Resetting the relationship with Aboriginal communities
2018 – 2019 UPDATE

In 2018-2019 the Tasmanian Government continued to deliver on its commitment to reset the relationship with Aboriginal communities. Work continued across Government to:

- improve access to Aboriginal specific programs, such as identifying and responding to family violence;
- increase employment and career development opportunities (for example through the Aboriginal Trainee Ranger Program and the Tasmania State Service Aboriginal Employment Strategy); and
- foster cultural respect in mainstream health settings (as envisioned through Tasmania’s implementation of the Cultural Respect Framework).

Moving forward, the key focus will continue to be on Closing the Gap Refresh, economic development including through procurement, joint land management, and land return arrangements that support Aboriginal people to connect to country and culture.

**Key Priority 1 - A new approach to Aboriginal Eligibility**

A new approach to Eligibility for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander specific programs and services commenced on 1 July 2016.

All Tasmanian Government agencies are working collaboratively to ensure a streamlined approach for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Tasmania when accessing programs and services.

This work has included several operational improvements such as the introduction of Agency Guidelines; introduction of a more user friendly Eligibility Form; changes to acceptable forms of communal recognition; the expansion of organisations that may provide communal recognition; and all relevant agencies accessing and using a central Aboriginal Eligibility Register since January 2018.

**Key Priority 2 - Focus on Tasmanian Aboriginal history and culture in the delivery of the Australian curriculum**

The Department of Education is leading the development and implementation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Histories and Cultures Framework. The Framework is underpinned by an online multimedia platform, which provides teachers with a bank of resources to support the Australian Curriculum’s cross-curriculum priority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures in Tasmanian classrooms.

The multimedia platform, known as ‘The Orb’ (www.theorb.tas.gov.au), is a resource that features Tasmanian Aboriginal voices.
sharing knowledge of people, community, identity, living culture, country, and place.

The Orb was officially launched on 15 August 2018.

Additional teaching resources have been developed and include illustrations of practice and lesson plans. They can all be accessed via The Orb.

The initial launch of The Orb included six multimedia Living Cultures teaching resources, specifically ochre, stone tools, dance, shelters, mutton birding and also fibres.

Living Cultures is also continuing to be enhanced. Professional learning and user support are currently focus tasks, and there will be ongoing staged releases of enhancements. Shell stringing and food were new additions in 2019.

Layers of Time is the next major component of The Orb and is currently under development. Connecting to Place, the third major component of The Orb, is in the planning phase.

Key Priority 3 - Constitutional recognition of Tasmanian Aboriginal people

An historic amendment to Tasmania’s Constitution to recognise Tasmanian Aboriginal people received Royal Assent on 15 December 2016.

This symbolic recognition of the First Tasmanians was consolidated by the formation of the Reconciliation Council of Tasmania.

Now called Reconciliation Tasmania, the council was supported by the Tasmanian Government in its establishment in August 2017. Reconciliation Tasmania is working to bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Tasmanians together in the spirit of reconciliation.

Key Priority 4 - Explore joint land management arrangements and review the current land return model

The review of the land return model commenced in late 2017. The release of a Discussion Paper to guide community consultations was put on hold in early 2018 on the advice of the Tasmanian Electoral Commissioner, until conclusion of the 2017-18 Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania (ALCT) elections.

During this time other work continued to progress the review, including a jurisdictional analysis on land return and management models in other jurisdictions.

Following the conclusion of the ALCT elections on 30 June 2018, the Department of Communities Tasmania released a Discussion Paper on 9 August 2018 for public comment and received 151 separate responses and submissions. The Consultation and Feedback Report: Improving the model for returning land to Aboriginal communities has been released and is available at www.aboriginalaffairs.tas.gov.au.

The Tasmanian Government is also continuing to progress Aboriginal joint management of reserved lands in Tasmania. A key objective of this work is close collaboration with Tasmanian Aboriginal people to ensure their ancestral knowledge, and past and current cultural practices are integral to informing the contemporary management of the Tasmanian landscape. The Aboriginal Heritage Council plays a key advisory role in this work.

Working on Country Aboriginal Trainee Rangers working for the Parks and Wildlife Service undertake six-month placements within Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania. Trainees acquire the technical skills required to identify and record Aboriginal heritage sites, and to more fully participate in the joint management of reserves.
This priority area is supported by:

- Funding of $200,000 per annum for joint management of reserved land, including a focus on the Aboriginal cultural values of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area; and
- $660,000 over four years from 2016-17 to employ two additional people under the Parks and Wildlife Service Aboriginal Trainee Ranger program.

