

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan
to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036



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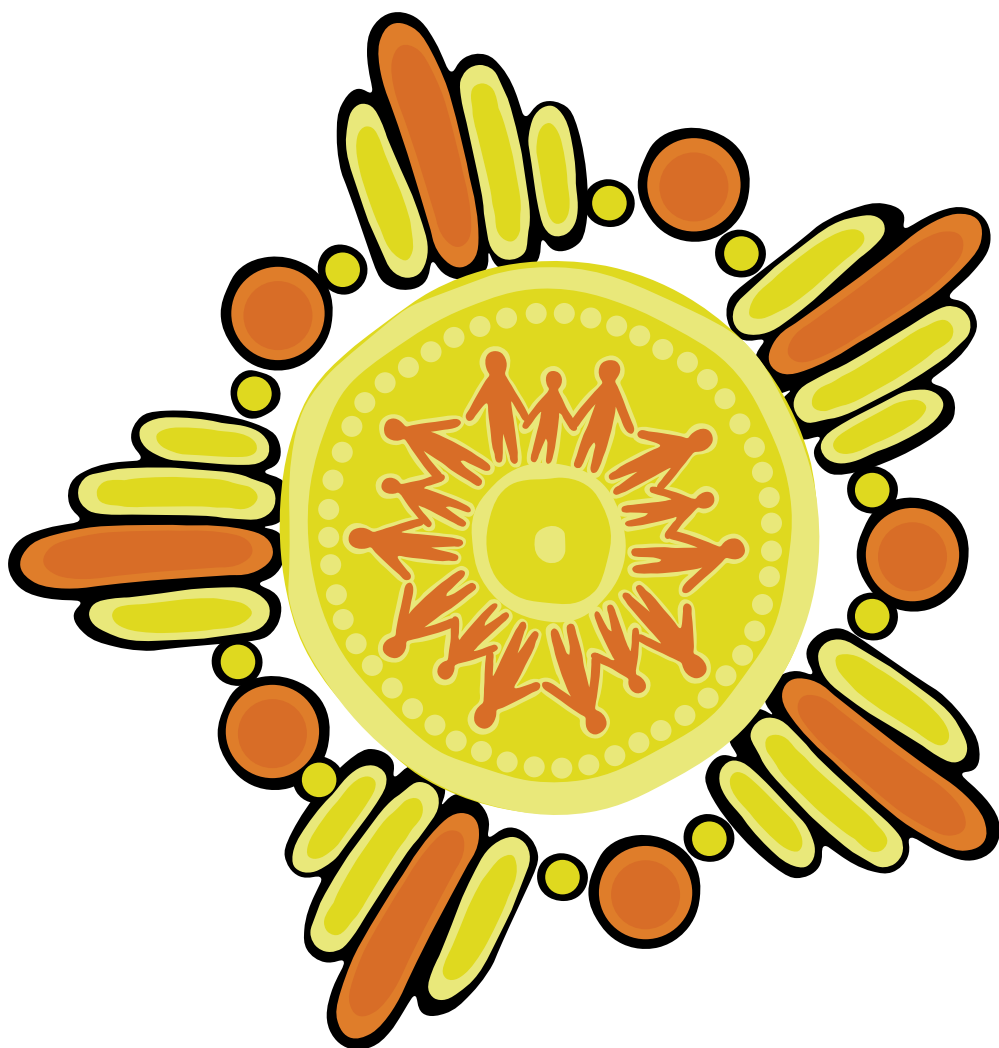
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Description of artwork

"Safety is one of the core fundamentals of individual, family, and community life. Family safety specifically requires a network of support from different layers and levels of community(s), agencies, and sectors.

The illustration depicts the strength of the varying layers and levels coming together to build and grow a network of family safety across Australia and is represented through various geographical locations and settings. The colours chosen, represent both the land and sea and acknowledges both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The focus of this piece is at the centre with the joining of different people, experiences, and needs, coming together surrounded by supports to show strength and unity for a safer, stronger community."

We would like to thank Tovani Cox who designed the artwork for Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic, and Sexual Violence. Tovani was born in Broome and comes from the Bunuba, Gija and Karajarri peoples across the Kimberley region.

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Acknowledgements

We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Elders past and present.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have cared for Country since creation and pay respect to their ongoing relationships to the lands, waters and seas across Australia.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rich contribution to society and commit to building a safer future for Australia's children together.

We acknowledge the lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children, men, families, and communities impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence, including the murdered and missing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and the children and families of women who have lost their lives to violence.

We acknowledge survivors of the Stolen Generations who experienced serious harm from the loss of family, Country and community.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who bring immense strength and resilience through connection to culture, community, ancestry and land.

We acknowledge all people who work to end violence and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples impacted by violence, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, in working to stop the violence directed against them, their children and their communities.

Dedication

This plan is dedicated to the grandmothers who fought for justice, to the women who have experienced abuse or lost their lives to violence, to the mothers who protected their children against all odds, and to the young ones who deserve a future free from fear and violence.

It is for the men stepping forward to break the cycle, the Elders who carry the wisdom of our ancestors, and the families walking the long road to healing.

The voices of our people – women, men, Sistergirls, Brotherboys, and children – have shaped this plan. Their stories, pain, and resilience are woven into every word.

We honour their strength, and we commit to a future where all our communities and people are safe, strong, and self-determining.

A note on language

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices has been developed in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It is informed by engagements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across the country and shaped by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. It is important that community voice sits at its heart.

This plan is different to other government-led plans. When we use ‘our’, ‘us’ and ‘we’, we reflect the voices of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who shaped the plan. This language does not reduce the responsibility on governments. By endorsing this plan with us, governments have committed to act in partnership – listening to communities, resourcing priorities, and being accountable for progress.



Help and support

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services

Support service	Support offered	Contact details
13 YARN	Support line for mob who are feeling overwhelmed or having difficulty coping. Available 24/7.	13 92 76 13yarn.org.au
Well Mob	Social, emotional and cultural wellbeing online resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.	wellmob.org.au
Brother to Brother Crisis Support Line	Brother to Brother is Australia's first 24-hour hotline assisting Aboriginal men, staffed by Aboriginal men, including Elders, to promote a culturally safe service. Available 24/7.	1800 435 799 dardimunwurro.com.au/brother-to-brother
Indigenous interpreter services	Indigenous language interpreter services support equal access to government services and opportunities for First Nations peoples. There are a range of interpreting services available across Australia.	niaa.gov.au/our-work/culture-and-empowering-communities/indigenous-interpreters



National Services

Support service	Support offered	Contact details
1800RESPECT	National sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service. This service is free and confidential. Available 24/7.	1800 737 732 1800respect.org.au
Kids helpline	Australia's only free (even from a mobile), confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.	1800 551 800 kidshelpline.com.au
National Elder Abuse Phone Line	Free call phone number that redirects callers seeking information and advice on elder abuse with the phone line service in their jurisdiction. Elder abuse phone lines are not crisis support services, and operating hours and services vary across jurisdictions.	1800 ELDERHelp (1800 353 374) health.gov.au/contacts/elder-abuse-phone-line
The National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline	The National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline (The Hotline), is a free, independent and confidential service for reporting abuse and neglect of people with disability.	1800 880 052 jobaccess.gov.au/complaints/hotline
Disability Gateway	The Disability Gateway is a free Australian-wide service to help people with disability; their families and carers find trusted information and services.	1800 643 787 disabilitygateway.gov.au
QLife	QLife provides anonymous and free LGBTIQ+ peer support and referral for people in Australia wanting to talk about sexuality, identity, gender, bodies, feelings or relationships.	1800 184 527 qlife.org.au
Men's Referral Service	The Men's Referral Service is a men's family violence telephone counselling, information and referral service operating around the country and is the central point of contact for men taking responsibility for their violent behaviour.	1300 766 491 ntv.org.au/mrs
eSafety Commissioner	Australia's national regulator of online safety, with reporting schemes to help people who experience online abuse. Culturally tailored materials, including stories from mob in language and tips to help you be deadly online.	esafety.gov.au/report esafety.gov.au/first-nations
National Relay Service	The National Relay Service (NRS) can help you if you're d/Deaf or find it hard to hear or speak to hearing people on the phone.	accesshub.gov.au



Joint ministerial statement

We are proud to release *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036* (Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices).

Across Australia, the unacceptable reality is that the prevalence of family, domestic and sexual violence remains too high. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, the impact of violence is even greater, shaped by the legacy of colonisation, dispossession and intergenerational trauma. Behind every statistic are individuals, families and communities that deserve safety, respect and healing.

Our vision as set out in the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (National Plan) is to end gender-based violence in one generation. All governments have committed to collective action to achieve this critical goal. Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices strengthens this commitment and represents key progress towards addressing Target 13 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement).

Under the National Plan, we developed the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025*, which aimed to address the immediate needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, while we undertook comprehensive consultation with community to develop Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices.

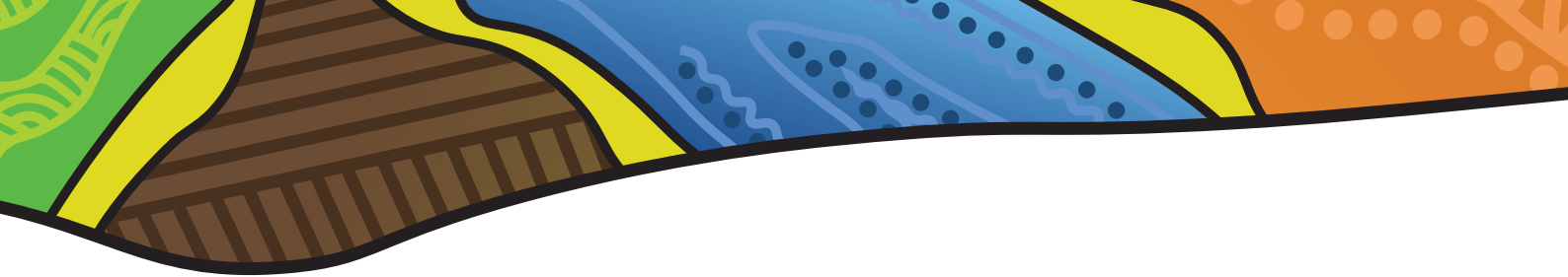
This plan stands on the shoulders of many – the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander survivors of family, domestic and sexual violence who bravely shared their lived and living experiences; and the community-controlled organisations, advisory bodies, specialist services, Elders, men, women, Sistergirls and Brotherboys, young people and advocates who persistently told us what must change to achieve real safety and healing throughout community.

We recognise that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children requires a response that is culturally safe, trauma-informed and enables self-determination for community-led solutions. When services are designed by those who understand local realities – the kinship systems, cultures and connection to Country – safety and healing are more likely to endure.

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices is grounded in deep consultation. It responds to decades of advocacy by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to address the high and disproportionate rates of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, and the barriers they face in accessing support.

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices provides a foundation to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' voices, needs and experiences remain central to this work, and it places shared responsibility on all governments to achieve an end to violence. The commitments made in the plan will be delivered through joint and coordinated actions, and we will measure progress openly and hold ourselves accountable to the communities that the plan serves.

We know that change requires sustained commitment, a whole-of-community approach and resources that match the scale of the challenge. But we also know that progress begins with listening.



We deeply thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who shared their stories and lived experiences of domestic, family and sexual violence. Your courage drives this plan.

We also thank members of the Steering Committee for their leadership, insight and commitment to ending violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children.

Together, we commit to turning the vision of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices into real and lasting change. Every government, organisation and community has a role to play in ending domestic, family and sexual violence, now and for generations to come.

Endorsed by

The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP

Minister for Social Services

The Hon Ged Kearney MP

Assistant Minister for Social Services
Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence

Dr Marisa Paterson MLA

Australian Capital Territory
Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services
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Minister for the Prevention of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence
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The Hon Jodie Harrison MP

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The Hon Robyn Cahill OAM

Northern Territory
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Minister for Child Protection
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Minister for Trade, Business and Asian Relations
Minister for International Education, Migration and Population
Minister for Workforce Development
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The Hon Amanda Camm MP

Queensland
Minister for Families, Seniors and Disability Services and
Minister for Child Safety and the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence

The Hon Katrine Hildyard MP

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Minister for Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence
Minister for Women
Minister for Child Protection

The Hon Jane Howlett MP

Tasmania
Minister for Tourism, Hospitality and Events
Minister for Racing
Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

The Hon Natalie Hutchins MP

Victoria
Minister for Prevention of Family Violence
Minister for Treaty and First Peoples
Minister for Women
Minister for Government Services

The Hon Jessica Stojkovski MLA

Western Australia
Minister for Child Protection
Minister for Prevention of Family and Domestic Violence
Minister Assisting the Minister for Transport
Minister for Peel



Steering Committee statement

This plan is grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander experience and builds on the work of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence in developing the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025*.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, independent Commissioners, and Australian and state and territory government partners worked together to develop Our Ways – Strong Voices – Our Voices - reflecting what we all want - safe women and children, safe families and communities, respected in culture and identity.

At every meeting we affirmed our responsibility to respect the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and ensure our children and young people can grow up strong and safe in culture with their families and communities.

We affirmed our commitment to work together in respect, kindness and compassion and to honour the lived experience and expertise of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in every community in Australia.

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices will be our commitment to honour the testimony of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples around the country who told us what they need.

We listened to women and children. We listened to Elders, young people and men. We listened to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and non-Indigenous organisations that support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities. We listened to governments who want to end gender-based violence through better investments and genuine and formal partnerships.

We listened, learned and are united in wanting the violence to stop, in wanting safe places and healing, and in wanting systems that create safety, accountability and justice.

We thank the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Social Services, for her leadership and the Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council for their commitment to delivering the vision of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices.

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices is a joint commitment for all to work together to achieve Target 13 of the National Agreement, that: By 2031, the rate of all forms of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is reduced at least by 50%, as progress towards zero.

It will be a roadmap to change and we will celebrate its milestones.



Steering Committee members

Adjunct Professor Muriel Bamblett AO

Co-Chair Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices Steering Committee
CEO, Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA)

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Operations Manager, Mura Kosker Sorority

Papunya Connors

Co-founder of EveryMob

Professor Kyllie Cripps

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Shane Sturgiss

Independent Subject Matter Expert

We acknowledge the work of SNAICC - National Voice for our Children in their role as Our Ways Secretariat and in particular their support for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caucus of the Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices Steering Committee.



Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices

Executive Summary

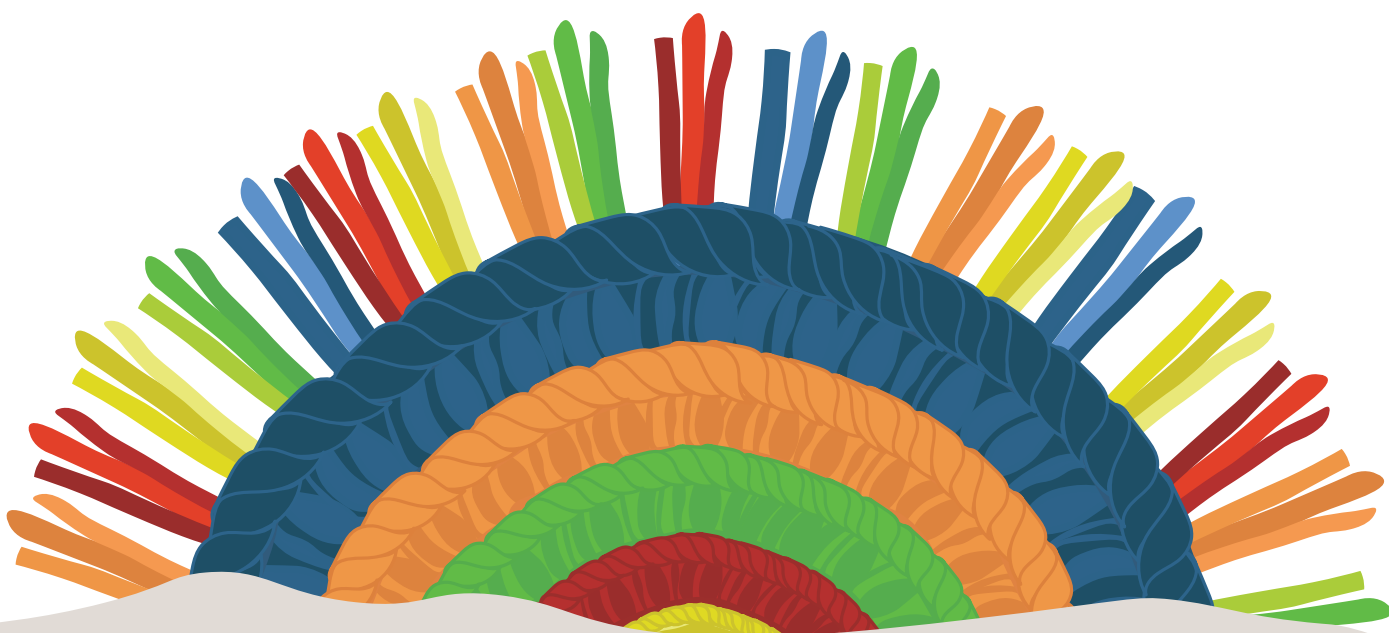
Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices honours generations of women, Elders, families, and communities who have been and are clear that real solutions come from us. It is grounded in our cultures and lived experiences. This plan reflects our collective strengths, woven together by the voices and knowledge of our people to drive action that creates safety for our women and children.

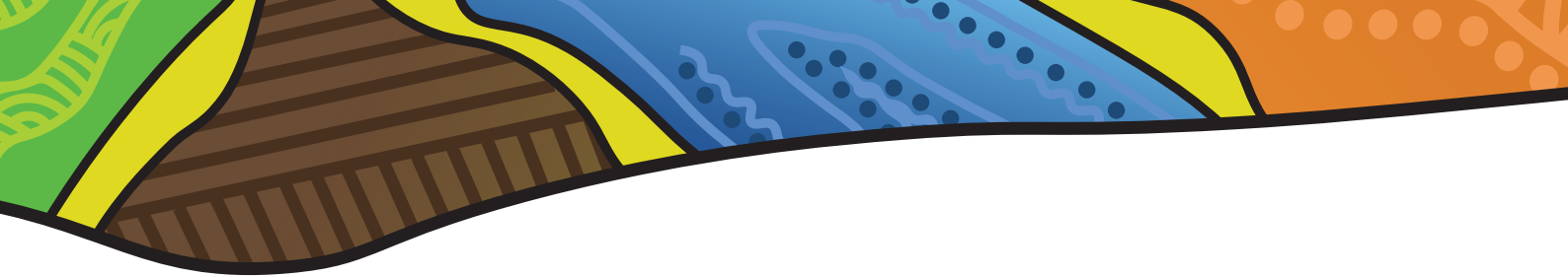
This is the first standalone national plan that will work over 10 years towards realising a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children live free from violence. It does not sit underneath any other policy framework. It sits on equal footing with the *National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032* (National Plan) and drives change in the way that plan and all other efforts recognise and respond to the distinct needs and priorities of our communities. It is built upon cultural authority, community control, respect for human rights and self-determination.

Our plan brings together distinct strands in a weave—each strong on its own yet more powerful when interwoven—to create something resilient and new.

At the centre is a clear goal: safety for women and children within stronger, safer families and communities, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples leading the way. Systems are reformed and made accountable by the threads of our collective voices. No one will need to live in fear. Dignity, safety, and healing will be the fabric of life—supported by systems that respect our communities.

Woven throughout the plan are 8 principles that underpin change based on self-determination, truth-telling, lived experience, healing, systemic transformation, intersectionality, accountability and Indigenous Data Sovereignty. These principles are the colours and patterns of our weaving—making the plan strong, rights-based, and led by us. They will guide every action we take to create safety and end violence.





This plan is not one single strand, it is a weaving of 5 essential threads that describe our priority areas for putting our vision and principles into action:

Voice, agency and self-determination: Every decision is shaped by us – our voice, our leadership, our wisdom are the basis of our future.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions that are strengths-based, preventive and healing: Support honours our story and culture, weaving trauma-responsive, community-led approaches that bind us in strength.

Reforming the institutions and systems that impact safety: Justice, health, housing, family and social supports, education, disability services and child protection—each system is a thread that, when reformed, strengthens the whole.

Strengthening evidence, research and data, embedding Indigenous Data

Sovereignty: Owning our data and stories means the research woven into our work is ethical, trustworthy, culturally sensitive and fit for our communities.

Breaking the cycle through strengthened housing and financial security: Safe housing and fair and equal opportunities are threads for women and children's safety, creating a strong base that cannot easily be unravelled.

Each of these essential threads is unique, but their power and resilience come from their careful weaving together—a process led by communities and guided by cultural ways.

Change will be built row by row—through an action plan, crafted, reviewed, and renewed regularly by our communities. Governance is shared, bringing our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and communities together with governments in shared decision-making about every step of design, planning, implementation and review. Communities will co-design monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that every thread is visible and every action accountable.

This 10-year plan is designed to ensure real and lasting change, not driven by political cycles or quick policy decisions. It continues to weave beyond the current end date of the National Plan and current targets under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, driving change through to 2036. Progress will be reviewed regularly and we will adapt to make sure our actions are responsive and having an impact, but our direction and commitment will hold strong. Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices is a weaving for current and future generations—embedding change deeply within systems and setting lasting expectations for collaboration, accountability, and self-determination.

Aligned with National Agreement Target 13, this plan aims to halve violence rates by 2031 and continue toward zero, and to contribute to achieving Target 12, reducing overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care. It will drive broad reform across all systems and in turn change the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children, and families who will live free from violence, experiencing healing and safety that are as strong as the weaving that binds our communities.

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices provides a pathway to change and an invitation—an open weave. Let us work together in real and genuine partnership, side by side as different strands, knowing that only together can we create something strong enough to secure safety and dignity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children and the generations to come.

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices

The plan at a glance

Our Vision

Creating stronger, safer communities by delivering on real change through empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, recognising self-determination and transforming institutional responses.

