

Closing the Gap Action Plan 2025-2028

Horizon 3
Building strong
foundations





Acknowledgement of Country

TAFE NSW acknowledges Aboriginal Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our campuses are located and where we live, learn and work. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present, and we are committed to honouring Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to the land, waters, and seas, as well as their rich contribution to society.

We recognise that Aboriginal cultures and communities form the foundation of cultural diversity within New South Wales. Hundreds of cultures, languages, and kinship structures have long been embedded in the lands of Aboriginal Countries throughout the state. We acknowledge and celebrate these diverse traditions, customs, and cultures that have existed for more than 60,000 years.

TAFE NSW will continue to value Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultures and promote their rights and interests. In doing so, we acknowledge the wrongs of the past, respect the Cultural diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and commit to embedding equality and equity throughout all areas of TAFE NSW by integrating inclusive and innovative opportunities that will result in stronger relationships built on respect and trust.

Disclaimer: For the purposes of this document, use of the term 'Aboriginal' is inclusive of Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

© Amy Allerton, contemporary Aboriginal Artist of the Gumbaynggirr, Bundjalung and Gamilaroi nations

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Message from the Managing Director

I am proud to present the TAFE NSW Closing the Gap (CTG) Action Plan 2025–2028: Horizon 3 – Building strong foundations. As Australia’s largest vocational education and training provider, with around 37,000 students and more than 400 employees who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, TAFE NSW plays a vital leadership role in delivering change across learning and workplace environments.

We believe education is more than a pathway to employment and economic success for individuals and communities across New South Wales; it is also a powerful force for promoting equity and self-determination. This belief is at the heart of our commitment to Closing the Gap.

This is not just a policy or a plan; it is a strong organisational commitment to walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, ensuring everyone has the opportunity to thrive in culturally safe spaces. We know the gap in outcomes is not the result of individual choices, but rather of systemic barriers that have persisted for generations. Addressing this gap requires more than good intentions; it demands bold, sustained and culturally grounded action.

This action plan is a key moment in our journey. It builds on the foundations of our Horizon Approach, a phased strategy that started with Closing the Gap as a TAFE NSW Strategic Plan deliverable (Horizon 1), and the implementation of governance and direction mechanisms (Horizon 2). It marks the beginning of a new phase (Horizon 3), focused on building trust, strengthening partnerships and embedding Aboriginal ways of working.

At the heart of this plan is our Aboriginal Empowerment and Excellence Model. This is not just a framework; it is a commitment to change. It ensures Aboriginal voices are heard and lead the way at TAFE NSW. We are dedicated to developing greater cultural capability across our organisation, co-designing solutions with communities, and fostering inclusive and respectful learning and working environments.

To deliver on this plan, we will need to walk together, listen deeply, act with integrity and be accountable for our outcomes. It means recognising that self-determination is essential, not optional. Without it, any attempt to close the gap will not succeed.

This plan is aligned with national and state Closing the Gap frameworks, and with the principles of Excellence, Collaboration, Respect, and Accountability. These principles guide us as we work to ensure that every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student, employee and community member feels seen, heard, supported and empowered.

The plan also supports the goals of the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations National Skills Agreement, particularly in strengthening access to quality vocational education and training for priority groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We are fully committed to this plan for the long term because this work matters. People matter. We envision a future in which equity isn’t just a goal but a reality.



Chloe Read
Managing Director, TAFE NSW




Chloe with Blaze Taylor, Gili Award winner for TAFE NSW Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year

National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap represents a historic commitment between Australian state and territory governments and the Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Organisations to address the inequalities Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience.

It focuses on four Priority Reforms:




Priority Reform 1

Formal partnerships and shared decision making




Priority Reform 2

Building the community-controlled Sector



Priority Reform 3


Transforming Government organisations



Priority Reform 4

Improving shared access to data and information at a regional level

The NSW Government developed a fifth PR:



Priority Reform 5


Employment, business growth and economic prosperity




National Agreement on Closing the Gap

In addition to the Priority Reforms, 17 Socio Economic Outcomes aim to drive meaningful, long-term change in health, education, employment and justice.


TAFE NSW directly supports the following outcomes:




Socio Economic Outcome 5
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students achieve their full learning potential.




Socio Economic Outcome 6
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential through further education pathways.




Socio Economic Outcome 7
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth are engaged in employment or education.



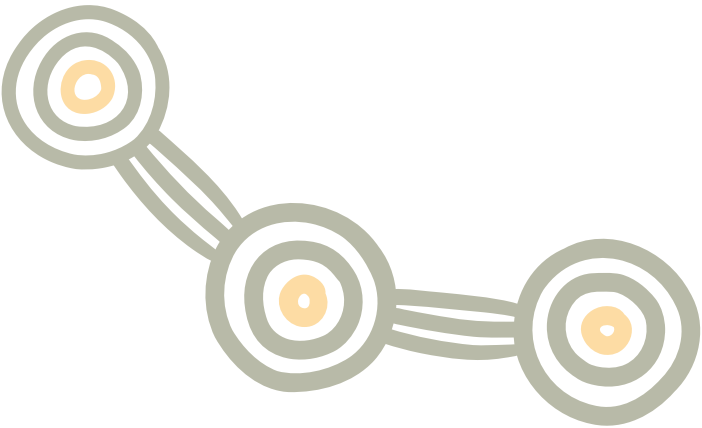
Socio Economic Outcome 8
Strong economic participation and development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.



Socio Economic Outcome 16
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing.



Socio Economic Outcome 17
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to information and services enabling participation in informed decision-making regarding their own lives.



TAFE NSW indirectly supports:
Disclaimer: TAFE NSW recognises the value of all Closing the Gap SEOs. This plan prioritises those where we can make a difference, which is why SEOs 1, 2, 12, and 13 are not covered in detail.



Socio Economic Outcome 3
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are engaged in high-quality, culturally appropriate early childhood education in their early years.



Socio Economic Outcome 4
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thrive in their early years.



Socio Economic Outcome 9
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people secure appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and needs.



Socio Economic Outcome 10
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system.



Socio Economic Outcome 11
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are not overrepresented in the criminal justice system.



Socio Economic Outcome 14
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing.



Socio Economic Outcome 15
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters.

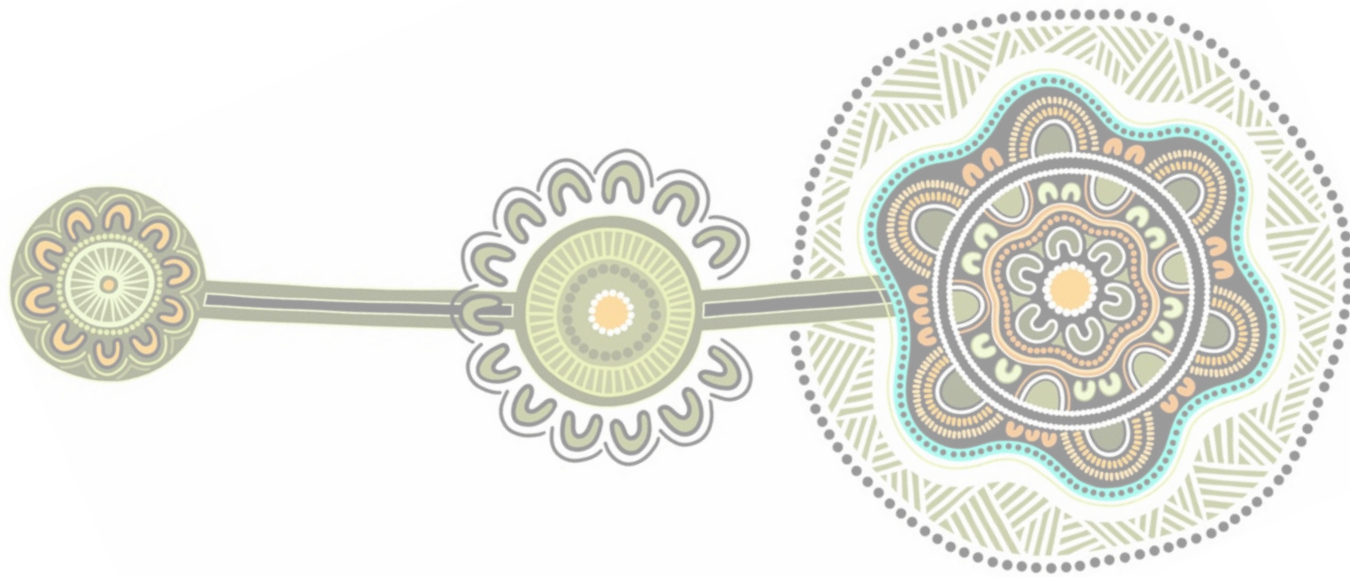
NSW Implementation Plan for Closing the Gap

