

Aboriginal Policy Statement



Minister's preface

As the Minister for Ageing and Disability Services, I am committed to closing the gap on Aboriginal disadvantage in New South Wales. The Government is currently developing a *NSW Closing the Gap Strategy* to detail the work we will undertake to close the gap on Aboriginal disadvantage.

Providing good quality health and human services is critical to our success in this area. To make a difference, these services need to be responsive and sensitive to the specific needs of Aboriginal people.

Stronger Together: A new direction for disability services in NSW 2006 – 2016 articulates a renewed focus and increased funding for disability services to strengthen families, promote community inclusion, enhance system capacity and streamline accountability. Importantly, it encourages person centred service planning and innovative approaches to ensure more culturally appropriate services for Aboriginal people with a disability now and into the future.

I will continue to lead Ageing, Disability and Home Care to ensure culturally competent services for Aboriginal communities of NSW. This Aboriginal Policy Statement provides the foundation for the agency's ongoing commitment to Aboriginal older people, Aboriginal people with a disability and their carers and families.



Peter Primrose MLC

Minister for Ageing
Minister for Disability Services
Minister for Volunteering
Minister for Youth




Statement to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) respects the values, culture and heritage of Aboriginal people and we will endeavour to promote this respect in all the work that we do. We will work in ways that are both supportive and empowering of Aboriginal people, their families and communities.

Through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), all Australian State and Territory Governments have committed to closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage within a decade.

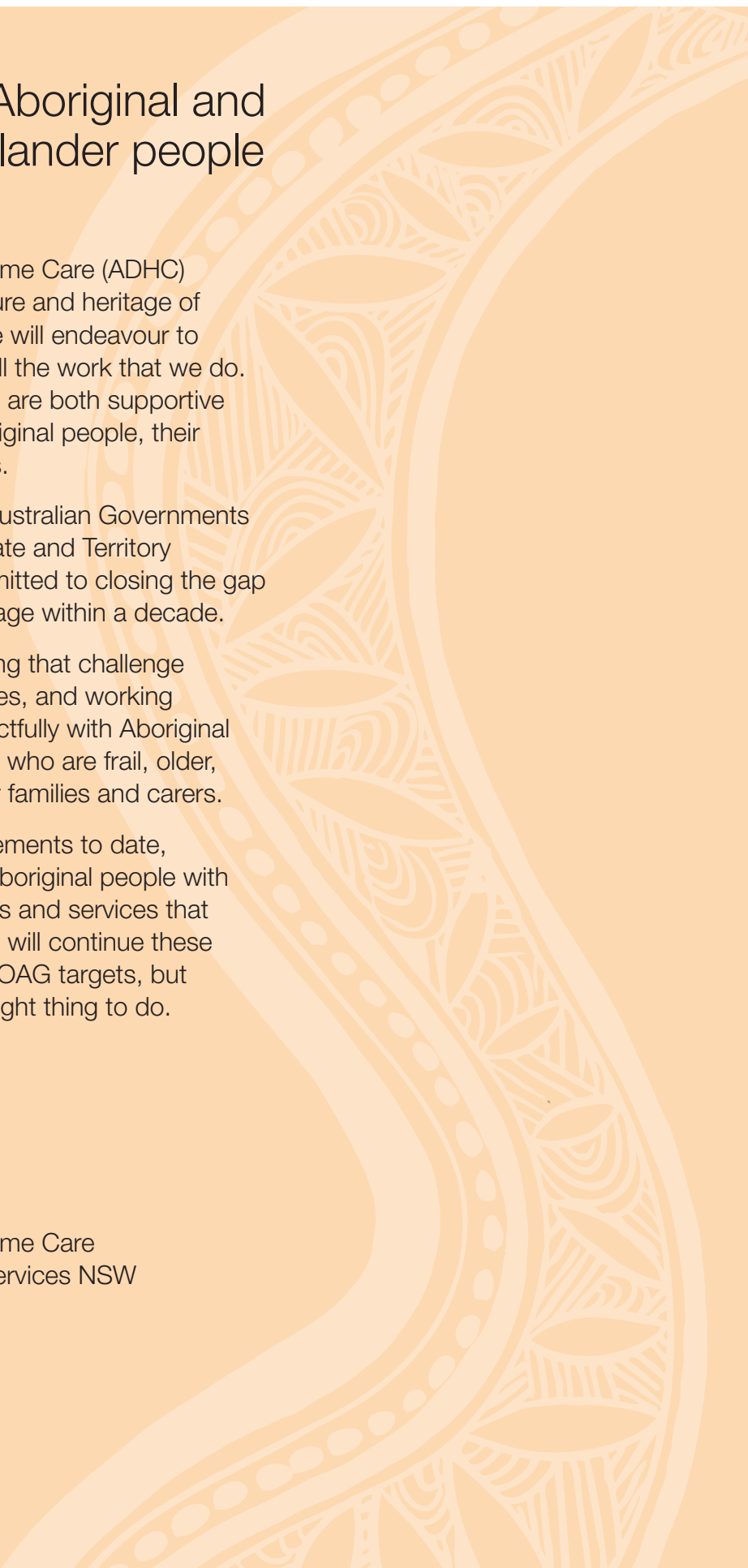
I commit ADHC to meeting that challenge by leading reform initiatives, and working collaboratively and respectfully with Aboriginal people, particularly those who are frail, older, have a disability and their families and carers.

