriginal organisations and Aboriginal people across NSW that partnerships are one of the most powerful levers for change when they are genuinely resourced and supported.

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

Evidence shows that Aboriginal organisations currently bear significant unfunded costs when they partner with government on reforms to Close the Gap. These costs create a barrier to achieving better outcomes and creates additional burden for ACCOs. The partnership costing provides a practical tool for Community organisations to negotiate sustainable resourcing for partnerships.

Transformational impact

There is currently no agreed policy or costing approach to ensure that NSW Government departments are meeting the commitment to adequately fund their Aboriginal partnership. Embedding this tool will strengthen implementation of Priority Reform 1, to build and strengthen partnerships.

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Create a toolkit to promote the costing tool, including a practical 'how to guide' for usage and case studies	August 2025	December 2025
2. Trial and test the toolkit and funding tool with an existing partnership	September 2025	June 2026
3. Develop an engagement plan to build understanding and support for the price guide across government and the Community-controlled sector	July 2025	May 2026
4. Develop a policy framework for partnership arrangements in NSW, to support departments to align with the National Agreement strong partnership elements	October 2025	March 2026
5. Endorse the partnerships costing tool for use across NSW Government	January 2026	June 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, NSW CAPO, Aboriginal Affairs NSW



Health and Wellbeing

The Health and Wellbeing Sector Committee focuses on achieving the Socio-Economic Outcomes across areas such as life expectancy, healthy and thriving children, and mental health and wellbeing. For Aboriginal Communities, health is intrinsically linked to social, cultural and emotional wellbeing. Supports need to be holistic, aligned to Aboriginal Community priorities, place-based and able to respond to social determinants of health.

There are 2 significant, newly funded initiatives with total funding of \$45 million that will embed community-led approaches to physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing.



This program supports Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) to deliver locally designed and led social and emotional wellbeing programs to Aboriginal Communities across NSW and increase access to culturally responsive suicide prevention activities.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Communities have emphasised the importance of culturally safe, Community-led social and emotional wellbeing programs as a foundation for improving mental health outcomes for Aboriginal people. They've made it clear that long-term sustainable funding and investment in the workforce are vital to ensure consistent service delivery and build strong, resilient Communities. These programs must take a holistic and culturally grounded approach to social and emotional wellbeing – one that supports families, empowers young people, and values the voices and experiences of those with lived experience.

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

The program aims to significantly reduce suicide rates among Aboriginal people, addressing the leading cause of death for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 to 39 years old. It is expected to increase access to suicide prevention activities and reduce the demand on emergency departments and mental health inpatient facilities. It will also foster integrated models of care between ACCHOs and mental health service providers, enhancing service quality and coordination.

Transformational impact

The initiative empowers ACCHOs to share decision-making authority for community suicide prevention and wellbeing activities. Embedding multiple levels of Aboriginal governance is essential for culturally driven and developed initiatives and this program includes a partnership between the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) and the NSW Government to support the sites with delivery.

Building the Community-controlled sector is a key foundation for this program, with participating ACCHOs leading the delivery of Community-led and culturally appropriate suicide prevention and wellbeing services to respond to the unique needs of the Communities they service. Emphasising self-determination, the initiative supports Aboriginal Communities in leading and designing their own suicide prevention and wellbeing activities, promoting Community strength and cohesion.

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Recruit Aboriginal mental health workforce within ACCHOs	July 2025	June 2026
2. Deliver suicide-prevention program within ACCHO sites	July 2025	June 2028
3. Complete evaluation to measure outcomes, community satisfaction and long-term sustainability	July 2025	June 2027

Shared decision-making: Minister for Mental Health, AH&MRC, NSW Ministry of Health

This initiative aims to increase access to Aboriginal-led, culturally safe and integrated maternity, child and family health services during pregnancy and the first 2,000 days of a child's life (from conception until school entry age). Funding will be used for expansion of the Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service and Building Strong Foundations into ACCHOs.

Building Strong Foundations is an outreach service for Aboriginal children from birth to 5 years. Together with the Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service, this service will be fully integrated into selected ACCHOs to provide wraparound care for Aboriginal families across the first 2,000 days.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Ensuring that Aboriginal women, families and communities have access to culturally responsive, respectful and holistic, continuity of maternity and child and family health care – from early pregnancy until school entry age (with additional supports as required) – will assist in providing Aboriginal children the best possible start in life.

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

This initiative offers an important opportunity to strengthen Aboriginal maternal and infant health outcomes. Currently, only 43% of eligible clients are enrolled in an Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service. This initiative will improve availability in areas with the lowest current service coverage to ensure Aboriginal women, children and families have increased access to culturally safe, integrated and evidence-based maternity, child and family health services for the first 2,000 days.

Additionally, more Aboriginal children in NSW (aged 0 to 5 years) will complete all age-appropriate health and development checks in the child's My Personal Health Record book. Parents/carers of Aboriginal children will be supported at a crucial point in time through engagement and wraparound support services to safely care for their child up to school entry age. Aboriginal children will see improved lifelong health, education, social and economic outcomes through increased parental capacity to provide a safe and supported environment.

Transformational impact

This initiative strongly embeds all Priority Reforms into the model, particularly 1, 2 and 3. These additional services in ACCHOs will support self-determination to access culturally safe maternal, child and family health models of care within their community. It also creates a strengthened partnership between ACCHOs and NSW Health to support integrated, and Community-led service delivery.

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Develop Aboriginal governance and monitoring structures	September 2025	March 2026
2. Select sites for program delivery within ACCHOs	September 2025	March 2026
3. Deliver the Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service and Building Stronger Foundations across selected ACCHOs	April 2026	June 2028
4. Evaluation	June 2027	June 2028

Shared decision-making: Minister for Health, AH&MRC, NSW Ministry of Health



Housing, Land and Water

The Housing, Land and Water Sector Committee focuses on the availability, affordability and appropriateness of housing for Aboriginal people and strengthening Aboriginal Peoples' Cultural, physical and economic relationship to land and water. These Socio-Economic Outcome areas play a critical role in determining Aboriginal wellbeing outcomes and supporting strong Communities.

There are 3 newly funded initiatives, with total funding of \$30.9 million, aimed at contributing to Aboriginal people's and Communities' access to, management of and economic development in housing, land and water, while supporting connection to Country.



Facilitating Community development planning will inform Aboriginal landowner decision-making and the supported delivery of land activation projects that achieve economic, social, environmental and cultural outcomes, in line with Aboriginal Community aspirations. The supported delivery of projects could include due diligence and feasibility, technical investigations, planning approvals and project management so that they are development ready.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Aboriginal Communities have raised the need for accessible support for effective land activation. We heard that it is important to ground processes in the aspirations of Aboriginal Communities and deliver work in partnership with local decision-makers to ensure processes are Community-led. We also heard that government needs to show its commitment to genuine partnership through providing appropriate resources.

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

The pilot program will enable Aboriginal Communities to activate opportunities from returned land, such as for housing and economic development opportunities such as renewable energy and tourism. Simultaneously it will build the capacity of Aboriginal Communities in land activation and increase understanding of the NSW Planning System.

The pilot program will also create Aboriginal jobs in construction, renewable energy, and community infrastructure, promoting stable employment and economic stability within communities. For Aboriginal women, this will also contribute to reducing the gender pay gap.

Transformational impact

Integrated joint delivery and shared decision-making between the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council will improve government collaboration with Aboriginal landowners, build capacity of the Community-controlled sector and will foster self-determination and economic prosperity (Priority Reforms 1, 3, 2 & 5 respectively).

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Undertake Community development planning	July 2025	June 2026
2. Transfer land to Community	January 2026	July 2026
3. Regulatory approvals	January 2026	December 2026
4. Land activation	July 2026	January 2029
5. Monitor and evaluate the program, including economic analysis	January 2029	June 2029

Shared decision-making: Minister for Planning and Public Spaces; Minister for Lands and Property; Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure; NSW Aboriginal Land Council

Local Land Services will establish an Aboriginal Employment Program in partnership with Local Aboriginal Land Councils to deliver culturally appropriate services in partnership with Aboriginal Communities of NSW through a dedicated workforce. Alongside employment benefits, this program will improve land use management and biodiversity outcomes through traditional cultural land management practices.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us:

We heard from Aboriginal Communities that more local employment opportunities, including targeted and identified roles, are needed. Practising traditional culture, and caring and protecting land and waters are essential.