Building on this national commitment, the NSW Implementation Plan for Closing the Gap outlines the state's specific actions, investments and accountability measures to meet these reforms and outcomes.

It emphasises co-design and partnership with Aboriginal communities, embedding cultural safety across government services and strengthening Aboriginal-led solutions to improve outcomes. Through this approach, NSW aims to create sustainable, community-driven change that empowers Aboriginal people and ensures equity in opportunities and outcomes.

TAFE NSW is committed to playing a key role in Closing the Gap by embedding these outcomes in our education and training. Through strong partnerships with government agencies, industry leaders and local communities, we will drive meaningful change that enhances access, equity, and success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

By fostering co-designed solutions, culturally safe environments, and sustainable career pathways, we will contribute to the broader goal of creating lasting social and economic opportunities that empower individuals and strengthen communities.



Our journey



Problem statement

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples face numerous barriers to educational success and employment, including cultural differences, socio-economic disadvantages, geographic isolation and a history of systemic discrimination.

These barriers contribute to lower enrolment, retention and completion rates in vocational education programs, limiting individuals’ opportunities to gain the skills and qualifications they need for sustainable employment.

As a result, communities continue to face economic and social disparities, reduced workforce participation and challenges in breaking cycles of disadvantage. The transition to equitable employment is further hindered by systemic biases, limited career pathways and a lack of culturally safe workplaces, impacting the prosperity of both individuals and communities.

Addressing these challenges requires a whole-of-system approach that emphasises formal partnerships and shared decision-making (Priority Reform 1) and transforming government organisations (Priority Reform 3). By empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to share decision-making authority and embedding cultural practices, including Aboriginal ways of working, in policy and service delivery, TAFE NSW can create more effective and culturally appropriate solutions.

This collaborative approach ensures that interventions are tailored to the unique needs of each community, fostering genuine partnerships and increasing accountability. Through coordinated efforts across government and community sectors, we can address interconnected education, employment, health and social issues, ultimately achieving successful holistic outcomes aimed at Closing the Gap.

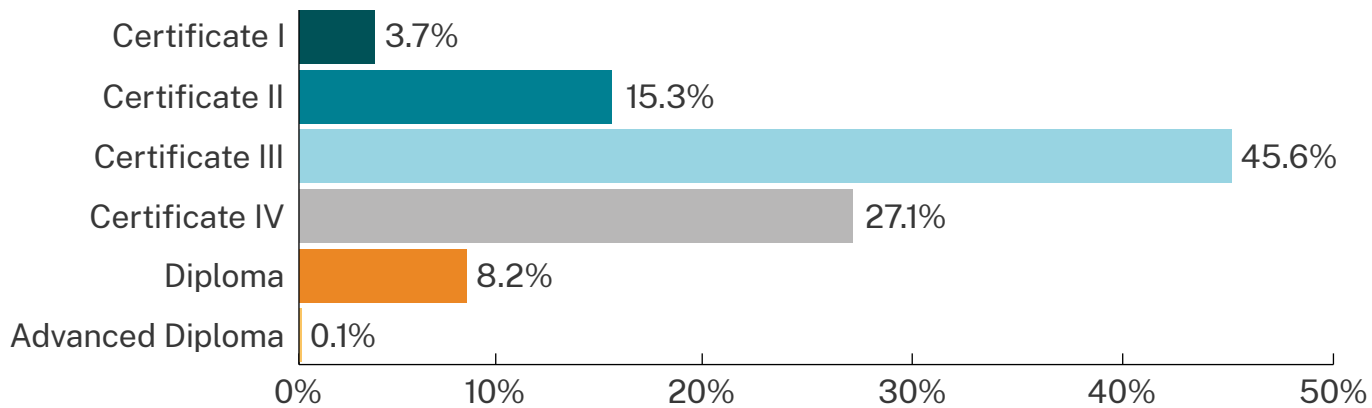
Data

Data plays a crucial role in driving meaningful change within the TAFE NSW CTG Action Plan as it offers a significant opportunity to strengthen evidence-based decision-making in education and training. TAFE NSW can gain deeper insights into Aboriginal students’ and employees’ successes and challenges by improving the collection, analysis and application of high-quality data that accurately represents Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and experiences. This understanding will enable TAFE NSW to develop targeted initiatives that enhance enrolment, retention and completion rates while ensuring that vocational education pathways respond to community needs.



2024 Full qualification enrolments

In 2024, TAFE NSW recorded more than 18,000 enrolments by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students across VET award programs, ranging from Certificate I to Advanced Diploma. Most enrolments were concentrated at Certificate III (8,277) and Certificate IV (4,913) levels, indicating strong engagement with skills-based learning that leads to job readiness and industry-recognised qualifications. However, the lower enrolment numbers at Diploma (1,497) and Advanced Diploma (16) levels suggest potential barriers or gaps in progression to higher-level qualifications. This warrants further exploration.



The CTG Action Plan provides a timely and strategic framework to investigate these enrolment patterns and unpack the factors influencing participation and progression in VET pathways. By leveraging the plan’s deliverables, such as improved data storytelling, culturally responsive wraparound supports and co designed programs, TAFE NSW has a critical opportunity to create new and innovative pathways that align with emerging skill areas and future workforce needs.

This data also underscores the importance of using the CTG Action Plan as a catalyst to support Aboriginal learners in their transition from gaining foundational qualifications to sustainable employment, career mobility and lifelong learning opportunities. In doing so, TAFE NSW can continue to strengthen its role in building equitable, future-ready educational spaces that respond to Aboriginal communities’ aspirations and industry’s evolving needs.

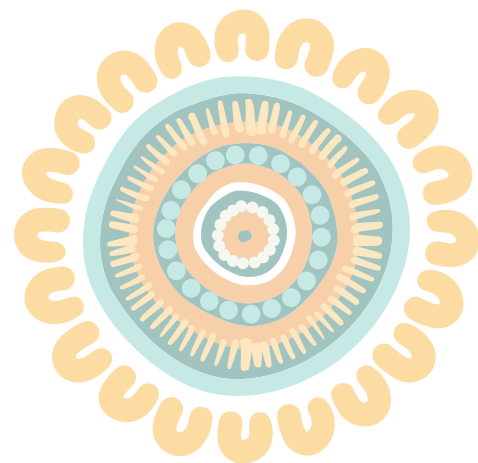
TAFE NSW's commitment to Closing the Gap



TAFE NSW is committed to Closing the Gap through a strategic, long-term approach that builds on the foundations established in the TAFE NSW Strategic Plan. This commitment builds on the significant work already undertaken to strengthen Aboriginal governance, partnerships and cultural capability. In 2022, Closing the Gap was introduced as a key initiative within the Strategic Plan. By 2023, it was elevated to an overarching commitment. This shift reinforces TAFE NSW's dedication to driving systemic change through education and training. The development of the CTG Action Plan marks the next phase of this journey, providing a clear framework for sustainable, community-led initiatives that deliver a real and measurable impact.

