

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Closing the Gap report strengthens the case for accelerating community control in the NT

The Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) says the 2026 Closing the Gap Annual Data Compilation Report (ADCR) confirms what the community controlled health sector has long argued: where Aboriginal communities lead, outcomes improve and the gap begins to close.

While the national report shows some progress, the Northern Territory is moving backwards on six targets—including employment, youth detention and adult imprisonment. Female life expectancy in the NT remains the only cohort nationally that has not improved since the baseline was set.

AMSANT CEO Donna Ah Chee said the report's own evidence pointed to the answer.

"This report reminds us that Closing the Gap isn't just about the targets; it's about how we achieve them. The Priority Reforms were designed to change the way governments work with Aboriginal people because we know that's how the targets will be achieved," she said.

"Programs like Birthing in Our Community and Connected Beginnings are some of the bright spots in this report for good reason. Where governments have genuinely shared power with Aboriginal communities and invested in community controlled services, outcomes improve."

"Yet the same report acknowledges governments still cannot measure progress on Priority Reform 2—building the community-controlled sector—and still lack the regional data needed to understand what's happening in communities under Priority Reform 4."

Ms Ah Chee said the data shows the Northern Territory has the most to gain from accelerating transitions from government services to community control.

"The data shows why accelerating community control matters in the NT," she said. "We're going backwards on imprisonment, employment and life expectancy for Aboriginal women. These figures are a reminder that we cannot afford to delay the reforms we already know work."

AMSANT is leading the response through its Accelerated Pathways to Community Control (AP2CC) project, which is supported and endorsed by all NT Aboriginal Health Forum partners.

"We know exactly what needs to happen next in the Territory. AMSANT and our partners are already leading that work through the Accelerated Pathways to Community Control project, supporting the accelerated transition of the remaining 43 government-run clinics to Aboriginal community control," Ms Ah Chee said. "What we need now is for government to match that commitment with the investment, the data and the urgency this moment demands."

AMSANT is calling on governments to properly resource the Priority Reforms, establish meaningful measures of progress on community control and regional data sharing, and ongoing support to accelerate the transition of the remaining government-run clinics to Aboriginal community control in the Northern Territory.

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