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

Aboriginal land management provides benefits to Aboriginal Communities, and to the environment and the economy. The 4-year program will deliver meaningful, culturally grounded employment opportunities for Aboriginal people across NSW, supporting long-term economic stability and cultural continuity. Developed in response to Community priorities and aligned with key strategies including the Cultural Fire Management Strategy, the program will work with Communities to explore and co-design land management strategies. This will contribute to intergenerational knowledge exchange, and strengthen partnerships within Communities, ensuring Aboriginal voices are central in decisions about Country and cultural heritage protection.

Transformational impact

The program supports Priority Reform 5 by creating long-term, meaningful employment for Aboriginal people, contributing to key targets such as youth employment, overall employment, wellbeing, and connection to Country. By embedding cultural knowledge in land management roles, the program strengthens both Community wellbeing and environmental stewardship.

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Establish project management and governance frameworks	July 2025	September 2025
2. Plan and design recruitment, training, and monitoring and evaluation	July 2025	June 2026
3. Recruit and support participants	January 2026	June 2029
4. Monitor and evaluate the program	January 2026	June 2029
5. Engage internal and external stakeholders	July 2025	June 2029

Shared decision-making: Minister for Agriculture and Regional NSW, Local Land Services, NSW Aboriginal Land Council

Together with Aboriginal Communities, the NSW Aboriginal Land Council and the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water will develop a 10-year NSW Inland Waters target and mechanisms to achieve it. The objective is to increase Aboriginal ownership of, and access to water inland from the coastal zone (not sea water). This will inform policy and investment decisions to achieve the target and support amendments to the National Agreement on the Inland Water Target.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Aboriginal Communities have consistently raised concerns about their lack of water rights and access to water. We have heard that urgent structural reform is needed to ensure Aboriginal water rights are recognised and there is long-term water security for Aboriginal Communities for economic, cultural and social purposes, including the protection of cultural water sites. Water is not just about money or business – it is spiritual and deeply connected to culture, identity and looking after Country.

'It's not just about access to water...it's also about the rights to culturally manage the water.' – NSW CAPO Closing the Gap Community Engagement Report

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

Increasing Aboriginal ownership of, access to and management of inland water will help to deliver better economic, cultural, social and environmental outcomes for Aboriginal Communities, including by creating new jobs and business opportunities related to managing water.

Transformational impact

The initiative aims to create real and lasting change by putting frameworks in place to support increases in Aboriginal peoples' ownership of, access to and management of water. It also supports the goals of the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms by embedding Aboriginal-led decision-making for Aboriginal Communities (Priority Reform 1); knowledge-building to support Aboriginal organisations to understand the water market and deliver benefits to their Communities (Priority Reform 2) and systemic and structural reform to water policy and legislation (Priority Reform 3).

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Consult with Aboriginal Communities on NSW Inland Waters Target	September 2025	June 2026
2. Provide advice to government on options for target and approaches to implementation	September 2025	December 2025
3. Implement knowledge building and support for Aboriginal stakeholders on water management framework and water market	August 2025	June 2026
4. Develop a business case for 2027 onwards to fund reforms and services to support the implementation of the target	October 2025	June 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Water; Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water; NSW Aboriginal Land Council



Families and Justice

The Families and Justice Sector Committee focuses on achieving the Socio-Economic Outcomes related to criminal justice, child safety and wellbeing, and domestic and family violence to improve life outcomes for Aboriginal people and make lasting progress in Closing the Gap.

There are 2 significant, newly funded initiatives with total funding of \$33.4 million that will support safe, stable and connected families through accessible, wraparound services that are culturally appropriate and trusted.



The strategy will increase the availability of culturally appropriate supports for Aboriginal children and adults while in and after leaving prison; support improved outcomes in the community after release and reduce the likelihood of return to prison; and expand the involvement of ACCOs in delivering throughcare service. This will enable Aboriginal children and adults to exit custody and reintegrate into community with dignity and care.

The initiative will fund a wellbeing and Alcohol and Other Drug support program, an in-custody domestic and family violence program for Aboriginal men, a new post-release accommodation service for Aboriginal adults and an expansion of Corrective Services NSW’s Elders mentoring program to include community-based support. The initiative will also fund a Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder diagnosis, treatment and support service for Aboriginal children and young people in contact with the criminal justice system.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

We need to ensure culturally appropriate and accessible throughcare programs are available in every community. We need to focus on service system gaps and failures, and deliver ambitious systems change to better support young people leaving detention. This needs to start on entry into custody.

‘[The] correction system is broken – another thing we want to look at: that every community has post release care.’

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

By June 2028, this initiative will improve outcomes for and support the interests of Aboriginal people and Communities in NSW by increasing the availability of Community-led, ACCO-delivered and culturally appropriate supports for Aboriginal children and adults experiencing incarceration during, and after leaving a period of incarceration. This initiative aims to contribute to a reduction in the over-representation of Aboriginal adults and children in the criminal justice system in line with Socio-Economic Outcomes 10 and 11.

Transformational impact

This initiative continues formal partnerships and shared decision-making by involving ACCOs in the co-design of programs that provide support to Aboriginal children and adults who are in and leaving youth detention or prison in NSW in line with Priority Reform 1. It will also contribute to Priority Reforms 2 and 3 through partnering with ACCOs to deliver a range of initiatives for Aboriginal children and adults in custody and exiting custody, and increase accountability through transparent funding allocations.

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Establish and deliver the ACCO-delivered Aboriginal Wellbeing and Alcohol and Other Drug support program	July 2025	June 2028
2. Co-design, establish and deliver an ACCO-led domestic and family violence program for Aboriginal men in custody who use violence	July 2025	June 2028
3. Establish and deliver Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Diagnosis and treatment service for Aboriginal young people in contact with the criminal justice system	July 2025	June 2028
4. Establish an ACCO-delivered post-release accommodation and place-based support centre for Aboriginal adults	July 2025	June 2028
5. Expand the Corrective Services NSW’s Aboriginal Elders & Mentors Program to include community-based post-release support	July 2025	June 2028
6. Complete program evaluation of all initiatives	July 2025	June 2028

Shared decision-making: Attorney General, Department of Communities and Justice, Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT)

This initiative develops and implements the prioritised actions of the Therapeutic Pathways for Children report, which was a key initiative of the 2022–2024 Implementation Plan. The actions support trauma-informed and culturally safe responses that direct children at risk of contact with the criminal process away from the formal criminal justice system.

Therapeutic Pathways will increase the availability of ACCO-designed and delivered programs for children as an alternative or and/or alongside the criminal justice system by funding a place-based Community-led diversion pilot, such as a Community-led alternative responder model. It will also establish an ACCO- and youth-led mechanism diversion pilot, such as a Community-led for the participation of systems-impacted Aboriginal young people in policy and program design that impacts them.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

We need to urgently reduce the number of children entering the justice system:
'It's senseless locking kids up.'

We need to better support networks, meaningful community activities and cultural programs, driven by the needs of young people, to prevent entry into the justice system:

'We need to figure out what's missing for kids in their lives. The kids should be driving that. As opposed to adults coming in and assuming what they need and want.'

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

By funding more culturally safe, place-based and ACCO-delivered services there will be improved systems responses for Aboriginal children who are at risk of contact with the criminal justice system. This will contribute to a reduction in the over-representation of Aboriginal children in the criminal justice system in NSW in line with Socio-Economic Outcome 11. As contact with the criminal justice system from a young age significantly increases the likelihood of reoffending, it will also contribute to a reduction in the over-representation of Aboriginal adults over the long-term.

