Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices)

IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

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Commissioner's Introduction to the Implementation Framework

In December 2017, I launched the multiyear Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) project. The occasion was marked, and the project officially given life, through the dance of a group of First Nations girls and young women from Redfern.

The young dancers reignited our powerful matriarchal lineage within their movements, across their painted skin, and in the confidence and excitement they showed in expressing our culture. They reminded us that it is our young ones who are the next holders of our knowledges, and that when they are invested in, they can dance and sing a vibrant and healthy future into being. We all carry the visions of our ancestors and the dreams of our children. We all have a responsibility to act today and make real a healthier, more just, inclusive and equitable nation.

This group of young dancers continues to represent, for me, the purpose of Wiyi Yani U Thangani—to elevate the voices, strengths and knowledges of First Nations women and girls, knowing that we hold the solutions to drive transformative positive change.

The landmark *Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing Our Rights, Securing Our Future Report* (the Report), released in December 2020, documents this truth. It conclusively shows how—despite our women's absences from the arenas of decision-making due to ongoing structural marginalisation and discrimination—they are present across all of life. Capturing over 2,000 women and girls' voices from right across Australia, the Report brings a well overdue First Nations gender-lens to issues from housing to education and economic participation. It describes how First Nations women carry knowledge about sustaining existence, are doing the backbone work of society—caring for children, family and Country—and are at the forefront of driving economic and social change.

The Report with its blueprint for structural change comes right when it is needed. Australia and many nations are reckoning with systemic racism and sexism and the far-ranging gender inequalities that perpetuate harm against women and children. This is abuse that First Nations women and girls have been the most impacted by for centuries. There is growing recognition that First Nations women and girls hold the solutions to overcome this abuse, and advance societal health and wellbeing. Momentum is building as people add their voices and take action in pursing First Nations gender justice and equality in Australia, for the benefit of everyone.

This Implementation Framework is designed to channel the momentum that has been built. It provides guidance for translating the substantial findings of the Report into meaningful action and provides examples of innovative First Nations women and girl-led initiatives across a wide range of sectors. This includes, climate justice, developing collective leadership, establishing Birthing on Country centres, forming mission orientated financial institutions for women to save and invest in projects with social impact, and prevention approaches to end violence against women and children.

I hope this Implementation Framework will inspire, provoke thought, and encourage discussions and collaborations for thinking, working and living our lives differently. Throughout its pages, images of young dancers, reflecting the Redfern group, weave this framework together and connect all the generations of our women in collective leadership. Their images remind us that we all have a part to play in forming the future our women and girls envision today. The Wiyi Yani U Thangani project sets the tone for a new way ahead—how that way ahead is actualised is up to us all.

Background—why and how this Implementation Framework was developed

Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's voices) is a multiyear systemic change project delivered in partnership by the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and the National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA).

The project consists of three stages. The first stage involved national engagements with First Nations women and girls throughout 2018, resulting in the *Wiyi Yani U Thangani Report.*[1]

Stage Two of the project has focused on socialising the findings of the Report with communities, peak bodies, First Nations and non-Indigenous organisations, as well as the Commonwealth and state and territory governments.[2] Several tools have been developed as a part of Stage Two to help community groups and other stakeholders to engage with the Report and project, and to effectively pursue the implementation of the Report. The third stage of the project will culminate in a national First Nations women and girls Summit. From the Summit a National Framework for Action will be developed to advance First Nations gender justice and equality in Australia.

This Implementation Framework is the major outcome of Stage Two. It is a living document to be used and refined in preparation for dialogues at the Summit, and to form the basis for the National Framework for Action. It introduces a First Nations gender-responsive systems practice approach. This is in response to the Report's major finding that systemic change is required, as a process and as an outcome, to meet the needs and rights of First Nations women and girls.

This Implementation Framework draws on the substantial findings of the Report. It has been further developed through a series of dialogue papers, workbooks and roundtables.[3] In particular, two thought leader roundtables were held, alongside workshops with Waminda Women's Health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation in New South Wales, Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre in Western Australia, the Kimberley Aboriginal Women's Roundtable, a session at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) 2021 conference, and many online presentations to community groups.

The Implementation Framework has also been informed by several theoretical methods. To design the Implementation Framework, Mariana Mazzucato's mission maps were used to help link diverse but interconnected projects that work toward large-scale social, ecological and economic goals.[4] Other influential systems change resources used include the School of Systems Change,[5] the Systems Change Observatory (SCO) at the Skoll Centre of Social Entrepreneurship, Saïd Business School[6] and Oxfam's Conceptual Framework on Women's Economic Empowerment.[7]

Many specialist voices have also contributed to the Implementation Framework. Special thanks to Karabena Consulting[8] in mapping out a vision for First Nations gender justice and equality. Ingrid Burkett, Co-Director of the Yunus Social Business Centre[9] and Cathy Hunt, the Executive Director of Women of the World Australia,[10] provided support in developing networks for action. The visionary work of Danjoo Koorliny's large-scale Aboriginal systems change project in Western Australia, looking to 2029 and beyond,[11] has been of inspiration in pursuing a First Nations women's-led approach to systems change. Katie Stubley from the Centre for Social Impact[12] has provided invaluable advice for how to see systems, as well as the 101 on systems practices.

Lastly, this Implementation Framework reflects the UN Women's multigenerational campaign: 'Generation Equality: Realizing women's rights for an equal future'.[13] The campaign has formed action coalitions within thematic spaces to drive systemic change. This Implementation Framework is the beginning of a similar approach for First Nations women and girls in Australia—it lays the groundwork for a First Nations women's agenda to unite multiple stakeholders to achieve gender equality.

Navigating this Implementation Framework

This Implementation Framework is set out in two parts.

The first part considers how to progress the implementation of Wiyi Yani U Thangani through a system thinking and practice approach. It is divided into the following sections:

- defining a vision for First Nations gender justice and equality;
- outlining system change practices; and
- presenting a set of 'ways of working'.

This first part is bookended by big and necessary ideas for shifting systems. It begins with outlining a vision for First Nations gender justice and equality to see beyond current structures, and to consider what the path ahead needs to look like in order to enact change. It finishes with a series of 'ways of working' to guide the types of work practices required to enact change.

The second part of this framework presents a series of priorities and interconnected actions set out within four thematic areas, which have been informed by the findings and overarching recommendations of the Report. They are: women and girls' 'leadership for self-determination', 'Law, language, land and cultural rights', 'societal healing' and 'economic justice and empowerment'. Dialogue Paper One (accessed here) provides a detailed overview of these four thematic areas through which systemic change can be focused.

Part One | Defining a vision and taking a gendered systems thinking approach

Wiyi Yani U Thangani sets out a vision for achieving First Nations gender justice and equality in Australia. Throughout Stage One and Two of Wiyi Yani U Thangani, First Nations women and girls have spoken of seeing and believing in a world that upholds our unique cultural, social, economic, and political rights and interests. A world that deeply values, celebrates, and enables all of who we are—our knowledges, identities, ideas, work and aspirations. A world that functions on the understanding that humanity, the lives of all women and men, are embedded and dependent upon earth's ecosystems. A world which ensures women, men and children are free from intersecting discriminations, inequalities, compounding traumas and violence, and guarantees our self-determination in the decisions that form and shape our existence. Women and girls know this world because it has existed before and continues to unfold within our First Nations ways of knowing, being and doing.

The question is, how does this world become our shared reality, our common humanity?

This vision is not a Western mainstream conception of gender equality

which predominantly focuses on individual rights and access to resources within the current structures that exist.[14] First Nations gender justice and equality challenges this dominant worldview, which too often promotes hierarchy and exclusion, re-entrenches power dynamics, and further marginalises First Nations women and girls. Instead, it looks to re-design systems through a resurgence in First Nations women's knowledges and values, so the societal structures that surround us mirror and embrace who we are.

Achieving the many dimensions of gender justice[15]—across all aspects of life, including health, housing, education, and the economy—are the processes to realise this vision. Equality is the creation of the conditions and the formation of the laws, policies and institutions, where all women and men and gender diverse peoples are recognised and respected.[16] Equality is not to make all people the same. Rather, it is to embrace and unleash the potential of our differences.

Why is it important to vision?

'Visioning'[17] helps to gain clarity about what we want the world to look like and how we want to exist within it. For First Nations people, visioning is a way of seeing and acting with insight and wisdom. It is not a linear process of imagining a distant future that may never arrive, but it is cyclic—a constant sense of existence emerging where the past, present and future are united. This framework has been developed with this understanding in mind. It is difficult to capture in English, but at its simplest, it means that our actions today, how we choose to live right now, and the influences of the past, determine what is to come. In some ways, the future is forever in our presence.

> *'**The future** can't be predicted, but **it can be envisioned** and brought lovingly into being ... **Living successfully in a world of systems requires** more of us than our ability to calculate. It requires **our full humanity**—our rationality, our ability to sort out truth from falsehood, our intuition, our compassion, **our vision**, and our morality.'*[18]
>
> **—Donella Meadows**

Designing systems for First Nations gender justice and equality

First Nations peoples are the oldest and most experienced systems thinkers in the world. Our societies and ways of being are generated and sustained through extensive, interconnected systems of knowledges. These knowledges teach of how to live within, care for, and adapt to the dynamic ecosystems that all of life depends upon. They show how the human and non-human form relationships and affect one another. These systems are supported by interconnected structures of Laws, protocols, kinship, and cultural practices. They contain lessons, values and principles of relationality, collaboration, intergenerational responsibility, love, collective care, inclusivity, reciprocity, life-long learning and more. All of which are the threads and elements that construct life functions.

Systems thinking may sound confusing but, in essence, it is a First Nations worldview. Still, there are many ways to define systems practices. Overall, a systems thinking and practice approach places issues in context by taking a bird's eye view to see the bigger picture of how elements interact and create a diverse range of outcomes. **Structures**—laws, policies, funding arrangements, relationships and institutions, and **actors**—people, employees, decision-makers, the public, deliverers and recipients of services—are both fundamental aspects of how systems function. The generalised method of systems practice is non-linear, action-oriented and iterative. It encourages a process of identifying issues through exploring root causes and probing assumptions. It necessitates listening to diverse perspectives and designing initiatives based on evidence, and then trialling, evaluating and incorporating new learnings into initiatives, to constantly improve and achieve better outcomes.[19]

Why do we need systems thinking and practices today?

There is growing recognition from governments and sectors the world over that systemic shifts are needed if we are to seriously meet the needs of people and planet far into the future, without exploiting either.[20] Fields from economics to earth sciences and health[21] are all exploring ways to overcome siloes and develop multisectoral approaches to form effective systems that are responsive to the interconnections of people and environments.

First Nations knowledges and our women's voices and ways of seeing and being are fundamental to forming these approaches. Women and girls see a world that can be redesigned around economies of care, time spent on Country, pursuing and engaging in meaningful interests and life-long learning so as to form societies that are healthier, more equitable and ecologically sustainable. This is why First Nations gender justice and equality is a cross-cutting human rights cause. Its emphasis on systemic change places it at the heart of systems change work.

Throughout Stage One and Two of Wiyi Yani U Thangani, women and girls have spoken consistently of the need for work and policies to be holistic—for everything in life to be interwoven, and be seen as whole, and not in parts. In the same measure, they have spoken of stakeholders, funders and governments who operate within rigid siloes, detached from how life truly functions. As such, they struggle to collaborate and support holistic work on the ground, hindering progress, limiting positive outcomes and, too often, causing harm.

To form new systems, civic society—young and old—decision-makers and various private and public stakeholders must (re)learn how to think, live, and work in systems. Much of this process of relearning starts from the beginning of life, in the ways that we are born, raised and educated. It is well evidenced that minds, thoughts, and behaviours are shaped by surrounding environments, particularly within foundational early years.[22] In response, the Implementation Framework has been conceived and designed through a First Nations systems lens that considers how systemic change is life-long and intergenerational, and that every person and being has a role to play in changing how systems function. The 'systems thinking' embedded throughout this framework is as much about process—how we do the work—as it is about the outcomes—forming thriving living systems.

Setting out systems practices, tools and methods. This section is a high-level overview of some major systems practices most relevant to how women want to see change happen, as raised throughout the Wiyi Yani U Thangani project. These are:

- How to see systems and (re)grow connections;
- How to understand mental models;
- Forming new mental models through (re)storying; and
- Supporting communities of practice, influence, and impact.

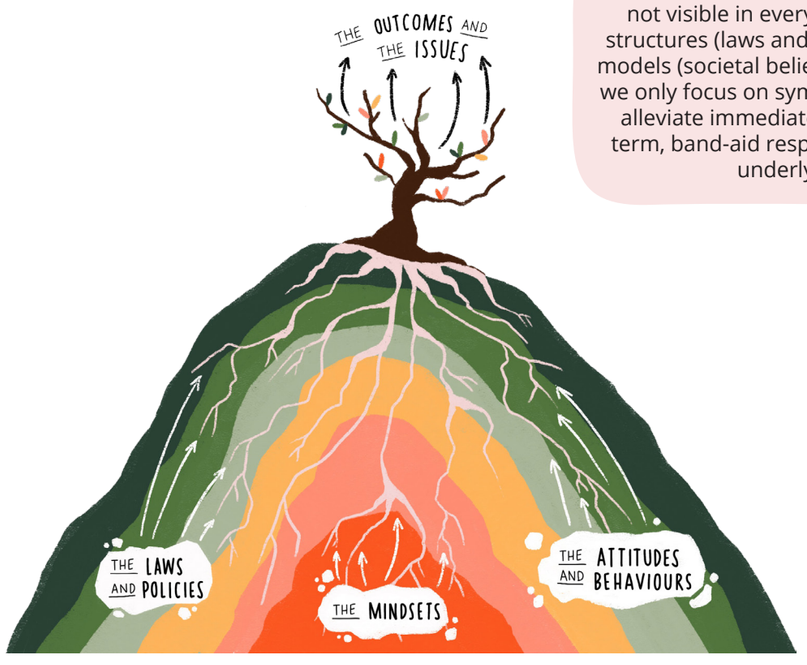
Many systems practices are focused on understanding power dynamics, mapping stakeholder relationships, knowing your place within the system, and the influence you can have in making change.[23] This is important, but in our view, we are more interested in the power and influence women can gain on the ground as relationships and collaborations form and emerge through enacting systems practices. The practices and thoughts presented here are to help support the lives and work of our women and girls so we can drive self-determined sustained change in our communities.[24]

How to see systems and (re)grow connections

The dominant mode of working which most of us exist within focuses primarily on symptoms, behaviours, or constant reactions to crisis. Systems thinkers refer to this as the 'iceberg' model.[25] First Nations women and girls envision systemic transformation occurring like the growth of seeds into trees and forests. Seeds take root in soils and grow into the surrounding atmosphere. Both of which, if healthy, can form the nourishing conditions for life ecosystems, including all people, to flourish.

It is important to realise that the trees and the icebergs are not separate from us, but are a map of ourselves, as well as the places we work within and the society that surround us. We all have strongly held beliefs and habits that are affected by our circumstances that influence our behaviours. We also know when our circumstances or habits change, our thinking and behaviours can change.

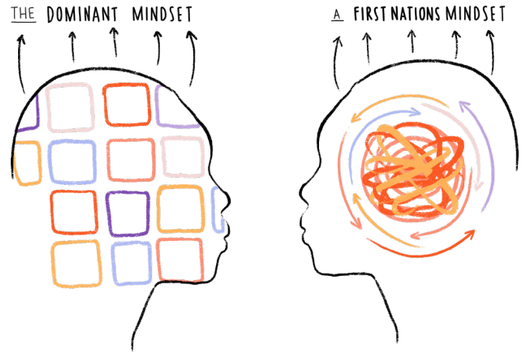
Like a tree, the root causes of issues and behaviours sit hidden beneath the surface—not visible in everyday life. These are the structures (laws and policies) and the mental models (societal beliefs, and narratives). When we only focus on symptomatic issues, we may alleviate immediate crisis but these short-term, band-aid responses rarely resolve the underlying causes.



The tree model can be used to see yourself and the system co-existing. It can help explore why and how issues are occurring and to identify leverage points for transforming systems and resolving issues. ***To do this effectively it is important to ask and explore: why is this issue occurring? What are the root causes of the issue? What are the structures and behaviours that contribute to re-enforcing issues? When root causes are identified they need to be explored from multiple perspectives and understood within context.*** It is at the root cause level that well designed interventions can bring about systemic shifts to resolve deeply entrenched issues.

How to understand mental models?

Mental models are the worldviews we prescribe to which inform social norms, beliefs, and behaviours.[26] They are the stories, the grand historical narratives, that help us make sense of the world around us. Worldviews take hold the moment seeds begin to sprout, anchoring roots in place, and holding huge sway over how society forms and functions.



A First Nations worldview is holistic—human and non-human beings are seen as equal and existing within dynamic and interdependent relationships. It is a worldview that helps people live within and sustain thriving ecosystems. In contrast, the dominant Western worldview tends to be based on individualism, hierarchy and compartmentalisation. It can separate the world into detached parts, and cause decisions to happen within vacuums, without proper understanding of their consequences within systems.