Our Principles

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 Agency, self-determination and human rights | 5 Inclusion and intersectionality |
| 2 Voices of living and lived experience | 6 Evidence and data eco-systems |
| 3 Strength, resilience and healing | 7 Accountability |
| 4 Transform institutions and systems | 8 Respect for Country, waters, culture, lore and language |

Who will the plan make a difference for?

- Women and girls, including women who are incarcerated, women misidentified as perpetrators, women and girls who are impacted by sexual violence, and missing and murdered women and girls
- Men and boys
- Elders and older people
- Children and young people
- Children in out-of-home care and youth justice
- People with disability
- LGBTIQ+people, Sistergirls and Brotherboys.

What will the plan do?

- Map how we will work together over the next 10 years to end violence and deliver sustainable change
- Develop an action plan for implementation of our 'Threads'
- Be supported by a Sector Strengthening Plan
- Empower communities to lead change
- Align with other agreements, policies and plans designed to prevent and respond to family, domestic and sexual violence.

Our Threads: weaving safety, healing and change

The weaving that holds this plan together is formed from 5 essential threads.



Centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice, self-determination, and agency



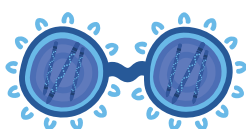
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions



Reforming institutions and systems that impact safety



Strengthening evidence, research, and the data ecosystem through Indigenous Data Sovereignty



Breaking cycles of harm through strengthened housing and financial security

Tracking our progress and impact

The plan will be underpinned by a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, codesigned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples and governments to:

- Reflect the vision, principles and threads of the plan
- Have clear outcomes that demonstrate systems, community and individual level change
- Be accompanied by an indicator framework with measures of change.
- Establish a baseline to measure change against
- Include data sources and plans for data development to address gaps in available data.

Our Governance

Accountability will be achieved through a governance structure that will ensure shared decision making at every stage by:

- Having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives from every state and territory meet regularly with Australian state and territory government leaders to oversee implementation
- Working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander National Peak Body for Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence.



The Journey to Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices is not the beginning of the story. This plan is the latest chapter in a long struggle led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. For generations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, families and communities have carried the burden of violence while holding and protecting culture, kin and Country.

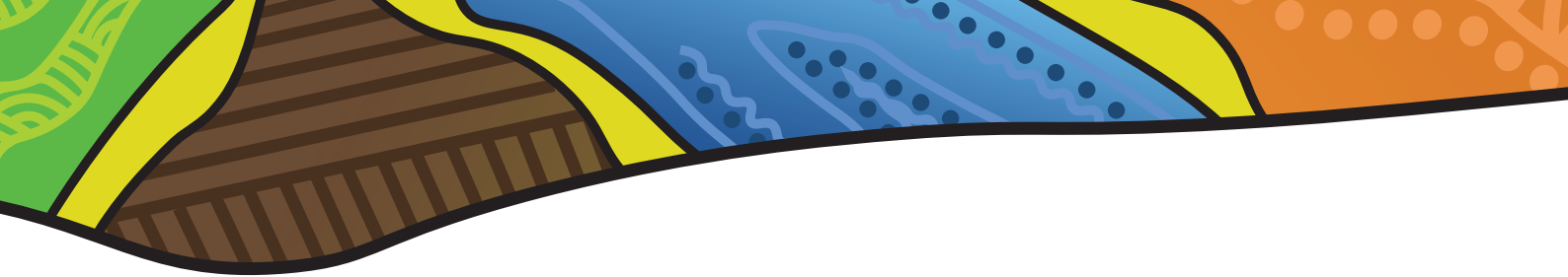
Since the 1970s, when women first opened grassroots refuges and safe spaces — often with no funding or government support — Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been responding to family, domestic and sexual violence. Elders and women stood up when nobody else would, building safe spaces when mainstream services excluded and failed us. These acts of survival weren't simply about providing refuge – they were about dignity, sovereignty and the right to live free from violence.

For decades, we have been telling governments, services and the wider community the same truth: violence against our women and children is a national crisis. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are hospitalised, assaulted, and killed at rates far above those of non-Indigenous women. For too long, that truth has been met with too little action, too little recognition, and too slow a response.

Yet, our women and communities have never been silent. Through landmark reports like the *Women's Business Report*¹; campaigns against family violence deaths; the National Network of Indigenous Women's Legal Services² advocating to establish Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services³; the *Wiji Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices)* report⁴; and community 'Black Out Violence' campaigns⁵: our voices have carried forward the demand that solutions must be led by us, shaped by culture, and grounded in our own knowledge systems.

This is the legacy we stand upon today. Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices does not emerge from nowhere. It is built on the courage of women who started refuges with nothing but determination. We draw on the strength of communities who continue to raise their voices throughout inquiries, reports, campaigns and royal commissions. We respond to, and are inspired by, the resilience of families who have lost loved ones to violence but continue to work tirelessly for change.

In 2020, all Australian governments joined the National Agreement, committing to work differently, in genuine partnership. In 2022, the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* (National Plan) recognised the need for a dedicated First Nations Plan. Those commitments follow decades of advocacy and a long-standing call for justice that came before them.



Indeed, this fierce advocacy reached a pivotal moment with the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025* (Action Plan)⁶. Developed in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence, this dedicated Action Plan was the first to formally acknowledge the alarmingly high rates of family, domestic and sexual violence experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, and to commit resources and concrete actions to respond. Serving as a critical bridge under the broader National Plan and, the Action Plan worked to address the urgent and immediate needs of communities, while establishing new principles of collaboration, shared leadership, and culturally safe service delivery.

Initiatives under the Action Plan laid essential groundwork for enduring change, setting the context and momentum for *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices*. It strengthened community-led action, amplifying lived experience, and demanding that systems begin to transform—rather than simply tweak or accommodate existing services. Much of the work set out in the Action Plan continues and will be taken forward through this new plan⁷.

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices now steps forward to deliver a plan for long-term, sustainable and transformative responses. It draws on the advocacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and the strength and wisdom of generations. It responds to the urgent truths set out through countless reports, coronial inquests and inquiries, including the 2024 Senate Inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children⁸. This plan recognises women’s leadership and advocacy in Australia and globally at the United Nations seeking change, as well as those who have driven change through the first dedicated Action Plan. Most importantly, *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices* centres the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and communities as the only way forward.

What we call for here is not new. This is not a new initiative. *Our Voices* continues the struggle and legacy of this and earlier generations. We carry forward their fight into a space where governments, services and the whole of Australia must finally listen, act, and walk with us.

Because *Our Ways* are *Strong Ways* and our voices and our ways are key to ending the violence that has silenced and hurt too many of our women, our children and our families for too long.



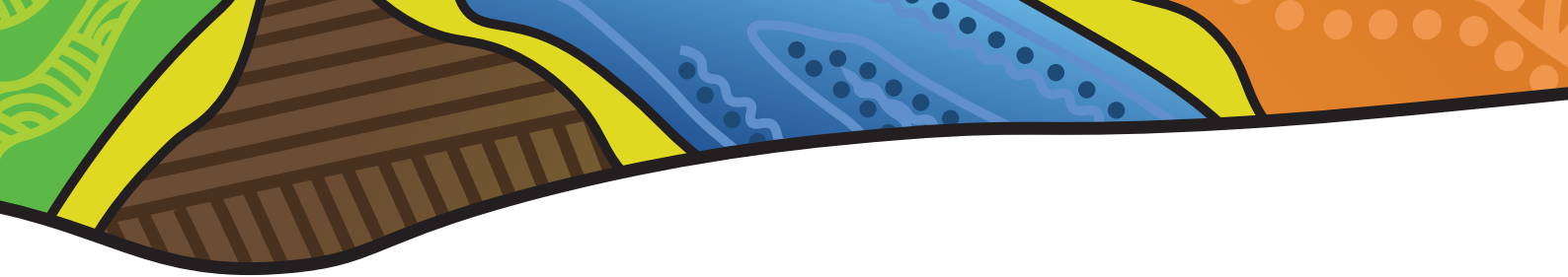


Why a standalone Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander plan matters

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have long called for action against violence that speaks truthfully to our histories and our lived realities. Through the Wiyi Yani U Thangani engagements, women and girls spoke of how they have inherited the pain and trauma of generations of violence against their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and how communities experience harms from colonisation that manifest today through inequality, discrimination and marginalisation. They highlighted that they continue to live with the structural conditions – the systemic factors – which are responsible for reproducing and sustaining the violence and harm in their lives. Harms associated with, and further perpetuated by, financial, housing, education and employment stressors also weave themselves throughout women’s lived realities. Taken as a whole, these structural factors sit at the root of our women and children’s experiences of harm, from the individual to the societal level⁹. Government plans, while well-intentioned, often fall short. To be successful, responses must understand the impacts of history and the nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people’s diverse experiences. Responses must reflect the knowledge, resilience, and strength embedded in our cultures, kinship systems, and connection to Country.

Across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the violence experienced is often described and understood as ‘family violence.’ This reflects the understanding that violence can take place not only between intimate partners, but also across extended kinship networks, involving intergenerational harm, lateral violence, and gender-based abuse. However, while the term ‘family violence’ acknowledges the complexity of relationships and community dynamics, the true extent, nature, and seriousness of violence is not always known and seen¹⁰. Family, domestic and sexual violence are deeply traumatic experiences—physical and sexual assault, coercive control, threats, psychological abuse, and patterns of intimidation—that victim-survivors may find extremely difficult to disclose, sometimes taking months or even years before sharing with a trusted person¹¹. We need a plan that is responsive to the forms of violence endured, driving culturally safe, trauma responsive support that meets the real needs of women, children and families.

Violence is not a problem Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can or should solve in isolation, nor is family, domestic and sexual violence a part of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. But the way violence plays out against women and children in our communities is different to others, so too are the hurdles we have to overcome to seek safety, justice and accountability, and to heal¹². For too long, responses have addressed symptoms rather than causes of family violence and sexual assault, relying on programs designed elsewhere, imposed without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, and too often abandoned when priorities or funding change. A meaningful response must address the drivers of violence and the risk factors that can escalate family, domestic and sexual violence — including poverty, homelessness, drug and alcohol use, gambling, and experiencing mental health issues. It must respond to the needs of children and adults with disability and developmental delays, including preventing and responding to the impacts of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD)¹³.



These are not simple or standalone issues; they are complicated, nuanced, and can carry stigma if treated without care. The drivers cannot be separated from the history of colonisation, which impacted women and children in distinct and harmful ways, or the continuing harms of discriminatory systems that we experience today. Real change requires solutions that are designed with and led by our peoples, grounded in cultural strength, responsive to the intersecting challenges we face, and sustained for the long term¹⁴.

The disproportionate rates of violence

Our women and children carry deep strength and leadership, sustaining culture and protecting families across generations. Violence occurs despite these strengths, shaped by history and its consequences which are evident today. Our women and children experience violence that is more frequent and more severe than that experienced by other women and children in Australia. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are **27 times more likely** than other Australian females to be hospitalised due to family violence¹⁵. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are up to **7 times more likely** to be homicide victims¹⁶. Between 1989–90 and 2022–23, **97% of Indigenous women victims of homicide were killed by someone they knew. 72% of these women were killed by an intimate partner**¹⁷. Over half of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who experience family violence have a disability¹⁸.

The distinct gendered drivers of violence

Overwhelmingly, violence against all women in Australia is perpetrated by men¹⁹. This plan is necessary to ensure that the experiences, agency and safety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children are at the centre of all responses.

Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, is most often perpetrated by a male partner or other family member, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous people²⁰. The drivers of this violence are not always the same as for non-Indigenous women. They are shaped by the intersection of racism and sexism – alongside factors including disability and poverty – the enduring influence of patriarchal values on gendered roles, and by how violence itself is defined, understood, and responded to when it is in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's safety²¹.

The history of colonisation and dispossession has created structural inequalities and human rights violations that create risk for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women²². These inequalities include systemic racism, sexism, economic disadvantage, and social marginalisation²³.



A distinct pathway for justice and healing

A standalone plan is not about separation—it is about women and children’s safety within stronger, safer families and communities. It is about justice and truth-telling now and for the future. We will not find healing in systems and responses that have been harmful. In many cases our communities, women and children find ways to heal despite the systems and processes that work against us. However, true justice and healing require that the systems that have harmed our people are transformed with us.

This plan provides a different pathway: one that is led by us, grounded in lived experience and culture, and strengthened by our deep relationships with kin, Country, and community. At the same time, it calls governments into genuine partnership—partnership that is transparent, accountable, and focused on real and sustainable change.

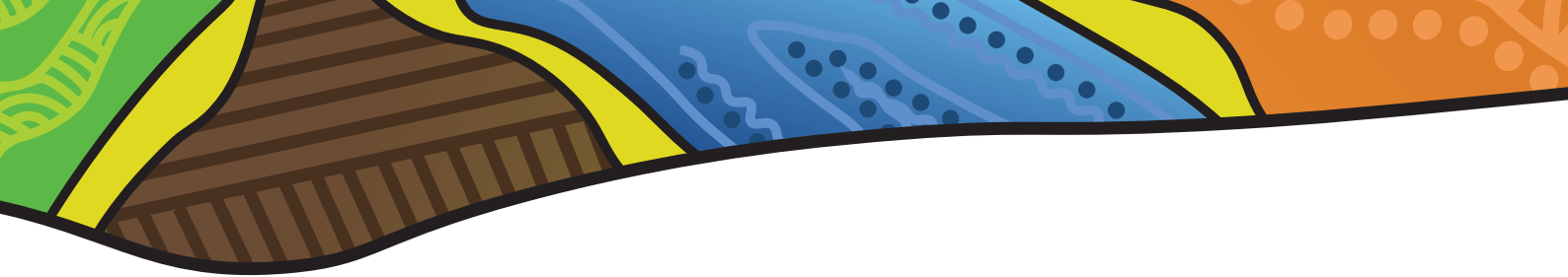
The power of community-led change

Despite the trauma and impacts of colonisation, our communities have always shown strength and resilience. Grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, uncles, mothers, fathers, young people, and Elders continue to nurture and provide safety, stability, and resilience, ensuring cultural continuity and care for future generations. This plan honours this history. It makes sure that our families and communities are the ones guiding decisions about our safety, justice, healing, and rights. It recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women’s leadership and voices must be heard and respected, and that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men must be included and supported to end violence. When communities are empowered to lead, solutions are safer, more culturally relevant, more trusted, and ultimately more effective.

Walking in parallel, not apart

This plan stands alongside and on equal footing with the National Plan, complementing its efforts, but also driving change in the way it is implemented to better align with the aspirations and priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It’s not a side-plan or something extra—it’s our plan, our voice, our leadership. Like the National Plan, it addresses the four core domains of **Prevention, Early Intervention, Response, and Recovery and Healing**. What sets this plan apart is the way it embeds **cultural leadership, community control, and Indigenous Data Sovereignty** as foundational principles. These are not optional extras but essential to making change meaningful and lasting.

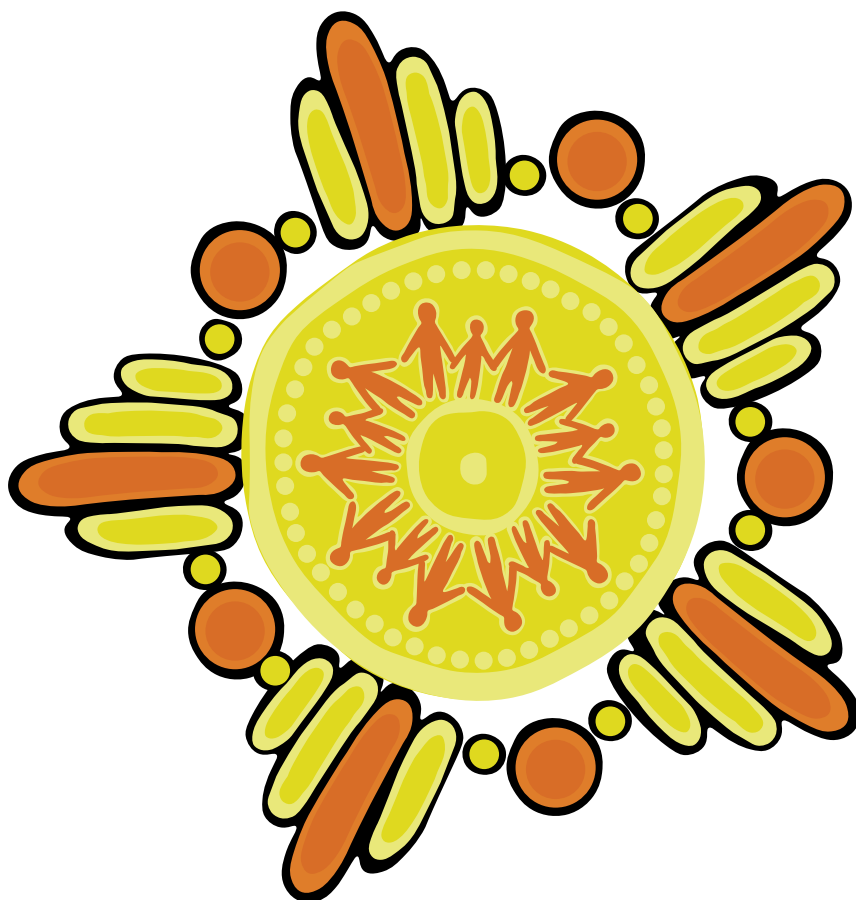
The National Plan aims to make the systems that affect us work better for all. However, the focus of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices is on transforming mainstream systems and responses so they become culturally safe, responsive, and accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, while supporting and growing solutions led by our own communities. This Plan recognises that we cannot take a one size fits all approach—all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities are different and responses need to be locally designed and driven. Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices ensures our unique needs and what our communities do well are noticed, resourced, and followed through. Together, the two plans strengthen each other: the National Plan provides national framework and drive for change, while this plan ensures that our pathways are grounded in justice, culture, healing and self-determination.



While this plan shares the values of the National Plan, it also reflects what is important in our cultures: that healing, kinship, cultural practice, and connection to Country are central to prevention, early intervention, responses, recovery, healing and long-term safety.

Our approach to men also makes this clear. We recognise that the majority of men in our communities are not using violence against women and children. We agree that for those that do use violence a trauma responsive approach that places culture at the centre is critical to address the reasons men choose to use violence. This approach must first and foremost focus on accountability, addressing attitudinal and behavioural change and personal responsibility. It must also create safe spaces for men and develop cultural programs and activities that strengthen identity, promote social and emotional wellbeing, and address men's trauma—including for those who are themselves victims of family violence, albeit it at much lower rates than women—while always centring women and children's safety. Responsibility and restoration must go hand in hand if we are to create safer futures for all.

By working together—not apart—we contribute to the shared national goal of ending violence for every woman and child in Australia. This plan ensures that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples do so with authority, agency, and the cultural strength required to transform systems and to heal.



What we heard in consultations

Waminda: South Coast Women's Health and Wellbeing Aboriginal Corporation

A standalone Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander plan is about community-led solutions. Across the country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations are already demonstrating what change looks like when culture, healing, and self-determination guide the work. These examples show that our communities hold the expertise, authority, and strength to design solutions that are more effective, trusted, and sustained. One such example is Waminda's vision for systems change and community-led healing, which illustrates the transformative potential of shifting power to community and embedding culture at the heart of responses.

Waminda were asked "If there were no barriers, how would your community address Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence?"

Waminda's Vision for Systems Change and Community-Led Healing

Waminda promotes a fundamental shift in power from the colonial institutions that have historically caused harm, towards genuine shared decision-making models. Our approach recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities hold the knowledges, expertise, and solutions needed for change, and that ACCHO's are best placed to deliver this work because they are accountable to community. Waminda envision a future where mainstream services are required to address the barriers to access identified by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. At present, institutional racism remains entrenched across the health and education systems, policing and correctional services, child protection, and legal and court systems. These systems are fragmented, reactive, punitive, and continue to fail our communities.

To create real and lasting change, Waminda recommends:

1 Reallocation of Resources

- Transfer resources to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to deliver services for our communities.
- Make ongoing funding of mainstream services contingent upon:
 - Robust systems for mandatory decolonisation training for staff at all levels.
 - Transparent accountability mechanisms that require Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community input into all policies and practices.
 - Payment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members' time and knowledge.



2 Genuine Collaboration

- Require all mainstream services to collaborate meaningfully with ACCHOs and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led NGOs, avoiding siloed approaches and ensuring sharing of resources and knowledge to better support communities.

3 Justice Reform

- Require the police and criminal justice system to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of Knowing, Being and Doing by prioritising alternative justice pathways such as Circle Sentencing, Family Yarns, and Care Circles.

4 Healing-Focused, Culturally Grounded Programs

We envision fully funded, trauma-informed services underpinned by cultural healing frameworks that centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being and doing. These programs must be free of charge and include free transport for community members. Examples include:

- **Culturally grounded education:** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led pre-schools, schools and universities that are free from institutional racism, promote truth-telling, honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledges, and foster strong cultural identity. These schools would also focus on skills for emotional regulation, healing from intergenerational trauma, and developing healthy relationships.
- **Safe housing and healing supports for men:** Free temporary accommodation and safe housing for men recovering from addiction and violence, enabling women and children to remain safely at home while men engage in behaviour change and healing.
- **Employment and empowerment:** Meaningful employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men that build knowledge, confidence, and capacity to support their families.
- **Family-based healing:** Family yarning circles, family healing retreats, and other culturally led supports to address trauma and strengthen family relationships.

Warminda's Vision

Through these reforms, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people will have access to holistic, wrap-around supports from conception through to end of life. By fostering intergenerational healing, resilience, and cultural strength, we can move beyond survival and ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people thrive in systems that are accountable to them and grounded in culture.



Our Vision

Creating stronger, safer communities delivering on real change with reformed systems, delivered by and that are empowering and accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

At the heart of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices is a collective call for safety, dignity, justice and healing, carried by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across generations. This vision is for communities where no one lives in fear: where women, children, young people, men, Elders, LGBTIQA+SB peoples, people with disability, and those incarcerated or removed from their families all live in safety, with respect and dignity.

