



CLOSE THE GAP

NATIONAL CLOSE THE GAP DAY

YOUR 'HOW-TO' GUIDE



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TOGETHER WE'RE CLOSING THE GAP

Ten years into the Close the Gap campaign and many more Australians are now aware of the shamefully lower life expectancy rates, acute levels of sickness, and poorer access to appropriate medical care being experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. But while we still have a long way to go to achieve Indigenous health equality, I'm encouraged by the gains we have made over the last decade.

With your ongoing help and commitment, the Close the Gap Campaign is redoubling its efforts to keep our governments on target for Indigenous health equality by 2030.

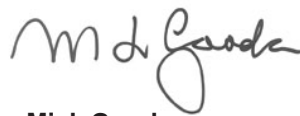
Our message this year is that we need to recommit to Close the Gap!

I love National Close the Gap Day (NCTGD); and it is with pride that I've seen it grow each year to become a key day in our national calendar. Every event — whether at a school, in an office, or out in our community — demonstrates to governments that Australians value health equality for all.

You can make this message crystal clear by asking everyone you know to sign the Close the Gap pledge this year at your event: www.oxfam.org.au/closethegap

Thank you for your support in this 10th anniversary year of the campaign. Please find enclosed, and accompanying this guide, information and resources to help you host your event.

Thanks again



Mick Gooda

Chair, Close the Gap Campaign

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
Social Justice Commissioner

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this publication may contain the images or names of people who have since passed away.

This guide will help you prepare and maximise our collective impact on NCTGD.

For more information, visit: oxfam.org.au/closethegap

If you have any questions, please call our customer service team on Freecall 1800 088 110 (9am – 5pm AEST).

Allen Christensen and Emily Dowling at a community National Close the Gap Day in West End, Brisbane.
Photo: Jason Malouin/OxfamAUS.

Cover Photo: Jason Malouin/OxfamAUS

ALLOW OUR STORY TO BECOME PART OF YOURS



When we consider life expectancy and other key health indicators, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander outcomes are on a par with some of the poorest countries in the world. Health professionals Raymond Blackman, Lynore Geia and John Rallings spoke to Tom Widdup, Oxfam's Close the Gap campaign lead, about the future of Indigenous health on Palm Island.

"There isn't an aspect of life that your health doesn't impact," explains John Rallings, Director of Nursing at the Joyce Palmer Health Service. "Without it we can't be productive in our jobs; we can't be there for our families. There are economic and social impacts. Your health is critical," says John.

Many Indigenous communities experience health conditions that have become extremely rare elsewhere in the Australian community. This includes trachoma (an eye infection that can lead to blindness) and rheumatic fever.

"Diseases like rheumatic fever, they're easy to prevent," says Dr. Raymond Blackman, co-founder of Palm Island's Children and Family Centre. But while this disease is also relatively easy to treat, if left undiagnosed, it can develop into rheumatic heart disease (RHD) leading to permanent heart damage; even heart failure. "I've got a patient who's got RHD. He's only 19, so this is tragic for him," says Raymond.

So what's the answer to improve health on Palm Island?

"I think politicians, they sometimes forget that the people who know the most are the people who are on the ground," says Raymond. "It doesn't always mean more money; sometimes just more insight."

John Rallings echoes this sentiment: stressing the importance of governments, health professionals and communities remaining committed if we are to close the gap.

"I think the major contribution of the campaign is that it is really engaging people in the process; the Close the Gap campaign has brought Indigenous health to the forefront of peoples' minds and discussions. It's really trying to engage people ... that's the outcome that's going to make health improvements sustainable," says John.

"What's affected me personally is seeing a lot of young people experiencing social, emotional and mental health problems and not having the appropriate services," says Dr. Lynore Geia, a senior lecturer in nursing at James Cook University. "Palm Island has had many suicides of young people over the years. When people die young in the community it's absolutely devastating. It's not what's supposed to happen; the grief across the island is palpable."

When asked about her thoughts on the solution, Lynore — although speaking separately from John and Raymond — comes to a very similar conclusion to her colleagues: "I think the solution lies within building community," she says.

"If you look back over the years since white settlement, government policies have not really engaged with the Indigenous Peoples. It's not the government's problem to fix our health, but it needs to start recognising and engaging ... taking the risk with us," says Lynore.

