

# ANROWS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL RESEARCH  
ORGANISATION FOR WOMEN'S SAFETY  
*to Reduce Violence against Women & their Children*

Social Justice Team  
Australian Human Rights Commission  
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**Re: Framework for action and First Nations Gender Justice Institute call for submissions**

Dear Commissioner,

ANROWS thanks the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC) for the opportunity to respond to the call for submissions to contribute 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.

ANROWS is an independent, not-for-profit company established as an initiative under Australia's *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022* (the National Plan). Our primary function is to build the evidence base that supports ending violence against women and children in Australia. ANROWS is embedded in the National Plan architecture and will continue to deliver and develop this function across the next decade under the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032*. Every aspect of our work is motivated by the right of women and children to live free from violence and in safe communities. We recognise, respect and respond to diversity among women and children, and we are committed to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

Primary (core) funding for ANROWS is jointly provided by the Commonwealth and all state and territory governments of Australia. ANROWS is also, from time to time, directly commissioned to undertake work for an individual jurisdiction, and successfully tenders for research and evaluation work. ANROWS is registered as a harm prevention charity and deductible gift recipient, governed by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission (ACNC).

We have focused on select questions from the call for submissions where we identified we could add the most value. We have drawn on our experience designing and delivering evaluations, the importance of accountability to community determined outcomes, working with and incorporating the voices of lived expertise, and suggestions for supporting and strengthening data sovereignty and governance. We have provided examples of ANROWS projects that enliven and support our feedback and shared relevant resources. We would be very pleased to assist the Committee further, as required.

Yours sincerely



**Jane Lloyd**  
Acting Chief Executive Officer

30<sup>th</sup> January 2024

## Overall comments

ANROWS is grateful to have the opportunity to contribute to the design of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action and the establishment of a First Nations Gender Justice Institute. We commend the AHRC for embedding data collection and evaluation planning from this early stage and for highlighting the importance of accountability and the protection and strengthening of data sovereignty and governance, all of which will no doubt be critical for success.

In our submission, we have responded to questions that align with ANROWS's experience and expertise with examples and have provided suggestions for non-ANROWS frameworks and resources that the AHRC may find useful. We have provided responses to the following questions:

- In your experience what practices and approaches are most effective for collecting data, measuring and evaluating change?
- 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?
- 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?
- Do you have any additional thoughts, views or experiences about strengthening data sovereignty and government that could be included in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality and First Nations Gender Justice Institute's work?

ANROWS is available for further consultation on request.

## Responses to individual questions

### **In your experience, what practices and approaches are most effective for collecting data, measuring and evaluating change?**

ANROWS has experience undertaking evaluation work in the domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) sector for a diverse range of clients from the private sector, national, state and local governments, and service providers. ANROWS supports organisations to develop practice-based evidence of "what works" in preventing and responding to DFSV within their own work. In 2020, ANROWS published a series of quick guides that can support any organisation to apply evaluation concepts, frameworks and skills in their own setting and context (Koens & Nannes, 2020). Lloyd et al.'s (2023) *The Australian National Research Agenda to End Violence against Women and Children (ANRA) 2023–2028*, published by ANROWS, details ways of working including:

- creating space for pilots and evaluations of community-led interventions
- making better use of existing data
- listening to children when they are children
- working with the knowledge of experts by experience
- valuing practitioners' expertise.

In our experience, we have found that participatory evaluation methods and culturally safe and trauma-informed approaches are highly effective in collecting data and measuring and evaluating change. These methods ensure that the perspectives and insights of First Nations women's

knowledge and cultures are not only heard but also integral to the process of setting outcomes and measuring change.

### **Participatory evaluation research methods**

ANROWS's dedicated evaluation team has expertise in conducting participatory evaluations that are adaptive and collaborative by design. Participatory evaluation involves the evaluator and stakeholders working in partnership (Koens & Nannes, 2020; Sette, 2020). The application of participatory methods by ANROWS's evaluation team encourages stakeholders to exchange ideas, critically reflect and contribute to the design, implementation and evaluation of projects and adapt practices and tools throughout the process. The active participation of services, funders and communities in the evaluation process promotes ownership, relevance and uptake of findings. Examples of good participatory practice include:

- involving stakeholders at multiple levels (program staff, management, funders and clients) in the evaluation
- involving stakeholders in all stages of the evaluation from design to report writing
- responding to the needs and concerns of all participants, including information needs. For example, providing progress updates and information about changes to the design or implementation of the evaluation.

An adaptive and collaborative approach to evaluation enables participants to meet changing priorities and conditions throughout implementation. In practice, this means taking an approach that:

- uses participatory planning at the beginning of a project to ensure collective understanding of the approach, understands data limitations and develops fit-for-purpose plans and frameworks
- plans for a mixed methods approach so that, in the event that one data source does not yield the expected sample size or depth of data, other data collection methods can be expanded to address any gaps
- incorporates capacity-building approaches to support partners to use evidence for continuous improvement and build evaluative mindsets.

