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The National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum submission to the design of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality and the establishment of a First Nations Gender Justice Institute.



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About the National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum

The National Forum was established in May 2012 and is the National Peak Body for Family Violence Prevention Services (FVPLS) around Australia that provides culturally safe and holistic services to First Nations people affected by family violence – predominantly women and their children. The National Forum provides expert national advice in areas of policy, planning and law reform, and advocates for safety and justice for First Nations people affected by family violence.

The National Forum represents 13-member Family Violence Prevention Legal Services (FVPLS) across Australia that provide culturally safe and specialist legal and non-legal assistance and support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander victim-survivors of family violence – predominately women and children. The national forum members are:

- Aboriginal Family Legal Service Western Australia (Perth Head Office, Broome, Carnarvon, Kununnura, Geraldton, Kalgoorlie, Port Hedland)
- Aboriginal Family Legal Service Southern Queensland (Roma)
- Binaal Billa Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (Forbes)
- Central Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Unit Aboriginal Corporation (Alice Springs Head Office, Tennant Creek)
- Djirra – formerly Aboriginal Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Victoria (Melbourne Head Office, Mildura, Gippsland, Barwon South-West, Bendigo and shortly also Echuca-Shepparton, La Trobe Valley and Ballarat)



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- Family Violence Legal Service Aboriginal Corporation (Port Augusta Head Office, Ceduna, Pt Lincoln)
- Many Rivers Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (Kempsey)
- Marninwarnitkura Family Violence Prevention Unit WA (Fitzroy Crossing)
- Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council Domestic and Family Violence Service (Alice Springs, NPY Tri-state Region)
- Queensland Indigenous Family Violence Legal Service (Cairns Head Office, Townsville, Rockhampton, Mount Isa, Brisbane)
- Thiyama-li Family Violence Service Inc. NSW (Moree Head Office, Bourke, Walgett)
- Warra-Warra Family Violence Prevention Legal Service (Broken Hill)
- North Australian Aboriginal Family Legal Service (Darwin Head Office, Katherine)

The National Forum works with its members, communities, governments, and other partners to raise awareness about family violence affecting First Nations people, and it also advocates for culturally safe legal and holistic responses to this issue. The National Forum provides a unified voice for its FVPLS members in areas of national policy, planning and law reform, and being a member of the national Coalition of Peaks. The National Forum is committed to the national Closing the Gap targets.

Our work is informed by evidence, and we aim to influence government policy, to advocate for First Nations people affected by family violence, and to advance the goals of the FVPLS sector.



The National Family Violence Prevention Legal Services Forum submission

The National Forum thanks the Australian Human Rights Commission for the opportunity to provide this submission in response to the development of the Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality (the Framework) and the establishment of a First Nations Gender Justice Institute at the Australian National University (the Institute). We note that the Framework and Institute build on the Wiyi Yan U Thangani Project and will progress and respond to the themes and priorities set out in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices): Securing our Rights, Securing our Future Report (2020) and Implementation Framework (2021). We note further that the AHRC's articulated approach to measurement and evaluation aims to bring together and respond to existing Wiyi Yani U Thangani ways of working and principles, and address the four key thematic areas, priorities and actions set out in the Implementation Framework (<https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/wiyi-yani-u-thangani-5>).

Our submission aims to support the Framework and Institute to work towards the right priorities, and ensure that both these mechanisms collect data, take action and measure progress against outcomes self-determined by First Nations women and girls. Our submission responds to the following themes:

- Measuring change outcomes
- Ensuring a strong accountability and evaluation approach
- Protecting and strengthening data sovereignty and governance



Theme 1: measuring change outcomes

What change do you want to see for First Nations women and girls, in all their diversity, with their families and communities, to live their lives in the way they want? What would you feel, see, hear, sense or collectively understand if this change was happening?

In our commitment to addressing family violence within Indigenous communities in Australia, we recognise the critical need to empower First Nations women and girls across diverse backgrounds. This vision is embedded in our collective efforts to build a society that respects Indigenous values, prioritises equity, and actively includes all. The Forum desires the following changes:

Equality and Justice. seeking practical changes where First Nations women and girls in Australia experience real equality and justice. Recent statistics indicate that Indigenous women in Australia are 32 times more likely to be hospitalised due to family violence. This highlights the urgent need for fair representation in decision-making forums and dismantling systemic discriminatory practices.

