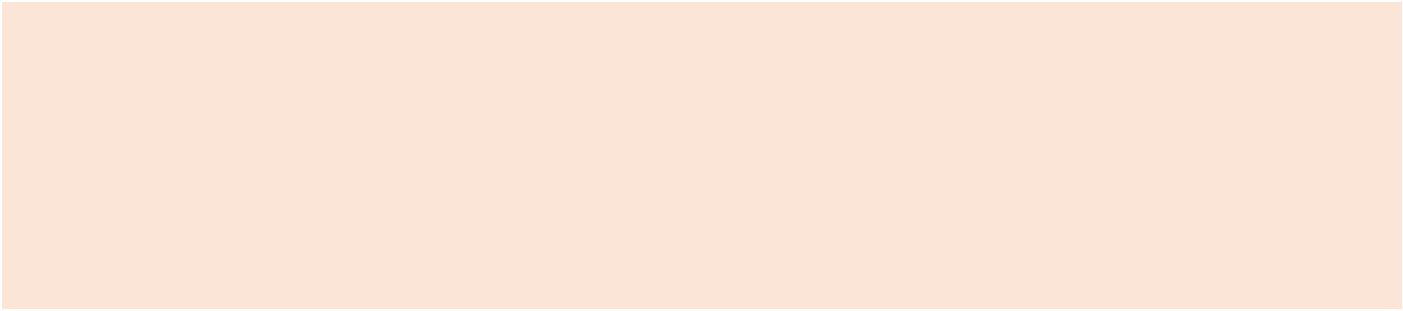
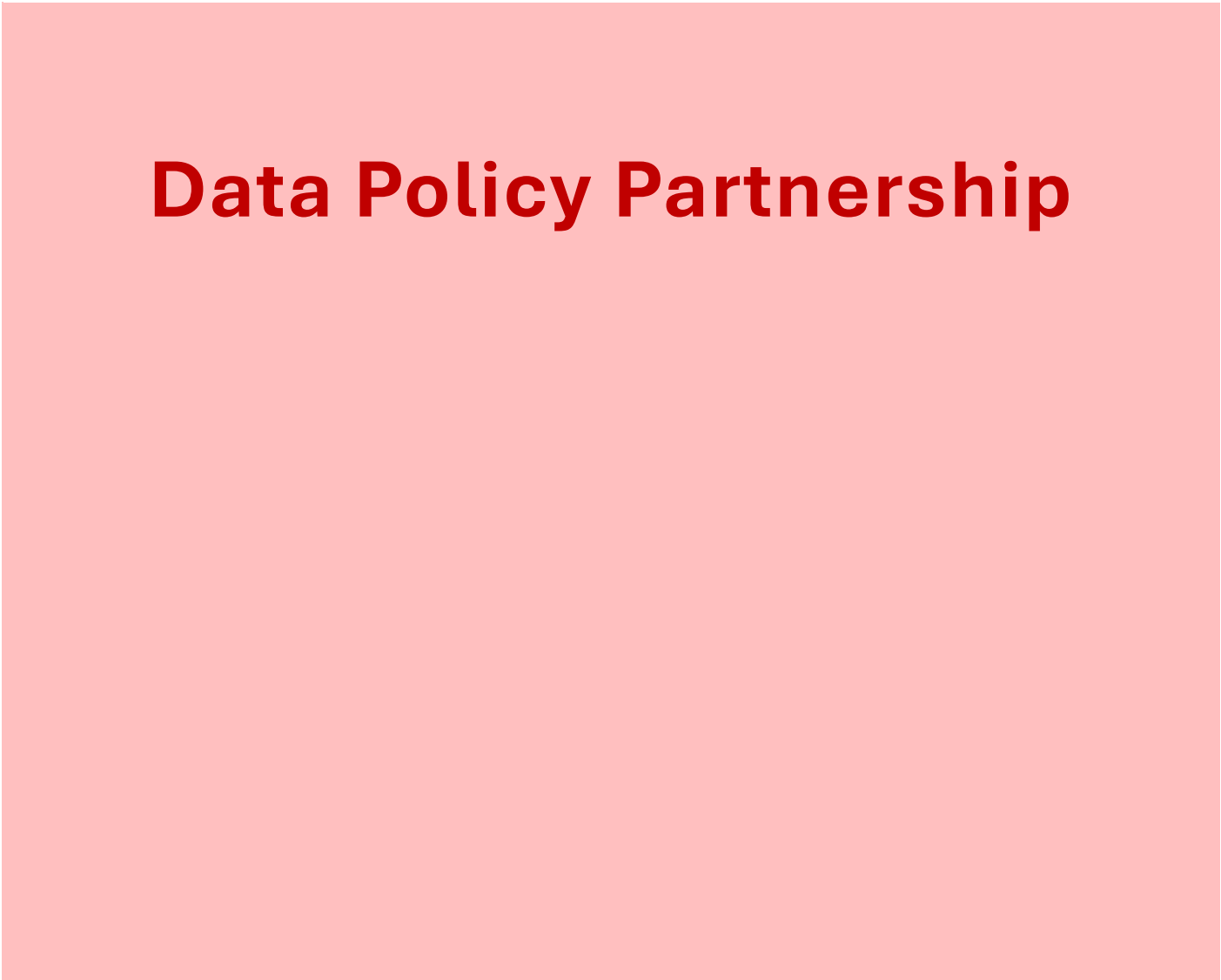




Annual Report 2025-26



Data Policy Partnership

Acknowledgement

The Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations (Coalition of Peaks) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and acknowledge their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to the people, the cultures and the Elders past, and present.

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Preamble to the Agreement to Implement the Data Policy Partnership

Our people carry the stories of our Ancestors. These stories hold more than sixty thousand years of knowledge: of the seasons, the stars, the movement of waters and winds, and the ways we live with each other and with Country. They tell us where we have been and guide us towards where we need to go.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, data is more than numbers or reports. It is our knowledge, our stories, and our aspirations for the future. Data is layered, interconnected, and intrinsically linked to every element of our lives and being. Yet governments have traditionally used our data to tell stories about us, stories that are not ours.

Through this Partnership, we will share our knowledge so governments can better understand how we see data, and how it connects to the needs of our communities. We will continue to tell our stories in ways that celebrate our strengths and empower our people to shape the path ahead.

At the heart of this work is our drive to uphold the principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance. By placing our people at the centre of how data is governed, we ensure it becomes a foundation for truth-telling and better outcomes.

Together with our government agency partners, we will work to build what is needed to make this work real, so that data has a positive impact for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. In this Partnership, we will walk forward together, with trust and respect.

Access the full Agreement to Implement

The full Data Policy Partnership (DPP) Agreement to Implement can be accessed online, at the following location:

<https://www.abs.gov.au/about/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/data-policy-partnership>

Message from the Co-Chairs

We are pleased to present our first Annual Report about the work program of the Data Policy Partnership to the Joint Council on Closing the Gap (Joint Council).

DPP Co-Chair Sharif Deen's message

In reflecting on the achievements of the Data Policy Partnership over the last twelve months, there is plenty to acknowledge and celebrate. At the same time, we recognise there is still important work ahead. The progress made through the Partnership is grounded in decades of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, research and expertise in data sovereignty and data governance. The Data Policy Partnership continues to draw on this significant evidence base, guided by the Maiam nayri Wingara principles, to develop recommendations for Joint Council on options for an Indigenous Data Entity.

Partnership remains at the heart of our work. We will continue to work collaboratively with Governments to improve data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes taking a strategic approach to addressing ongoing barriers to data access and use and identifying practical solutions that support greater transparency and accessibility.

The Data Policy Partnership also looks forward to expanding opportunities for collaboration across the Policy Partnership network, while continuing to strengthen governance and engagement with Joint Council. Our priorities and forward work plan over the next three years will allow for continued progress and for advancing the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in shaping, governing and using data that affects our lives and communities.

Through this work, we remain focused on creating a more effective and responsive data ecosystem that supports Closing the Gap and delivers lasting benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

DPP Commonwealth Co-Chair Phillip Gould's message

It has been a privilege to Co-Chair the Data Policy Partnership over the past year. Bringing together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, governments and data experts, the Partnership has created an important forum for shared decision-making on some of the most important data reforms under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. Members have worked in genuine partnership, discussing (at times) challenging and complex issues with respect and openness, and sharing expertise, perspectives and lived experience to strengthen data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Throughout the year, the Partnership has balanced an ambition for long-term reform with a focus on practical actions that can make a difference now. While we have

continued to explore complex issues such as strengthening Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance, addressing priority data gaps, and improving the way Priority Reform progress is measured, we have also focused on tangible initiatives that can support communities and decision-makers in the short term like identifying existing data access pathways and Priority Reform Four wise practice. This focus on practical action alongside systemic reform has enabled the Partnership to build momentum while keeping community priorities at the centre of our work.

A key lesson from our first year has been that meaningful reform starts with a shared understanding. This is both in terms of the National Agreement and related commitments, and data as a specialised policy and technical field. The development of supporting materials like the [DPP Data Definitions and Terminology Reference Document](#) are an important step in creating a common language around concepts such as Indigenous Data Sovereignty, data governance and data access. This clarity supports accountability, consistent conversations, and strengthens capability across both governments and the community-controlled sector.

As we look ahead, I am confident that this foundation of shared understanding, combined with a commitment to partnership and practical action, will continue to support better data outcomes and help ensure data reflects the strengths, priorities and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

Independent and Coalition of Peaks Members' Personal Reflections

Reflection from Yasmin Johnson (Independent Member)

Knowledge • Voice • Authority

Reflecting on our first twelve months, I have come to see the work of the Data Policy Partnership as being about much more than data. Data carries **knowledge**. It tells stories about our people, our families, our communities and our experiences. How those stories are collected, interpreted and told is therefore central to our work on the DPP.

As a First Nations Independent Member, I have valued the opportunity to bring a community and cultural lens to this work. I am still growing my knowledge of the complex systems that sit around data, and sometimes that means I listen, reflect and contribute afterwards. I have also learned through this process that our lived experience, cultural knowledge and connection to community are important forms of knowledge and expertise in their own right.

One of the strongest themes for me has been **voice**. Our communities should not simply be the subjects of data. We must have a voice in deciding what matters to our communities, what is measured through our lens, how our stories are told through data, and how that knowledge can be used to strengthen our communities.

Central to this is **authority**. Our voices matter, but so does having genuine authority over the data that carries our stories, experiences and knowledge. Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance need to be embedded from the beginning, helping to shape the work and ensuring our communities remain connected to how their data is collected, interpreted, shared and used.

Our first year has built important foundations and relationships. As we move forward, I hope we continue turning those conversations into meaningful change, where our communities' voices, stories and experiences continue to be reflected in our work, and that knowledge shapes our shared purpose for stronger communities, self-determination and creating pathways for future generations.

Reflection from Nathan Taylor (Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW)

As a newly joined member of the Data Policy Partnership, the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council (AH&MRC) welcomes the opportunity to contribute directly to this important national work. Our formal participation in the DPP is recent, however our Priority Reform 4 team members were involved in its establishment, and we have remained connected to its progress through the NSW Priority Reform 4 Partnership and Project Control Group. From that perspective, it has been encouraging to see the foundations established over the DPP's first year and the growing focus on Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance. In particular, the work underway to consider the challenges and complexities of the Community Data Projects.

As the DPP moves into its next year, we see an opportunity to build on these foundations and increasingly demonstrate tangible change for communities. Success should ultimately be reflected in whether Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have greater authority over how data about us is collected, interpreted, accessed and used, and whether communities can access and use data to inform their own priorities and decision-making.

Genuine, shared decision-making will remain critical to this and community perspectives should shape the work from its earliest stages and continue throughout its development and implementation.

We look forward to bringing our experience from the NSW Priority Reform 4 and Aboriginal Data Sovereignty and Governance work into the national conversation, while also learning from the experiences and approaches of other jurisdictions and Community Members.

Executive summary

The Data Policy Partnership (DPP) brings together representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations and Australian, state and territory governments.

Together, we are progressing [Priority Reform Four](#) (PR4) and strengthening data under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement).

The DPP enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and government partners to share expertise, experiences and decision-making to achieve better data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities under the National Agreement. Our approach is guided by the Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles.

More than a year has passed since the DPP was established. This inaugural annual report outlines progress against the DPP's priorities endorsed by Members at DPP Meeting Two in February 2026. The table below summarises achievements against the six policy priorities.

Throughout its first year, the DPP reflected on how members work in partnership while recognising the ongoing challenge of accelerating reform and transformation across government.

