

MEDIA STATEMENT

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A statement from AMSANT on Close the Gap Day

For Immediate Release

To be attributed to Donna Ah Chee, CEO of the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT):

Close the Gap Day provides an opportunity to assess progress on improving the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Northern Territory and across the country.

The latest Closing the Gap update shows that while some progress is being made, many Aboriginal communities and families are still living with significant disadvantage.

Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHSs) have played a central role in improving life expectancy for Aboriginal Territorians over the last two decades — with a nine-year improvement for men and almost five years for women.

However, the data makes clear that further gains are being limited by a lack of progress on the social determinants of health, including education, poverty and housing.

In the Northern Territory, the education system continues to fail our young people with education outcomes well below national targets. The Closing the Gap target is for 96% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 20-24 to attain year 12 or equivalent. However, despite slight improvements in recent years the figure in the NT is the lowest in the country at just 40%.

More than half (55%) of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory are living in poverty, and around two in five (43%) live in overcrowded housing.

The latest Productivity Commission data also shows worrying trends in incarceration, youth detention, employment and early childhood development.

For many Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, these statistics reflect their daily reality.

AMSANT is clear that strengthening the Aboriginal community-controlled sector must remain central to Closing the Gap. We have a proven model: when Aboriginal organisations control the design and delivery of services, people are more likely to access care, trust the system and stay connected to support.

However, improving health outcomes requires sustained investment across all the social determinants of health. When children get a strong start in life, when families are supported and when communities have access to safe housing, education and meaningful work, we see better health outcomes across the board.

We know that progress is possible — but it will only happen at the scale and pace our communities need when governments work in true partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and invest in the solutions communities know work.

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