Access to Education and Opportunities. focused on removing barriers hindering access to quality education and diverse opportunities. Alarming data suggests that Indigenous girls face higher rates of school dropout and limited access to higher education. Our aim is to create tangible pathways for educational attainment, skill development, entrepreneurship, and career advancement for First Nations women and girls.



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Cultural Preservation and Pride. practical steps where First Nations women and girls in Australia can live authentically, embracing and celebrating their cultural heritage. Statistics indicate that cultural disconnection can contribute to mental health challenges, emphasising the need for initiatives that promote cultural preservation, language revitalisation, and instil a sense of pride in identity.

Health and Wellbeing. concrete improvements in health and well-being outcomes for First Nations women and girls in Australia. Indigenous women face higher rates of chronic health conditions and limited access to quality healthcare. Our vision includes tangible campaigns for improved healthcare accessibility, mental health support, and addressing existing health disparities within Indigenous communities.

Community Empowerment. empowering First Nations communities in Australia with practical initiatives. Data indicates persistent economic disparities, impacting women and girls disproportionately. We envision community-controlled projects, economic development efforts, and social programs specifically designed to address the unique needs of women and girls within our communities. Specifically, we consider community-controlled approaches to be in line with priority reform two of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

If these changes were happening in Australia, we consider that our community would witness a society characterised by:



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Tangible Cultural Resilience. actively supporting Indigenous traditions, flourishing languages, and tangible efforts by Indigenous women and girls in Australia to preserve and pass down their rich heritage.

Economic Empowerment. concrete economic opportunities and financial independence for First Nations women, contributing to the overall prosperity of our communities in Australia.

Practical Solidarity. a strong sense of interconnectedness and practical solidarity, where Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities collaborate in Australia to address common challenges and build a more inclusive future.

Safety and Security. a practical shift towards a society in Australia where First Nations women and girls feel safe, supported, and free from pervasive threats, allowing for their full participation in all aspects of life.

Our commitment to this vision is grounded in our work as an organisation. By advocating for these concrete changes, we aim to create a more just, inclusive, and culturally vibrant future for First Nations women and girls, where they can live their lives free from violence and in alignment with their unique cultural identities. The statistics underscore the urgency of these changes, and we believe the articulated changes will ensure a future that prioritises the wellbeing and empowerment of all Indigenous women and girls in Australia.



What practices and approaches are most effective in collecting data, measuring and evaluating change?

What are effective practices (data collection, measurement, and evaluation) for how to measure change outcomes across the community? The Forum considers that approaches and methodologies grounded in First Nations knowledge and cultures should be used when setting outcomes and measuring change. We consider strongly that the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls to construct knowledge in accordance with self-determined definitions of what is real and what is valuable is fundamental to the exercise of self-determination. To achieve this, we consider the following should be taken into account:

First, the values and worldview of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls should be embedded in how measures and outcomes are defined. We note that when it comes to developing outcome measures, there is a general mistrust by Indigenous communities towards externally imposed processes. In order to ensure self-determined participation in defining and measuring outcome measures, we believe that women and girls themselves need to be actively involved in defining and prioritising these measures indicators. As an extension of this point, when such outcome measures are being developed, we consider it important for the diverse reality of Indigenous women and girls to be reflected – measures must take into account geographic and cultural diversity amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls.



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Second, because language is a central system of how cultures code, create and transmit meaning, the language chosen to describe measures and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls will effectively shape the way they think about change outcomes. Outcomes should therefore have specific terminology and a preferred language for the purpose of describing and categorising outcomes and indicators as they relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. For example, traditional Aboriginal languages emphasise verbs, not nouns, and traditional philosophies are held deep within constructs that are neither written nor consistent with the patterns of dominant language.

Third, because what constitutes evidence and what counts as legitimate knowledge for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls – and indeed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals in general – will look vastly different than the construction of evidence in a Western paradigm, we consider that any evidence which informs outcome measures must first be underpinned by the following:

- *Cultural Protocols*. cultural competence in research: A critical review of Indigenous cultural competency frameworks" by Ewen et al. (2019) critically examines existing cultural competency frameworks, offering insights into their strengths and limitations. The article underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of cultural protocols in Indigenous research settings.



