

\$1bn to Close the Gap for Indigenous Australians

Compensation payouts for Stolen Generation children, health clinics and boarding schools are all part of the \$1bn Closing the Gap announcement.



Natasha Bita National Social Affairs Editor

Follow

[@natasha_bita](#) 2 min read August 5, 2021 - 12:11PM News Corp Australia Network

Keeping Indigenous Australians safe from Covid-19 has been hailed by Prime Minister Scott Morrison as “nothing short of extraordinary”, in his annual Closing the Gap message to federal parliament.

Mr Morrison has announced \$1 billion in taxpayer spending to improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, who trail other Australians in terms of education, health and welfare.

He singled out the lower life expectancy of Indigenous Australians as a priority area, with the latest Productivity Commission data showing that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are likely to die eight years earlier than other Australians.

“We have many years of hard work ahead of us,” he told parliament.

Mr Morrison praised the work of the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation in keeping Indigenous Australians safe through the Covid-19 pandemic.

“The fact that no Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person has died from Covid-19 in Australia, and there have been no cases in remote communities, is one of the most significant pandemic achievements Australia has had,” he said.

“Indigenous Australians have been six times less likely to contract Covid-19 than the wider population.”

Aboriginal health worker Gabrielle Ebsworth hopes to return to a remote community to help close the gap for life expectancy.

Ms Ebsworth, an Aboriginal liaison officer with Royal Melbourne Hospital, benefited from a scholarship through the [Australian Indigenous Education Foundation](#), which sent her to Sydney's prestigious Kincoppal boarding school in Rose Bay.



Gabrielle Ebsworth

She graduated in 2015 and obtained a degree in politics and sociology from the University of Melbourne.

Growing up in the NSW township of Narromine, west of Dubbo, she saw Aboriginal people miss out on health care.

"Aboriginal people still experience racism and a lot of internal bias from health care providers," she said.

"When people don't have spaces where they feel safe and heard and seen, they won't go to a GP if they feel they will be judged or stigmatised in some way.

"I would like to go and work in a rural town when I get older and want to start a family."

The money will be paid "in recognition of the harm caused by forced removal", along with a \$7000 "healing assistance payment" to cover counselling or medical bills.

Mr Morrison said the removal of Indigenous children their families was a "shameful chapter in our national story".

He said Closing the Gap was "at its core, about children".

"The ultimate test of our efforts is that every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boy or girl can grow up with the same opportunities and the same expectations as any other Australian child," he said.

The States have already set up their own redress schemes for the Stolen Generation.

The Closing the Gap funding will include \$254 million to build or renovate health clinics in remote regions.

Alcohol and drug treatment services will be expanded through \$66 million in grants, and \$45 million will be spent to improve maternal and antenatal care services through a “healthy mums, healthy bubs” program.

Three new boarding schools will be built for high school children in remote communities.

And \$123 million will be spent to provide [childcare for more Indigenous children](#), who risk falling behind at school.