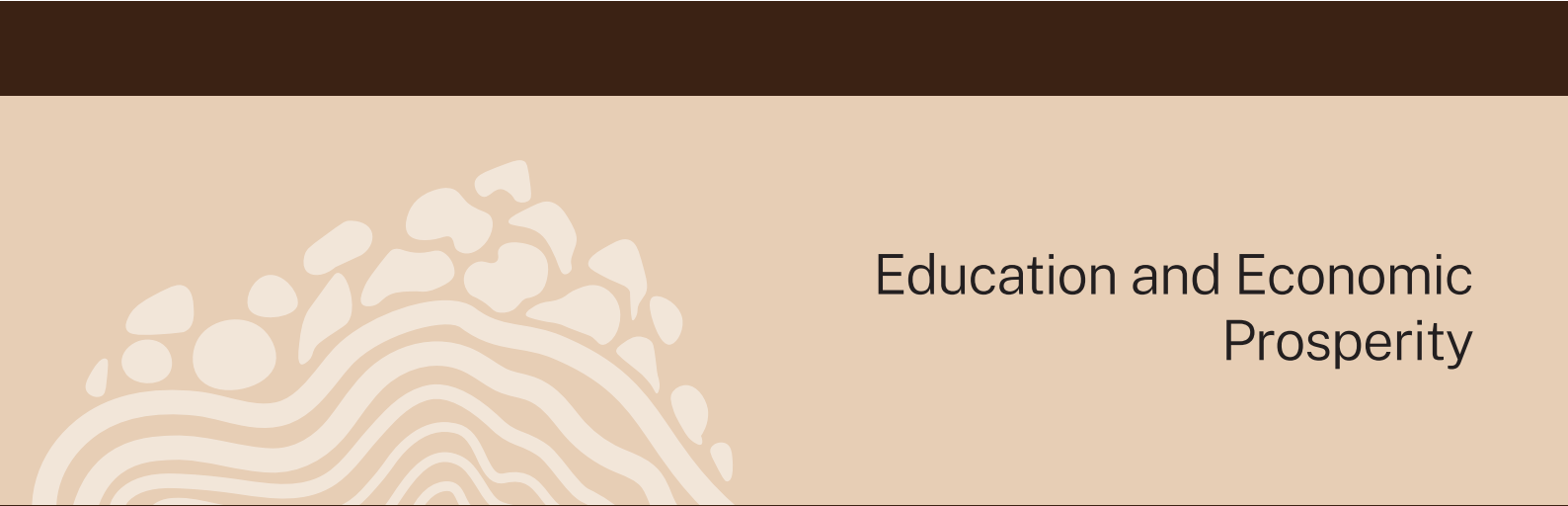
By establishing an ACCO- and youth-led mechanism for Aboriginal young people's participation in policy and program design, the initiative will also ensure that efforts to achieve Outcome 11 are informed by the lived experience of Aboriginal young people.

Transformational impact

Therapeutic Pathways supports Priority Reforms 1, 2 and 3 by establishing new opportunities for formal partnerships and shared decision-making with the Community-controlled sector in NSW through ACCO-led initiatives and transforming the way services are delivered. It will provide resourcing to local ACCOs to deliver new, therapeutic pathways for Aboriginal children and elevate the existing backbone provided by the Community-controlled service system.

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Recruit an Aboriginal consultant to provide project support	July 2025	December 2025
2. Co-design and establish a mechanism that is ACCO- and youth-led for the participation of systems-impacted Aboriginal young people in policy and program design	July 2025	June 2028
3. Fund an ACCO-delivered place-based and community-led diversion pilot that provides a therapeutic alternative to traditional criminal justice responses to children's behaviours, such as a community-led alternative responder model	July 2025	June 2028
4. Evaluate initiatives	July 2025	June 2028

Shared decision-making: Attorney General, Department of Communities and Justice, Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT)



Education and Economic Prosperity

The Education and Economic Prosperity Sector Committee focuses on achieving Socio-Economic Outcomes related to languages, education and employment and the NSW-specific Priority Reform 5, relating to economic prosperity. There are 4 significant initiatives with total funding of \$46.7 million to create strong connections between culture and education at all levels and support language revitalisation.



This new initiative responds to the urgent and critical state of Aboriginal languages in NSW. It will enhance efforts toward Closing the Gap Outcome 16 to increase the number and strength of Aboriginal languages spoken in NSW by investing in Community-driven language revitalisation efforts.

The program will surface language records held in NSW archival collections and make them accessible to Aboriginal language centres and Communities. Language revitalisation will be supported through investment in Community-controlled Aboriginal language centres and a growing workforce of Aboriginal language educators. In addition, the program will support NSW’s participation in the national Languages Policy Partnership and establish a NSW Language Centres network to support the growing Community-controlled sector.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

The Aboriginal Languages Trust’s statewide Community consultations in 2021 and Aboriginal Language Centres & Hubs research in 2024 highlighted the need for long-term, Community-led investment in Aboriginal language revitalisation. Communities consistently called for more community-controlled Aboriginal language centres to lead language work, develop resources, deliver programs, and train and employ Aboriginal language teachers. They also stressed the importance of local access to language archives and to Country, to ensure language can be taught in its original and cultural context.

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

The program will strengthen the Community-controlled Aboriginal languages sector, including growing the languages and archivist workforce, increase investment in Community-led organisations and expand the number of locally driven language programs.

It will support language revitalisation by providing greater access to language resources, unlocking archived materials and strengthening Kinship, Country and Community connections. Formal partnerships and shared decision-making between Aboriginal language Communities and government will deliver culturally appropriate, collaborative approaches that ensure Communities lead and sustain language work into the future.

Transformational impact

The Languages Centres Investment Program (part of the program of work) is built around Community-led and shared decision-making. It provides multi-year funding to Community-controlled Aboriginal language centres needed for a sustainable Community-controlled sector.

The First Nations Community Access to Archives component works to make government agencies more accessible and accountable to Aboriginal Communities. Overall, the full program of work creates secure and sustainable employment opportunities in both the Community-controlled and public sectors.

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Establish a Closing the Gap team in the Aboriginal Languages Trust	September 2025	June 2026
2. Deliver the First Nations Community Access to Archives project	July 2025	June 2029
3. Establish a network of Community-controlled Aboriginal language centres	July 2025	June 2027
4. Deliver the Language Centres Investment Program, supporting 10 Aboriginal language centres	June 2026	June 2029

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Aboriginal Languages Trust, NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG)

This initiative places Aboriginal Community Connectors in 7 rural and remote NSW Communities. Delivered in partnership with ACCOs, the program employs qualified Aboriginal people to work directly with secondary students, families, and schools. Community Connectors work holistically with NSW secondary students who may be at risk of disengaging from school or not achieving their full potential.

The initiative removes barriers to education by linking Aboriginal students with critical, culturally responsive services to support them to succeed academically and personally, and strengthens their cultural identity and Community connection. It increases students' engagement in school, supports their Year 12 aspirations and promotes a successful transition to post-school pathways.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

In the 2024 Aboriginal Community Connectors Student Voice Survey, 93% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students reported trust in their Community Connector and around 70% said that the support they received helped them stay engaged with learning and remain at school.

We have also heard this initiative supports partnership and shared decision-making across government and local ACCOs, and supports the sustainable employment of identified Aboriginal people in jobs in their local Communities.

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

The initiative will continue to support around 350 Aboriginal students, annually across 7 rural and remote locations – currently: Armidale, Bega, Dubbo, Lightning Ridge, Orange, Tamworth and Wilcannia. The initiative supports Aboriginal students to improve educational engagement, wellbeing and cultural inclusivity. Aboriginal Communities and families will also benefit from strengthened local networks, the development of culturally competent services and greater economic participation and employment.

Key stakeholders who benefit from this initiative are students who have improved educational engagement, wellbeing and cultural inclusivity, and access to post-school pathways; families, who have stronger involvement in education, access to culturally responsive supports and increased access to critical services; communities, which have strengthened local networks, development of culturally competent services and economic participation and empowerment; and society and government, which have improved education and employment outcomes, reduced demand for health services, lower interactions with the criminal justice system and increased social cohesion.

Transformational impact

The extension of this initiative supports Priority Reforms 2 and 5. By partnering with the NSW AECG, government is fostering a strong and sustainable relationship to support an ACCO to deliver high-quality and culturally responsive services in Community. Broader systemic impacts include improved employment outcomes, reduced demand for health services, lower interactions with the criminal justice system and increased social cohesion.

Milestone	Start date	Finish date
1. Continue program in the 2026 school year	January 2026	December 2028
2. Ongoing program monitoring and evaluation	February 2026	December 2028
3. Evaluate program outcomes	June 2027	December 2028
4. Complete the program	December 2028	December 2028

Shared decision-making: Minister for Education and Early Learning, NSW AECG, NSW Department of Education

The Regional Operations Model aims to strengthen the NSW AECG's capacity to deliver place-based, Community-focused solutions in 4 regional and remote NSW locations – Griffith, Broken Hill, Dubbo and Newcastle – with the intention to expand service delivery to additional regions. Each hub is governed by local Aboriginal Community leaders and members, ensuring all decision-making is Community-led and-aligned with localised needs and priorities.