To achieve genuine and lasting change, TAFE NSW is adopting a Horizon Approach, with a strong focus on establishing, refining and enhancing critical foundations and core capabilities between 2025 and 2028. This includes strengthening Aboriginal leadership and governance structures, embedding cultural capability across the organisation, enhancing data collection and reporting to measure impact, and developing co-designed frameworks for community-led programs. These foundational elements will ensure that future initiatives are built on a culturally responsive and effective platform that supports the long-term success of Aboriginal students, employees and communities.

This journey represents a strong commitment to Closing the Gap, ensuring that TAFE NSW, in partnership with Aboriginal communities, continues to deliver education and training that fosters equity, empowerment and opportunities for future generations. This commitment aligns with the TAFE NSW Charter, which reinforces our responsibility to provide training programs and educational pathways that enhance economic prosperity, employment opportunities and self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and communities. Through this alignment, TAFE NSW will continue to drive systemic change, ensuring that education and training serve as powerful tools for promoting equity, empowerment and lasting opportunities.



Truth Telling Statement

Closing the Gap, for me, is about making sure our mob are involved and making shared decisions with government agencies about our own future. It's the priority one reform area that we have focus, if we get that right, the rest will fall into place. Over my 25 years at TAFE, I've seen some deadly initiatives, and the most successful training solutions are those where Aboriginal people were involved from the start, where there was a sense of Aboriginal community ownership. That's what makes it work.

The opportunity now for TAFE NSW is to have Aboriginal Community front and centre, with full participation in decision-making, and a change and transformation strategy that supports our Aboriginal community-controlled registered training organisations now and into the future.

For TAFE NSW to be able to catapult the gap of disadvantage, for all minority groups and in particular Aboriginal Australians, requires a deep personal commitment, exceptional leadership and an organisational cultural change like no other.

Uncle Merv Donovan (he/him)
Gumbaynggirr
TAFE NSW Aboriginal Advisory Council – Elder in Residence

“ Over my 25 years at TAFE, I've seen some deadly initiatives, and the most successful training solutions are those where Aboriginal people were involved from the start, where there was a sense of Aboriginal community ownership. ”



Horizon approach to Closing the Gap

The TAFE NSW Horizon Approach represents a strategic, long-term commitment to achieving transformative and sustainable educational outcomes and opportunities for Aboriginal students, employees and communities. This commitment aligns with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and Socio Economic Outcomes. TAFE NSW has made significant progress through the Horizon Approach, identifying the necessary steps to drive meaningful and lasting change.

During Horizon 1 (2022–2023), the Closing the Gap initiative was integrated into the TAFE NSW Strategic Plan. This phase included critical activities such as training Aboriginal staff to act as coaches and mentors, researching barriers to online study and development of a draft Aboriginal Skills Gap Analysis framework.

Building on this, Horizon 2 (2024–2025) elevated Closing the Gap as a TAFE NSW commitment. This included establishing a dedicated steering committee, creating a robust governance structure to ensure accountability and direction, and developing the Aboriginal Empowerment and Excellence Model.

These milestones have strengthened Aboriginal leadership, informed strategic decision-making and created a framework for long-term success. However, significant opportunities remain to address systemic barriers and ensure educational excellence and transformative change in Horizons 4 and 5.

Our CTG Action Plan includes Horizon 3 (2025–2028), which builds on past work by deepening community partnerships, enhancing data-driven decision-making and embedding co-designed solutions that drive sustainable outcomes.

Horizon 4 (2028–2031) will focus on refining and expanding these initiatives to ensure Aboriginal students, employees and communities continue to benefit from an inclusive, culturally safe and future-focused TAFE NSW. An opportunity exists to expand these efforts beyond education and training, contributing to broader Priority Reforms and Socio Economic Outcomes.

In Horizon 5 (2031–2032), we aim to leverage data to inform Aboriginal co-designed policies, strengthen Aboriginal-led solutions and drive systemic transformation. TAFE NSW can play a key role in achieving long-term, sustainable outcomes that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities.

Horizon 1 Commitment

- Closing the Gap included in TAFE NSW Strategic Plan (2.4.2) and elevated as a Commitment

2022
-2023

Horizon 2 Governance and Direction

- Closing the Gap Steering Committee
- Clear governance and decision-making
- Strategic direction and alignment to 2031 based on National Agreement
- Reporting Mechanisms

2024
-2025

Horizon 3 Change and Accountability

- Reporting
- Coordination
- Plan to achieve change (outcomes driven)
- Building relationships and partnerships

2025
-2028

Horizon 4 Holistic Impact

- Intensive holistic programs
- Data storytelling (demonstrate impact)

2028
-2031

Horizon 5 Review and Improve

- Review impact of programs
- Consolidate and embed
- Refine and adapt
- Future planning

2031
-2032

Purpose



The CTG Action Plan aims to promote equity, inclusion and success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities.

By focusing on culturally responsive education, community engagement and resource allocation, the plan aims to address systemic barriers, enhance educational outcomes and foster a supportive environment that celebrates diversity and promotes lifelong learning.

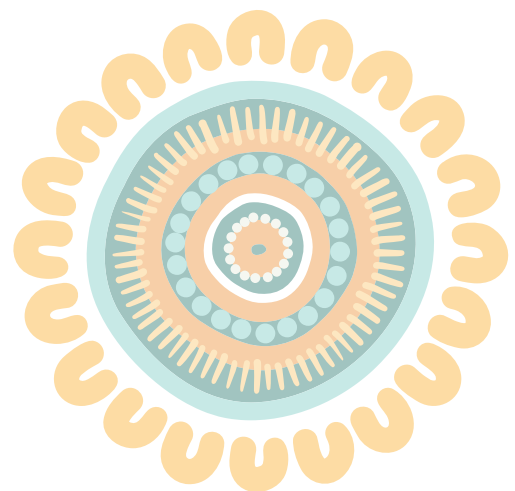
To achieve this, TAFE NSW will transform its operations, cultivate sustainable engagement and trust with Aboriginal communities, and support self-determination.

Why it matters

The right to self-determination, recognised in both national and international law, is pivotal. It empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to shape their own development paths, participate in governance and maintain their cultural heritage. Without supporting self-determination, efforts to close the gap will likely fail to create meaningful and sustainable change.

This plan aligns with the Socio Economic Outcomes and Priority Reforms set out in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan. The TAFE NSW Strategic Plan 2022–2025 and the TAFE NSW Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Plan are directly linked to the CTG Action Plan, ensuring high-level support and integration into broader strategic priorities.

Additionally, the plan commits to intersectionality and supports Aboriginal Peoples’ diverse identities and needs. TAFE NSW can support this by leveraging common goals in other action plans, such as those relating to Disability Inclusion, Multicultural, LGBTIQA+, and the Gender Equity action plans. By doing so, TAFE NSW enhances its ability to create inclusive learning environments that celebrate diversity and empower all people.



Truth Telling Statement

To me, Closing the Gap is a basic human right, like housing, employment and education that everyone should have access to every day. These aren't just targets; they're rights we all deserve.

Over my 13 years with TAFE NSW, I've seen firsthand the impact when TAFE connects directly with communities, delivering courses that no one else can. Now, as part of the Product team, we're committed to ensuring everything we create is culturally respectful and sensitive, a significant shift from the days when I had to apologise for the language used in our materials.