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- *Community-Controlled Approaches in line with priority reform two of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.* empowerment and Indigenous Australian communities: A systematic review" by Haswell et al. (2010) systematically reviews initiatives that empower Indigenous communities. The research explores the impact of community-controlled approaches on various social indicators, providing a comprehensive overview of effective strategies.
- *Two-Way Learning.* "Two-way learning: Unsettling and resetting the knowledge and power dynamic in community-based participatory research" by Smith et al. (2020) delves into the dynamics of two-way learning in research partnerships. The article emphasises the importance of mutual respect and shared knowledge creation in community-based participatory research.
- *Storytelling and Oral Histories.* "Aboriginal storytelling: An examination of its value for reconciliation education in Australia" by McGinty (2017) explores the educational value of Aboriginal storytelling. The article delves into how storytelling contributes to reconciliation efforts and cultural understanding.
- *Cultural Safety.* "Culturally safe healthcare in Indigenous populations: Theoretical and practical issues" by Kruske et al. (2006) discusses the theoretical foundations and practical implications of providing culturally safe healthcare to Indigenous populations. The article addresses challenges and proposes strategies for improving healthcare experiences.



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- *Local Indigenous Workforce.* "Indigenous employment and community economic development in Australia: A review of the literature" by Altman et al. (2018) reviews literature on Indigenous employment and its broader impact on community economic development. The article provides insights into successful strategies and challenges.
- *Artistic Expression.* "Art-making in community: Connections between self-determination and well-being" by McNamara et al. (2020) investigates the links between artistic expression, self-determination, and well-being in Indigenous communities. The article sheds light on the positive effects of art in promoting cultural resilience.
- *Holistic Wellbeing.* "Beyond Band-aids: Exploring the underlying social determinants of Aboriginal health" by Carson et al. (2007) goes beyond conventional health indicators, exploring the social determinants affecting Aboriginal health. The research provides a holistic perspective, emphasising the interconnectedness of various factors.
- *Cultural Mapping.* "Cultural mapping as a tool for identifying cultural assets for rural community and economic development" by Barth (2013) focuses on the practical application of cultural mapping in identifying and preserving cultural assets. The article discusses how mapping initiatives can contribute to community and economic development.



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- *Respecting Time Frames.* "Historical trauma as public narrative: A conceptual review of how history impacts present-day health" by Brave Heart (2003) is a seminal work that conceptualises historical trauma's impact on present-day health. The article explores the importance of acknowledging historical context in health interventions.
- *Reciprocal Accountability.* "Building collaborative research capacity in an Indigenous research organisation: A case study" by Walter et al. (2017) presents a case study on collaborative research capacity-building within an Indigenous organisation. The research explores the dynamics of reciprocal accountability and effective collaboration.

How do you want to see local change practices and data collection inform national priorities and achieve systemic outcomes, and how could this relate to the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality?

The Forum envisions local change practices and data collection informing national priorities and achieving systemic outcomes, particularly in alignment with the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality in the following ways:

- *Foundational Principles and Cultural Safety.* local change and data collection practices place a strong emphasis on aligning with the foundational principles



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of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework. this includes recognising the centrality of Indigenous-led/community controlled solutions, cultural integrity, and the right to self-determination. Cultural safety and sensitivity are paramount in local change practices and data collection, ensuring that methodologies respect diverse cultural contexts and honour the intersectionality of identities.

- *Centering Indigenous Women's Voices and Community-Controlled Strategies.* aligning with the framework, local change practices and data collection actively centre the voices of Indigenous women and girls in the design, implementation, and evaluation. Community-controlled strategies are seen as essential for fostering a sense of agency and addressing gender disparities at the grassroots level, contributing to the overarching goal of transformative change.
- *Holistic Approach and Intersectionality in Data Collection.* the holistic approach to well-being advocated by Wiyi Yani U Thangani is embraced ensuring that data collection goes beyond conventional measures. Intersectional data collection methods capture the diverse challenges faced by individuals within First Nations communities, providing a nuanced understanding that aligns with the framework's goals.
- *Advocacy for Systemic Change and Policy Coherence.* utilising data from local initiatives, local change and data collection practices support policy changes at the national level. This aligns with the framework's call for systemic change, contributing to policies that are coherent, responsive, and aligned with the aspirations outlined in Wiyi Yani U Thangani.