The hubs support the delivery of Regional Operations Model-funded components including Early Childhood Aboriginal Engagement Officers, Community Expansion – Aboriginal Language and Culture Nests and Connecting to Country for Early Childhood Educators.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

We have heard through 2 evaluations (2023 and 2024) and Community feedback that the Regional Operations Model strengthened cultural responsiveness in service delivery, grew partnership and shared decision-making practices in the education sector and is ultimately aligned with Community needs. Community consultation participants also highlighted the positive role of the Regional Operations Model in addressing the needs of Aboriginal students, families and Communities.

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

The Regional Operations Model increases access to place-based, Aboriginal Community-led cultural education and extends service delivery to previously underserved regions. It improves educational outcomes through the integration of local cultural knowledge, heritage and connection to Country as well as creating employment and career development pathways within Aboriginal Communities. By promoting intergenerational language use and cultural identity in homes and schools, this initiative preserves Aboriginal languages and culture.

Expanding the Regional Operations Model will generate significant and lasting benefits for Aboriginal students, families, and Communities. It will increase access to vital place-based, Aboriginal Community-led cultural education programs, strengthening the quality and integrity of cultural education programs and resources. It will also support the preservation of language and culture by expanding Community-based Aboriginal language revitalisation in homes and schools. This work complements the role of the NSW Aboriginal Languages Trust.

Transformational impact

The initiative increases self-determination and empowerment of Aboriginal Communities through educational design and delivery, ensuring the impacts are long-term and sustainable. It strengthens partnerships and engagement between Aboriginal Communities, schools and the NSW Government in line with the *Walking Together, Working Together 2020 – 2030 Partnership Agreement*. The hubs also provide safe spaces for Community to connect, and provide new, sustainable employment options for Aboriginal people in their local Community.

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Continue delivery of the Regional Operations Model from 4 hubs (Griffith, Broken Hill, Dubbo and Newcastle)	July 2026	June 2029
2. Engage Early Childhood Education Officers and lead transition efforts in Regional Operations Model locations	July 2026	June 2029
3. Community Expansion – Language and Culture Nests: implement a plan for building capacity and skills in Community for strengthening language and culture in Regional Operations Model locations	July 2026	Ongoing
4. Deliver Connecting to Country program to early childhood services in Regional Operations Model locations	July 2026	Ongoing
5. Engage and partner with Communities. Maintain strong relationships to deliver the Early Childhood Aboriginal Engagement Officers transitions pilot and Community Expansion – Language and Culture Nest services across Regional Operations Model locations	July 2026	Ongoing
6. Complete final evaluation and reporting for all NSW AECG Regional Operations Model components	July 2025	June 2029

Shared decision-making: Minister for Education and Early Learning, NSW Department of Education, NSW AECG

This initiative aims to revitalise, reclaim and maintain local Aboriginal languages and cultural knowledge in NSW public schools. The Nests build and strengthen cultural capabilities and increase Community access to high-quality Aboriginal Languages and Culture education. They strengthen intergenerational knowledge transfer, aligning with the NSW AECG Partnership Agreement, and ensure Aboriginal voices shape education policy.

NSW AECG currently operates 7 Nests, which are networks of communities bound together by their connection through an Aboriginal language. They support the Bundjalung, Dunghutti, Gamilaraay/Yuwaalaraay/Yuwaalayaay, Gomeroi, Gumbaynggirr, North West Wiradjuri, and Paakantji languages. This initiative expands the program beyond schools to include Community members.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

The 2024 OCHRE Review reaffirmed strong support for the Nests program among Communities and Aboriginal Language Custodians and Educators. In the review, Community members expressed a deep desire to see their languages and cultures remembered, respected, and revived. This shared desire stems from the recognition that language is intrinsically linked to culture and identity.

A 2024 independent review highlighted that the expansion of the Nests was a step towards promoting self-determination and economic empowerment at the local level.

Anticipated Aboriginal Community benefit

Aboriginal students benefit most through access to localised, culturally embedded Aboriginal language and culture education. Aboriginal Communities benefit from greater control, cultural continuity and, strengthened cultural pride and resilience. Aboriginal Language Educators are supported to deliver localised Aboriginal language and Culture education programs aligned to the NSW K-10 Aboriginal Languages syllabus.

The Nests promote intergenerational cultural transmission, preserving heritage and uniting students, families, and Communities through shared learning experiences that foster cultural pride and connection.

Transformational impact

The Nests foster shared decision-making and culturally grounded ACCO service delivery to support the revitalisation of Aboriginal Languages and Culture, in line with Socio-Economic Outcome 16. They also reinforce broader system and sector change by supporting employment opportunities and creates sustainable career pathways, and building the capacity of ACCOs.

While the primary focus of this initiative is Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Communities, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people benefit from increased cultural understanding through exposure to Aboriginal languages and culture.

Milestones	Start date	Finish date
1. Develop project frameworks in partnership with NSW AECG and ACCOs	July 2025	December 2025
2. In partnership with NSW AECG, co-design and refine program and training	July 2026	December 2026
3. Launch updated program in schools	January 2026	Ongoing
4. Evaluate outcomes and refine approach	September 2026	September 2027

Shared decision-making: Minister for Education and Early Learning, NSW Department of Education, NSW AECG



Appendix: Ongoing work

Under previous Implementation Plans, the NSW Partnership committed to a number of initiatives that have continued or whose timeline has been extended. These have been listed below and will continue to be reported on.



Supporting Local Partnerships

Total 2022-24 Implementation Plan funding:
\$9.8 million

ACCO funding: \$9.8 million

This initiative enhances self-determination for NSW Aboriginal Communities by establishing and supporting pilot Place-Based Partnerships between ACCOs and government across the state. These pilots promote local decision-making and Community autonomy by enhancing collaboration between ACCOs, local services and government. Pilot sites have been established in Tamworth, Greater Western Sydney and Orange. We will establish 3 additional trial sites in Far West NSW and continue supporting the work of existing pilot sites alongside the Blacktown Community Data Project, which is a national commitment.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Aboriginal Communities emphasised the need for authentic joint decision-making and self-determination through formal partnerships grounded in Community leadership to promote equitable power sharing with the government. Partnerships that connect local ACCOs with government entities are essential to appropriately address Community needs and priorities.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Support establishment of partnership agreements between the remaining Place Based Partnership trial sites and local, NSW or Commonwealth governments	October 2023	June 2026
2. Develop Community development plans across all Place Based Partnership trial sites including 3 new sites	October 2023	June 2026
3. Develop memorandums of understanding across Far West and Orange trial sites between ACCOs and community for the remaining Place Based Partnership trial sites	October 2023	June 2026
4. Evaluate the Supporting Local Partnerships project to determine effectiveness and outcomes	April 2026	June 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, NSW CAPO, Aboriginal Affairs NSW

Toolkit to support local councils to work in partnership with Aboriginal Communities

Funding from other sources

This initiative will deliver a toolkit to increase the capacity of the local government sector to accelerate councils' contributions to Closing the Gap and embed shared decision-making with Aboriginal communities. It builds on the 2022 Partnership Stocktake and the Closing the Gap factsheet developed by the NSW Office of Local Government and Local Government NSW. The toolkit aims to progress actions under Priority Reforms 1, 3, and 5. It will include a self-assessment tool to gauge maturity in delivering Closing the Gap outcomes and share best-practice case studies of councils working with Aboriginal Communities.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Councils across NSW have called for clearer guidance and practical examples to help build them effective partnerships with Aboriginal communities. They are seeking tools and resources to better understand and communicate their role in Closing the Gap, and to improve outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Set up a council working group of Aboriginal staff and councillors to guide the toolkit development	March 2025	September 2025
2. Implement engagement plan and finalise toolkit based on ACCO and council consultations	March 2025	October 2025
3. Broadly communicate and provide guidance to local councils on how to use the toolkit	October 2025	June 2026
4. Monitor implementation of the toolkit across local councils and share best-practice examples. Assess recommendations of the toolkit project evaluation	October 2025	June 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Local Government NSW, Aboriginal Affairs NSW, NSW CAPO

Prioritisation Policy and Sector Uplift Strategy

Funding from other sources

The Prioritisation Policy will re-prioritise existing and planned funding across the NSW Government to boost the portion of services delivered by ACCOs. The Sector Uplift Strategy will strengthen and grow the service delivery and organisational capacity of the ACCO sector to be prepared for the reprioritisation of funding to the sector.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Communities have told us that governments need to fund ACCOs to provide services to Aboriginal people, and that there is a need for better coordination of funding across the services in each community. Government funding arrangements need to recognise that ACCOs provide more holistic services that take a whole-of-person and family approach, which can have higher costs.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Work with NSW CAPO and government agencies to understand funding and develop options to deliver a prioritisation policy	December 2023	February 2025
2. Develop options for a Sector Uplift Strategy, based on the State of the Sector Report	June 2026	June 2027

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Aboriginal Affairs NSW, NSW CAPO

Aboriginal-led commissioning project	Total 2022-24 Implementation Plan funding: \$3.9 million ACCO funding: \$3.9 million
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The Aboriginal-led commissioning project, led by AbSec, supports Aboriginal Communities to have decision-making power to design, deliver, and oversee services and programs that directly meet their needs and priorities. This approach is rooted in principles of self-determination, cultural safety and Community empowerment.