There's also a pressing need to properly support our Aboriginal language courses. While we've developed strong resources, we still lack a clear strategy to train and sustain the teachers who deliver them. We're doing what we can to bridge those gaps, but we need more robust systems in place.

When it comes to licensing our courses to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, the process needs to be more streamlined and accessible. There's enormous potential to build community capability, but the current complexity is a barrier and it's holding people back.

Aunty Terrie Lowe (she/her)
Bundjalung
TAFE NSW Product Manager Aboriginal Languages

“

Closing the Gap is a basic human right, like housing, employment and education that everyone should have access to every day.

”



Closing the Gap vision

TAFE NSW’s vision is to be a catalyst in Closing the Gap by fostering trust, collaboration and self-determination among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

We are committed to listening to, collaborating with, and influencing government to develop, deliver and contribute to Aboriginal-informed, co-led and co-designed programs that ensure holistic, place-based outcomes for Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal outcomes in education and training at TAFE NSW focus on improving engagement, retention and success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities, leading to self-determination, stronger employment pathways, and broader social and economic benefits.

We will do this by:

- Implementing the Aboriginal Empowerment and Excellence Model as a foundation
- Embedding Aboriginal ways of working across TAFE NSW
- Placing Aboriginal voices at the centre of decision-making
- Partnering with Aboriginal communities to ensure equitable educational outcomes and social impact.

Shared cultural principles

The principles outlined in this action plan demonstrate our commitment to Aboriginal ways of working, ensuring culturally responsive, community-driven and outcomes-focused education and training. Grounded in the principles of Excellence, Collaboration, Respect and Accountability, these principles uphold Aboriginal self-determination, cultural integrity and equitable opportunities.



Excellence

Education and Training

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples feel empowered to make decisions that affect their lives.



Collaboration

Engagement

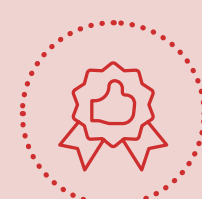
Community co-led and designed programs which meet needs and aspirations



Respect

Culture

Cultural respect, safety and integrity



Accountability

Outcomes

Aboriginal outcomes that are sustainable and equitable

These principles align with the Priority Reforms and Socio Economic Outcomes under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan. They reinforce a commitment to genuine partnerships with Aboriginal communities, shared decision-making and sustainable, community-led solutions. By embedding these principles in education and training, TAFE NSW supports structural transformation that drives equitable outcomes and long-term success for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Aboriginal Empowerment and Excellence Model



The Aboriginal Empowerment and Excellence Model (the model) is the cornerstone of Horizon 3, marking a pivotal step in TAFE NSW's commitment to closing the gap. This transformative model is key to driving lasting improvements in educational, employment and holistic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, employees and communities. By embedding culturally responsive practices, prioritising community-driven solutions and integrating Aboriginal ways of working, the model provides the structural and operational support needed to achieve systemic change and positive Aboriginal outcomes.

With a strong foundation in policies, plans, frameworks, guiding principles and operational practices, the model ensures that change is envisioned and actively embedded in daily work at TAFE NSW. As we move into Horizon 3, this approach will be instrumental in strengthening Aboriginal leadership, enhancing cultural capability, and ensuring that education and training pathways are inclusive, effective and aligned with Aboriginal communities' needs and aspirations. Through this model, TAFE NSW will advance Aboriginal outcomes within education and contribute to broader Priority Reform areas and outcomes, reinforcing our role as a leading VET provider while also promoting equity and opportunity.

The core components of the model include:

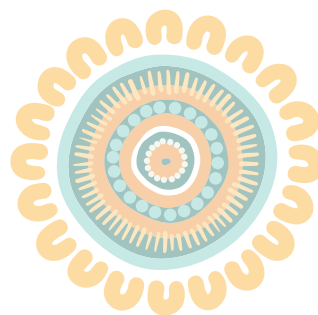
- Policies, strategies and frameworks—guiding the approach
- Guiding principles—driving action, which applies to all core values
- Operational practices—embedding changes in daily work and behaviours.

The model represents a significant step forward in Closing the Gap in education and employment opportunities. It strives to foster relationships and incorporate Aboriginal ways of working in a manner that is supported and understood.

It aligns with our broader commitment to achieving the objectives of the TAFE NSW Horizon Approach for Closing the Gap, and has three key aims:

1. Aboriginal empowerment and self-determination
2. Cultural excellence
3. Aboriginal-led and community-driven solutions.

The Aboriginal Empowerment and Excellence Model and the CTG Action Plan directly support and align with the national and state Priority Reforms and Socio Economic Outcomes.



Strategic activities



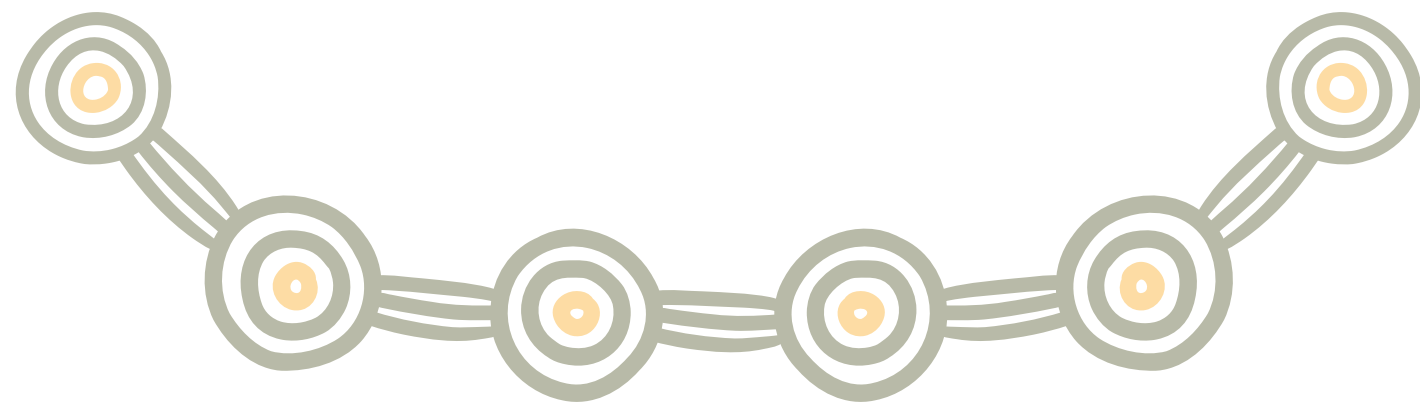
NSW Government alignment

In line with the NSW Government's approach to Closing the Gap, TAFE NSW will prioritise:

- Participating in working groups that support the Education and Economic Prosperity Sector Committee in developing the whole-of-government Implementation Plan for Closing the Gap
- Reviewing this CTG Action Plan for consistency and alignment with, and progress against, the committee's whole-of-government implementation plan.

Building on this commitment, TAFE NSW will continue to lead with a community-focused outcomes approach to Closing the Gap—centred on the Aboriginal Empowerment and Excellence Model.

Through collaboration with Aboriginal communities and organisations, other government agencies and industry partners, TAFE NSW will actively contribute to whole-of-government efforts to achieve holistic outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.