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- *Culturally Informed Data Representation and Trauma-Informed Approaches.* recognising the importance of culturally informed data representation, local change and data collection practices incorporate culturally relevant ways of presenting data. Additionally, trauma-informed approaches are employed, acknowledging the historical context of trauma within Indigenous communities and ensuring that change practices are sensitive to ongoing historical injustices.
- *Partnerships with Indigenous Organisations and Intersectoral Collaboration.* local change and data collection practices actively foster partnerships with local Indigenous organisations, aligning with the framework's emphasis on collaboration. This includes engaging with diverse stakeholders across sectors such as health, education, and justice to comprehensively address the multifaceted challenges faced by Indigenous women and girls. We note that priority reform 1 of the National Closing the Gap Agreement is centred on genuine shared decision making, and we consider that shared decision outcomes should be drawn on when communities decide how to invest funding provided to them.
- *Long-term Vision for Change and Cultural Continuity.* local change and data collection practices align with the framework's long-term vision for transformative change, contributing to sustained improvements in the lives of First Nations women and girls, and reflecting the framework's commitment to enduring impact. Cultural continuity is prioritised, recognising the intrinsic



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connection between cultural preservation and gender justice. In addition, we consider that the importance of local change and data collection practice must be demonstrated through feedback mechanisms that highlight the benefits of data collection in achieving stated outcomes.

- *Cultural Grounded Research Design and Preventing Violence.* local change and data collection practices ensure that research is culturally grounded, aligning with the framework's call for methodologies that honour Indigenous epistemologies. Local change practices are designed not only to address immediate challenges but also to contribute to preventing violence and promoting broader healing within Indigenous communities.
- *Data Sovereignty and Ownership and Adaptive Approaches.* acknowledging the framework's emphasis on data sovereignty, local change and data practices prioritise data ownership within Indigenous communities. Adaptive and iterative approaches, in alignment with the framework, recognise the need for flexibility in responding to evolving community needs, ensuring that local initiatives can evolve based on ongoing feedback.



Theme 2: ensuring a strong accountability and evaluation approach

Should government (and other stakeholders) be accountable to community determined outcomes? How can this be included in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality?

The question of government and other stakeholders being accountable to community-determined outcomes is crucial in the context of advancing the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality. The inclusion of accountability mechanisms aligns with the principles of self-determination and community-controlled strategies emphasised in the framework. The Forum considers accountability can be integrated into the framework in the following ways:

Establishment of Community Oversight Committees. these committees would consist of community representatives responsible for monitoring and ensuring accountability. Their role would include assessing whether government and stakeholder actions align with community-defined outcomes and addressing any disparities.

Clear articulation of community aspirations. ensure that the framework includes a clear articulation of community aspirations and priorities. This involves actively seeking input from diverse communities to understand their unique needs and visions for gender justice. By clearly defining these aspirations, the framework establishes a foundation for accountability.



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Participatory Budgeting and Resource Allocation. integrate the concept of participatory budgeting and resource allocation. The framework can advocate for processes that allow communities to have a direct say in how resources are allocated to initiatives related to gender justice and equality. This enhances transparency and ensures that community priorities receive adequate funding.

Co-Design of Policies and Programs. emphasise the co-design of policies and programs. The framework should encourage collaborative processes where communities actively participate in shaping the design of initiatives. This not only ensures cultural relevance but also establishes a sense of ownership, making accountability to community outcomes more intrinsic.

Community-controlled data governance. Highlight the importance of community-controlled data governance. The framework can advocate for the establishment of mechanisms that give communities control over their own data. This includes determining how data is collected, used, and shared, fostering a sense of empowerment and self-determination.

Community-controlled impact assessments. propose community-controlled impact assessments as a regular part of the policy and program cycle. This involves communities actively participating in evaluating the impact of initiatives on gender



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justice and equality. These assessments should be integrated into decision-making processes, ensuring ongoing accountability.