It is increasingly understood that the dominant mental model—which has constructed siloed, linear work processes—is not producing effective results or policies capable of responding to real world challenges. Tools are being designed to enable policymakers and organisations to think and act within systems and create more effective interventions which respond to complexity.[27]

Case Study

Climate Interactive, a think-tank grown from Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), works with policymakers, community groups and organisations to play out scenarios through simulations and systems modelling to test what works to address climate change and inequity. They have created a game called 'C-roads',[28] where simulations and scenario workshops test ideas and shows how shifts in spending, policy and community actions and organising can create multiple solutions. The game has seen leaders from poorer nations act out the impacts of wealthier nations' short-term environmental policies, and how this can lead to disastrous consequences for their citizens.[29]

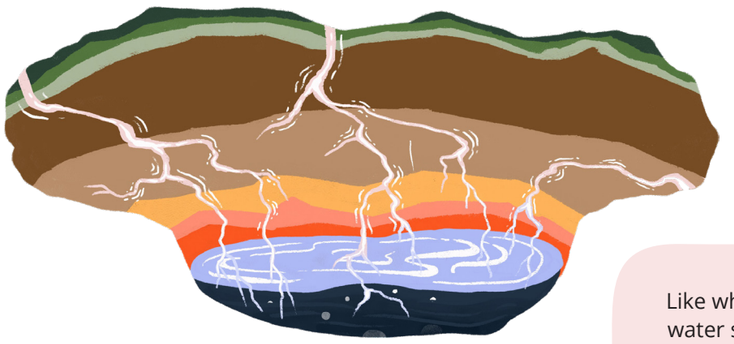
Climate Interactive's scenario games and planning can help to develop systems-designed interventions, which have long-term benefits across a range of interrelated issues including health, energy, food and education. They call this 'multi-solving'.[30]

Forming new mental models through (re)storying

Throughout Wiyi Yani U Thangani, collaboration, and the ability to think systemically and form new mental models and narratives that more accurately reflect the world around us, was fostered by talking in strengths. Moving away from issues and deficit, and highlighting values and interests, enabled people to challenge their own biases and to learn from other perspectives. Strength-based conversations unite people, and move rapidly to the roots of transformation, to the bottom of the iceberg or the understory of trees. These conversations recreate systems and help to (re) story—as roots tap into nourishing sources of water and nutrients, ecosystems come alive and ideas and possibilities grow. Whereas, issue-focused discussions re-entrench divisions, usually along lines of current sectors, funding arrangements and expertise.

For instance, when women speak of healing from a position of strength, it is not limited to an isolated intervention responding to acute trauma. It is woven throughout life, nurtured through multiple conditions and spaces. Healing connects diverse areas from housing to First Nations schools and jobs on Country, and improved mental health through greater self-determination.

This Implementation Framework reflects interconnectedness. It shows how a First Nations systems thinking approach, cultivated through a holistic worldview, can help in developing policies that drive 'multisolving'. For example, it shows how involving women and children in the design of housing leads to improvements in safety, social cohesion, access to services, employment and income security. This can enhance connection to Country, culture and kin, in turn supporting mental, physical and spiritual health and wellbeing. In contrast, affordable housing designed without community input, can result in housing built in undesirable locations, disconnected from opportunities. This leads to social fragmentation, unsafe conditions, increased vulnerability and worsening health of women and children.



Like when roots of a tree tap into water sources, when we draw on sources of strength and connect with resources around us, we see growth, relationships flourish, and systems are healthy.

Supporting communities of practice, influence, and impact

It is our peoples and communities on the ground who hold ancestral knowledges, have lived experience and are doing the work—we know our lives and know what is needed to drive social change. Top-down, prescriptive approaches inhibit rather than expand the potential of communities to drive change.

An emerging area of systems work, which is supporting change from the ground up, is focused on creating the conditions for bringing together 'communities of practice'.[31] Organisations globally have recognised that diverse groups of people collaborating in collectives hold significant power, and practical expertise informed by lived experience, to create positive large-scale change.[32] Groups and processes have been established—usually referred to as 'design labs'—to connect like-minded people within networks, further develop their relationships, provide the space for communities to form and develop social change ideas, and connect with resources to implement, scale-up and influence social narratives, structures, policies and laws. Some initiatives are developed specifically to target mental models and reform laws and policies, as critical areas of leverage to engender change.

Case Study

A First Nations approach to communities of practice is set out in *Country Can't Hear English: A Guide Supporting the Implementation of Cultural Determinants of Health and Wellbeing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*,[33] prepared by Karabena Consulting. The Guide presents a theory of 'emergence' which demonstrates how social innovations built through community actions and networked connections can lead to broad-based change. The Guide explores four stages of emergence:

Stage 1: Creating change-capable networks—made up of change-capable individuals, working to promote societal change.

Stage 2: Supporting communities of practice—made up of people invested in sharing common work and creating new knowledges of practice.

Stage 3: Harnessing systems of influence—systems that have real power and influence. When practices developed by communities become the accepted standard and people no longer hesitate to adopt these practices.

Stage 4: Illuminating what has been achieved—evidence and approaches are developed and systems transform.

The approaches outlined in the Guide require a critical whole-of-system shift from top-down, centrally managed planning procedures, to bottom-up participatory, community-driven processes.[34]

Ways of working—taking a First Nations gendered systems thinking approach

Over the course of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani project we have developed a set of 'ways of working' to help us think and act through a First Nations gendered systems lens. These can be used by individuals and teams across all sectors and positions. We recommend referring to these ways of working when engaging with this Implementation Framework and that readers apply them to their own work. The more they are practised, the more likely they are to become embedded and to alter work practices for the better. The presentation of these ways of working have been informed by the everyday systems practices developed by the Prevention Centre.[35]

Co-design and collaborate:

First Nations women need to lead in designing solutions and initiatives and be a part of every stage of developing, implementing and evaluating work.

Is co-design a part of your work from conception to actualisation of an idea, and have you ensured that co-design meets the standards of First Nations women? Are you prepared and willing to let co-design change your thinking, projects and intended outcomes?

Take a

strength-based

approach:

First Nations women's lives hold remarkable knowledges, skills and expertise that can inform and create meaningful solutions.

Are you fixated on issues and symptoms and wanting to fix problems without listening or understanding the lives and work of women and their communities? Are you working with the strengths and assets identified?

Engage in

deep listening:

It is important to be present, focused, respectful and considered, when meeting and in dialogue to absorb new knowledge and to help define intention and hopes of communities.

Are you thinking about your point of view and what to say next rather than listening? Have you spent time seeking to understand what has been communicated, without assuming and imposing your position? Have you come with a preformed fixed idea that you are unwilling to let go of?

Commit to

self-awareness and reflection:

There are many unknowns at the beginning of a project, reflective learning helps work to be flexible, adaptive and better able to meet needs and local priorities.

Does your work have ongoing evaluation, and can it be altered by new learnings? Are you open to feedback without feeling threatened or defensive? Can you let go of control and accept that you do not know everything?

Rebalance power:

Working in collaboration requires the rebalancing of power relationships and the acceptance that the Western worldview is not superior to all other knowledges. *When you engage are you happy to sit as an equal at the table? Do you invite and encourage others to put forward perspectives and thoughts? When you hear new ideas do you take interest, or do you dismiss them?*

Be

intersectional:

Voices from the margins must be embraced and all diversities understood and responded to, including women and girls living remotely, those with disabilities, LGBTQIA+SG (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, Sistergirl and Brotherboy), and incarcerated women and children.

Does your work consider diversity or does it presume a homogenous one-size-fits-all approach will work? Have you invited diverse perspectives and lived experiences to gain a better understanding of the whole?

Think in

context and relationships:

Nothing exists in isolation. Everything is connected to something—placing issues within the environment that they occur and the economic, social and political conditions helps to gain an understanding.

Have you thought and mapped out how the issue you are considering is connected to other things? Do you know/have you explored the historical and contemporary context that an issue is arising within?

Be informed by

women's Law and culture:

Women's knowledge systems hold vast skills and practices that are significant to all sectors and tell of how to live healthy and sustainable existences.

How is your work and thoughts influenced and informed by women's knowledges? Do women have the opportunity to integrate their knowledges and cultural practices into work and projects?

Be

visionary and sustainable:

What is designed today should create healthier more sustainable and interconnected living environments, which bring about multiple benefits for health and wellbeing to meet the needs of women and girls well into the future.

Are you aware of what women want for their families and communities beyond services or programs being provided? Have you considered how to make your work sustainable and the social, economic, and ecological benefits it could bring to women and communities?

Take a

healing-informed approach:

Work underpinned by healing addresses the root causes of harms and inequalities, not just the symptoms.

Do you spend time exploring what has happened and how to prevent it from re-occurring, or do you impose predetermined solutions? Do you judge people's behaviours rather than identifying structural drivers?

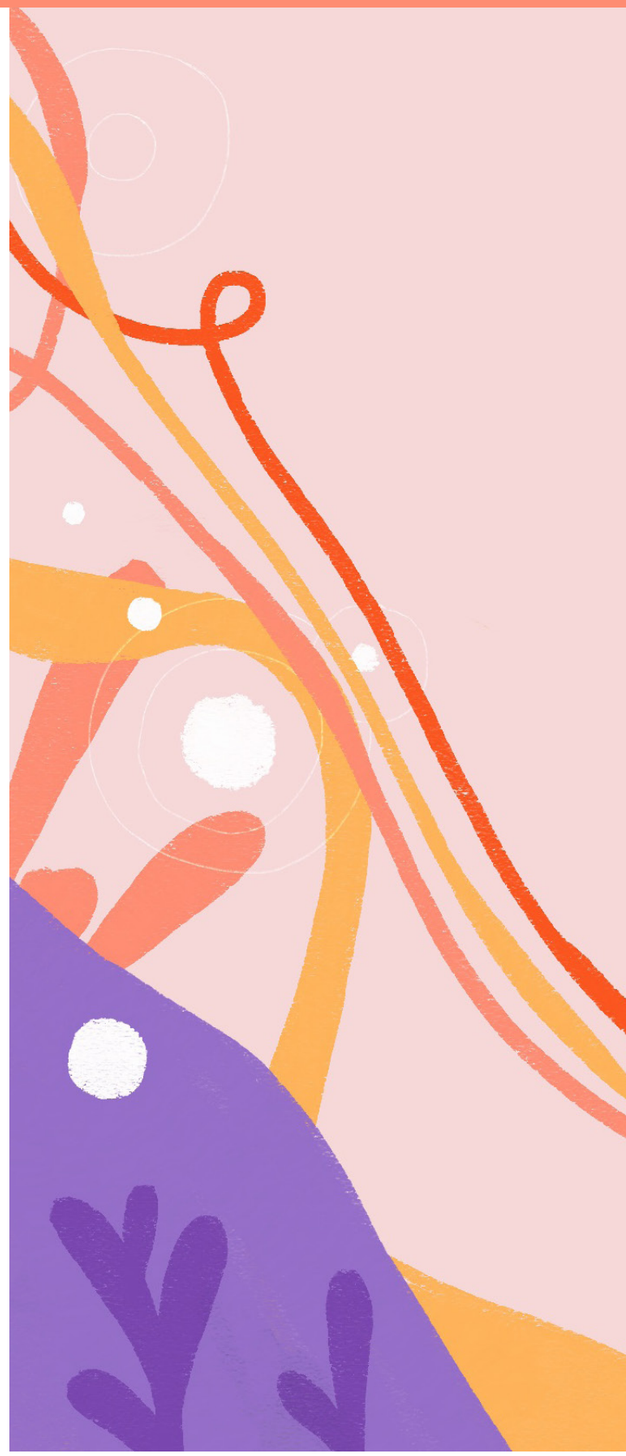
Part Two | Taking Action

This Implementation Framework presents a guide to progress First Nations gender justice and equality. It begins with three overarching structural reforms that women and girls have identified as critical to forming the empowering foundations, and shifting relationships with those in power, from which healthier and sustainable systems can be developed. Following this are four thematic areas containing nine major priorities along with a series of corresponding interconnected actions. Each action defines how women and girls want systems to function, what our strengths are, and what investments should be made to improve life. Corresponding to each action are elements of the current system that need to be changed to overcome structural barriers and begin to form enabling conditions. These include: changing hearts and minds; community organising and participation; collaborative partnerships; policy and law reform; governance and institutional supports; data and knowledge co-creation; and digital access.

The intention is for this Implementation Framework to make visible and prominent the work and knowledges of women and girls alongside our dreams and aspirations, so structures and systems become responsive and can begin to be reshaped by how we want to live. It is about connecting Australia's structures—laws, policies, institutions, decision-making processes and even societal behaviours—with the visions of our First Nations women and girls to create dynamic systems that are responsive to our lived realities and all aspects of life.

In a direct response to overcoming siloed, sectored and segmented ways of operating, this Implementation Framework is holistic and its actions are interconnected. It also acknowledges the crises that must be confronted immediately, particularly in response to family violence, poverty, trauma and drug and alcohol use, and the need to dramatically reduce incarceration rates and removal of children. In confronting these issues, this Implementation Framework focuses on systemic drivers of equality to target root causes of inequalities and structural discriminations including racism and sexism. This approach is designed to simultaneously reduce harms and violence, while enhancing empowerment, self-determination and health and wellbeing.

Importantly, this Implementation Framework takes an intersectional approach. It responds to First Nations women and girls in all our diversity—women and girls with disabilities, women elders, LGBTQIA+SG women, those living in remote regions, and incarcerated women and girls. It emphasises the need to deeply consider and incorporate the multiple perspectives and experiences of women and girls from these diverse backgrounds across every action.



Overarching structural reforms

Throughout Wiyi Yani U Thangani and the iterative development of this Implementation Framework, women highlighted a number of overarching structural reforms that are critical to progressing real, sustained change. These were repeatedly discussed when identifying reforms needed across the four thematic areas and cut across all major priorities and actions. Women and girls were clear that structures in their current form create uncollaborative environments and lack trust and transparency which are the conditions needed to create effective change. For this reason, set out below are three overarching structural reforms to be progressed in parallel with the actions in the Implementation Framework, so as to enable a greater degree of success of the initiatives and models put forward in the actions.

From top-down and detached to relational, collaborative and self-determined decision-making

First Nations women and girls were clear that there must be a fundamental re-setting of the relationship with public and private sectors—one that is grounded in inclusivity, respect, understanding and equality. The current top-down approach limits collaboration and co-design and burdens communities with accountability toward governments to deliver services that are not in the best interests of communities.

Women and girls described the need for mechanisms to shift the power dynamic and to bring governments and all partners to the table to co-design. Women and girls have expressed the need to develop governance and partnership structures which are informed by cultural governance practices, so we can stand strong in self-determined positions as knowledge holders and experts of local and regional interests. Women spoke of the need to establish state, territory and Commonwealth First Nations women and girl advisory bodies, and spaces to unite women and governments in policy formation such as 'policy labs'. There was also broad consensus for a Voice enshrined in the Constitution which embeds principles of culturally-secure gender equality, and the need to form local and regional decision-making bodies such as women's councils.

In enhancing self-determination and collaboration, women and girls highlighted the following principles:

- **Prioritise self-determination, participation and respect**
- **Embed women's Law, culture, knowledge and governance**
- **Ensure co-design, deep listening and collaboration**
- **Commit to processes of innovation**
- **Guarantee transparency** from policy conception to implementation
- **Redefine success and impact** centered around women and girls' worldviews
- **Ensure shared decision-making and shared responsibility**
- **Determine measures of accountability** defined by women and girls' ideas of success.

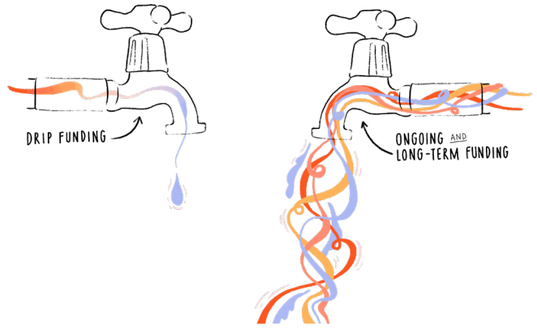
From uncaring and punitive to caring and enabling systems

We must retune how our systems respond to people in need and situations of crisis. Across all policy settings, the narrative is one of burden and blame on the individual, with little to no regard for the structural forces at play. The response punishes individual behaviours instead of providing the necessary resources and supports to guarantee the welfare and wellbeing of individuals for the benefit of society. This is evident in our welfare system where support is conditional, limited, and punitive.

Through a First Nations gender lens and embedding the principle of 'do no harm', we can create a system where all children are born into vibrant communities, surrounded by kin, culture and Country, where all families are equipped with adequate resources.This includes adequate income, housing and care for children, people with disability and elders. Systems should guarantee that all people are afforded the opportunity to pursue their interests, gain employment and access supports no matter where we live.

In shifting the response the following principles must be included:

- **Establish mechanisms for women and girls' participation in all areas of policy-making** especially in healing from trauma, social security, housing, childcare and disability care, law reform and child protection
- **Embed the principle of 'do no harm' across all policymaking frameworks**
- **Include a mandatory application of an intersectional gender and trauma-informed lens across all policy areas** to account for facts such as family violence, disabilities, remoteness and access to services
- **Guarantee that all social security lifts women, children and families out of poverty**
- **Ensure that social security translates into dignity and sustainable livability** and supports engagement in meaningful education and employment opportunities.



From short-term, insecure and uncoordinated to long-term, secure and holistic funding

The needs and aspirations of First Nations women, girls and their communities are significantly underinvested in. Current funding arrangements are short-term, conditional and tied to targets and indicators rarely determined by community, burdening communities with administration and reporting requirements, trapping them in reactive responses and limiting their ability to invest in and pursue long-term change. Women and girls have also highlighted that when progress is made, it is frequently hindered or undone because funding is pulled or re-directed.

Women and girls want transparent funding decisions and to be a part of designing the criteria to determine expenditure with a focus on funding awarded to First Nations organisations and investments made to target the root causes of inequalities and support initiatives that drive systemic equality. This means looking beyond rigid, linear outputs-orientated frameworks focused on reach, scale and replicability, to broader social, ecological, cultural and economic impact. It requires innovative financial mechanisms be designed to facilitate approaches such as impact investing, ecosystem financing, justice reinvestment and other approaches where success is measured by the empowerment of communities, positive life outcomes, reduction in trauma, and sustainability of impact. This could include exploring the development of large scale regional impact funds that use a percentage of mining royalties or tax or other forms of revenue to invest in community social, economic, cultural and ecological initiatives. This approach is not about absolving government of responsibility for essential service delivery or privatising it, but about looking beyond, to develop transformative opportunities for economic development and business.