Looking ahead, the DPP will build on its foundational work in line with its six priorities to enable better data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Summary of key achievements

DPP Priority	Key achievements
P1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance and Indigenous Data Sovereignty: examine and provide options on Recommended Action 2.2 of the Review of the National Agreement by the Productivity Commission (i.e., PC Review) on a Bureau of Indigenous Data (BOID)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a high-level three-stage proposal to progress the work needed on PC Review Recommended Action 2.2 (establish a BOID) Completed Stage 1 of the proposal – a desktop review of international and Australian Indigenous data entity models Commenced scoping work for Stage 2 - an options study to be developed in consultation with key stakeholders. It will provide evidence-based options for DPP to consider in forming recommendations to Joint Council.
P2. Priority Reform measurement: examine and provide options on Priority Reform measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analysed and discussed recommendations in the ANZSOG Report

recommendations in the ANZSOG Report ¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drafted a Partnership Working Group (PWG) paper on implementing and progressing the recommendations in the ANZSOG Report
P3. Community Data Projects: support action and provide oversight and accountability to progress learnings from individual projects to improve outcomes across the projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved oversight and accountability for CDPs by including CDP reporting as a standing agenda item Shared learnings from individual projects to improve outcomes across other jurisdictions and projects Developed a resource with actions to leverage enablers and address barriers for CDPs
P4. Data sharing, access and capability: identify gaps and opportunities to improve existing data access pathways through increased visibility of existing data services across governments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed and published a DPP Data Definitions and Terminology Reference Document to strengthen data capability across both the community-controlled sector and government Developed a template and implementation pathway for a guide on existing government data access pathways and services for community and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)
P5. Embedding Priority Reform Four: contribute to the development of the Commonwealth Priority Reform Strategy to guide holistic government implementation of Priority Reform Four, reflective of the other three Priority Reforms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed a Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Plan Drafted a recommendation for submission to the Joint Steering Committee leading the Commonwealth Priority Reform Strategy to include the Maïam nayri Wingara principles
P6. Addressing data gaps: address priority data gaps across outcomes, targets (especially those without data) and indicators under the National Agreement through collaboration with, and provision of advice to, the other Policy Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaged with other Policy Partnerships Attended meetings of the Justice Policy Partnership (JPP) and Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP) to discuss data priorities (DPP Co-Chairs)

Table 1: Summary of key DPP achievements, Year One

¹ ANZSOG Report refers to the 'Australian and New Zealand School of Government Closing the Gap Priority Reforms Performance Measurement Project 2023-2024' (Gray, et al., 2024)

1 Establishing the Data Policy Partnership

The DPP's underlying theory of change is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership over how data is collected, shared and used will improve the quality, relevance and trustworthiness of data. This leadership will support better decision-making, service delivery and outcomes under the National Agreement. The DPP operationalises Priority Reforms One and Four through shared decision-making and improved access to information.

1.1 Background

In January 2024, the Productivity Commission's Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (PC Review) found progress was insufficient on Priority Reform Four (PR4, shared access to data and information at a regional level) and recommended the establishment of a Bureau of Indigenous Data (BOLD)².

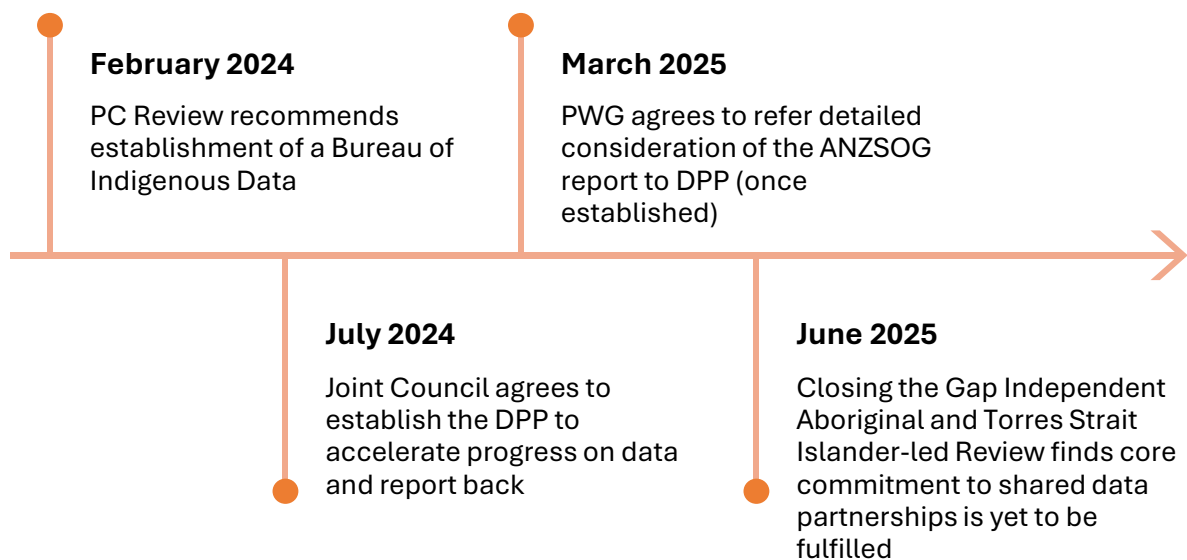


Figure 1: Events leading up to DPP Establishment

In July 2024, the Joint Council on Closing the Gap (Joint Council) discussed the need to accelerate progress on the implementation of PR4 and agreed more work was needed before deciding how to progress Recommended Action 2.2. As an interim measure, Joint Council agreed to the immediate establishment of a Data Policy Partnership (DPP), with in-principle agreement by governments to resource this work. In March 2025, Partnership Working Group (PWG) considered the recommendations of the Australian and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) report Closing the Gap Priority

² Recommendation 2, Action 2.2

Reforms Performance Measurement Project 2023-24 (ANZSOG Report)³ and referred it to the DPP, once established, for further consideration.

Released in June 2025, the Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review of the National Agreement by Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research (the Independent Review)⁴ found that the core commitment to shared data partnerships was not yet being fulfilled. The Independent Review stated that the “lack of progress on data access and capability is undermining self-determination.”⁵ It added that “structural and systemic barriers persist to prevent effective data sharing and collaboration”.⁶

The DPP was established in mid-2025. Between April and May 2025, key Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and government stakeholders were consulted on the establishment documents, including the Agreement to Implement and Terms of Reference, Existing Policy Partnerships’ experiences and governance arrangements informed these documents, which were endorsed by Joint Council in June 2025.

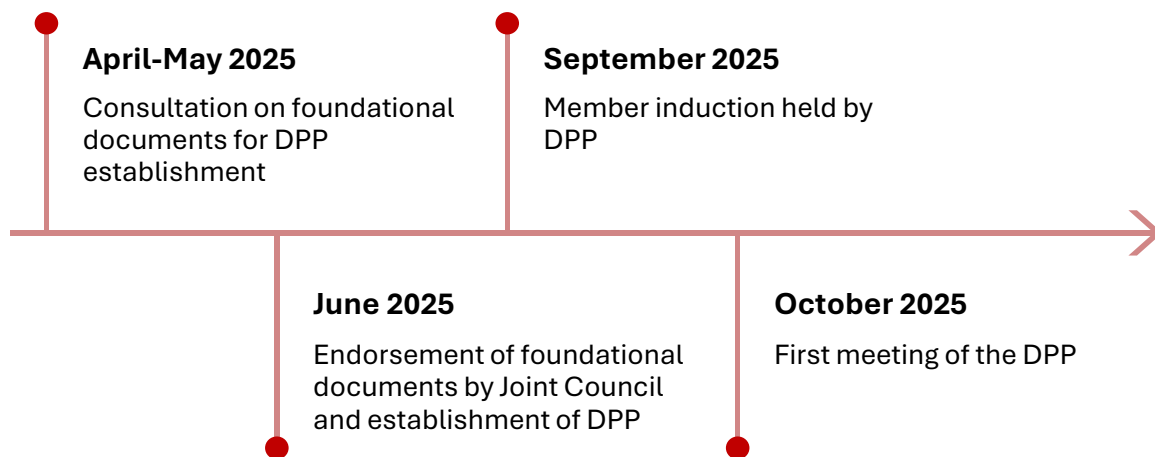


Figure 2: DPP Establishment Process

In September 2025, the DPP held an induction for Members, followed by its first meeting in October. Upon its establishment, Joint Council and PWG tasked the DPP with:

- progressing PR4
- implementation advice on the PC Review Recommended Action 2.2, the establishment of a BOID
- implementation advice on the ANZSOG Report recommendations

³ ANZSOG Report – (Gray, et al., 2024)

⁴ (Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research, 2025)

⁵ Ibid., p.21.

⁶ Ibid.

- arrangements to support the CDPs, and
- tangible actions to progress Target 11.

1.2 Priority Reform Four linkages

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap is built around four Priority Reforms, directly informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The DPP is tasked with progressing [Priority Reform Four](#) (PR4, shared access to data and information at a regional level) which is a cross-cutting area of priority reform rather than a specific policy area with a socio-economic outcome or target under the National Agreement.

PR4 aims to provide regional and local data that directly empowers communities to drive the first three Priority Reforms.

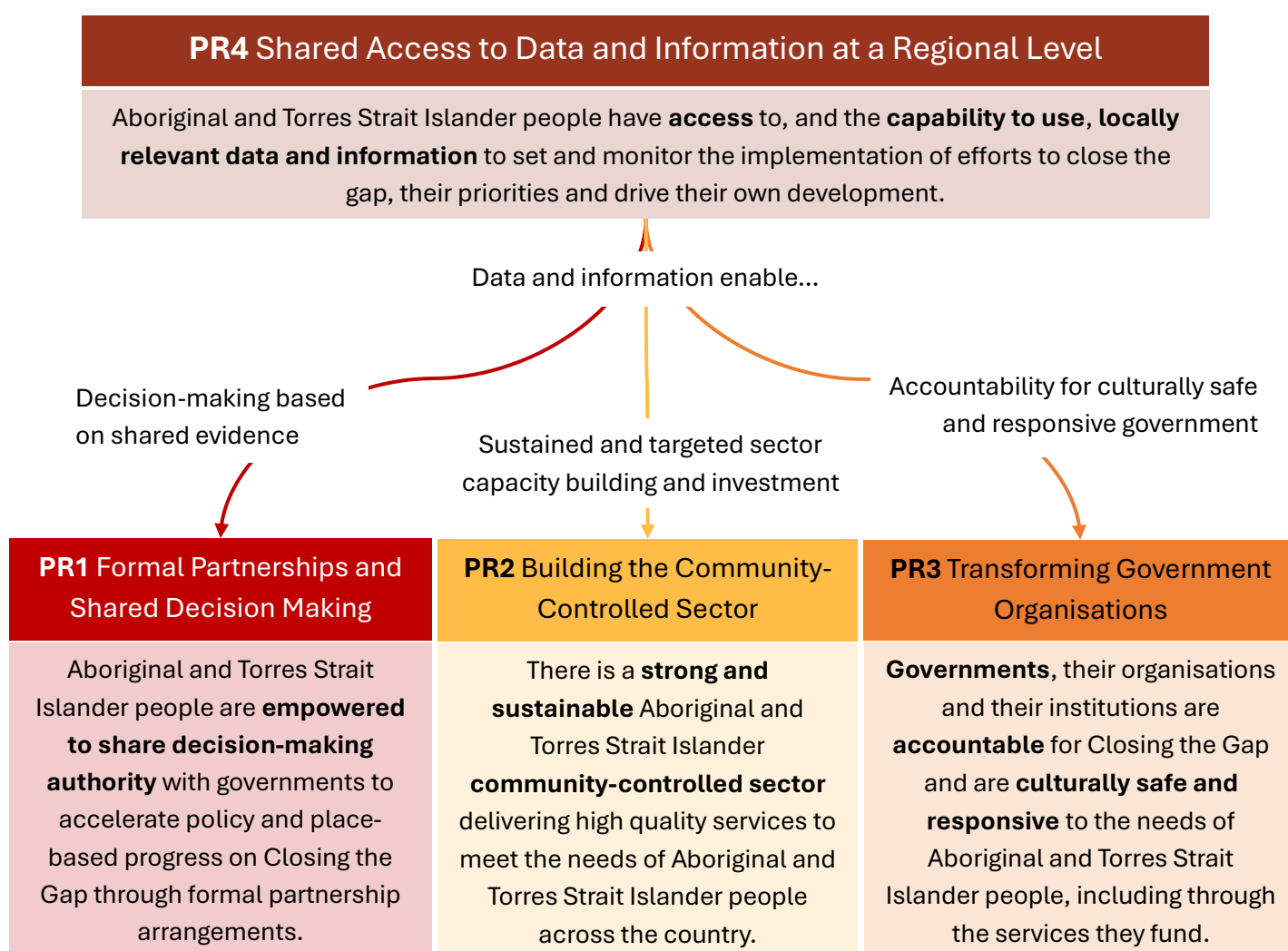


Figure 3: Priority Reform Four linkages to other priority reforms

Data access and sharing are both enablers and drivers of broader system change. Key elements of PR4 include genuine partnership, timely access to disaggregated data, and support in building capability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

Shared access to regional-level data will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to advance the first three Priority Reforms⁷ through:

- **Priority Reform One:** Empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to participate in shared decision-making with governments.
- **Priority Reform Two:** Strengthened Community-Controlled organisations to drive their own development and make evidence-based decisions.
- **Priority Reform Three:** Transformation of government organisations to increase accountability and responsiveness whilst addressing barriers to progress Closing the Gap.

