

Data Policy Partnership Communique

Meeting Two Outcomes

The Data Policy Partnership (DPP) held its second meeting on Gadigal Country (Sydney) on 24 and 25 February 2026.

Members were welcomed to Gadigal Country by Uncle Michael West from the Metropolitan Local Aboriginal Land Council.

Coalition of Peaks (Peaks) Co-Chair, Sharif Deen and Australian Bureau of Statistics Co-Chair, Dr Phillip Gould, opened the meeting by thanking members for attendance, and welcoming new member for the ACT, Rishi Dutta.

Co-Chairs recapped the outcomes from meeting one including agreeing a process for prioritising and planning workstreams over the first 12 months and for the four-year strategic plan, and the Agreement to Implement.

Data Policy Partnership Priorities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations have been raising data priorities and barriers for many years. These community priorities have been brought to Closing the Gap forums through the Coalition of Peaks and are at the heart of [Priority Reform Four – Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level](#). Based on what communities have brought forward through Closing the Gap forums, the DPP developed a set of policy priorities to focus on for the next four years. The six agreed policy priorities are:

1. **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance:** provide options on implementing action 2.2 of the Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the National Agreement) by the Productivity Commission on a Bureau of Indigenous Data.
2. **Priority Reform measurement:** provide options on implementing the Priority Reform measurement recommendations in the Closing the Gap Priority Reforms Performance Measurement Project 2023-24 by the Australia and New Zealand School of Government.
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 Priority Reform Four, 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.

In addition, capacity will be retained to respond to emerging opportunities identified by DPP members and Joint Council.

Discussion under this item also included digital inclusion, jurisdictional borders, government-held data, key data agencies and data custodians, the importance of community data, and structural issues which limit data sharing.

Members agreed to the DPP priorities in principle. A key action was to develop expanded metrics to progress Priority Reform Four.

National data landscape and Closing the Gap Community Data Projects

The Closing the Gap Community Data Projects have been confirmed as a standing agenda item for the DPP, reflecting their central role in progressing Priority Reform Four. Government members provided reporting updates on the Community Data Projects underway in their jurisdictions, highlighting the diversity of project stages and the different strengths and challenges emerging through implementation.

Opportunities identified for the DPP to support the Community Data Projects include bringing specific and collective challenges to the Partnership Working Group and Joint Council. Members also agreed in principle to a project proposal to support action and provide oversight and accountability for the Community Data Projects, with further work needed to define activities and recommendations for Joint Council later this year. The project proposal includes a focus on improved governance, reporting, consultation, funding, partnering arrangements and data access and capability.

Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Plan

Keeping key stakeholders informed is critical to the success of the DPP. Members reviewed the DPP Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Plan, which sets out the approach for the four-year duration of the DPP. The plan aligns with the principles and objectives in the [National Agreement on Closing the Gap Ongoing Joint](#)

[Communications Strategy](#). 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. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, data is more than numbers or reports; it is knowledge, stories and aspirations for the future.

Overview of Closing the Gap Review and Performance Measurement Recommendations

An overview was provided on the recommendations related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data governance mechanisms in three Closing the Gap reports:

1. Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap by the Productivity Commission.
2. Independent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap by Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research.
3. Closing the Gap Priority Reforms Performance Measurement Project 2023-24 by the Australia and New Zealand School of Government.

Report author leads Commissioner Selwyn Button from the Productivity Commission, Professor Lindon Coombes, Director at the Jumbunna Institute, University of Technology, Sydney, and Professor Matthew Gray, Director at the Australian National University Centre for Social Research and Methods, attended the DPP meeting as guest speakers. Each provided an overview of their respective reports and recommendations, with a particular focus on recommendations related to establishing a Bureau of Indigenous Data.

Following the presentations, the guest presenters joined DPP members for a Q&A session and panel discussion.

Project proposal - Bureau of Indigenous Data

The DPP discussed the approach to address [Joint Council's request to progress Action 2.2](#) of the Productivity Commission's review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which calls for the establishment of a Bureau of Indigenous Data.

The DPP has been established to bring together Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and government members with the expertise, authority and cross-jurisdictional reach needed to undertake this work in partnership. Drawing on the shared strengths of its members, the DPP will engage with the opportunities and complexities of this work to develop evidence-based recommendations for the Joint Council.

There are multiple viable models for establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data entity, each with distinct implications for resourcing, legislative settings, governance arrangements, and implementation timeframes.

To support informed decision-making, work is required to examine these options in partnership with key stakeholders.

Members discussed and agreed to the proposal for how the DPP can progress this work. There are three stages addressed in the project proposal:

- a. **Stage 1:** A desktop review of related international and Australian models and literature (undertaken by the Co-Secretariat).
- b. **Stage 2:** An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Entity Options Study. Develop implementation options through stakeholder engagement and consultation that consider:
 - i. Roles and responsibilities
 - ii. Resourcing and funding
 - iii. Logistical and operational requirements
 - iv. Legislative and policy environment
 - v. National coordination
 - vi. Implementation timeframes.
- c. **Stage 3:** Recommendations for Joint Council from the DPP.

Implementation of the proposal will commence in the lead-up to DPP Meeting Three.

DPP Data Definitions and Terminology Reference Document

The DPP Data Definitions and Terminology Reference Document was developed for the DPP Members' Induction Workshop and updated as part of DPP meeting two. Members agreed to make the document more widely available and publish it on the [DPP web page](#) as a living document. This aligns with the aim of uplifting data capability skills across both the community-controlled sector and government.

2026 DPP Meetings

Meeting dates and locations* for the remainder of 2026 are provided below:

<i>Meeting No.</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Location</i>
Meeting 3	Tuesday 19 and Wednesday 20 May	Ngunnawal Country/Canberra
Meeting 4	Tuesday 25 and Wednesday 26 August	Meanjin/Brisbane
Meeting 5	Tuesday 17 and Wednesday 18 November	Naarm/Melbourne

*Noting the national reach of the DPP, opportunities to meet in a variety of locations around the country will be a priority for 2027-2029.