The following must be embedded in reforming funding structures:

- **Develop gender-responsive and systemic change funding frameworks** which direct funding toward place-based community-controlled initiatives
- **Re-set the relationship** so communities are understood as creators of change and not recipients of service delivery funding
- **Develop investment criteria designed by First Nations women and girls** for a range of women and girls initiatives including family violence response work
- **Guarantee parity in funding initiatives** for women and men, boys and girls
- **Ensure participation of First Nations women and girls in funding decisions**
- **Increase transparency of funding allocation and coordination in expenditure**
- **Design financing for impact** targeting funding to community-driven systemic change initiatives to deliver social, economic and health outcomes
- **Develop long-term funding structures** to effectively and efficiently enable change and to reduce complexity of grant systems
- **Apply flexible, non-linear measurement frameworks** co-designed with communities, women and girls

FIRST NATIONS GENDER
JUSTICE and EQUALITY

4 Thematic areas • 9 Major priorities • 24 Action areas

THEMATIC AREA 1
LEADERSHIP and DECISION-MAKING FOR SELF DETERMINATION

Major Priority 1:
First Nations women and girls are strong in identity and empowered leaders in both worlds

Action 1.1: Collective leadership from the start of life

Action 1.2: Reinvigorate cultural governance and invest in place-based leadership

Major Priority 2:
First Nations women and girls are represented and responded to across all areas of decision-making

Action 2.1: Mainstream readiness to become First Nations gender responsive

Action 2.2: Women and girls have access to mechanisms to advocate for their rights and interests

THEMATIC AREA 2
LANGUAGE, LAND, WATER and CULTURAL RIGHTS

Major Priority 3:
Cultural rights are secured, practised and lived by First Nations women and girls

Action 3.1: Thriving languages, spoken every day, throughout all of life

Action 3.2: Women's knowledges reinvigorated and embraced across sectors

Major Priority 4:
Access to and autonomy over ancestral country

Action 4.1: Culturally-layered, resilient and adaptable infrastructure for vibrant living

Action 4.2: Women making decisions, governing, and negotiating for Country

Action 4.3: Innovative on-Country supports, education and economies

Major Priority 5:
First Nations gender-just climate solutions

Action 5.1: First Nations women at the heart of climate and Country justice

Action 5.2: Girls and young women leading the way in sustainable solutions

THEMATIC AREA 3
SOCIETAL HEALING and INTERGENERATIONAL WELLBEING

Major Priority 6:
Healing-informed, engaged and transformed systems and society

Action 6.1: National coverage of women-designed and led healing models on Country and in community

Action 6.2: Healing-informed workplaces and workforces

Action 6.3: Truth-telling, language and culture throughout education

Action 6.4: A nation engaged in truth-telling, recognition and recovery

Major Priority 7:
Every First Nations child is born into an empowered, healthy, and sustainable community

Action 7.1: Women and child-centred culturally-safe maternal and early life models of care

Action 7.2: A transformed First Nations children, women and family centred early childhood education and support system

Action 7.3: Affordable, culturally-secure and liveable homes in safe, connected and sustainable communities

THEMATIC AREA 4
ECONOMIC JUSTICE and EMPOWERMENT

Major Priority 8:
Control over income and financial resources and engagement in meaningful economies

Action 8.1: Institutional supports to lift women and children out of poverty and guarantee their financial wellbeing

Action 8.2: Women and girls enjoy the right to financial information, knowledge and literacy

Action 8.3: Empowering conditions for women's training and employment

Action 8.4: Sustainable local economies and business

Major Priority 9:
A transformed care economy

Action 9.1: The full spectrum of women's care work is recognised and valued

Action 9.2: Wrap-around caring infrastructure for collective wellbeing and empowerment

Thematic area 1:
Leadership and decision-making for self-determination

VISION:

First Nations women and girls in all our diversity are in control of the decisions that determine and affect our lives. Our voices and knowledges are respected and we shape decisions across all social, economic, cultural, political and environmental spaces. Intergenerational collective leadership is respected and strengthened through connecting to Country and processes of cultural governance.

Policymakers, representative bodies, and decision-making institutions learn from our processes of leadership while also challenging power relations and norms that create barriers to our participation and representation in these spaces. We have built a movement where many have committed to the empowerment of our women and girls to voice our knowledges and experiences on issues that impact our lives. We have constructed enabling mechanisms so we can stand in our full power and strength in identity to occupy leadership roles.

This empowerment and engagement in decision-making and leadership contributes to and supports us towards a genuine ongoing process of truth-telling, self-determination, healing, and agreement-making in Australian nation building.

THE RESPONSE:

This priority area puts forward the actions to challenge and reconstruct dominant Western conceptions of leadership and decision-making. It outlines how we must:

- Reshape structural and institutional arrangements with shared accountability, decision-making authority and respect to guarantee our full participation and leadership;
- Embed cultural governance tools within all decision-making spaces, bringing our women to the forefront of policy design, implementation and evaluation;
- Be supported to gather, share knowledge and advocate for our rights as a collective;
- Establish women and girls-led models of leadership and organising, and design the structures that will elevate our knowledges and voices into regional, state, national and international levels of decision-making;
- Grow our women-led workforce to invest in our carer and leadership development; and
- Provide wrap-around healing and empowering supports right from the start of life for our young people to feel safe and strong in their identity.

Major Priority 1:
First Nations women and girls are strong in identity and empowered leaders in both worlds

Action 1.1: Collective leadership from the start of life

Action 1.2: Reinvigorate cultural governance and invest in place-based leadership

Collective leadership from the start of life

ACTION 1.1

First Nations women's sense of leadership is place-based and embedded within our Law and kinship which positions us within society and Country and sets out our relationships to all that surrounds us. This structure ensures collective decision-making and responsibility. From an early age we learn to establish reciprocal relationships which remove hierarchy between human and non-human beings—creating balance within entire ecosystems. Our kinship structures and customs of collective care keep children safe, happy, strong in identity and connected to family, community and Country. Values of collective leadership, including interdependence, unity and shared responsibility, are instilled in children from the moment they are born and carried throughout life. Our whole of life approach to leadership heals and unites, connecting governance, decision-making and the life of whole ecosystems.

Reinvigorate early life collective care and kinship

Form the conditions and policy architecture to enable the (re)assertion and preservation of women's antenatal care, collective child-rearing practices and kinship responsibilities.

See Major Priority 7, Action 7.1 of Societal healing and intergenerational wellbeing for more information.

Guarantee access to lifelong cultural education

When our women are empowered to know and be all of who they are, they are powerful leaders. This happens through lifelong access and connection to Country, learning and speaking our languages, and engaging in the intergenerational transference of Law through ceremonial gatherings, bush-meetings and cultural-based leadership programs.

See Major Priority 3, Action 3.2 of Language, land, water and cultural rights for more information.

Grow the political voice of girls and young women

Empower young women to make decisions for all aspects of their life, alongside challenging harmful systems and inspiring change-making from an early age through supporting access to community assemblies, youth councils, networks and rights-focused education such as Koori Youth Council, National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC), and Deadly Indigenous Youth Doing Good (DIYDG).

Changing hearts and minds

- Increasing the awareness of the importance of different birthing and child rearing models creating a healthy, strong and empowered start to life for women and babies that sets us up for collective care and leadership.

Consider: *Spread the word through sharing the* Djakamirr *and* Birthtime *campaigns and community resources such as* Growing up Our Way.

- Media and news networks using their platforms to elevate voices, knowledges and stories of First Nations women and girls in leadership—with inclusion strategies to centre women and girls with disabilities, those living in rural and remote areas, older women, and LGBTQIA+SG women and girls.

Governance and institutional supports

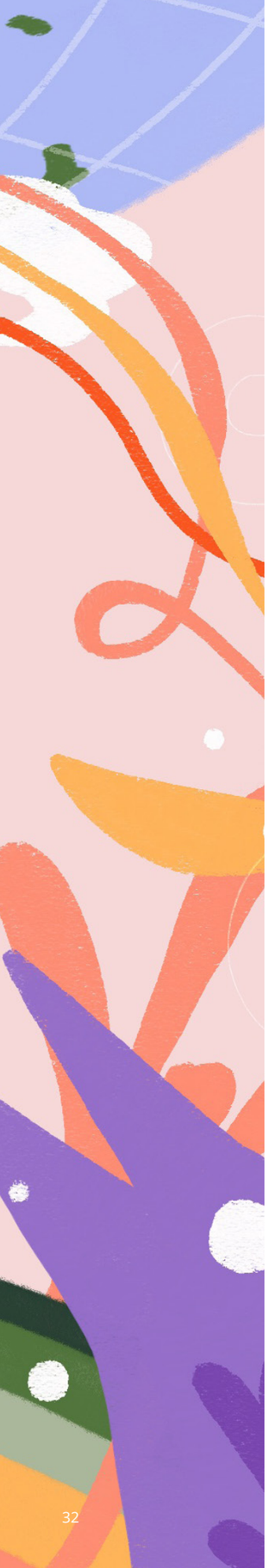
- Develop funding and assessment and evaluation frameworks to ensure women's oversight in awarding and monitoring funding allocations to women and girls' programs and leadership projects. This should include criteria and guidelines to direct funding to community-controlled initiatives and mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of funding in achieving the priorities and outcomes as outlined by women and girls—for example, measuring increased feelings of political voice, strength in identity and self-esteem.
- Increase transparency around funding allocation and ensure women and girls' leadership, recreation and education programs are given equal funding to that of boys' programs, and that both are raised commensurate with need.

Policy and law reform

- Reforms to child protection systems to ensure continuation of care and connection to kin and culture for young people, including: accountability mechanisms to ensure authorities comply with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle;[36] greater transparency around placement decision-making; replacing legal orders for permanent adoption with investment into community-controlled reunification services; and reforming carer assessment processes such as the Blue Card system in Queensland[37] to support women and families becoming carers.
- Strengthen workplace policy infrastructure through setting targets for the representation of First Nations women under the age of 25 years in advisory and decision-making roles in government, business and mainstream and community-controlled organisations and develop gender responsive Reconciliation Action Plans[38] (RAPs) in partnership with First Nations employees, women's organisations and Reconciliation Australia.
- Consider the possibility of Reconciliation Australia working with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner to develop gender-responsive guidelines for developing RAPs.
- Review workplace leave policies and ensure a national standard for gender and culturally-responsive leave including carer, sorry business, compassionate, cultural, maternal and paternal leave. Alongside this should be strong guidelines for how leave policies should be designed and implemented.

Collaborative partnerships

- Leadership and research bodies such as the Australian Indigenous Leadership Centre (AILC), Healing Foundation, NIYEC, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), Children's Ground, Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC) partnering with young women and girls to develop locally relevant leadership and civic engagement activities, programs and multimedia resources. Partnerships could also build on existing programs such as the National Indigenous Youth Parliament or Oxfam's Straight Talk.



ACTION 1.2

Reinvigorate cultural governance and invest in place-based leadership

Investments must be made into place-based, gender-responsive governance that centres and builds on our inherent leadership skills. First Nations women's self-governed organisations and leadership programs play a critical role in meeting the needs of our women but are highly undervalued and are doing this with minimal resources. They offer safe spaces, gender-responsive services, hubs for activism and advocacy, alongside culturally-safe mentoring, career progression and governance opportunities and mechanisms to build on women's strengths, capabilities and networks. There needs to be a different structure of investment, support and evaluation that understands the efficacy of our organisations to grow leadership and enable new opportunities to emerge.

First Nations women's models of leadership and governance

Sustain and invest in the spaces that enable women to learn and lead from our place of knowing through self-governed programs and community-controlled organisations.

Foster relationships for impact and influence

Form the spaces for women and girls to network and grow their ideas in collaboration with public and private stakeholders through knowledge sharing, designing promising initiatives and developing investment frameworks to sustain work over the long-term.

Build the evidence base to support effective practice

Through the leadership of organisations such as AILC, AIATSIS, and the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute (AIGI) in partnership with women and girls we must support community-led research and documentation of our models of leadership and cultural governance to integrate these models across society and all workplaces.

Community organising and participation

- Prioritise and substantially increase investments in First Nations community-controlled service delivery sectors, and recognise and invest in the importance of women's organisations in supporting the career development, mentorship and training of women and community—such as Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre, Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC), Waminda South Coast Women's health and Welfare Aboriginal Corporation and Yanalangami: Strong Women, Strong Communities leadership program.
- Provide dedicated sustained funding to organisations, festivals and networking community groups to support women's gatherings and collaborations this includes DIYDG, Women of the World (WOW), the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA), Kimberley Aboriginal Law and Cultural Centre (KALACC) and the Winds of Zenadth.

Suggestion: As a First Nations woman could you set up a forum, workshop or on-Country gathering with others in your community to identify your societal leadership and governance principles and structures? Together you could work on embedding these principles across organisations and governance models within your community.

- Explore mechanisms to guarantee gender parity within community-controlled organisations and bodies.

Yanalangami: Strong Women, Strong Communities offered through Tranby National Indigenous Adult Education and Training, seeks to grow and amplify the sovereign voices, stories, and aspirations of First Nations women Changemakers. Yanalangami is a Darug/Dharug Nation word meaning, we walk together, me and you. The Yanalangami program connects women, cultivating a culturally-safe and supportive community for the Changemakers through a series of empowerment workshops, and professional development opportunities. Drawing on their community experience, Yanalangami enhances women's leadership skills via yarning circles and story sharing practice to foster women's self-confidence, resilience, and strength. The Yanalangami program is designed through Tyson Yunkaporta's 8 Way Method, weaving cultural practice, knowledge, and leadership content together to empower women as Changemakers. The Yanalangami program focuses on cultivating wellbeing, following the understanding that leadership is not something that happens in isolation, but takes the strength of many women empowering each other and walking together to create meaningful change.[39]

Policy and law reform

- Policy-makers to work with women's networking groups and community-controlled organisations to develop innovative funding models (such as dedicated funding streams for women-led programs and services) and mutual trust models (such as Queensland Tracks to Treaty[40]) so aspects of their work which are not essential service delivery can be self-sustaining.
- First Nations principles of leadership and governance to be integrated into policy-making processes for both governments and corporations. Effective ways to facilities this process would be to design spaces for First Nations policy-making, such as policy labs.

Data and knowledge co-creation

- Fully fund research and data-collection on women's place-based leadership carried out by key First Nations research bodies including AILC, AIATSIS, the Lowitja Institute, and AIGI. Research must be owned and controlled by women, and pathways and training should be developed for girls to engage in research, data-collection and evaluation.
- Develop, design and invest in First Nations-led programs and courses such as certificates in First Nations politics or local government, based on First Nations governance and women's knowledge.

Consider: Across the globe, formalised gathering spaces are emerging where like-minded people can come together to form powerful ideas and access tools and resources to make them a reality. These spaces—the underlying purpose of which is to empower people regardless of their background or economic situation—have come to be known as community-maker spaces. They can include events, working spaces and accessible trainings, as well as networking opportunities, and learnings about new technologies and knowledges. We must fund First Nations women and girls community-maker spaces to grow ideas and initiatives.

Major Priority 2:
First Nations women and girls are represented and responded to across all areas of decision-making

Action 2.1: Mainstream readiness to become First Nations gender responsive

Action 2.2: Women and girls have access to mechanisms to advocate for their rights and interests

ACTION 2.1

Mainstream readiness to become First Nations gender responsive

Mainstream institutions have a responsibility to ensure the services and activities they undertake are both culturally and gender responsive. Mainstream institutions and society as a whole have much to gain from understanding and embedding our leadership practices—providing a much more collaborative and grounded response to ways of working. In order to embrace First Nations knowledges as well as becoming culturally-safe places for First Nations women to work, mainstream institutions must ensure the full and effective participation and empowerment of First Nations women and girls. Institutions must go above and beyond Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) processes and be prepared to transform and design organisational structures to meet the needs of women and girls. Key to this process is having women and girls at the forefront of design and decision-making.

Sectors and institutions embrace women's decision-making power

All institutions embed First Nations gender justice and equality as a key principle and commit to strong accountability and evaluation mechanisms, such as benchmarks, targets, employment pathways and succession planning.

Strengthen government and institutional accountability

All institutions to hold greater responsibility for their actions, decisions, policies and services through recognising First Nations models of governance which value collective responsibility, power-sharing and working with, rather than for, communities.

Recognise and eradicate all forms of discrimination

We need culturally-responsive education and truth-telling programs, anti-discrimination media campaigns and resources, workplace training and accountability mechanisms including zero-tolerance discrimination policies.

Changing hearts and minds

- All Australians to take accountability and responsibility for addressing intersectional discrimination—sexism, racism, classism and ablism—that perpetuates violence and harm against women, girls and gender and sexually diverse persons, and creates barriers to our social, economic and political participation.
- Develop curriculum content and media campaigns to promote gender-transformative stories and representation of our women and girls' leadership, to challenge harmful stereotypes, racism and sexism, and to reshape dominant leadership approaches.

Policy and law reform

- Reform all Indigenous Procurement Policies across jurisdictions to include a gendered lens.
- Provide all Australians with access to First Nations governance and leadership education and training. This must include an understanding of free, prior and informed consent, First Nations models of leadership and accountability and models of effective and genuine engagement. This has the potential to ensure policy frameworks are no longer top-down and detached from community.

Governance and institutional supports

- Mainstream institutions and organisations to commit to targets and measures for women's recruitment and retainment. This includes introducing flexible work practices, gender and culturally responsive leave, cultural responsiveness training, adopting special measures and identified positions, and offering intersectional and healing-informed supports and training.
- Strengthen the role and authority of women and senior local cultural leaders in community decision-making and delivery of services and education through setting targets for the representation of women in advisory and decision-making roles in government, business, mainstream and community-controlled organisations.
- Develop accountability and transparency mechanisms to ensure women's voices are respected and responded to, and so community can examine decision-making processes and outcomes for greater confidence in government and mainstream institutions performance.

