



Closing the Gap

Achieving better outcomes for First Nations people in the VET sector

The National Skills Agreement introduces a step-change in governments' approach to delivering on Closing the Gap commitments for skills, with dedicated investment and concrete action to ensure that the design and delivery of VET to First Nations Australians is in full and genuine partnership.

Closing the Gap is identified in the Agreement as a national priority requiring focused effort from all governments.

Recognising Closing the Gap as a national priority, and First Nations peoples as a priority group provides a genuine commitment to meet Closing the Gap targets across all levels of government.

In addition to the Closing the Gap initiatives, the Agreement provides a range of mechanisms and flexible funding arrangements that can be used to support First Nations learners. This includes targeted First Nations foundation skills initiatives and opportunities to boost cultural capability in mainstream RTOs through the National TAFE Network.

States and territories also have access to a flexible funding stream, which supports training systems to deliver on national priorities such as Closing the Gap.

What is the Closing the Gap initiative?

Through the National Skills Agreement, the Australian Government is partnering with states and territories to work with First Nations people on a package of reforms focused on the four Priority Reform Areas of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

The Closing the Gap initiative will:

- establish partnerships with First Nations organisations in VET to provide genuine engagement and agency in policy making (*Priority Reform 1: Formal partnerships and shared decision making*).
- expand investment in the capability, sustainability, and growth of the Aboriginal Community-Controlled (ACC) and First Nations Owned (FNO) training sector (*Priority Reform 2: Building the community controlled sector*).

- grow the First Nations VET workforce and boost cultural capability of mainstream RTOs (*Priority Reform 3: Transforming government organisations*).
- boost data and evaluation capability in the First Nations VET sector (*Priority Reform 4: Shared access to data and information at a regional level*).

What are the benefits?

The reforms will increase self-determination and shared decision-making, leading to policies and programs which better reflect the needs of First Nations people, improving outcomes.

How much funding has been allocated?

The Australian Government will invest up to \$214 million over five years to help meet Closing the Gap skills targets, including \$36 million to establish the VET policy partnership with First Nations organisations. Commonwealth financial contributions to states and territories will be matched by the relevant State. There will also be additional investment to support shared access to data and information at a regional level.

What are the next steps?

The Australian, and State and Territory Governments will work closely with First Nations partners on how best to coordinate engagement, including on the next phase of design and implementation.