Foundation of strength

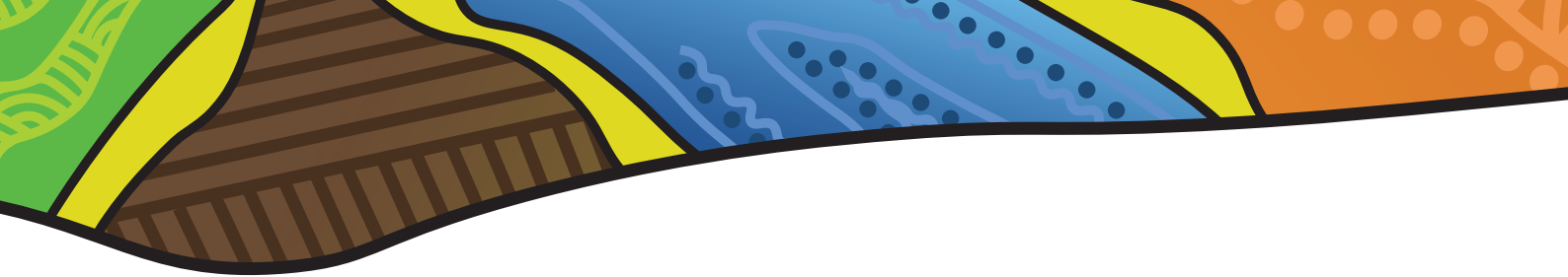
This vision begins from the strengths already held in community. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have always carried the knowledge, resilience and cultural authority needed to sustain families and communities through hardship and across time. Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices builds from this foundation, recognising that communities themselves will guide healing and prevention through cultural knowledge, connection to Country, kinship, and intergenerational resilience.

Healing and opportunity

Healing, in this vision, is not only about preventing and addressing harm. It is also about reclaiming opportunity—through culture, kinship, language, waters, land and lore. Healing restores connection to identity and pride, enabling communities and families to thrive into the future.

Reforming systems

For this vision to be realised, services and systems need to change. They should walk with women, children and communities—delivering justice, accountability and cultural safety. True reform means that governments, services and institutions are not only responsive, but also empowering and accountable to the peoples and communities they serve.



Working together

Transformation requires all of society working together. Governments, services and broader communities honouring the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and being willing to walk with us in genuine partnership for change. Lasting impact depends on lived experience, cultural authority and community leadership being respected and at the centre of this work now and for the future.

Safer futures

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices is both a commitment and an invitation: a pathway toward safer, stronger and more just futures. Built on respect for women and community strength, carried by resilience, and led by wisdom, this vision and this plan as a whole offer a collective journey for transformation—where justice and healing are supported, culture is sustained and revitalised, and future generations can grow in safety and dignity.



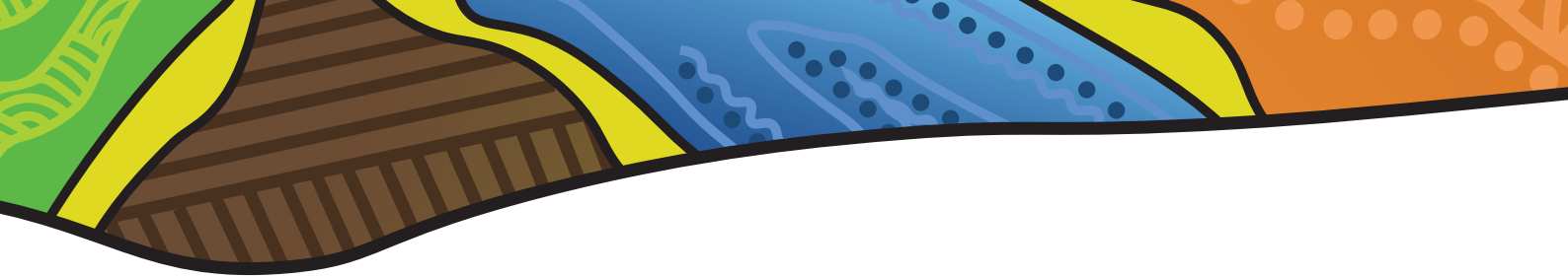
Our Principles

Our vision is underpinned by 8 core principles. These principles reflect that ending family, domestic and sexual violence requires courage, truth-telling and collective responsibility. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have carried this truth for generations: that communities are strongest when they are grounded in culture, when their voices are heard, and when decisions are made by the people most directly affected. Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices builds on this knowledge, bringing together the strength of culture, the wisdom of lived experience, and the responsibility of systems to transform the way we respond to violence.



Our Vision

Creating stonger, safer communities delivering on real change with reframed systems, delivered by and that are empowering and accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people



At the heart of these principles are **agency, self-determination and human rights**. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should share decision-making, and not just be consulted, in shaping the services and systems that impact families and communities. Self-determination is not only good practice—it is a right, affirmed by international law and decades of community advocacy. We also recognise that self-determination is a nuanced concept, particularly for victim-survivors of violence whose self-determination has been violated as part of the abuse they have endured. In this context, healing may involve victim-survivors reclaiming personal power and agency that was taken away and redefining self-determination on their own terms, within both familial and community contexts, as their experiences shape new understandings of self and collective strength. Governments, services and communities each share the responsibility to listen, to share power, and to walk alongside one another toward solutions that reflect culture, dignity and collective resilience.

1. Agency, self-determination and human rights

Principle: that agency, self-determination and human rights are built into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family, domestic and sexual violence policy, decision making and service delivery.

2. Voices of lived and living experience

Principle: that the voices of those with lived and living experience are at the forefront of family, domestic and sexual violence policy and program responses

3. Strength, resilience and healing

Principle: that family, domestic and sexual violence responses are trauma-informed and healing focused to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to build on their strengths and resilience

4. Transform institutions and systems

Principle: that institutions and systems prioritise the safety of and increase their responsiveness to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples impacted by family, domestic and sexual violence.

5. Inclusion and intersectionality

Principle: that family, domestic and sexual violence services, programs and systems are accessible to and inclusive of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

6. Evidence and data eco-systems

Principle: that data are collected in line with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community concerns and values, and with a focus on embedding Indigenous Data Sovereignty.


7. Accountability

Principle: that systems and programs have strong accountability mechanisms with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander oversight, implementation, evaluation, and monitoring.

8. Respect for Country, waters, culture, lore and language

Principle: that Country, waters, culture, lore, and language are recognised and integrated into service delivery and policy planning





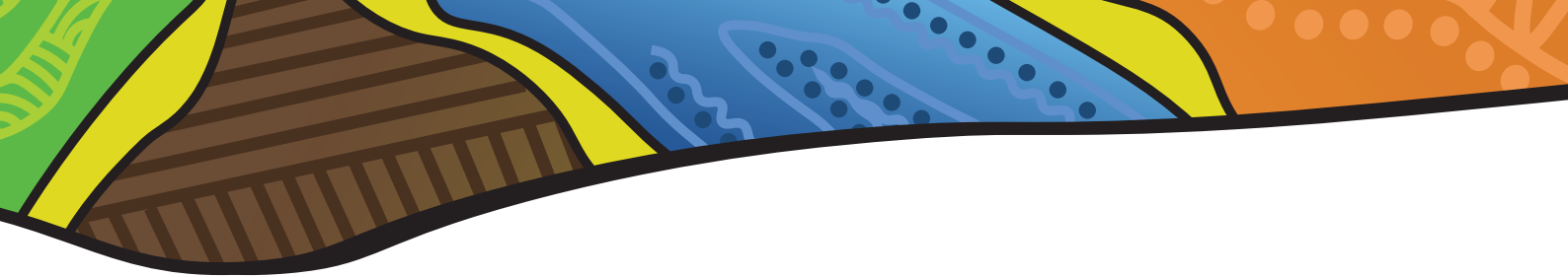
Central to this work are the **voices of lived and living experience**. Those who have experienced the pain of violence—particularly women, children, young people and families impacted by violence including many who have felt the impacts of the death of family members—as their lived experience is critical to understanding what is required for safety and healing. Their courage to speak must be honoured and heard by embedding their wisdom in responsive policy and service design. This means creating space for victim-survivors and families to lead, and resourcing communities to elevate women, children and young people as changemakers. Their knowledge, joined with the leadership of men and boys who stand alongside them, lights the path to safer futures.

Equally important is a commitment to **strength, resilience, prevention and healing**. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples carry deep reserves of strength in culture, kinship, language, and connection to Country. Healing from violence must recognise both the harm of colonisation and the resilience of communities. Services and governments must invest not only in crisis response, but in prevention, healing and early intervention. Critically, this includes early and culturally safe healing responses for women who have experienced discriminatory system responses, including those who have been misidentified and treated as people causing harm. Misidentification is a systemic failure reflecting racism toward women who often find themselves entrapped by systems²⁴. It inflicts further trauma, undermines trust, and can perpetuate cycles of violence. Supporting women with timely intervention, care and healing is essential to ensuring the system does not increase harm and risk but instead restores justice, dignity and safety. Programs grounded in cultural knowledge, community leadership and trauma responsive care are needed to break cycles of violence, create safety and nurture environments where women, children and families can thrive.

But healing cannot flourish unless **institutions and systems are transformed**. Structural racism and systemic bias remain barriers to accessing justice, safety and wellbeing. Transformation goes beyond small adjustments; it requires governments and services to dismantle discriminatory practices and to embed cultural safety across every level of policy, law and service delivery. This is about restoring trust as much as it is about delivering better and just outcomes.

A truly effective response must embrace **inclusion and intersectionality**. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children experience violence through the lens of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination—racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, ageism and more²⁵. Services must reflect the diversity of communities and their members, including the unique challenges in regional and remote areas, ensuring safety and support regardless of gender identity, sexuality, age, disability, or location. No one should be excluded from safety.

To ensure decisions are grounded in **truth, data and evidence** should be shaped by Indigenous Data Sovereignty. Communities need to know that information collected reflects what they value—connection, healing, dignity—not just statistics. Data should be governed and owned by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, returned to communities in usable ways, and centred in Indigenous knowledge systems. Without this, the stories of violence risk being misunderstood, misinterpreted, misused or silenced.



True change requires **accountability** at every level. People who cause harm must be held responsible for the harm they inflict. Victim-survivors must be able to decide what accountability and justice means to them and service and system reforms must be co-designed and co-developed with women and children with lived experience²⁶. Services must be culturally safe and responsive. Governments must respect and uphold human rights and be transparent in resourcing and reporting. And communities must hold space for truth-telling, addressing violence and strengthening collective responsibility for safety. Accountability is about ensuring everyone is playing their role fully, so that we can all work together to end violence against women and children.

Finally, this work must always be grounded in respect for **Country, waters, culture, lore and language**. Reflecting this in practice requires that respect for the cultures and identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is embedded within system design, leadership, policies, programs and service delivery. This includes focusing on the strengths of our cultures, changing discriminatory attitudes and building the cultural safety and capability of the workforce. Embedding respect for culture in systems, services and responses is more than symbolic—it is essential to creating pathways away from violence and toward thriving futures.

Putting these principles into action will create a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children, families and communities live free from violence. It is not only possible—but is being built, community by community, with strength, courage and wisdom. Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices invites everyone—governments, services, communities, and individuals—to stand in that vision, to share the responsibility, and to work towards safety and justice that is grounded in culture, dignity and self-determination.





Who will the plan make a difference for?

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices prioritises diverse groups—including women, men, Elders, children, people with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+SB members—and recognises our geographic and cultural diversity spanning urban, regional, remote, very remote and discrete communities. By embedding place-based and inclusive strategies, this approach centres community leadership while dismantling systemic barriers to safety and wellbeing.

Safety, justice and healing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities means that responses need to be led by, and accountable to victim-survivors—emphasising culture, connection, self-determination and human rights at every level.

Women and girls

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls are leaders and custodians of culture but face far higher rates of family, domestic, and sexual violence than others. With rates of hospitalisation and homicide drastically higher than national averages, women are too often failed by system responses that can discriminate and cause further harm, including by treating them as offenders or removing children from non-offending mothers²⁷. Centring women and children's safety and leadership within trauma responsive, culturally safe services is essential to addressing violence and promoting healing.

Women who are incarcerated

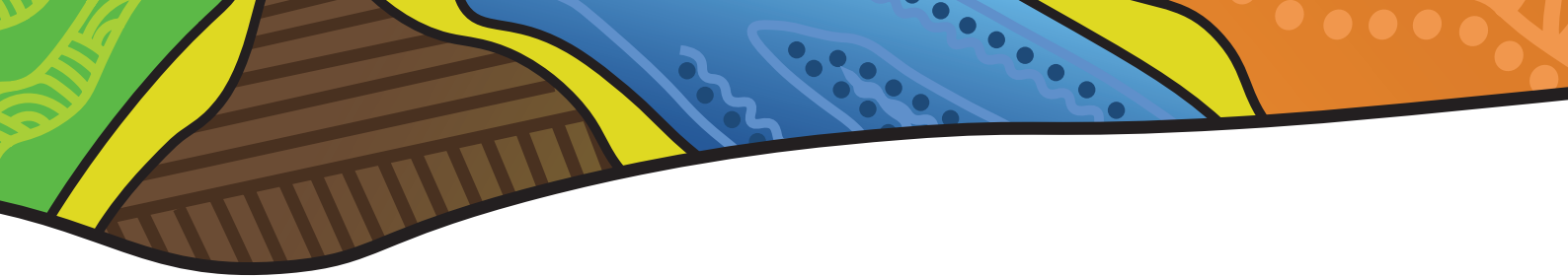
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are vastly overrepresented in the prison system, with many being mothers and most having experienced violence, including sexual assault, as adults and children²⁸. Discriminatory and inadequate policing and justice system responses contribute to this over-representation. Short sentences and unnecessary remand separate mothers from children – sometimes permanently – destabilise families and contribute to intergenerational trauma and cycles of disadvantage²⁹. Reforms must focus on community-based supports, diversionary programs, and restorative justice mechanisms that promote healing and family safety.

Women misidentified and treated as perpetrators

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are frequently misidentified and treated as perpetrators due to systemic racism, leading to removal of children, wrongful criminalisation, and barriers to support³⁰. These impacts occur due to bias in responses and decision-making, and the criminalisation of reactive and defensive actions of women who are victim-survivors³¹. Addressing this requires reform in policing and justice responses as well as in other institutional responses so that victim-survivors will not be socially entrapped. This would ensure women are accurately identified as victims and supported accordingly.

Women and girls impacted by sexual violence

Since colonisation there has been a history of sexual violence against and exploitation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. This undermines the culture and agency of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and has normalised abuse. The harms associated with sexual assault are serious and lead to ongoing underreporting, linked to mistrust, fear, and shame³².



Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims have ended their lives because of sexual assault and abuse from both family and non-family members. Many victims have left their own communities to seek safety from repeated abuse and threats³³.

Evidence indicates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander girls in out-of-home care, including residential care, are at increased risk of sexual assault and sexual exploitation. Specific responses to address the vulnerabilities of children to sexual assault are critical.

A lack of specialist, community-controlled services further isolates victim-survivors. Sexual assault services must be culturally led, co-designed with victim-survivors, trauma responsive, holistic, and focused on immediate safety and long-term healing.

Missing and murdered women and girls and their families

Too many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have been murdered or disappeared, leaving families to pick up the pieces³⁴. Many women who are murdered are mothers, leaving children to grow up without their mother's love, guidance and protection³⁵. Too often, families alone must advocate for justice—work that should be led by police and victim support agencies. This increases their trauma and highlights systemic racism in circumstances where victims are not seen as 'worthy' and are given no or less attention than non-Indigenous women who are murdered, including by the media³⁶. The Senate Inquiry into Missing and Murdered First Nations Women and Children highlighted the inadequate response of police and justice systems in responding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's experience of violence³⁷.

Families require culturally safe and responsive support in their search for justice and healing.

Men and boys

Men and boys also play an important role in preventing violence, fostering healing, and building safer communities. Men need to be part of the solution in changing attitudes that contribute to and allow for violence against women and children. They are also affected by family violence, sexual assault, and high levels of interpersonal violence, yet stigma and shame—particularly around sexual abuse—often prevents them from seeking help. Currently, there are limited programs that firstly, support men and boys as victim-survivors and secondly, for those men who are violent, address their use of violence. To be effective, programs must ensure accountability, provide pathways to healing, promote social and emotional wellbeing, provide prevention and early intervention initiatives for young people, and empower men to challenge violence, shift harmful attitudes, and contribute to safer and more respectful communities³⁸.

Elders and older people

Elders are vital as knowledge holders and community leaders. Violence and neglect undermine their role in sustaining culture, while many face unique vulnerabilities such as financial abuse, disability, poor health, and isolation³⁹. For women, this may compound the trauma of earlier life experiences of violence. Many may not have safe housing or culturally appropriate aged care. Support must focus on safety, as well as restorative, culturally meaningful approaches that respect Elders' central community role.



Children and young people

Children and young people must be nurtured, protected and supported as future leaders, but too often they witness or experience family violence or sexual assault. This causes deep trauma, disrupts development and cultural connection, and can lead to harmful state intervention by way of child removals. Exposure to violence as a child can affect brain development, such as changes to the brain's structure and chemical activity and impacts to emotional and behavioural functioning⁴⁰. Holistic, culturally strong, trauma responsive supports, co-designed with victim-survivors, are needed to protect children, as well as to break cycles of violence and promote resilience and healing.

Children in out-of-home care and youth justice

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are significantly overrepresented in out-of-home care and youth justice, significantly due to exposure to violence, lack of supports for families and systemic inequities. Research also shows that children with disability are over-represented in child protection and youth justice systems⁴¹. These systems can also harm children, often separating them from important supports, connections and safety that exists within their families, communities and cultures. Their path to healing requires trauma responsive, culturally connected supports that build on the strengths of our families, prevent family violence and child harm, promote restoration and build self-determination in child protection and youth justice systems.

People with disability

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability face compounded exclusion and high rates of violence, often unsupported by service systems that are not culturally safe or accessible⁴². Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with disability are incarcerated, experiencing further trauma. The experience of family, domestic and sexual violence also contributes to disability at an alarming rate among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children and there is a critical need to raise awareness about the relationship between violence and brain injury and the responses needed to support victim-survivors⁴³.

Approaches must dismantle ableism and racism by providing comprehensive and culturally sensitive supports that cater to the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disability, with a particular focus on the final report and recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission.

LGBTIQA+ people, Sistergirls and Brotherboys

LGBTIQA+ community members, including Sistergirls and Brotherboys, face intersectional violence rooted in racism, homophobia, and transphobia, with limited access to safe supports⁴⁴. There is an urgent need to strengthen recognition, inclusive supports, and research to better understand and address their multiple experiences of marginalisation.



What we heard in consultations

Southern Aboriginal Corporation – Moorditj Men’s Program

Across the country Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are successfully implementing innovative approaches to create safety, prevent violence, and promote culturally-grounded healing responding to the diverse needs and experiences of communities and their members. In Western Australia, Southern Aboriginal Corporation is working to support the social and emotional wellbeing of Noongar men.

Southern Aboriginal Corporation were asked “If there were no barriers, how would your community address family, domestic and sexual violence?”

If there were no barriers, Southern Aboriginal Corporation would seek to continue to address family and domestic violence in its specific service delivery regions of the Great Southern, South West and Wheatbelt areas of Western Australia, through its Moorditj Men’s Program. The program was delivered across the Wagyl Kaip Southern Noongar lands, designed to build the social and emotional health and wellbeing of Noongar men by:

- providing an opportunity for diversionary activities, skills acquisition and the achievement of productive outcomes including future training and employment
- providing opportunities for health promotion and illness prevention
- addressing suicide risk and mental health issues through connection strategies aimed at increasing a sense of belonging and resilience
- addressing the misuse of alcohol and other substances
- promoting safety in the home and community, developing a community free from fear and violence
- increasing levels of support for victims of violence.

Southern Aboriginal Corporation entered a partnership with Aboriginal Koort Kaarl Service Inc. to facilitate the pilot program, which successfully saw the employment of 1.0 FTE Men’s Support Worker based in Katanning. In the October-November 2023 period alone, the Support Worker engaged with over 60 Aboriginal men through yarning sessions and individual consultations. Overwhelmingly, the pilot program identified community need for more programs and supports specifically for men. We recommend that [Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices] encourages governments to work with service providers across the family violence sector to identify opportunities to grow existing programs that have already demonstrated success in building stronger, safer families.



What will the plan do?

The plan will change lives because it is grounded in a shared commitment to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children live free from violence, supported by safe, strong families and communities. The solutions sit with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Governments and services must walk alongside, working in genuine partnership.

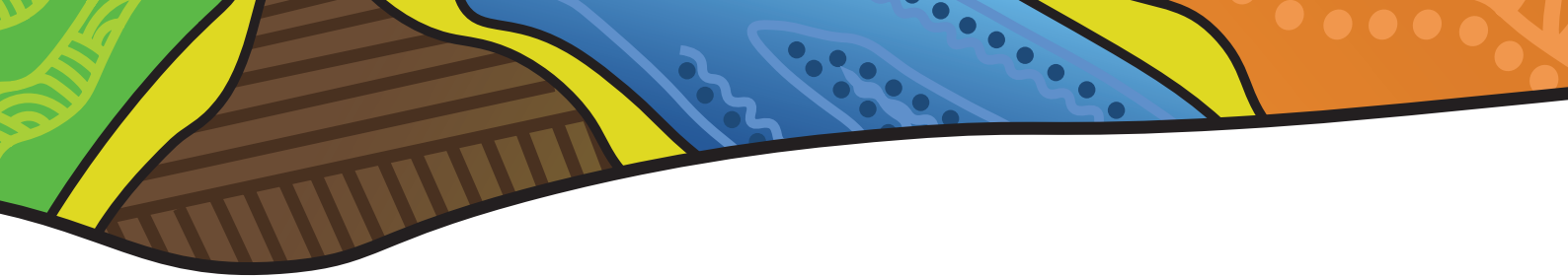
Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices is a long-term plan, mapping how we will all work together over the next 10 years to end the violence and deliver sustainable change. The work will happen in a comprehensive and coordinated way across communities and the many different systems that have a part to play in the solutions. These systems include health, justice, housing, education, employment, social services, child protection and specialist family, domestic and sexual violence responses.

