



Australian Government



National Commission for
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Children and Young People

CORPORATE PLAN 2026—27



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People (the National Commission) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continued care of and connection to land, water, culture and community. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures, and Elders both past and present.

The National Commission operates throughout Australia, including through offices on the lands of the Ngunnawal, Ngambri, Wiradjuri, Turrbal, Jagera, Muwinina, Kurna, and Wurundjeri Peoples.

Acknowledgement of people with lived experience

The National Commission acknowledges and thanks all children and young people with lived experience who share their stories, insights, and perspectives.

We honour the strength, resilience, and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and we commit to listening deeply, walking alongside, and amplifying their voices in all aspects of our work.

The National Commission defines children and young people as aged 0–24, in line with the *National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Act 2026*.

Note on language

The terms *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander*, *First Nations*, *First Peoples*, and *Indigenous* are used respectfully and interchangeably throughout this document when referring to First Peoples of Australia. These terms are used to respectfully encompass the diversity of cultures, identities, and preferences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Statement of Preparation

I, Sue-Anne Hunter, as the accountable authority of the National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, present the National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People's 2026–27 corporate plan, which covers the period 2026–27 to 2029–30, as required under paragraph 35(1)(b) of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Act 2013* and in accordance with section 16E of the *Public Governance, Performance and Accountability Rule 2014* (PGPA Rule).



Sue-Anne Hunter

National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

21 August 2026



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NATIONAL COMMISSIONER'S FOREWORD

As the Inaugural National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People, it is my honour to present the 2026–27 Corporate Plan for the National Commission. It is the first since I began this role in September 2025, and I am pleased to share my vision and forward plan for my office.

As a Wurundjeri and Ngurai Illum Wurrung woman who grew up strong in my culture and served in sectors dedicated to our children and families – and as a mother – I understand the immense importance of fighting to keep kids connected to their family, community, and culture. And I understand what it takes.

The most important knowledge I bring to this role is that none of this is possible without building around children and young people – they are at the centre of everything we do. My approach is grounded in the understanding that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are rights-holders, inheritors of cultural knowledge, and leaders and experts in their own right. They are starting their journey, but they know better than anyone what it is like to be a young First Nations person today. The National Commission is for them. And we know that what benefits our children will benefit our society for generations to come.

This Corporate Plan comes at a historic moment. On 26 March 2026, the *National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Act 2026* received royal assent, establishing the National Commission as an independent statutory body. The Act came into effect on 1 July 2026, endowing the role with statutory powers and functions to drive accountability across Australia. More than that, it served as recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people deserve a national representative with the authority, permanence, and power to champion their rights, amplify their voices, and put their needs front and centre on the national stage. It represents the culmination of decades-long efforts by First Peoples to secure the federal backing we always knew our children deserved.

The passage of primary legislation and transition to a statutory model marks the end of the provisional chapter and opens the door to sustained meaningful impact. In the first year of this plan, we will prioritise strong engagement through building trust and pathways for children and young people to lead and contribute in ways that are safe, culturally grounded, and empowering – developing skills, knowledge, and experience that will serve them on their own paths and in their future endeavours. We will provide advice to government that reflects the voices of First Nations children and young people and raises expectations for systemic transformation grounded in rights, evidence, self-determination, and lived experience.

Enhancing national coordination remains central to our approach. No single office, program, or government can transform the lived realities of children and young people on its own. Real, lasting change across jurisdictions, sectors, and policy silos demands alignment, shared responsibility, and collective effort. The National Commission exists in a landscape where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, communities, organisations, and independent officeholders already lead vital work for children and young people, from the grassroots to the halls of democracy. Our role is to support and coordinate efforts across this landscape in ways that respect that leadership and build collective impact.

As we look ahead, I know that – together with children, families, communities, and stakeholders – we can turn aspirations into action and results. There is no shortage of challenges, and the statistics are inexcusable. But that is only part of the story. Our children are so much more than numbers can convey. They are born from hundreds of years of resilience and the timeless history of our cultures. Their potential is endless and their rights are non-negotiable. I look forward to nothing more than continuing to work alongside them for their future.