AbSec is implementing the project through an Aboriginal-led Commissioning Framework designed to respond to Aboriginal Community needs and uphold Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, and doing in all stages of the commissioning process, from design and delivery through to monitoring and evaluation of programs and services. The current funding envelope is not intended for service delivery.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Communities have told us that priority-setting and funding allocations are often driven solely by government, without partnership, and therefore may not adequately reflect the unique needs and priorities of Aboriginal Communities. In contrast, Communities have identified that an Aboriginal-led approach to commissioning services, as partners with government, should empower communities to determine their own priorities, ensuring that resources are directed to services they identify as most critical to supporting Aboriginal children, families and Communities.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Finalise project frameworks and select sites	October 2025	November 2025
2. Complete a funding request for potential service delivery	November 2025	February 2026
3. Complete evaluation of process and outcomes as at end of contract term	November 2025	March 2027

Milestones subject to funding gateway process	Start date	Finish date
1. Design services with ACCOs in 2 sites	Dependent on budget dates	Dependent on budget dates
2. Subject to the funding gateway process, deliver agreed services	July 2026	March 2027

Shared decision-making: Minister for Families and Communities, Department of Communities and Justice, AbSec

ACCO Comprehensive Support Package	Total 2022-24 Implementation Plan funding: \$2.0 million ACCO funding: \$2.0 million
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This initiative aims to strengthen ACCOs by focusing on the critical areas of workforce retention, governance, and digital/physical infrastructure. It aims to build the long-term capacity and sustainability of ACCOs through a co-designed support package that is culturally informed, evidence based and tailored to sector needs.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

We heard from Community that there is a need to increase support for and investment in ACCOs including strengthening workforce retention, improving governance capability, and enhancing digital and physical infrastructure. There is a need for comprehensive service mapping of available services and programs, including identifying the funding communities are receiving, service gaps, duplication, and unmet needs through regional and topic-based consultations.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Produce State of the Sector report	October 2025	December 2025
2. Produce Gap Analysis report	December 2025	February 2026
3. Soft launch testing and feedback	May 2026	July 2026
4. Finalise package and roadmap	July 2026	August 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, AbSec, Aboriginal Affairs NSW

Independent Aboriginal-led accountability mechanism to monitor government accountability

Total 2022-24 Implementation Plan funding: \$2.4 million

ACCO funding: \$2.4 million

Scope options for a NSW independent, Aboriginal-led accountability mechanism to hold government to account for implementing the National Agreement and achieving the transformative change it requires.

During 2024, foundational research and consultation occurred to shape the design of a mechanism that can support, monitor and publicly report on government transformation and the alignment of government policies with the National Agreement, be recognisable and culturally safe for Aboriginal people and improve complaints and feedback mechanisms within government.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Communities have said that government departments are currently evaluating themselves, whereas they should be evaluated independently by Aboriginal people and organisations.

'We're not seeing accountability from the mainstream sector when we're seeing deaths in custody and people dying when they're turned away from hospitals because we're not treated properly. There's no accountability for those mainstream organisations.'

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Agree next steps to continue towards establishment of an Independent Accountability Mechanism	July 2025	December 2025
2. Review existing accountability mechanisms and engage with the NSW Audit Office and Office of the NSW Ombudsman	December 2025	July 2026
3. Revised model agreed upon by NSW CAPO and NSW Government	July 2026	December 2027

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, NSW CAPO, Aboriginal Affairs NSW

Indigenous Expenditure Report

Funding from other sources

This initiative involves regular reporting on government expenditure on Aboriginal communities through the publication of the NSW Indigenous Expenditure Report. This provides visibility of the proportion of government spending on programs and services delivered through ACCOs for Aboriginal people.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

We heard that we need more transparency in funding for local organisations and services. *'Anyone who gets Aboriginal funding should be telling the ACCOs and LALCs what funding they got.'*

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
This is an ongoing annual commitment to ensure transparency and develop the evidence based for Aboriginal outcomes. To date, NSW Treasury has quantified 45.6% of government expenditure and the next iteration will aim to capture 100%.		

Shared decision-making: Treasurer, NSW Treasury, NSW Aboriginal Land Council

The *Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2019–2025* provides a clear and coordinated framework to drive Aboriginal employment outcomes within the public sector. The Office of the Public Service Commissioner will review the Aboriginal Employment Strategy and develop a new strategy for 2026 to 2030. The new strategy will include a strong focus on anti-racism and embedding cultural capability into the NSW Capability Framework.

The new strategy could explore a range of initiatives, informed by sector and NSW CAPO consultation. These include sector-wide initiatives to address racism, improved mechanisms for reporting and handling complaints of racism by incorporating a trauma-informed approach and supporting the pipeline of emerging Aboriginal leaders into senior leadership roles.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

In the 2022–2024 Implementation Plan, the Office of the Public Service Commissioner committed to ‘strengthen the Aboriginal Employment Strategy to increase Aboriginal employment in the public service’ and ‘implement a zero-tolerance approach to racism’. The current strategy is due to expire at the end of 2025 and its review is underway.

The review of the strategy will provide an opportunity to consult with Aboriginal employees and explore Community feedback on how government can support employment outcomes for Aboriginal people, embed cultural capability and build an anti-racism culture.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Review the current strategy to identify improvements and opportunities for the new strategy	June 2025	September 2025
2. Embed cultural capability in the NSW Capability Framework	June 2025	November 2025
3. Launch the new strategy for 2026-2030	December 2025	February 2026
4. Deliver actions under the new strategy	February 2026	December 2030

Shared decision-making: Public Service Commissioner, Office of the Public Service Commissioner, NSW CAPO

Aboriginal Cancer Care Pathways

Total 2022-24 Implementation Plan funding:
\$9.7 million

ACCO funding: \$5.8 million

This initiative aims to provide an Aboriginal cancer care pathway for people to access prevention, cancer screening and referral to cancer services within a primary healthcare setting. The initiative rolls out positions in ACCHOs and primary health care services, reviews access to regular health checks for Aboriginal people (known as '715 health checks') and builds health literacy around cancer screening through a health promotion campaign. This will occur in partnership with the Cancer Institute NSW and the AH&MRC of NSW through an Aboriginal Reference Group.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

We need to increase rates of cancer screenings by providing culturally safe access, which is timely, cost effective and supports Community along the cancer pathway. There is a need for increased investment, particularly in ACCHOs, to navigate cancer services and increase accessibility. Further education is needed regarding cancer and cancer screening, which must be delivered in a culturally safe way.

We need to improve access for Communities to attend general health and cancer screenings to overcome existing access barriers and stigma.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Complete a competitive expression of interest process and assessment to select 15 sites for Aboriginal Cancer CarePathways positions	April 2025	July 2025
2. Support recruitment of all Aboriginal Cancer Care Pathways positions across successful ACCHOs and deliver the program	July 2025	October 2025
3. Implement 715 health promotion campaign	July 2025	November 2026
4. Evaluate the program	October 2025	June 2028

Shared decision-making: Minister for Health, AH&MRC, Cancer Institute NSW

This program develops and implements culturally safe, community-led models of care for Aboriginal people in NSW. It funds partnerships between NSW Health and ACCHOs to deliver strengths-based, trauma-informed, and holistic mental health and wellbeing services.

The program supports sustainable workforce development, locally designed service models, improved referral pathways, and better coordination between mainstream and Community-controlled services. It builds upon the capacity of Aboriginal Communities to lead mental health and suicide prevention responses, reducing barriers and increasing the number of Aboriginal people accessing supports.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

We heard that culturally safe, Community-led models of care play an important role in improving mental health outcomes for Aboriginal people. This requires strong partnerships between ACCHOs and Local Health Districts that are equitable and grounded in shared governance and mutual respect to ensure the sustainability of models.