Implementing the plan

Change will be underpinned by the 8 core principles described above, which will guide everything we do to create safety and end violence. Change will be driven through 5 connected threads that describe our priority focus areas for putting our vision and principles into action. The threads of our Plan weave together to create a story of safety and strength for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and communities. These threads will centre Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices and self-determination, grow community-led action in healing and prevention, progress a journey of systems change that addresses racism and embeds cultural leadership and safety, and respond to the urgent and immediate needs for safety and support in our communities.

The change will be delivered through the development of an initial **action plan** that will set out how work on each of the threads will happen, clearly defining the roles of community, governments and sectors in working together to implement the plan. The action plan will be reviewed and updated regularly throughout the life of the plan to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to the emerging needs of communities. We will be flexible and reflective, learning as we go and adjusting to make sure our actions are making a real difference for women, children, and families. The action plan will also sit alongside a **Sector Strengthening Plan** under development for the community-controlled family, domestic and sexual violence sectors that will be designed to improve service delivery, coverage, capacity, quality and resources for community-controlled organisations.

Our communities will be empowered to take the lead; to drive and deliver the change. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural ways of knowing, doing and being, will be built in. Through partnership in the design and delivery of systems, and services that prioritise self-determination. By recognising that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the experts in their own lives. Governments have an important role to play, partnering with communities to design policies to bring about change, and equipping the sectors that respond to and prevent violence.



The plan will align to existing efforts and agreements, working to achieve the four priority reforms of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. It will sit alongside and complement the large number of existing policies and plans designed to prevent and respond to violence nationally and in each State and Territory (see Appendix 2).

What outcomes will we work to achieve?


The success of this plan will be reflected in a society where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are partners in leading and shaping policy and where services and responses are self-determined by our communities. We will see service systems that no longer harm, they work with our communities to create a future where safety, healing and self-determination are respected.

The true test of whether the plan is driving this change will be the support and safety experienced and felt by women and children in our communities. These experiences will be underpinned by the systems changes that grow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led and culturally strong responses, healing and prevention.

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices will work to achieve sustained progress towards Target 13 of the National Agreement, to realise a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families live free from violence. It will also work alongside *Safe and Supported: The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2021–2031* to make progress towards Target 12, reducing the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care by addressing the violence and systemic inequities that too often contribute to children's separation from family, community and culture.

A detailed Outcomes Framework will be developed by mid-2026 in partnership between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to agree the short, medium and long-term outcomes that reflect our shared goals and to support accountability for progress to achieve change. The Outcomes Framework will be complemented by an Indicator Framework that describes the measures that provide visibility of whether the plan is making change for our communities. Outcomes for Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices will be strongly aligned with the Outcomes Framework for the National Plan, while also capturing the specific and different outcomes that are needed to respond to the distinct context and experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities impacted by violence and support self-determination.





As a 10-year plan, our outcomes will extend past the life of both the National Plan and the current targets in the National Agreement, charting the path forward towards a future free from violence. While further detail will be reflected in the Outcomes Framework, the broad systems transformation outcomes that the plan will drive include:

- increased and sustained self-determination and partnerships in policy design, oversight and implementation
- increased Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led and community-controlled initiatives in family, domestic and sexual violence response, prevention and healing
- increased prevention and healing focused programs that work to interrupt and end cycles of violence
- increased services and responses that create accountability and address the behaviours of people who cause harm
- improvements in justice, youth justice and child protection responses for women and children experiencing violence
- increased accountability and capability of non-Indigenous services and governments to operate in culturally safe and effective ways, and
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are empowered to lead research and have control over their data consistent with principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

As the plan drives these system transformations and increases Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led responses that are grounded in the strengths and leadership of our communities, we will expect to see changes for our women, children and communities, including:

- more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and families receiving support from a culturally safe service before experiencing crisis
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children experiencing violence having timely access to the supports and resources they need to be safe in their local communities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children who have experienced violence receiving trauma responsive and culturally safe supports that promote justice and healing
- more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children live safely in connection with their families, communities and cultures
- more LGBTIQ+ people, Sistergirls and Brotherboys are feeling safe in relationships and connected with community and culture
- increased economic security and housing stability for victim-survivors
- more people who use violence being accountable and supported to change their behaviours, and
- more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children are safe and thriving, living free from family, domestic, and sexual violence.

When it is completed, our outcomes framework will describe the theory of change that underpins outcomes and will guide the development of our Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.



Tracking our progress and impact

Accountability is built in. This will be underpinned by a **Monitoring and Evaluation Framework** that measures progress toward outcomes that are agreed in partnership. The framework will sit alongside and enhance reporting against Target 13, as well as contributing to reporting against Target 12 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap. It will enable us to track and report change over the life of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, to continuously improve our efforts, and to respond to new or emerging areas of need. Measuring progress is not just about statistics, but about truth-telling, recognising lived and living experiences, and ensuring that reform delivers visible and meaningful change in communities. In this way, monitoring is a tool for learning, strengthening, and holding all partners to account.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and governments will co-develop the evaluation framework to:

- reflect the vision, principles and threads of the plan
- have clear outcomes that demonstrate systems, community and individual level change
- be accompanied by an indicator framework with measures of change
- establish a baseline to measure change against
- include data sources and plans for data development to address gaps in available data.

Recognising that change must be understood and driven from the perspective of those who live and experience the reality of violence and its impacts in community, the approach to monitoring and evaluation will centre the voices and expertise of victims-survivors, as well as Elders, community members, services providers and professionals working to prevent and respond to violence.

The pivotal role of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices in ending violence for women and children does not exempt other strategies, principal among them the National Plan, from centering the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As the key mechanism for government accountability to the National Plan, the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission will be empowered to work alongside communities to increase consistency of monitoring across government efforts and ensure amplification of real-time feedback across both plans.

Over the life of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, there will be a minimum of 2 evaluations that ensure progress is tracked, learnings are applied, and change is guided by community voices. The findings from evaluations will be shared with communities to create opportunities for community-led responses and improvements based on findings.



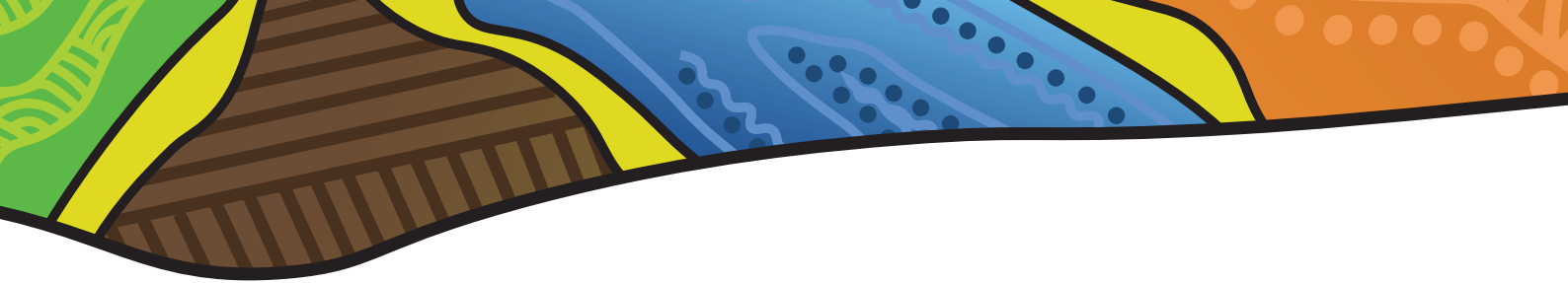
Governance for the plan

Accountability will also be achieved through the plan's **governance structure** which will reflect the commitment under the National Agreement's Priority Reform One: Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making, to building and strengthening partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and peoples to share in decision-making with governments.

The governance structure for the plan will embed the strong partnership elements under Priority Reform 1. These elements require that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties appoint their own representatives, that there is a formal agreement that defines the parties, roles, purpose and objectives of the partnership, and that decision-making is shared between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by consensus, where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander parties hold as much weight as governments.

The purpose of the governance structure will be to:

- oversee the progress of actions in the Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices Action Plan
- embed the voices and expertise of people with lived and living experience
- share in decision-making to develop, regularly review and update the Action Plan
- share in decision-making to develop a monitoring and evaluation framework
- respond to ongoing monitoring and evaluation and drive continuous improvement of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices.



The governance structure will ensure that governments are sharing decision making at every stage of planning, implementation and review with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives through:

- 1** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives from every state and territory will come together regularly with Australian, state and territory government departmental leaders to oversee implementation, develop and renew action plans, and find solutions to implementation challenges across the life of the plan.
- 2** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives from every state and territory will work with ministers from the Australian, state and territory governments to align planning and reporting frameworks, oversee implementation and make high-level decisions across the life of the plan.
- 3** Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, experts and community representatives will come together with Australian, state and territory governments to address emerging needs and priorities to inform improvements and action planning and ensure community voices are central to driving the plan's implementation. The frequency and process for identifying who will take part will be agreed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and Australian, state and territory government departmental officials with responsibility for the governance of Our Ways.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership for the plan will also be strengthened through the establishment of a new **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak body for family, domestic and sexual violence** that is anticipated to commence operating in early 2026 following a community-led design and establishment process.



Case study

KWY Aboriginal Corporation

Creating a space for change – with safety at the heart

KWY Aboriginal Corporation (KWY) is a South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation established in 2011 after conversations with local Elders around the need for Aboriginal-led responses for families to health, wellbeing, and safety. Initially focused on men's behaviour change around domestic and family violence, KWY has since incorporated working holistically with women, children, and the wider community. The vision is for Aboriginal peoples to thrive through being culturally strong, empowered, and safe, with a current portfolio of programs focusing on:

- place-based safety hub models centred around family and domestic violence
- supporting holistic children and youth work with a strong focus on child development, school retention and positive participation in the community
- person-centred mental health and social and emotional wellbeing support
- kinship care, Reunification and Finding Families connection services
- intensive family support services addressing child protection concerns through active case management and whole-of-family support
- culturally-responsive and trauma-informed training to the sector based on Aboriginal wise practice research and evidence.

KWY seeks to create spaces for change and increased safety, connectivity and strong social and emotional wellbeing for our families not just through the delivery of culturally-grounded programs, but through advocacy and influence within the sector. The strength of KWY is the breadth of programs that ensure that children, women, men and community are all part of the story.



Stronger Safer Family Outreach

An Aboriginal family was referred to KWY's Stronger Safer Family Outreach program due to domestic violence and substance misuse concerns. The program uses a multidisciplinary team to walk alongside families, offering holistic, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed support.

Both Mum and Dad were supported by a men's and a women's worker, which culturally aligns with respecting men's and women's business, and a child and youth practitioner supported the children's wellbeing and voice. Within the family Dad was using violence and we used the Men's Behavioural Analysis (MBA) Tool to guide safety planning, hold him to account and support him through behaviour change approaches. KWY worked with the father to connect him with AOD services, allowing him to make informed choices and a referral to the KWY My Journey behaviour change program was accepted. Mum was provided outreach both in home and at a community space and assessed using the Women's Safety Analysis Tool which supported work on emotional wellbeing, confidence building and education on the cycle of violence.

The child and youth practitioner liaised with the school to help strengthen their relationship with the parents and the child and provided 1:1 therapeutic support to the children, with the support of the school's Aboriginal Community Education Officer, to strengthen cultural identity and knowledge. As a result, the children re-engaged with their education and attendance significantly improved.

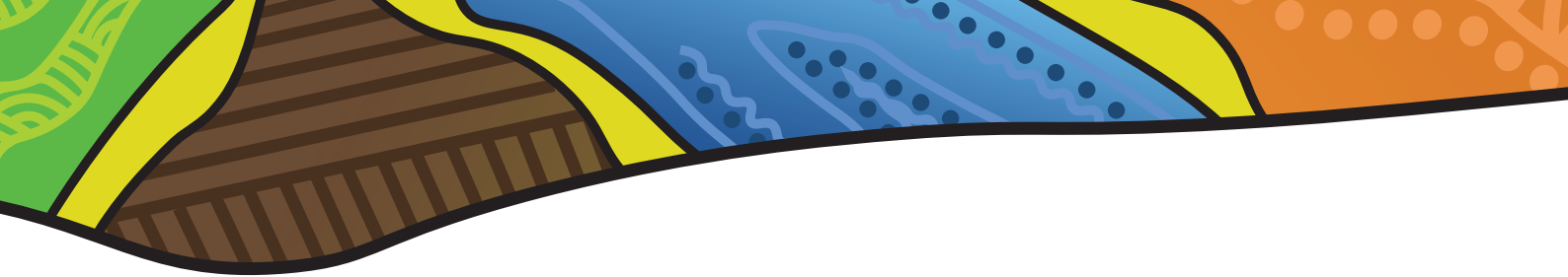
KWY also used other tools such as a genogram and eco map to understand kinship, cultural connections, and existing supports, which also helped identify service gaps and over servicing.

The feedback from the family was that they felt safe working with an ACCO who genuinely listened and supported their family to thrive again.

Dad said, 'I now have the tools to manage my frustrations and understand how my behaviour was affecting my partner and children'. Mum said, 'my home is a happy home again and I am now studying a Diploma of Community Services to help my community'.

**Our Threads: weaving safety,
healing and change**





The vision of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices reflects principles that have guided Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing and being for generations. This includes the understanding that, in our communities, we are connected and accountable to each other, and knowing that self-determination and respect for human rights are critical to ending violence.

We draw on the metaphor of weaving because it speaks directly to how wellbeing and safety are created. Across diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, both women and men have woven: women creating baskets, mats and treasured items for ceremony and daily use; men crafting fishing nets and their own ceremonial items. Weaving is not just the making of objects—it is a practice that connects people to Country, ancestors, and cultural knowledge. It involves gathering materials sustainably, with deep respect for land and waters, and passing down skills through generations. In this way, weaving embodies care, continuity, and cultural strength.

Just as individual fibres are woven into mats and baskets that are strong, functional, and enduring, community strength emerges when people, cultures, histories, healing practices, and systems are interwoven in ways that respect and reinforce one another. The quality of the weave—the strength of its connections—determines whether communities feel supported, services are trusted, and systems are truly responsive⁴⁵.

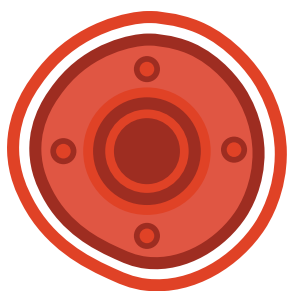
For governments, this means reforming institutions so they are fair, just, accountable and culturally safe, and ensuring Aboriginal community-controlled organisations are resourced to lead solutions. It means embedding a human rights approach in law, policy and practice to address racism and systemic discrimination. For services, it requires embedding trauma responsive and relational practice, recognising that safety and healing grow through trust, cultural connection, and continuity of care. For communities, it honours the collective voice and agency that must sit at the centre of all decisions.

Weaving is also a way of understanding how change unfolds over time⁴⁶. Humphrey et al. (2023) remind us that in weaving, each element—ethics, worldview, methodology, knowledge, and transformative practice—must be interconnected for the basket to hold⁴⁷. In the same way, Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices is a living document, designed to adapt and respond⁴⁸. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation are like tending the weave: checking its strength, repairing weak threads, and allowing new patterns to emerge as communities innovate and systems evolve.

This is how we plan to build stronger, safer communities: by weaving together Indigenous leadership, government responsibility, service accountability, and community wisdom into a fabric of safety and healing that no single thread can carry alone.

The essential threads in our weave

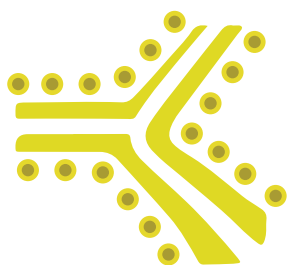
The weaving that holds this plan together is formed from 5 essential threads. Each thread contributes strength, resilience, and beauty to the whole, and together they create a weave strong enough to hold communities safely.



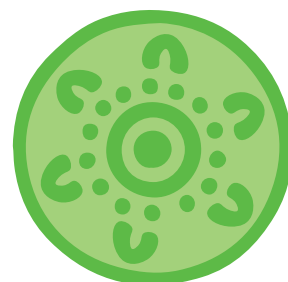
The first thread is the foundation of the weave: **centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voice, self-determination, and agency**. This gives the plan its direction, integrity, and cultural authority. This thread is based on respect for Indigenous peoples and their inherent human rights.



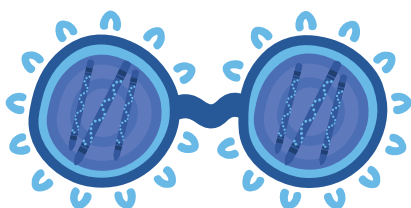
The second thread is **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions**. These must be sustainably supported, built on strength and resilience, and grounded in safety and healing that responds to local contexts and cultures.



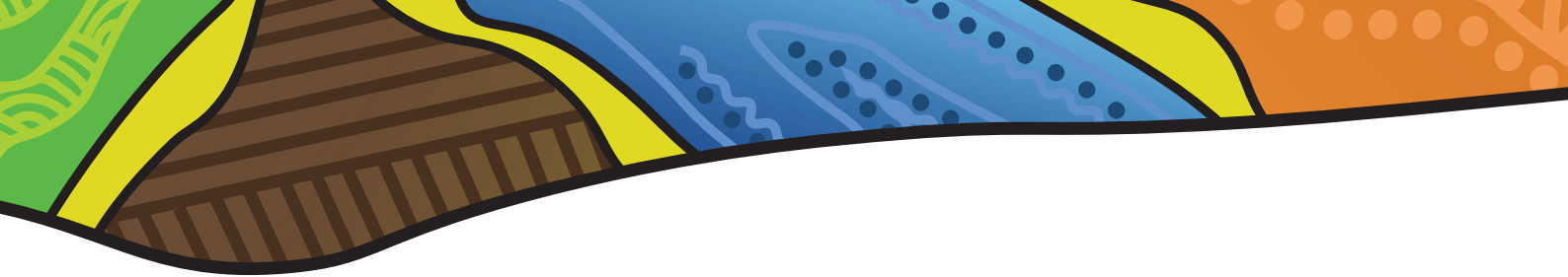
The third thread is **reforming institutions and systems that impact safety**. Justice, health, education, housing, disability support and advocacy, and child protection must be transformed, addressing systemic discrimination to become culturally safe, responsive, and accountable to community.



The fourth thread is **strengthening evidence, research, and the data ecosystem through Indigenous Data Sovereignty**. This ensures knowledge is gathered and used ethically, with Indigenous leadership guiding how data and research will inform reform, and how evidence systems will be grown by community to be rigorous and culturally grounded.

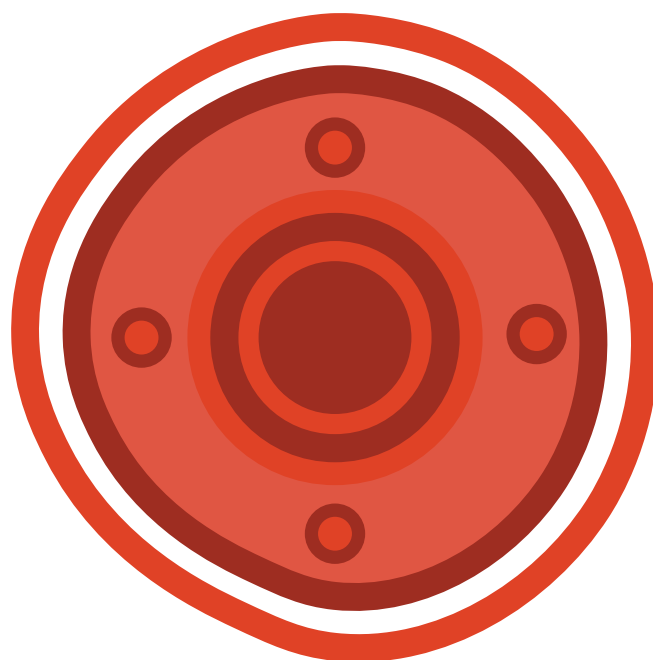


The fifth thread is **breaking cycles of harm through strengthened housing and financial security**. Without safe homes and economic stability, safety and healing cannot be sustained. Targeted reform must address economic disparities for women and gaps in access to safe, stable and affordable housing.



Together, these 5 threads form a resilient weave—one that honours cultural traditions while driving systemic reform. Yet a weave does not endure on its own. Its strength depends on how we return to it, not just once, but continually. Returning to the weave is our reflexive and reflective practice: it is the regular evaluation of the plan as a whole and of each of its threads. Through this, we check how the weave is holding, how each strand contributes, and how the connections between them maintain its integrity. In doing so, we ensure that the weave remains strong, adaptive, and capable of carrying our communities safely into the future.





**Thread 1: Centring voice,
self-determination and agency**

This thread forms the foundation strand of the weave: centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, agency and self-determination so the whole fabric has direction and integrity.

Thread 1 will place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, self-determination and agency at the heart of service systems and decision-making. This means moving beyond consultation to genuine community-led and place-based solutions, supported through shared decision-making and the transfer of service delivery to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations. It also means ensuring that services and institutions create culturally safe and responsive systems where women and children are supported to have real influence and control in the decisions that affect their lives.


This thread aligns particularly with the National Agreement's Priority Reform One: Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision Making, and Priority Reform Two: Building the Community-Controlled Sector, including the commitment to direct a meaningful proportion of funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations. Funding commitments will also align with the Sector Strengthening Plan (focus area 4), ensuring the growth and sustainability of the sector over time. Thread 1 also aligns with the National Plan's cross-cutting focus on Closing the Gap and its commitment to "developing solutions with and led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Elders and communities."