Sue-Anne Hunter

National Commissioner for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People

ABOUT THE NATIONAL COMMISSION

Our Purpose

The National Commission's purpose is to promote and advance the rights, interests, and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, consistent with international human rights instruments and First Peoples' ways of being, knowing, and doing.

We do this by empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to understand their rights, assert their voices, and inform our work; by carrying out independent inquiries, providing advice and advocacy to strengthen government accountability; and by enhancing national coordination on systemic issues to address accountability gaps.

Human Rights Framework

The National Commission's approach integrates Australia's international human rights obligations into our operations, as required by the *National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Act 2026*.

Our human rights approach is grounded in the following principles found in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

- **Self-determination:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development (UNDRIP Article 3).
- **Best interests of the child:** In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration (CRC Article 3).
- **Non-discrimination:** Rights apply to all children without discrimination, including on the basis of race, disability, or other status (CRC Article 2).
- **Right to life, survival and development:** Every child has the inherent right to life, and states shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child (CRC Article 6).
- **Participation:** Children have the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them, with those views given due weight (CRC Article 12).
- **Cultural rights:** Indigenous children have the right to enjoy their own culture, profess and practice their own religion, and use their own language (CRC Article 30).

The National Commission recognises that the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are indivisible – the right to health cannot be separated from the right to family, culture, and Country. Similarly, child protection cannot be separated from health, education, and community wellbeing. Our approach reflects this holistic understanding.



Core instruments and standards that guide and inform our work

CORE HUMAN RIGHTS TREATIES

INSTRUMENT	STATUS
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)	Ratified
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)	Ratified
Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)	Ratified
Convention Against Torture (CAT)	Ratified
Optional Protocol on the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT)	Ratified
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	Ratified

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

INSTRUMENT	STATUS
Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Ratified
Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children	Ratified
Optional Protocol to the CRC on Armed Conflict	Ratified
Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure	Not Ratified

INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

INSTRUMENT	STATUS
Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples	Endorsed
International Labour Organisation Convention on Indigenous Peoples	Not Ratified



INTERPRETIVE GUIDANCE

COMMITTEE	GENERAL COMMENT OR RECOMMENDATION
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	23: Rights of Indigenous Peoples
Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	31: Racial Discrimination in the Criminal Justice System
Committee on the Rights of the Child	11: Rights of Indigenous Children
Committee on the Rights of the Child	5: General measures of implementation
Committee on the Rights of the Child	13: Freedom from Violence
Committee on the Rights of the Child	14: Best Interests of the Child
Committee on the Rights of the Child	20: Rights During Adolescence
Committee on the Rights of the Child	24: Rights in the Justice System

RULES AND GUIDELINES

Minimum Rules for Juvenile Justice Administration (Beijing Rules)

Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Liberty (Havana Rules)

Standard Minimum Rules for Non-Custodial Measures (Tokyo Rules)

Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners (Bangkok Rules)

Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (Mandela Rules)

Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (Riyadh Guidelines)

Guidelines on Justice in Matters involving Child Victims

Guidelines on Access to Legal Aid Legal Aid

Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children

OUR KEY ACTIVITIES

The National Commission will continue to focus on three key activities with the aim of improving accountability and driving long-term, tangible, and systemic change.

1. Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to understand their rights, assert their voices, and inform our work.
2. Carrying out independent inquiries and providing advice and advocacy to strengthen government accountability.
3. Enhancing national coordination on systemic issues to address accountability gaps.

Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to understand their rights, assert their voices, and inform our work

The National Commission will prioritise the meaningful participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people as a foundation of our work. The focus in this reporting period will be on ways to embed children and young people's voices, leadership, and expertise into the National Commission's ongoing priorities and outputs. In addition, we will support children and young people to understand and engage with their rights.

We know that policy decisions affecting children and young people are most effective when they centre the perspectives and lived experience of children and young people. Being heard on issues that affect them and having their input taken seriously is also their right under international law.

Engagement with children and young people will be guided by the principles of respect, safety, equity, strength, and accountability. We will work with children and young people in ways that recognise their diversity, strengths, and existing leadership, and that support them to shape narratives, priorities, and solutions on issues that affect them. We will also work to increase children and young people's awareness of their rights, help them understand how they can engage with rights-based processes, and support young leaders who advocate for their peers and communities.