Focus areas

Focus area	Pillar of the model	Description	Closing the Gap alignment	
Access to quality education	Education and training/ culture	The model aims to improve educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students by addressing systemic barriers, increasing participation and implementing culturally responsive practices.	PR 1 PR 2 PR 3 PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7 SEO 8 SEO 14 SEO 15 SEO 16
Partnership and collaboration	Engagement	The model and Horizon 3 (CTG Action Plan) highlight the importance of community partnerships and collaboration with Aboriginal organisations and stakeholders for building respectful and sustainable relationships and ensuring meaningful engagement in decision-making processes that directly impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' education and employment.	PR 1 PR 5	SEO 6 SEO 8
Educational attainment	Education and training	TAFE NSW recognises that current educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are below broader benchmarks. Our strategy to improve participation and success directly supports the SEO of increasing educational attainment rates.	PR1 PR2 PR3 PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7 SEO 8 SEO 15

Focus area	Pillar of the model	Description	Closing the Gap alignment	
Employment and economic outcomes	Outcomes	The model aims to enhance job readiness through tailored programs and training that align with community needs. This will drive employment rates, directly contributing to the Socio Economic Outcomes of increased economic participation and reduced unemployment.	PR 3 PR 4 PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7 SEO 8 SEO 17
Cultural preservation	Culture	Educational programs that reinforce cultural identities and languages, such as Certificate IV in Languages (Aboriginal), are vital for cultural preservation.	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7 SEO 14 SEO 15 SEO 16

PR - Priority Reforms
 SEO - Socio Economic Outcomes

Truth Telling Statement

Closing the Gap starts with acknowledging there's a real discrepancy between First Nations people and non-Indigenous people, and that's because of colonisation. It's about putting things in place to bring us up to par, so we can live healthier lives and give back to our Mob.

My experience at TAFE NSW was strong because of the Aboriginal staff on deck; they understood where we were coming from, could empathise, and helped break down the barriers that usually stop our people from learning. It's that lived experience that makes the difference. TAFE gave me confidence. I didn't finish Year 12 thinking I'd go any further, but seeing other Mob there made me feel like I could do it too. That sense of belonging and support doesn't exist in other places.

The opportunity for TAFE to really close the gap is to keep encouraging our people into higher education, not just to access it, but to help run it. Aboriginal people should be in meaningful roles across the whole system, not just in support positions. We've got more to offer, and we need pathways that help us step into those roles and stay there.

Joe Gordon (he/him)
Ngemba Kamilaroi
TAFE NSW Project Support Officer and former student

“

It's about putting things in place to bring us up to par, so we can live healthier lives and give back to our Mob.

”



Pillar: Education and training



In the scope of education and training within the TAFE NSW CTG Action Plan, we recognise the complex challenges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples face. However, a significant opportunity exists to turn these barriers into pathways for empowerment and sustainable growth. By addressing cultural differences, socio-economic disparities, geographic isolation and systemic discrimination, we aim to enhance enrolment, retention and completion rates in vocational education programs.

This proactive approach not only fosters individual skills development but also strengthens community resilience and economic participation. Through the creation of culturally safe learning environments and strong career pathways, we aspire to support a future in which every individual can achieve their full potential.

The strategic activities we are committed to delivering

- Education and training that focuses on skills development, flexible delivery, teaching approaches and support services
- Curriculum development that integrates Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives, and embeds it in programs and materials
- Staff capability to support cultural responsiveness, respect and protocols
- Community-led solutions that ensure Traditional Owners own and teach Aboriginal languages and cultural programs

The outcomes we want to achieve

- Aboriginal students' sustained engagement in courses and pathways
- Aboriginal students' increased job seeking in fields and emerging industries that lead to sustainable employment and business development
- Students feel Aboriginal cultures are respected and embraced at TAFE NSW
- Community organisations and partners have capabilities in governance, data sovereignty and sustainability
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities lead and preserve their cultural heritage
- Individuals and communities feel empowered to connect with their cultures and languages
- Aboriginal languages in New South Wales are preserved and revitalised



Pillar: Education and training

Deliverable	Responsibility	Closing the Gap alignment	
a. Develop and implement procedures, including relevant processes and guides, to support implementation of the Aboriginal Education and Training Policy , ensuring classrooms are culturally appropriate and teaching methods align with Aboriginal ways of learning.	Chief Learning & Teaching Officer	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7
b. Develop and implement procedures, including relevant processes and guides, to support implementation of the Confirmation of Aboriginality Policy , to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to programs, services, and financial and other opportunities that are specifically for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.	Chief People Officer	PR 1 PR 2 PR 3	SEO 8
c. Develop the Aboriginal Education and Training Plan , including research on online study barriers, youth programs (for 13–17-year-olds), Aboriginal training solutions and innovation.	Chief Learning & Teaching Officer	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7
d. Develop the Aboriginal Quality Teaching Framework to support product development and cultural customisation, ensuring teaching materials reflect Aboriginal cultural perspectives.	Chief Product & Quality Officer		SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7 SEO 15
e. Implement the Aboriginal Employment Strategy to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers employed at TAFE NSW.	Chief People Officer	PR 5	SEO 8
f. Review, update and embed the Student Journey Aboriginal Guiding Principles , ensuring the student journey is culturally appropriate and supportive.	Chief Student & Community Officer	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7
g. Review, update and embed the Product Development and Implementation Guiding Principles to ensure products reflect Aboriginal cultural perspectives.	Chief Product & Quality Officer		SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7 SEO 15

Deliverable	Responsibility	Closing the Gap alignment	
h. Enhance Aboriginal Student Support Services to provide culturally appropriate tutoring, counselling and mentoring services, and ensuring services address the unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.	Chief Student & Community Officer	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7
i. Review the Away from Base Program to optimise support for Aboriginal students. Collaborate with Aboriginal communities to identify and address barriers.	Chief Student & Community Officer	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7
j. Ensure equitable funding and resource allocation for programs supporting Aboriginal students. Address systemic barriers by providing adequate resources for Aboriginal education and training initiatives.	Chief Learning & Teaching Officer	PR 5	SEO 5
k. Develop and implement a Certificate IV in Aboriginal Languages in collaboration with Aboriginal language and knowledge holders and communities to preserve and promote Aboriginal languages through formal educational pathways.	Chief Product & Quality Officer	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7
l. Conduct a comprehensive review and improvement of TAFE NSW's VET delivery and support services for Aboriginal people before and after release, focusing on pathways for transitioning from incarceration to education and employment.	Chief Learning & Teaching Officer	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7 SEO 10 SEO 11
m. Participate in working groups supporting the Education and Economic Prosperity Sector Committee in the development of the whole-of-government Implementation Plan for Closing the Gap.	Managing Director	All PRs	
n. Review this CTG Action Plan for consistency and alignment with, and progress against, the committee's whole-of-government implementation plan.	Managing Director	All PRs	

Truth Telling Statement

For me, Closing the Gap is about making sure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities have the same opportunity and access to services and quality of life as all Australians. That means breaking down barriers and creating genuine pathways to education, employment and wellbeing, and doing that by listening to our grassroots communities and working towards meaningful, sustainable change that's led by our people, for our people.

One of the most rewarding parts of working at TAFE NSW has been seeing the real impact education has on our mob. Watching students succeed, move into careers they enjoy, and knowing we've helped make that happen by actually connecting training to what communities want and need.

But we can't ignore the challenge in our rural and remote communities, where limited opportunities are a constant. If we based our viability measures off local population instead of enrolment quotas, we'd see more courses delivered and better outcomes.

If TAFE is fair dinkum about Closing the Gap, then we've got to listen to what our communities are saying, not just collecting feedback, but acting on it. When we offer courses that meet the real demands of community, that's when you'll see genuine change. That's how we get our mob off the benefits and into work, and show the next generation that education and employment are part of their future too.

