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New report highlights importance of Indigenous-led solutions to improve outcomes: Jesuit Social Services

A new Productivity Commission report measuring the wellbeing of Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people demonstrates that Indigenous communities and organisations must be central to designing and implementing solutions to ultimately help people thrive, says Jesuit Social Services.

“The Productivity Commission’s report into Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage shows us that too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are experiencing disadvantage. The number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children taken into out-of-home care has tripled over the past four years. This can often set people onto a sad trajectory of serious problems including poor mental health, substance abuse problems and contact with the prison system, the rates of which have increased over the same timeframe,” says Jesuit Social Services CEO Julie Edwards.

“All Australians deserve the opportunity to flourish and reach their potential, but there have been a number of policy failures that have exacerbated the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the rest of the Australian population over the past decade.”

Jesuit Social Services has long advocated for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have greater ownership over the Federal Closing the Gap initiative, which aims to reduce disadvantage among Indigenous people and communities. The 2019 Closing the Gap report found that only two of seven targets were on track.

“In July this year, a new National Agreement on Closing the Gap was struck. This new agreement has been developed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations, and includes new targets including a commitment to reduce the number of Indigenous people in our criminal justice system. This is significant because it places Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, strengths and decision-making at the fore of influencing priority areas for reform and ultimately improving outcomes for people and communities,” says Ms Edwards.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations have also played a critical role in the development of four new Priority Reforms which will build and strengthen community-controlled organisations to deliver services and programs.”

The Productivity Commission report shows positive progress being made in areas including early child development and economic participation, including employment.

“This highlights the strengths and capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. With communities and organisations having greater ownership over Closing the Gap targets and priorities, we look forward to positive progress being made towards many other targets in years to come.

“Strengthening outcomes for Indigenous people creates a stronger, more cohesive society for all.”

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