We will engage with a diverse range of children and young people through a variety of mechanisms, including partnerships with existing youth-led and community-based initiatives, engagement at forums and events, and collaboration with jurisdictional counterparts. Children and young people will be supported to see how their contributions inform advice, advocacy, and action, strengthening transparency and trust.

We will further embed a national youth engagement model that is youth-led, co-designed, and sustainable, and that supports children and young people to participate in policy advice, reform conversations, and strategic planning in developmentally appropriate ways that align with their priorities and aspirations.



Carrying out independent inquiries and providing advice and advocacy to strengthen government accountability

Providing authoritative, independent advice to government will remain a central function of the National Commission in this reporting period. This advice will be shaped by the voices and lived experience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, evidence, human rights, and systemic analysis. Public advocacy will also represent a core component of our work to improve accountability to upholding and protecting the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people.

We will provide advice through a range of mechanisms, including submissions, inquiries, reports, direct engagement with ministers and officials, and public commentary. This includes exercising statutory powers for gathering information, conducting inquiries, and tabling reports.

Advice will focus on identifying and addressing accountability gaps, highlighting violations of Australia's human rights obligations, and making recommendations to improve government accountability. We will work internationally, to inform expert international advice, and domestically, to promote a national focus on child rights.

Children and young people's perspectives will inform how issues are framed, the narratives that are challenged, and the solutions that are proposed. This will include supporting children and young people to influence national conversations on matters affecting them and ensuring their insights inform our policy positions, theories of change, and reform roadmaps.

Our social media presence allows us to engage with young people over 16, as well as families, communities, and stakeholders across sectors and jurisdictions. Alongside our website, this provides an avenue for advocacy, education, and relationship building.

Enhancing national coordination on systemic issues to address accountability gaps

The National Commission will continue to play a coordinating role within a complex national landscape involving multiple jurisdictions, systems, and stakeholders. The focus will be on strengthening shared responsibility, sustaining a national focus on child rights, and driving greater accountability for the impact on, and for improving the outcomes for, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, of government policies, programs and services.

This work supports Australia's commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, with a focus on addressing the accountability gap identified by the Productivity Commission's 2024 Review of the National Agreement.¹ We will also continue to enhance coordination between civil society and government and promote a nationally consistent approach to child rights and accountability across jurisdictions and sectors.

We will build on established relationships with state and territory children's commissioners, guardians, and advocates, including through the National Commissioner's role as Co-Chair of the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ANZCCGA). This work will support collective priority-setting, coordinated advocacy, aligned advice to government, and shared approaches to cross-jurisdictional issues.

We will also continue to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, peak bodies, leaders, research institutions, and advisory bodies, recognising their leadership and expertise and avoiding duplication of work. By mapping existing systems, stakeholders and reform initiatives, the National Commission will be informed on where we can add value, strengthen collaboration and help overcome barriers to change.



OPERATING CONTEXT

Environment

Accountability gaps

The National Commission operates in a national policy and service environment in which there is broad, public recognition that systems are failing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people – particularly children and young people. However, structural reform remains slow and inconsistent, despite established evidence about what works and the ready willingness of communities to drive their own solutions.

Compared to their non-Indigenous peers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are 11 times more likely to be in out-of-home care² and 27 times more likely to be incarcerated.³ Reform efforts remain uneven and constrained by accountability gaps – National commitments alone are not sufficient. A coordinated, sustained, national focus and a rights-based approach is needed to strengthen systems through self-determination and community control.

National Coordination

Responsibility for policy, service delivery, and legislation is distributed across multiple jurisdictions and portfolios. Differences across jurisdictions can limit national coordination and the comparability of data, making it difficult to track progress and accountability.

National frameworks can support consistent approaches, but, without strong accountability settings they can also become forums without follow-through. Clear lines of responsibility are necessary for establishing and strengthening a coherent, rights-based approach across jurisdictions.

Ultimately, it is Australia's responsibility under international law to meet its human rights obligations. The National Commission will continue to drive a national focus on implementing and upholding the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, as well as working with our jurisdictional counterparts to ensure effective and consistent integration across jurisdictions.