Think & Act: Does your workplace have a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)? Consider working with Reconciliation Australia to create new or expand existing RAPs to include targets and actions to enhance women's leadership across all institutions and develop assessment and auditing tools.

ACTION 2.2

Women and girls have access to mechanisms to advocate for their rights and interests

Women-led and self-governed representative bodies, organisations and gatherings are all mechanisms to support women to organise and provide the space for women to share knowledge, advocate for their rights and interests, set agendas, challenge discriminatory structures and engage in negotiations. While they are integral to women's self-determination, they are largely underfunded, undervalued or non-existent. When mainstream bodies and processes do exist, they are largely inaccessible to, and exclusionary of, First Nations women and girls. Increasing women and girls' access to, and ownership over, these mechanisms will substantially improve the ability of society to comprehend and respond to the full reality of First Nations women's lives.

Women's self-governed rights and interest bodies

Invest and resource local, regional and national representative bodies to advance women's rights and hold governments to account for the full implementation of and compliance with international human rights treaties and standards.

Women's gatherings and events

Invest in women-led events including summits, workshops and roundtables to provide opportunities for women and girls to learn, share, build relationships, organise, set priorities and create momentum for change.

Women's guaranteed participation in human rights bodies

Establish accessible channels and programs to guarantee women's representation and participation in state and territory, national and international rights bodies such as Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) and Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP).

Community organising and participation

- Empowering women through strategic investment in leadership, governance and nation building support, including through partnerships with key organisations such as the AIGI, the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD) and The Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC).
- Women and girls to lead the establishment of regional gatherings in partnership with key organisations such as the AILC, ensuring accessibility for all women, including women with disabilities, women living in rural and remote areas, older women, and LGBTQIA+SG women and girls.

Policy and law reform

- Advance all calls set out in the Uluru Statement from the Heart[41] including enshrining an Indigenous Voice in the Australian Constitution and establishing a Makarrata Commission and ensure women and girls' equal representation and participation in designing and progressing all elements.
- Structurally guarantee gender equality within the Indigenous Voice through gender parity and the establishment of a permanent First Nations women and girls standing committee to ensure expert advice and lived experience is heard and responded to.[42]
- Governments to invest in sustainable funding models to enable women's representative bodies to become self-supporting and independent. Accountability frameworks and mechanisms must also be developed to ensure governments are responsive to bodies, roundtables and summits.

Governance and institutional supports

- State and territory, national and international human rights bodies and forums to commit to targets and the development of mechanism for First Nations women's participation, recruitment and retention.

  See Major Priority 2, Action 2.1 of Leadership and decision-making for self-determination for more information.

- Human rights bodies to also develop accessible gender and culturally responsive communications, programs and multimedia resources to ensure women and girls can confidently advocate for governments and institutions to respond and take action on realising and protecting our rights.
- Establish support networks for First Nations women in politics similar to Emily's List supporting Labour women in politics.[43]

Thematic area 2: Language, land, water and cultural rights

VISION:

Our children are born surrounded by family, wrapped in community and kinship supports. From our earliest years, we are immersed in our languages and educated in our knowledges in balance with Western learnings. We can choose to live on, access and have control over our homelands, developing and engaging in culture-based institutions and economies. Women's knowledges, songlines and ceremonies are recognised for their equal worth and importance to men's and together our Laws are upheld, respected, intergenerationally transferred and embedded within local, regional and national governance and decision-making. First Nations women are united through climate justice networks which centre our sophisticated systems of knowledge and are driven by our innovative solutions. This is a way of being that we have always known could exist—because we've lived it and been here before. Our ancestors rejoice, for we have come home.

THE RESPONSE:

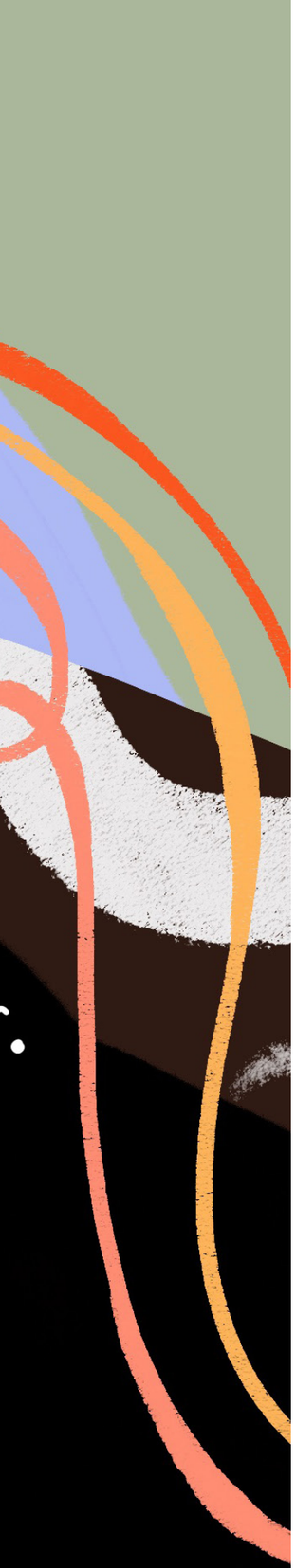
This priority area puts forward the actions to invest in and support First Nations women and girls to meaningfully exercise our rights to learn, practise and transmit language, knowledge, Law, ceremony, songs and cultural practices. It outlines how we must:

- Revive and integrate our languages across learning systems, workplaces and the emergence of new economies;
- Enable women and girls to spend meaningful time on Country and come together for cultural and ceremonial gatherings;
- Protect our cultures and knowledges through a national framework that recognises living heritage;
- Upgrade and create a robust, sustainable infrastructure for all communities that embraces new technology;
- Engage in gender-sensitive healing-informed approaches to agreement-making;
- Protect the rights of children and young people from the multiple harms of climate change; and
- Centre First Nations women in climate justice solutions.

Major Priority 3:
Cultural rights are secured, practised and lived by First Nations women and girls

Action 3.1: Thriving languages, spoken every day, throughout all of life

Action 3.2: Women's knowledges reinvigorated and embraced across sectors



ACTION 3.1

Thriving languages, spoken every day, throughout all of life

Languages speak life—they tell of our interwoven ecological, kinship and economic systems. Women raise children in language and know language-speaking imparts unique knowledges for collective care and societal governance. National recognition and resourcing of language-use supports family and gender-equitable models of care where language, culture, intergenerational relationships, and nurture are intertwined. This provides a vehicle for growing language-based jobs and economies, from service delivery, authorship and editing to tourism and ecosystem management. It is time to reverse the loss and let languages flourish to unleash the intersecting benefits for societal health and prosperity.

Create the content and infrastructure for language immersion

Grow the potential for collaborations across communities, organisations, and national institutions to create imaginative multimedia language resources to embed in education and apply throughout life, and to support communities to rename places.

See Major Priority 6, Action 6.3 of Societal healing and intergenerational wellbeing, for further information on embedding language and culture in the national curriculum.

Growing economies through language and culture

Encourage investments and local business planning to increase meaningful training and employment in language enterprises such as ecotourism, curriculum development, interpreting and carer supports.

Integrating languages across workplaces and service supports

All services to explore and embed local creative ways to guarantee first languages and ensure interpreters are present so as to form environments of recognition, safety and care, and that languages are built into programs and service delivery.

Policy and law reform

- Expand the Australian Government Action Plan for the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages[44] to become a national multiyear strategy linked to Closing the Gap.[45]
- Implement existing language frameworks and promising initiatives, including resourcing all schools to embed the Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Languages,[46] alongside *Yalbilinya:* National First Languages Education Project[47] to support language teaching. Further, consider national rollout of the New South Wales (NSW) Language and Culture Nest program[48] linking communities speaking languages to the education system. Also, integrate languages into cultural safety across all sector policies, and guarantee that all First Nations peoples who speak their language as a first language can access supports in their languages.
- Proactive approach needed by all states and territories to restore First Nations place names by committing to restoration processes in geographic/place naming legislation. This includes supporting signage across state and national parks and working with communities to determine and protect sacred areas.

NSW is the first state to protect and maintain Aboriginal languages in legislation. The *NSW Aboriginal Languages Act 2017*[49] establishes a trust to oversee the development of a 5-year Strategic Plan to guide revival work, annual reporting, and support for local language activities. All states and territories should adopt processes for communities to lead in the formation of meaningful language legislation that does not simply recognise but provides the supports for active language use. **As a First Nations person, what would you like to see in legislation to protect and nurture your languages?**

Governance and institutional supports

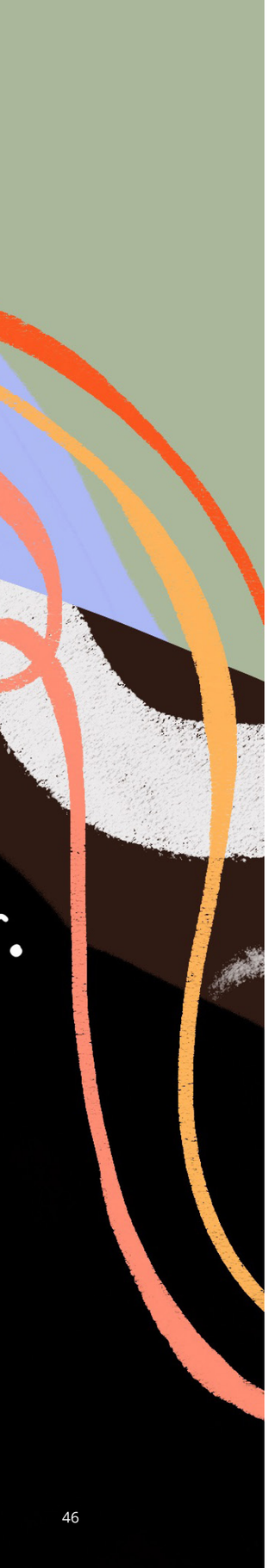
- Strengthen the national institutional fabric of language bodies, including the 22 Language Resource Centres, AIATSIS, the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation (ALNF) , the Indigenous Literacy Foundation (ILF), First Languages Australia (FLA), Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs), and the entire education system to: collaborate and create interactive resources; work strategically with language communities to awaken and grow languages; and strengthen linkages between language development, education, employment and career pathways.
- Introduce annual AIATSIS National Indigenous Language Reports[50] monitoring language maintenance.
- Organisations and schools develop language integration mechanisms such as dedicated KPIs for community engagement.

Think: Does the organisation you work for have a language policy, and if so, does it have the resources and processes to implement it? Can you/your organisation engage with the local community to create meaningful language-use policy?

Digital access

- Embed culturally-appropriate language software for recording language across all schools, communities, and language centres, and facilitate community collaborations with organisations like Miromaa and ALNF to access digital training, create local digital resources and apps, and engage in language learning, gatherings and symposiums.

The Pertame Master-Apprentice Program[51] (MAP) is focused on language revival and strengthening and intergenerational knowledge transfer between Pertame women, from Grandmothers to great-granddaughters. Pertame is an endangered language with fewer than 10 fluent speakers. The MAP is a leading language revival program developed by Native American communities which rapidly develops fluent speakers through language immersion by bringing together elder speakers (Masters) with adult learners (Apprentices). The Pertame program aims to professionally develop female apprentices into fluent speakers and teachers through a range of immersion training including 15–20 hours of learning a week, on-Country camps, active teaching in the classroom, and completion of requirements for Cert 1 in Language and Knowledge.



ACTION 3.2

Women's knowledges reinvigorated and embraced across sectors

Etched into this continent, women's Laws, ceremonies and cultural practices contain one of the greatest encyclopedias of knowledges on earth. Australia must celebrate, protect and integrate them into the national identity. In a rapidly changing world, structural reforms are needed to guarantee women can regularly access Country, engage in processes of (re)connection—particularly for Stolen Generations, use new technologies to protect and archive knowledges, and ensure self-determined ownership and communal control of knowledge and data. Such reforms would protect our knowledges from exploitation, so women can confidently grow and share knowledges while gaining social and economic benefits. Driving reforms through a national framework of living heritage protections and knowledge revitalisation could be world-leading, contributing to sustainable, innovative, and equitable ecological, economic, and social systems.

Women's ceremonial gatherings and reignition of songlines

Women's ceremony on Country to take place regularly in every region of Australia to strengthen kinship, knowledge transfer, the learning of cultural practices and songlines, and to re-inscribe across Australia women's intimate knowledges of Country and life.

Self-determined recording and archiving

Under the leadership of cultural authorities, with support of digital archivers, women and girls record their knowledges, songs, ceremonies and cultural practices to access and use for the benefit and wellbeing of current and future generations.

Women's knowledges expand societal learning and ways of working

Active use of our knowledges across sectors and to design new models in environmental protection, sciences, medicine, maternal health, child, disability, and aged care, as well as enhancing emerging technologies in AI and Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLT) like Blockchain.

Changing hearts and minds

- Women's knowledge and culture to be celebrated in festivals, public art, museums, at national events and through prominent campaigns for women's rights so all Australians value and respect the significance and power of women's knowledges.

The Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC) organise annual Law and culture camps for women from the NPY region. Ongoing feedback and internal program evaluations consistently show that women view their Law and culture as one of the most empowering, unifying and important aspects of their lives. However, NPYWC does not have reoccurring funding, and every year a significant amount of time is invested in finding philanthropic and government funds.

Data and knowledge co-creation

- Launch a national songlines reignition project to connect and archive songlines across Australia, with a database and online portal with strong safeguards for secret knowledges.
- Run trials for communities to develop knowledge recording, sharing and application projects using blockchain.
- Enhance research about commercial economic, social and health benefits of practicing Law and culture.

Indigiledger is a First Nations-owned technology platform, harnessing Blockchain to empower First Nations peoples to have control over their knowledges. They have created a digital label for consumers to scan the authenticity, traceability, and history of First Nations artwork. It brings consumers and artists together, properly values First Nations knowledges and stops exploitation.[52]

Policy and law reform

- The Australian Government to show commitment to living heritage by ratifying the *UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003*.[53] This could encourage states and territories to develop empowerment-based policies for sectors to proactively protect and incorporate women's knowledges into work and life.
- Australian governments to recognise and commit to maintaining the tangible and intangible living heritage of First Nations peoples including standards and guidance to maintain the interwoven and distinct knowledges of women and men, and invest to guarantee First Nations peoples with regular access to Country so as to nurture and keep heritage alive.
- Strengthen protection of individual and collective Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property[54] (ICIP) and Indigenous Knowledge[55] (IK) through either a standalone framework or via effective incorporation into copyright and Intellectual Property legislation, and increase women's access to specialist ICIP training from groups such as Terri Janke and Company.[56] Also, explore Blockchain technology for greater protection, ownership, and control of ICIP and IK by First Nations individuals and collectives through IP Australia.
- Introduce national deterrent penalties and compensation directed to First Nations knowledge holders for the damage misuse and appropriation of heritage, ICIP and IK.

Community organising and participation

- Establish a National First Nations Heritage Council, as recommended in the final report on Juukan Gorge,[57] to have guaranteed gender parity and strong links to community Law, culture and heritage work.
- Grow women's Law and culture organisations and programs through investing in: their Law and culture infrastructure (for example, improving Law ground facilities, providing access to vehicles, building secure storage, providing access to archive training); their strategic planning (for example, the Kimberley Aboriginal Women's Law and Culture Strategic Plan); and mapping of women's living heritage and culture. This investment should be tied to national targets to increase women's activities to those of men as part of a renewed national approach to protect heritage.

Think & Act: Consider and explore ways to establish STEM and emerging technology educational incubators in communities. Incubators would integrate First Nations knowledges, sciences and pedagogies into these fields, while enabling girls to learn Indigenised approaches, and develop localised solutions in STEM and tech. These initiatives could be linked to further education fellowships and scholarships with a focus on learning and knowledge application in community.

Major Priority 4:
Access to and autonomy over ancestral country

Action 4.1: Culturally-layered, resilient and adaptable infrastructure for vibrant living

Action 4.2: Women making decisions, governing, and negotiating for Country

Action 4.3: Innovative on-Country supports, education and economies

ACTION 4.1

Culturally-layered, resilient and adaptable infrastructure for vibrant living

Wherever we live, whether it be urban communities or in towns in rural and remote areas, our homelands are everywhere. The infrastructure supporting our lives—the roads and transport, access to greenspaces and bushlands, the use of technology and renewable energy sources—should always meet our basic human rights and our current needs and those of future generations. The places we call home are diverse and rich in our knowledges, and the built environment surrounding them should reflect this, protect and uphold our culture and heritages, while also ensuring that we have access to all life's opportunities. To ensure this happens, native title and land rights must be reformed and applied so as to provide real benefits that can ensure sustainable liveability on homelands, and our women and their communities must be actively involved in urban and town planning and decision-making. How we construct the built environment matters to our health and wellbeing and to sustainable liveability.

Forming an equitable, culturally-rich green infrastructure

Infrastructure development—energy, roads, public utilities, buildings and waste management—must embrace and incorporate local ecologies, care of Country, cultural heritages and the needs of women, men, children, those with disabilities and our elders.

Building place-based, connected, low to zero-emission housing

From the remote to urban, secure women and children's access to, and ownership of, culturally and sustainably-designed housing models that harness renewable energy, and are surrounded by ecological, cultural, social, and economic opportunities.

See Major Priority 7, Action 7.3 of Societal healing and intergenerational wellbeing, for further descriptions on the need for women and children specific housing.

Closing the digital divide and embracing transformational tech

Enhancing technological skills and connectivity has boundless possibilities for new economies, on-Country living, learning and business, and opens opportunities to digitise, share and connect to knowledges, improving access and engagement with education.

