



Government
of South Australia

Hon Chris Picton MP
Minister for Health
and Wellbeing

MHW-H25-3645

Mr Colin Marsh
Director First Nations Voice Secretariat
Attorney-General's Department
Email: voicesecretariat@sa.gov.au

Dear Mr Marsh

On the 19 May 2025, I attended the First Nations Voice Engagement Hearing, along with Department for Health and Wellbeing Chief Executive, Dr Robyn Lawrence.

I would like to thank the First Nations Voice for the invitation to attend this hearing I hope the information provided during the hearing was useful. During the hearing, I took two questions on notice, which I am now responding to:

Question 1 - How is the South Australian government measuring its progress in relation to life expectancy, healthy birthweight and early childhood development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities?

Life expectancy measures published by the Productivity Commission are based on the Census of Population and Housing, and the Census Post Enumeration Survey, death registration information provided by the State/Territory Registrars of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and the ABS Census Data Enhancement Indigenous Mortality Quality Study.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander estimates of life expectancy cannot be directly measured in SA due to the small number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander deaths reported.

Although we cannot measure it at the state level, the SA Government is committed to the socio-economic target of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long and healthy lives, through the delivery of culturally responsive healthcare for our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Our work is supported by the *SA Health Aboriginal Health Care Framework 2023-2031*.

The measures for healthy birthweight are sourced from the Australian Institute for Health and Welfare's National Perinatal Data Collection. The SA Department for Health and Wellbeing report all birth related data to the National Perinatal Data Collection.

For Early Childhood Development, the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a comprehensive measure of child development conducted every three years by the Australian Government, gathering information on more than 90% of Australia's children in their first year of full-time school.

It gives population level data on child development, grouped by domains:

- physical health and wellbeing;
- social competence;
- emotional maturity;
- language and cognitive skills (school based); and
- communication skills and general knowledge.

Target 4 of Closing the Gap is about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children thriving in their early years and refers to the AEDC as a measure of progress. The target is to increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children assessed as developmentally on track in all five domains of the AEDC to 55% by 2031.

The Office for Early Childhood Development use the census data to understand progress in relation to early childhood development for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Question 2 - How much of the health and wellbeing expenditure is specifically directed towards mental health, preventive care and chronic illness management, including palliative care?

The Department for Health and Wellbeing funds a range of programs targeted at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders across the areas of mental health, preventive care, chronic illness management and palliative care.

The Department's Aboriginal Health branch, has three priority areas for Aboriginal Health investment, being Child and Maternal Health, Chronic Disease and Social and Emotional Wellbeing. Aboriginal Health Branch has an annual allocation of up to \$3million for investment in Social and Emotional Wellbeing and up to \$2million for investment in the Chronic Disease priorities in Aboriginal Health.

The Aboriginal Health branch during 2024/25 expended \$1,028,700 for the delivery of the Beyond the Gap Program, a collaborative program between SA Pharmacy and Aboriginal Health Branch with a vision of Continuity in Medicines Management (CMM) for all Aboriginal people. The Beyond the Gap Program is an investment in Aboriginal Health which aims to improve health of Aboriginal people by improving health system performance, with a focus on continuity of care.

The Department's Mental Health Strategy and Planning branch, in partnership with the Commonwealth, has commissioned an all-ages Aboriginal Social and Emotional Wellbeing Centre in Adelaide, investing \$768,000 in 2024/25.

In addition, during 2024/25 the following mental health programs were delivered via the Local Health Networks:

- Northern Adelaide Local Health Network: Closing the Gap – Mental Health - \$262,000
- Southern Adelaide Local Health Network: Aboriginal Gambling – Mental Health - \$101,000
- Women's and Children's Health Network: Mental Health Services to APY Lands - \$716,000

The Health Services Planning Branch oversees the Department's investment in Palliative Care. As part of the Palliative Care Connect program being implemented in South Australia, through Commonwealth funding has invested in Aboriginal-specific palliative care navigation services and educational resources. To date, \$413,295 have been invested, with \$437,800 allocated for 2025-26.

In addition, Preventive Health SA delivers a range of grant programs to support prevention work and improve health outcomes, including:

- The Aboriginal Health and Health Equity Division administers two community grant programs each year. The 2024/2025 combined grant expenditure for both programs was \$288,864.80 and in 2023/2024 the combined grant expenditure was \$109,780.00.
- The Population Health Division provided grants totalling \$60,000 in 2023/24 to establish six Aboriginal specific Suicide Prevention Networks.
- In 2024/25, \$5,580 was provided for Mental Health First Aid Training to Miwi – Inyeri Pelepi – Ambi Aboriginal Corporation as part of the Suicide Prevention Community Grants Program.

If there are any other outstanding questions, or you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact my office on (08) 7117 6500.

Yours sincerely



Chris Picton MP
Minister for Health and Wellbeing

23/7 / 2025