Community sector

Across government and non-government systems, repeated inquiries, consultations, and strategic resets can stall momentum. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have repeatedly contributed knowledge and leadership that has not been followed through with changes in implementation or improvement in outcomes. In this context, the National Commission's role is to prioritise accountability for the implementation and meaningful impact of reforms.

Public discourse

Discourse surrounding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people has the power to support or obstruct meaningful reform. Rights- and strengths-based messaging is essential for driving improvements in policy and legislation, as well as supporting the wellbeing of children and young people. This includes increasing awareness and knowledge of child rights across government, civil society, and the public, as well as among children and young people themselves. A national focus on the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people is emerging, but it must be strengthened and sustained long-term to support rights-based reform.



National frameworks

National frameworks and partnerships create opportunities for aligning actions, strengthening accountability, and embedding shared decision-making.

- **The National Agreement on Closing the Gap** provides an overarching architecture for reform and accountability, including Priority Reforms to change the way governments work with and support First Nations peoples.
- **National Programs and Frameworks** such as Connected Beginnings and the Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO) Leadership Transition Framework aim to ensure that children thrive in their early years and that communities are supported to lead.
- **Safe and Supported** provides a long-term framework for child wellbeing and protection.
- **Policy Partnerships** such as the Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership and the Justice Policy Partnership seek to shape reform agendas.

The National Commission will continue to promote a rights-based approach to these initiatives and their associated reforms, as well as strengthening the expectation that commitments are implemented with transparency and measurable progress.

International scrutiny

International human rights mechanisms provide external scrutiny of Australia's treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. Australia's periodic reporting processes and engagement with international bodies highlight gaps between international obligations and domestic practice – particularly the absence of comprehensive incorporation of child rights into domestic law. Youth justice has emerged as a prominent theme in Australia's recent international scrutiny.

- On 12 December 2025, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded its visit to Australia with preliminary findings expressing concern at the overrepresentation of First Nations young people in the criminal justice system, the use of isolation, spit hoods, restraints, adult facilities, and adult sentencing practices, and described Australia's low age of criminal responsibility as a 'violation of fundamental human rights norms'.⁴ The Working Group called on Australia to take urgent action to address these issues.
- At Australia's Universal Periodic Review on 26 January 2026, United Nations member states provided a number of recommendations, including to end the use of solitary confinement for children, prohibit the detention of children in adult facilities, harmonise the juvenile justice system with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and ensure children's rights to family and cultural identity are fully protected.⁵ 26 member states recommended raising the age of criminal responsibility. While Australia accepted some recommendations, such as those relating to Closing the Gap, it did not accept those necessary for driving meaningful progress, such as raising the age of criminal responsibility and strengthening legal rights mechanisms. These remain outstanding recommendations across several international human rights bodies with which Australia engages.
- On 5 May 2026, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) issued a statement under its early warning and urgent actions procedures, expressing alarm about the overrepresentation of Indigenous children in the criminal justice system as a result of systematic and structural racial discrimination.⁶ The Committee urged Australia to respect its international law obligations, intensify efforts to eliminate racial discrimination against First Nations children, and fully align domestic legislation with international human rights principles and objectives.

Australia is also currently preparing for its review under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is due to take place in 2027. The National Commission engages with international mechanisms to strengthen domestic accountability and support the application of international standards in Australian policy, legislation, and systems.



Collective advocacy

Collective advocacy and coordinated leadership across jurisdictions and sectors strengthen the conditions for accountability and reform. The longstanding advocacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and leaders remains a critical driver of change, and facilitating strong relationships and sustained coordination across these sectors and communities is critical to translating commitments into action.

Capability

The National Commission's capability is shaped by its purpose to operate as an independent, rights-based accountability body, working across complex systems, jurisdictions, and policy landscapes. This is supported by the National Commissioner's powers and functions, as set out in the *National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Act 2026*. Our capability is also defined by how we work, the values that guide our operations, and our ability to adapt as our role continues to evolve.

The National Commission is supported by a multidisciplinary workforce with experience across policy, governance, legal, engagement, communications, and leadership. Our workforce model is designed to remain flexible and responsive, enabling us to adjust our mix of skills, roles, and expertise in line with emerging priorities and resourcing.