### **Culturally safe approaches**

ANROWS, across all projects and partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, communities and organisations, works to uphold cultural safety. Culturally safe approaches feature many of the same characteristics of participatory approaches such as genuine partnership and involvement of key stakeholders throughout the entire process and throughout all aspects of the evaluation including the development of the theories/stories of change, the development of the ethics application, data collection, and analysis and report writing, including preparing recommendations.

Western research methods and approaches are often not appropriate for use in First Nations contexts. Resources developed for and by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can respond to and meet community needs and expectations. Several high-quality resources developed for and by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples exist, and their use may increase engagement and, ultimately, the success of evaluations. For example, the First Nations Cultural Safety Framework produced by the Australian Evaluation Society (AES) was developed through a co-design process with a reference group that consisted of members of the AES Indigenous Culture and Diversity Committee and representatives from other AES committees (Gollan & Stacey, 2021). It includes practical guidance on the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in the evaluation process and what contributes to culturally safe evaluation in all phases of the evaluation process, from design through to implementation, reporting, and translating the learnings into policy and practice.

The First Nations Ripple Mapping Tool and the Impact Yarns Tool, both available on the Kowa website (Kowa, n.d.), collectively form a robust framework that not only captures the nuanced experiences of First Nations women and girls but also aligns with their values, contributing to a more accurate and meaningful measurement of change outcomes.

Existing guidelines and standards for conducting research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples include:

- the *AIATSIS Code of Ethics for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research* (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies [AIATSIS], 2020)
- the *Ethical Conduct in Research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and Communities* (National Health and Medical Research Council [NHMRC], 2018).

Culturally safe practice informs how research and evaluation is conducted and how findings and recommendations are communicated. For example, in November 2016, in partnership with the Wuchopperen Health Service and Cairns Regional Domestic Violence Service, ANROWS held yarning circles to discuss Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and community responses to violence against women. In August 2020, ANROWS held a webinar on *Understanding the Role of Law and Culture in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities in Responding to and Preventing Family Violence* (ANROWS, 2020). The panel included Aboriginal women (Dr Victoria Hovane and Donella Raye) and researchers and academics who experienced working in a culturally responsive way with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities (Dr Harry Blagg and Dr Tamara Tulich).

Additionally, ANROWS's approach to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities has included:

- establishing a project advisory committee with appropriate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation
- seeking input and approval of the evaluation tools and processes from the Aboriginal communities before data is collected
- obtaining ethics approval from an appropriate Human Rights Ethics Committee
- ensuring that the budget includes catering and room hire costs and these services be procured from Aboriginal-led organisations
- feeding back the aggregated findings directly to the organisations
- listening to feedback and engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory group members in decisions around Indigenous data, for example, in the redevelopment of questions for the Indigenous Module of the 2021 National Community Attitudes Survey (NCAS), and in the development of the 2021 NCAS Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Analysis Plan.

### **Trauma-informed approaches**

Trauma-informed approaches are important when evaluating programs aimed at reducing violence. ANROWS has commissioned a range of research projects which contribute to current evidence about trauma-informed approaches including the *Women's Input into a Trauma-Informed Systems Model of Care in Health Settings (The WITH Study; Hegarty et al., 2017)*, *Establishing the Connection: Interventions Linking Service Responses for Sexual Assault with Drug or Alcohol Use/Abuse: Final Report* (Stathopoulos & Jenkinson, 2016) and *The Effectiveness of Crisis and Post-Crisis Responses for Victims and Survivors of Sexual Violence: An Overview of Findings from Reviews* (Coates et al., 2022).

Key principles emerging from the literature about what a trauma-informed approach means include:

- recognising that DFSV is prevalent across Australian communities and therefore evaluation participants may be impacted by trauma
- recognising that evaluation processes can trigger trauma responses
- creating an evaluation environment where people can participate without their experiences of trauma being a barrier to their equitable participation
- understanding the risk of perpetuating trauma through evaluation and mitigating impacts by handing power over experiences back to those who have experienced trauma
- creating a safe environment not only through data collection, but also in planning phases and reporting and dissemination.

Examples of practical steps include:

- engaging a paid panel of lived experience advisors across the evaluation to review the approach, data collection tools and reporting from a trauma-informed lens
- ensuring appropriate supports are provided as part of all data collection (i.e. including support services in surveys and participant information sheets)
- ensuring the evaluation team are skilled in trauma-informed approaches, including recognising the signs of trauma and responding appropriately
- designing flexible data collection approaches, allowing for adaptations for particular communities or groups of participants, including removal of potentially distressing questions
- being prepared to respond to distress through mechanisms such as distress protocols.

