Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK





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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Australian Human Rights Commission

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 Wivi 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 decisionmaking 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 School⁶ 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 Consulting⁸ in mapping out a vision for First Nations gender justice and equality. Ingrid Burkett, Co-Director of the Yunus Social Business Centre⁹ 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 Impact¹² 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 Wivi 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 selfdetermination 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 justice¹⁵—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?

Visioning¹⁷⁷ 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 health²¹ 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 shortterm, 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.



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 'multisolving'.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.



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?



strength-based

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?

Commit to



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?

Think in

context and

relationships:

Nothing exists in isolation.

Everything is connected to

within the environment that they

something—placing issues

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 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 vour 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?



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?



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?

Engage in deep listening:

It is important to be present. focused, respectful and considered, when meeting

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?



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?



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 codesign 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 selfdetermined 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 respectEmbed 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 traumainformed 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

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Major Priority 1: First Nations women a girls are strong in ident

both worlds
Action 1.1: Collective leadership
from the start of life

Action 1.2: Reinvigorate cultural governance and invest in placebased leadership

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

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

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 genderjust climate solutions

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

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

Major Priority 6: ealing-informed, engaged nd transformed systems

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

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 areas •

4

9 Major priorities • 24 Action areas



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 decisionmaking 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 decisionmaking and leadership contributes to and supports us towards a genuine ongoing process of truthtelling, self-determination, healing, and agreementmaking 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.

nd girls are strong 1 identity and mpowered leaders in oth worlds

Major Priority 1:

Action 1.1: Collective leadership from the start of life

Action 1.2: Reinvigorate cultural governance and invest in placebased leadership

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ACTION TO THE ACTION t

Collective leadership from the start of life

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 communitycontrolled 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 decisionmaking; replacing legal orders for permanent adoption with investment into communitycontrolled reunification services; and reforming carer assessment processes such as the Blue Card system in Queensland³⁷ 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 Plans³⁸ (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 culturallyresponsive 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.



Reinvigorate cultural governance and invest in place-based leadership

Investments must be made into place-based, genderresponsive governance that centres and builds on our inherent leadership skills. First Nations women's selfgoverned 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 communitycontrolled 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 varning 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 Treaty⁴⁰) 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 policymaking 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 AlLC, AIATSIS, the Lowitja Institute, and AlGI. 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 Nationsled 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.



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 nonindigenous, 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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Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing Our Rights, Securing Our Future— Implementation Framework

ISBN 978-1-925917-65-9

Acknowledgements

The Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Implementation Framework was drafted by Allyson Campbell, Jane Pedersen, Kimberley Hunter, Lluwannee George, Niamh Kealy, Nick Devereaux, Sophie Spry, and Zara Pitt.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner thanks the participants of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Stage Two Roundtables and all the First Nations women and girls engaged throughout Stage Two.

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Design and layout Dancingirl Designs

Cover design artwork Artist Elaine Chambers in collaboration with We are 27 Creative, 2017 Cover design and framework illustrations Grace Hallam, PWC Social Impact Printing Centrum Group