Incorporate Indigenous evaluation frameworks. acknowledge and incorporate Indigenous evaluation frameworks within the framework. Indigenous evaluation approaches, rooted in cultural values and traditions, provide holistic perspectives on outcomes. Integrating these frameworks ensures that assessments align with Indigenous worldviews and community-determined success.

Indicators rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems. advocate for the development of indicators rooted in Indigenous knowledge systems. The framework can call for the identification of indicators that align with cultural values, ensuring that the measurement of outcomes reflects the richness and diversity of Indigenous perspectives.

Mandatory impact reporting by stakeholders. propose mandatory impact reporting by government and stakeholders. The framework can advocate for regulations requiring regular reporting on the impact of policies and programs, particularly regarding their alignment with community-defined outcomes. This creates a formalised structure for accountability.

Cultural safety audits. integrate cultural safety audits into accountability mechanisms. These audits would assess the cultural competence of government and stakeholder initiatives, ensuring that services are delivered in a way that respects and promotes cultural safety for Indigenous communities.



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Community feedback platforms. promote the establishment of community feedback platforms. The framework can recommend the creation of accessible platforms where community members can provide ongoing feedback on the impact of initiatives. These platforms should be designed to be culturally sensitive and inclusive.

Advocacy for legislative amendments. ensure legislative amendments that embed the principles of accountability to community-determined outcomes are reflected in the framework. Legislative amendments can provide a robust foundation for ensuring sustained and systemic accountability.

Capacity building for community advocacy. include initiatives for capacity building focused on community advocacy. The framework should allocate resources and support to build the capacity of communities in effectively engaging with government and stakeholders, ensuring that their voices are not only heard but also influential in decision-making processes.

Community-driven policy reviews. propose community-driven policy reviews at regular intervals. The framework can recommend periodic assessments of policies related to gender justice and equality, with a focus on community-driven reviews. These reviews should actively involve communities in evaluating policy effectiveness.

Establishment of mediation processes. integrate the establishment of mediation processes within the framework. In cases of disagreements or conflicts between communities and government/stakeholders, having culturally appropriate mediation



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processes can provide a constructive space for resolution while maintaining the principles of self-determination.

Recognition of community protocols: recognise and respect community protocols for decision-making and accountability. The framework should acknowledge the diverse ways in which communities engage in decision-making and ensure that government and stakeholders respect and align with these protocols.

Community-controlled advocacy campaigns. encourage and support community-controlled advocacy campaigns. The framework should call for the allocation of resources for communities to engage in advocacy efforts, ensuring that they have the tools and support needed to hold government and stakeholders accountable to community-determined outcomes.

National framework for Indigenous data sovereignty. The framework should advocate for a national framework for Indigenous data sovereignty. This involves establishing guidelines and principles that recognise the rights of communities over their own data, fostering a sense of control and ownership that is integral to accountability.

Inclusion of cultural impact assessments. propose the inclusion of cultural impact assessments within policy development processes. These assessments would evaluate the potential cultural impact of policies on Indigenous communities, ensuring that they align with cultural values and do not have unintended negative consequences.



What does the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality and First Nations Gender Justice Institute need to do to incorporate diverse lived experiences and to ensure that no one misses out on opportunities to contribute to and hear this work?

The Forum considers the following should be undertaken to incorporate diverse lived experiences into the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality, along with the First Nations Gender Justice Institute. It considers that by incorporating these detailed strategies, the Framework and the Institute can create a more nuanced, inclusive, and representative initiative that reflects the rich tapestry of diverse lived experiences within First Nations communities.

Demographic mapping and analysis. conduct a comprehensive demographic mapping and analysis to identify and understand the unique characteristics, needs, and challenges of different demographic groups of women and girls within First Nations communities. This involves examining factors such as age, location, cultural background, socioeconomic status, and gender identity.

Tailored outreach strategies. develop tailored outreach strategies for specific demographic groups. Implement targeted communication plans that use culturally appropriate channels to reach diverse audiences, including print media, community radio, and digital platforms.

Elder-led consultations. facilitate elder-led consultations that prioritise the wisdom and experiences of older community members. This ensures that the framework is



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grounded in intergenerational knowledge and respects the contributions of Elders to the community.