1.3 Scope of Partnership

The DPP brings together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and government members with the expertise, authority and cross-jurisdictional reach to work in partnership through complex issues and develop well-founded recommendations for Joint Council.

Priority Reform One is focused on formal partnerships and shared decision-making between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and government partners. Policy and place-based partnerships are two ways to help realise this objective.

The Agreement to Implement establishes the DPP as a mechanism for a joined-up approach to progressing Priority Reform Four, including supporting shared access to government-held data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and data policies relevant to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The DPP will manage this broad scope by prioritising actions and determining how to work with existing government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data and policy forums to effect change on data sharing and governance.

⁷ (Coalition of Peaks, n.d.)

DPP Guiding Governance Artefacts

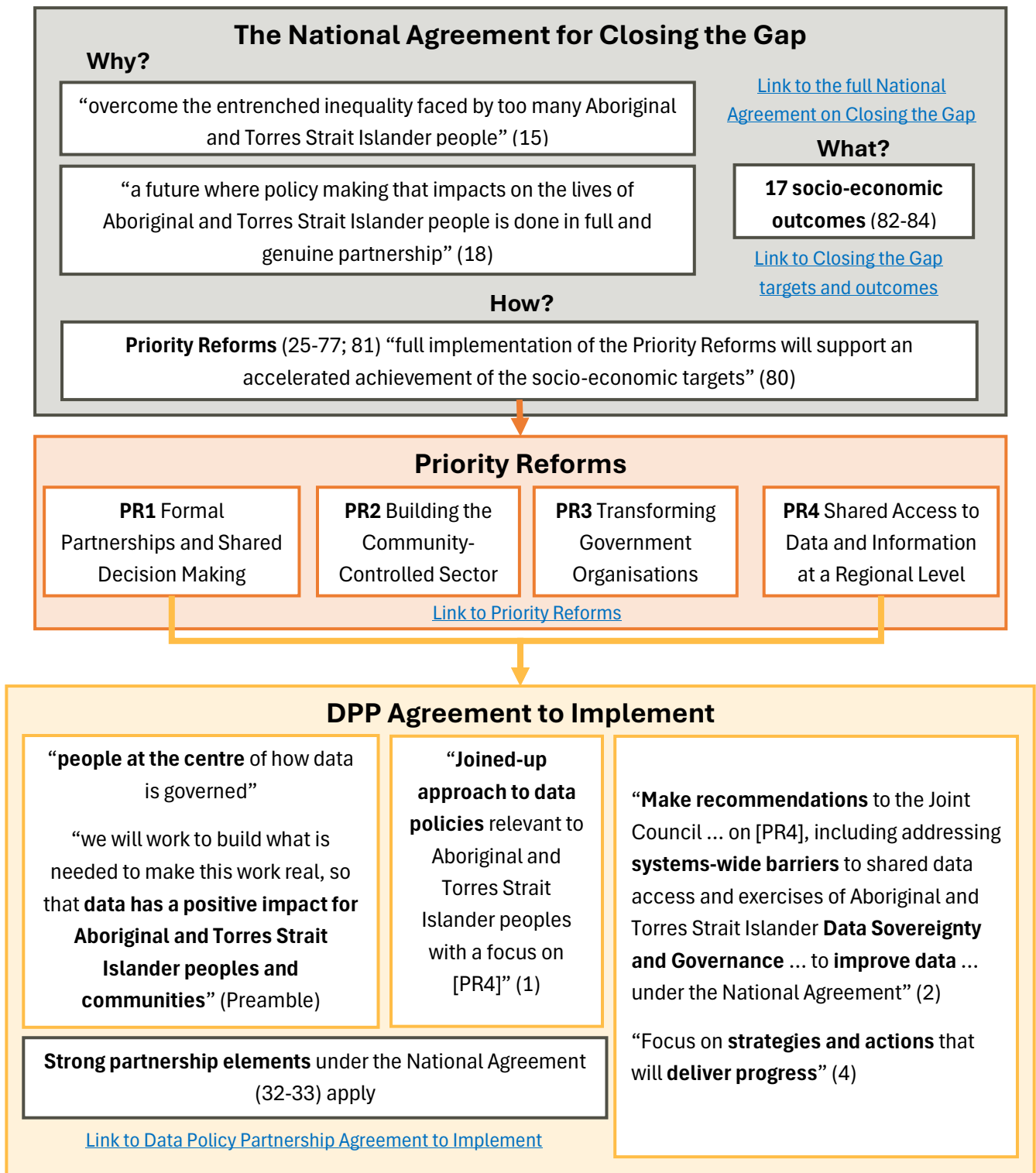


Figure 4: Guiding governance artefacts for DPP

1.4 Objectives

The DPP's objectives, as detailed in the [Agreement to Implement](#), include:

- **Strengthen collaboration** on data between governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, communities, and organisations to achieve the goals of the National Agreement by giving focus to the Priority Reforms
- **Improve data access, sharing and use** so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can lead solutions, make informed and place-based decisions, track progress, and drive their own priorities, development and outcomes⁸
- **Support improved data quality, measurement and reporting** on Priority Reforms and socio-economic outcomes, targets, and indicators under the National Agreement
- **Reduce duplication** and coordinate more effectively across governments, the Coalition of Peaks, and community organisations to achieve better data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

1.5 Membership

Membership of the Data Policy Partnership comprises:

- one representative from the Australian and each State and Territory government
- five representatives from the Coalition of Peaks
- five independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.

Joint Council Co-Chairs identified suitable candidates for the DPP Co-Chair roles. The Coalition of Peaks, in alignment with [section 32\(a\)\(i\) of the National Agreement](#), ran an Expression of Interest process to select Peaks members and Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members. State and territory government agencies nominated Government members. A full list of Members can be found at Appendix A⁹.

The DPP meets quarterly and quorum requires at least 10 Members, inclusive of five voting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Members and five Government Members.

⁸ For example, providing Joint Council with advice on the establishment of an Indigenous Data Entity.

⁹ Appendix A – List of Members

National Agreement for Closing the Gap **Priority Reform Four: Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level****Data Policy Partnership**

Coalition of Peaks representatives

Commonwealth government

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
representativesGovernment
representatives

Independent representatives

State and Territory governments

Aim: share expertise, experiences and decision-making to achieve **better data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities** under the National Agreement for Closing the Gap

Approach: guided by the **Maiaṃ nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles**[^]

...in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to...

Exercise control of the data ecosystem including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure.

Data that are contextual and disaggregated (available and accessible at individual, community and First Nations levels).

Data that is relevant and empowers sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance.

Data structures that are accountable to Indigenous peoples and First Nations.

Data that is protective and respects Indigenous peoples individual and collective interests.

PrioritiesStructural reform to embed
Priority Reform FourPriority Reform Four
ImplementationSector/target specific
data development1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait
Islander data governance and
Indigenous Data Sovereignty2. Priority Reform
measurement3. Community
Data Projects4. Data sharing,
access and
capability5. Embedding
Priority Reform
Four6. Addressing
data gaps

[^] (Maiaṃ nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, 2018)

Figure 5: DPP Placemat overlay

1.6 Year One Priorities

The agreed DPP Year One Priorities were:

1. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance:** provide options on implementing Recommended Action 2.2 of the PC Review on a BOID.
2. **Priority Reform measurement:** provide options on implementing Priority Reform measurement recommendations in the ANZSOG Report.
3. **Community Data Projects:** support action and accountability through progress reporting and provide a forum for advice and sharing of learnings from individual projects to improve outcomes across projects.
4. **Data sharing, access and capability:** identify gaps and opportunities to improve existing data access pathways through increased visibility of existing data services across governments for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.
5. **Embedding Priority Reform Four:** contribute to the development of the Commonwealth Priority Reform Strategy to guide holistic government implementation of PR4, reflective of the other three Priority Reforms.
6. **Addressing data gaps:** work with, and provide advice to, the other Policy Partnerships to close priority data gaps and measure progress across outcomes, targets (especially those without data) and indicators under the National Agreement.
7. **Emerging opportunities and priorities:** retain capacity to address and respond to emerging issues identified by the DPP membership and Joint Council.

Chapter 3 details the DPP's progress against these priorities in its first year.

1.7 Establishing our plan

1.7.1 Priorities and Work Plan

All Policy Partnerships must meet the following operational and reporting requirements:

- Sign the Agreement to Implement
- Hold meetings four times per year
- Release a public meeting communique following each meeting
- Provide an Annual Workplan to Joint Council
- Provide a three or four-Year Strategic Plan to Joint Council (length is term dependent, noting the DPP has a four-year term)
- Make recommendations to Joint Council
- Provide an Annual Report and presentation from Co-Chairs to Joint Council

1.7.2 Methodology

Before seeking DPP Member endorsement, the DPP Co-Secretariat considered Policy Partnership obligations, Joint Council and PWG taskings, and alignment of priorities with the scope of the DPP, as described in the Agreement to Implement, then estimated the level of resourcing based on the following:

- Complexity of the policy/project (i.e., will this require whole of government changes, legislative change, additional resourcing)
- External suppliers required
- Estimated time required
- Stakeholder engagement
- Required level of authority (i.e., an authorising environment already exists under the National Agreement or existing government commitments, new authority is required from Joint Council, Minister/s or Cabinet/s)
- Availability of resourcing (e.g. covered by existing DPP resources and/or external - i.e., State/Territory/Commonwealth government, other - resourcing required)

The DPP Co-Secretariat assessed project impact based on each project's potential to influence or drive reform, make system impacts and directly benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations:

- **Low impact** – priorities that will influence small scale reform (e.g. a single program or agency) or have minor benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations (e.g. information sharing) over the short, medium or long term
- **Medium impact** – priorities that will influence or create medium scale reform (e.g. reform for a whole sector) or have medium benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations (e.g. capacity building, improved data sharing within existing mechanisms) over the short, medium or long term
- **High impact** – priorities that will influence or create large scale reform (e.g. whole of government reform, cross sector reforms) or have large benefits for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations (e.g. capacity building, improved data sharing within existing mechanisms)

2 DPP Fundamental concepts

2.1 Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance

In Australia:

Indigenous Data – refers to information or knowledge, in any format or medium, which is about and may affect Indigenous peoples both collectively and individually.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty – refers to the right of Indigenous people to exercise ownership over Indigenous Data. Ownership of data can be expressed through the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of Indigenous Data.

Indigenous Data Governance – refers to the right of Indigenous peoples to autonomously decide what, how and why Indigenous Data are collected, accessed and used. It ensures that data on or about Indigenous peoples reflects our priorities, values, cultures, worldviews and diversity.¹⁰

The principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance, as articulated by Maïam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective (MnW), inform the work of the DPP. The DPP can help address key challenges identified by both the PC Review and Independent Review in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's rights to data collection, access and use. The DPP can also support government custodians of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data to be accountable to First Nations people for the governance of that data.

“The Indigenous data paradox means that there is an enormous body of data about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people but almost no data for or by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people”

– Professor Maggie Walter (Palawa), 2018¹¹

2.1.1 BADDR data

The voices and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must underpin data initiatives as well as policy and program ones. Without this, data is often Blaming, Aggregate, Decontextualised, Deficit-based and Reductive (BADDR)¹². Government priorities drive comparisons of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous data at high levels of geography, creating deficit-based narratives rather than measuring

¹⁰ (Maïam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, 2018)

¹¹ (Walter, 2018)

¹² (Walter, 2025), p. 65

outcomes that matter to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities in ways that reflect their cultural, geographic and local diversity. Governments must make structural changes to ensure data systems are inclusive of, and accessible to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples at all stages of the data lifecycle.¹³ This supports data that are disaggregated, contextualised, available and amenable, and reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander priorities.¹⁴

Dominant BADDR data	Indigenous data needs
Blaming data – Compares Indigenous and non-Indigenous data in a way that frames Indigenous people as an issue and non-Indigenous people as a norm.	Lifeworld data – Data that reflects the whole picture of Indigenous peoples, including culture, communities, achievements and resilience.
Aggregate data – Represents data as broad figures which miss the diversity of Indigenous peoples.	Disaggregated data – Recognises cultural and geographical diversity to provide information for local and community planning and services.
Decontextualised data – Focuses on individuals and families without considering the different factors and histories that shape their lives.	Contextualised data – Reflects the wider social context in which disadvantage occurs.
Deficit, government priority – Is collected about government priorities focused on deficits.	Indigenous priority data – Addresses Indigenous priorities and agendas and supports self-determination.
Reductive data – Treats Indigenous peoples as one group without diverse communities, cultures and experiences.	Diversity of data – Reflects the diversity of Indigenous ways of doing, knowing and being.