Kurt Beahan (he/him)
Wiradjuri
TAFE NSW Manager Community Engagement
Central West

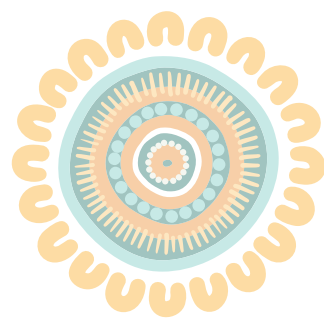
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One of the most rewarding parts of working at TAFE NSW has been seeing the real impact education has on our mob.

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Pillar: Engagement



Effective engagement is at the core of TAFE NSW’s commitment to Closing the Gap, presenting a powerful opportunity to build meaningful partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. By fostering trust, respect and genuine collaboration, we can ensure that education and training initiatives are informed by lived experiences and community aspirations.

Addressing historical and systemic barriers requires a shift towards co-designed solutions that prioritise cultural safety, self-determination and shared decision-making. Strengthening engagement practices will not only improve participation and outcomes in vocational education but also empower communities to shape their own futures, driving long-term social and economic prosperity.

The strategic activities we are committed to delivering

- Community-driven programs and partnerships to support student aspirations and community needs
- Engagement strategies to support participation in learning, with culturally appropriate marketing and engagement activities
- Governance that supports change requirements and sector-wide approaches to closing the gap

The outcomes we want to achieve

- Increased connection between TAFE NSW, local communities and industry partners
- Increased capability of community organisations and partners in governance, data sovereignty and sustainability



Pillar: Engagement

Deliverable	Responsibility	Closing the Gap alignment	
a. Develop and implement procedures, including relevant processes and guides, to support implementation of the Aboriginal Engagement Policy , setting the framework for how TAFE NSW will work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, communities, businesses and organisations.	Chief Student & Community Officer	PR 1	
b. Create a comprehensive Aboriginal Engagement Plan for engaging with Aboriginal communities to foster respectful and sustainable relationships.	Chief Student & Community Officer	PR 1	
c. Finalise and implement the Aboriginal Skills Gap Analysis Framework to prioritise community needs and place-based outcomes and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment and participation in skills shortage areas.	Chief Student & Community Officer	PR 5	SEO 6 SEO 8
d. Review, update and embed the Aboriginal Engagement Guiding Principles to guide respectful and effective engagement with Aboriginal communities.	Chief Student & Community Officer	PR1	
e. Review, update and embed the Aboriginal Cultural Protocols Guiding Principles to ensure respectful integration of Aboriginal cultural protocols.	Chief Student & Community Officer	PR 1	

Deliverable	Responsibility	Closing the Gap alignment	
f. Review, update and embed the Aboriginal Marketing and Communications Guiding Principles to foster culturally appropriate marketing and communication.	Chief Operating Officer	PR 1	
g. Strengthen relationships and partnerships with Aboriginal communities and organisations , working closely with community leaders and stakeholders to support community-driven solutions and aspirations.	Chief Student & Community Officer	PR 1	
h. Assess current approaches TAFE NSW uses to engage with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural services and expertise, including the costs associated with these services. Identify a consistent approach to engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Services .	Chief Operating Officer	PR 1	
i. Foster cultural awareness and respect by supporting the planning and execution of significant community events that celebrate and promote Aboriginal cultures.	Chief Operating Officer	PR 1	

PR - Priority Reforms
 SEO - Socio Economic Outcomes

Truth Telling Statement

To me, Closing the Gap is everything. It's honouring the strength and resilience of those who walked before us, and building a legacy that future generations can carry with pride. Every day, I reflect on my ancestors, on the sacrifices they made and the determination they held onto, and I channel that strength in my journey to help close the gap.

Culture at TAFE NSW is rich and alive. It has a heartbeat. I've been able to bring my full self into this space, both worlds, and feel celebrated for it. That hasn't always been the case in government organisations, so to be able to show up fully, and support others to do the same, is something I deeply value.

My Pop always said education is power, and I believe that with every fibre of my being. As one of the largest education providers in Australia, TAFE NSW has the power to break generational cycles, to create real change, and to shape a system that once excluded us, into one that empowers us. That is our greatest opportunity to Close the Gap by walking into those rooms, influencing what's taught and how it's taught, and showing that our knowledge, our culture and our stories belong at the centre.

Danicka Ryan (she/her)
Ngunawal
TAFE NSW Project Manager

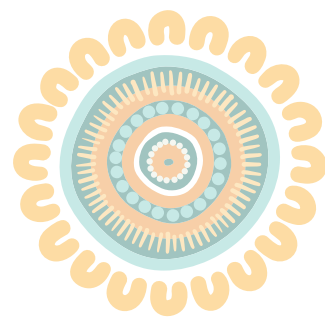
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I've been able to bring my full self into this space,
both worlds, and feel celebrated for it.

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Pillar: Culture



Culture is pivotal to the success of TAFE NSW Closing the Gap initiatives, offering a vital opportunity to integrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives, knowledge and practices into education and training. By fostering culturally safe learning and working environments, we can create spaces in which identities are respected, traditions are valued and self-determination is upheld.

Strengthening cultural inclusion enhances the learning experience for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and also enriches the broader TAFE community by fostering understanding, respect and reconciliation. Through authentic representation, cultural capability and the celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, we can drive systemic change.

The strategic activities we are committed to delivering

- Curriculum development to embed Aboriginal knowledge and perspectives in programs and materials
- Culturally safe spaces and practices for students, employees and communities
- Capability development for staff to support cultural responsiveness, respect and protocols

The outcomes we want to achieve

- Students feel Aboriginal cultures are respected and embraced at TAFE NSW
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities lead and preserve their cultural heritage
- TAFE NSW and local communities have a stronger connection



Pillar: Culture

Deliverable	Responsibility	Closing the Gap alignment	
a. Review and update Intellectual Property: Use of Indigenous Knowledge and Culture Policy to ensure alignment with the Aboriginal Quality Education Framework and Aboriginal guiding principles.	Chief Product & Quality Officer		SEO 16
b. Develop an Aboriginal Innovative Plan to guide the creation of new and innovative products to support Aboriginal students with digital literacy and innovation.	Chief Learning & Teaching Officer	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7
c. Develop Cultural Responsiveness Framework for creating Aboriginal cultural learning spaces to ensure these spaces are culturally responsive and supportive.	Chief Product & Quality Officer		SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7 SEO 15
d. Review, update and embed the Aboriginal Languages Guiding Principles to preserve and promote Aboriginal languages.	Chief Product & Quality Officer		SEO 16
e. Review, update and embed the Culturally Sensitive Emerging Technologies Guiding Principles to ensure emerging technologies are culturally appropriate.	Chief Product & Quality Officer	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7

Deliverable	Responsibility	Closing the Gap alignment	
f. Review, update and embed the Aboriginal Cultural Learning Spaces Guiding Principles creating spaces that reflect Aboriginal cultural perspectives.	Chief Operating Officer	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7
g. Review, update and embed the Intellectual Property Aboriginal Guiding Principles to protect and respect Aboriginal intellectual property.	Chief Product & Quality Officer		SEO 16
h. Provide professional development programs for staff on cultural responsiveness to enhance employee cultural responsiveness and respect.	Chief People Officer	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7
i. Ensure Cultural Safety for students, employees and communities by creating culturally safe environments and following safe practices.	Chief People Officer	PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7
j. Train Aboriginal employees as coaches and mediators to enhance culturally appropriate employee support.	Chief People Officer		SEO 14

PR - Priority Reforms
SEO - Socio Economic Outcomes

Truth Telling Statement

For me, Closing the Gap is about breaking cycles and building real, sustainable opportunities, opportunities that are culturally safe, community led and grounded in truth. It's not about ticking boxes or meeting targets. It's about ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and students feel a genuine sense of belonging, that their identity is respected, and their contributions are valued at every level of TAFE NSW.