Maintaining service delivery and strengthening local capacity also depends on sustainable funding and ongoing workforce investment. Importantly, programs must take a holistic and culturally grounded approach to social and emotional wellbeing – one that includes meaningful support for families, young people, and individuals with lived experience.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Recruit Aboriginal mental health workforce and train in culturally safe care across all sites	June 2022	June 2026
2. Establish/integrate culturally safe referral pathways between Local Health Districts and ACCHOs	June 2022	June 2026
3. Complete evaluation to measure outcomes, satisfaction and sustainability	June 2022	June 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Mental Health, NSW Ministry of Health, AH&MRC

This initiative aims to strengthen ACCHOs by increasing workforce capacity to provide comprehensive services. This will respond to areas of high demand and support emerging leaders in regional and remote areas. Three programs will be delivered. The ACCHO Traineeship Program offers supported places for Certificate III and IV in Fitness in ACCHOs. The Cultural Leadership Framework project supports credentials in leadership and management for ACCHO staff. The NSW ACCHO Workforce Program supports placements and cultural training for health workers.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

NSW CAPO Community consultations have highlighted that many ACCHOs across the state face significant challenges in attracting and retaining workers. As such, ACCHOs require additional resources and further opportunities for training and workforce development.

Community requires reputable capacity-building planning from the ground up, including traineeships/apprenticeships. This includes upskilling Aboriginal health workers who are from the communities they work in.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Identify ACCHO workforce requirements and commence placements as part of the Workforce Program	July 2025	June 2026
2. Evaluate the ACCHO Workforce Program	December 2025	September 2026
3. Deliver training program and placements for ACCHO-based trainees	May 2024	June 2025
4. Evaluate the Traineeships for ACCHOs Program	April 2025	July 2025
5. Deliver Leadership Courses to three cohorts of ACCHO staff	November 2024	October 2025
6. Evaluate the Leadership Course	June 2025	November 2025

Shared decision-making: Minister for Health, AH&MRC

Brighter Beginnings is a whole-of-government initiative focused on improving outcomes for NSW children and their families in the first 2,000 days, from conception to school age.

NSW Health and the AH&MRC of NSW will work in partnership with the Department of Education to scope opportunities for ACCHO sector involvement as part of NSW Government's commitment to Brighter Beginnings, with a focus on early childhood development and Aboriginal families.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Adequately supporting Aboriginal children in their early years is a key focus area. This initiative aims to ensure that care and support is offered to all and there are specialised services for those who need it, particularly for the first 2,000 days.

Community consultation highlighted the need to increase availability of services and skilled clinicians to identify early issues, and to invest in targeted supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Brighter Beginnings agencies together with CAPO partners develop an Aboriginal Governance Framework for Brighter Beginnings	September 2025	June 2026
2. Develop monitoring and evaluation processes for Pregnancy Family Conferencing, Sustaining NSW Families and Health and Development Checks in partnership with AH&MRC	Underway	June 2026
3. Map access and uptake of NSW Health-focused Brighter Beginnings initiatives by Aboriginal children and families to develop recommendations on current issues and gaps	September 2025	November 2026
4. Identify opportunities for further integration and/or funding for the expansion of health-focused Brighter Beginnings initiatives for delivery in ACCHOs	September 2025	June 2028

Shared decision-making: Minister for Health, NSW Health, AH&MRC, Department of Education, Department of Customer Service, Department of Communities and Justice

Housing, Land and Water

Culturally responsive building standards and design principles for Aboriginal housing

Total 2022-24 Implementation Plan funding: \$8.7 million

ACCO funding: \$8.7 million

This pilot project develops culturally responsive design principles, building standards and evaluation frameworks for housing in partnership with 4 Aboriginal Communities in NSW. These will then be trialled and refined through the building of housing assets within these Communities, reflecting these principles and standards. The principles will reflect the diverse housing requirements of different Aboriginal peoples in different Communities and are intended to influence future policy on housing design and provision.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

During 2022 NSW CAPO Community engagements, we heard that we need to involve Communities in the process of designing houses. This includes incorporating Communities' priorities when developing Aboriginal housing, including housing for larger families, housing for people with disability, Elders' accommodation, housing for youth, and housing for young families.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Consult Communities, investigate sites and develop key design principles for 4 pilot Communities	April 2024	May 2025
2. Appoint architects to co-design housing that reflects local needs, culture and environment	May 2025	July 2025
3. Start construction and soil turning	December 2025	December 2026
4. Complete construction and project evaluation, and return findings to Communities	December 2026	January 2027

Shared decision-making: Minister for Housing, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, Aboriginal Housing Office

The Aboriginal Wellbeing Framework outlines the housing priorities of Aboriginal people and Communities in relation to social housing in NSW. The framework will play a key role in defining housing-related wellbeing outcomes that are meaningful to Aboriginal people living in social housing in NSW and embed a cultural dimension that is currently absent from existing outcomes frameworks. The experiences of Aboriginal people with disability who live in social housing is a key focus area.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

During 2022 NSW CAPO Community engagements, we heard that there is a strong need to improve accountability and transparency between government, organisations, and Communities especially around how housing programs are evaluated. We also heard that Aboriginal people with disability face additional barriers in accessing suitable housing and require support services with a culturally safe disability perspective.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Develop project plan, research and framework	January 2025	June 2025
2. Develop and co-design a wellbeing survey in partnership with Aboriginal Communities	July 2025	February 2026
3. Design and develop a visual tool to share survey results with Aboriginal Communities, stakeholders and participants	February 2026	May 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Housing, Homes NSW, First Peoples’ Disability Network, Aboriginal Housing Office, NSW Aboriginal Land Council

The purpose of this project is to create a partnership comprising equal representation from NSW Government, NSW Aboriginal Land Council and NTSCORP to design an overarching comprehensive and holistic reform, supporting a negotiated redesign of the Native Title and Land Rights interactions at a local or regional level.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

We have heard from Communities that there are barriers and frustrations with the current land and water claims systems. The partnership will address this by identifying current land and water claims systems and processes, and provide evidence-based recommendations to assist in the design of streamlined, simplified, consistent, efficient, transparent, and equitable systems and processes for future cases.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Identify pilots and publish issues paper	July 2024	March 2025
2. Engage with Community	April 2025	December 2025
3. Develop options and draft recommendation	January 2025	June 2026
4. Implement and plan	June 2026	December 2026
5. Complete activities and close project	January 2027	January 2027

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty; Department of, Planning, Housing and Infrastructure; NSW Aboriginal Land Council; NTSCORP

This initiative involves supporting increased access to cultural fishing rights recognising NSW CAPO's position to immediately commence section 21AA of the *Fisheries Management Amendment (FMA) Act 2009* (without regulations) and place an immediate moratorium on all prosecutions. The NSW Government is committed to working in genuine partnership to support cultural fishing and is implementing the recommendations of the Parliamentary Inquiry into the commencement of section 21AA of the FMA Act.

The initiative also includes collaborative research and analysis to investigate delivery models, such as Aboriginal Community-owned and-managed commercial fishing businesses or an Aboriginal-controlled commercial fishing trust that can buy licences and quota entitlements. The NSW Government will also review all existing fisheries prosecutions involving Aboriginal people to ensure only serious offences are pursued – namely, where they involve illegal sales, recidivist offending involving commercial quantities of product and/or abusing or obstructing fisheries officers.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

In NSW CAPO-led engagements, Aboriginal Communities voiced concern about their ability to exercise their inherent rights to fish for subsistence, recreation, commercial, and other cultural and community purposes. It is important that land rights include water and sea rights, and that Aboriginal people can access jobs in the fishing and farming industries.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Commence s.21AA, recognise Aboriginal cultural fishing rights in legislation and ensure Aboriginal people and the broader community are informed of the implications of the legislation	February 2023	Ongoing
2. Work with 3 Aboriginal Community-owned organisations to develop business plans and leverage funding investment to establish 3 new Aboriginal fisheries businesses under the Aboriginal Fisheries Business Development Program, and share case studies to inform future Aboriginal fisheries business development	June 2022	June 2027
3. Co-host a forum to develop and progress a strategic pathway and action plan to generate greater participation of Aboriginal people in commercial fisheries in NSW	June 2026	June 2027
4. Co-design and deliver a draft community education program to improve the understanding of Aboriginal fishing in the current NSW legal system	February 2026	December 2026
5. Deliver joint communications to promote the work NSW CAPO and NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development are delivering together under Socio-Economic Outcome 15B	July 2025	Ongoing
6. Explore, test and evaluate alternative, culturally appropriate sentencing approaches (e.g. circle sentencing) for fisheries-related court processes involving Aboriginal people and share the findings	July 2024	June 2027

Shared decision-making: Minister for Agriculture, Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, NSW Aboriginal Land Council, NTSCORP

Families and Justice

NSW Aboriginal Justice Partnership Project

Total 2022-24 Implementation Plan funding:
\$7.3 million

ACCO funding: \$7.3 million

By working with Aboriginal Communities and organisations across NSW, this initiative will develop a program of structural reforms to transform the way the justice system supports Aboriginal Communities.