We prioritise culturally responsive, child safe, place-based, and rights-based ways of working, with attention to cultural protocols, recognising that how we operate is important in enabling what we deliver. The National Commission complies with the National Child Safe Standards, which provide a framework for ensuring the safety of children in organisations, and the Commonwealth Child Safe Framework, which is a whole-of-government policy that sets minimum standards for Australian Government entities to create and maintain child safe culture and practices.

Our staff are supported to work collaboratively across functions and engage respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, communities, governments, and stakeholders.

We are committed to building and sustaining capability over time, including through learning, reflection, and continuous improvement. This includes continuing to strengthen our ability to:

- engage meaningfully and safely with children and young people
- provide high-quality, independent advice grounded in rights, evidence, and lived experience
- work collaboratively across jurisdictions and sectors
- operate with transparency, integrity, and accountability.

Corporate, Governance, and Operational Support

The National Commission is supported through a shared services arrangement with the Department of Social Services, which provides corporate, financial, human resources, information technology, and other enabling functions. These arrangements support compliance with legislative and governance requirements while allowing us to focus more of our internal capability on delivering our core functions.

Governance, risk management, and integrity are embedded across the National Commission and overseen by the National Commissioner as the accountable authority, with support from the Governance team.



Enquiries

Anyone can contact the National Commission with an enquiry via our website. We maintain strong principles and procedures to ensure that all enquiries are managed responsibly and respectfully to guide individuals towards appropriate supports. Our staff receive training to respond with empathy and uphold the dignity and privacy of those who reach out.

Enquiries also support the receipt of information that may inform systemic issues and reform priorities, consistent with the National Commission's information-handling powers and confidentiality obligations.

Outcome Statement

Documented in our Portfolio Budget Statement for the Social Services portfolio, the National Commission is responsible for the outcome:

Amplifying the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, by providing strategic, independent and impartial advice about policy, reforms and services, and promoting and enhancing coordination on matters related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Functions

The National Commissioner has the following general functions:

- a.** to promote, and enhance coordination among Australian government entities and officials of, efforts to identify and recommend solutions to systemic issues that affect the rights, interests, development, safety or wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- b.** to provide advice to the Commonwealth on matters affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, in relation to developing and delivering policies, programs and services
- c.** to undertake and commission research into systemic issues and barriers that affect the rights, interests, development, safety or wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, including as a result of regulatory activities and the developing and delivering of policies, programs and services
- d.** to provide and commission educational programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people with the goal of empowering them to promote, and to advocate for the incorporation of, their views, needs and experiences on matters that affect them in the development and delivery of policies and programs by, and advice to, the Commonwealth
- e.** to undertake public advocacy to promote the rights, interests, development, safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people, and to amplify their voices and strengths
- f.** to engage with a broad range of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people throughout Australia, including in remote areas, and to support them to understand and assert their rights, agency and leadership
- g.** any other function conferred on the National Commissioner by the *National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Act 2026*, or any other Act.



The National Commissioner also has the following functions:

- a.** to conduct research and inquire into matters relating to, or for the purposes of, the general functions, and to make recommendations in relation to those matters
- b.** to accept a referral of a matter relating to the general functions
- c.** to refer matters to another entity
- d.** to contribute to inquiries into matters relating to the general functions
- e.** to provide advisory services
- f.** to collaborate with the Australian Human Rights Commission and other organisations and institutions on matters relating to the general functions
- g.** to engage with international human rights mechanisms, including relevant United Nations bodies, rapporteurs and procedures, for the purposes of providing information, research or advice on matters relating to the general functions
- h.** anything incidental or conducive to the performance of any of the functions.

Risk

The National Commission operates in a complex environment that presents strategic, operational, reputational, and integrity risks. These risks arise from the nature of our mandate, the systems we seek to influence, community and stakeholder expectations, and the broader policy and political context in which we operate.

Effective risk management supports sound decision-making, organisational resilience, and the delivery of our purpose. We take a proactive and proportionate approach to identifying, managing, and monitoring risks across all aspects of our work.

Risk Governance

The National Commissioner, as the accountable authority, is responsible for ensuring that appropriate systems of risk oversight, management, and internal control are in place. Risk considerations are integrated into strategic planning, operational decision making, engagement activities, advice to government, and organisational capability development.

