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Albanese Pledges \$75M for Indigenous Gap, Slams Culture Wars

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Prime Minister Anthony Albanese unveiled a \$75 million funding package at the Garma Festival in the Northern Territory on August 2, 2025, aimed at boosting economic opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. The initiative, part of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, is designed to help native title holders negotiate better economic agreements and accelerate project approvals, with a focus on self-determination through economic empowerment. In his remarks, Albanese cautioned against political distractions, stating that “culture wars” divert attention from addressing disparities in health, education, and employment.

The funding will support mobile TAFE programs, providing skills training in remote areas to reduce the need for relocation. Albanese also announced a partnership with the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance and the Coalition of Peaks—an organisation representing more than 80 Indigenous groups. The collaboration seeks to involve private capital and institutional investors in advancing Indigenous-led economic development, in line with the Closing the Gap framework's emphasis on shared decision-making.

Recent data from the Productivity Commission shows that only four of 19 Closing the Gap targets are currently on track. Areas such as incarceration, child protection, youth development, and suicide prevention have seen limited or negative progress.

Acknowledging the data, Albanese said that while reports and reviews are valuable, they must translate into real outcomes.

The announcement comes amid criticism from opposition figures who argue that the government's policy lacks clarity on implementation and outcomes. Some have cited the 2023 Voice referendum defeat as an indicator of public scepticism regarding Labor's approach to Indigenous affairs.

Pat Turner, CEO of the Coalition of Peaks, reiterated the need for a shift in authority toward Indigenous-led organisations. She described the partnership as a step toward long-term structural change but emphasised that lasting improvements will require sustained community involvement and accountability.