



# **Health Ministers Meeting (HMM): Communique 2024 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Roundtable**

**The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Roundtable was held on Friday 22 March 2024 on Ngunnawal Country / Canberra.**

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Roundtable ('the Roundtable') brought together Health Ministers and Chief Executives, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health leaders and experts to discuss priorities for health system reform.

Aunty Violet Sheridan, Senior Ngunnawal Elder, welcomed attendees of the Roundtable to Ngunnawal country.

The aims for the Roundtable included:

- That Health Ministers and Governments recommit to working in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health sector to implement the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reforms.
- That the voices and knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are elevated and centred in the potential features of national cultural safety standards.
- That priority areas for inclusion in the National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA) and its inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Schedule are outlined.

The Chair of the Health Ministers' Meeting, Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA (ACT Minister for Health, Minister for Children, Youth and Family Services, Minister for Disability and Minister for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs) welcomed attendees to the Roundtable and highlighted the importance of the Roundtable in providing a forum for health Ministers to hear the sector's views and voices.

The Hon. Mark Butler's (Minister for Health and Aged Care) opening address echoed the importance of working in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health sector and outlined his focus on ensuring their voices are embedded in the key pieces of work on the Roundtable agenda, including health care in prisons.

## **Key priorities discussed at the Roundtable**

### Closing the Gap

Working in jurisdictional groups, participants reflected on progress to date in implementing the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and their impact on overcoming the health inequities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Examples of positive reform were shared, along with opportunities to extend and embed better practice.

### Building a health system which is culturally safe and free of racism

Participants discussed how recognising, understanding, and responding to racism within the health system is a precondition to embedding culturally safe practices. First Nations speakers highlighted the importance of ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can access and benefit from the range of opportunities, programs, and services within the health system.

### The National Health Reform Agreement (NHRA)

The Roundtable explored opportunities for delivering health system reform through the NHRA to embed a shared commitment to Closing the Gap, elevate the role of Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, and ensure funding arrangements enable the delivery of sufficient, high quality and culturally responsive services. Governance arrangements for the co-design of the First Nations Schedule to the NHRA were agreed.

### **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Roundtable Report**

An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Roundtable report will be developed by the Lowitja Institute, capturing the actions and priorities identified during the event discussions. The report will include a summary of discussions from the event, programmatic solutions and up to three practical, tangible outcomes to address gaps in health equity, as discussed by Roundtable participants.