This includes developing options for shared decision making on justice issues, developing a plan to grow the role of ACCO service delivery in the justice sector, developing a cultural capability framework to embed cultural safety into design and delivery of policy and programs that involves Aboriginal people, and developing local justice plans to inform the development of the broader state-wide Partnership and ensure that place-based approaches are built from the ground up.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

We have heard that we need to ensure that programs and policies are Aboriginal-led in both design and delivery. We have heard that we need to ensure that critical feedback is considered, and decision-making power is shared through stronger local, regional and state-wide partnerships with Aboriginal Communities on justice. We have also heard that ACCOs are best placed to deliver justice services to Aboriginal people, and that Aboriginal people experience systemic racism and bias in their contact with government agencies and there is a need to build cultural capabilities across government.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Engage stakeholders and deliver engagement report	December 2025	October 2026
2. Undertake Community forums to form local justice partnerships and develop local justice plans in selected Communities	December 2025	June 2027
3. Develop and deliver an Aboriginal Justice Partnership Options Paper for shared decision-making at local, regional and state levels	July 2025	June 2027
4. Develop and deliver a Cultural Capability Framework that embeds cultural safety into the design and delivery of policies and programs involving Aboriginal people	July 2025	June 2027
5. Develop and deliver an ACCO justice sector strengthening plan	July 2025	June 2027
6. Undertake and deliver project evaluation	July 2025	June 2027

Shared decision-making: Attorney General, Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), Department of Communities and Justice

Continue the Bail Advocacy Program led by Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) Limited, which comprises 2 pilot services: the Bail Advocacy Program for young people in South Sydney (Gadigal); and the Bail Advocacy Program for women in Newcastle (Awabakal/Worimi/Wonarua) and Redfern (Gadigal).

The program aims to reduce avoidable remand, support higher quality and better-informed bail decisions, and improve court outcomes for clients in contact with the legal system by providing bail support and advocacy in a holistic, client-centred and culturally responsive way. It also aims to reduce the impact of maternal incarceration by supporting Aboriginal mothers to remain in the community, enabling bubs to be born on Country and raised in safe, connected families. For children, the program provides culturally safe supports to reduce and address the drivers of short-term remand, including through a network of trained Aboriginal support persons for Aboriginal children in police custody. The pilots will serve as a proof of concept for a statewide framework for bail for all Aboriginal people in NSW.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

There is a need for better access to culturally appropriate legal support and bail. There is a lack of trust in mainstream legal services, and Aboriginal people need culturally appropriate and safe legal advocacy support. Gaps in services in many areas prevent access to appropriate legal and related support. Many people aren't getting bail or have difficult bail conditions that set them up to be breached. More support is needed to help people access bail and avoid remand.

'We don't have services in our community designed for Aboriginal people.'

'Bail conditions are setting [kids] up to fail.'

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Continue delivery of the pilots	January 2024	June 2026
2. Deliver evaluation report of the pilots	January 2024	June 2026
3. Establish and implement a Support Person Network for Aboriginal young people	August 2024	June 2026
4. Deliver a cost-benefit analysis for the pilots	March 2025	December 2025

Shared decision-making: Attorney General, Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), Department of Communities and Justice

Aboriginal Legal Service Child and Family Advocacy and Support Total 2022-24 Implementation Plan funding: \$10.0 million

ACCO funding: \$10.0 million

Continue the pilot Aboriginal Legal Service Child and Family Advocacy Support program led by the Aboriginal Legal Service NSW/ACT, providing legal and non-legal advocacy and support to families at risk of having their children removed through holistic early assistance. We know Aboriginal children and young people do better when they are supported to remain with their families. This initiative aims to increase the number of Aboriginal children, young people and families accessing early intervention and support, and reduce the number of Aboriginal children removed into out-of-home care.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Investment in the strengths and expertise of local Communities and Aboriginal culture is needed to make real change. Holistic and culturally safe support is needed for Aboriginal children and families to thrive. Parents and carers should not have to be on the books of the child protection system to access support. An emphasis on holistic support is needed. Services for families are lacking, and there are significant barriers to accessing those available. More funding for family support and early intervention can save spending – for example, in criminal justice.

‘The focus is at the bottom when people are falling off the cliff, why isn’t it at the start? Why isn’t the aim strengthening our families?’

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Continue to increase service delivery of the program	July 2023	June 2026
2. Deliver final evaluation and make recommendations for future for the program	January 2026	June 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Families and Communities, Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT), Department of Communities and Justice

Strong Families Our Way is an Aboriginal-led initiative designed to embed culturally safe, Community-led mechanisms into NSW's child protection system. It will establish and evaluate Aboriginal Community-Controlled Mechanisms to strengthen Aboriginal decision-making, uphold cultural authority, and shift the focus toward early intervention, prevention, and cultural restoration. The mechanisms will ensure compliance with the Aboriginal Case Management Policy and promote meaningful family and Community participation in decisions affecting Aboriginal children. The initiative aims to reduce the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in the child protection system.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Aboriginal Communities across NSW want genuine involvement in decisions affecting their children and families. Communities emphasised the need for localised, trusted decision-making, timely access to culturally appropriate services, and systems that listen to and respect Aboriginal voices. There is strong support for the mechanisms to ensure cultural safety and self-determination in child protection.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Aboriginal Community-Controlled Mechanisms operational in targeted locations	July 2025	December 2025
2. Final evaluation	November 2025	June 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Families and Communities, AbSec, Department of Communities and Justice

The Child Protection Assessment Project includes designing, implementing and evaluating the policies, practices, procedures, and assessment frameworks that govern statutory child protection assessment and decision-making in NSW, consistent with the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998*.

The new approach will introduce a more culturally responsive way of assessing risk and support child protection assessment and decision-making. It will strengthen and guide how the Department of Communities and Justice works with children and families by understanding their individual strengths and needs. This will be achieved through working in formal partnership with AbSec and Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT) to design and implement a new approach to the way we assess families in our statutory child protection system.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

In September 2024, Department of Communities and Justice stopped using the Structured Decision-Making tool. We have heard clearly from Aboriginal people that the Structured Decision Making tools (in particular, the risk assessment) do not make equitable decisions about Aboriginal families. Aboriginal children and families have been, and continue to be, disproportionately impacted by child protection practices.

Aboriginal people have told us they know what is best for their families and Communities and that self-determination means they need to be equal partners in decision-making.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Sign the Partnership Agreement between the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, AbSec and Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT)	May 2025	May 2025
2. Create the Child Protection Assessment project plan including the co-development of the stakeholder engagement plan	August 2025	November 2025
3. Develop a draft assessment framework based on what was heard from the Community. This includes assessment policy and practice rules and guidelines for Department of Communities and Justice staff	October 2025	December 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Families and Communities, AbSec, Department of Communities and Justice

In 2019, the Family is Culture review made 126 recommendations for structural reform to the child protection system. The Family is Culture Project is a new partnership between AbSec, the Aboriginal Legal Service and Department of Communities and Justice to map supported review recommendations within the context of the current child protection and out-of-home-care system reforms.

The project will include ongoing monitoring and oversight with AbSec, the Aboriginal Legal Service and Department of Communities and Justice under the wider Closing the Gap governance structure to ensure that supported recommendations are effectively embedded within the broader reforms.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

'Local Aboriginal Communities should have the right to self-determination and community control as a matter of importance and action'

'Governments need to give us an assurance that our voices will be heard; and that from those voices, new policies will be implemented. You've got to walk the walk and talk the talk.'

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Finalise the Family is Culture project plan	July 2025	December 2025
2. Complete gap analysis of Family is Culture implementation	January 2026	March 2026
3. Map Family is Culture recommendations, including identifying a subset of priority recommendations for implementation and monitoring	April 2026	September 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Families and Communities, AbSec, Department of Communities and Justice

The plan will guide a whole-of-society approach to improving the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal people impacted by violence over 5 years from 2026 to 2031. It will provide a framework to address the disproportionate impact of domestic, family and sexual violence on Aboriginal Communities in NSW, and progress achievement towards Socio-Economic Outcome 13 – that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

We heard that we need to address domestic violence as a complex, overlapping issue that interrelates with other social, economic and historical factors. Prevention must be a realised outcome where emphasis is placed on early intervention that respects self-determination.