"Policy and programs that centre the voices of people with lived and living experience, and are designed with community, will always deliver stronger outcomes. Our people know what works for us. Governments and services must listen, respect and partner with us to build solutions."

- public submission

Elevating community voice and lived experience also means empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, especially for women and girls, and embedding fundamental human rights, supporting the guiding principles underpinning the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and in line with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Critically, this includes elevating the voices of children and young people to inform and develop the policies, programs and service responses that impact their lives. This ensures that policies and programs are not only effective but uphold the dignity and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Findings from evaluations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander family violence programs consistently highlight that community involvement in service planning is critical for success.⁴⁹ When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices are heard and acted upon, culturally strong and safe systems are created, with services that are inclusive, responsive, and trusted. Achieving this requires governments and non-Indigenous organisations to form genuine partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities, and to share authority in decisions that affect them.

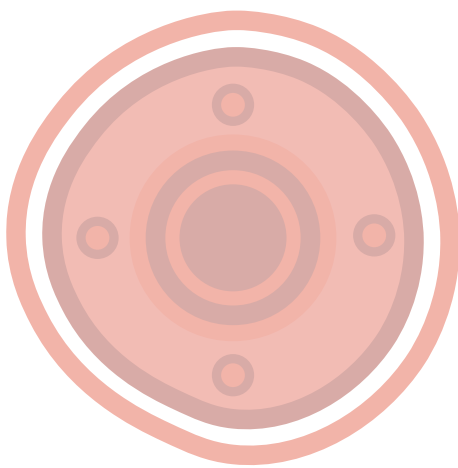


Thread 1 also recognises that effective community leadership is only possible when supported by strong and sustainable funding.⁵⁰ Participants in the Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices engagements highlighted that current funding arrangements—short-term, competitive, siloed, or reliant on pilots—create instability and undermine trust. Such models limit organisations’ ability to build rapport with communities, develop their workforce, evaluate and improve programs, and provide consistent, healing-focused support.

As we develop action plans for Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, we will focus on what the evidence and our communities have told us is needed to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres voice, self-determination, and agency, including:

- long-term, sustainable and flexible funding models that increase the sustainability and proportion of funding to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, supporting services to respond flexibly to address local need, build their infrastructure, and attract and retain a skilled workforce
- shared decision-making at every level, ensuring governments and services partner with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in policy, planning, design, delivery, and evaluation
- commissioning models that include our communities and community-controlled organisations in shared decisions that prioritise funding to the areas of highest need and the most effective responses for our communities
- commitment to sector strengthening, with funding and effort aligned to the Sector Strengthening Plan and the broader reform goals of the National Agreement
- supporting the empowerment and agency of women and children through their inclusion in service design, participation and control in decision-making, and access to culturally safe community-controlled and non-Indigenous services.

When governments and services commit to these practices, they will be better equipped to enable culturally informed and safe interactions, creating service systems that uphold Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, strengthen community agency, and deliver outcomes that keep families safe.



What we heard in consultations

Yalu Aboriginal Corporation were asked “If there were no barriers, how would your community address FDSV?”

Provide a sweeping and ongoing community education campaign – that doesn’t last a season, a few weeks or months but is part of an ongoing, sustainable campaign to eradicate violence in all its forms in remote communities. These would need to be programs that are targeted at every single member of community as every person is important.

All Government entities, organisations, companies, sporting bodies, and businesses, that are located remotely should embed a commitment to ending violence in the communities in which they work. This should be reflected in their strategic plans, frameworks, policies, procedures, and training. Their commitment to ending violence is an important one, and it has a huge reach within the communities where they provide a service and within the workforce that they employ.

Having co-designed programs for children, women, and men run by Yolngu. Historically, there has been very little capacity building for Yolngu people, and most programs are run by people who are not Yolngu and are not from East Arnhem. There has been a type of gatekeeping by people and a distinct lack of knowledge sharing and promotion of local Yolngu into management positions. There are no clear pathways for Yolngu people to develop the knowledge and skills required to do their work. Most ‘qualifications’ are generic; if there are places for Yolngu to study, they are not local. There should be a focus on co-design and training local people to continue to run training, workshops and ongoing education in local communities. These programs should include parenting programs for children 0–18, men’s behaviour change, education about violence, education about addictions, attachment, colonisation and its impacts and relation to lateral violence, and any other identified needs in the community. These programs should be provided in schools, women’s and men’s groups, local churches, family and clan groups, and all the homelands. Education and information sharing must be multi-faceted and aim to meet people wherever they are.


Work underway: Strengthening Families and Communities Partnership

The Strengthening Families and Communities Partnership, under the A Better Safer Future for Central Australia Plan, is an example of a regional place-based way of working with local leadership, service providers, and communities in Central Australia. Based on genuine community engagement and supported by community-led design and implementation, the Partnership is delivering a variety of grants that are focused on reducing family and domestic violence through strengths-based, preventative, and healing approaches. Activities include increasing outreach services to remote areas, providing community legal education, strengthening cultural connections through workshops and walks, creating safe spaces on community, and building healthy home and life skills. Communities are benefiting from increased support for existing, upcoming, or new programs and activities that align with their plan for change and work to build on protective factors to prevent family violence.

Through Our Ways, there is an opportunity to continue and learn from the approach started under the Partnership, and build on the success of working in place and demonstrating community-led methods to reducing family violence.



Thread 2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions that are strengths-based, preventive, and healing



This thread strengthens the healing fibre of the weave, carrying the resilience and wisdom of our communities and ensuring culture is the medicine that holds us together.

Thread 2 will strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions that are sustainably supported, strengths-based, preventive, and grounded in therapeutic healing responsive to local contexts. Embedding healing across prevention, early intervention, response and recovery is critical to ending violence and intergenerational trauma. For too long, trauma has been carried from generation to generation, and without healing, cycles of violence will continue.


“Our ears, eyes and hearts are in the community.”
– participant, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
community-controlled sector engagement

This thread aligns with the National Agreement Priority Reform One: Formal Partnerships and Shared Decision-Making, Priority Reform Two: Building the Community-Controlled Sector, and Priority Reform Three: Transforming Government Organisations. It also aligns with the National Plan, highlighting the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led responses across the National Plan’s priority focus areas for action of prevention, early intervention, response and recovery and healing. Thread 2 places healing and self-determination at the centre of responses, ensuring services are available, accessible, culturally safe, and responsive to the needs of victim-survivors, children who experience or witness violence, and families grieving missing or murdered loved ones.

Efforts to end violence must prioritise healing as part of recovery, prevention, and early intervention. This requires trauma responsive, culturally safe, place-based, and kinship-centred responses that prevent violence, and support both victim-survivors and people who use violence. Services include evidence-based social and emotional wellbeing programs, culturally safe health care, and positive parenting, education and community initiatives that address child removal and strengthen families.

Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices recognises that cultural safety, strong identity, and connection to Country and culture are essential to protect against the impacts of intergenerational trauma caused by colonisation. We heard extensively, and literature confirms, that for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to thrive, family, culture, and community connection must be at the centre of healing.

To embed cultural, healing and therapeutic approaches at the centre of service delivery will need governments, non-Indigenous organisations and non-Indigenous people to change the way they work with, and alongside, our communities. But healing can’t come from non-Indigenous systems alone. It needs community-led spaces where culture is the medicine – places of healing, the wisdom of Elders, and the strength of connection to Country and spirit. Non-Indigenous organisations must work in partnership with community-controlled organisations to strengthen their own culturally responsive service delivery, and to transfer service delivery to our communities so we can lead them. In this way, Thread 2 commits to solutions that uphold self-determination, embed cultural authority, and support the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to govern their own paths of healing and justice.



As we develop an action plan for Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, we will focus on the evidence and what our communities have told us is needed to strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions, including:

- embedding healing across prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery services through trauma responsive, culturally-safe, place-based, and kinship-centred practice
- supporting truth-telling initiatives that build knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and experiences
- investing in community-led healing programs, the wisdom of Elders and cultural practices that strengthen identity, connection to Country, and spirit
- expanding wellbeing, health, prevention, family support, parenting, and education programs that strengthen families, reduce child removal, and keep children connected to their families, communities and cultures
- supporting the critical role of specialist services in prevention, response and legal services, including the role of the Family Violence Prevention and Legal Services
- ensuring services respond to the needs of children impacted by violence, families grieving missing or murdered loved ones, and others on collective journeys of healing
- investing in cultural program and activities for men that strengthen their identity and address their trauma, reinforcing accountability and centring the safety of women and children
- sharing information with communities about the culturally-strong and community-led services and supports available to them to respond to violence and support their safety
- building strong partnerships between non-Indigenous and community-controlled organisations to strengthen culturally responsive service delivery, and transfer service delivery to community-control.

As these actions progress, healing will be embedded at every level of systems, enabling culturally-strong responses that prevent harm, address immediate safety, support men to stop using violence, interrupt cycles of trauma, and promote long-term and lasting resilience for women and children who experience violence.

Case study

Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre: Healing and Rebuilding through Culturally Safe Support

**Client name and any identifying details have been changed to protect privacy.*

Background

Jasmine*, a 32-year-old Aboriginal woman from a remote Kimberley community, had been in an abusive relationship for several years. The violence escalated after the birth of her second child, leading her to fear for her safety and that of her children. Jasmine's isolation, both geographically and socially, compounded her situation. The cultural pressures and the stigma associated with leaving a partner in her community made it difficult for her to seek help. The complexity of her situation was further heightened by the lack of access to culturally appropriate services in her area, leaving her feeling trapped and hopeless.

Solution

Jasmine was connected to the Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre through a community outreach initiative. Understanding the need for a culturally safe and holistic approach, the Centre provided Jasmine with a comprehensive support plan:

- 1 Women's Refuge:** Jasmine and her children were offered immediate shelter at the local women's refuge, a safe and culturally welcoming space where she could begin to feel secure.
- 2 FVPLS Legal Service:** The Family Violence Prevention Legal Service team worked with Jasmine to secure a restraining order and provided legal guidance on custody matters, ensuring that her rights and the safety of her children were prioritised.
- 3 Therapeutic and Social Supports:** Recognising the trauma Jasmine had experienced, the Centre arranged for her to receive counselling from a culturally competent therapist. Additionally, she participated in healing circles and other traditional practices that resonated with her cultural background, helping her reconnect with her identity and community.
- 4 Empowerment and Skill-Building:** Jasmine was also enrolled in programs focused on building life skills, including parenting support, which helped her regain confidence and independence.

Outcome

Over the next six months, Jasmine's situation improved significantly:

- **Safety and Stability:** Jasmine and her children remained safe, with no further incidents of violence. The stable environment of the refuge and the support from the legal team allowed her to start rebuilding her life.
- **Legal Empowerment:** The legal support Jasmine received enabled her to navigate the court system effectively. She successfully obtained a restraining order and gained full custody of her children.
- **Healing and Recovery:** Through consistent engagement in counselling and traditional healing practices, Jasmine reported a marked decrease in anxiety and depression. Her participation in community activities also improved her sense of belonging and well-being.
- **Economic Independence:** Jasmine completed her vocational training and secured part-time employment. She expressed increased confidence in managing her finances and supporting her family independently.

Analysis and Conclusion

This case illustrates the critical importance of providing wrap-around, culturally safe, and trauma-responsive supports for Aboriginal women escaping family and domestic violence. The success of Jasmine's journey was rooted in the integration of legal, therapeutic, and social services, tailored to her cultural needs and personal circumstances. Key lessons include the need for continuous community engagement to reach isolated individuals and the importance of culturally informed approaches that empower women to reclaim their strength and independence. While Jasmine's progress has been significant, ongoing support is necessary to ensure long-term stability and prevent relapse into unsafe situations.



What we heard in consultations

Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation was asked “If there were no barriers, how would your community address FDSV?”

In truth, money/funding is always our biggest barrier for creating change, so without that barrier in mind our team spoke of a holistic healing centre that could support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in a person-centred, trauma-informed, culturally sensitive way. A purpose-built Healing Centre that Connects to Culture and Country as methods of healing, rehabilitation and of course, support. It would have crisis accommodation, transition housing, family violence specific counseling services, sexual violence support services, specialist practitioners, therapeutic approaches, parental support, home skills support, prevention programs, internal references to support programs, support staff that are dedicated to each family member, including the perpetrator, and is, in all, a safe space. It would be peer-run, so operated by CHAC for the community, to support families holistically to get back to a safe family home.

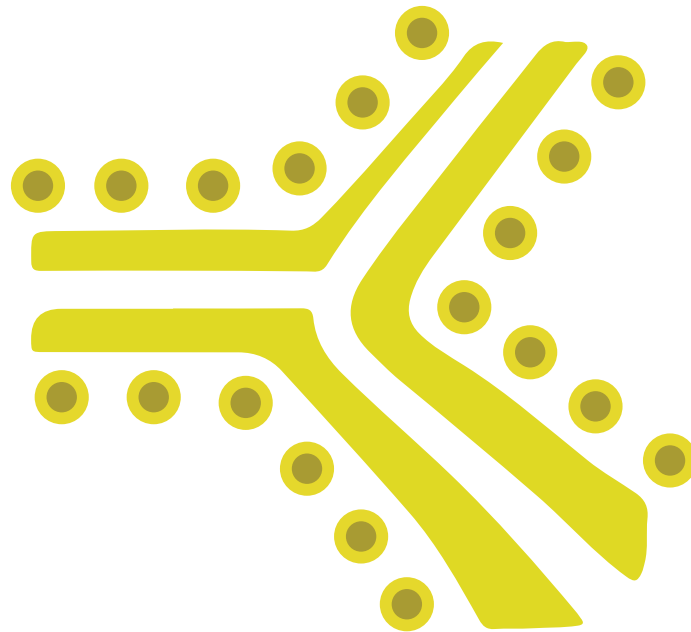
Work underway: Four Immediate Priority Grants under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025

The Government's Four Immediate Priority Grants; supporting crisis accommodation services, culturally responsive programs delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, community-led men's wellness centres, and prevention programs and campaigns for children are examples of where government is working differently with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Through the early implementation phase of these grants, the government is receiving positive feedback from stakeholders about this new approach.

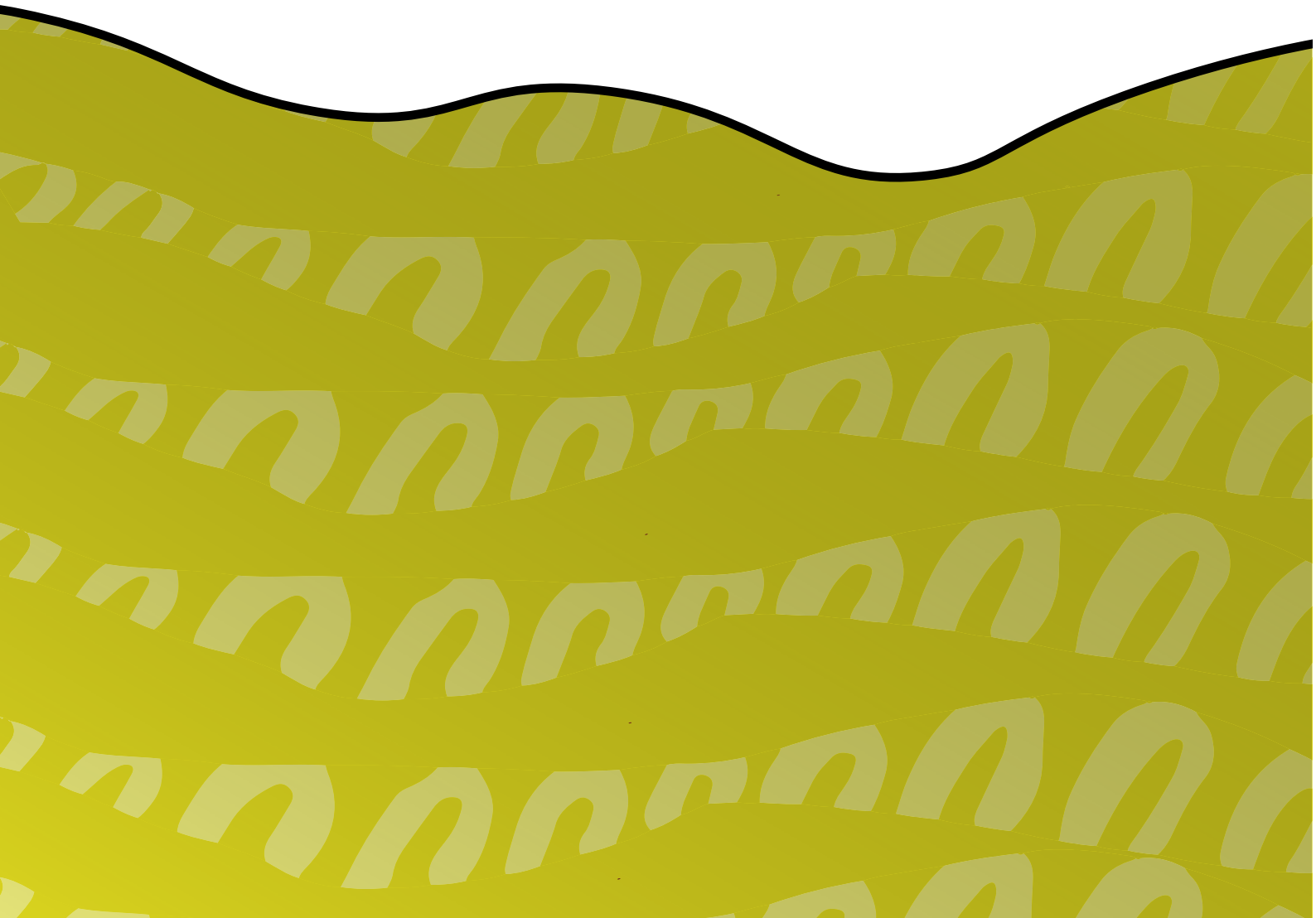
Work underway: Supporting Adolescent Boys Trial

The Supporting Adolescent Boys Trial is a national early intervention trial for young men and adolescent boys aged 12 to 18 years who present with adverse childhood experiences including family and domestic violence. The trial includes supports for First Nations peoples in alignment with the priorities of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025. The trial is being delivered in 14 sites nationally, including 2 sites in each state and one in each territory. Two activities are specifically focused on First Nations participants in Broome, Western Australia and Palmerston, Northern Territory. All trial sites will work with participants with diverse needs, including young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and boys.

When we develop action plans for Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, we will focus on what the evidence and lessons learnt from these grants and trial tells us in relation to strengthening Australian and jurisdictional government partnerships, improving coordination, reducing funding duplication, and supporting a wholistic approach to addressing drivers and experiences of family violence.



**Thread 3: Reform the institutions
and systems that impact safety**



This thread reforms the systems and institutions that intersect with safety, reworking weak strands so the weave can carry families without breaking.

Thread 3 will strengthen efforts to centre the diverse needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities at the heart of service systems. To date, we have attempted to address family, domestic and sexual violence primarily through service delivery improvements, localised actions and 'trial' programs. Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities have led the way in comprehensive and holistic responses to create safety, but these responses have not been resourced, enabled and embedded at scale across the systems that impact our women, children and families. Thread 3 commits us to change this story by pursuing comprehensive systems reform on a nationwide scale, while recognising that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are different and reform must be led by and responsive to the unique needs of each community.


“Aboriginal [and Torres Strait Islander] ways of working are not transactional, and for many people, continuing relationships are more important than single transactions. By contrast, current government processes for services are transactional: creating pilot projects, calling for tenders and employing contract staff all rely on temporary, transactional relationships.”

– public submission

This thread aligns particularly with the National Agreement Priority Reform Two: Building the Community-Controlled Sector, and Priority Reform Three: Transforming Government Organisations. It also aligns with the National Plan's focus on 'Addressing structural barriers to achieving change' including strengthening the sector, building the workforce and improving law and justice responses. Thread 3 focuses on the core system reform priorities that are needed to improve the safety, responsiveness and impact of systems and services, including:

- 1** Strengthening the family, domestic, and sexual violence sectors and intersecting sectors to respond to the diverse needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- 2** Building a culturally capable and trauma responsive workforce
- 3** Building cultural safety and capability of governments and non-Indigenous organisations and workers
- 4** Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance and partnerships at every level of the system from national oversight through to community and place-based implementation.

Thread 3 will drive efforts to strengthen the community-controlled sector which is central to self-determination and agency for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. A domestic, family, and sexual violence Sector Strengthening Plan will be developed by communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives, First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence and Australian, state and territory governments working in partnership. It will focus on actions that improve service delivery, coverage, capacity, quality, and resources for community-controlled organisations.




Building a workforce that can respond effectively to the diverse needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities will require dedicated efforts to establish new workforce pathways, and to attract, retain and upskill staff.⁵¹ There will be opportunities to leverage workforce initiatives underway, for example through the National Skills Agreement and employment services programs including Workforce Australia, Remote Australia Employment Service and Inclusive Employment Australia. Efforts must grow the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforces that prevent and responds to violence, recognising the incredible strengths that already exist within our communities.

“We trust our people to understand our needs, so the system needs to invest in training and employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to work and lead the change. It makes a huge difference when we see and hear our people in these roles – especially for victims and perpetrators.”
– public submission

Governments and non-Indigenous organisations and workers carry a big responsibility to change the way they operate and work with our communities. This will require shifts in leadership and policy to address systemic racism and discrimination, alongside training and education to embed cultural safety and competency, and trauma responsive ways of working.

We heard clearly that major reforms are needed to build the cultural capability and safety of justice, policing, courts and child protection systems that too often exacerbate harm rather than wrapping supports and safety around our families, women and children. It is important that these systems ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience equality before the law. Frequently Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are experiencing punitive and harsh responses from institutions and systems that fail to recognise and respond to their needs for safety and healing, often increasing risk. This situation is described as ‘systemic entrapment’ as women are left with little choice and ability to leave violence.⁵² They can even be held responsible for the violence against them. Police ‘misidentification’ of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women victims as perpetrators is one outcome of systemic entrapment. This is leading to increases in child removals, incarceration and suicide rates as family violence and sexual assault contribute to distress, trauma and suicidal ideation. Addressing systemic entrapment requires victim centred responses that prioritise identification and responses to women’s experiences of violence in all its forms.