Table 2: BADDR Data and Indigenous Data Needs¹⁵

¹³ (Commonwealth of Australia, 2024)

¹⁴ (Walter, 2018)

¹⁵ Adapted from (Walter, 2025), p. 65

2.2 The Australian Government Data System

The national and cross-jurisdictional data governance landscape and existing Priority Reform Four (PR4) initiatives form part of the operating context that informs the DPP's work, deliberations and decisions.

2.2.1 The data landscape

Data is held by Commonwealth, state, territory and local governments. Government-held data is collected through methods including surveys and censuses and during the delivery of government services. When supported by appropriate governance, administrative data collected during service delivery can be shared with other government agencies, approved universities and other approved users for secondary purposes of informing policy and research in the public interest. Responsibility for collecting, managing and using data spans all levels of government and departments. Legislation, policies, capability, infrastructure and organisational culture influence how governments manage and share data.

Data sharing and access can range from publicly released, or open data, to conditional data, such as that made available only within specific conditions (for users, purposes, access through controlled and secure systems). Data sharing and access governance arrangements for more sensitive data often involve a formalised data sharing agreement.

2.2.2 Data access mechanisms

Tools, services and capability supports have been developed across governments to improve data transparency, access and analysis. The central source of open government data is data.gov.au. Australian Government examples include the [Australian Government Data Catalogue](#), the [Digital Atlas of Australia](#), [ABS TableBuilder](#) for customised and flexible access to detailed data with extensive free options, [ABS data consultancy services](#) for specialised requests, and secure data assets including [ABS integrated data assets](#) such as PLIDA and BLADE¹⁶ and [AIHW's National Health Data Hub](#). State and territory government examples include [DataACT](#), [Data.NSW](#), [NT Open Data Portal](#), [Qld Open Data Portal](#), [Data.SA](#), [DataVic](#) and [dataWA](#). These types of mechanisms are starting points for considering immediate pathways for improved Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community data access.

2.2.3 National data policy governance

State and territory governments play a central role in public data policy and management, overseeing the collection, governance, access and use of data to support service delivery, policy development, performance reporting and public accountability.

¹⁶ PLIDA (Person-Level Integrated Data Asset); BLADE (Business Longitudinal Analysis Data Environment)

While approaches vary across jurisdictions, governments increasingly use whole-of-government data strategies, governance frameworks and data-sharing initiatives that promote the secure, ethical and effective use of public sector data. Common priorities include improving data quality, metadata standards to enhance interoperability, strengthening privacy and security protections, enabling data integration and cross-agency collaboration, supporting evidence-based decision-making, and increasing public access to data. Governments are placing greater emphasis on Indigenous Data Sovereignty, community engagement, digital capability and the responsible use of emerging technologies to deliver better policies, programs and outcomes for citizens. Despite these efforts, significant barriers to data sharing and access persist for data users, leaving governments with more to do to remove these barriers.

The [Intergovernmental Agreement on Data Sharing](#) (IGA) commits all jurisdictions to sharing public sector data across governments as a default position, where it can be done securely, safely, lawfully and ethically. The IGA recognises data as a shared national asset and aims to maximise its value to improve policies, services and outcomes for all. The IGA is implemented through the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting (DDMM) and is supported by the National Data Sharing Work Program. The IGA is planned for review and may address concerns that the IGA has not effectively enabled data sharing across governments.

Commonwealth and cross-jurisdictional data governance fora exist to provide strategic leadership and collaboration on data and digital priorities. These sit under the [Secretaries Digital and Data Committee](#) (SDDC) for the Commonwealth and DDMM across jurisdictions. The DPP uses these government arrangements to support policy, system and governance change to progress PR4, such as raising awareness and seeking input on a guide on government data access pathways¹⁷.

2.2.4 A complex authorising environment for data sharing governance

The PC's [2017 Inquiry into Data Availability and Use](#) examined how Australia could better use public and private sector data to improve economic productivity, service delivery, research, innovation and consumer outcomes. The Inquiry concluded that the Australian Government was not realising the full value of its data assets due to fragmented legislation, risk aversion, barriers to data sharing and limited consumer access to their data. It advocated a fundamental shift in policy settings to treat data as a valuable national asset, supported by stronger governance, greater transparency and appropriate safeguards to maintain privacy, security and trust.¹⁸

The *Data Availability and Transparency Act 2022* (DAT Act) was introduced in response. The DAT Act created a statutory data sharing scheme authorising Australian

¹⁷ 3.4 DPP Priority 4: Data sharing, access and capability

¹⁸ (Productivity Commission, 2017)

Government entities to share public sector data with accredited entities for three permitted purposes: delivery of government services; to inform government policies and programs; and for research and development. The scheme is underpinned by Data Sharing Principles, accreditation requirements, data sharing agreements and regulatory oversight to ensure data is shared in a manner that is safe, transparent and in the public interest. No Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander agency or institution is accredited under the DAT Act.

The 2025 Statutory Review of the DAT Act found that it had not been effective in achieving its objectives. This is largely because the framework is complex, prescriptive and voluntary for Commonwealth data custodians who often have existing data sharing arrangements under other legislation. The Review also found that the DAT Act does not empower First Nations people and has limited effectiveness in supporting commitments like the National Agreement.

The Review recommended expanding accreditation to include ACCOs, embedding Indigenous data governance frameworks so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are heard, recognised and empowered, and explicitly recognising the roles of states and territories as data custodians. It also called for the development of a nationally consistent data sharing framework to achieve full interoperability and standardised pathways for users to access public sector data across all levels of government. The Commonwealth Government has not yet to respond to the Review.

The DPP has begun considering current legislative and policy barriers hindering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's access to a range of data. DPP Government Members are sharing jurisdictional examples of efforts to improve data access.

2.3 The Data Story of Closing the Gap

2.3.1 National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The National Agreement guides all DPP governance.

Meeting shared objectives and obligations under the National Agreement relies on fit-for-purpose data and policies, which underpin all Priority Reforms and socio-economic outcomes, targets and indicators. The National Agreement includes 19 national socio-economic outcomes across 17 life outcome areas for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Appendix C¹⁹).

Policy Partnerships established under Priority Reform One of the National Agreement focus on progressing socio-economic targets and outcomes. The current Policy Partnerships are: Justice, Early Childhood Care and Development, Housing, Aboriginal

¹⁹ Appendix C – Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

and Torres Strait Islander Languages, Social and Emotional Wellbeing and Vocational Education and Training. The DPP is the only Policy Partnership focused on a Priority Reform, giving it a uniquely cross-cutting remit.

2.3.2 Shared decision-making and working in partnership

“For our peoples, data is not just numbers on a spreadsheet or information stored in systems. Data is people. Data is story. Data is identity. Data is family, community, culture and lived experience... Today, through the National Agreement and Priority Reform Four, there is an opportunity to reshape how governments and institutions work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples — not as subjects of data, but as decision-makers, custodians and leaders in the governance of information about our communities.

Real partnership means moving beyond consultation into shared authority, transparency and trust... Because when Indigenous communities lead data conversations, outcomes change. We begin to see policies informed by lived realities. We strengthen self-determination. We create systems that honour truth, dignity and cultural integrity. And importantly, we create pathways where our young people can see themselves not just represented in data — but shaping it.”

– Ngunnawal Elder, **Dr Aunty Caroline Hughes AM** (Welcome to Country, DPP3)

The DPP recognises that formal partnership and shared decision-making (Priority Reform One) are core to all relationships between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations and Australian governments to achieve the outcomes of the National Agreement.

Clauses 32 of the National Agreement describes **strong partnerships** as being built on accountable and representative participation, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives chosen through their own community structures, government representatives empowered to make decisions, and other parties involved as agreed. Formal, transparent agreements support strong partnerships when they clearly define roles, objectives, decision-making arrangements, governance processes, and mechanisms for monitoring, review, and dispute resolution. Strong partnerships also rely on shared decision-making based on consensus, inclusivity, transparency, equal access to information, respect for self-determination and lived experience, and alignment of programs and services with jointly agreed community priorities.

Clause 32.C of the National Agreement describes **shared decision-making** as governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people having voices of equal weight to make decisions together, with decisions reached through consensus and mutual respect. It is transparent and inclusive, ensuring all parties have access to clear information, sufficient time to consider decisions, and opportunities for diverse

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices to be heard safely and without fear of repercussions. Shared decision-making supports self-determination by valuing lived experience and aligning programs and services with jointly agreed community priorities.

The DPP's Agreement to Implement reflects and expands on these principles to clarify how the partnership operates.

2.3.3 Information and reporting

The National Agreement includes specifications on target, outcome and indicator measurement as well as routine reporting and information sharing to support accountability. The Closing the Gap Information Repository is a centralised, publicly accessible data platform managed by the Productivity Commission. It monitors progress on the 19 socio-economic outcomes and four Priority Reforms. The repository includes an interactive Data Dashboard and Annual Data Compilation Report.

All governments have agreed also to publish annual reports, tabled in Parliament and informed by the PC dashboard and data, that outline progress against implementation plans and the Priority Reforms, demonstrate how actions and investments support Closing the Gap outcomes, and report on formalised partnerships with, and funding provided to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

2.3.4 Existing Closing the Gap Reporting

National progress on **outcomes** under the National Agreement:

- [Dashboard - Closing the Gap | Productivity Commission](#)
- [Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report July 2026 - Closing the Gap | Productivity Commission](#)

Commonwealth reporting on **partnerships**:

- [Closing the Gap Appendix E: Commonwealth Partnership Stocktake](#)
- [Closing the Gap Appendix G: Full list of 2026 Implementation Plan Commitments](#)

Reporting on **actions and implementation** from each Party to the National Agreement:

- [Annual Reports | Closing the Gap](#)
- [Implementation Plans | Closing the Gap](#)

2.4 Data needs

The Data Development Plan (the Plan) 2022-2030 is the mechanism through which governments and the Coalition of Peaks will strengthen the evidence base underpinning the National Agreement. Its purpose is to identify, prioritise and coordinate the development of data needed to measure progress against the Closing the Gap socioeconomic outcomes, improve accountability, and support shared decision-making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Plan recognises that existing data varies in quality and coverage, and establishes a framework for developing new data sources, improving consistency and disaggregation of existing collections, and embedding principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty, Indigenous Data Governance, ethical data use, partnership, data sharing and community-led approaches across data collections over the life of the National Agreement.

Across the 17 socioeconomic outcomes, the key data needs focus on developing richer and more culturally informed measures of wellbeing, service access and outcomes, particularly where current data is incomplete or does not reflect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives. Major themes include:

- improving **health, mental health** and **early childhood** data;
- understanding barriers to **education, employment** and **economic** participation;
- strengthening data on **housing, justice, child protection** and **family safety**;
- measuring **cultural strength, language use** and **connection to Country**;
- improving **digital inclusion** and **access to information**; and
- expanding the use of **community-owned data**.

Improving data quality, comparability and disaggregation are cross-cutting needs. This includes for vulnerable cohorts such as people with disability, Stolen Generations survivors, LGBTQIA+SB people, young people and older people. The Plan also places strong emphasis on culturally appropriate services, community-controlled sectors, regional access to data, and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have greater control, access to and capability to use data for local decision-making and self-determination.

The DPP indirectly supports the Plan through collaboration with ANZSOG and other Policy Partnerships. The Plan does not measure progress on the Priority Reforms; however, the ANZSOG Report seeks to address this gap.

3 DPP Year One Progress

In its first year of operation, in addition to its establishment, the DPP progressed several activities, including developments on its year one priorities.

3.1 DPP Priority 1: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance and Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Joint Council tasked the DPP with progressing further work on Recommended Action 2.2.²⁰ and this was the DPP's primary focus in year one.

3.1.1 Key achievements

- Developed a high-level three-stage proposal to progress the work needed on PC Review Recommended Action 2.2 (establish a BOID)
- Completed Stage 1 of the proposal – a desktop review of international and Australian Indigenous data entity models
- Commenced scoping work for Stage 2 - an options study to be developed in consultation with key stakeholders. It will provide evidence-based options for DPP to consider in forming recommendations to Joint Council.