We need to develop culturally appropriate and culturally safe responses for Aboriginal women and children that acknowledge the strength, resilience and richness of Aboriginal culture. A thorough process can achieve an integrated service system that supports healing, recovery and positive life outcomes for Aboriginal women, children and men.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Submit draft plan to NSW Cabinet for approval	March 2025	February 2026
2. Develop Implementation Roadmap to accompany the plan	September 2025	February 2026
3. Begin year one of implementation plan	March 2026	March 2027

Shared decision-making: Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, Department of Communities and Justice, Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT)

Education and Economic Prosperity

Aboriginal Cultural Safety Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care

Funding from other sources

This framework is designed to support early childhood education and care providers and their staff across NSW to deliver services that are culturally responsive, safe and welcoming for Aboriginal children and their families. It includes a suite of tools and resources to support services to develop, maintain and improve culturally safe environments that value and nurture culture, language, Kinship and identity.

By embedding cultural safety in service delivery, the framework encourages greater participation of Aboriginal children in early childhood education and care, while ensuring all children attending these services learn, understand and value Aboriginal culture and histories.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Consultations conducted by the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care – National Voice for Our Children in 2022 heard there are ongoing concerns about the Western confinements, culturally unsafe frameworks, and lack of understanding of the socio-political history of Aboriginal peoples in Australia, which all have implications for access, support, and service delivery on the ground.

There was also overwhelming evidence and support from local families and Communities for ACCOs over mainstream early childhood education and care services, combined with a lack of ACCOs across the state to cater for demand and need.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Refine framework with key Aboriginal stakeholders	July 2025	June 2026
2. Implement the framework	July 2026	Ongoing
3. Evaluate the impact of the framework	July 2025	December 2028

Shared decision-making: Minister for Education and Early Learning, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Department of Education, NSW AECG

The grant supports the development of sustainable employment and training pathways for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people in the public sector and local government through subsidised salary, development, and support costs. The number of positions has grown over the years, with funding for 312 positions approved in the 2024-25 financial year. The grant is being expanded to further support government and local government agencies and to begin to support the ACCO sector.

The program contributes to greater workforce diversity, inclusion and cultural responsiveness across NSW. It creates meaningful employment pathways, supports skills development and enhances the capability of host organisations to support Aboriginal employees.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

As highlighted in the 2024 Productivity Commission Review, supporting ACCOs achieves long-term employment and economic outcomes for Aboriginal people.

Stakeholder feedback has emphasised the value of extending the grant program to better support ACCOs, particularly through school-based apprenticeships and traineeships and employment pathways for Aboriginal young people.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Approve program expansion	July 2025	June 2027
2. Promote expansion and engage with the ACCO sector	July 2025	June 2027
3. Open Grant Round – Round 1	July 2025	September 2025
4. Open Grant Round – Round 2	November 2025	February 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Skills, TAFE and Tertiary Education; Department of Education; NSW AECG

Access to Country deepens language learners' engagement with and understanding of historical, current and ongoing connection to Country/place and culture, enabling languages to be taught in their original context.

This initiative sets up partnerships to develop policy measures that remove barriers and aid communities to gain access to Country for languages learning and education. Access to Country will require the efforts of many, including government and non-government agencies and organisations. This initiative builds on a 2025 research paper identifying barriers and opportunities to support Communities' access to Country.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Language belongs to Country. There is a need for Communities to gain access to Country for languages. Language education on Country helps keep mob active and healthy.

'There's no place for the old ones to do that. If we want to go out on Country, there's nowhere to go. If they want to go out on Country, it's not comfortable because anyone can just drive in there. Where do we go?'

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Stand up a cross-agency working group on access to Country	July 2025	July 2026
2. Develop a NSW Government strategy for improved Aboriginal Community access to Country	January 2026	June 2029

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Aboriginal Languages Trust, NSW AECG

This program contains 3 key commitments: Aboriginal Tourism Experience Development Workshop Program, Media Training and Trade Events Participation Program.

The first 2 initiatives have been completed. The Trade Events Participation Program will provide export-ready, Aboriginal-owned and -led businesses with financial assistance to travel – as a first-time delegate – to trade events targeting international and domestic buyers, such as Australian Tourism Export Council's Meeting Place and Explore NSW & ACT events held annually in Australia.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

The program was shaped by feedback from participants in previous workshops, and priorities identified in the *NSW Visitor Economy Strategy 2030*. Destination NSW has continued ongoing engagement with the NSW Aboriginal Tourism Operators Council, which was a delivery partner for the Aboriginal Tourism Experience Development Workshop Program.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Deliver the Trade Event Participation Program	July 2024	June 2026
2. Evaluate Trade Event Participation Program	June 2026	August 2026

Shared decision-making: Minister for Jobs and Tourism, Destination NSW, NSW Aboriginal Tourism Operators Council

This initiative will establish a website compiling links to all existing government services to provide an easy-to-access online destination for Aboriginal businesses.

It also includes undertaking a detailed scope of works for an Aboriginal Community-controlled one-stop shop business advisory and support service including an online portal to provide streamlined and culturally safe support for the Aboriginal business sector.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

Communities have told us that there is a need for easy-to-access, culturally safe business support that Aboriginal Community-controlled, and that we need to overcome the onerous administrative burden of accessing multiple different business advisory services.

'[We want] an avenue for support for an Aboriginal person to start their own business with the appropriate support.'

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Compile links to government-information and other sources for the Aboriginal business sector on a website	July 2025	July 2026
2. Develop scope of works to deliver an Aboriginal Community-Controlled one-stop shop advisory service	July 2025	December 2025

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Aboriginal Land Council

Publish the revised Aboriginal Procurement Policy	Funding from other sources
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In 2023 the Aboriginal Procurement Policy was reviewed. A revised policy that reflects the review’s recommendations is being developed.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

The project will include revising the Aboriginal Procurement Policy to focus on creating opportunities through government procurement, supporting the growth of Aboriginal businesses and driving employment opportunities for Aboriginal people.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Publish the revised Aboriginal Procurement Policy, informed by Aboriginal businesses and government partners	July 2025	TBC
2. Implement the revised Aboriginal Procurement Policy	TBC	Ongoing

Shared decision-making: Minister for Domestic Manufacturing and Government Procurement, NSW Treasury, NSW Aboriginal Land Council

Aboriginal Business Roundtables	Funding from other sources
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This initiative continues the NSW Government’s commitment to hold Aboriginal Business Roundtables to support Aboriginal economic advancement. Building on the success of the previous Aboriginal Business Roundtables, the government committed to continuing running roundtables with Aboriginal businesses every 6 months to inform and influence government policy to support Aboriginal economic advancement.

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

We need to address the key barriers identified by Aboriginal businesses that are hindering growth:

- ⇒ *‘The red tape you have to go through, and the application process is ridiculous.’*
- ⇒ *‘The current process “really cuts out a lot of small businesses and is quite off-putting for them.’*
- ⇒ *‘I don’t think people are aware of how much assistance and help they can get’*

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Hold bi-annual roundtables in regional and metro locations	2025 onwards	Ongoing

Shared decision-making: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and Treaty, Aboriginal Affairs, NSW Aboriginal Land Council

This initiative will empower local Communities to create place-based, Community-led digital inclusion solutions. It builds on the delivery of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Digital Inclusion in NSW Baseline Evaluation and NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Digital Inclusion Roadmap (under Phase 1: research and evaluation) in July 2025. The findings and recommendations from this research will inform the implementation and delivery of the Digital Inclusion pilot

What Aboriginal Communities have told us

We heard that access to digital devices and the internet needs to be more affordable for vulnerable Community members., The research reported that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experienced racism and discrimination both online and in society, highlighting the need for more positive representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the media. Programs should support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to build their confidence in digital technology and improve digital connectivity in regional and remote Communities.

Milestones to completion	Start date	Finish date
1. Establish Digital Hubs in nominated communities in partnership with ACCOs	January 2026	June 2026
2. Run a Digital Skills Uplift Program in consultation with Aboriginal Communities	Estimated June 2026	June 2027
3. Consult with Community on the need for a Digital Device Voucher Program	Estimated June 2026	June 2027

Shared decision-making: Minister for Customer Service and Digital Government, NSW Department of Customer Service, BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation

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