"We understand the way we think. That will close the gap. I know it will."

So I ask myself: "Where does that leave the average Australian wanting to help close the gap?"

Lynore must be reading my mind, as she adds: "The biggest role for our non-Indigenous friends is to listen and hear our stories; share our stories, and allow our stories to become part of your story."





Occupational Therapist Elizabeth Browne working with Oriol Palmer at the Joyce Palmer Health Centre's aged care and rehabilitation clinic, Palm Island, QLD. Photo: Jason Malouin/OxfamAUS.



HOW TO HOST A GREAT NATIONAL CLOSE THE GAP DAY EVENT





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Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Centre

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CLOSE THE GAP



STEP 1: WHAT SORT OF ACTIVITY?



It could be a few friends over to your place or a local cafe. Or it could be a large event with 10, 50, or even 100 people. It could be held at your work, in a local park, in another community space, or on a university campus. Whatever you choose, have fun and get as many people involved as you can.

The aim of National Close the Gap Day (NCTGD) is to bring people together, to share information, and importantly, to take action so we can achieve Indigenous health equality by 2030.

The key to hosting a successful activity is starting new conversations with people who perhaps aren't aware of the extent of our Indigenous health crisis. You can start by sharing your thoughts on the resources we provide as part of this event. Then, we encourage you to take the suggested actions outlined later in this guide.

Together, this is how we will help close the gap.

GET TALKING, GET ACTIVE

You can link up with an existing activity or start your own.

Invite a guest speaker to share their experiences and insights.

Watch this year's Close the Gap video to get people thinking, talking and taking action (you can also watch videos from throughout the 10 years of the campaign online).

Incorporating "action" into your activity is vital. This can be done via social media, signing the pledge (and encouraging others you know to sign too – this can be done by taking the "30 for 2030 Challenge") and sending an e-letter to the PM.

You can also fundraise as part of your event. All money you raise will help achieve Indigenous health equality by 2030.

And lastly, have fun (and food)!



MAKE A MEAL OF IT

Everyone loves food, and this is a great way to get people together, relaxed and talking. Why not hold a picnic lunch, community bbq, or morning or afternoon tea?

If you're having food, think about including some bush tucker. There are lots of Aboriginal catering companies to choose from. You can also support a local Oxfam producer partner like Robins Foods. Together with their Indigenous community suppliers, Robins Foods make chutneys, salad dressings and sell Australian herbs. Visit: www.oxfamshop.org.au/outbackspirit

A simple way to raise money during your event is to ask your guests for a gold coin donation to sample some of your delicious dishes.

GET CREATIVE

Think about including Close the Gap messages in creative ways. You could:

- Hold a trivia competition using the “chatterboxes” supplied.
- Include NCTGD in your staff meeting or conference.
- Design a banner, sculpture, chalk-artwork or mural painting.
- Set up a display promoting NCTGD with banners, balloons and temporary tattoos.
- Make your own health promotion posters.

“Holding an event on this day is important to our organisation as it gives staff [the] time to reflect on the issues ... and lets us explore ways that we could assist with improvements through our work[place].”

BIANCA, QUEENSLAND



“I think this is a great event that everyone in their community can get involved with in their own way; to raise awareness about the health/life expectancy gap between Indigenous and other Australians. It’s important in that it brings awareness to communities that may not otherwise get involved.”

TAMARA, SOUTH AUSTRALIA

STEP 2: DATE, TIME & LOCATION



We're asking you to hold your activity on **Thursday 17 March 2016, to maximise the impact of National Close the Gap Day.**

But if that's not possible for you, we encourage you to hold your event on another day in March, or for instance on Harmony Day (21 March), during NAIDOC week (3–10 July), or during Reconciliation week (27 May to 3 June).

STEP 3: BEFORE YOUR ACTIVITY



A bit of preparation can go a long way to ensuring the success of your activity and the overall impact of National Close the Gap Day.

INVITE YOUR GUESTS

Any event is a good event, but the more people you invite, the bigger your impact.