3.1.2 Models for an independent Indigenous Data Entity

Both the PC Review and the ANZSOG Report made recommendations to establish a national, independent Indigenous data entity. Joint Council and PWG have directed the DPP to consider these findings.

3.1.2.1 Bureau of Indigenous Data

The PC Review recommended the establishment of a BOID to: support governments to embed Indigenous Data Governance in their data systems and practices; invest in enhancing the data capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities; and consolidate and oversee data development work for the National Agreement.

Based on the PC Review, the BOID would:

- support governments to embed Indigenous Data Governance into their data systems and practices
- invest in the data capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities
- consolidate and oversee data development for the National Agreement

²⁰ DPP tasking from Joint Council sought consideration of the logistical, scope, roles and responsibilities, and resourcing complexities to support Indigenous Data Governance and Closing the Gap data development, including examining the option of a Bureau of Indigenous Data

- be governed by an Indigenous Data Board (IDB), comprised of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives initially appointed by the Joint Council
- be funded jointly by the Australian, state and territory governments
- be auspiced by an existing statutory agency in the short-term (one to two years) and established under its own legislation as an independent cross-jurisdictional statutory authority no later than 2028
- have functions determined by IDB advice, such as Closing the Gap Dashboard and Annual Data Compilation reporting, other national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander reporting, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data standards and protocols, managing national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander surveys, datasets and new collections, investing in data infrastructure, advising on Indigenous Data use, and addressing barriers to implementation of Priority Reform Four (PR4)

The recommendation to establish a BOID was informed by submissions to the PC Review by MnW²¹ and a concept proposal by Professor Maggie Walter (Palawa), University of Tasmania and Professor Ray Lovett (Ngiyampaa/Wongaibon), Australian National University²². The concept proposal involved an Indigenous Data Authority overseen by an Indigenous Data Commissioner to assist progress towards Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

In its response to the PC Review recommendations and Recommended Action 2.2, Joint Council tasked the DPP with considering the logistical, scope, roles and responsibilities, and resourcing complexities to support Indigenous Data Governance and Closing the Gap data development, including examining the option of a BOID. While the intention was for the DPP to provide initial recommendations at the first Joint Council meeting in 2025, the DPP was not yet established.

In May 2025, the Independent Review supported the PC Review's recommendation to establish a BOID, noting it was step in the right direction, adding that once established it would offer hope that policy and program design can be increasingly shaped by Indigenous-led data and governance structures.²³

3.1.2.2 Independent Indigenous Data Authority

The ANZSOG Report proposed a Priority Reform Measurement Framework for Closing the Gap Priority Reforms, which includes a series of recommendations on changes to targets and indicators, and the way outcomes are measured. Recommendation 3 calls for the establishment of an Independent Indigenous Data Authority (IIDA) to be a centralised Indigenous controlled data agency whose purpose is to collect, analyse,

²¹ (The Maïam nayri Wingara Executive Members, 2023)

²² (Walter & Lovett, 2023)

²³ (Jumbunna Institute of Indigenous Education and Research, 2025), p. 154

and store data relating to, and sourced from, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations. In March 2025, the PWG referred detailed consideration of the ANZSOG Report²⁴ to the DPP for advice (once established).

The ANZSOG Report recommended the IIDA would:

- be Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander designed, led and governed, with an Indigenous Data Committee established to support its co-design
- be a centralised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander controlled data agency to collect, analyse, and store data relating to, and sourced from, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations
- take custodianship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander national datasets and develop new ones
- resolve data inconsistencies and gaps, complete jurisdictional annual reports and generate more timely, disaggregated, and relevant data under the National Agreement
- develop Indigenous Data Governance and Indigenous Data Sovereignty protocols and principles for government
- support Jurisdictional Independent Mechanisms²⁵
- support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to build data capability and collect information reflecting localised need/priorities
- undertake evaluation and monitoring of government policies, programs and performance relating to and ensuring compliance with the National Agreement
- be established in a manner ensuring independence and accountability and authority to collect data, including from jurisdictions, to undertake its role

3.1.3 Considering the models

Multiple viable options could support Indigenous Data Governance and Closing the Gap data development, each with distinct implications for resourcing, legislative settings, governance arrangements, and implementation timeframes. To support informed decision-making, the DPP must systematically examine these options in partnership with key stakeholders. This analysis will provide the evidence needed for the DPP to develop well-founded recommendations for Joint Council on approach and next steps.

²⁴ ANZSOG Report – (Gray, et al., 2024)

²⁵ Clause 67 of the National Agreement reads that “by 2023, Government Parties agree to each identify, develop or strengthen an independent mechanism, or mechanisms, that will support, monitor, and report on the transformation of mainstream agencies and institutions. The mechanism, or mechanisms, will: support mainstream agencies and institutions to embed transformation elements, as outlined in Clause 59, and monitoring their progress; be recognisable for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and be culturally safe; engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to listen and to respond to concerns about mainstream institutions and agencies; and report publicly on the transformation of mainstream agencies and institutions, including progress, barriers and solutions”.

The DPP agreed to a high-level three-stage proposal for progressing this work at its second meeting. By late 2026, the DPP had considered the Stage 1 desktop review drafted by the Co-Secretariat (near completion) and has commenced design preparations for the Stage 2 report.

Project Stage	Description
Stage 1	A desktop review of international and Australian Indigenous data entity models.
Stage 2	<p>An options report that assesses the relative costs, benefits, risks, constraints and viability of the options, informed by those identified in Stage 1. This will be informed by research and consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and government representatives and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the related models and recommendations identified in the PC Review, Independent Review, ANZSOG Report and Stage 1 desktop review. • Develop findings and recommendations regarding options that consider but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Roles and responsibilities ○ Resourcing and funding ○ Logistical and operational requirements ○ Legislative and policy environment ○ National coordination ○ Implementation timeframes. • Evaluate the alignment of the options with the National Agreement and principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance. • Provide clear recommendations to the DPP supported by evidence and analysis.
Stage 3	<p>Recommendations will be developed based on the desktop review and Options Study and agreed to by DPP Members following the steps below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DPP deliberation on and agreement to the final report. • DPP development of recommendations to Joint Council. • DPP seek feedback from PWG on recommendations. • Recommendations provided to Joint Council for agreement.

Table 3: Overview for DPP project to consider an independent data entity

3.2 DPP Priority 2: Priority Reform Measurement

The DPP began considering the Priority Reform measurement recommendations in the ANZSOG Report, as tasked by PWG. Key components of the ANZSOG Report are being progressed through work on PC Review Recommended Action 2.2, which is relevant to Recommendation 3 on establishing an IIDA²⁶. Establishment of a BOID or IIDA is also essential to progress and implement the full suite of ANZSOG Recommendations. Publication of the ANZSOG Report, another tasking from PWG, was discussed at DPP Meeting Four and Members are working towards a final decision.

3.2.1 Key achievements

- Analysed and discussed recommendations in the ANZSOG Report
- Drafted a Partnership Working Group (PWG) paper on implementing and progressing the recommendations in the ANZSOG Report

3.3 DPP Priority 3: Community Data Projects

At the first DPP meeting, Members agreed to increase the visibility and accountability of Closing the Gap Community Data Projects (CDPs), including through a standing agenda item and regular progress reporting.

Since the first meeting, DPP Government Members have reported to the DPP on CDP progress. This reporting provides insights on project status, lessons learned, and actions taken to address challenges. These updates support transparency, shared access to information and joint understanding of what is working well and where further work is required. The CDPs are at varying stages of implementation, from not yet established to priority areas of interest identified, to baseline data requested.

In March 2025, the NIAA commissioned Keogh Bay to undertake a Lessons Learned report for the CDPs which the DPP reviewed at its second meeting. The report identified drivers of project success and challenges including governance, consultation, data access and capability, funding, and partnership arrangements. The final report recommendations have been provided to all partners of the current CDPs for consideration in future implementation.

Drawing on expertise from its Members, the DPP developed a resource²⁷ that identifies enablers, barriers and actions for CDPs, noting they are only one model that supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities who wish to enter into formal data sharing arrangements to access government-held data. DPP Members highlighted the key relationships between Place-Based Partnerships and CDPs and the interconnected nature of all Priority Reforms, including Priority Reform One (PR1, formal partnerships

²⁶ 3.1.2.2 Independent Indigenous Data Authority

²⁷ 3.3.3 Enablers and Barriers: Closing the Gap Community Data Projects

and shared decision making). The DPP continues to strengthen efforts and discuss ways to ensure measurements for PR4 initiatives, including and in addition to CDPs, focus on data governance, access, capability and use.

3.3.1 Key achievements

- Improved oversight and accountability for CDPs by including CDP reporting as a standing agenda item
- Shared learnings from individual projects to improve outcomes across other jurisdictions and projects
- Developed a resource with actions to leverage enablers and address barriers for CDPs

3.3.2 Background on Closing the Gap Community Data Projects

Clauses 74 to 76 under PR4 of the National Agreement outline agreement to establish CDPs in up to six locations across Australia to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' access and use of location-specific data on the Closing the Gap outcome areas. The CDPs' locations are:

- Maningrida (Northern Territory)
- Doomadgee (Far North Queensland)
- Blacktown (New South Wales)
- Western suburbs Adelaide (South Australia)
- Kimberley Region (Western Australia)
- Gippsland (Victoria)

3.3.3 Enablers and Barriers: Closing the Gap Community Data Projects

Through its strategic oversight of the CDPs, the DPP has considered partnership and governance, evaluation, data literacy, legislative and policy issues, funding and sustainability and community voices.

The DPP has identified several key enablers and barriers to inform CDPs and support annual reporting to Joint Council. DPP members noted that CDPs are progressing at varying paces across jurisdictions, reflecting differences in funding, resourcing, community priorities, implementation and additional initiatives taking place under PR4.

Strong community leadership, trusted partnerships, community-led decision making and effective governance arrangements are critical enablers of success for CDPs and broader shared access to Government-held data. Communities have emphasised the importance of projects being responsive to local priorities and progressing at a pace that reflects community needs and aspirations.

Lessons emerging from the CDPs, including the Keogh Bay report, highlight the importance of sustainable funding, resourcing, strong governance arrangements and community-led approaches. DPP members noted that where Place Based Partnerships are established and aligned with CDPs, they can act as an important enabler by supporting local relationships, improving coordination and strengthening community governance. However, arrangements vary across jurisdictions and communities, contributing to different levels of progress and project maturity.

DPP members also identified policy and legislative barriers that can affect data access, sharing and use.

The DPP acknowledged that community measures of success may not always align with those used by governments. The DPP supports an ongoing staged approach to CDPs and embedding broader PR4 reforms that centres community perspectives and self-determination.

As CDPs continue to develop, further lessons will emerge to strengthen policy settings, partnerships and community-led data capability. The DPP will continue to monitor progress and provide advice to support the sustainability and effectiveness of CDPs. The DPP is also exploring complementary data sharing and access pathways to the CDPs²⁸, noting that CDPs are only one mechanism to meet the goals of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance under PR4.

The following table offers a starting point of the DPP's advice for CDPs.