Community-based research partnerships. form community-based research partnerships to conduct in-depth studies on specific issues affecting different communities of women and girls. Collaborate with local researchers and community members to ensure that research questions align with community priorities.

Accessible technology initiatives. implement accessible technology initiatives that bridge digital divides. Provide resources and support for communities with limited digital access, ensuring that online engagement does not exclude those with varying levels of technological infrastructure.

Indigenous sign language inclusion. recognise and include Indigenous sign languages in engagement efforts. Ensure that individuals who use sign languages have equal opportunities to participate by providing sign language interpreters and accessible materials.

Inclusive storytelling workshops. conduct inclusive storytelling workshops that empower community members to share their experiences through diverse mediums such as written narratives, visual arts, and oral storytelling. This approach captures a broad spectrum of lived experiences.

Training on trauma-informed practices. provide training on trauma-informed practices for those engaging with communities. Equip facilitators and researchers with the skills



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to create safe and supportive environments that acknowledge and respect the impact of historical trauma on lived experiences.

Remote community engagement strategies. develop strategies for engaging with remote and isolated communities. This may include mobile consultation units, teleconferencing, and utilising local community leaders as liaisons to facilitate meaningful engagement.

Customised capacity building workshops. offer customised capacity-building workshops based on identified community needs. These workshops can focus on enhancing community members' skills in advocacy, research, and effective engagement in the framework's development and implementation.

Diversity and inclusion training for stakeholders. provide diversity and inclusion training for stakeholders involved in the framework. Ensure that government representatives, researchers, and organisational partners understand the importance of inclusivity and cultural competency in their interactions with communities.

Public symposiums on gender justice. host public symposiums on gender justice that are open to diverse community members. These events provide platforms for community members to express their views and contribute to the framework in a public forum.

Collaborative data governance protocols. develop collaborative data governance protocols. Work with communities to establish agreements on how data will be



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collected, shared, and utilised, ensuring that communities maintain control over their own information.

Intersectoral workshops. facilitate intersectoral workshops that bring together representatives from health, education, justice, and other sectors to discuss gender justice. This holistic approach recognises that diverse lived experiences are influenced by various aspects of community life.

Regular feedback mechanisms. establish regular and accessible feedback mechanisms throughout the framework's development. Create online platforms, community bulletin boards, and physical suggestion boxes to collect ongoing input from diverse community members.

Community-controlled monitoring and evaluation. implement community-controlled monitoring and evaluation processes. Empower communities to actively assess the framework's impact over time, ensuring that diverse perspectives are integral to evaluating the success and shortcomings of the initiatives.

Theme 3: protecting and strengthening data sovereignty and governance

How can we ensure safe and considered access and use of the database for Indigenous women and girls and How can the First Nations Gender Justice Institute support First Nations women and girls to access, contribute to and use the database?



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Ensuring the safe and considered access and use of Indigenous databases for Indigenous women and girls involves a thoughtful and comprehensive approach. The Forum believes that to realise this, the following should be taken into account:

Tailored consent processes for data collection. develop culturally sensitive and gender-specific informed consent processes explicitly designed for Indigenous women and girls. Ensure that consent forms and procedures acknowledge the unique cultural context, potential vulnerabilities, and specific considerations related to gender.

Gender-inclusive database design. incorporate a gender-inclusive perspective in the database design, recognising the diverse experiences of Indigenous women and girls. Collect disaggregated data to capture the nuances of their experiences, ensuring that the database reflects their unique needs and challenges.

Community-owned governance structures. establish community-led governance structures with a specific focus on ensuring the representation and voice of Indigenous women and girls. Formulate advisory committees or councils that actively participate in decision-making processes related to the database, emphasising gender equity. In this regard, we call for funding to ACCOs, specifically FVPLS's to ensure effective First Peoples' Data Sovereignty and substantially more comprehensive datasets. FVPLS's have insufficient funding to collect the data needed to inform systemic change. Trends, statistics and stories about Indigenous women's experiences and the solutions that make a difference for our women are incomplete because:

- ACCOs are told by funders what we must report on; and



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- ACCOs have insufficient resources to record, assess and report on our women's experiences and the solutions that make a difference for our women.