Community organising and participation

- Empower and enable women to plan, set goals, targets and initiatives for their communities, neighbourhoods, cities and regions, through online and physical forums, action networks and partnerships with private and public stakeholders, and through the establishment of permanent community planning committees in local government.
- Urban, town and community planning to include gender-sensitive procurement policies so women are trained and employed to deliver municipal and essential services.
- Unite communities with the Indigenous Mapping Workshop[58]—teaching geospatial tools and mapping—and with multidisciplinary experts such as architects, sociologists, geographers, anthropologists to engage in regional and town planning through the design of meaningful and interactive maps.

Policy and law reform

- Strengthen environmental planning, assessment and construction policies and legislation across all jurisdictions to include management of First Nations living heritage, with special emphasis on: protecting and enhancing women's and men's sacred sites and knowledges to inform sustainable infrastructure design; and ensuring all urban planning regenerates and maintains connection to local ecologies, waterways, and bushlands.
- Create national standards and a guidance framework for cultural mapping, heritage, and connection to Country for urban planning and construction, alongside requirements to employ community engagement specialists and to establish knowledge holders and elders' gender-equal planning/development committees.

An example of developing a cultural mapping framework is the Government Architect NSW (GANSW) process that is considering how to centre Country in engagements and planning with the built environment.

- Redesign a long-term Remote Australia Housing Agreement,[59] and a national First Nations housing strategy with recurrent funding to meet diverse housing needs. Include regulations and targets: for investment into housing and the procurement of relevant First Nations services, to guarantee the participation of women and men in all decision-making, and for the development and adoption of greener zero-emissions housing designs.

Digital access

- Australian Government's First Nations Digital Inclusion Strategy[60] to take a gender-sensitive approach, setting targets and mechanisms to ensure equal access to the National Broadband Network (NBN), telecommunication services and connectivity technologies across Australia. The Strategy should prioritise remote areas, enhance relationships between communities and tech companies to develop local initiatives, distribute tech assets and bring emerging technology education and initiatives to communities.
- Rollout transformative technology and innovation across First Nations communities to promote gender equality.

ACTION 4.2 Women making decisions, governing, and negotiating for Country

Country—land, waters, sky, and the earth beneath the surface—is the interconnected living system that gives life and sustains existence for all human and non-human relatives. The rights to access and govern our Country are fundamental to self-determination and resolving injustices of dispossession. The Native Title Act began a process of recognising our rights, but there remains much unfinished business—a complex and inadequate legal system has led to watered down-rights, protracted litigation and ongoing conflict, re-entrenching trauma. Systems of land ownership and management, including native title and land rights regimes, must be reformed to uphold and translate rights into real benefits, a guaranteed economic floor and sustainable liveability. Through a First Nations gender lens, we can reform the patriarchal systems that have cumulatively marginalised First Nations women from decision-making processes. New processes of negotiation and agreement-making grounded in social justice principles, gender equity and cultural governance can lay the equitable foundations for economic, health and social wellness to benefit the entire continent.

Gender-just treaty negotiations and agreement-making

Guarantee women and men equally participate in designing and progressing land negotiations and agreement-making and that compensation and ownership of assets translates into long-lasting social, ecological and economic benefits.

Recognise women in land and water management

Elevate women's knowledges and roles and ensure their equal participation in decision-making, planning, design and implementation of initiatives and management projects for land and water.

Gender-sensitive and healing-informed reform of native title and land rights

Across all representative bodies and negotiation processes ensure women and men can embed cultural governance, and design and deliver whole-of-life approaches to conflict resolution and mediation, as well as processes to heal the pain of disconnection.

Changing hearts and minds

- Resource a national campaign and regional dialogues to support the public to understand the benefits of agreement-making for all Australians.
- Enable national dialogues and information-sharing about the value of different forms of land ownership, including communal and collective forms of land title and joint-management by First Nations peoples of public lands and national parks.

Policy and law reform

- Australian governments to legislate a national negotiation framework—founded upon the social justice principles and UNDRIP and developed in co-design with First Nations peoples. The process must provide a holistic, comprehensive approach to the interconnected elements of land, social, economic and ecological justice for all First Nations peoples to respond to historic and contemporary injustices and the intergenerational consequences of dispossession.
- Within this approach develop a framework for compensation, with robust guidelines (building on the National Native Title Council's National Compensation Strategy) for the ongoing spiritual, cultural and economic loss of land—enabling settlement processes beyond the confines of native title.
- Continue to grow and unlock the intersecting social, economic, cultural and environmental benefits of the Indigenous Estate through a national strategy that supports investment and empowers First Nations people to determine how land is used, managed and developed.
- Embed free, prior and informed consent within the Native Title Act, land rights and all agreement-making processes.

Governance and institutional supports

- Review and reform with a gender and healing informed lens the funding to PBCs, Native Title Bodies and other representative bodies. Funds must support women's self-determination and processes of healing to redress land and cultural disconnection. An independent fund for governments to support representative bodies should also be established as recommended in the Juukan Gorge final report.[61]
- All representative bodies to be supported to embed gender parity in governance and for this approach to be First Nations-led and controlled.
- Support First Nations peoples to establish place-based, culturally-grounded governance structures to ensure their strategic decision-making is not inhibited by burdensome administrative and reporting requirements.
- Guarantee ongoing access to applied training relating to governance, land management, strategic planning, Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) and other agreement mechanisms. Training must be gender-sensitive to promote equality of benefits particularly in regard to employment opportunities.
- The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner in partnership with AIATSIS and other relevant stakeholders to develop a national code of ethics and standard best practice approaches for all professionals including lawyers and anthropologists engaged in native title and other land negotiation processes.

Data and knowledge co-creation

- Map and assess the full extent of the Indigenous Estate. This should record and articulate the various forms of ownership and agreements and corresponding rights in a clear and accessible database to allow strategic decision-making for negotiations and development.
- Gather and provide disaggregated gender data—highlighting the involvement of women in land agreement-making processes and the gendered social, cultural and economic benefits/return on investment of ILUAs— to promote greater gender-equitable outcomes.
- Develop a national network for land use negotiations and agreements to facilitate the sharing of knowledge between First Nations communities and claimants across Australia.

ACTION 4.3

Innovative on-Country supports, education and economies

Being able to learn and train on Country within an education system infused with our knowledges and pedagogies begins a cycle of deep engagement with Country and the growth of cultural activities, pursuits and economies. It can train our peoples to deliver services for our communities in health, disability supports and elder care, simultaneously increasing the likelihood of establishing these services on Country and enhancing employment opportunities. First Nations peoples of all abilities have a right to live on our homelands and be able to access the culturally-safe services and supports that can keep us all well, engaged and happy. None of our peoples should be forced to leave the places that nourish us and keep us connected to Country and kin because of a lack of services. Developing the infrastructure and the structural supports to enable on-Country life and services opens endless possibilities for our peoples to thrive within healthy, engaged and productive societies which keep our culture and knowledges alive and flourishing.

On-Country education and training to meaningful employment

Improve access to and availability of culturally-responsive on-Country education and training opportunities which lead to meaningful employment and support the viability of women and girls living on their ancestral Country.

See Major Priority 6, Action 6.3 of Societal healing and intergenerational wellbeing and Major Priority 1, Action 1.2 of Leadership and decision-making for self-determination for more information.

Grow vibrant on-Country women-led enterprise

Connecting women with research institutes, think tanks, and business supports to foster entrepreneurial aspirations and create enterprises which use cultural knowledges and include land and water use and management.

See Major Priority 8, Action 8.4 of Economic justice and empowerment for more information.

Keeping our elders and those with additional needs on Country

Ensure accessible disability supports and elder care infrastructure, particularly in remote locations to enable access to support regardless of where people live.

Policy and law reform

- Develop dedicated First Nations business development strategies at the national, state/territory and regional levels which explore economic opportunities in land and water use and management. Strategies to include a comprehensive approach to overcoming access issues which restrict First Nations peoples from developing educational and economic opportunities on-Country.
- Consider legislating percentage targets to enhance First Nations access to and use of water in all river systems such as Murry-Darling Basin, to grow the potential for First Nations water economies in areas such as bushfood cultivation.
- Consider meaningful integration of First Nations women's culture and Country-based economies into the Australian Government's Northern Development Agenda.
- Abstudy supports to access on-Country education.
- Substantially increase investments to build capacity of the First Nations community-controlled service sectors and prioritise Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) as preferred service providers for First Nations funded services and programs, including aged care, disability supports, housing, health, and social services.
- All Australian governments implement the First Peoples Disability Network's (FPDN) ten-point plan[62] for the better implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) for First Nations peoples.

Collaborative partnerships

- Facilitate partnerships between private bodies, schools and government to work with communities in establishing community-controlled on-Country schools.
- Continue to expand the Studio School Australia model in partnerships with communities and regions that want to develop on-Country education.
- Strengthen community connections to culturally-responsive institutes such as the Northern Institute, Social Ventures Australia (SVA) and Circulanation.

Circulanation is a First Nations-led not-for-profit organisation that focuses on the delivery of entrepreneurship education for First Nations peoples in the remote Northern Territory (NT). The organisation delivers a facilitated entrepreneurship program which aims to enhance entrepreneurship capabilities and leadership. In doing so, Circulanation envisions the building of an inclusive economy that celebrates culture, First Nations knowledge and Country, and which drives social equality and economic prosperity for all.[63]

Data and knowledge co-creation

- Evaluate the social, cultural, environmental, economic and fiscal return on investment from women's participation in the Indigenous Ranger Program and the Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) program.
- Develop and evaluate training programs based on ranger methods to care for and manage Country.

Northern Institute (NI) is an Australian 'think-tank', based at Charles Darwin University, that undertakes interdisciplinary social and public policy research. NI work in partnership with First Nations communities, NT Government and business, national and international agencies and institutions to understand the complexity of the world and the ways different knowledge and governance systems operate to improve lives and opportunities.[64]

Major Priority 5:
First Nations gender-just climate solutions

Action 5.1: First Nations women at the heart of climate and Country justice

Action 5.2: Girls and young women leading the way in sustainable solutions

ACTION 5.1

First Nations women at the heart of climate and Country justice

Country is not separate but a part of us. We are the relatives of Country, its custodians, caretakers and inheritors. Climate change poses one of the greatest threats we have ever seen to our Country, our knowledge systems, our sacred sites and the places we live. While our women and girls contribute significantly to climate justice efforts, both mitigating and adapting to these challenges (as we have always done), we are likely to be disproportionately impacted by climate change in the places we live including worsening droughts, heat stress, floods and tropical storms. We are already seeing the threat to homes, cultures and livelihoods due to rising sea levels in the Torres Strait. To both repair and reconcile the damage caused, and prepare for the challenges of the future, our women and girls must be part of climate justice solutions—not only do we know our Country best, we carry the knowledge to teach and share sustainable ways of doing that recognise that when our Country is healthy, we are healthy.

Women's voices matter in designing effective climate policy and solutions. A 2019 study in the European Journal of Political Economy analysed data from a large sample of countries and found that female representation leads countries to adopt more stringent climate change policies. The study concludes that female representation and women's voices in policy design and decision-making may be an underutilised tool for addressing climate change.[65]

Women at the heart of climate governance

Ensure women's full and equal participation and leadership in all governance and decision-making in the pursuit of climate just and sustainable solutions.

Transition to circular green economies

Invest in resilient circular green economies informed by our knowledges and culture such as eco-tourism, renewable energy production, transport, land conservation and carbon abatement and food forests and markets.

Country needs women, women need Country

Comprehensively resource and expand land management and agriculture programs—including the Indigenous Ranger Program and Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) program—with a focus on equal employment for men and women.

Policy and law reform

- Introduce legislative measures to enable the legal personhood of environmental features, as in other countries such as Aotearoa/New Zealand where the Whanganui River has been attributed this status.
- Introduce stronger legal protections against the extraction of minerals and resources on First Nations Country—including lands and waters—without the free, prior and informed consent of traditional custodians, including those who are women.
- Reform the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act[66] to incorporate First Nations knowledges and ways of caring for Country as key principles of conservation.
- Normalise the practice of directing public and private capital towards First Nations gender-just climate solutions.
- Introduce stronger legal protections for traditional owners of carbon projects to benefit from carbon offsetting and abatement markets.
- Guarantee and support women and girls' participation at international climate conferences, including UNFCCC (COP26) and international climate justice events held under the UN SDGs.
- Governments to work with native title holders to increase ranger programs and jointly-manage the formation of national parks agreed to through ILUA processes and other agreement frameworks.

Community organising and participation

- Support national coordination of First Nations-led organisations involved in the delivery of carbon projects—for example, through the growth and strengthening of the Indigenous Carbon Industry Network (ICIN).[67]
- Establish innovative partnerships with AIGI, AICD, ORIC and IBA's Strong Women, Strong Business initiative with a view to developing sustainable local economies and to enhancing sustainable land management initiatives. This may include research, development, funding and/or resourcing for cool burning practices, ancestral food farms, low-emissions technologies and transport, and traditional agriculture.
- Embed gender equality as a key principle across environmental governing bodies and organisations and encourage all institutions to develop gender policies and implementation plans within their organisations.

The Indigenous Carbon Industry Network brings together Indigenous organisations similarly involved in land management that have a role in contributing to the carbon market. The network aims to enable and empower organisations by supporting their representation in the carbon industry, providing governance support and advocating for strong policy settings that meet First Nations producers needs and interests.[68]

Data and knowledge co-creation

- Collaborate with local communities and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to strengthen data on First Nation women's access to climate finance, technologies and knowledge, and calculate the estimated return on investment in First Nations green economies.
- Map, analyse and develop a gender sensitive database of cultural and sacred sites at threat due to climate change, and create mitigation and protection strategies in response.
- Enhance public and private funding and resourcing to drive community-led and owned research focusing on women's environmental knowledges, applied practice of these knowledges in caring for Country, and the transformative power of gender-just environmental governance and decision-making.

ACTION 5.2

Girls and young women leading the way in sustainable solutions

Our society, governments and all decision-makers have a responsibility and a duty of care to the younger generations to ensure that what we do and design today meets the needs and aspirations of our children far into the future—this is a principle held across the globe to ensure everything we do is geared towards a future that is hospitable and healthy. For this principle to be translated into action, our girls and young women must be at the forefront of designing a future that meets our expectations and needs. In developing formal mechanisms that support our full and equal participation in climate change policy and governance, and by strengthening education connecting our youth to Country and kin by Elders and cultural leaders, we pass the seed of knowledge. Our knowledge of care and custodianship has existed for millennia to ensure that we do not make the mistakes of the past and can grow into a future that is, in its truest sense, sustainable.

Connecting youth to Country and kin

Strengthen cultural connections to family, community, Country and kin to enable youth to lead climate solutions from a place of confidence and strength in identity.

See Major Priority 1, Action 1.1 of Leadership and decision-making for self-determination for more information.

Responsive education for sustainable existence

Invest in traineeships, fellowships, scholarships and education pathways for our girls to become scientists, rangers, politicians, engineers, researchers and teachers to lead Australia into a sustainable future.

Girls lead in demanding a thriving future

Create mechanisms for girls and young women's participation at all levels of environmental governance and decision-making.

Changing hearts and minds

- Place the principle of duty of care, and First Nations principles of caring for Country and stewardship at the forefront of economic development.
- Support women and girls in STEM by sharing stories of deadly women doing amazing work towards climate justice and creating pathways towards a better future. This will help abolish stereotypes and racially fuelled sexism, replacing the narrative with one which sees First Nations women and girls at the forefront of politics, science, business and design.
- Working in a generational mindset, share and support ideas of sustainability and climate justice that is circular rather than linear emphasising that everyone has a role in creating a stronger, more empowered future.

Community organising and participation

- Organise young women and girls' gatherings to discuss climate justice priorities and actions, ensuring that the knowledge, ideas and solutions shared are given a platform to inform public and private environmental decision-making. These forums may include Bunuba Dawangarri Aboriginal Corporation's cultural mapping camps and Karajarri Women Ranger's Supporting Youth for a Strong Future program—combining discussions of cultural knowledge sharing with climate justice.
- Invest in youth-led climate justice initiatives and organisations such as Seed and work with government across all levels to ensure their voices are informing climate policies and environmental decision-making and governance.

Seed Mob is an Indigenous youth-led climate network, creating a space for First Nations young peoples to get involved in climate justice. Their vision is to create a just and sustainable future that meets the needs and aspirations of our youth, combined with strong cultures and communities. Many of their campaigns, including *Protect Country* emphasise that First Nations peoples have looked after the land and water sustainably for generations, and that we can continue to do so in the future. As Country is at the heart of our identities, it is integral that First Nations youth have a role in protecting and demanding climate justice.[69]

Policy and law reform

- Strengthen legislation to ensure that all ministers have a duty of care to protect young and vulnerable people from the immediate and future harms of climate change.
- Revise national approaches including the National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework,[70] National Strategy for Disaster Resilience[71] and National Climate Resilience and Adaptation Strategy[72] to embed a gender-sensitive, youth and First Nations knowledge lens to responding to environmental challenges.
- Develop and promote education equity, including accessible traineeships, STEM fellowships, and closing the digital divide to create opportunities and pathways for First Nations girls to access quality education that meets their needs and aspirations.
- Guarantee First Nations youth representation and participation at local, national and international climate events, particularly those led and facilitated by world leaders such as COP26 and G20 meetings on the environment and climate justice.