²⁸ For example: 3.7 DPP Member case studies and lessons learned

Closing the Gap Community Data Projects: Enablers and Barriers

Themes	Enablers	Barriers	Actions for consideration
Partnerships and governance	<p>Clear accountabilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate lead organisation identified by community • Appropriate lead government agency (or agencies with clearly defined roles) identified • Clear authorising environment for the appropriate level of shared decision making <p>Foundational governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities build successful governance foundations before specifying data priorities • Appropriate investment to establish the partnership relationship before delivery <p>Government readiness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead government agency can support data sharing and/or access that meets community needs – e.g. appropriate and meaningful disaggregation, formats that are usable and useful for community • Government partners are transforming to support culturally safe partnerships <p>Shared goals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities and government can agree on the priority data needs and objectives • Community views are heard and given equal weight by government partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of clear partnership and decision-making arrangements stalls most meaningful progress • Western knowledge systems and government processes prioritised at the expense of valuing communities' contributions • Community unsure of the role and value-add of government partners • Government holding the power for decision making and resourcing, leading to communities being disempowered and disengaged • Community data needs are not well understood, and the government partners are not appropriately resourced to improve this understanding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Government agencies to provide a detailed list of resources, including what funding is available for CDP lead Government and community partners • Share evidence of effective practices so that organisations can support informed business cases to secure funding • Have a clear Terms of Reference where each participating partner's role and responsibilities are clarified • Identify where power sits for decision making, make clear the authorising environment within the partnership • Before establishing a CDP, consider if a CDP is the best mechanism to meet community data needs, or if other initiatives are more appropriate • If establishing a new CDP, consider existing place-based initiatives that already have an emerging data need • Ensure that time to establish the partnership foundations is factored in when starting any new CDP

Themes	Enablers	Barriers	Actions for consideration
	Ways of working <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All partners follow the CtG strong partnership elements Stable resourcing over time to build strong relationships between people 		
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures of success are defined with communities and have full community buy-in, including with community specific adaptation as needed Communities are supported to lead culturally appropriate evaluation for their CDP Governments increasing understanding of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance, supporting more meaningful impact evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rigid requirements to use nationally standard and prescriptive measures of success, meaning that these measures do not reflect community expectation or experience No involvement with community to define success measures or evaluation Poor choice or inappropriate implementation of evaluation methods 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities are resourced by government to undertake self-evaluation of their CDP Governments should ensure flexibility in evaluation approaches, within consistent principles Government partners to evaluate effectiveness of data sharing pathways for CDPs, with consideration to what data was shared and the length and complexity of the data sharing process
Funding and sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear funding source identified Funding supports the long-term nature of partnership Responsible government portfolio(s) remain aware of their accountabilities for their CDP Funding is provisioned to communities in a timely manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government budget cycles that do not support CDPs Lack of clarity around government funding availability and accountability for CDPs Funding tied to a specific or rigid model that may not be appropriate for the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governments should re-consider the current funding allocation for CDPs and extend sustainably. Governments could adopt a co-portfolio sponsored arrangement, such as the NSW Shared Data Access Policy
Community voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community engagement, involvement, assessment and reflection on CDPs Resourcing for community members, including investment in their capability, to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community members not having sufficient access to CDPs, resourcing or meaningful ways to participate in CDPs Inflexibility to tailor CDP approaches to meet the data needs of communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and resource greater community engagement in CDPs and other PR4 community data initiatives Invest in government cultural capability to improve the identification of opportunities

Themes	Enablers	Barriers	Actions for consideration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> actively engage in the establishment and ongoing running of CDPs Government partners with strong cultural capability to appropriately and effectively respond to community needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standardised reporting that doesn't appropriately reflect community voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to elevate community voices in decision-making for CDPs and other PR4 data initiatives
Data literacy and capability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communities are confident and know what data they need to ask for Communities collecting their own data where appropriate Direct community involvement and leadership in storytelling with data Government partners understanding community data needs, enabling them to offer alternatives if suggested data does not exist Government partners sharing experience of CDPs and other PR4 community data initiatives, to upskill other government agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governments and communities thinking and speaking differently about data, with limited efforts to find the 'common ground' Governments not understanding community data capability needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relevant government staff attend workshops on data needs of First Nations communities to improve their understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> what data is needed and why how to support communities to identify and locate relevant data Hold community workshops on pathways for understanding the available government held data that could align with their community priorities, and how community can access and use these datasets Invest in capability building (PR2) for communities so that data initiatives can be community-led and self-determined
Policy and Legislation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ability to work within current legislation to provide access to data and share data with communities with appropriate protections and safeguards Strong understanding of the policy context and authorising environment to deliver practical and innovative solutions Fit-for-purpose and flexible data solutions that meet community needs while 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The data sharing legislative landscape is highly complex and reform is yet to improve this outlook, making it challenging for CDPs and other cross-jurisdictional data initiatives to navigate Government agencies not actively identifying, designing and implementing solutions to data access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify where policy alternatives may support community data access or sharing for CDPs while legislative reform progresses Raise understanding about the legislative provisions that make data sharing more challenging for CDPs by sharing case studies

Themes	Enablers	Barriers	Actions for consideration
	<p>balancing government obligations – e.g. a high-level dashboard of community defined indicators vs access to de-identified unit-record level data</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early, ongoing and resourced community involvement in the policy process, including problem identification, goal setting and solution design • Some growing recognition of Indigenous data needs in legislation – e.g. in recent review of DAT Act 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of government transparency on CDPs progress • Low risk appetite in government to try new approaches • Lack of involvement from communities in early policy design 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify what government policy change needs to occur to improve access to government-held data for communities • Bring communities in early to help identify and understand policy problems and possible solutions

Table 4: Closing the Gap Community Data Projects: Enablers and Barriers

3.4 DPP Priority 4: Data sharing, access and capability

By its second meeting, the DPP developed a [Data Definitions and Terminology Reference Document](#), published on the DPP web page with the aim to strengthen data capability across both the community-controlled sector and government.

To improve awareness of existing pathways to access data, the DPP is developing a guide on existing government data access pathways and services. The guide is targeted to a variety of stakeholders, including Community and ACCOs and will outline what support is available and how to access data through existing government pathways.

The guide will present existing data access pathways and services across Commonwealth and jurisdictional governments and outline the access requirements for each service.

This work advances PR4 by improving transparency and visibility of existing data access arrangements across governments.

3.4.1 Key achievements

- Developed and published a DPP Data Definitions and Terminology Reference Document to strengthen data capability across both the community-controlled sector and government
- Developed a template and implementation pathway for a guide on existing government data access pathways and services for community and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs)

3.5 DPP Priority 5: Embedding Priority Reform Four

Throughout its first year, DPP members considered practical actions to remove barriers to embedding PR4, including governance reform, sustainable funding, stronger commitments, and embedding PR4 as business-as-usual. Members acknowledge that Priority Reform One (PR1, formal partnerships and shared decision making) and Priority Reform Two (PR2, building the community-controlled sector) are more mature. PR4 now requires greater focus and stronger budgetary commitment across all jurisdictions to embed system reform.

At its second meeting, the DPP considered a Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Plan. In addition to keeping stakeholders informed, the plan aims to assist in building a better understanding of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples view, understand and use data. Implementation of the plan has been delayed pending confirmation of resourcing.

At its fourth meeting, the DPP discussed success measures for government and partnerships and a recommendation of incorporating the Maiam nayri Wingara principles in the Priority Reform Strategy.

3.5.1 Key achievements

- Developed a Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Plan
- Drafted a recommendation for submission to the Joint Steering Committee leading the Commonwealth Priority Reform Strategy to include the Maiam nayri Wingara principles

3.5.2 Background on Embedding Priority Reform Four

Transformation under the National Agreement requires more than incremental change. It demands a fundamental shift in how government organisations think, behave, and make decisions. The PC Review recommended that all mainstream government systems and culture need to be fundamentally rethought (Recommendation 3). Consequently, the Commonwealth Priority Reforms Roadmap was developed as a practical guide to help the Australian Public Service (APS) do things differently when working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. It outlines immediate, achievable actions that APS agencies can take to build readiness ahead of the forthcoming Commonwealth Priority Reform Strategy (the Strategy). The DPP notes that contextual differences across States, Territories and communities will need to be addressed when the strategy flows from the Commonwealth level to jurisdictions.

A Joint Steering Committee has been established to guide and oversee the development of the strategy. It is envisaged the DPP will have in-depth experience and expertise to contribute in relation to content on PR4.

The DPP will continue to look for opportunities to contribute to and inform best practice on the realisation of PR4. At its second meeting the DPP sought to strengthen its engagement through a Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Plan. In addition to keeping stakeholders informed, the plan aims to help build a better understanding of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples view, understand and use data.

3.6 DPP Priority 6: Addressing data gaps

A key DPP priority is to work with and advise other Policy Partnerships to close priority data gaps and measure progress across outcomes, targets (especially those without data) and indicators under the National Agreement.

The DPP has a strategic advisory role in engaging with other Policy Partnerships on data to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance, self-determination and co-design across detailed aspects of the data lifecycle.

3.6.1 Key achievements

- Engaged with other Policy Partnerships
- Attended meetings of the Justice Policy Partnership (JPP) and Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP) to discuss data priorities (DPP Co-Chairs)

3.6.2 Working with other Policy Partnerships

During its first year the DPP began supporting other Policy Partnerships with their priority data needs.

The DPP Co-Chairs participated in Policy Partnership Co-Chair Forums and the DPP commenced engagement with the Justice Policy Partnership (JPP) and Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP). The DPP will continue to expand its engagement and collaboration with other Policy Partnerships to drive progress on priority data needs.

The DPP discussed its role in engaging with other Policy Partnerships at Meetings Three and Four. Members agreed the DPP has a role in providing advice to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance and self-determination, consistent with the CARE²⁹ and FAIR³⁰ principles and the Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles³¹. This includes advice on embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance, self-determination, and co-design across all stages of the data lifecycle.

Table 5 (below) indicates the proposed DPP roles in collaboration projects with other Policy Partnerships, as discussed at DPP Meeting Four.

²⁹ (Global Indigenous Data Alliance, 2019)

³⁰ (Wilkinson, et al., 2016)

³¹ (Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, 2018)

The Role of the DPP with Other Policy Partnerships

Role description	What this might look like	DPP involvement
Strategic advice: <i>to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance and self-determination, consistent with the CARE and FAIR principles, and Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles</i>	DPP and DPP Co-Secretariat to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure other Policy Partnerships are aware of available resources, e.g. Maiam Nayri Wingara, Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data NIAA. promote alignment with the principles and, where appropriate, facilitate connections between Policy Partnerships and relevant stakeholders, including through the sharing of implementation examples and good practice. 	DPP and DPP Co-Secretariat provide advice and information on request. Project led by relevant Policy Partnership.
Data governance advice: <i>to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance, self-determination and co-design are embedded in decisions about detailed aspects of the data lifecycle.</i>	DPP to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> connect and provide support to other Policy Partnerships and relevant data custodians on the implementation of technical advice in line with Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance principles across the data lifecycle. provide advice on data project plans, strategies, progress updates and issues as requested. connect other Policy Partnerships with the right technical experts. 	DPP and DPP Co-Secretariat provide advice and information on request. Project led by relevant Policy Partnership.
Leadership: <i>in providing and promoting consistency in data approaches, principles, and standards that enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance and self-determination and leverage work at the Community/grass-roots level.</i>	DPP to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify and agree appropriate data approaches, principles and standards and communicate these to other Policy Partnerships. maintain an understanding of data-related projects across sectors, facilitate connections between stakeholders and share relevant examples and learnings where appropriate. 	DPP and DPP Co-Secretariat provide advice and information on request. Project led by relevant Policy Partnership.
Leadership: <i>in promoting data custodian and data ecosystem accountability for data sharing and access, as well as Aboriginal and</i>	DPP to work with Policy Partnerships, relevant data custodians and other stakeholders to:	DPP and DPP Co-Secretariat may drive cross-cutting system changes as

<p><i>Torres Strait Islander governance and self-determination across the data lifecycle</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build capability to manage, share, and use data in ways that support Priority Reform Four, including culturally safe data practices and respectful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. • identify and address barriers to data access, availability and sharing, including cross-jurisdictional issues and challenges affecting the community-controlled sector. • promote accountability for data sharing and access across the data ecosystem and support consistent approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance. 	<p>appropriate. Project led by relevant Policy Partnership.</p>
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Table 5: The role of the DPP with other Policy Partnerships

3.6.2.1 Policy Partnership Co-Chairs Forum

A Policy Partnership Co-Chairs Forum was convened on 6 August 2025 to identify immediate and high impact actions to accelerate progress on Target 11 at the request of Joint Council. This relates to reducing the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by at least 30 percent by 2031. Following this forum, DPP Co-Chairs met with the JPP to discuss priority data needs.

On 16 April 2026, the DPP Co-Chairs attended the Policy Partnership Co-Chairs Forum on governance. The forum brought together Policy Partnership Co-Chairs to reflect on shared priorities and explore how governance, relationships and clearer tasking can better support Policy Partnerships to deliver for Joint Council. The focus for this forum was strengthening governance arrangements, improving co-ordination and accountability, and supporting clearer, more actionable directives. The issue of governance is particularly relevant for the DPP, noting it was established by Joint Council to progress specific taskings on PC Review Recommended Action 2.2 and the CDPs, and has been referred the ANZSOG Report for consideration by PWG.

3.6.2.2 Justice Policy Partnership (JPP)

On 17 February 2026, the DPP Co-Chairs attended JPP Meeting 19 to present on and discuss data for Target 11. The DPP Co-Chairs provided an overview of the justice data landscape to build shared understanding and support discussion on Target 11 priority data needs. The discussion identified areas of need, including how improved access to and use of data could support better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in the justice system. The DPP Co-Chairs invited the JPP to prepare a project proposal to drive progress on Target 11 data based on existing data assets, access pathways, capability and infrastructure. The JPP further discussed project options at JPP Meeting 20 in June 2026. The project option agreed on by the JPP was taken to DPP Meeting Four in August 2026. As part of the discussion, the DPP agreed to engage further with the JPP about their data proposal.

