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MEDIA RELEASE

Close the Gap Day, A Time to Reflect and Recommit

As Australia marks National Close the Gap (CTG) Day, it is an opportunity for the nation to reflect on the progress and challenges in the life outcomes facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities.

For ten years Closing the Gap has put an important spotlight on the vast health, economic and life disparities between First Nations peoples and the Australian population at large.

Historically, the challenge of Closing the Gap has always centred around the lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and input in the larger framework, policies and targets. The top-down approach of Closing the Gap was never going to yield the outcomes we all hoped to see.

“We were really pleased when the Council of Australian Governments agreed to a formal partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies on closing the gap. It was encouraging to hear the Prime Minister acknowledge that until Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are brought to the table as equal partners, the gap will not be closed and that this principle would be part of Closing the Gap efforts going forward,” said NACCHO CEO, Pat Turner.

“Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations were established on principles that address structural power imbalances. Our services are fundamental to closing the gap. But we have long recognised that closing the gap on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and disadvantage will never be achieved until:

- Our primary health care services are adequately resourced, and their infrastructure hardware is fit for purpose;
- Our people are living in safe, secure and health housing;
- Culturally safe and trusted early intervention services are available to our vulnerable children and their families to address the unacceptably high rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and youth in out of home care and detention facilities;
- Services to promote our psychological, social and emotional wellbeing need to be fully funded within our comprehensive primary health care service model; and
- Our connection to our land, languages and lore need to be respected, maintained and promoted, given we are the oldest living culture in the world over the past 65,000 years.

National Close the Gap Day is an opportunity for us all to reflect on the status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our country and consider how we
can work together to ensure our First Nations people enjoy the same access to health, education and employment outcomes as non-Indigenous Australians.

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