Tell your family, friends and workmates what you're up to. They might want to help you run your activity, or even register their own. Send out invitations by email, through social media, and put up the posters we've supplied. You can download and print more posters from our website: www.oxfam.org.au/nctgd

If you're holding a public event, think about promoting it in your local newspaper, community newsletter or on community noticeboards.

You can access and edit your NCTGD event page using the unique URL provided when you confirmed your event online.

SEND A REMINDER

Remind everyone about your event the week before.

AND THEN ...

- Download more resources. If you're holding quite a large activity, visit www.oxfam.org.au/nctgd to download additional chatterboxes, posters and "30 for 2030 Challenge" forms.
- Close the Gap t-shirts are discounted in the lead up to NCTGD. Get in quick and make sure your shirts arrive in time via: www.oxfam.org.au/nctgd
For large orders of ten or more please contact Freecall 1800 088 110.
- Watch the NCTGD 2016 video online (you can also watch video stories from the last 10 years of the campaign too). If you're having an outdoor event, forward a link to the video so people have a chance to watch it before the day. If you live in regional or remote Australia and your internet connection won't come to the party, then Freecall 1800 088 110 and we can send you the video files.
- Read and sign up to the "30 for 2030 Challenge": this is the most important action we'd like you and your guests to take on the day. More than 200,000 people have signed up to Close the Gap; we'd like to reach 250,000 by the end of March 2016.

THINK ABOUT FUNDRAISING

Your donation to the Close the Gap campaign will help us record and raise the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples around Australia.

Their stories need to be told; and your donation will make sure they're heard!

There are heaps of ways to fundraise and this is completely up to you — no idea is too big or too small. It can be as easy as charging a gold coin for a sausage sizzle, baking cakes to sell, or charging an entry fee.

The best way to get started is to add a fundraising goal to your event page and then encourage your guests to make donations online — donations can be made before, during or even after your event.

You may be surprised how many people will want to support you, and remember, the more you raise, the bigger the difference you make to Close the Gap.

STEP 4: ON THE DAY

Your activity can be any shape or size, but here are some tips for a fun event that will also help Close the Gap.

There are a couple of things we'd like you to include.

WATCH, DISCUSS, LEARN AND SHARE

- Start with an acknowledgement of the traditional owners of the land you're meeting on.
- Thank everyone for attending and explain the importance of their involvement in NCTGD.
- Watch the 2016 National Close the Gap day video.
- Use the chatterboxes that are supplied in your pack. These are great way to break the ice, start conversations, and help people understand the extent of the health crisis.
- **This is really important: distribute the "30 for 2030 Challenge" forms.** Make sure you have enough copies for everyone attending your event.

TAKE ACTION

We can't stress enough how important it is to take action on and around NCTGD.

Here are some things you can do to boost the number of people who join in:

- Encourage people to take the "30 for 2030 challenge" and explain what's involved. You'll find "Challenge" forms including details about these in your event pack. Ask people to return their forms to Oxfam as soon as possible (by mid-April at the very latest).
- Sign the pledge through your smart-phone's QR coder reader. Simply scan the square QR code on the back of this guide to join more than 200,000 Australians who have signed the pledge.

- Write to the Prime Minister. You can either use the printed letter supplied or do it online at www.oxfam.org.au/nctgd
- If you're holding a workplace event, ask your CEO or managers to sign the Close the Gap Organisational Pledge (also supplied in your activity pack or downloadable from our site).

DONATE TO CLOSE THE GAP

- Ask your guests to make a donation in the donation box provided. By donating to the Close the Gap campaign you're giving us the best chance to achieve health equality by 2030. This includes providing direct support for health and wellbeing projects in Australia's Indigenous communities.

Remember to get everyone to sign up to the "30 for 2030 Challenge".

SHARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Tell the world what you're up to. Share pictures of your event: include photos of people holding the "30 for 2030 Challenge" poster. Also include a caption encouraging people to sign the Close the Gap pledge or to write to the Prime Minister. And don't forget to include this link www.oxfam.org.au/nctgd, and this hashtag **#closethegapday**





I'M TAKING THE
30 FOR 2030 CHALLENGE TO

CLOSE THE GAP

oxfam.org.au/closethegap



Photo: Peter Izzard/OxfamAUS/OxfamAUS

West End, Queensland: Queensland Aboriginal and Islander Health Council (QAIHC) employees Lenny Dahlen and Anita Heerschop at the 2014 NCTGD event. Photo: Jason Malouin/OxfamAUS.