The change to systems will only happen if it is done in partnership at every level. This means shared decision-making for this plan doesn’t stop at its national governance structure, it needs to happen at the state and territory level, in each region, and in every community. This includes the commitment of non-Indigenous services and workers to build genuine partnerships with communities and community-controlled organisations and to transfer resources to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations to lead responses for our people.



As we develop actions plans for Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, we will focus on what the evidence and our communities have told us is needed to reform institutions and systems, including:

- improving service delivery, coverage, capacity, quality, and resources for community-controlled organisations in line with the family, domestic and sexual violence Sector Strengthening Plan
- prioritising workforce development pathways to improve staff attraction, retention, and career progression within the sector, with a focus on building local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforces and on improving recruitment and retention of specialist workers with senior experience, particularly in regional and remote areas
- improving working conditions and support for family, domestic and sexual violence workers, including through initiatives, systems and framework that build psychological safety and capacity for self-care
- strengthening cultural safety and capability across government agencies and non-Indigenous services through co-designed, trauma responsive training and education programs that address the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and the histories and drivers that underpin trauma and violence in communities
- establishing accountability mechanisms for non-Indigenous services that require the development and application of high standards of cultural safety and capability in the delivery of services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- progressing education, training and institutional reform within justice, police, courts and child protection services to address racism and discrimination, and increase cultural safety and capability, trauma responsive practice, and healing-centred responses
- improving awareness, understanding of and ability to identify and respond effectively to the impacts of violence on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, within universal service systems, particularly in hospitals, primary health services, allied health, disability supports, schools, early education and care, and tertiary education settings
- developing governance structures and partnerships that share decision making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to ensure community voices guide systemic reform and service delivery at every level.

As these system changes happen, we expect that the result will be an integrated and connected service system that is holistic, strengths-based, family-centric, culturally-safe, and trauma responsive, providing supports that create safety at every stage of life, and at every stage of a woman, child and family's journey.

Case study

DJIRRA

Melinda's story

**Client name and any identifying details have been changed to protect privacy.*

Melinda*, an Aboriginal woman with 3 children, endured a series of violent assaults by her former partner over 5 years.

During one incident, Police attended and questioned Melinda and her former partner separately. Based on this very short assessment, Melinda was arrested, denied bail and remanded to Dame Phyllis Frost Centre. Melinda's children remained in the care of Melinda's former partner, their father.

Djirra's Prison Support Program met with Melinda at Dame Phyllis Frost Centre and quickly ascertained that she had been misidentified by Police as the person using violence. The Prison Support Lawyer provided Melinda with initial legal advice and the Prison Support Paralegal Support Worker assisted with making warm referrals for other supports. Melinda was released from prison shortly afterwards.

Melinda was traumatised by the violence and her interactions with police, and so the Prison Support Lawyer linked Melinda in with Djirra's Case Management team and the Koori Women's Place. A counselling appointment was immediately made available for Melinda, and Koori Women's Place staff provided wraparound cultural contact that is crucial to the safety and wellbeing of our women.

The Prison Support Lawyer assisted Melinda to urgently file proceedings for the return of her children, to apply for a family violence intervention order to protect herself and her children from her former partner, and to apply for victims compensation.

Over the next few months, the Prison Support Lawyer represented Melinda in the Family Court, Magistrates' Court and Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal, and Melinda's children were returned to her care, a long-term family violence intervention order was granted, and victims compensation was awarded.

Melinda is still engaged with Djirra's services and is feeling safe, supported, strong in culture and positive about her future.

Tiana's story – unborn reports

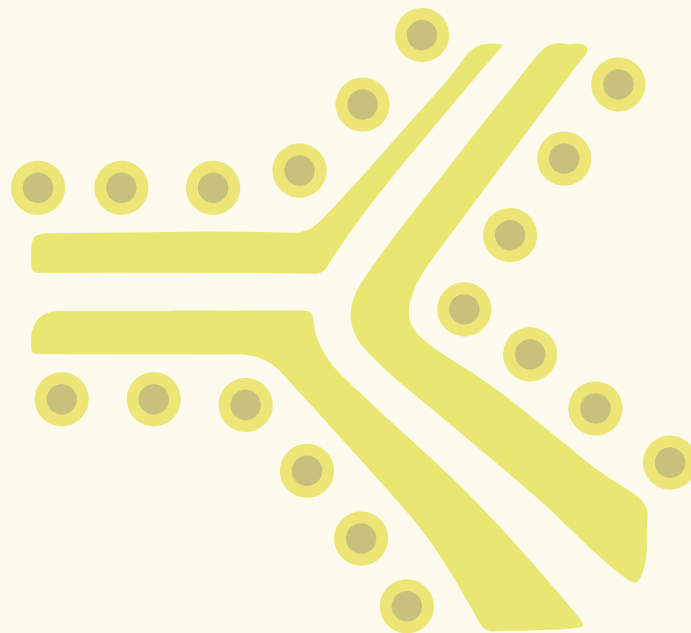
Tiana* is an Aboriginal woman with 2 children out of her care, who had experienced significant family violence from the non-Aboriginal father of her 4 children.

In 2024, Tiana became pregnant with her fifth child. One month before she was due to give birth, an unborn report was made to the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) regarding her unborn child, which was subsequently referred to the Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency (VACCA).

VACCA then connected Tiana to Djirra for legal and wrap around support, while maintaining case management, AOD and housing support to ensure continuity of care.

Shortly after the birth, the matter was brought before the Children's Court. The Court formally placed the child in Tiana's care. VACCA continued to support Tiana, whilst Djirra provided intensive legal support and advocacy.

The child remains in Tiana's care and is thriving. In subsequent Court proceedings, Tiana has been praised for how she has cared for this child. Tiana is now having monitored contact with one of her two children who remain in care, and is actively pursuing reunification with both, with the ongoing dedicated support of Djirra and VACCA.



Case study

Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service (QIFVLS)

Jane's story

**Client name and any identifying details have been changed to protect privacy.*

We assisted a mother 'Jane' (not her real name) in relation to a Family Law matter. There were 4 subject children in this matter. The matter had been ongoing since early 2022 and had been relisted at Court on approximately 12 occasions. There were very serious risk issues in this matter, including extensive domestic and family violence, drug issues (ICE), criminal history and transiency. The father had multiple domestic and family violence and grievous bodily harm charges against Jane.

The matter was listed for an Undefended Hearing. As we were seeking the Court make default Orders, we had a higher burden of proof and disclosure to satisfy to get this matter successfully resolved at the Undefended Hearing stage

In preparation for Trial, the QIFVLS solicitor was required to review more than 2,000 pages of subpoenaed documents, prepare a very detailed case outline and affidavit material, and prepare very extensive tender bundle supporting Jane's position and why she sought very specific orders for the ongoing parenting of the children of the relationship.

We prepared this matter for Trial and were ultimately successful in obtaining Orders for Jane from the Court resulting in:

- Jane having Sole Parental Responsibility for the children
- the children living with Jane and spending no time whatsoever with the father
- Jane being permitted to relocate to another town for the reasons set forth in her supporting material which we had drafted
- an injunction preventing the father from contacting the children, and/or contacting or attending their school or day care being granted.

The Court ultimately agreed with Jane's position, in relation to the father posing an unacceptable risk of harm to the children. The Court made orders that were consistent with Jane's application.

Jane was very happy with the result. Jane can now move on with her life and focus on recovering with her children and providing them with security, stability and safety.

Jane's case also demonstrates the length of time we are experiencing in supporting our clients across the continuum of contested family law proceedings. The outcomes achieved for Jane would not have been possible without QIFVLS' engagement and long-term support using both our legal and non-legal supports.

Case study

Law reform to protect victim-survivors

In 2020 the Western Australian Government passed new laws to better protect family violence victims informed by the case of an Aboriginal woman Jody Gore, who was jailed for life for the murder of her former partner who had been violent to her for many years.

The Family Violence Legislation Reform Act 2020 was announced as the most comprehensive family violence law reform package the state had ever seen. One of the amendments was to ensure that people who acted to defend themselves from family violence are protected from convictions like homicide under the defence of self-defence.

In 2019 the Attorney General released Ms Gore from prison under the 'mercy' law, and she returned home to the Kimberley. Ms Gore had served 4 years in prison.

Upon introduction of the Bill to WA Parliament in 2019, the then Attorney General acknowledged that Ms Gore's case had informed the proposed changes. This included the introduction of jury directions to counter stereotypes, myths and misconceptions about family violence, making it easier for evidence of family violence to be introduced in criminal trials.

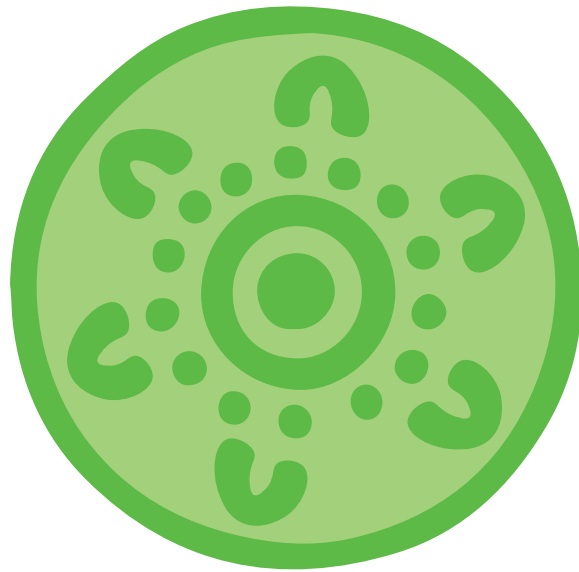
More recently, the introduction of the Evidence Bill, and the ongoing work under the Strengthening Responses to Family and Domestic Violence: System Reform Plan, have continued work by the WA Government to support victim-survivors to feel protected and supported during court proceedings.

Work underway: Remote Training Hubs Network

Remote Training Hubs Network (the Hubs) will support First Nations peoples in remote Central Australian communities to access Vocational Education and Training that is industry-relevant, accredited and non-accredited, and delivered On-Country. The Hubs will help to ensure training meets community needs matched to local jobs. The Commonwealth will partner with First Nations communities, empowering First Nations-led decision making in the design and establishment of the Hubs. The Hubs will connect people with training for skills needed On-Country by:

- enabling training to be tailored to community aspirations and workforce requirements
- assisting with trainee transport between locations
- engaging mentors to support student needs and connect training qualifications to local jobs
- delivering 4 custom-built, industry standard Mobile Training Units, linked to in-demand industries, to complement the training being delivered and expand the delivery of training outside hub locations, as needed.

Hubs will be delivered in phases with Mobile Training Units being progressively rolled out through to March 2026.



**Thread 4: Strengthening evidence,
research and data, embedding
Indigenous Data Sovereignty**

This thread strengthens the data and knowledge strands, ensuring that evidence grows under Indigenous authority so the weave is both strong and ethical.

Thread 4 will place Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities at the centre of how knowledge and data about our communities are created, interpreted, shared and used. The strengths of our cultural knowledge will be essential to creating a future where our women and children are free from violence. Recognising this, Thread 4 will provide the opportunity for our communities to develop and lead the agenda for research and to decide what data is collected about our communities and why, as well as what is done in response to that data.


Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices will work to uphold the Maiam Nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles, recognising that self-determination means shifting control of family, domestic and sexual violence data to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and communities. Too often data is used against us, as a tool for discrimination, racism, judgement and harm. When in community hands, data can become a tool for safety, healing and justice.

This Thread aligns particularly with the National Agreement Priority Reform Four: Shared Access to Data and Information at a Regional Level, and with the National Agreement's *National Data Development Plan 2022–2030*, which includes specific priorities for family violence data development related to Target 13. It will also intersect with the work of the newly established Data Policy Partnership under the National Agreement. Thread 4 also aligns to the National Plan's focus on "Specific and measurable targets" and its recognition that data is crucial to understand gender-based violence, measure progress towards ending it and inform decisions about funding, service design and delivery.

Thread 4 focuses on key research and data development priorities that will improve the data and evidence base that underpins reform and responses to violence, including:

- 1 Working in partnership to identify and address the gaps in research and data availability about experiences of and responses to family, domestic and sexual violence, including community design of what data is collected and how it is gathered, analysed and reported
- 2 Building the data, research and evaluation capability of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and community-controlled organisations
- 3 Reforming systems to embed Indigenous data sovereignty at every level
- 4 Recognising and building Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research leadership and growing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander research workforce.

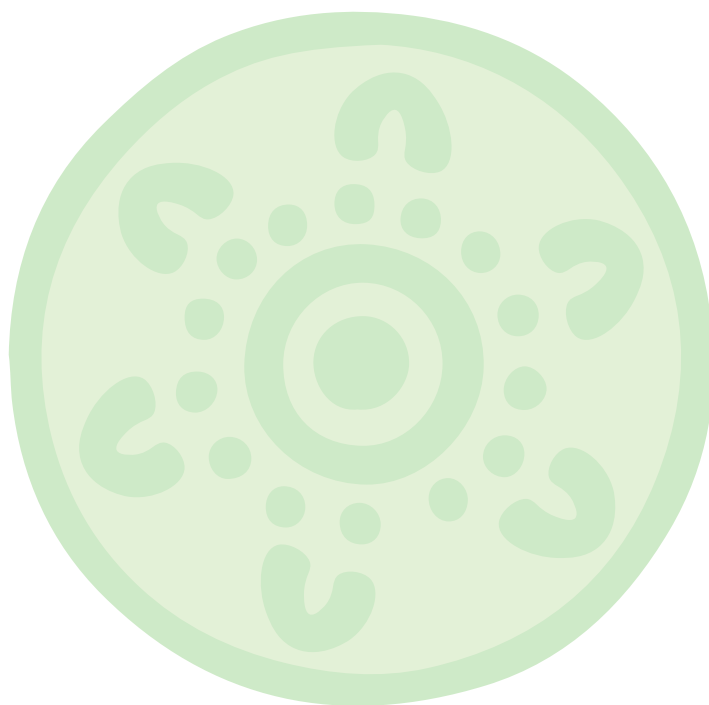
Currently, there is a significant lack of research and data on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, children and families' experiences of violence, as well as the causes, drivers and multiple forms of marginalisation that contribute to violence.⁵³ Reflecting this, proxy measures for Target 13 of the National Agreement (such as hospitalisations of First Nations women and children) are being used while an approach to measure and regularly report progress towards achieving Target 13 is being established. Gaps in data exist not only because of what is collected, but also the way it is collected and failures in responding to people who report their experiences of violence and seek help. Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people impacted by violence will not disclose their cultural identity to authorities because of well-founded fears of racism and discrimination. Many women will not report violence for fear of punitive responses that misidentify who is causing the harm, and can lead to child-removal.




Thread 4 will bring improvements to quantitative and qualitative data collection that are led by communities, identifying where the gaps are and how best to address them. This will mean not just collecting numbers, but capturing stories and experiences that describe the knowledge, lived and living experiences and aspirations of our people. Our communities and organisations will be involved in the design of data collection, reporting, and analysis, to ensure that data is relevant to culture and context. This will help to ensure data provides a comprehensive picture of the issues and is used to respond in ways that create safety and promote healing. We will work to improve the flow of data to communities where it is collected by governments, while also building capacity in our communities and community-controlled organisations to develop their own data and evidence to inform local responses.

“Establishing accountability mechanisms such as regular monitoring and reporting on progress help ensure reforms lead to real change. Data collection on family violence rates, police responses, and service outcomes should be shared with Aboriginal [and Torres Strait Islander] communities to promote accountability and improve service provision.”
– public submission

Thread 4 also recognises, upholds and builds on the strengths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics and researchers who are leading the way in building the research evidence base and informing system reforms. This includes a focus on investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led research institutions and activities and supporting pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to enter and thrive in the research workforce.





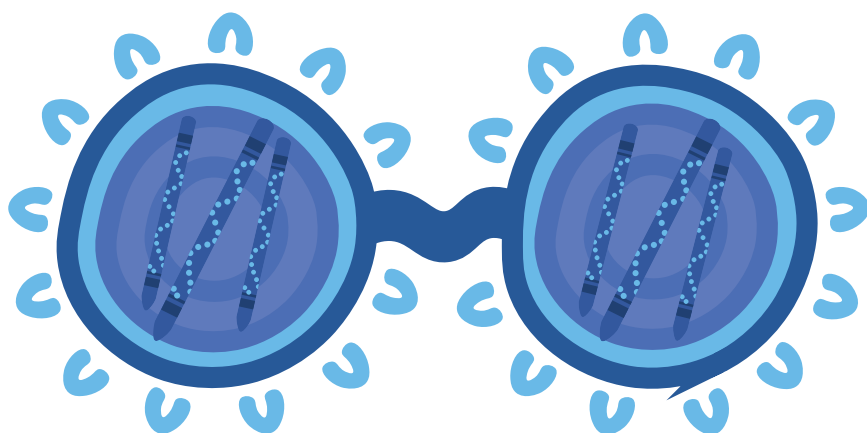
As we develop action plans for Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, we will focus on what the evidence and our communities have told us is needed to strengthen evidence, research and data, including:

- partnering to map data availability and gaps and identify steps to improve data collection that accurately describes the distinct experiences of family, domestic and sexual violence and responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- development of policies, processes and systems for sharing government data with communities and community-controlled organisations so that communities can use data to inform responses
- investment that builds the data and evaluation capabilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to capture, analyse and use their own data
- investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led data initiatives, research, and evaluation
- building policies, systems and mechanisms that embed Indigenous Data Sovereignty from the systems level to the local community level
- promoting, sharing and elevating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led research, and
- developing workforce pathways and supports for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers, including scholarship programs for young people to enter the research workforce.

As these reforms are progressed, access to quality, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-led research and data will improve, enabling communities to identify patterns of violence, develop targeted interventions to prevent and respond, and track what is working. This knowledge will shape policy and service delivery, ensuring culturally strong responses that address immediate safety concerns, reform discriminatory and harmful system responses and promote long-term healing and resilience. Thread 4 will also be critical to increasing transparency and accountability that builds trust between communities, services and governments.

“Data collection and evaluation are essential to inform evidence-based services and to assess effectiveness to ensure community-led solutions incorporate cultural competency training and are flexible, collaborative and holistic. For example, in relation to perpetrator intervention programs, this evaluation valuation must involve victims’ and survivors’ assessment of behaviour change.”

– public submission



**Thread 5: Breaking the cycle through
strengthened housing and financial security**



This thread reinforces the weave through housing and financial security—without strong shelter and stable foundations, the weave cannot hold against cycles of harm.

Thread 5 will improve access to long-term, culturally safe housing and strengthen financial security for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. While efforts in other areas are also needed, housing access and economic independence are foundational to breaking cycles of violence and creating a generation where safety, healing and self-determination are the norm.

“In our frontline work, Djirra has found that housing unavailability and the prospect of homelessness acts as a dangerous deterrent to victims/survivors leaving violent relationships and accessing safety.”

– Djirra submission, Wiyi Yani U Thangani: Securing our Rights, Securing our Future Report

This thread aligns with the National Agreement Target 9a and 9b on safe, secure housing, as well as Targets 5–8 on education, employment, and economic participation. It also aligns with the National Plan’s focus on “Addressing structural barriers to achieving change”, including particularly the focus on housing as essential to ending gender-based violence and on addressing barriers to create safety for victim survivors. Thread 5 commits to strengthening pathways that enable families to live in safety and stability, while recognising that systemic racism and discrimination continue to make housing and employment harder to obtain for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Strengthening housing programs

Family, domestic, and sexual violence is a leading cause of homelessness for women and children in Australia. Overcrowding, housing insecurity and homelessness increase vulnerability to violence and exacerbate risks within homes. These conditions can also lead to punitive legal and child protection interventions, including child removal and lasting trauma. Safe living conditions require options for both victim-survivors and people who use violence, with severe shortages of crisis, transitional, and long-term housing—particularly in regional and remote locations—leaving many without refuge.⁵⁴

Inclusive and culturally safe housing options are essential for all victim-survivors, including LGBTIQ+SB peoples, women and children with disability, men and boys, and young people. Current services can exclude young people under 18 or families with older children, and LGBTIQ+SB peoples often avoid non-Indigenous services for fear of discrimination. This thread recognises the urgent need to address these housing gaps, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-designed and community-managed housing central to solutions.

Strengthening financial security supports

Poverty and financial instability are closely linked to vulnerability to violence. Strengthening economic equality is therefore critical to breaking cycles of harm. This requires structural reforms that ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have the resources, opportunities, and support to achieve stability and independence. Security measures must enable women to remain safely in their homes when possible, and support must extend beyond crisis, integrating with shelter and safe house programs to build financial, digital, and emotional wellbeing.

Holistic, culturally safe employment initiatives—developed and led by communities—will be central to supporting women to secure and retain work. In crisis situations, without a housing pathway or financial resources to flee violence, the system creates a revolving door of unsafety for victim-survivors and their children. Thread 5 commits to breaking this cycle by embedding culturally strong pathways to housing and economic security, ensuring safety and healing are sustainable across the life course.

When we develop action plans for Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, we will focus on what the evidence and our communities have told us is needed to strengthen housing and financial security, including:

- supporting sufficient provision of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-designed and community-managed safe houses, transitional housing, and affordable long-term housing across urban, regional, remote, very remote and discrete communities
- developing housing responses that consider the safety of both victim-survivors and people who use violence, to prevent homelessness and overcrowding
- implementing holistic programs via shelters and safe houses that build emotional, financial and digital wellbeing alongside safety
- ensuring housing options are inclusive and culturally safe for young people, LGBTIQ+SB peoples, people with disability, and men and boys
- embedding culturally safe financial support programs designed to meet the needs of women and children, enabling safe and stable lives
- investing in community-led employment and job creation initiatives that support economic independence and long-term security for women and families.

As these reforms are advanced, strengthened housing and financial security will protect families from cycles of harm, reduce child removal, and ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can live lives of safety, dignity, and self-determination.

