

## **CLOSING THE GAP ON HEALTH – REVIEW 2023. Information compiled by Gary Cerie.**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People are 3 times more likely to have diabetic retinopathy than the non-Aboriginal population. They are less likely to have an eye examination and have longer waits for cataract surgery.

Suicide is 6 x higher in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population than in non-Aboriginal populations and is highest in the Kimberley region of WA. Rate of Aboriginal suicide deaths in WA were 33 per 100,000 people and 26 deaths per 100,000 nationally. <sup>3</sup> The general statistic reported by Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) is reported to be 12 per 100,000 people in 2021 (with incidence in males 3 x that of females, 18 cf 6).<sup>4</sup>

### **PROGRESS IN CLOSING THE GAP**

The closing the gap for vision report released in 2021 <sup>1</sup> showed that 90 % of the targets set had been achieved and 96% had been completed or committed. However, there were many services impacted by COVID lockdowns, especially remote WA Aboriginal communities.

Cataract surgeries were continuing to increase (6,0072 cf 14,243 target)

Eye examinations for people with diabetes were around 50% cf target 100%, but were low in WA 33% (down from 36% 2 years prior)

Trachoma hotspots reduced to 16 from 54 and communities at risk of trachoma down from 205 to 65.

Most areas of Queensland and all of the Northern Territory had Aboriginal leadership of their eye health service delivery. In WA the South West and Mid-West areas had Aboriginal Community Health leadership of eye health systems.

### **CLOSING THE GAP THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS**

Discussion is prevalent about self-determination and control over health outcomes. The Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations and Australian Local Government Association formed a partnership agreement in 2019 on Closing the Gap with common priority reforms and targets.<sup>2</sup>

- 1) Formal Partnerships and shared decision making
- 2) Building the Community Controlled Sector
- 3) Transforming Government Organisations
- 4) Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level

Whilst some targets were improving (National Averages) – such as Babies born with a healthy birth weight – 89.5% 2019, Children enrolled in preschool – 96.7% 2021. Others were deteriorating such as Children commencing school developmentally on track - 34.3% 2021, People taking their own life 27.9 per 100,000 people 2020.<sup>3</sup>

WA report October 2022 has slightly worse outcomes

Children developmentally on track 31 vs 34

Life expectancy Aboriginal WA cf National Statistic

Males 67 cf 72 years (Non- aboriginal males 80 years nationally and WA)

Females 72 cf 76 years (Non-Aboriginal females 84years cf 83 Nationally)

WA Government has struck Native Title agreements with regional communities:

Southwest Settlement Agreement – Noongar lands

Yamatji Nation Indigenous Land Use Agreement – Mid-West WA

Gibson Desert Nature Reserve Compensation and Lurrtjurrululu Paleakitjalu Settlement

These formal partnerships look to improve outcomes through self-determination, responsibility and control over service delivery.

<sup>1</sup> IEHU University of Melbourne

<sup>2</sup> Closing the Gap: <https://closingthegap.gov.au>

<sup>3</sup> Annual Report on Closing the Gap- Western Australian Government October 19, 2022

<sup>4</sup> Suicide and self-harm monitoring. <https://aihw.gov.au>