**Key Priority Area 5 – Closing the Gap**

In December 2018, COAG agreed to a Closing the Gap Refresh framework intended to set the Closing the Gap agenda for the next ten years. In its official communiqué of this decision, COAG committed to a genuine, formal partnership between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and Indigenous Australians through their representatives.

Negotiations between COAG and a National Coalition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peak Bodies have resulted in two primary partnership mechanisms – a Joint Council on Closing the Gap and a formal written Partnership Agreement between COAG and the Peaks.

As a member of COAG, the Tasmanian Government is working with the Peaks and Tasmanian Aboriginal people, in conjunction with other jurisdictional governments, to progress the Refresh framework.

The Tasmanian Government continues to invest in activities that support COAG’s Closing the Gap agenda, including the following projects:

**Under the Aboriginal Family Safety Initiative**, Aboriginal Family Safety Workers, based in Child and Family Centres at Ravenswood, Burnie and Bridgewater engage with Aboriginal families, deliver activities that promote family safety and provide culturally appropriate support.

The Initiative also supported delivery of a pilot pre-employment training course for Aboriginal community members, which focused on working with families and developing capacity to support community members experiencing family violence.

The Initiative was allocated $333,340 over three years, from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

Support for Aboriginal families through the Aboriginal Family Safety Workers will continue under the new *Safe Homes, Families, Communities: Tasmania’s action plan for family and sexual violence 2019-2022*.

An **Aboriginal Employment Strategy** to 2022 has been developed for the Tasmanian State Service and is supported by an action plan outlining the actions to be delivered in the first 12 months of implementation.

This three year plan sets out a number of strategies to increase the proportion of Aboriginal people working in the Tasmanian State Service to 3.5%.

Key themes in the Strategy include: attracting more Aboriginal people to State Service jobs, developing and progressing the careers of existing Aboriginal employees, supporting culturally respectful workplaces and employing Aboriginal people to deliver culturally safe and inclusive services.

The Strategy was released in June 2019.

An **Aboriginal Procurement Policy** is being developed for Tasmanian Government agencies. It will help drive greater appreciation in Tasmania of the benefits of a vibrant Aboriginal business sector.

It will also encourage the establishment and growth of Aboriginal businesses in Tasmania and make Aboriginal businesses more aware of the
wide range of goods and services that government agencies procure.

In 2018-19 the Tasmanian Government provided further support to the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania for the **wukalina Cultural Walk** from **krakami lumi** in Mt William National Park to **larapuna** (Eddystone Point).

This signature tourism experience has completed its second season, showcasing the cultural and natural values of North-Eastern Tasmania and delivering strong benefits to the Tasmanian tourism sector and pathways to employment for Aboriginal people in the areas of hospitality, guiding, heritage, and land management.

**Additional activities**

An Issues Paper on the review of the Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy was developed and released for public consultation in November 2017 with a second consultation period from October 2018 to January 2019. Feedback from this consultation was incorporated into a final revised Aboriginal and Dual Naming Policy which was released in early June and is available at [www.aboriginalaffairs.tas.gov.au](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.tas.gov.au).

Within the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE), additional activities undertaken by Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania in 2018-19 included:

- providing executive support to the Aboriginal Heritage Council;
- commencement of a statutory review of the design and operation of the **Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975** involving:
  - initial consultation with key Aboriginal organisations in March 2019; and
  - release of a Discussion Paper to inform and guide a 16 week public comment period commencing 1 June 2019;
- ongoing support and capacity building for the Cultural Management Group which is responsible for the delivery of the key desired outcomes of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) Management Plan 2016. Major activity included:
  - continuation of the ‘Assessment of Aboriginal Cultural Values (AACV) Project,’ a multi-year project commissioned by DPIPWE that aims to fulfil the Tasmanian and Australian Governments’ commitments to provide the World Heritage Committee with more detailed information on the Aboriginal cultural values of the TWWHA and their relationship to its Outstanding Universal Value; and
- the final component of the ‘Cultural Values Assessment of the 2013 Extension Area of the TWWHA Project, which is scheduled for completion this year.

Within the Department of Health (DoH), additional activities are underway to improve Aboriginal cultural respect across Tasmania’s health sector. DoH is working with communities and internal stakeholders to develop a **Tasmanian Implementation Plan for the Cultural Respect Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (2016 – 2026)**. The Implementation Plan will outline activities to improve cultural respect and list performance measures across six domains: whole-of-organisation approach; communication; workforce development; consumer participation; stakeholder partnerships; and data, planning and evaluation.