Throughout my journey at TAFE, I've experienced both deep pride and deep frustration. Pride when our culture is embraced and embedded meaningfully. Frustration when our voices are overlooked or our knowledge is treated as optional. True progress happens when we move from consultation to co-design, from aspiration to action. That's when cultural safety becomes more than a policy; it becomes a lived reality.

Our greatest opportunity lies in embedding Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing across the entire organisation, not just in isolated initiatives or when it's convenient. It means transforming leadership structures, acknowledging the cultural and colonial load many of us carry, and creating career pathways that are visible, supported and achievable.

Every one of us has the right to be at the table, to shape the decisions that shape our futures. Whether we're teaching in classrooms, supporting students, advocating for better systems or guiding our colleagues through change, every voice matters. Every act of truth-telling matters. This is how we close the gap: together, with integrity, from the ground up.

Beck Miles (she/her)
Darkinjung
TAFE NSW Alternative Dispute Resolution Specialist

“

True progress happens when we move from consultation to co-design, from aspiration to action.

”



Pillar: Outcomes

Achieving meaningful outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples is a key focus of the CTG Action Plan, presenting an opportunity to drive long-term social and economic change. By improving access, retention and completion rates in vocational education, we can create stronger pathways to sustainable employment, career progression and economic independence.

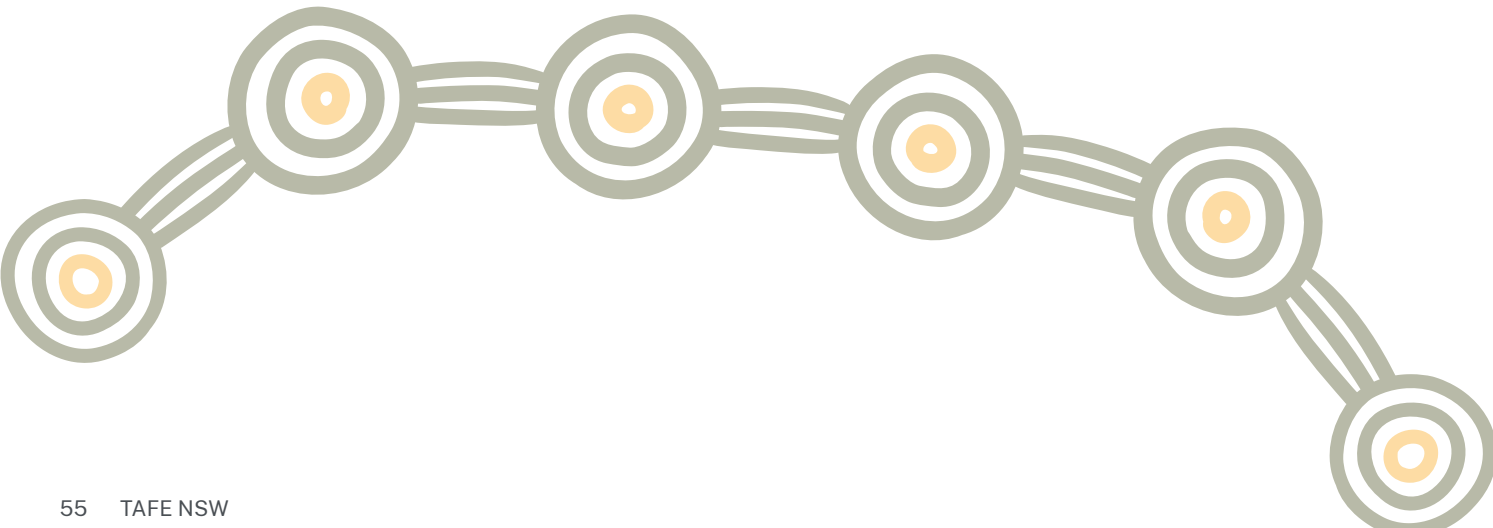
Measuring success must go beyond enrolment figures to include the quality of student experiences, cultural safety, and employment outcomes that align with individual and community aspirations. Through targeted strategies, accountability and ongoing collaboration, we can ensure that education and training lead to lasting, positive impacts for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, families and communities.

The strategic activities we are committed to delivering

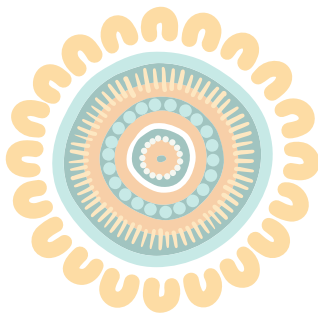
- Education and training, with a focus on skills development, flexible delivery, teaching approaches and support services
- Governance that supports change requirements and sector-wide approaches to Closing the Gap

The outcomes we want to achieve

- Aboriginal students’ increased job seeking in fields and emerging industries that lead to sustainable employment and business development.



Pillar: Outcomes



Deliverable	Responsibility	Closing the Gap alignment	
a. Develop an Aboriginal Outcomes Measurement Framework to support the TAFE NSW Closing the Gap Impact Measurement Statement by establishing data baselines for Priority Reforms and Socio Economic Outcomes to measure organisational progress on closing the gap.	Managing Director	All PRs	
b. Review current reporting methods and develop tools to align and report on student and community priorities and aspirations, focusing on data storytelling. Ensure that reporting provides a holistic view of outcomes, reflecting the true successes and priorities of students and communities.	Chief Student & Community Officer	PR 3 PR 4 PR 5	SEO 5 SEO 6 SEO 7 SEO 8 SEO 17
c. Develop data storytelling programs and pathways , providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities with access to regional and local data to support local decision-making and development.	Chief Information Officer	PR 3 PR 4	SEO 5 SEO 17
d. Develop a comprehensive framework for evaluating, reporting and improving the effectiveness of the CTG Action Plan and Aboriginal Empowerment and Excellence Model, ensuring alignment with all strategic activities and goals.	Managing Director	PR 3 PR 4	SEO 5 SEO 17
e. Embed a continuous Aboriginal community engagement and feedback strategy to ensure ongoing dialogue and influence in TAFE NSW's actions and decisions.	Chief Student & Community Officer	PR 3 PR 4	SEO 5 SEO 17