I am proud of the achievements to date, particularly in providing Aboriginal people with employment opportunities and services that better meet their needs. I will continue these efforts, not because of COAG targets, but simply because it is the right thing to do.



Jim Moore

Chief Executive
Ageing, Disability and Home Care
Department of Human Services NSW



Ageing, Disability and Home Care acknowledges the traditional custodians of New South Wales. We recognise and celebrate the diversity of cultures, language groups and traditions of Aboriginal people of NSW.

What is the ADHC Aboriginal Policy Statement?

The ADHC Aboriginal¹ Policy Statement underpins our strategic directions in strengthening services for older Aboriginal people, Aboriginal people with a disability, their carers and families. It reinforces the overarching principles and objectives of ADHC's Aboriginal policies and programs. It also reiterates commitments made to Aboriginal people and communities in *Stronger Together* and the National Disability Agreement.



What are the principles and key concepts guiding the policy?

The following principles will guide the agency's work in delivering culturally responsive services for Aboriginal older people, Aboriginal people with a disability, their families, carers and communities. The agency will:

- **respect** the values, culture and heritage of Aboriginal people
- **acknowledge** that Aboriginal people and communities know and best interpret their own needs
- **encourage** transparency, equity and choice
- **promote** person centred, flexible and locally based service delivery approaches
- **provide** culturally appropriate information and resources
- **engage** the Aboriginal community in the development of new programs and policy reform
- **build** the capacity and resilience of Aboriginal organisations, communities and families
- **recognise** that responsive service for Aboriginal communities is best delivered by Aboriginal staff.

What is the context surrounding the policy?

Aboriginal Australians continue to be the most disadvantaged group in Australia with life expectancy being 17 years less than that for the non-Aboriginal population.² The 2006 census data noted that nationally, the onset of health conditions in Aboriginal Australians is 10 years lower than that of non-Aboriginal Australians. In NSW Aboriginal people make up 2.5% of individuals needing assistance with core activities of daily living, with the median age for Aboriginal males being 41 years and females 49 years.³ Aboriginal people in NSW are two and a half times more likely to have a disability than non-Aboriginal people.⁴

The demand for disability and aged care services for Aboriginal people is likely to increase substantially over the coming years reflecting the increase in the Aboriginal population as a whole. It is critical that the agency prepares for future demand, and builds capacity within Aboriginal communities and organisations to respond accordingly.

Service access remains an ongoing issue for Aboriginal people and communities due to a number of longstanding issues. Unequivocally access to services is a fundamental human right as set out by the United Nations Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and has four overlapping dimensions: non-discrimination, physical accessibility, economic accessibility and information accessibility.⁵

ADHC recognises that services need to be accessible, flexible and tailored to meet the needs of Aboriginal families and communities.