Thematic area 3: Societal healing and intergenerational wellbeing

VISION:

Australian society embraces intergenerational healing and wellbeing of people, communities, land, waters and skies. Healing is a collective responsibility, helping to make society and the Australian environment healthy, safe and trauma-free for everyone. Our women's knowledges and practices, which have sustained our healthy ways of being since time immemorial, are embedded in how people act and the ways in which systems function from education to health and planning for transport and housing. Every system is grounded in the principles of 'do no harm' and enhances empowerment and health. We have reclaimed our sovereign knowledges of birthing practices and child raising, so our women and children can live without trauma from the start of life. Where trauma does occur, there are accessible healing supports, recovery options and specific therapies. This is reinforced by a society that embraces our cultural and socio-economic protective factors. We live within interconnected sustainable communities and homes, designed around care for everyone from the young to the old, nurturing kin relationships, and easy access to lifelong education and work opportunities. We are surrounded by and spend time—whether it's for learning, work, recreation or land management—within Country that is healthy, alive and singing in every part of our continent, from big cities to rural towns and homeland communities.

THE RESPONSE:

This priority area puts forward the actions to embed a healing-informed and trauma-aware approach across all areas of life. It outlines how we must:

- Design, deliver and sustain self-determining healing initiatives grounded in our knowledges;
- End punitive trauma responses across sectors, with an immediate focus on child protection, justice systems, and clinical settings, such as hospitals;
- Embed healing-informed work practices and policies throughout all systems;
- Reclaim child rearing and early life care knowledges and models of care, through approaches such as Birthing on Country, Child, Parent and Family Centres, as well as women and children focused rehabilitations and respite;
- Create connected structures and enabling public supports where housing, early childhood care, education and employment opportunities are designed to function together;
- Design an empowering social security system so women and children live free from poverty and are not vulnerable to traumatising circumstances; and
- Undertake national processes of truth-telling and agreement and embed these throughout education and work so all Australians play a role in the nations healing journey.

Major Priority 6:
Healing-informed, engaged and transformed systems and society

Action 6.1: National coverage of women-designed and led healing models on Country and in community

Action 6.2: Healing-informed workplaces and workforces

Action 6.3: Truth-telling, language and culture throughout education

Action 6.4: A nation engaged in truth-telling, recognition and recovery

ACTION 6.1

National coverage of women-designed and led healing models on Country and in community

With healing programs and supports largely ad-hoc or non-existent, women are leading the way in healing work for our families and communities. Women are designing programs, running refuges and organisations, and are using their individual resources to counter the punitive responses that are trapping people in cycles of crisis and trauma. This burden is far too great. Communities must be sustainably supported to carry out this long-term critical work and have access to life-long on-Country healing. We must invest in existing models that work, and co-design new and innovative healing models for widespread coverage, with women's knowledges and lived experiences at the centre. Healing must have a strong focus on preventative approaches to strengthen collective identity and end the transmission and experience of trauma. We must also ensure women's ongoing roles in healing work and training are elevated and that there are pathways to advance their careers.

Grow evidence and invest in women's healing initiatives

Recognise and support women's roles and initiatives, record and embed their knowledges in polices, program design and workplace practices.

On-Country healing to strengthen cultural governance, self-determination and (re)connection

Grow pathways that support on-Country healing and strengthen cultural governance and connection to culture, kinship and Country including through ranger programs, schooling, Stolen Generation reconnection supports and working with the Native Title Tribunal, Land Councils, PBCs and ORIC.

See Major Priority 4 within Language, land, water and cultural rights for more information.

Healing supports for prevention, intervention, recovery and diversion

Communities are guaranteed resources to design and deliver a continuum of care from intervention to recovery, alongside prevention and diversion initiatives. Including gender-sensitive rehabilitation, mental health supports, family violence prevention and supports, and youth and adult diversion.

Data and knowledge co-creation

- Build and record the evidence of women's healing knowledges and models and develop accessible resources for knowledge sharing and capacity building of service delivery.

Consider developing culturally-appropriate measures for collecting and recording population-level data about early childhood and lifetime trauma and life outcomes. Data could be used to analyse trends for effective service delivery planning. This should not be recorded at an individual service delivery level so as to stigmatise and form unfounded conclusions.

Community Participation

- The Healing Foundation[73] should be funded to co-design and establish widespread healing centres and hubs with women. Centres act as a one stop shop model for coordinated and holistic care.

The Healing Foundation partners with First Nations communities, organisations and women and men's groups to develop healing programs, priorities and approaches which integrate First Nations and Western knowledges and practices. The Healing Foundation evaluates programs and has grown a substantial body of evidence and accompanying resources to show what works in designing and implementing healing programs and workplace practices.[74] Resources specific to women's healing can be found here. A broader range of healing resources and publications about programs and practices can be found on the Healing Portal.

Policy and law reform

- Governments to co-design healing approaches to meet needs identified by women and support women in delivering programs through procurement and tendering processes.
- Governments co-design local workforce strategies, with a focus on training and learning pathways for women in either formal or informal work, with pathways to advance in their careers or to access relevant employment if they choose. To include specified positions for women in healing work.
- Governments commit to strategies such as decarceration, raising the age of criminal responsibility, reducing recidivism and the removal of children. Additionally, governments should expand Circle sentencing[75] and culturally-secure family violence courts.
- Governments to consider embedding laws for the protection of children from poverty which is linked to reducing trauma and re-traumatisation, and to addressing systemic inequality and discrimination. For example, the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act.[76]

See Major Priority 9, Action 9.2 in Economic justice and empowerment for more information.

Digital access

- Expand access to women's healing resources and digital online learning, and create networks for women to gather, share learnings, access knowledge and remain connected to Country and culture.

ACTION 6.2

Healing-informed workplaces and workforces

Alongside the healing work being done by communities on the ground, governments must show a greater commitment to making society-wide healing happen. Workplaces must be transformed, and workforces empowered, to recognise and embed the principle of 'do no harm' and end punitive measures that traumatise and re-traumatise. A national healing-informed training program, embedded with women's knowledges should be mandated for all Australian government staff, the entire human service sector, and organisations funded to deliver services for First Nations women, children and families. This training would also be accessible to First Nations communities and community-controlled organisations to further increase their capacity to partner within their region to create healing-informed programs and services.

Policy architecture to support multi-sectorial transformation

Governments should commit to co-designing jurisdictional healing strategies with First Nations peoples to ensure all responses across all sectors and institutions are healing-informed and gender-responsive.

National healing-informed training

A national accredited training program and ongoing supports—co-designed with First Nations women and girls—is delivered to all workplaces to enable workforces to respond to and prevent trauma and support healing. An example includes the WorkUp model delivered in partnership with the Healing Foundation and ANROWS.

Communities create and sustain healing-informed regions

Community services—from the police to schools, courts and health providers—to partner with women and girls to embed gender-responsive, place-based healing practices.

Collaborative Partnerships

- Healing Foundation to coordinate the co-design of the national training program, working with women and sector experts such as the Family Violence and Prevention Legal Services and Forum (FVPLS), Lowitja, Jumbunna Institute, Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS), the Australian Childhood Foundation, Emerging Minds and Telethon Kids Institute.
- Engage with Indigenous Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and other education and training providers to develop and deliver region-specific content and ensure access for all workforces. Also consider a national network of training coordinators and assessors.
- Communities co-design supportive regulatory frameworks with assessment tools and resources to assist workplaces to engage in training and embed within practice and policy. Resources may include checklists, self-assessment audits, guidelines for implementation and workforce and workplace standards.

Policy and law Reform

- Co-design a national approach to give consistency and confidence to all jurisdictions and workplaces to become healing-informed. A national approach would support current jurisdictional healing policies such as Queensland's healing strategy[77] and NSW's OCHRE plan.[78] It should also align with the Commonwealth Closing the Gap Implementation Plan[79] to develop an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Engagement Framework and the new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan.[80] This should also build on the development of mandatory APS-wide culturally-sensitive gender and sexuality training.

Since January 2020, the first ever Queensland Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Healing Strategy (Leading healing our way)[81] has been developed. The Queensland Government engaged the Healing Foundation to lead a co-design process to inform the Strategy. They 'yarned up' with communities across Queensland to dream big for what should be included in the Strategy.

- Embed women's healing knowledges and practice across all policy areas and service delivery, particularly in healthcare systems. This includes services to be covered by Medicare such as women traditional healers, maternal practitioners, therapeutic interventions and medicines.
- Create specific funding streams or additional funding within government contracts, such as through the Indigenous Advancement Strategy (IAS), to support community-controlled organisations to access and engage in trauma and healing-informed training.

Digital access

- Develop a national campaign and online resource hub for all individuals and workplaces to access the resources and multi-media training to understand trauma and healing-informed responses. This may be expanding the Healing Foundation and Health*InfoNet* Healing Portal.[82]

Since 2018, the Scottish Government has been committed to a whole-of-society approach to becoming trauma-informed, stating that trauma is everyone's business. They have developed a comprehensive workforce strategy, supporting frontline services in the first instance and are now developing trauma-informed champions in community organisations within every region of Scotland. Led by the NHS Education for Scotland (NES), the National Trauma Training Programme's vision is to enable the workforce and the general public to recognise when people are affected by trauma and adversity and be capable to respond in ways that prevent further harm and support their recovery. The Programme includes evidence-based training resources, a leadership development component and a team of co-ordinators to support sectors to embed and sustain trauma-informed practice.[83]

ACTION 6.3

Truth-telling, language and culture throughout education

In order to respond to our needs and aspirations, Australia must embrace other ways of doing education through investing in First Nations-led education systems, and community and on-Country schooling. This is where our children feel safe, surrounded by culture, and where learning can take place inside and outside four walls. For many First Nations children and people, the current mainstream education system is not the empowering mechanism it is designed to be—it is, in fact, traumatising for many. Our histories, cultures, languages and knowledges are almost completely absent within mainstream education, and so too are our people—our elders, educators and mentors. All schools and universities must commit to becoming healing-informed institutions and workforces that embrace the diversity and strengths of First Nations students, work collaboratively with our communities and First Nations educators, and teach with cultural intelligence. Across all institutions and subject matters, our pedagogies, histories, languages and our truth must be embedded.

First Nations-led education and on-Country schooling

Invest in independent community/on-Country schools, early childhood 'Language and Culture Nests'[84] and First Nations curriculum and methods of teaching.

Culturally-safe, healing-informed and empowering learning environments

Grow the First Nations education workforce, through: improving education and workplace conditions, wages and embedding First Nations knowledges and methods across all education settings; and build capacity of non-Indigenous educators through ongoing healing-informed culturally-responsive training.

Embed First Nations knowledges, cultures and languages from early years to university

Invest in the development of quality cultural and language resources and curriculum content co-designed and delivered with First Nations communities, educators and elders, for all students at all stages of education.

See Major Priority 3, Action 3.1 of Language, land, water and cultural rights for more information.

Truth-telling throughout education

All education institutions commit to mandatory truth-telling units and teaching of local histories and actively work to confront gender stereotypes, racism and all discrimination, at every stage of education.

Policy and law reform

- Increase funding to and expansion of First Nations independent school networks and early childhood 'Language and Culture Nests' such as those delivered across NSW by the Aboriginal Education and Communities directorate.[85]
- Conduct First Nations education review and implement strategies for redesigning an education system for First Nations children, as called for by the Utyerre Apanpe First Nations Educators Network.[86]
- Co-design targeted strategies to increase recruitment and retention of First Nations teachers and invest in More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI).[87]
- Incorporate First Nations languages in the school curriculum in each jurisdiction, in line with the Australian Curriculum Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages.[88]
- Enhance the growth of the Curricula Project[89] and the national rollout of its contents to incorporate First Nations knowledges and culture in the education system.
- Incorporate mandatory truth-telling units in the Australian Curriculum and throughout all subject areas through school and into university.
- Embed Healing Foundation resources into the Australian Curriculum and teacher training programs.

Learn more and do more: The National Indigenous Youth Education Coalition (NIYEC) advocates for an independent First Nations education system and reform of the national mainstream system, to incorporate truth-telling, First Nations knowledges and lived experiences, and to centre the voices of young mob. NIYEC are driving a campaign, Learn Our Truth, encouraging schools, educational leaders, and students to teach and learn Indigenous history and the full extent and impact of the settler history of Australia.[90]

Governance and institutional supports

- Guarantee the mechanisms for collaborative and consultative processes in enhancing the education system including: establishing Indigenous Education Consultative Bodies[91] in each jurisdiction; embedding First Nations units directed by First Nations people in each education department; and re-establishing First Nations independent school support networks at regional, state and territory, and national levels.
- Grow and expand partnerships with First Nations education institutes, such as Stronger Smarter, NIYEC, Children's Ground and Studio Schools Australia, to create empowering pathways into further educational opportunities for girls and young women, including STEM, arts, humanities and social science training and careers.

Community organising and participation

- Organisations such as ILF, the Sharing Stories Foundation, language resource centres and First Nations education and training organisations should be invested in to develop relevant local resources with communities.

Organisations such as the NIYEC and Children's Ground, and the *In my Blood it Runs* film and campaign, all support major educational reform and the development of a First Nations-led education system. In April 2019 Children's Ground brought together First Nations educators from several nations. The gathering formed the Utyerre Apanpe First Nations Educators Network to develop an education system designed and delivered by First Nations peoples and to work with governments to determine future education policy.[92]

Has your school or university had a screening of *In My Blood It Runs?* https://inmyblooditruns.com/screenings/

A nation engaged in truth-telling, recognition and recovery

ACTION 6.4

All Australians have a role to play in creating a healed society by coming to terms with the truth about the foundations of this nation—colonisation—and the ongoing impacts of discrimination and inequality on our people. This includes shining a light on the stories of First Nations women and girls—our knowledges, strengths and ongoing stories of resistance. Formal processes of truth-telling, recognition and recovery are vital to forming the foundations from which new relationships between First Nations people and the Australian nation can be built. Supporting public engagement with our cultures, our sovereignty and our experiences of colonisation is an important process of everyday learning and awareness-raising. The major priority of truth-telling is not to divide but to unite. Truth-telling shines light in dark places, it expels the falsehoods that sit between us and creates space for us to come together.

Create processes and spaces of community and societal truth-telling

This includes public art, formal institutions such as museums and galleries, community forums both in person and online, and the establishment of state, territory and national assemblies to lead formal truth-telling processes.

Rename and mark sites of memorialisation and heritage

Rename places, roads, towns and features in local language, and mark sites of memorialisation with signs and public stories of resistance and colonial impact including massacres. There must also be stronger heritage laws to stop ongoing cultural destruction and enable connection, care, and protection of significant and sacred sites.

See Major Priority 3, Action 3.1 of Language, land, water and cultural rights for more information.

Repatriate cultural heritage items and ancestral remains

Facilitate the secure return of cultural heritage items and ancestral remains held overseas to their rightful nation group.

Changing hearts and minds

- Strengthen the media's role in sharing strength-based stories of First Nations peoples.
- Develop truth-telling websites, webinars, apps and learning resources, and support and expand existing truth-telling platforms including the massacre maps project and have it supported by ongoing news content in the Guardian.

Collaborative Partnerships

- All Australian museums to work with First Nations peoples to ensure content is culturally-responsive and engaged in truth-telling.
- National museums to work with a First Nations representative governing committee to consider deigning and establishing a standalone national First Nations living history museum. This could be a part of the Ngurra: The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Precinct, to be built in Canberra.

Policy and law reform

- Implement the recommendations from the *Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples* for the Australian Government to support a process of truth-telling.[93] This to happen alongside the Government's commitment to establishing a national resting place as a site of reflection of First Nations remains.
- Establish a Commonwealth Truth-Telling Commission, with the powers of a Royal Commission, to run regional dialogues and happen in parallel with a national process of treaty/agreement-making. The Commission should be informed by learnings from the Victorian Yoo-rrook Truth and Justice Commission.[94] Engagement with the Ebony Institute's Truth, Justice and Healing Project[95] should be considered.
- Enshrine the 'Voice' into the Australian Constitution through national referendum as a significant step towards a healed nation.
- Amend place name legislation across jurisdictions to strengthen processes of restoring First Nations place names.
- An independent government agency with cultural authority, such as AIATSIS, to facilitate and negotiate ongoing cultural heritage and ancestral remains return requests in accordance with the Human Rights Council resolution 42/19, adopted in 2019.[96] There should also be ongoing investment into programs such as the AIATSIS 'Return of Cultural Heritage' initiative,[97] the Australian Government Indigenous Repatriation Program,[98] Encounters Fellowship[99] and the Indigenous Repatriation Museum Grants Program.[100]

Major Priority 7:
Every First Nations child is born into an empowered, healthy, and sustainable community

Action 7.1: Women and child-centred culturally-safe maternal and early life models of care

Action 7.2: A transformed First Nations children, women and family centred early childhood education and support system

Action 7.3: Affordable, culturally-secure and liveable homes in safe, connected and sustainable communities

ACTION 7.1

Women and child-centred culturally-safe maternal and early life models of care

Our Law contains extensive teachings about the rewarding, challenging and life-affirming journey of maternal health, birthing and growing children on Country. First Nations women's Birthing on Country (BOC)[101] and in community (BiOC)[102] models are metaphors used to describe culturally secure models that support women to reclaim our sovereign birthing rights, knowledges and practices. These models do not literally mean birthing on Country but capture the sense of birthing in a culturally safe environment that feels connected to home and community. Birthing models and centres of our own design provide holistic health, culturally-informed wrap-around supports, continuity of care throughout and beyond pregnancy, creating trauma free birth experiences. Whilst we advocate support for birthing on Country as a priority choice for First Nations women, regardless of where birthing takes place, a culturally-safe and responsive First Nations and non-Indigenous maternal health workforce is also vital. Mainstream birthing suites and programs must also be designed to be responsive to the social and emotional needs of our women and families.

Reclaim sovereign birthing rights

Expand throughout Australia First Nations-designed birthing centres that support Birthing on Country (BOC)[103] and in community (BiOC) to strengthen and reclaim women's sovereign birthing rights, knowledges and practices.

Culturally and clinically safe birthing suites and programs

First Nations specific pregnancy programs integrating our knowledges should be available across all maternal care and hospitals, guaranteeing continuity of care pre and post birth, with additional supports for mums and babies experiencing harms such as homelessness, violence, alcohol and drug use.