PR - Priority Reforms
SEO - Socio Economic Outcomes

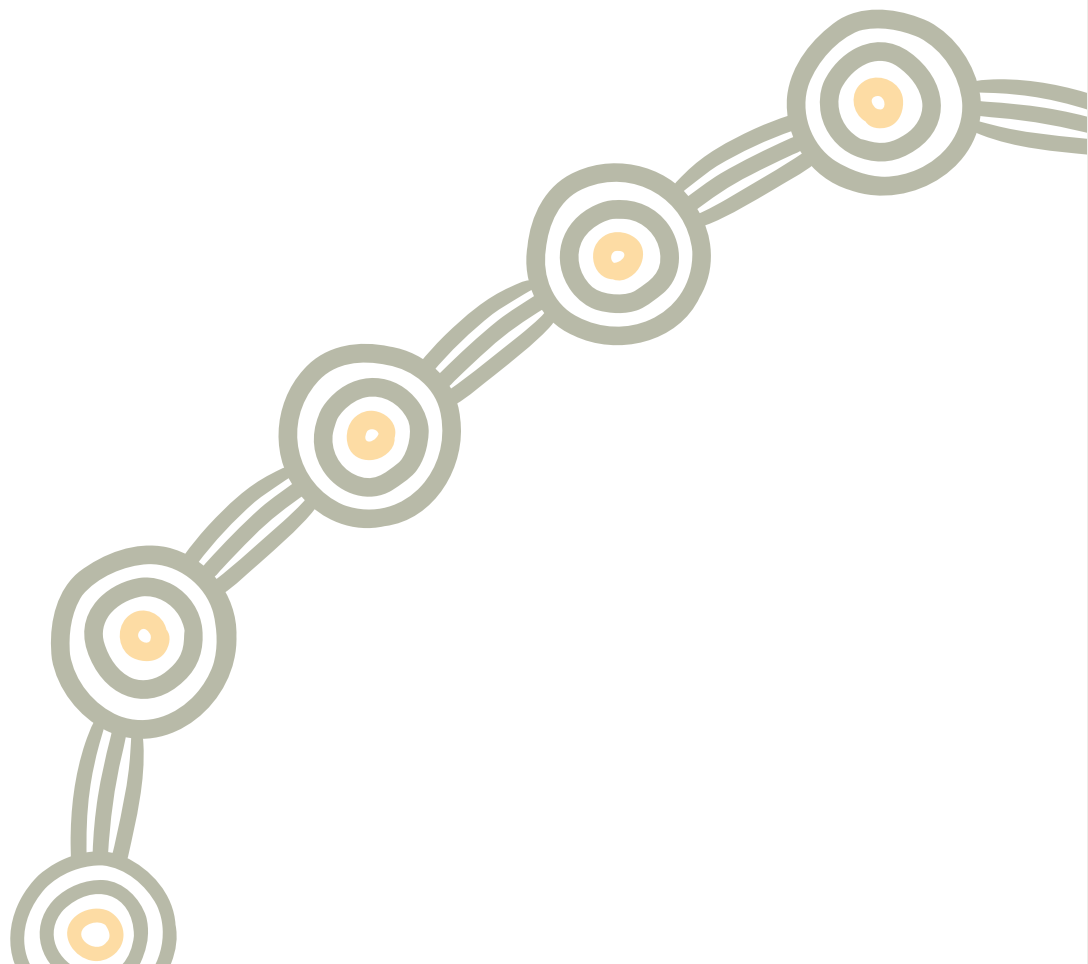


Reporting and measuring success

TAFE NSW is committed to transparency, accountability and continuous improvement throughout the duration of the CTG Action Plan. Measuring success requires a balanced approach that incorporates qualitative and quantitative data to ensure a comprehensive understanding of progress and impact.

Regular progress updates, community and staff surveys, and stakeholder feedback will provide critical qualitative insights, capturing lived experiences, challenges and achievements to ensure that initiatives remain responsive and effective. At the same time, quantitative data analysis will go beyond basic metrics, focusing on data storytelling to uncover trends, highlight systemic barriers and measure long-term outcomes. By aligning data collection with Closing the Gap Priority Reforms and Socio Economic Outcomes, TAFE NSW will track progress in a meaningful, actionable way that reflects real change.

Through this approach, we will ensure that the Closing the Gap commitments are not just aspirational but tangible, measurable and accountable—driving ongoing transformation that truly benefits Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, employees and communities.



Measures of success

Percentage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and communities that feel:

Education and training
<ul style="list-style-type: none">TAFE NSW courses/programs fulfil individual and community aspirationsTAFE NSW supports employment opportunities for individuals and communitiesTAFE NSW is a culturally safe environment
Engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none">TAFE NSW supports community connection and self-determinationTAFE NSW supports employment opportunities for individuals and communities
Culture
<ul style="list-style-type: none">TAFE NSW is a culturally safe environmentTAFE NSW supports language revitalisation and cultural preservation
Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">TAFE NSW courses/programs fulfil individual and community aspirations

Recognition of contribution

The development of the TAFE NSW CTG Action Plan has been a deeply collaborative effort, shaped by the voices, expertise and lived experiences of key Aboriginal stakeholders. Guided by the TAFE NSW CTG Steering Committee, Aboriginal Strategic Leadership Group, Aboriginal Staff, and TAFE NSW Aboriginal Advisory Council, this plan reflects a shared commitment to driving meaningful and lasting change.

Building on the groundwork laid through the Aboriginal Support Structure Review, Reconciliation Action Plans and the TAFE NSW Strategic Plan, this action plan represents the next phase in our journey towards equity and empowerment.

Each initiative has contributed valuable insights, reinforcing the need for culturally responsive policies, strengthened Aboriginal leadership and sustainable pathways to success.

By embedding this collaborative approach, TAFE NSW will ensure the CTG Action Plan remains a living, evolving framework—one that is grounded in accountability, partnership, and the collective ambition to transform education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.



This document has been endorsed by the Centre For Accessibility Australia, and conforms with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2 to Level AA.



Glossary



Term	Definition
Aboriginal Empowerment and Excellence Model	A TAFE NSW framework guiding systemic change through Aboriginal-led, culturally responsive practices focused on improving education, employment and holistic outcomes
Aboriginal Ways of Working	Culturally grounded practices that reflect Aboriginal knowledge systems, values and relational approaches in decision-making, governance and service delivery
Culturally Safe Environment	A setting in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel respected, valued and free to express their cultural identity without fear of discrimination or harm
Co-design	A collaborative process that involves Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the planning, design and implementation of programs, services or policies that affect them
Coalition of Peaks	A representative body consisting of more than 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations that partner with Australian state and territory governments on Closing the Gap reforms
Confirmation of Aboriginality	A formal process that verifies an individual's Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identity, which is often required to access specific programs or support services
Cultural capability	An individual or organisation's ability to respectfully and effectively engage with people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
Cultural protocols	Customary rules and practices that guide respectful interactions and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
Data sovereignty	The right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to govern the collection, access and use of data about their communities in a way that aligns with their values and priorities
Equity	Fairness in access to opportunities and resources, ensuring that individuals and communities receive the specific supports they need to achieve equal outcomes
Horizon Approach	A phased framework guiding the long-term implementation of the CTG Action Plan, from strategic alignment (Horizon 1) to systemic transformation (Horizon 3) and continuous improvement (Horizon 5)

Term	Definition
Intersectionality	An approach recognising that individuals can experience multiple and overlapping forms of discrimination or disadvantage based on race, gender, disability status, sexual orientation and other identities
National Agreement on Closing the Gap	The formal agreement between state and territory governments and the Coalition of Peaks, outlining four Priority Reforms and 17 Socio Economic Outcomes to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
NSW Closing the Gap Implementation Plan	The NSW Government's roadmap for meeting the goals of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap through targeted reforms and investments
Priority Reforms	Four key areas in the National Agreement on Closing the Gap aimed at transforming systems to support Aboriginal-led solutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PR 1: Formal partnerships and shared decision-making ▪ PR 2: Building the community-controlled sector ▪ PR 3: Transforming government organisations ▪ PR 4: Shared access to data and information The NSW Government added a fifth PR: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PR5: Employment, business growth and economic prosperity
Self-determination	The right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to freely determine their political status; pursue economic, social and cultural development; and make decisions about their futures
Socio Economic Outcomes	A set of 17 national targets under the Closing the Gap framework aimed at improving wellbeing in education, employment, housing, justice and cultural preservation
TAFE NSW Charter	The guiding document outlining TAFE NSW's mission, vision and responsibilities, including its commitments to accessibility, equity and community-focused education
Truth-telling	An honest, respectful sharing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's historical and lived experiences, acknowledging past injustices and enabling healing and reconciliation
Vocational education and training (VET)	Education and training that equips learners with skills and knowledge for work, encompassing certificates, diplomas and apprenticeships across various industries

For more information:

🔍 [TAFE NSW Closing the Gap Action Plan 2025-2028](#)