Case study

'Choose Deadly' – VACCA's program for adolescents using family violence in the home

Healthy and respectful family relationship programs are critical in assisting young people and the whole family to heal and build positive relationships. VACCA runs the 'Choose Deadly' program which supports young people aged 12 to 17 years that are using family violence in the home. 'Choose Deadly' provides therapeutic and whole family interventions to support young people, their family members or their carers. It does this through flexible, targeted and earlier interventions to reduce the use of family violence in the home, preventing further escalation of violence and potential involvement with youth justice, out of home care or criminal justice systems.

Youth workers identify goals with the young person, family and care team that aim to create safer homes and build young people's understanding of healthy relationships and to empower the young person to make safer and better decisions. The goals can also support the young person to address trauma, support emotional regulation, strengthen connection with community and their culture and help the young person to develop boundaries and to feel safe themselves, noting they have often experienced violence themselves.

The following case study demonstrates that working therapeutically with young people who either use or experience violence can help end cycles of violence, build up young people's confidence and connection to culture, as well as have positive flow on effects to their whole family.

Case study

Harry

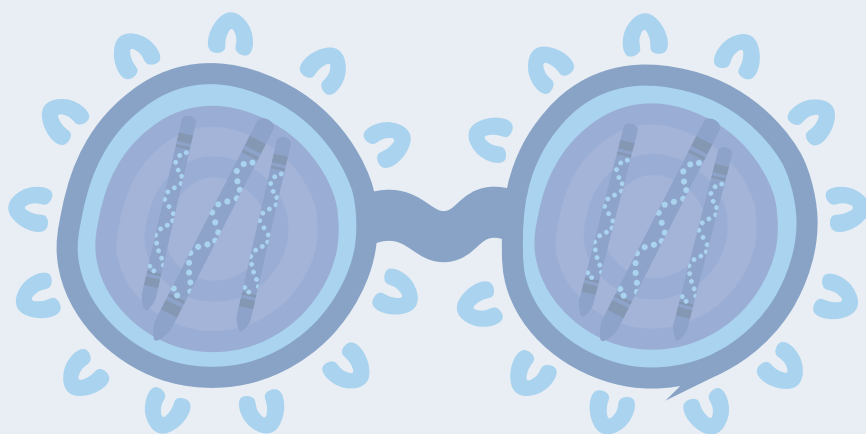
Harry* is a 15-year-old boy who was referred to 'Choose Deadly' due to having thoughts about hurting his family. To understand Harry's story, it is important to know that he grew up around family violence. Harry's dad was abusive to his mum which led to Harry having paranoid thoughts. At the time of entering the program, Harry had poor mental health, was withdrawn and struggled with school attendance. Concerned about his paranoid thoughts, Harry's mum didn't feel comfortable leaving him home alone with his younger brother, which meant she had to stay home and couldn't work, adding financial pressure to the family. Harry wanted to stop these thoughts from happening and sought help to get better. Our staff worked long term with Harry to help build trust and rapport. They developed violence prevention and emotional regulation strategies tailored to his needs, including sessions on setting boundaries to help address his previous experiences of family violence. Harry has come a long way with the support of our 'Choose Deadly' staff. He is now able to babysit his younger brother, has stable mental health, and improved self-esteem and confidence. Harry is attending school, has made strong friendships and has a social network. His mum is now able to go to work, which means the family is no longer experiencing financial stress.

**Names have been changed or omitted to protect the privacy of our clients and staff.*

Work underway: Leaving Violence Program Regional Trials

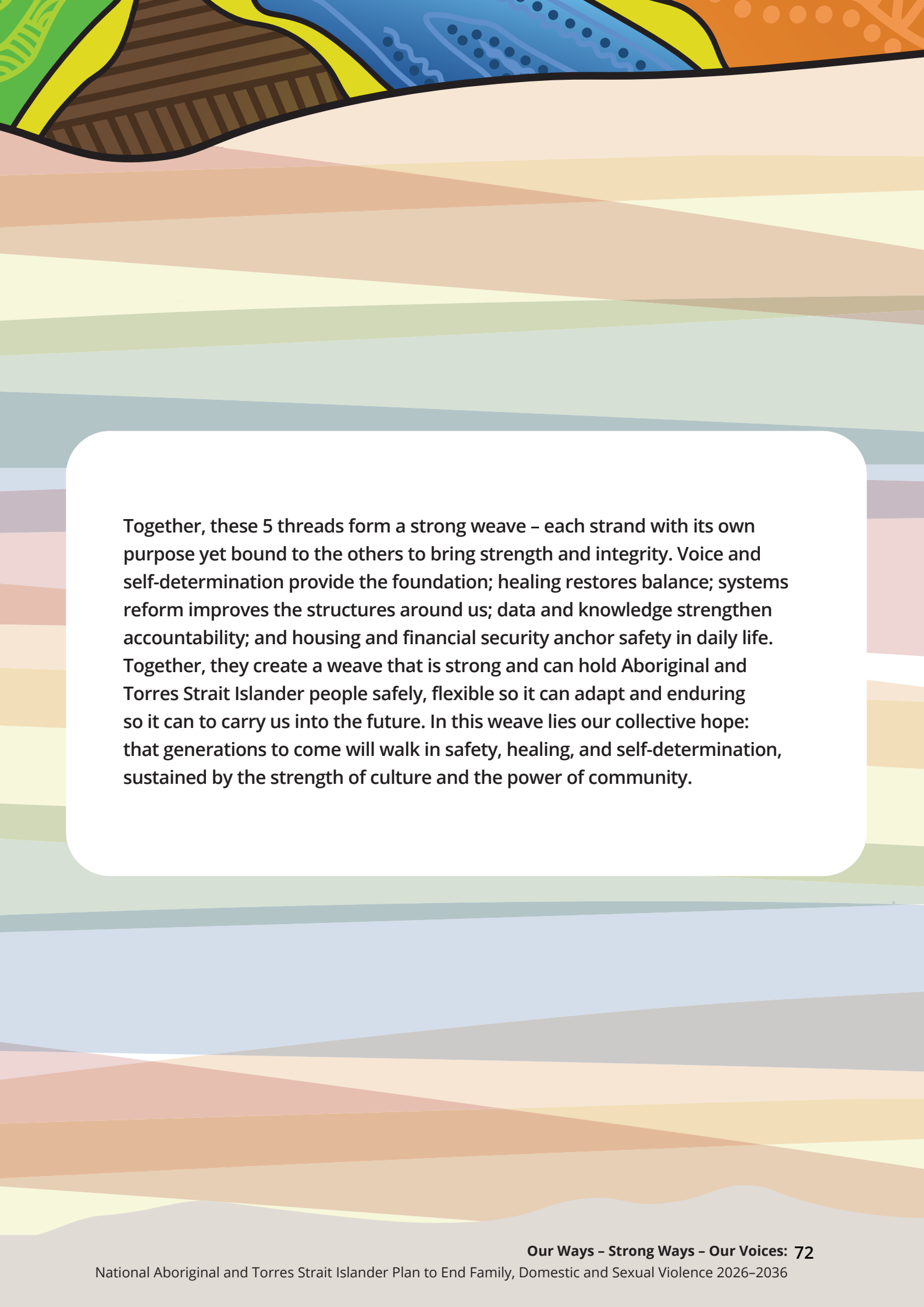
The Leaving Violence Program provides a financial support package to eligible victim-survivors of intimate partner violence regardless of visa status, gender, or sexuality. It provides up to \$5,000 in financial support, including a cash payment of up to \$1,500 and the remaining funds in goods and services. The support package includes mandatory risk assessments, safety planning, and referrals to other services as needed, for up to 12 weeks. The Leaving Violence Program has 2 delivery models, a National Program delivered by Telstra Health and 4 Regional Trials, delivered by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations. Regional Trials are being delivered in the Darwin, Broome, Cairns, and Dubbo regions, with a focus on supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors. While the National Program is ongoing, Regional Trials are due to cease on 30 June 2026.

As we develop an action plan for Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, we will focus on the evidence and lessons from the Regional Trials program in taking a holistic approach to respond to family violence.









Together, these 5 threads form a strong weave – each strand with its own purpose yet bound to the others to bring strength and integrity. Voice and self-determination provide the foundation; healing restores balance; systems reform improves the structures around us; data and knowledge strengthen accountability; and housing and financial security anchor safety in daily life. Together, they create a weave that is strong and can hold Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people safely, flexible so it can adapt and enduring so it can carry us into the future. In this weave lies our collective hope: that generations to come will walk in safety, healing, and self-determination, sustained by the strength of culture and the power of community.

Appendix 1: Summary of consultation themes

This summary shares findings from the engagements held for the development of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices between August 2024 and January 2025. Building on the extensive engagement undertaken as part of developing the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025*, SNAICC conducted consultations with key stakeholder groups with over 80 organisations, advisory bodies and groups, including 47 Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations. These consultations aimed to ensure comprehensive input from diverse voices within the community, addressing any gaps in previous engagements.


This included:

- 14 sessions with Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations both online and in person
- 9 online sessions with non-Indigenous services
- 14 online sessions with individuals or specific organisations
- 9 online consultations with cross-government agency representatives in each jurisdiction
- 6 conference sessions involving a total of 997 participants
- 6 Knowledge Circles with 71 women with lived experience
- 52 written submissions, including 13 submissions from Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations, 3 Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations peaks and 9 non-Indigenous organisations.

The themes of engagement outcomes highlight several critical areas that require attention and action. Funding is a foundational element, emphasising the need for sustained financial resources to support long-term initiatives. Self-determination and community-led local solutions are crucial for empowering communities to address their unique needs and contexts. This approach ensures that interventions are relevant and sustainable. Additionally, the call for “no more pilots” reflects a preference for scalable, proven strategies over short-term projects, advocating for a commitment to long-term solutions.

A competent and well-supported workforce is essential for effective service delivery, highlighting the importance of training, support, and stability. Legal supports must be integrated with other services to provide comprehensive assistance, ensuring a holistic approach to addressing individuals’ needs. Breaking down silos between different sectors and services is necessary for holistic responses, promoting coordinated efforts that consider all relevant factors. The “no wrong door” approach further supports this by ensuring that individuals can access the support they need regardless of their entry point into the system.

Education, healing, prevention, and early intervention are foundational themes that underpin many engagement outcomes. Accessible, high-quality education empowers individuals and communities, while proactive measures focus on healing and preventing problems before they escalate. Specific themes for women, men, and children emphasise the importance of tailored support and the creation of safe, supportive environments. Keeping children with their families and communities where appropriate and safe to do so, and involving families in child protection decisions, are crucial for the well-being of children.




Finally, non-Indigenous organisations must be inclusive and culturally competent, ensuring that services are accessible to all communities. Safe and secure housing options, including refuges and transitional housing, are critical for addressing the diverse needs of individuals, particularly those affected by family and domestic violence. Justice reforms, including better police responses and changes to the criminal justice system and family law, are necessary to provide fair and supportive outcomes for individuals and communities. Data sovereignty and the resourcing of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) for data collection and analysis are essential for informed decision-making. These themes collectively underscore the importance of comprehensive, community-led, and sustainable approaches to engagement.

Findings from these engagements have been analysed and have informed recommendations for Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices. These recommendations are intended to inform the plan’s focus and priorities, based on the priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and FDSV response sectors. These recommendations were prepared by the SNAICC Secretariat and presented to the Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices Steering Committee to guide the development of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices.

Key recommendations that emerged from the engagements with community, organisations, and individuals, and the have been reflected in the plan include that Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices should:

- 1 Prioritise and enable self-determination through community-led, delivered and monitored solutions to FDSV that uplift the entire community.
- 2 Provide ongoing, flexible funding for ACCOs to design, deliver and evaluate FDSV services to meet the needs of each community.
- 3 Enable a holistic, strengths-based, culturally safe, community-led, flexible and whole-of-community service system that supports the entire community across people’s changing life-course and needs.
- 4 Focus on the gaps that exist within the service system to support safe and healthy Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.
- 5 Address harmful government interventions that drive child removals and incarceration of women and children, increasing trauma and risk.
- 6 Call on Governments to reform the FDSV and other government systems, such as the legal system, housing, and health systems, according to the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities in alignment with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, with recognition of the role of colonisation and intergenerational trauma on communities, healing, and safety.
- 7 Enable workforce and organisational improvements to ensure culturally safe, trauma responsive and resourced supports.
- 8 Work towards a culturally safe, non-competitive, accountable and collaborative non-Indigenous sector.
- 9 Recognise and address the needs of children and young people, both as victim-survivors in their own right, but also as needing community, culture, and access to education for intergenerational healing, connection, and safe families.

- 
- 10** Lead to data collection and reporting that is qualitative and narrative-based to enable an accurate understanding of the issues and solutions, to be meaningful and beneficial to ACCOs and communities.
 - 11** Have strong accountability mechanisms, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led oversight, implementation, evaluation and monitoring, with a focus on government accountability in delivering.

The recommendations are consistent with the Priority Reforms of the National Agreement on Closing Gap, focusing on self-determination, a different way for government and community to work together and a stronger more sustainable ACCO sector.

Appendix 2: Initiatives, reforms and related policies

Governments are driving reform in many areas that will help build protective factors that support family safety and wellbeing. Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices is the interlocking piece. It provides a unifying framework to align and amplify work across the Australian and state and territory governments, sector and communities, and to promote cooperation on priorities.

It is not the role of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices to be the ‘home’ for all policies that address family, domestic and sexual violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities; its role is to influence and connect that work to improve outcomes for families and communities.

The table below lists some examples of related strategies and plans that Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices will complement.

National Initiatives	
Strategies, agreements and reforms	Alignment
National Agreement on Closing the Gap (National Agreement)	Outlines how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and all governments will work in genuine partnership to overcome the inequality experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
Social and Emotional Wellbeing Policy Partnership	Family violence (Target 13) is one of the Closing the Gap socioeconomic targets in scope for this group.
Justice Policy Partnership	The Justice Policy Partnership’s Strategic Framework includes strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled law and justice sector and establishing new or strengthening existing cross sector partnerships between Justice and Family Violence Prevention.
Early Childhood Care and Development Policy Partnership	Brings together governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives to develop recommendations to improve early childhood outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families, in line with all Australian governments’ commitments under Closing the Gap. Family violence (Target 13) is one of the priority focus areas for this group.
Family Domestic and Sexual Violence Sector Strengthening Plan	Sets out actions to support and build the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled family, domestic and sexual violence services sector in line with all Australian governments’ commitments under Closing the Gap.

National Initiatives

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032 (National Plan)

Prevents and responds to violence against women and children in Australia, with the aim to end gender-based violence in one generation.

First Action Plan 2023–2027

A First Action Plan has been developed that outlines the first 5 years towards achieving the vision of the National Plan. It prioritises the focus and national leadership needed to deliver change.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023–2025

A dedicated Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan to work alongside the First Action Plan. It was developed in genuine partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council on family, domestic and sexual violence, in recognition of the disproportionately high rates of family, domestic and sexual violence that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience.

Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFS) Commission

The Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission is dedicated to ending gender-based violence in a generation. Its core function is to promote and support the achievement of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032. The Commission is a key mechanism for government accountability. It provides a Yearly Report to Parliament against whole of government efforts to prevent, address and respond to domestic, family and sexual violence.

Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023–2026

The Safe and Supported: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Action Plan 2023–2026 (and its associated *Safe and Supported: the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children* (2021–2031)) will focus on achieving safety and wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. It was developed in partnership with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership Group.

Early Years Strategy 2024–2034

The Early Years Strategy sets the direction and course for our collective efforts to nurture young children for a bright future. Its vision is that all children in Australia thrive in their early years.

National Initiatives

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

Wiyi Yani Thangani: Change Agenda for First Nations Gender Justice

The Change Agenda is a Blakprint for transformation, setting out the change that First Nations women and children want to see in the world, for themselves, their children, families, communities, Country and culture.

It is the first document of its kind to centre our vision for gender justice and equality, and the outcomes we believe must be met to achieve this vision.

Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality

Outlines the Government's vision for gender equality in Australia and actions to achieve this. This includes a focus on gender-based violence and ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls are centred, noting gender inequality intersects with the impact of racism and ongoing injustice.

A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia (Central Australia Plan)

The A Better, Safer Future for Central Australia Plan aims to address the decline in services and investment in the region. The plan focuses on six core actions:

- Improved community safety and cohesion
- Job creation
- Better services
- Preventing and addressing issues caused by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders
- Investing in families
- On-Country learning

National Women's Health Strategy 2020–2030

Outlines a national approach to improving health outcomes for all women and girls, particularly those at greatest risk of poor health, and aims to reduce inequities in health outcomes.

It identifies 5 priority areas to address in order to improve health outcomes for Australian women and girls, including the health impacts of violence against women and girls.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031 (Health Plan)

The Health Plan emphasises cultural safety in all health systems and prioritises Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community-controlled Health Services. There is a focus on growing the First Nations health workforce, who are better able to provide wholistic, culturally appropriate health services that builds rapport and safety with First Nations people. Specifically, Objective 4.7 of the Health Plan commits governments to delivering targeted, culturally safe and responsive injury prevention activities. This includes recognising the physical, emotional, spiritual and cultural aspects of harm, and centring efforts on the safety and emotional wellbeing of individuals, families and communities.

National Initiatives

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence (National Principles)

The National Principles set out a shared understanding about the common features and impacts of coercive control, and guiding considerations to inform responses. The National Principles have been developed and endorsed by all Australian governments.

National Principles are aligned with the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–32 and recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experiences across the principles.

National Access to Justice Partnership 2025–2030

A National Agreement between Commonwealth and state and territory governments to provide legal assistance services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and people experiencing vulnerability and financial disadvantage to achieve better justice outcomes. The NAJP will also support the development of a strong, sustainable and collaborative legal assistance sector through prioritising long-term reforms, including the development of a NAJP Closing the Gap Schedule, National Legal Assistance Data Strategy, Outcomes Framework and National Legal Assistance Workforce Strategy.

National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing 2017–2023

Acknowledgement of disproportionate experiences of violence for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Example action under Outcome 2.2: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families are strong and supported - Support community-led anti-family violence and child abuse campaigns.

Includes AMSANT 2009 modelling proposing a psychologist for every 1500 people to see those with complex problems such as interpersonal violence.

Australia's Disability Strategy 2021–2031

The national disability policy framework agreed to by all levels of government that is an enabler to people with disability being able to fulfil their potential as equal members of their communities. Supporting the 1 in 6 Australians that identify with disability.

The policy priorities set out under Australia's Disability Strategy are committed to by all levels of government and include priorities for the prevention of violence against groups at heightened risk, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children with disability, and upholding the rights of victim-survivors with disability.

National Initiatives

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

Housing Policy Partnership

The Housing Policy Partnership brings together Commonwealth and State and Territory governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives from each jurisdiction to establish a joined-up approach and give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a voice in the design of housing and homelessness policy and services.

The Housing Policy Partnership also supports governments' commitments under Target 9a and 9b of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

National Agreement on Social Housing and Homelessness (NASHH)

The NASHH is a national agreement between the Australian, state and territory governments. Under the NASHH, the Australian Government provides state and territory governments \$9.3 billion over 5 years from July 2024 to help people who are experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness and support the effective operation of Australia's social housing and homelessness services sectors.

The NASHH embeds all governments' commitments from the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, including shared decision making with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Each state is responsible for implementing the NASHH, including establishing a jurisdictional Partnership Body consisting of appropriate state or territory government representatives and representatives from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. These Partnership Bodies will share decision making for decisions predominately affecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

National Drug Strategy 2017–2026

The aim of this strategy is to build safe, healthy and resilient Australian communities through preventing and minimising alcohol and other drug-related health, social, cultural and economic harms among individuals, families and communities. First Nations people are identified as a priority population in the strategy.

National Quality Framework for Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services 2019–2029

The National Drug Strategy is supported by several sub-strategies and national frameworks such as the National Quality Framework for Drug and Alcohol Treatment Services. This framework sets a nationally consistent quality benchmark for providers of drug and alcohol treatment services. It includes strong clinical governance requirements and a list of accreditation standards that drug and alcohol specialist treatment service providers must meet.

National Initiatives

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability

The Disability Royal Commission was established in April 2019 in response to community concern about widespread reports of violence against, and the neglect, abuse and exploitation of, people with disability.

The Royal Commission has made 222 recommendations on how to improve laws, policies, structures and practices to ensure a more inclusive and just society that supports the independence of people with disability and their right to live free from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

National Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Child Sexual Abuse 2021–2030

Aims to ensure children and young people in Australia are protected and safe from sexual abuse in all settings, and victims and survivors of abuse are supported and empowered.

National Plan to End the Abuse and Mistreatment of Older People

Aims to protect older Australians from abuse, mistreatment, and neglect, ensuring they are treated with dignity and respect. The plan sets out national priorities to prevent harm, strengthen safeguards, and support older people to live safely and independently.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy 2025–2035

Aims to achieve a significant and sustained reduction in suicide and self-harm of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people towards zero through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community leadership and governance.

National Review of First Nations Health Care in Prisons: Final Report

Presents evidence and key recommendations on the opportunities for systemic reform at the national, state and territory levels to improve health care delivery for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in places of detention.

First Nations Economic Partnership

The Economic Partnership was established to advance the economic empowerment and long-term economic security of First Nations people, communities and organisations.

National Survey of LGBTIQ+SB Experiences of Sexual Violence

This survey had a significant emphasis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to inform inclusive and accessible access to services and supports. There are 3 corresponding reports – ‘Prevalence, attitudes and lifetime experiences’, ‘Impact, help-seeking and bystander intervention’ and a Summary Report.

National Principles for Child Safe Organisations

Provide a national approach to embedding a child safe culture across all sectors of Australian society in which children are involved.

Sector Frameworks

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

Changing the picture: A national resource to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children

Changing the picture contains a set of clear actions that are needed to address the many drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Strong Families, Safe Kids: Family violence response and prevention for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Families

This policy paper outlines the impact of family violence on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, including the role of communal grief, disempowerment and trauma. It also investigates the key factors behind why current policy and practice responses are failing, and a detailed pathway for achieving change. Connection to culture and the right to self-determination are central to supporting families to be free from violence.