The National Commission's approach to risk management aligns with the Commonwealth Risk Management Policy and is designed to be flexible and fit for purpose. Risks are identified and assessed with regard to likelihood and consequence, and are managed through a combination of preventative controls, mitigation strategies, and ongoing monitoring.

Risk management is embedded across the National Commission. Staff are encouraged and supported to identify risks early, exercise professional judgement, and contribute to continuous improvement in risk awareness and management.

The National Commission is also supported by an Audit and Risk Committee, which includes independent oversight of financial reporting, risk management, and internal controls.

Key Risk Areas

The National Commission has identified a number of key risk areas that may affect our ability to fulfil our purpose and carry out our key activities. These are outlined below alongside corresponding mitigation strategies.



Risk	Mitigations
Mandate and role clarity The National Commission's role, functions, or authority are misunderstood or misaligned across governments, stakeholders, or the public	• Clearly articulate purpose, functions, and mandate through public materials and engagement. • Align priorities and activities to purpose and governing instruments, ensuring staff are equipped to understand the National Commission's objectives. • Maintain regular engagement with government and key stakeholders to manage expectations.
Independence and trust The National Commission's independence, credibility, or integrity is perceived to be compromised, including through fraud or corruption.	• Maintain robust governance, integrity, fraud, corruption, and conflict-of-interest arrangements and control plans. • Ensure transparency in decision-making and public commentary. • Uphold the National Commission's values and ethical standards across all activities, including training, reinforcing a culture of accountability.
Engagement related harm Reputational harm due to engagement with children and young people causing harm, traumatising, or consultation burden.	• Apply culturally responsive, child safe, and rights-based engagement practices and procedures. • Coordinate engagement with jurisdictional and community partners, incorporating place-based knowledge and expertise. • Close feedback loops and communicate how contributions have informed action.
Failure to reflect perspectives Reputational harm due to children and young people's perspectives are not meaningfully reflected in advice, advocacy, or priorities.	• Embed participation principles across planning and decision-making. • Use different engagement and accountability mechanisms to capture diverse voices and feedback. • Regularly test alignment between engagement insights and outputs.
Information and privacy Protected or sensitive information is used inappropriately or insufficiently safeguarded.	• Apply information management and privacy frameworks aligned with legislated standards and investigate options to improve alignment with Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles. • Promote staff awareness of data handling and security responsibilities. • Maintain a child safety framework aligned with mandatory reporting and child protection requirements.
Compliance and governance The National Commission is not compliant with legislative, policy, or administrative requirements.	• Maintain fit-for-purpose governance, policies, and procedures. • Regularly review compliance obligations and controls. • Seek assurance and advice through appropriate oversight mechanisms.



Cooperation and collaboration

The National Commission collaborates with a variety of stakeholders to hear community perspectives, align priorities, and work together to drive greater accountability and systemic change. This ranges from direct engagement with children, young people, and communities, to consultation and collaboration with non-government organisations, frontline services, and policy leadership groups. We also work with national and international human rights bodies, research institutions, and other stakeholders whose work complements or aligns with our own. We meet with elected officials and government representatives to provide advice and discuss opportunities for reform.

Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates

The National Commissioner is Co-Chair of the Australian and New Zealand Children's Commissioners, Guardians and Advocates (ANZCCGA) group, which comprises national, state and territory representatives. The functions and responsibilities of its members vary across roles and jurisdictions. However, through ANZCCGA, there is a shared common purpose to protect and promote the rights, interests and wellbeing of children and young people in Australia and New Zealand. The National Commission provides the secretariat function for ANZCCGA, as well as contributing to knowledge sharing and collective advocacy on shared priorities.



PERFORMANCE

Our performance will focus on demonstrating that the National Commission is operating effectively and maturing as an organisation. This includes centring the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people; providing independent, credible advice to government; and strengthening coordination and collective impact across jurisdictions and systems.

These performance measures were developed with consideration of the National Commissioner's statutory functions and powers under the *National Commission for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Act 2026*. They emphasise the quality, influence, and integrity of our work. As such, they are expressed as staged maturity outcomes over the reporting period.