Culturally-responsive maternal health workforce

Grow the First Nations nursing and midwifery workforce through targeted culturally-safe strategies that include improving education and workplace conditions, wages and embedding First Nations maternal knowledges and practices across all maternal health settings.

Community organising and participation

- Establish local at-home and in-community birthing programs to significantly reduce travel for birth and if travel is necessary family supports and a consistent birthing companion must be guaranteed.
- Realise the opportunities created by recently passed midwives' indemnity legislation,[104] by increasing funding for community-controlled organisations through Medicare and other dedicated funding pathways to train and employ midwives in communities. The scheme should be extended to include midwives attending homebirths to further support BOC models.
- Explore the implementation of 'bundled payment and pricing' models to improve access to birthing centres and continuity of culturally-safe midwifery and nurse care.

The Birthing in Our Community Program (BiOC) in Brisbane brings midwives and family support workers together to provide women and families with holistic culturally-safe supports, including consistent same-midwife support, transport to care services, in-home visits, perinatal psychology, and linking to housing, financial and legal services. A seven-year evaluation of the program found that it had resulted in a 50% reduction in preterm births, which has almost closed the gap in comparison with non-Indigenous pre-term birth rates.[105]

Policy and law reform

- Move from policy aspiration and strategic suggestions to the actualisation of BOC approaches across the country, from urban to remote. Congress of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nurses and Midwives (CATSINaM) to be resourced to design and implement a BOC actualisation plan alongside a nursing and midwifery strategy and develop training, targets and timeframes for establishing BOC models and increasing First Nations employment, linked to Closing the Gap.
- Embed the CATSINaM Nursing and Midwifery Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Curriculum Framework across all universities and vocational nursing and midwifery courses.
- Commit to reducing child protection interventions at birth and in early years through establishing rooming-in models for substance-using mothers in partnership with First Nations women's detoxification, rehabilitation and wrap-around support programs.

Data and knowledge co-creation

- Fund the Molly Wardaguga Research Centre[106] and other relevant and culturally-safe research bodies to develop approaches to BOC and BiOC in co-design with First Nations women. Ensure at least one site in every jurisdiction and grow to cover all regions.
- Fund CATSINaM, in partnership with communities and RTOs, to develop core content curricula to be used for placements and local vocational training.

The Caring for Mum on Country project, which takes a decolonising participatory action-research approach, is working in collaboration with Yolngu women from Galaiwinku in Northeast Arnhem Land to integrate Yolngu and Western medical pregnancy and childbirth knowledge systems. Pregnant women in Galaiwinku have to fly hundreds of kilometres by themselves to give birth, which can be distressing and traumatic. A major objective of the project is to form a community-based cohort of First Nations doulas-childbirth companions, known as Yolngu djakamirr, to provide cultural, emotional and spiritual support and a skilled birthing companion before, during and after childbirth. Charles Darwin University has partnered with the Australian Doula college to deliver djakamirr training in Galaiwinku to grow the cohort, and reinvigorate Yolngu maternal health, pregnancy and birthing knowledges and care practices.[107]

ACTION 7.2

A transformed First Nations children, women and family centred early childhood education and support system

Early years care, health and education supports, alongside social security payments that keep families out of poverty, must be made widely available. This system must account for the intersectionality of disability, family violence, drug and alcohol use and other complex needs, and work to reduce contact with the child protection system. There must be immediate supports including women and children's refuges, respites, rehabilitations, family violence healing and counselling supports, and integrated therapeutic and clinical supports. Women must also have access to flexible education and workforce participation if wanted. This approach is fundamentally based in prevention to keep women and children healthy and safe and together, without the intervening harms of youth detention and child removal.

A healthy first 2000 days

Women and families should be supported to plan regional rollouts of first 2000 days initiatives, including Connected Beginnings,[108] the Australian Nurse-Family Partnership Program,[109] and First 1000 Days Australia.[110]

All mothers and carers raise families free from poverty

Re-design the social safety net and childcare system to guarantee access to universal culturally-safe free early childhood education and care, and ensure adequate non-punitive social security payments that keep women and children safe and together.

Wrap-around therapeutic healing supports, interventions and family centres

Expand the design and establishment of culturally-safe child, parent/carer and family programs and centres—accounting for intersectional needs such as disability supports, and ensuring that children are supported to remain with family and kin and raised in culture.

Policy and law reform

- Implement the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Early Childhood Strategy and the workforce development strategy under Closing the Gap.[111]
- End and replace all punitive reporting requirements for childcare and parenting payments.

  See Major Priority 9, Action 9.1 of Economic justice and empowerment for more information.

- Amend the Social Security Act to include mandatory application of an intersectional gender and trauma-informed lens to account for factors such as family violence, the needs of women and children with disabilities, remoteness and access to services.

  See Major Priority 8, Action 8.1 of Economic justice and empowerment for more information.

- Governments annually monitor the impact of all social security payments on children, parents and single mothers/carers.
- Embed the *National Quality Framework's* guiding principles across all Early Childhood Education & Care (ECEC) centres.[112]
- Co-design dedicated funding stream arrangements, including an increase of funding to ECEC services for children and families with disabilities, therapeutic and/or clinical needs.
- Design and implement equal non-transferable "use it or lose it" parental leave policies for men and women.
- Reform processes such as the Blue Card system in Queensland which make it increasingly hard to be carers for kin whilst lengthy processing increases vulnerability of children.

Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre in the Fitzroy Valley of Western Australia supports the health and wellbeing of women and their families through a range of programs including the Baya Gawiy Buga yani Jandu yani u Centre.[113] Baya Gawiy includes both an Early Childhood Learning Unit (ECLU) and a Child and Parent Centre to provide holistic support to women and their children. Embedded with First Nations knowledges and language and their principle of 'many ways of knowing and doing', the ECLU makes learning for children meaningful and connected to community whilst also preparing them to walk in two worlds.

Collaborative Partnerships

- Develop strategies—in partnership with SNAICC, regional peaks, ECEC centres and governments—for the recruitment and retention of First Nations ECEC staff. This should include gender-sensitive flexible training and employment pathways with additional supports including childcare placements and housing particularly in remote regions.

Data and knowledge co-creation

- Map the gaps in childhood and wrap-around family supports and research and co-design solutions with communities. In addition, support SNAICC's call to develop an innovative intermediary community First Nations body to broker childhood service design and delivery where there are current gaps.[114]
- Work with SNAICC and research institutions to gather evidence on First Nations early childhood learning and child raising knowledges and practices. This should be used to develop local educational resources and to scale up culturally-responsive ECEC, rather than depending on international evidence that may not be appropriate.

ACTION 7.3

Affordable, culturally-secure and liveable homes in safe, connected and sustainable communities

Regardless of where we live, we should all have access to safe, affordable homes, healthy, local and native foods, and the infrastructure to support thriving communities. Women must be equally represented in housing and community infrastructure design. This should be through greater investment in the Indigenous Housing Sector (IHS), government partnerships with community-controlled women's and housing organisations and with PBCs, and the establishment of women's local and regional housing committees. Community, social and affordable housing must also be upgraded and grown to end overcrowding and improve safety and health, while guaranteeing easy access to Country. Women and families should be able to walk, relax and engage in sports and activities within green spaces, bushlands and community gardens near their home to improve positive health outcomes and environmental connectivity.

Women and children-centred safe and secure housing models

Design and rollout housing models to keep women and children together, end homelessness-related family violence, and women's homelessness-related deaths. Increase rental assistance for women and family violence payments, and introduce prison-release housing payments.

Affordable and sustainable housing surrounded by Country, community and opportunities

New builds (sufficient to meet backlog and keep up with future demand) and existing social and affordable housing to be constructed or retrofitted with sustainable materials, provided with access to transport, employment and education opportunities, surrounded by green spaces, and designed to meet the varied needs and sizes of families.

Food security for all

First Nations food sovereignty movements to be supported, including through the establishment of food cooperatives, regenerative farming, First Nations food businesses, and mechanisms to lower costs of nutritious foods and reduce poor food content in shops—particularly in remote communities.

Did you know: 2019 Australian analysis shows that if every child in Australia spent their first three years in stable housing, the Australian economy would be $3 billion better off each year.[115]

Policy and law reform

- The Commonwealth and State and Territories, in partnership with First Nations housing organisations and women, co-design a nationally coherent housing strategy and redesign of the Remote Australia Housing Agreement—both must include adequate funding to meet housing need, as a priority through Closing the Gap.
- Housing strategies and agreements should commit to end family violence-related homelessness and death, include a targeted approach to guarantee housing security for mothers and carers, and integrate a First Nations employment plan and procurement of First Nations contractors.
- Increase Commonwealth Rent Assistance by 30%[116] and reform eligibility criteria to increase accessibility for vulnerable families, index rental support payments to reflect actual rental costs and introduce government backed buying schemes.
- Ensure housing reform is part of all jurisdictional First Nations and mainstream family violence and health plans for both men and women.
- Australian Government to redesign and fully implement a National Strategy for Food Security in partnership with women.

Did you know: Foodbank's 2018 Rumbling Tummies report found that 58% of First Nations families had experienced food insecurity in the year prior to the survey being taken.[117]

Collaborative Partnerships

- Governments to work with housing developers and the IHS to designate a proportion of the build of homes and apartment complexes to women and children, low-income earners and essential workforces with high concentration of women (e.g. health and aged care workforce).
- Financial institutions, governments, property developers, IBA, and the IHS to co-design with women targeted rent-to-buy models for single parents, carers and low-income earners.
- Support partnerships between community, hospital and healthcare services to design homelessness health hubs within areas of high homelessness—guaranteeing a gender-sensitive and holistic response to their needs.
- Implement a national network of culturally-safe family violence and homelessness healing hubs and core-and-cluster housing, connected to specialist supports and permanent housing.

Data and knowledge co-creation

- Map First Nations crisis and transitional accommodation needs across Australia and fill the gaps, with the express aim to end the revolving door between specialist family violence services and the return to unsafe relationships and housing.
- Enable all jurisdictions to gather data on housing supply and current and future demand.
- Analyse and evaluate what works in terms of housing products and whether it leads to long-term secure and viable housing—analyse alongside other factors like education, access to services, community wellbeing and employment.

Suggestion: ILUA agreements could introduce innovative culturally-responsive housing, including housing informed by kinship laws, interconnected with family and Country, family camps built on homelands, and housing to rent and buy.

Thematic area 4: Economic justice & empowerment

VISION:

Our skills, knowledges and work are recognised, valued and understood as central to the functioning of Australia's economy. Economic systems and policies are structured around a deep understanding of, and value for, the care we provide our families, communities and our Countries so as to enable a sustainable economic system that guarantees our financial security and shrinks inequality so that no one lives in poverty. Women are in control of the financial decisions and resources in our own lives and are empowered to develop and lead vibrant local economies where profit stays circulating across our regions for the benefit of our communities and our Countries. Economic justice and empowerment for First Nations women and girls is a vehicle through which we are secure and supported to lead the lives we value. Not only does our economic justice benefit us, it benefits entire communities—men, women, girls and boys. Our sustainable economies provide significant wealth and wellbeing for everyone, leaving no one excluded or marginalised.

THE RESPONSE:

This priority area puts forward the actions to recognise and value women and girls' skills, roles and responsibilities to address structural powerlessness and poverty. It outlines how we must:

- Re-design an economic and financial system that centres First Nations women in all our diversity to ensure our economic security and financial wellbeing;
- Invest in lifting women out of poverty through enabling social security frameworks underpinned with the principle of 'do no harm' and designed not as 'stop-gap' short-term responses but long-term and structural;
- Recognise and respond to the full spectrum of care work women provide for our children, our old people, people with disability, people experiencing family violence and trauma, and for Country and culture; and
- Guarantee sustained investment in safe and culturally-appropriate financial infrastructure and in local economies by both public and private sectors to enhance women's business, employment and economic security.

Major Priority 8:
Control over income and financial resources and engagement in meaningful economies

Action 8.1: Institutional supports to lift women and children out of poverty and guarantee their financial wellbeing

Action 8.2: Women and girls enjoy the right to financial information, knowledge and literacy

Action 8.3: Empowering conditions for women's training and employment

Action 8.4: Sustainable local economies and business

ACTION 8.1

Institutional supports to lift women and children out of poverty and guarantee their financial wellbeing

First Nations women's engagement with financial supports and services is different to that of First Nations men and the broader community. Women experience multiple intersecting barriers to financial wellbeing, and supports must take a gendered lens. Fundamentally this is about ensuring women have a system of income supports that meet all of their needs and those of their children and families, that does not punish them and cause further trauma. Supports must embed the principle of 'do no harm' and provide women with an economic base to enable them to raise families safely, access quality education and pursue careers or business. Social security systems need significant reform and women must be at the centre of design. Women and girls also want to partner with private sector financial institutions to build innovative solutions so women can access their money, build their income and keep money circulating in their regions.

Re-design a protective and enabling welfare support system

Government must commit to re-designing the welfare system with First Nations women—particularly programs such as JobSeeker, Community Development Program, ParentsNext and the Basic Card.

Raise income security and remove punitive welfare conditions

End current punitive and burdensome welfare subsidy systems and provide a regular and unconditional income raised to at least minimum wage. This would provide a basic income to redress poverty and inequality, and would contribute to women's unpaid care work.

Locally designed, gender-responsive financial resources, services and institutions

Private and public partnerships with women and girls to design and deliver culturally-safe approaches to banking, financial services and superannuation so women can save and access their money, get loans, and money is invested and circulated in community priorities leading to social, economic and ecological impact.

Changing hearts and minds

- Through campaigns and media, challenge stereotypes of First Nations women experiencing financial hardship and improve public understanding of the need to re-design financial systems from punitive to enabling to reduce income inequality, redistribute wealth and end intergenerational poverty.

Policy and law reform

- Amend the Social Security Act to include mandatory application of an intersectional gender and trauma-informed lens to account for factors such as family violence, the needs of women and children with disabilities, remoteness and access to services.

See Major Priority 7, Action 7.2 in Societal healing and intergenerational wellbeing for more information.

- Explore possibilities for the roll out or trialling of an unconditional Universal Basic Income (UBI) to provide First Nations women and their families with strong financial security.
- Make superannuation schemes fair for First Nations women through annual government contributions to low-income earners, reduce income threshold on monthly contributions, and pay superannuation guarantee on paid parental leave.[118]

Collaborative partnerships

- Banks, financial institutions and relevant research bodies to co-design with communities the models and resources for banking that enable economic safety, security and keeps money invested and circulating in regions.
- The Australian Basic Income Lab[119] to partner with First Nations women and girls to ensure a First Nations gendered approach to policy positions and to research the impact a UBI would have on reducing economic inequality for women and girls.
- Increase participation of First Nations women in superannuation policy design and on superannuation fund boards.

ACTION 8.2

Women and girls enjoy the right to financial information, knowledge and literacy

Financial information, education, mentoring, networks, supports and services must be accessible for First Nations women and girls to know and understand their financial rights and make positive choices about their financial wellbeing. Building financial literacy and normalising conversations about money removes shame and increases confidence to speak about our finances, and design and advocate for solutions to better our financial inclusion and prosperity. Financial literacy must be grounded in our knowledges and understandings of wealth, and in balance with cultural and kinship responsibilities.

Normalise money talk

Guarantee accessible financial education for women and girls to increase confidence and knowledge to negotiate, design and lead solutions for our economic justice. This must include targeted supports for women and girls with additional needs including with disability, women in remote areas and women in incarceration.

Establish community financial hubs

Community-controlled and trauma-informed financial hubs for women and girls to access information, advisory services, education and for greater coordination of supports—such as parental, unemployment and study supports, and family violence crisis payments.

Community organising and participation

- Communities to co-design financial infrastructure and resources to meet their needs with governments and private sector partners.
- Private sector to partner with community-based organisations to develop and deliver financial education and training focused on building women's financial literacy and wellbeing. This should also include access to understanding intellectual property (IP) rights so women are empowered to challenge when their IP is exploited or undervalued.
- Education and training institutes such as Financial Counselling Australia (FCA) to work with communities to train First Nations women to become qualified financial counsellors.

Muru Mittiga—a Dharug organisation based in Western Sydney—operates a Community Financial Hub to support local community to access no interest loans, energy accounts payment assistance, and financial counselling. This free service is delivered in a culturally-safe and responsive environment and has supported over 2,500 people and arranged over $2million in no interest loans.[120] Other models and initiatives include Mob Strong Debt Help and Good Money Stores.

Data and knowledge co-creation

- Supported by government, and in partnership with private sector financial institutions and community organisations such as First Nations Foundation, expand research, policy and advocacy in the pursuit of First Nations women and girls' economic justice.
- These partnerships should also develop trainings and resources to grow women's negotiation, accounting and financial literacy skills.

Digital access

- Guarantee the infrastructure—such as telecommunications and internet—needed to allow women to access technologies for their financial control, and provide culturally-responsive training and education supports for women to use technologies safely and securely.
- Develop programs in partnership with First Nations women that enhance technological access to banking (such as banking apps) in trial sites spanning from urban to very remote settings.

ACTION 8.3

Empowering conditions for women's training and employment

We must establish the supportive infrastructure that reflects the work and skills of our women, so we can grow job opportunities, create meaningful conditions for employment, and increase the number of women progressing in careers of their choice, while also benefitting families and communities. To ensure this happens, workplaces, institutions, private corporations and governments must guarantee women's participation in designing effective training and employment opportunities. Designing these programs and opening new employment opportunities must meet the needs and aspirations of women of all abilities—regardless of location, education, or circumstance and embrace the skills and knowledges of women who are long-term unemployed, recovering from trauma, have disability and are in, or beyond, incarceration.