STEP 5: AFTER YOUR EVENT

There are a couple of really important things to do after the day.

YOUR FEEDBACK

We'll be in touch towards the end of March to get some feedback about your activity. The online survey will take 10-15 minutes to complete. Your input is vital and will help us shape and improve future events.

RETURNING DONATIONS

The easiest way to deposit the money you raise is to make an online donation to your own event page. Total the cash you have collected then make the donation with your card. You can download additional instructions on how to return collected donations from our website.

RETURNING COMPLETED PLEDGE FORMS

The Close the Gap pledge is an ever-growing group of people calling for an end to the Indigenous health crisis. Please return completed pledge forms to Oxfam ASAP so we can add your event invitees to this list of concerned Australians. Even after your NCTGD activity, you and other supporters can continue to collect and send in pledge forms.

CELEBRATE YOUR SUCCESS AND THANK EVERYONE

Thank everyone who came to your event and remind them how important their involvement is to achieve health equality. You can include some of the achievements listed in the chatterboxes or visit www.oxfam.org.au/closethegap for more examples.

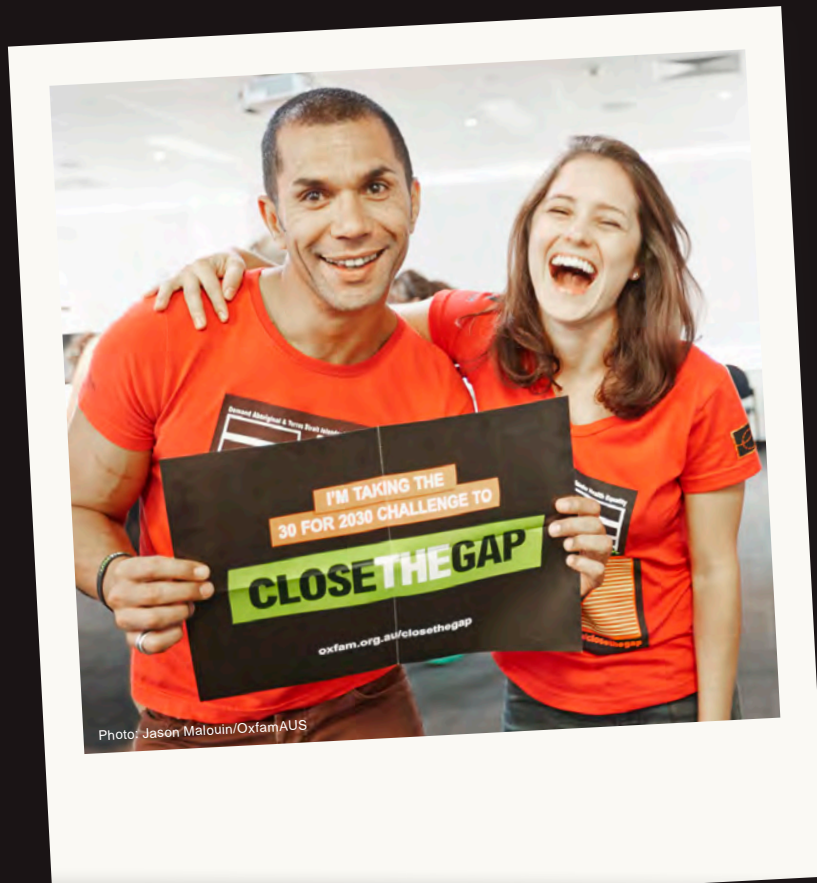
Remind your invitees of their "30 for 2030 Challenge" pledge, and encourage them to fill and return this to us as soon as they can.

Then let the world know what you got up to: what inspired you, what you talked about and what you learned. Remember to give yourself a pat on the back — it's people like you that make National Close the Gap Day and the Close the Gap campaign the tremendous success that it's been.



Willun Thorpe (7) with his father, Alistair Thorpe, in Thornbury, Melbourne. Photo: Bonnie Savage/OxfamAUS.





GETTING TOGETHER. SHARING STORIES.

TAKING ACTION. CLOSING THE GAP.



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