Performance maturity scale and definitions

The National Commission assesses progress using a 4-stage maturity scale from **in place** to **embedded**, **consistent** and, finally, **sustained**. This scale ensures that performance measurement assesses institutional strength, capability, and impact. The maturity targets provide a consistent basis for assessing progress over time while avoiding perverse incentives that can arise from volume-based targets – ensuring that quality, cultural safety, and accountability remain central to performance assessment.

Maturity scale

1. **In place:** foundational elements such as policies, frameworks, systems, and processes have been formally established and approved.
2. **Embedded:** elements are actively implemented and integrated into standard practice and routine operation.
3. **Consistent:** elements reliably produce documented outcomes across activities.
4. **Sustained:** elements meaningfully shape outcomes and continuously improve over a sustained period of time.

Other definitions

Diversity: includes First Nations children and/or young people with disability, from remote or regional communities, with first languages other than English, belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community, from low socio-economic backgrounds, and/or with lived-experience of youth justice or out-of-home care.

Intersectional: recognises that children and young people may have multiple, overlapping identities, experiences, and circumstances that interact to influence their opportunities, experiences of inclusion, and outcomes.

Government products: policy positions, priorities, frameworks, and proposals; inquiries, speeches, responses, and communiques; and other relevant products produced by state, territory, or Commonwealth governments and elected officials.

Major outputs: policy positions, priorities, inquiries, reports, education and communications products.



Key Activity 1: Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people to understand their rights, assert their voices, and inform our work

Performance measure	Engagement with children and young people is meaningful and accountable	Children and young people are supported to understand and assert their rights
2026–27 indicators of success	Engagement and accountability mechanisms are in place, supported by culturally responsive, child safe, and place-based approaches and appropriate cultural protocols. Documentation demonstrates that feedback processes have been applied to all major engagement activities.	Rights education approaches are in place and informed by children and young people. At least 1 rights education resource or activity is developed with input or feedback from children or young people.
2027–28 indicators of success	Engagement insights are embedded in the National Commission’s work. Documentation demonstrates how diverse and intersectional voices of children and young people have informed decision making, priorities, advice, publication and other commission outputs and activities.	Rights-based approaches are embedded across the National Commission’s work. A suite of rights-based educational resources, tools and pathways are made available and accessible to children and young people.
2028–29 indicators of success	Outputs are consistently informed by the voices and insights of children and young people engaged by the National Commission. At least 70% of major outputs draw on documented engagement insights and/or include review or feedback from children and young people where appropriate.	Children and young people are consistently supported to understand and assert their rights. A minimum of 3 rights-based education initiatives and programs provide opportunities for children and young people from diverse backgrounds to engage and participate.
2029–30 indicators of success	Children and young people are engaged through sustained and responsive mechanisms that support participation and leadership opportunities. Evidence demonstrates that children and young people contribute to the co-design, review and evaluation of National Commission priorities, activities and engagement approaches.	Rights education is sustained and strengthens children and young people’s agency and leadership over time. At least 1 established mechanism supports children or young people to lead peer engagement, advocacy, or rights-focused activities demonstrating improved understanding and outcomes.



Performance measure	Engagement with children and young people is meaningful and accountable	Children and young people are supported to understand and assert their rights
Basis of assessment	Records of engagement and feedback materials, cultural and place-based protocols, evidence of influence on outputs, and internal reviews of engagement activities.	Rights-based resources and materials, records of engagement and activities, communications content, evidence of input or feedback, records of participation and leadership opportunities, and internal reviews of rights education approaches and activities.



Key Activity 2: Carrying out independent inquiries and providing advice and advocacy to strengthen government accountability