Australian governments are collectively working towards specific targets to significantly reduce the gap in life expectancy between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians.

The NSW Government has an ongoing commitment to working with Aboriginal people and communities to close the gap in disadvantage between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people of NSW. In 2008 under the National Partnership Agreement the NSW Government committed to spending \$180.38 million over four years investing in resources and infrastructure and in the development of effective programs aimed at closing the gap in disadvantage. The NSW State Plan 2010 further outlines how it will achieve improvements in health, education and social outcomes for Aboriginal people and communities. The Government is currently working towards the development of a *NSW Closing the Gap Strategy*.

How is ADHC making a difference?

ADHC implements practical strategies that impact positively on the lives of Aboriginal people, their families and communities. ADHC plays a lead role in funding, coordinating and delivering services to older Aboriginal people, Aboriginal people with a disability, their families and carers to assist them to live independently and participate in community life.

The Aboriginal Service Delivery Model has been developed for implementation over the next five years. The model is a flexible targeted service to support the needs identified by an Aboriginal person with a disability and their family, ensuring that informal supports are enhanced and sustained into the future. This model is designed to respond to the issues that Aboriginal communities have signalled through a range of consultations and reports.

The growth and expansion of Aboriginal Home Care, including the establishment and development of the Aboriginal Access and Assessment Team, has seen client numbers increase by 50% over the last four years. Client numbers in 2006/2007 were around 2000, in 2009/2010 the number of clients receiving services from Aboriginal branches was over 3000.

The *Aboriginal Employment and Capabilities Framework Action Plan 2008–2010* objective of shifting from three percent to five percent Aboriginal workforce participation has been achieved within a two year time frame. This included the development of specific targeted workforce programs to provide Aboriginal people with the work experience, formal qualifications and confidence to gain employment in ADHC and in the community care sector.

ADHC's service delivery approach and targeted workforce strategies aim to build the capacity and resilience of Aboriginal families and their communities.

What are the key results we are trying to achieve?

The policy statement underpins a new model of accountability for the delivery of programs and services to older Aboriginal people, people with a disability and their carers and provides the foundation for the agency to strengthen services for Aboriginal people. Practical strategies will be outlined in an *Aboriginal Cultural Inclusion Framework* to provide guidance for the Regions and Central Office to ensure that the services, programs and policies of the agency are culturally inclusive. Regions and Central Office will be required to develop annual cultural inclusion strategies detailing the specific actions they will undertake to achieve the following key results:

- **Aboriginal communities will be engaged and included**

Aboriginal people are engaged in all aspects of service development, planning and delivery

- **Strengthened services**

Services will develop their capacity to provide culturally competent services that meet the needs of Aboriginal families and their communities

- **Innovative and flexible services**

Innovative and flexible service planning and delivery will focus on the needs of our Aboriginal clients

- **Aboriginal workforce diversity**

Aboriginal workforce participation will be increased in ADHC funded services

- **Social inclusion through access and awareness**

Culturally specific resources will be developed to increase awareness of and access to services by Aboriginal people and communities

The agency will report on the achievements of the key result areas and strategies in a specific section of its annual report.

Aboriginal participation in strategic directions

An important element of this new approach is the establishment of a state-wide, strategic level Aboriginal Advisory Committee which will include the Chief Executive and up to ten external Aboriginal members. The committee will inform a strategic and coordinated approach to ensure culturally inclusive service delivery.

1. The term Aboriginal is used to make the document easier to read, recognising that the policy refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
2. *Deaths Australia, 2005, ABS, 2007.*
3. *The Health and Welfare of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, 2008, ABS, 2009.*
4. *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey, 2002, ABS, 2004.*
5. Gooda, M. *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Social Justice and Wellbeing AIATSIS Seminar Series: Indigenous Wellbeing, Canberra. 2010.*

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