Cultural safety measures. implement robust cultural safety measures within the database infrastructure. This includes the use of culturally appropriate language, imagery, and symbols. Ensure that the database environment is culturally safe and fosters a sense of belonging for Indigenous women and girls.

Gender-responsive data protection. prioritise gender-responsive data protection measures. Develop encryption protocols, access controls, and data storage practices that specifically address the heightened risks and vulnerabilities that Indigenous women and girls may face concerning the confidentiality of their information.

Community-defined purpose and benefits. collaborate with Indigenous women and girls to define the purpose and benefits of the database from their perspectives. Ensure that the goals of the database align with community-defined priorities, contributing directly to the well-being and empowerment of Indigenous women and girls.

Culturally competent data administrators. ensure that data administrators and personnel responsible for database management undergo specific training in cultural competency with a focus on gender considerations. This training should address the unique cultural and gender-related aspects relevant to Indigenous women and girls.

Inclusive data collection methods. employ inclusive data collection methods that respect cultural norms and preferences. Offer flexibility in data collection approaches,



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such as oral histories or storytelling, recognising that conventional methods may not capture the full range of Indigenous women's and girls' experiences.

Trauma-informed data practices. adopt trauma-informed data practices, recognising the potential impact of historical trauma on Indigenous women and girls. Implement protocols for handling sensitive information with care, and provide support services for those who may experience emotional distress related to data collection.

Empowerment through data literacy. develop initiatives to empower Indigenous women and girls with data literacy skills. Provide opportunities for education and training that enable them to interpret and utilise data, fostering a sense of ownership and agency in the use of information related to their communities.

Periodic gender impact assessments. conduct periodic gender impact assessments of the database. This involves evaluating how data collection and usage may impact Indigenous women and girls, both positively and negatively. Adjust database practices based on assessment findings to mitigate any adverse effects.

Gender-specific access protocols. establish gender-specific access protocols within the database. Provide options for Indigenous women and girls to control who has access to their data, ensuring that they have agency over the information shared and the purposes for which it is used.

Continuous consultation and feedback mechanisms. implement continuous consultation and feedback mechanisms specifically tailored for Indigenous women



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and girls. Regularly seek input on database practices, inquire about their experiences, and make adjustments based on their insights to ensure ongoing relevance and safety.

Gender-responsive reporting. develop gender-responsive reporting mechanisms that highlight the unique contributions and challenges faced by Indigenous women and girls. Ensure that reports generated from the database reflect the gender-specific outcomes and impacts of initiatives.

Gender-equal access to database benefits. enforce policies that ensure gender-equal access to the benefits derived from the database. Monitor and address any disparities in how information is utilised or how outcomes positively impact Indigenous women and girls, fostering equity in the distribution of benefits.

By focusing on these targeted measures, the Forum considers that the database environment will not only respects the unique cultural and gender-related aspects of Indigenous women and girls but actively contributes to their empowerment and well-being in Australia. Regular community engagement and ongoing refinement of practices will be crucial to achieving these objectives.

How do we ensure that databases are used and owned by First Nations women and girls?

We consider that approaching the use and ownership of a living database by First Nations women and girls in the ways articulated below will amplify their voices, address gender-specific considerations, and foster a sense of active data ownership.



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Women and girls-centric database design. tailor the database design to specifically address the needs and interests of First Nations women and girls. Ensure that user interfaces, data collection methods, and reporting mechanisms are gender-sensitive and culturally relevant.

Gender-inclusive governance structures. establish governance structures that prioritise the inclusion of First Nations women and girls. This may involve creating a dedicated committee or advisory group focused on gender-specific considerations within the database's decision-making processes.

Community-led data ownership agreements. develop community-led data ownership agreements that explicitly acknowledge and enforce the rights of First Nations women and girls. These agreements should outline the community's collective ownership of data while recognising the unique contributions and considerations of women and girls.

Participatory ethical review boards. include First Nations women and girls in the establishment and operation of ethical review boards. This ensures that ethical considerations are sensitive to gender-specific nuances and aligned with the values and priorities of First Nations women and girls.



End notes

The national forum thanks the AHRC for the opportunity to provide this submission.

Please contact Priya Devendran, **Senior Policy Officer**, National **Family Violence Prevention and Legal Service Forum** on pdevendran@qifvls.com.au

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