Performance measure	Advice to government is high quality, influential, and reflects diverse voices	Information gathering and handling support advice and statutory reporting
2026–27 indicators of success	Processes are in place to ensure advice and/or planning reflects diverse and intersectional voices. At least 2 major outputs reflecting experiences and voices of a diverse range of children and young people.	Governance frameworks for information-gathering and handling are in place . At least 1 formal review completed against statutory requirements each year.
2027–28 indicators of success	Engagement insights are embedded in core documents and processes, and advice is increasingly sought by governments. Advice provided by the Commissioner on at least 8 occasions each year.	Processes are embedded in routine practice. Formal review indicates governance processes are effective and appropriate in practice.
2028–29 indicators of success	Advice consistently contributes to clearer stakeholder understanding of systemic issues. Stakeholders report advice from the National Commission is of high-quality.	Records demonstrate the consistent application and improvement of processes across the National Commission's work. Formal review documents consistency of compliance and improvement across all activities.
2029–30 indicators of success	The National Commission's advice sustains recognition as authoritative and influential in national dialogue. Indicators of success to be developed through a documented theory of change.	Consistency is sustained and processes continuously improved, including increased alignment with Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles, noting limitations due to provision of IT services to the Commission by DSS. Formal review demonstrates at least 1 initiative focused on Indigenous Data Sovereignty.
Basis of assessment	Submissions and reports, records of engagement with decision-makers and proactive government engagement, evidence of alignment between advice and reform discourse, and references to advice in relevant parliamentary or government materials.	Documented frameworks, procedures, and records demonstrating application of processes, evidence of quality assurance and improvement reviews.



Key Activity 3: Enhancing national coordination on systemic issues to address accountability gaps

Performance measure	Efforts to improve national coordination are effective	Contributions add value and enhance collective impact
2026–27 indicators of success	Relationships with national and jurisdictional counterparts are in place and regularly engaged. • ANZCCGA Secretariat function is established and operational.	Approaches are in place to ensure the National Commission complements existing work without duplication. • Research products map accountability gaps and identify at least 3 areas where the National Commission can add unique value.
2027–28 indicators of success	Shared priorities or positions are embedded across jurisdictions. • At least 2 strategies, policy positions, or priorities are co-developed and agreed across multiple jurisdictions.	Addressing identified national accountability gaps is embedded in National Commission project planning and delivery. • At least 1 project established to address identified accountability gaps.
2028–29 indicators of success	Cross-jurisdictional collaboration is consistently evident on issues of national concern. • Collaboration is evidenced by at least 2 joint initiatives on the same issue over 2+ consecutive years.	The work of the National Commission is consistently recognised as adding value and enhancing collective impact. • Stakeholders report that the National Commission adds distinct value and enhances national collective impact.
2029–30 indicators of success	Sustained coordination contributes to more consistent, rights-based national approaches. • At least 2 government products across jurisdictions document shifts towards rights-based approaches on a similar issue.	National Commission value and strengthened collective impact is sustained over time. • At least 2 outputs addressing national accountability gaps. • Agreed priorities and positions, and landscape mapping demonstrate continuous improvement in demonstrated alignment and perceived value for 2+ consecutive years.
Basis of assessment	Records of activities and meetings, joint statements and submissions, evidence of shared priorities across jurisdictions, and government products.	Stakeholder feedback, landscape analysis, ANZCCGA secretariat documentation, formal agreements, shared positions, and priorities.

Assessment and Reporting

Performance against these measures will be assessed annually and reported through the National Commission's Annual Report. Where measures include multiple forms of evidence, performance will be assessed holistically, with weight given to quality, accountability, and alignment with the National Commission's purpose. Measures and indicators will be reviewed periodically to ensure they remain fit for purpose and reflect any changes in the operating environment.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Australian Government Productivity Commission (2024), Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap: Study Report: Supporting Paper, <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/closing-the-gap-review/report>
- 2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2026). Child protection Australia 2023–24, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/child-protection-australia-2023-24/contents/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-children/out-of-home-care>
- 3 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2026). Youth justice in Australia 2023–24, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/youth-justice/youth-justice-in-australia-2023-24/contents/first-nations-young-people-under-supervision/first-nations-young-people-in-detention>
- 4 United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (2025). Preliminary Findings from its visit to Australia (1 to 12 December 2025), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/statements/20251212-eom-stm-australia-wg-arbitrary-detention-en.pdf>
- 5 United Nations Human Rights Council (2026). Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Australia, Advance edited version, UN Doc. A/HRC/62/13, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/62/13>
- 6 United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2026). Statement 1 (2026): Overrepresentation of Indigenous children in Australia’s criminal justice system, Advance unedited version, https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT/CERD/SWA/AUS/11498&Lang=en



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