



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 128

WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Treasurer, Hon William Yan MLA:

Closing the gap

- 1. Please provide examples of specific programs or services in the NT that have been funded or expanded using GST revenue to address Closing the Gap targets.**

GST revenue is untied, fluctuates annually, and is consolidated to support the delivery of government services across the Budget generally. GST funding is not specifically assigned or hypothecated to individual programs.

The GST distribution is largely designed to enable each state and territory to provide a national average level of services.

The GST distribution is not designed to fund unmet need or close outcome gaps, but instead maintain the status quo. This leaves a critical role for other funding outside the GST system, such as tied Commonwealth payments, to improve outcomes for Indigenous people.

Tied revenues, such as Commonwealth funding received under various Federation Funding Agreements, are provided for specific purposes and subject to reporting and acquittal processes.

Recent major agreements include:

- the Territory's bilateral agreement under the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement* for increased student funding to 2029, with an estimated additional Commonwealth funding of \$737.7 million, and Territory investment of \$350 million over 2025-2029, on top of existing funding. The amount for Aboriginal students will vary by school, however is designed to provide the largest funding uplifts to students in remote Aboriginal communities, particularly schools with low historic attendance.
- A joint \$4 billion in Territory and Commonwealth funding over ten years from 2024 for 2700 for remote Aboriginal social houses under the *Northern Territory Remote Housing* agreement, which includes a formal tripartite partnership agreement with the Aboriginal sector in line with Closing the Gap priority reforms; and

- \$842.6 million over six years from 2025 for Aboriginal persons under various initiatives under the *Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment* agreement, which includes partnership with the Aboriginal sector. Services under this agreement include safe spaces and support for children and families, community development capability and jobs and training, mediation and peacemaking, hearing and oral health, alcohol harm reduction, remote policing, Aboriginal interpreter services, and Aboriginal teacher training and student engagement.

2. How is progress being measured in the four Closing the Gap priority reforms, especially in areas like shared decision-making and building Aboriginal-controlled services?

Closing the Gap priority reforms and socio-economic targets are measured and reported on by the Productivity Commission. There is no single metric to measure progress on Closing the Gap priority reforms, as reforms are specific to the circumstances of the relevant service, community and sector.

There are many Territory examples of shared decision-making and involvement with the Aboriginal-controlled sector in line with Closing the Gap priority reforms. The most prominent include:

- Northern Territory Aboriginal Health Forum which provides strategic guidance and makes decisions about key policy issues to improve Aboriginal health and wellbeing. It supports health organisations across the NT to plan, share information and coordinate their programs and activities and oversees transition pathways to community control
- Children and Families Tripartite Forum which provides advice to the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments to guide and support the implementation of the reform agenda from the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children, and related strategies
- Joint Steering Committee to the National Partnership on Remote Housing Northern Territory which is the formal tripartite decision-making body that oversees and manages the delivery of that agreement; and
- Joint Steering Committee to the Northern Territory Aboriginal Investment agreement which is similarly the formal tripartite decision-making body for that agreement, including negotiating and approving the terms of the new six-year deal.