

Supplementary Budget Estimates Opening Statement – 7 October 2025

National Indigenous Australians Agency, acting CEO, Julie-Ann Guivarra

Good morning, Chair and Senators

I begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians the Ngunnawal people and other families with connections to these lands. I pay my respects for their continued care and custodianship of country and culture.

I extend my respect to Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and to First Nations Senators and witnesses appearing today.

I am proud to be here as acting CEO of the National Indigenous Australians Agency. Before I provide an update on the work of the agency, I would like to acknowledge the leadership and commitment of Jody Broun, who stepped down as CEO at the end of August.

I am pleased to share with the Committee some key progress and achievements since Budget Estimates earlier this year.

Key deliveries and opportunities

The NIAA has continued to play a critical role in the development of policies and programs focused on improving outcomes for First Nations peoples across the country, including through the Closing the Gap framework.

The latest data update indicates we are making progress on key socio-economic targets, including in relation to preschool enrolments, employment, life expectancy and healthy birthweights.

However, there is more to be done to close the gap in life outcomes between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians, with some targets off-track or regressing. The NIAA will continue to work across the Commonwealth, all jurisdictions and with our First Nations partners to support critical initiatives and investments and drive meaningful change.

The NIAA is championing economic empowerment in remote communities through the Remote Jobs and Economic Development program, enacting the Government's commitment to create 3,000 jobs over 3 years. Across the first 2 grant rounds, around 650 applications were received, resulting in funding for 1,450 jobs with over 250 employers in remote communities.

On 1 November this year, we will formally launch the Remote Australia Employment Service. This program is designed to support job seekers in remote communities by building their skills, confidence, and readiness for local employment, and will service around 40,000 people across remote Australia.

More recently, we have participated in negotiations for the establishment of a new First Nations Economic Partnership, as a mechanism for shared decision-making about reforms to First Nations economic policy, leveraging the resources of government. On 29 September, the Treasurer, Minister for Indigenous Australians, the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance and the Coalition of Peaks signed the agreement, as a commitment to work together even more closely to deliver better economic outcomes for First Nations peoples.

The NIAA continues to lead the implementation of the Commonwealth's multi-year Central Australia Plan focused on youth, safety and community-led development. A key milestone has been the delivery of the Strengthening Community Leadership Program for leaders from Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, with the latest workshop held in Alice Springs on 17 and 18 September 2025. The program supports leaders to strengthen decision-making and manage risk, while offering opportunities for peer learning, networking and upskilling.

Another important step forward was the completion of the expansion of the Aboriginal Hostels Limited Ampere Mwere ['Upmerra merra'] Visitor Park in

Alice Springs, providing 20 additional emergency beds for women and children escaping family violence.

In the past 12 months, the NIAA has participated in finalising key agreements between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments, including the \$4 billion NT Remote Housing Package from 2024-25 to build up to 2700 homes over the next decade. In the first year of this investment, 222 homes were built across 30 communities and 3 town camps.

The NIAA is also working in partnership with the Northern Territory Government and Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory to progress funding schedules under the \$842.6 million Northern Territory Remote Aboriginal Investment Agreement, signed by the Prime Minister on 7 February this year. It represents a new way of delivering Commonwealth investment – one designed to bring the Priority Reforms to life and drive progress against the outcomes set out in the National Agreement.

We have finalised the National Strategy for Food Security and will continue to work with jurisdictions and the Aboriginal community-controlled health sector to develop governance arrangements and a Strategy action plan to coordinate investments and initiatives. Funding has also been committed to 23 remote community stores under the Store Efficiency and Resilience Package to improve store infrastructure and support more reliable access to food, helping ensure communities have greater, more consistent access to supplies.

The NIAA has also developed the Remote Stores Code of Practice and Low-cost Essentials Subsidy Scheme to support better access to affordable, healthy food in remote communities. Since applications opened on 1 July 2025, over 100 remote community stores have been approved to participate. Through this combined approach, the Scheme helps reduce the cost of 30 essential items, bringing prices closer to those in suburban supermarkets.

Building on these efforts to improve food access and affordability, the Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation has signed an agreement with the NIAA to lead the \$21.4 million First Nations Nutrition Workforce initiative. This initiative will support the establishment of a nutrition workforce of over 100 local First Nations staff in remote community stores.

We have expanded the Indigenous Rangers Program, implementing the Government's \$1.3 billion investment to 2028, creating up to 1,000 new jobs, with 111 new ranger projects, across all parts of Australia.

Early next year, the second and final round of the Indigenous Rangers Program expansion will see a surge in new ranger projects around Australia to create another 800 jobs, in support of the Government's commitment to employing 3,800 Indigenous rangers by 2030.

The NIAA has delivered programs that support reparations and healing, including the Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme, which provided \$120 million in payments to 1,470 applicants and delivered 100 Personal Acknowledgments as at 16 September 2025. Further, as part of the Youpla Support Program, the NIAA has provided over \$46 million to 9,923 people who were victims of the Youpla funeral insurance collapse, as at 30 June 2025.

Conclusion

At the NIAA, we continue to look for ways to improve our operations, capacity and capability to deliver the Government's agenda and ensure impact on the ground, in partnership with our stakeholders and the communities we serve.

Thank you. I welcome your questions.