

# BRIEFING PAPER

# CLOSING THE GAP

THE **ESSENTIAL** MEMBERSHIP FOR  
THE LEGAL PROFESSION

Prepared by the Law Society of Western Australia

[lawsocietywa.asn.au](http://lawsocietywa.asn.au)

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## CLOSING THE GAP

### Background

Historically, the Closing the Gap strategy is a long-term, Coalition of Australian Governments (COAG) framework that builds on the foundation of respect and unity provided by the 2008 National Apology to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. In 2008, COAG agreed to six ambitious targets to address the disadvantage faced by Indigenous Australians in life expectancy, child mortality, education and employment.

Justice targets are yet to be formally included.

### Policy Position

#### Law Council Australia

The Law Council of Australia has formulated a policy position with respect to these issues as part of the Law Council of Australia 2016 Federal Election Policy Platform.

#### Law Society of Western Australia

In February 2016 the Law Society of Western Australia resolved to commence a strategic campaign known as 'Closing the Gap' with an emphasis on the spiralling rates of incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Western Australia.

Currently the Law Society's campaign is being advanced by the work of the Indigenous Legal Issues Committee, the Aboriginal Incarceration and Justice Reinvestment Working Group and the Law Society's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) Working Group.

### Recommendation

The Law Society of Western Australia reaffirms its policy position of February 2016 and further endorses the Law Council of Australia 2016 Federal Election Policy Platform and thereby seeks the support of all parties to:

- Establish "justice targets" under the Closing the Gap Framework to reduce rates of Indigenous imprisonment and violent offending;
- Establish a national agency to collect and evaluate comprehensive data on corrections, law enforcement, juvenile justice, and diversionary measures, to inform government policies around crime and imprisonment;
- Repeal or amend all laws which provide for a penalty of imprisonment for offences arising from a fine-default; and
- Abolish mandatory sentencing laws.