3.6.2.3 Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership (ECCDPP)

On 4 March 2026, the DPP Co-Chairs attended the ECCDPP to explore how the ECCDPP could use and expand available data to drive its work, and more specifically, agree on data priorities. The ECCDPP acknowledged that data availability and sharing challenges limit its ability to define, prioritise and monitor policy positions. Better utilisation of data will enable the ECCDPP to make evidence-based decisions about what is needed to drive progress on Closing the Gap targets. At the workshop, the ECCDPP discussed and agreed key data priorities. Following this, the ECCDPP broadly agreed to a proposed project at their meeting in June 2026. The DPP and ECCDPP maintain an ongoing dialogue about this work.

3.7 DPP Member case studies and lessons learned

3.7.1 South Australia

The relationship between Place-Based Partnerships (PBPs) under Priority Reform 1 and Closing the Gap Community Data Projects (CDPs) under Priority Reform 4 (PR4) is central to achieving meaningful community driven outcomes. Community partners have consistently emphasised that partnerships and data sharing cannot be treated as separate reforms.

In South Australia, the PBP and CDP are co-located in the Western Suburbs of Adelaide. This has created a practical opportunity to align community priorities, partnership governance and data access. The South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled



Organisations Network (SAACCON) and the South Australian Government (SA Gov) have worked together to build a cohesive approach, with each initiative reinforcing the other.

Shared governance arrangements between SAACCON and the SA Gov underpin both the PBP and CDP. Community and government representatives work together to identify priorities, guide data activities and oversee implementation. This approach supports transparency, shared accountability and ensures that data sharing is driven by community priorities.

The PBP has provided a mechanism for community-identified priorities to be agreed and progressed through a shared decision-making process. Through the CDP, SAACCON has undertaken community consultation to identify priority data needs for Aboriginal communities in the Western Suburbs, informing discussions with government agencies about what data should be shared, why it is needed and how it can be used to support local aspirations. Early data-sharing activities are helping build a stronger evidence base to support local planning, monitor outcomes and inform decision-making on issues including child and family wellbeing, youth engagement and community safety.

This work has strengthened the relationship between community and government, while also supporting shared learning about data literacy, local needs and community-led evidence. By explicitly linking data provision to community priorities, the South Australian approach helps ensure that data sharing is not driven simply by what is available to government, but by what communities have identified as useful and necessary. This supports the intent of PR4 by promoting data that is relevant, granular and able to inform decisions at the regional and local level.

A Community Data Project that is not embedded in Priority Reform 1 principles may struggle to achieve legitimacy, relevance and impact. Without formal partnership arrangements and shared decision-making, control over data can remain with government, increasing the risk of misaligned priorities, reduced community trust and limited use of data for local decision-making.

Equally, partnerships that operate without integrated data may lack a shared evidence base, making it harder to demonstrate progress, identify emerging issues and hold all parties accountable for collective outcomes. When partnership and data are brought together, communities are better positioned to shape priorities, test solutions and track progress in ways that reflect local aspirations. Separation of PBP and CDP also increases duplication and inefficiency, reinforces power imbalances by distancing communities from data decisions, and weakens accountability for collective outcomes.

Ongoing engagement between SAACCON and the SA Gov is building trust through regular dialogue, shared decision-making and a commitment to community-led priorities. Bringing the PBP and CDP together creates a consistent forum to review progress, discuss data insights and agree on future actions, strengthening relationships and supporting Aboriginal self-determination over the long term.

3.7.2 New South Wales



An Australian-first initiative for improving access to Government-held data for Aboriginal Communities

Launched in July 2026 as the first of its kind in Australia, the [Shared Access to Data for Aboriginal Communities Policy](#) (the Policy) was established to improve Aboriginal Communities' access to government-held data.

Developed in partnership with Aboriginal and government stakeholders through extensive consultation and shared decision-making processes, the Policy is the first key deliverable under the NSW 2025-28 Priority Reform 4 (PR4) and Aboriginal Data Sovereignty and Governance (ADS&G) program of work. It establishes a consistent, transparent, and culturally-responsive approach to data sharing across NSW Government.

Key features of the Policy include a "yes-first" approach to data sharing; clear guidance on who can request data and the types of data that may be shared; and transparent timeframes for responding to data requests based on request complexity.

The Policy will support NSW Government's commitment to share data and information at a regional level with Aboriginal Communities. Access to timely and meaningful data is critical for self-determination, as it enables Communities to better understand local needs, identify priorities and make evidence-based decisions that improve the lives of their people.

Alongside the Policy, access to data is enabled by the ongoing [NSW Data Connector Service for Aboriginal Communities](#) (the Service) and the [Aboriginal Data Discovery Portal](#). Since the Service was established in January 2023, it has received over 235 data requests from Aboriginal Peoples and Communities. 63% of these requests have been from ACCOs.

In addition, the NSW PR4 and ADS&G program of work are commencing delivery of all other key milestones under the NSW 2025-28 NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan.



Uncle Brendan's Smoking Ceremony at the Policy Launch Event, Bangarra Dance Theatre.

"Part of the process of requesting data is refinement. You don't know what's in there."

– **Ian Brown**, Just ReInvest NSW, Independent DPP Member, attending the NSW Policy Launch on 15 July 2026

4 Looking Forward

4.1 Year Two Work Plan

At DPP Meeting Four, members agreed to continue the DPP priorities for Year Two of operations. With one exception (Commonwealth Priority Reform Strategy), most DPP priorities agreed at DPP Meeting Two were identified as long-term projects and so remain current.

To deliver on its agreed outcomes and priorities, the DPP must operate effectively and have influence on and visibility of initiatives across its policy area. This involves using existing initiatives and addressing information gaps.

Members agreed on a new approach to Government reporting and that future meeting agendas would include more presentations from jurisdictions on their Priority Reform Four implementation experiences and lessons learned.

4.1.1 Updated DPP Government reporting

The updated DPP approach to Government reporting asks each jurisdiction to report on relevant progress that could be of interest to other DPP Members. The reporting has two substantive sections and four sections overall:

1. Context
2. System-wide PR4 barriers – wins, challenges & opportunities, priorities
3. Alignment to Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) & Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) – wins, challenges & opportunities, priorities
4. How can DPP help?

The reporting is designed to be flexible for Government Members to complete and include prompting questions to help shape meaningful contributions to support discussions. The substantive sections, system-wide PR4 barriers, and alignment to IDS and IDG relate to the [DPP Agreement to Implement](#) sections 5.a.v. and 5.a.vi, respectively.

DPP Members PR4 Reporting Template

PR4 Government Member Progress Report: [Jurisdiction]

Report number	##	Reporting period	Mmm-Mmm YY	Report date	DD/MM/YY
Context: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Provide any relevant background about major consequential events or initiatives that might inform or influence progress or activities relating to your reporting – e.g. state election period, key milestones for a joint initiative, significant advancement of a policy initiative] 					
System-wide PR4 barriers	Wins	Challenges & Opportunities	Priorities		
5. a. v.* Improving cross-jurisdiction data sharing, access and use for the community-controlled sector, including addressing systems-wide barriers to shared access to government-held data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [what successes from the reporting period can you share?] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [what is making progress in this area challenging for government?] [what opportunities might government take up to support future progress in this area?] 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [what key priorities have been identified in your jurisdiction to further progress in this area?] [If your jurisdiction includes a CDP, please ensure your progress report includes an update on its progress] 		
Alignment to IDS & IDG	Wins	Challenges & Opportunities	Priorities		
5. a. vi.* Embedding the Maiam nayri Wingara^ principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty across the Australian data system, including through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Governance and governance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 		
How can DPP help? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Outline either some key questions or the type of support the DPP might be well placed to provide your jurisdiction, to assist meeting your agreements under the National Agreement for Closing the Gap] 					

* Agreement to Implement the Data Policy Partnership - [Data Policy Partnership | Australian Bureau of Statistics](#)

^ Maiam nayri Wingara. (2018)

Figure 6: DPP Members PR4 Reporting Template

DPP Strategic Forward Work Program — Snapshot

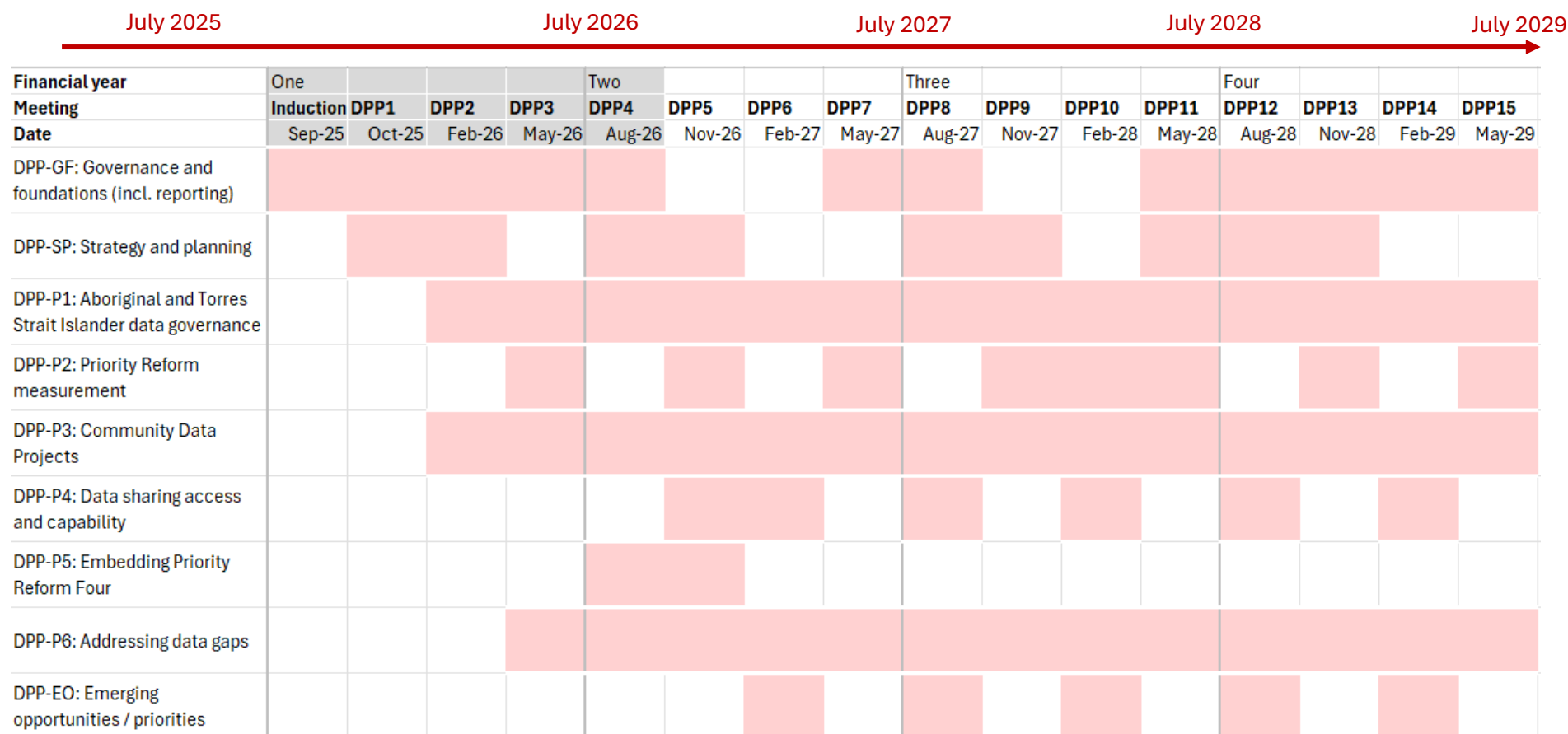


Figure 7: DPP Strategic Forward Work Program - Snapshot

4.2 Risks, Challenges and Opportunities

The DPP covers a cross-cutting area of priority reform rather than a specific policy area with a socio-economic outcome or target under the National Agreement. In year one, the DPP established new ways of working based on shared decision-making. Driving momentum for policy reform has many challenges, especially when it requires scale and pace to close the gap. By identifying challenges and risks, the DPP is strengthening its foundation to address them and help all Parties to the National Agreement to harness opportunities to make better use of data.

4.2.1 Working across government bureaucracies

Realising Priority Reform Four requires strong, consistent coordination across jurisdictions and portfolios. Compared to other national policy areas, data policy has unique technical and governance challenges that can make timely input and agreement across stakeholders difficult. Data is relevant across all sectors and departments. Data policy and custodianship are dispersed across public services, and most state or territory jurisdictions do not have a centralised statistical office. Data quality, consistency and handling practices are diverse. The PC Review³² reflected that government approval processes for data sharing and use often involve long timeframes. Many of the barriers affecting data access, governance and use are embedded within these broader government systems and governance arrangements. As a result, the DPP's ability to drive change relies not only on its own deliberations and recommendations, but also on its capacity to influence broader government reform processes.