Invest in women's training in and beyond care work

Ensure access to training and skills-development for women across all sectors and outside formal employment, with appropriate wrap-around supports. This also includes supports for women providing unpaid work and, if interested, pathways to qualifications and employment.

Inclusive workplaces and career pathways

Workplaces to create culturally-safe and empowering environments engaged in proactive recruitment and promotion that offer women flexible work, training, education and career opportunities and uphold principles of anti-discrimination and inclusivity.

Gender-sensitive and enabling employment and social security programs

Reform employment and social security programs to embed women's needs and aspirations and community social and economic development priorities so programs are caring and empowering and ensure no individual, family or community lives in poverty.

Policy and law reform

- Ensure welfare reform co-design processes such as the 'New Remote Engagement Program'[121] centres the voices of First Nations women and girls to create an enabling and holistic system. In particular the Remote Engagement Program must guarantee all work is rewarded with fair wages, superannuation and paid leave, and provides an 'adequate and unconditional economic floor' to ensure access to all basic needs for those who are unemployed.[122] Effective reform must also include creation of dignified and meaningful employment, adequate housing and access to essential services.
- End the ParentsNext compliance framework which pushes women into insecure work and jeopardises the connection between parents and children. Social security policies should aim to increase women's access to supports, and hours of childcare, particularly those on low/no income. Simultaneously, these policies should target the barriers to women's inclusion in employment, and support women to enter into employment if they choose to.
- Embed a First Nations gendered approach in all disability employment programs.
- Consider strengthening legislation, such as reforming the *Fair Work Act,* to encourage employers to take a proactive approach to embedding gender-sensitive cultural safety into workplace policies and practices.

First Nations women and girls are calling for more innovative employment models that look beyond the traditional mainstream structure and embed flexibility and trauma-awareness. For example, Hives For Heroes is an innovative employment program with a focus on supporting veterans with PTSD through beekeeping. The program allows veterans to gain a source of income and new skills with flexibility and responsiveness to trauma and injuries.

Governance and institutional supports

- Mainstream workplaces to develop support mechanisms and tools for First Nations women to grow a strong organisational culture that values and respects cultural identity and safety, and which does not bear the load of cultural responsibilities on women. This includes embedding First Nations gender justice and equality into anti-discrimination training and work practices.
- Public and private sectors to create comprehensive gender-focused culturally-safe workplace policies—for instance, by providing childcare within workplaces, family violence leave, cultural leave and flexible working arrangements.

Did you know: According to Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), First Nations women with caring responsibilities are more likely to be in culturally-unsafe and unsupported employment, and have higher cultural loads. Caring responsibilities are an important additional dimension to consider when creating inclusive and supportive workplaces for First Nations women.[123]

Data and knowledge co-creation

- Grow research on, and understanding of, First Nations women and girls' aspirations and how barriers operate to impede their engagement with training and employment.

Sustainable local economies and business

ACTION 8.4

Our Country and communities have always been full of vibrant dynamic activities and different forms of reciprocal exchange. Australia is etched in our trade routes, and the ecosystems we have lived within and maintained could all be considered thriving economies. The businesses our women and communities run today—from the arts and fashion to emerging technologies, the development of education resources, and renewable energy—are infused with our cultures, knowledges, and deep understanding of sustainability. There remains huge potential for our businesses to grow and for new forms of enterprise to emerge—allowing for local self-determining regenerative economies to take hold and for meaningful job opportunities to be created. Local economies can also guarantee that goods and services are produced by our peoples, and that they can be delivered to our peoples at affordable prices. With the right investment and economic development infrastructure, we can make visible and unlock the potential of our local and regional economies.

Grow women's Country and culture-based economies

Facilitate partnerships, training, capacity supports and business planning opportunities to recognise and grow vibrant circular economies—including arts, tourism, carbon sequestration, regenerative farming, and social enterprise.

Impact investing

Form the conditions for multiple investors—including public and private combinations—to invest in women's start-ups and small and medium-sized businesses, with the intention of generating widespread social, economic and ecological benefits.

Establish diverse enterprise models

Develop networks that enable women to access mentors, grants, seed-funding, business advice, and enter into partnerships or joint ventures, as well as exploring opportunities to establish a range of collective community-based enterprises such as cooperatives.

Community organising and participation

- Create and strengthen the ecosystem of partners and resources that support community organisations building local economies including all governments, research bodies and regional advisory services.
- Increase access for communities to cooperative networks and learning opportunities to support the establishment and ongoing functioning of cooperative and mutual models.

Policy and law reform

- Amend all Indigenous procurement policies across jurisdictions to include a gendered lens to grow opportunities for women's businesses.
- Introduce policy and legislation that enable and make simple the process of developing a cooperative business, and for existing businesses to transform into cooperatives.
- Develop a First Nations women's small and medium-sized enterprise investment strategy which includes mechanisms to enable women to access impact investing, to sit alongside and inform the Australian Government's procurement policy.

Consider: Do you include First Nations women's businesses in your procurement policies and practices? Consider looking at the Supply Nation business directory or reach out into your networks to see if you can invest in a woman's business.

Collaborative partnerships

- Through IBA's Start Up Package, create a targeted stream for women with wrap-around business planning support to access seed funding to design and establish enterprises.
- Financial institutions and research organisations to explore how to best modify lending criteria and increase access to low-interest and no-interest loans to encourage the development of women-owned business and local entrepreneurship.
- Establish a First Nations-led First Peoples Financial Services Office—as recommended by the Australian Sustainable Finance Initiative Roadmap[124]—to provide a single point of enquiry for engaging with First Nations communities and for coordinated collaborative solutions delivering on more than individual actions.

Major Priority 9:
A transformed care economy

Action 9.1: The full spectrum of women's care work is recognised and valued

Action 9.2: Wrap-around caring infrastructure for collective wellbeing and empowerment

ACTION 9.1

The full spectrum of women's care work is recognised and valued

The majority of care work is done by women, at home, in communities and on Country—rearing and teaching children, supporting our elders, caring for those with disabilities and health concerns, and providing stewardship of Country and culture—yet much of this work goes unacknowledged, unvalued, and unaccounted for. Ensuring that our women and girls are empowered and self-determined to perform care work that is meaningful and meets our needs and aspirations starts with accurately defining and measuring the full spectrum of this care and replacing punitive and narrow policies and laws with alternatives that are enabling and community-centred. Caregivers—paid and unpaid—are providing work that is critical to the functioning of a healthy society. We deserve to be remunerated fairly and not overburdened by an unaffordable society that undermines us and those we care for. Women who provide care must not be left trapped in cycles of financial insecurity and poverty. We must be re-empowered economically and within all aspects of our lives.

Recognise care work in and beyond GDP measurements

Capture the full spectrum of women's care work, including care for Country and cultural maintenance and record and measure its value to supporting the health, wellbeing and prosperity of society and the national economy.

Construct a caring social security system

Reform the social security system and funding approaches to more effectively compensate for care through community-led and social impact models, and by providing wrap-around trauma-informed supports.

End carer and motherhood penalties

The care and education provided to children by women is critical to the functioning of a healthy society and must be supported by ensuring access to basic needs and affordable services such as housing, food and child and health care.

Across the globe the movement to recognise the role of women in caring and sustaining society is gaining momentum. Campaigns are centred around the three "Rs" – **Recognise, Reduce and Redistribute**. Actions organised around these three "Rs" not only promote Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 Gender Equality but also address SDG 1 Ending all Poverty, SDG 3 Healthy Lives and Promotion of Wellbeing, SDG 4 Inclusive and Quality Education for All, SDG 8 Creation of decent Employment for All, and SDG 10 Reduction of Inequalities.[125]

Changing hearts and minds

- Shift societal thinking of care work—from free work carried out predominately by women to valuable work benefitting all of society for which all members of the community bear responsibility—through the development of educational resources, media and public discussion.
- Breakdown rigid and stereotypical gender roles by sharing stories of First Nations women and girls in all their diversity and by promoting the role of men and whole communities performing care work.
- Develop a measurement dashboard that incorporates all forms of care work into GDP and links it to societal and ecological health and wellbeing. Use this dashboard as part of a campaign to raise awareness of this undervalued contribution to society and the need for change.

Policy and law reform

- Women and girls to be central to economic policy reform related to care work with a view to shifting policies from neglecting women's needs and creating burdens on their lives to supporting them and investing in their capabilities.
- End and replace all punitive social security including ParentsNext and the burdensome reporting requirements for childcare and parenting payments—including removing the activity test for the Child Care Subsidy and ending stigmatising assessment and surveillance for the Additional Child Care Subsidy—with enabling financial supports that simplify eligibility and reporting ensuring no women are left out.
- Ensure the new Remote Engagement Program acknowledges and support all forms of work—including unpaid child, elder, disability and health care, and caring for Country and culture.[126]
- Increase award wages and reform superannuation schemes for all formal and informal care workers, ensuring that all care workers are appropriately remunerated for the value of work produced.

Data and knowledge co-creation

- Invest in capturing First Nations data relating to care work. For example, establishing a First Nations time-use survey or re-establishing the former Time Use Survey and ensuring an adequate First Nations sample. Both would involve significant investment in supports to collect a sufficiently large sample of First Nations people completing the survey (suggested to be online), particularly in remote areas where there is a digital divide. Working with communities through local methods of data collection and knowledge sharing must be prioritised over mainstream Western models of data collection.
- Research bodies to work with women to explore the full spectrum of unpaid care work and design models to compensate and remunerate this work.
- Explore and develop a national wellbeing measurement and dashboard which takes into consideration how measurements can fully incorporate the full spectrum of care.
- Expand the remit of WGEA to measure smaller workplaces and public sectors, and to incorporate First Nations data and knowledge into gender equality evaluations.

Did you know? The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) does not measure or record data on the care work performed by First Nations women and girls. This is a serious concern given that First Nations people are at higher risk of experiencing lower health outcomes, disability, financial insecurity, and have lower participation in early childhood care and education, increasing the need for unpaid care.[127]

ACTION 9.2

Wrap-around caring infrastructure for collective wellbeing and empowerment

The care we provide to our people and our Country is fundamental to our identities as First Nations women. Yet with the overburden of trauma and care in our lives and inaccessible services, women feel unsupported and exhausted. By sharing care across communities, women and girls can be re-empowered to participate and engage in social and economic spaces in ways that meet their goals and aspirations. Investing in culturally-appropriate services, supports, infrastructure and responsive policy tools is a triple win—it improves care by supporting working conditions and the quality of care provided, it grows whole communities by recentring care across local economies, providing new training and employment opportunities, and access to services, and it improves gender equality by re-empowering women and girls to access services and supports as needed, alleviating the impacts of poverty and insecurity.

Universal free, culturally-safe and responsive childcare

Expand access to First Nations-led models of childcare across Australia that women can trust to care for their children in culturally appropriate ways, where their children can thrive surrounded by culture and elders.

Guaranteed care for those with disabilities

Invest in accessible services for all First Nations people with disabilities and health concerns requiring care and provide adequate income and wrap-around services—including respite—for caregivers who provide disability support and health care.

Safe, engaged and dignified elder care

Ensure access and sustainable investment into safe and culturally-appropriate aged care facilities and services, alongside fair income supports and resources for women caring for elders in their homes and on Country.

Provide the supports for intimate time on Country

Ensure women can spend intimate time on Country to provide critical care to Country and care for their families through the practice of culture and the active transference of knowledge.

See Major Priority 4, Action 4.3 of Language, land, water and cultural Rights for more information.

Policy and law reform

Did you know? According to the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research's (CAEPR) 2016 study on Indigenous care and labour, First Nations women are more likely to be unpaid in disability care than are mainstream disability care workers. First Nations caregivers are also more likely to have higher educational attainment than their non-caregiving counterparts—meaning that First Nations individuals with relatively strong economic prospects are more likely to be unpaid and financially insecure.[128]

- Strengthen all carer's supports by including mandatory superannuation, paid leave (including maternity, paternity and cultural leave) and insurance.
- Strengthen NDIS service delivery to ensure adequate and appropriate supports are available to all First Nations people with disability regardless of location.
- Consider introducing a policy commitment or legislation to end child poverty.
- Include recognition and valuing of cultural maintenance and protection programs and provide financial support and remuneration for employment in caring for culture activities under Target 16 in the next iteration of all Closing the Gap implementation plans.
- Fund native title and land rights representative bodies to run frequent cultural connection camps and ensuring that resources are made available to women wanting to spend time on Country with their children, families and people they are caring for.
- Reform the IAS and the evaluation of First Nations programs related to the full spectrum of care work, to ensure that positively performing programs that are supported and trusted by the community they service, do not lose funding and are guaranteed long-term continuous resourcing.

Governance and institutional supports

- Enhance workforce capabilities to provide culturally-appropriate and safe care through a national gender-sensitive healing informed accredited training program.

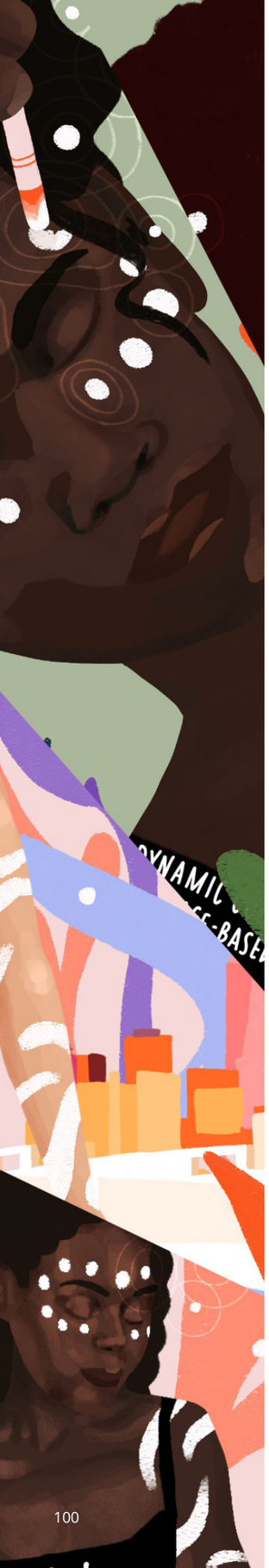
See Major Priority 6, Action 6.2 of Societal healing and intergenerational wellbeing for more information.

- Work with communities and First Nations organisations to identify how to support care work and respond to the needs of communities.
- Strengthen health care resources and supports to recognise and respond to the full spectrum of health care including, but not limited to: healing from trauma; supporting First Nations peoples in and post incarceration; drug and alcohol support; and recovery from violence.

Community organising and participation

- Grow community-led social and caring services that support local employment and training and which are trusted and supported by local families.
- Working with local communities and services, support the development of co-operative care services that centre community needs.
- Collaborate with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) to develop resources and support the roll-out of service technologies to communities to improve quality of care and support the learning and education of carers in communities.

Have you considered developing a Care Co-operative? A co-operative business is owned and controlled by its members, meaning that everyone involved shares in decision-making power and profit. This benefits employees and suppliers by allowing them to determine their working conditions and cooperate with other members working in solidarity rather than as independent parts of a sum. In First Nations communities, co-operative care businesses can provide formal structure to existing unpaid care workers by providing job/financial security and employment benefits. They can empower local communities by bringing together women already performing caring responsibilities—and who have existing local relationships, culture and language—to fill the gaps where existing services have failed. For example, The Co-operative Life, operating across NSW is Australia's first care co-operative designed to make care work more supportive for employees—putting needs at the centre of decision-making and ensuring vulnerable people do not slip through the cracks when navigating the impersonal and complex NDIS system.[129]



Next Steps

Wiyi Yani U Thangani is a multiyear systemic change project. This Implementation Framework is the starting point for the third stage of Wiyi Yani U Thangani which will culminate in a First Nations women and girls' National Summit in the first half of 2023. It is intended that the Framework be used as a tool for implementation of the Report, while also a guide for ongoing conversations with First Nations women and girls, community-controlled organisations and First Nations and non-indigenous, private and public, peak bodies and institutions. Over the course of 2022 there will be a series of stakeholder, government, and regional engagements to build on, and further refine this Implementation Framework in preparation for dialogues at the national summit and for the development of a National Framework for Action to advance First Nations gender justice and equality in Australia.

It is expected that the third stage of Wiyi Yani U Thangani will support collaborations and partnerships to advance many of the actions within this Framework. Alongside this action-orientated approach, we will begin to develop the measurement, accountability, and evaluation mechanisms so as to set timeframes, allocate responsibility and monitor the progress for achieving the priorities and actions outlined throughout this Framework. These mechanisms will be developed by First Nations women and girls in co-design with governments and relevant stakeholders and are likely to be presented and agreed to at the National Summit. This approach will help build toward a National Framework for Action that includes meaningful and holistic initiatives and structural changes that will ensure all stakeholders and communities are driving systemic change together and have the capabilities to achieve common outcomes.

This Framework presents bold ideas, big and small, not always new, but necessary to confront and overcome structural inequalities and the racialised sexism entrenched within contemporary society. These ideas, informed by the voices of First Nations women and girls, speak to the need for large-scale long-term generational change that can help us realise and live our collective rights more fully throughout Australia. A National Framework for Action is required to put the governance, policy, and legislative architecture in place to ensure this long-term change can progress, without faltering. In progressing generational change, the National Framework for Action has to be a flexible living document, capable of responding to emerging global trends and future challenges, not yet known. The ramifications of climate change, the COVID-19 pandemic and emerging technologies could drastically change how we live and we have to be prepared to adapt in ways that cause the least possible harms and the greatest benefits for many.

Throughout the next stage of Wiyi Yani U Thangani, as we respond to current demands and simultaneously look far into the future, we have to be aware of emerging trends. We must be capable of embracing emerging opportunities at the same time as protecting our people from all forms of discrimination and condemning new manifestations of harm. There is much to learn and do and build on to shift systems toward a better and healthier state of being.

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