

18 December 2023

Social Justice Team

The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)
GPO Box 5218
SYDNEY NSW 2001



Sent via: wiyiyaniuthangani@humanrights.gov.au

Dear Social Justice Team

RE: Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality

ACON writes to express our support for Wiyi Yani U Thangani, and the commitment to First Nations gender justice and equality. This letter seeks to ensure that the Framework for Action will meaningfully include Sistergirls and LGBTQ+ First Nations women, and shares some of our experiences regarding change outcomes and accountability and evaluation.

ACON is NSW's leading health organisation specialising in community health, inclusion and HIV responses for people of diverse sexualities and genders. ACON seeks to improve the health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+SB Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people by providing culturally sensitive HIV and sexual health education and health information, including programs to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of Sistergirls and Brotherboys.

ACON understands that gender inequality is experienced in unique ways that can be different for cis and trans women, and that gender inequality and rigid gender norms can impact LGBTQ+ people of all genders, and shares many of the same drivers of violence and inequality that affect women.

It is critical that efforts to promote gender justice for First Nations women and girls meaningfully includes Sistergirls and LGBTQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and also is responsive to the need to promote gender justice broadly for LGBTQ+SB First Nations people.

We commend the initiative's commitment to fostering positive change. We acknowledge the importance of culturally grounded approaches, and we are excited at the prospect of an institute that seeks to centre First Nations experiences while also accommodating the multiple, intersecting identities of First Nations women (including Sistergirls). We understand the difficulty of being asked to somehow separate cultural identity from gender and sexuality, and the tension this can sometimes create in a person's sense of self.

ACON's work is underpinned by intersectionality, which we identify as the interconnectedness and compounding of identities or social categories, that can lead to multiple dimensions of exclusion or marginalisation. We strive to structure our programs to be attuned to the ways in which intersecting experiences affect our communities' health.

ACON as an organisation continually advocates for opportunities to bring sexuality and gender diverse communities together, because such events are crucial in fostering a sense of shared identity, community and resilience, and a key factor in mitigating poor mental health outcomes.

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We applaud any initiatives that support the regular gathering of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls in ways that are fully inclusive of their sexuality and gender diversity. We see an invaluable opportunity for the Institute to play a pivotal role in facilitating gatherings at a local and national level for these communities.

The significance of local insights in informing national priorities cannot be overstated and ACON is therefore supportive of meaningful co-design in the development of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action. We encourage the project to ensure that any proposed co-design approaches meaningfully engage Sistergirls and LGBTQ+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

The Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action's focus on effective practices in data collection, measurement, and evaluation also resonates with our own commitment to evidence-based strategies. We support the necessity of an accountability and evaluation approach. Government and stakeholders should be held accountable to community-determined outcomes, a principle deeply embedded in our work. This approach should involve frequent report backs to community.

We believe that having mechanisms in place to ensure transparency and accountability are essential for realising the desired outcomes of our projects and fostering trust within our communities. We set key deliverables through our funding agreements with stakeholders. These deliverables are designed to be ambitious, while also being realistic and achievable within specified time frames.

ACON regularly communicates its progress to its stakeholders and to the NSW government through periodic and annual reporting that tracks our progress over time, against official NSW Health data reporting, and against organisational outcome-based planning.

ACON employs dedicated staff to manage the organisations' data protection policies and practices, and we continually engage staff in learning and development relating to data protection and governance. We also have a Research Ethics Review Committee that considers the ethical implications of any research projects that seek to involve our communities.

We'd encourage the Institute to consider its own Ethics Review Committee with membership to include First Nations women community representatives, to ensure that principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty are adhered to in any research the Institute seeks to endorse.

We are supportive of a Framework for Action that meaningfully includes Sistergirls and LGBTQ+ First Nations women in its design, development, and evaluation. We are eager to collaborate further to advance the shared goals of improving wellbeing and fostering inclusivity, and seeking gender justice and equality for sexuality and gender diverse Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our support. We look forward to the positive impact that Wiyi Yani U Thangani will undoubtedly have on the lives of our sexuality and gender diverse First Nations women and girls. If you would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me at

Kind regards



Nicolas Parkhill AM
Chief Executive Officer