



# Aboriginal Peak Organisations

NORTHERN TERRITORY

Media release

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## We need a voice to close the widening gap in the Northern Territory

New Productivity Commission data shows that the Northern Territory is going backwards on eight out of the 17 socio-economic Closing the Gap targets.

“Business as usual is failing our people,” said Dr John Paterson, APO NT Convenor and Acting CEO of NAAJA. “We need a Voice to Parliament so our solutions can be heard.”

While states such as Western Australia and Victoria are making real progress on Closing the Gap, the Northern Territory is getting worse from an already low baseline.

“The NT has the highest proportion of Aboriginal people, but it lacks a real whole of government commitment to implementing our solutions.

“The Closing the Gap partnership depends on the recognition of our expertise,” Donna Ah Chee, APO NT Governing Group member, and Acting CEO of AMSANT.

Most concerning is the adult imprisonment numbers, which are increasing at the highest rate in the country. The Northern Territory Government has walked away from its commitment to implementing the recommendations from the Don Dale Royal Commission, and instead has reinforced and fortified punitive aspects of the justice system that we know do not work.

The NT is the only jurisdiction where the employment gap is widening.

“We have long presented alternatives to the failed and costly Community Development Program (CDP) that will create real jobs in our communities,” Dr John Paterson said. “It is wasteful and a missed opportunity not to formally partner with us on solutions.”

The gap in the life expectancy for Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory is also getting wider. Aboriginal women die 12.8 years younger than non-Aboriginal women here. Many of the Safe Houses in the Northern Territory are in a state of disrepair and neglect, if they are present in communities at all. We call on governments to invest in Aboriginal owned and led programs to support women’s safety.

Housing in the NT remains almost twice as crowded as in all other States and Territories. The new National Partnership Agreement on Housing and Homelands is an opportunity for the NT to ensure the investment we need to close this gap.

While Aboriginal youth everywhere else are increasingly getting educated, trained and employed, our young Territorians are experiencing the worst outcomes in the country. Current, mainstream education systems are failing our children. We call on the NTG to speed up delivering on its commitment to reform school funding so remote schools are not missing out on needs-based resourcing.



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“We welcome the opportunity for a new way of working with government. At the moment, there is an inconsistency between the rhetoric and the reality. It’s one thing to be at the table and another to be heard and listened to” said Jerome Cubillo, CEO of NTIBN.

**Link to the report is here:** [Annual data report | Closing the Gap Information Repository - Productivity Commission \(pc.gov.au\)](#)

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