



MEDIA STATEMENT

12 FEBRUARY 2026

AMSANT welcomes new Closing the Gap investment as progress remains critical

The Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) today noted the Prime Minister's annual statement on the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. It welcomes the Federal Government's latest investments to build progress, particularly investment in health infrastructure and measures to reduce the cost of food in remote stores.

AMSANT Chair Rob McPhee said these initiatives signal growing recognition of the deep and complex challenges facing Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory.

'We welcome the commitment to improve access to Aboriginal employment in the health sector, reduce the cost of groceries in remote communities, and strengthen support for services that underpin healthy, strong families,' Mr McPhee said.

'We know that affordable food, meaningful work and community connection are critical contributors to long-term health and wellbeing, alongside clinical care.'

However, the latest Closing the Gap reporting confirms that only four of the 19 targets are currently on track, with key indicators—including early childhood development, incarceration, out-of-home care and suicide—moving in the wrong direction.

Mr McPhee said this underscores the need for sustained, coordinated action across all social determinants of health and wellbeing.

'The additional \$144.1 million for Aboriginal community controlled health service infrastructure is particularly important. Modern clinics and safe staff accommodation are essential to delivering quality care in remote communities,' he said.

'But clinical investment alone will not close the gap. The social determinants of health—education, housing, economic opportunity, food security and community safety—continue to place significant pressure on our communities. Ongoing attention to these are just as important so people do not have to come to a clinic or hospital in the first place.'

'These results particularly show that too many vulnerable children are not getting the support they need early in life.'

At the start of the school year, AMSANT highlighted the vital connection between education and lifelong health. Each additional year of education reduces adult mortality risk by nearly 2%, while completing secondary school reduces mortality risk by almost 25%. Targets around completing secondary school are currently not on track to be met.

'Education is one of the strongest predictors of lifelong health,' Mr McPhee said. 'If we want to close the gap in life expectancy and wellbeing, we must also close the gaps in opportunity that begin in early childhood.'

AMSANT also welcomed the \$13.9 million investment in 13YARN to address worsening suicide rates, extending its hours and establishing a text message service so more First Nations people can access culturally safe crisis counselling.

‘At a time when suicide rates remain deeply concerning, strengthening culturally safe crisis support is critical,’ Mr McPhee said.

AMSANT looks forward to working with the Australian Government, Northern Territory Government, community controlled organisations and peak bodies to ensure the new funding supports equitable, culturally safe and First Nations-led service delivery that improves the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal families and communities.

ENDS

Media contact: Amy Price, 0437 027 156
MR003/2026