Family and Community Safety for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Study (FaCtS)

The FaCtS Study aims to improve understanding of family and community safety and violence in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, using mixed methods, Community-based Action Research.

Australian Capital Territory Government

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019–2028

The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Agreement 2019–2028 sets the long-term direction for the ACT Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body to work together to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Canberra.

The agreement includes the key aim to reduce the rate of family violence and abuse against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children by at least 50 per cent by 2031.

ACT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Strategy (in development)

The Strategy is in development and aims to provide the ACT Government and its partners with an ambitious vision and implementation roadmap to support Canberrans to live free from domestic, family and sexual violence and be safe in their relationships, homes and communities.

The 'We Don't Shoot Our Wounded' and 'The Long Yarn' Reports

The 'We Don't Shoot Our Wounded' report (2009) is based on consultations held with ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victims and perpetrators of violence that looked at the experience of family violence and their access to justice and services.

'The Long Yarn' Report (2024) provides an update to the original recommendations from the 'We Don't Shoot Our Wounded' report following further extensive consultation with the ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The ACT Government is committed to implementing the recommendations from The Long Yarn.

Northern Territory Government

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

NT's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework Safe, Respected and Free from Violence 2018–2028

NT's Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework Safe, Respected and Free from Violence 2018–2028.

NT Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework 2020–2028

The NT Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework 2020–2028 is the Northern Territory's first strategy to prevent and respond to sexual violence, reduce its incidence and support those who experience it to be safe and heal.

10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families

The Generational Strategy is the overarching NT policy for children, young people and families in the NT. Three Action Plans are being developed to implement the Generational Strategy. They will also ensure the strategy remains flexible to address and work with emerging issues and circumstances.

NT Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Workforce and Sector Development Plan

The Northern Territory (NT) Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFS) Workforce and Sector Development Plan (the Plan) was developed in 2020 to set out the goals and priority actions to strengthen and support the DFS workforce and sector.

Northern Territory Domestic and Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Plan

The Northern Territory Government Domestic and Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework (RAMF) is a policy that provides a consistent and evidence-based way to identify, assess, respond to and manage DFV risk across the Northern Territory.

Queensland Government	
Strategies, agreements and reforms	Alignment
Domestic and Family Violence Reform Strategy	(Currently under development)
Domestic and Family Violence Advisory Panel	The independent advisory panel is comprised of professionals with extensive experience and diverse backgrounds and has been established to advise government on reforms to strengthen responses for survivors of DFV and hold perpetrators to account.
Domestic and Family Violence Working Group	The working group, comprised of people with lived experience of domestic, family and sexual violence has been established to highlight any gaps in the system and identify opportunities for future reform.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Domestic and Family Violence Prevention Group	The group was established to have oversight of Queensland's framework for Action: Reshaping our approach to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander domestic and family violence.
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Maternity Services Strategy 2019–2025 also known as the Growing Deadly Families (GDF) Strategy	The GDF initiative aims to ensure that every woman in Queensland giving birth to Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander babies has access to high-quality, clinically sound, and culturally capable maternity care — along with comprehensive support services tailored to their needs.
Walk the Talk - Reframing the Relationship and Closing the Gap Plan 2025–2028	The plan commits the Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development to amplifying First Nations' voices, supporting self-determination, and fostering equity. It is guided by the wisdom of the world's oldest continuous culture, with practical strategies to embed culturally respectful ways of working, strengthen governance, and deliver culturally safe and responsive services.
First Nations Cultural Safety Framework	The Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing, and Regional and Rural Development First Nations Cultural Safety Framework, a step forward in creating a culturally safe and inclusive workplace.
Building on the strengths of our stories (cultural agility program)	The program unpacks the history of violence and the legislative frameworks enacted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and builds a depth of understanding around cause and effect and how this shapes current day circumstances and practices that enables participants to think beyond the rhetoric and move towards a true shared space of understanding and collaboration.

Queensland Government

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Queensland First Nations Housing and Homelessness Partnership (QFNHHP)

Alignment

The Queensland First Nations Housing and Homelessness Partnership brings together government and First Nations community members to listen to the voices of First Nations peoples living in Queensland to provide strategic direction and guide implementation of First Nations housing and homelessness reforms, policies and services.

New South Wales Government

Strategies, agreements and reforms

NSW Aboriginal Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Plan

Alignment

The NSW Government is developing the State's first Aboriginal Domestic and Family Violence Plan. The Plan will be publicly released in late 2025.

NSW Health Aboriginal Family Wellbeing Strategy 2025–2035 Violence prevention through culture, safety, healing and collaboration (in draft)

Responding to Aboriginal people impacted by violence, abuse and neglect is the responsibility of the whole health system and this Strategy aims to support and guide everyone working in NSW Health. This Strategy has particular relevance to services that have specific roles and responsibilities in preventing, identifying and responding to violence, abuse and neglect. Read in conjunction with the NSW Aboriginal Health Plan 2024–2034: Sharing power in system reform and the NSW Aboriginal Health Governance, Shared Decision Making and Accountability Framework.

NSW Interagency Plan to Tackle Child Sexual Assault in Aboriginal Communities 2006–2011

This plan thoroughly considers how to improve the way child protection services operate; these measures are balanced against robust support for community capacity and leadership to assist Aboriginal communities to ensure the safety of their children and families and to address this problem in ways that are culturally meaningful.

NSW Domestic and Family Violence Plan 2022–2027 and the NSW Sexual Violence Plan 2022–2027

The Plans work towards a shared policy framework and vision that all people and communities in NSW are free from domestic, family and sexual violence. The Plans respond to and align with the National Plan. They also build on the significant work and reforms already underway in NSW and replace the previous whole-of-government strategies to address DFV and SV, which ended in December 2021.

The plans set out focus areas for action across the continuum of prevention, early intervention, response, recovery and healing from domestic and family violence. It also recognises the need for an accountable, well-coordinated and evidence-based service system.

New South Wales Government

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

Children First Framework 2022–2031

NSW Government's Children First Framework 2022–2031 is a whole of government system reform for preventing and responding to children and young people who display problematic and harmful sexual behaviour. It sets the vision and priorities for how NSW can and will work together to support children and young people who have displayed, or been affected by, PHSB.

Children First is supported by Talking About It, the NSW prevention action strategy.

Victorian Government

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

Dhelk Dja: Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families

Dhelk Dja is built upon the foundation of Aboriginal self-determination and articulates the long-term partnership and directions required at a statewide, regional and local level to ensure that Aboriginal people, families and communities are violence free.

Wungurilwil Gapgapduir – Aboriginal Children and Families Agreement

Wungurilwil Gapgapduir, which means 'strong families' in Latji Latji, is a tripartite agreement between the Aboriginal community, Victorian Government and community service organisations. It outlines a strategic direction to reduce the number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care by building their connection to culture, Country and community.

Korin Korin Balit-Djak: Aboriginal health, wellbeing and safety strategic plan 2017–2027

The Korin Korin Balit-Djak plan details how the Victorian government will work with Aboriginal communities, community organisations, other government departments and mainstream service providers – now and into the future – to improve the health, wellbeing and safety of Aboriginal people in Victoria.

Balit Murrup: Aboriginal social emotional wellbeing framework 2017–2027

The vision of Balit Murrup is to support Victorian Aboriginal people, families and communities to achieve and sustain the highest attainable standard of social emotional wellbeing and mental health.

Balit Murrup's objective is to reduce the health gap attributed to suicide, mental illness and psychological distress between Aboriginal Victorians and the general population.

Ending Family Violence – Victoria's 10-year plan for change

Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change outlines how the Victorian government will achieve the vision of a Victoria free from family violence by implementing all 227 recommendations of Australia's first Royal Commission into Family Violence.

Victorian Government

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

Indigenous Family Violence Primary Prevention Framework

This framework is a shared understanding across government, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations and the Aboriginal community about what primary prevention is in an Aboriginal context, where the priorities are, and how this work intersects with or sits alongside mainstream prevention effort.

The Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement

[The Victorian Aboriginal Justice Agreement](#) is a long-term partnership between the Aboriginal community and the Victorian Government. The signatories of the Agreement are committed to working together to improve Aboriginal justice outcomes, family and community safety, and reduce over-representation in the Victorian criminal justice system.

Wirkara Kulpa (Victorian Aboriginal Youth Justice Strategy)

Wirkara Kulpa is written for and by Aboriginal children and young people and captures the aspirations and changes Aboriginal children and young people, their families and communities want to see.

Wirkara Kulpa is focused on supporting Aboriginal children and young people so they remain outside the youth justice system and can live culturally rich lives.

It has been led by the Aboriginal Justice Caucus, under the umbrella of the Aboriginal Justice Agreement, and is a key initiative of [Burra Lotjpa Dunguludja \(AJA4\)](#) and [the Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2020-2030](#).

Victoria – Sector Framework

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

Nargneit Birrang - Aboriginal holistic healing framework for family violence

Nargneit Birrang provides a framework to guide the flexible design, funding, implementation and evaluation of Aboriginal-lead holistic healing programs for family violence in Victoria.

Tasmanian Government

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

Survivors at the Centre: Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022–2027

Survivors at the Centre is the Tasmanian Government's, coordinated, whole-of-government action plan to respond to family and sexual violence.

Survivors at the Centre commits \$100 million over 5 years for 38 actions to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence in Tasmania. These include new actions, and continuing or enhanced actions from the Tasmanian Government's previous two Action Plans.

Tasmania's Plan for Closing the Gap 2025–2028

Tasmania's implementation plan (2025–2028) is a requirement under National Agreement on Closing the Gap. The Tasmanian Government has engaged with its Coalition of Peaks partner and Aboriginal organisations in development of the Plan for better life outcomes for Aboriginal people in Tasmania.

South Australian Government

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

Family Safety Framework

The Family Safety Framework (FSF) is the South Australian Government's coordinated service response to Domestic, Family, and Sexual Violence (DFS) implemented statewide in November 2013.

The FSF seeks to ensure that services to families most at risk of violence are provided in a more structured and systematic way, through agencies sharing information about high-risk families and taking responsibility for supporting these families to navigate the system of services to help them.

South Australia's Royal Commission into Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence

The Royal Commission, which began on July 1, 2024, examined the existing policies, legislation, administrative arrangements, system structure and funding levers across South Australia.

The final report was publicly released on August 19, 2025, and included 136 recommendations that will support the domestic, family and sexual violence system in South Australia to better meet the needs of those who interact with it. The South Australian government has already committed to seven of these recommendations (recommendations 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 11 and 12) with an additional commitment made to respond to all 136 recommendations by the end of 2025.

The Royal Commission was supported by an Aboriginal Partnership Committee which was an Australian first. This partnership between the Commission and the South Australian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation Network (SAACCON) ensured that the Commission developed recommendations regarding domestic, family and sexual violence sector service delivery to Aboriginal people and communities in equal participation and shared decision-making with the Aboriginal people of South Australia.

South Australia's Women's Equality Blueprint 2023–2026

South Australia's Women's Equality Blueprint 2023–2026 provides a roadmap of current and future policies and practices that will help to:

- support the safety and security of women and girls
- increase women's participation and representation in leadership
- promote women's economic wellbeing
- increase support for women's health issues.

Western Australian Government

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy 2022–2032

The Aboriginal Family Safety Strategy 2022–2032 is WA's first dedicated strategy to address disproportionate rates of family violence that impact Aboriginal women, children, families and communities.

It sets a vision for WA Aboriginal families and communities that are safe, strong, and happy, enabling future generations to thrive. The Strategy was designed in partnership with the WA Aboriginal community, Aboriginal stakeholders, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations.

Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy – Western Australia 2021–2029

The Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy outlines a high-level framework for future state government policies, plans, initiatives and programs that contribute to better outcomes for Aboriginal people, built around genuine partnerships and engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders, strong accountability, and culturally responsive ways of working.

Path to Safety: Western Australia's Strategy to Reduce Family and Domestic Violence 2020–2030

Path to Safety: Western Australia's Strategy to Reduce Family and Domestic Violence 2020–2030 sets out a clear whole-of-government and community plan for reducing and responding to this issue over the next decade.

Strengthening Responses to Family and Domestic Violence: System Reform Plan 2024 to 2029

The System Reform Plan envisages a service system response that is collaborative, connected and organised around victim-survivor safety, recovery, and re-establishment. It builds on the strengths and resources of existing services and responses to respond to family and domestic violence more effectively in the Western Australian community.

Australian Local Government Association

Strategies, agreements and reforms

Alignment

Domestic Violence Prevention Toolkit for Local Government

A suite of factsheets, tips and tools for local governments to drive change and prevent violence against women, developed by Our Watch.

Glossary

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation	<p>Under the National Agreement, an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisation delivers services, including land and resource management, which build the strength and empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and peoples and is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. incorporated under relevant legislation and not-for-profit b. controlled and operated by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples c. connected to the community, or communities, in which they deliver the services d. governed by a majority Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander governing body⁵⁵
Cisgender	A person whose gender identity corresponds to their sex assigned at birth.
Coercive control	Coercive control involves perpetrators using patterns of abusive behaviours over time in a way that creates fear and denies liberty and autonomy. Perpetrators may use physical or non-physical abusive behaviours, or a combination of both.
Cultural safety	Cultural safety is about overcoming the power imbalances of places, people and policies that occur between the majority non-Indigenous position and the minority Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person so that there is no assault, challenge or denial of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person's identity, who they are and what they need. Cultural safety is met through actions from the majority position that recognise, respect, and nurture the unique cultural identity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Only the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person who is recipient of a service or interaction can determine whether it is culturally-safe. ⁵⁶
Family violence	'Family violence' is the preferred term for family and domestic violence within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, as it covers the extended families, kinship networks and community relationships in which violence can occur. ⁵⁷

**Family, domestic
and sexual violence**

Family, domestic and sexual violence is an umbrella term to describe various forms of violence that occur within family and intimate relationships, as well as sexual violence that can occur in any context.

As per the terms used in the National Plan:

Family violence is a broader term than domestic violence, as it refers to violence between intimate partners as well as violence perpetrated by parents (and guardians) against children, between other family members and in family-like settings. This includes for example elder abuse, violence perpetrated by children or young people against parents, guardians or siblings, and violence perpetrated by other family members such as parents-in-law. Family violence is also the term Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prefer because of the ways violence occurs across extended family networks. Family violence can also constitute forms of modern slavery, such as forced marriage and servitude.

Domestic violence refers to any behaviour within an intimate relationship (including current or past marriages, domestic partnerships or dates) that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm. This is the most common form of violence against women. Intimate partner violence can also occur outside of a domestic setting, such as in public and between 2 people who do not live together.

Sexual violence refers to sexual activity that happens where consent is not freely given or obtained, is withdrawn or the person is unable to consent due to their age or other factors. It occurs any time a person is forced, coerced or manipulated into any sexual activity. Such activity can be sexualised touching, sexual abuse, sexual assault, rape, sexual harassment and intimidation and forced or coerced watching or engaging in pornography. Sexual violence can be non-physical and include unwanted sexualised comments, intrusive sexualised questions or harassment of a sexual nature. Forms of modern slavery, such as forced marriage, servitude or trafficking in persons may involve sexual violence.

Family, domestic and sexual violence is recognised as a major health, welfare, and social issue, affecting individuals across all ages and backgrounds, yet predominantly impacting women and children. In the context of Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices, this literature review has identified certain elements of family, domestic and sexual violence that need to be specifically addressed in future initiatives.

**Financial and
economic abuse**

Where a perpetrator controls finances and assets to gain power and control in a relationship. Examples of abuse may include restricting use of a person's bank or Basics Cards or controlling a person's interaction with government systems and service providers, leading to significant economic disempowerment and making it difficult for victims to leave abusive situations.⁵⁸

Gender

Refers to the economic, social, political, and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being women and men. The social definitions of what it means to be a woman or a man vary among cultures and change over time. Gender is a sociocultural expression of particular characteristics and roles that are associated with certain groups of people with reference to their sex and sexuality. Rigid gender roles leave no space for acknowledgement or celebration of gender diversity.⁵⁹

Gender-based violence	Gender-based violence refers to violence that is used against someone because of their gender. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) defines violence against women as: ‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.’
Healing	Healing enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to overcome trauma and restore wellbeing. It is a holistic process that addresses mental, physical, emotional and spiritual needs. Effective ways to support healing include reconnecting with culture, strengthening identity, restoring safe and enduring relationships, supporting communities to understand the impacts of their experiences on behaviour, and supporting communities to create and lead change. For Stolen Generations, healing also means keeping children safe with family, and addressing the rates of out-of-home care. ⁶⁰
Heteronormativity	The privileging of heterosexuality as the normative human sexuality. It assumes there are only two distinct, opposite genders and that sexual and marital relations are the societal norm.
Indigenous Data Sovereignty	The right of Indigenous people to exercise ownership over Indigenous Data. Ownership of data can be expressed through the creation, collection, access, analysis, interpretation, management, dissemination and reuse of Indigenous Data.
Indigenous Data Sovereignty Principles – Maiam nayri Wingara	<p>In Australia, Indigenous Peoples have the right to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exercise control of the data ecosystem including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure. • Data that are contextual and disaggregated (available and accessible at individual, community and First Nations levels). • Data that are relevant and empower sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance. • Data structures that are accountable to Indigenous peoples and First Nations. • Data that are protective and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ individual and collective interests.
Intergenerational trauma	A form of historical trauma transmitted across generations. Survivors of the initial experience who have not healed may pass on their trauma to further generations. In Australia, intergenerational trauma particularly affects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, especially the children, grandchildren and future generations of the Stolen Generations. ⁶¹
Intersectionality	Intersectionality recognises that people’s lives are shaped by their identities, relationships and social factors. These combine to create intersecting forms of privilege and oppression depending on a person’s context and existing power structures such as patriarchy, ableism, colonialism, imperialism, homophobia and racism. ⁶²

Lateral violence	<p>'Lateral violence' describes the way people in positions of powerlessness covertly or overtly direct their dissatisfaction inward towards themselves, each other and those less powerful than themselves (AIHW & NIAA 2020). For First Nations people, the roots of lateral violence are found in colonisation, oppression, intergenerational trauma and experiences of racism (Korff 2015).⁶³</p>
LGBTIQA+SB	<p>LGBTIQA+SB refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, asexual, and Sistergirl and Brotherboy people. Plus (+) indicates other sexual orientation or gender identities.</p> <p>The LGBTIQA+SB community is comprised of non-homogenous individual communities, and the acronym may vary and be adapted depending on the individual communities it is used to reference.</p>
Mainstream sector/services	Organisations that deliver services to all Australians, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
Place-based	Place-based is a term used to described initiatives which are developed in partnership with community and tailored to fit the characteristics and needs of that location.
Self-determination	<p>Self-determination is concerned with the fundamental right of people to shape their own lives. In a practical sense, self-determination means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the freedom to live well, and to determine what it means to live well according to their own values and beliefs. Specifically, self-determination means that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have choice in determining how their lives are governed and their development paths • participate in decisions that affect their lives • have control over their lives and future including their economic, social and cultural development.⁶⁴
Sexual violence	Sexual violence exists both inside and outside of the intimate partner, family and domestic violence contexts and can include sexual assault, sexual threat, sexual harassment, child sexual abuse, street-based sexual harassment, and forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence, such as image-based abuse sexual harassment. ⁶⁵
Sistergirls and Brotherboys	<p>The exact meaning of the words Sistergirl and Brotherboy differs between locations, countries, and nations.</p> <p>Sistergirl may be used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to describe gender diverse people that have a female spirit and take on female roles within the community.</p> <p>Brotherboy may be used by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to describe gender diverse people that have a male spirit and take on male roles within the community.⁶⁶</p>

Social and emotional wellbeing	Social and emotional wellbeing includes a collective sense of self that is defined by connections to mind, body, family, community, culture, Country and spirituality. Furthermore, sense of self is significantly impacted by historical, political, social, and cultural determinants of health. The social and emotional wellbeing concept also recognises the significant diversity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia, how culture evolves and adapts over time, and how experiences and expressions of social and emotional wellbeing can change over an individual's lifespan.
Stolen Generations	In the 1900s, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children were forcibly removed from their families and communities. It is estimated that between 1910 and the 1970s, as many as 1 in 3 Indigenous children were taken from their families – affecting most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in Australia. Children were forcibly removed from their families and communities through race-based policies set up by both State and Federal Governments. They were put into homes, adopted or fostered out to non-Indigenous families. They suffered grief and trauma that continues today: losing their connections to family, identity, land, language and culture. These Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children have become known as the Stolen Generations. ⁶⁷ Some Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people use this term to refer to the ongoing removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in child protection and criminal justice systems.
Structural inequality	A term that describes power imbalances embedded in institutions and systems, especially where institutions carry unequal and unjust historical legacies. In the Australian context, racialised structural inequality has created a situation where social, economic and political privilege, power, resources and opportunities are concentrated with non-Indigenous people. ⁶⁸
Technology-facilitated abuse	A wide-ranging term that encompasses many subtypes of interpersonal violence and abuse using mobile, online and other digital technologies. These include harassing behaviours, sexual violence and image-based sexual abuse, monitoring and controlling behaviours, and emotional abuse and threats.
Trauma-responsive	Trauma-responsive care and practice recognises the prevalence of trauma and its impacts on the emotional, psychological and social well-being of people and communities and actively responds by integrating an understanding of past and current experiences of violence and trauma in all aspects of service delivery. The goal of trauma-responsive systems is to avoid re-traumatising individuals and support safety, choice and control to promote healing.
Victim-survivor or voices of lived experience	Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices uses both the voices of lived experience or voices of victim-survivor. Where possible voices of lived experience have been used; and acknowledges and respects the experiences of all who have experienced violence – women, children, young people and men. Incorporating the voice of lived experience supports self-determination and allows a unique and valued knowledge and viewpoint to inform how family, domestic and sexual violence is best addressed.

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