The DPP continues to deepen its understanding of how communities and governments can work together to achieve better data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. In its first year, the DPP has evolved into a trusted deliberative forum for Members to explore diverse perspectives and improve collective understanding of complex issues. It has shown the value of strong community engagement on data policy issues, demonstrating that technical and complex matters can be effectively explored through meaningful collaboration and shared understanding and decision-making. Moving from improving understanding to delivering impact will require the DPP to build on this foundation and find innovative ways for Members to influence the reforms required within their own jurisdictions, organisations and communities.

4.2.2 Measuring Priority Reform Four across national and regional contexts

Meaningfully measuring PR4 progress requires a flexible approach to reporting and evaluation. National measures can help track overall progress, but they need to support different community data needs and contexts. Measuring PR4 progress must also

³² (Productivity Commission, 2024)

balance reporting burden with respect for communities' cultural authority. Using both qualitative and quantitative measures can provide a more complete picture and help ensure results are interpreted appropriately.

PR4 monitoring needs to go beyond individual Community Data Projects (CDPs). Although the DPP has identified CDP barriers, enablers and potential actions³³, it recognises that the CDP model is challenging to scale because it is resource-intensive and limits data access to one community at a time. In future, the DPP will seek quarterly PR4 narrative reporting updates from each jurisdiction's Government Member, rather than CDP-specific updates³⁴, to improve accountability, visibility and impact.

4.2.3 Addressing deficit-based government data narratives

A consistent theme for the DPP is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience, knowledge and leadership is critical to Indigenous Data in Australia. Deficit-based data narratives contribute to entrenching negative outcomes³⁵. Appropriate communication of the context of data helps avoid perpetuating deficit-based data narratives. DPP discussions have recognised the importance of viewing and measuring the CDPs in a policy, partnership and Priority Reform context; and not in a vacuum. CDPs must be driven by community need and priorities, rather than a specific data solution, to achieve their intended outcomes.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data, collected by governments, are used for many purposes, including identifying service and data gaps and policy and program development. Some of this data is made public through platforms like the [Closing the Gap Information Repository data dashboard](#), [Regional Insights for Indigenous Communities](#) and [Indigenous Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Clearinghouse](#).

Significant challenges remain within the government data ecosystem. Much of the data collected does not accurately measure or explain progress for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Government data systems require significant reform to include, apply or acknowledge Indigenous knowledge systems and community priorities. These challenges limit the usefulness of the data for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities. When the DPP addresses data gaps with other Policy Partnerships³⁶, it exercises leadership by drawing attention to the importance of including appropriate context and community voices when sharing data and narratives.

The PC has started presenting Indigenous data on the Closing the Gap Information Repository with accompanying written content by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data scholars, illustrating the interconnectedness of data with culture and storytelling.

³³ 3.3.3 Enablers and Barriers: Closing the Gap Community Data Projects

³⁴ 4.1.1 Updated DPP Government reporting

³⁵ 2.1.1 BADDR data

³⁶ 3.6 DPP Priority 6: Addressing data gaps

Some Indigenous reporting frameworks and data collections are overseen by governance arrangements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation. Examples include the [Roundtable on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Statistics](#), [Indigenous Statistical and Information Advisory Group](#), and [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Services Data Advisory Group](#).

4.2.4 Government cultural capability

Cultural capability in government organisations is an element of Priority Reform Three (PR3, transforming government organisations). All government organisations, across jurisdictions and portfolios, are responsible for realising PR3. Given the interrelationship of the Priority Reforms³⁷, slow progress in PR3 can hinder realising shared access to data (PR4). DPP Members have noted that demonstrated commitment to the Priority Reforms varies across jurisdictions. Sustainably improving data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities requires culturally safe government environments informed by and respectful of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership. Cultural capability is critical for Australian governments to keep to their commitments under the National Agreement.

4.2.5 Government action towards realising Indigenous Data Sovereignty

Supporting Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS) and Indigenous Data Governance (IDG) is a long-term goal that will require sustained effort and reform across governments and communities. Full realisation of IDS and IDG requires community-led, -owned and -controlled data systems and governance³⁸. The scale and complexity of this task is significant, but not a reason for government to defer action. Priority Reform Two (PR2, building the community-controlled sector) recognises the shared commitment of the parties to the National Agreement to work towards community driven solutions. DPP Member case studies³⁹ demonstrate the immediate and practical steps jurisdictional governments can take while broader system reforms are developed.

Although legislative and structural reforms take time, policy and administrative changes are usually implemented more quickly. Governments and public servants can therefore play a practical role in supporting IDS and IDG through public administration mechanisms⁴⁰. The ability to make practical changes through government systems, policies, and administrative practices⁴¹ offer public servants an opportunity, and a responsibility, to advance progress towards IDS and IDG. Existing data administrative processes and decision-making structures can enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait

³⁷ 1.2 Priority Reform Four linkages

³⁸ (Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, 2018)

³⁹ 3.7 DPP Member case studies and lessons learned

⁴⁰ (Prehn, et al., 2025)

⁴¹ (Trudgett, et al., 2022)

Islander authority, participation, and self-determination⁴², meaning that government and public servants can act on this now while other system-wide changes occur.

Progress towards IDS and IDG will be incremental, but incremental does not mean insignificant. Practical improvements today can establish the foundations for more transformational reform in the future.

4.2.6 DPP Resourcing Capacity

The finite capacity of DPP Members and Co-Secretariat limits what it can address, despite the high interest in the DPP and its work. The potential scope and remit of the DPP is not limited to a single policy area. In addition to tasking by Joint Council and PWG, other groups are interested in the DPP's advice and leadership on data related issues. For example, the DPP received actions in Q3 2026 from the Healing Foundation's [From Sorry to Action Plan](#) and the [Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Children Roundtable Report](#). These actions relate to data on Stolen Generations survivors and their descendants, and violence, disappearances and deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children. Capacity to address these requests and remain responsive to communities' needs within existing resourcing will remain an ongoing issue for the DPP.

4.3 Conclusion and Outlook

As the DPP enters its second year of operation, it will continue to embed and refine ways of working in partnership to achieve better data outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. Throughout 2026-27, the DPP will monitor progress against its priorities and forward work plan whilst working collaboratively to identify and remove barriers to implementation.

The DPP will strengthen efforts to guide holistic government implementation of Priority Reform Four, reflective of the other three Priority Reforms. Guided by the Maiam nayri Wingara principles, we will develop recommendations for Joint Council on options for an Indigenous Data Entity. The DPP will continue its collaboration efforts with other Policy Partnerships and pursue systematic responses to drive outcomes across the National Agreement.

The DPP has demonstrated the ability to bring together different levels of government and community representatives to increase activities related to Closing the Gap. Building on this partnership will be key to be able to achieve the benefits of data across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

⁴² For example: (Hemming, et al., 2019); (Muller, et al., 2019)

Appendices

Appendix A – List of Members

Coalition of Peaks representatives

DPP Co-Chair – Sharif Deen, Acting Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Aboriginal Legal Service (NSW/ACT)

Catherine Liddle, CEO, Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care

Kerry Staines, CEO, First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence

Chad Stewart, CEO, Council of Aboriginal Services Western Australia

Nathan Taylor, Director of Intelligence, Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW

Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives

Ian Brown, Independent Member

Nicole Clinch, Independent Member

Yasmin Johnson, Independent Member

Bep Uink, Independent Member

Liz Wren, Independent Member

Government representatives

DPP Co-Chair and Commonwealth Government – Phillip Gould, Deputy Australian Statistician, Data and Statistical Practices, Australian Bureau of Statistics

Australian Capital Territory Government – Rishi Dutta, Executive Group Manager, Customer, Data and Technology Group, Digital Canberra Directorate

NSW Government – James Bates, Executive Director, Policy and Cabinet, Department of Customer Service

Northern Territory Government – Shaneen Tilmouth, Senior Executive Director, Aboriginal Partnerships and Reform, Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet

Queensland Government – Nathan Bines, Executive Director, Data and AI, Department of Customer Services, Open Data and Small and Family Business

South Australian Government – Rebecca Astley, Executive Director, Revenue, Economics and Policy, Department of Treasury and Finance

Tasmanian Government – Mellissa Gray, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Reform,
Department of Premier and Cabinet

Victorian Government – Bethany Fenech, A/Chief Data Officer and Director, Digital,
Data and AI Policy, Government Services Policy and Strategy, Department of
Government Services

Western Australian Government – Natalia Kacperek, Chief Data Officer, Department of
the Premier and Cabinet

Former representatives

Coalition of Peaks Representative - Donnella Mills, Chairperson, National Aboriginal
Community Controlled Health Organisation

Coalition of Peaks Representative – Vicki O'Donnell, Chairperson, Aboriginal Health
Council of Western Australia

Victorian Government – John Batho, Deputy Secretary, Digital Transformation,
Department of Government Services

Northern Territory Government – Tom Leeming, Deputy Chief Executive Officer,
Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet

Northern Territory Government – Margaret Close, Deputy Chief Executive Officer A/g,
Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet

Australian Capital Territory Government – Leesa Croke, Deputy Director General, Chief
Minister, Treasury and Economic Development Directorate

Appendix B – Acronyms and Abbreviations List

Acronym	Full name of acronym
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ACCO/s	Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisation/s
AI	Artificial Intelligence
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
AM	Member of the Order of Australia
ANZSOG	Australia and New Zealand School of Government
ANZSOG Report	Australian and New Zealand School of Government Closing the Gap Priority Reforms Performance Measurement Project 2023-2024
BADDR	Blaming, Aggregate, Decontextualized, Deficit (government priority), and Reductive data ⁴³
BOID	Bureau of Indigenous Data
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
The Peaks	Coalition of Peaks
CDP	Community Data Project
CtG CDP	Closing the Gap Community Data Project
DDMM	Data and Digital Ministers Meeting
DDP	Closing the Gap Data Development Plan
DPP	Data Policy Partnership
DRWG	Data and Reporting Working Group
ECCDPP	Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership
IDA	Indigenous Data Authority
IDB	Indigenous Data Board
IDC	Indigenous Data Commissioner
IIDA	Independent Indigenous Data Authority
IGA	Inter-Governmental Agreement on Data Sharing
Joint Council	Joint Council on Closing the Gap
JPP	Justice Policy Partnership
LGBTQIA+SB	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Sistergirl, and Brotherboy
MnW	MaiaM Nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective
National Agreement	National Agreement on Closing the Gap
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NSW	New South Wales
PBP	Place-Based Partnerships
PC	Productivity Commission
PWG	Partnership Working Group
SAACCON	South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network
SA	South Australia

⁴³ (Walter, 2025)

Appendix C – Closing the Gap Outcomes and Targets

The following 17 outcomes and 19 targets were established under the [National Agreement](#).

Outcome	Target
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long and healthy lives	Close the Gap in life expectancy within a generation, by 2031.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are born healthy and strong Children thrive in their early years	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander babies with a healthy birthweight to 91 per cent.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years	By 2025, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children enrolled in Year Before Fulltime Schooling early childhood education to 95 per cent.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the Australian Early Development Census to 55 per cent.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20-24) attaining year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96 per cent.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-34 years who have completed a tertiary qualification (Certificate III and above) to 70 per cent.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment or education	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth (15-24 years) who are in employment, education or training to 67 percent.
Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities	By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 25-64 who are employed to 62 per cent.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and need	<p>By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in appropriately sized (not overcrowded) housing to 88 per cent.</p> <p>By 2031, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • within discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities receive essential services that meet or exceed the relevant jurisdictional standard • in or near to a town receive essential services that meet or exceed the same standard as applies generally within the town (including if the household might be classified for other purposes as a part of a discrete settlement such as a “town camp” or “town based reserve”.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system	By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults held in incarceration by at least 15 per cent.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system	By 2031, reduce the rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people (10-17 years) in detention by at least 30 per cent.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are not overrepresented in the child protection system	By 2031, reduce the rate of over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by 45 per cent.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and households are safe	A significant and sustained reduction in violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children towards zero.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing	Significant and sustained reduction in suicide of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters	By 2030, a 15 per cent increase in Australia's landmass subject to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests. By 2030, a 15 per cent increase in areas covered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's legal rights or interests in the sea.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing	By 2031, there is a sustained increase in number and strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages being spoken.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives	By 2026, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have equal levels of digital inclusion. Two additional targets – community infrastructure and inland waters – will be developed over the next year to further strengthen the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

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