### **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?**

Government accountability to community determined outcomes is critical and evaluations are one method of ensuring governments are held to account.

One approach that might be considered in the framework for action is a call for a commitment to accountability by relevant stakeholders, including government. ANROWS's approach to working with First Nations communities and organisations as a non-First Nations research organisation is informed by the Warawarni-gu Guma Statement (Douglas et al., 2018). Developed in 2018 with a forum of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates at the ANROWS National Research Conference, the statement provides an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective on domestic, family and sexual violence and a pathway for working respectfully with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that ANROWS has accepted and committed to upholding.

The Warawarni-gu Guma Statement continues to guide our work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, evaluation and research. ANROWS works to:

- uphold the political integrity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their right to self-determination as established under the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (United Nations [UN], 2007)
- be informed by, and promotes, strengths-based perspectives on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- acknowledge the heterogeneity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

Additionally, ANROWS convenes regular meetings with leading Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander researchers who provide direct feedback about ANROWS's work and hold ANROWS to

account for our commitments. A similar approach could be taken by the institute to maintain its own accountability and to promote accountability from other stakeholders.

### **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?**

To effectively incorporate diverse lived experiences and ensure that no one misses out on opportunities to contribute to and hear the work of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action and the First Nations Gender Justice Institute, the inclusion of varied perspectives, particularly from victim-survivors of domestic, family and sexual violence, should be prioritised.

ANROWS's commitment to working alongside lived experience experts, and drawing on the insights of women with lived experience to inform our work, includes taking specific actions such as:

- working with women with lived experience as *remunerated* advisors to draw on their expertise in the design and implementation of our evaluation work. ANROWS seeks this input to ensure that evaluations are trauma informed and that the input of women with lived experience is appropriately considered and incorporated throughout
- facilitating workshops and consultations with advisors related to the development of theories of change to provide feedback on appropriate and ethical processes, the appropriateness of the evaluation tools and templates, and to provide reflections on evaluation findings and implications.

Our commitment to collaboration and inclusivity extends throughout our organisation, emphasising the importance of diverse voices in shaping our evaluation methodologies and research practices. A recent ANROWS publication, *Towards Meaningful Engagement: Key Findings for Survivor Co-Production of Public Policy on Gender-Based Violence* (Wheildon & ANROWS, 2023) outlines five key recommendations for policy makers seeking to incorporate lived expertise. They are:

- 1) Independence in co-production:
  - Support and encourage survivors' independence.
  - Engage survivor networks respecting their autonomy.
- 2) Funding for survivor networks:
  - Contribute funding to independent survivor networks.
  - Provide training and ongoing support for co-production.
- 3) Prioritise marginalised communities:
  - Prioritise co-production with survivors from marginalised communities.
  - Establish survivor networks and tailor mechanisms to their needs.
- 4) Training and support for survivors:
  - Develop induction and training for survivors in policy and co-production.
  - Provide trauma-aware support and utilise existing networks.
- 5) Policymaker training:
  - Ensure policymakers are trained in co-production benefits.
  - Encourage risk taking and power sharing.
  - Provide training in trauma-aware practice and ongoing mental health support.

## **Do you have any additional thoughts, views or experiences about strengthening data sovereignty and government that could be included in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality and First Nations Gender Justice Institute's work?**

Regarding the enhancement of data sovereignty and governance within the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action and the First Nations Gender Justice Institute, it is important to emphasise the importance of each stakeholder contributing to First Nations data sovereignty.

Indigenous data sovereignty is an important issue for government to pursue with Indigenous leaders, given the potential harm to Indigenous peoples. Work needs to be done to translate and build on the 2018 National Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit's work in order to have safe protocols in place in all settings (Maiaam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective & Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, 2018). For example, data that is routinely collected from Indigenous peoples as part of government-funded population surveys such as the Personal Safety Survey (PSS) and the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) are typically made publicly available, for example, via the Australian Data Archive (ADA). The ADA and other organisations that make Indigenous data available need to have a protocol in place that ensures sharing of data is not harmful to Indigenous peoples.

ANROWS recommends consideration of the Maiaam nayri Wingara principles developed at the inaugural National Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit in 2018 by delegates (Maiaam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective & Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, 2018). The delegates asserted the right to:

- exercise control of the data ecosystem including creation, development, stewardship, analysis, dissemination and infrastructure
- data that is contextual and disaggregated
- data that is relevant and empowers sustainable self-determination and effective self-governance
- data structures that are accountable to Indigenous peoples and First Nations
- data that is protective and respects our individual and collective interests.

Exercising Indigenous data governance enables Indigenous peoples and their representative or governing bodies to accurately reflect their stories. It provides the necessary tools to identify what works, what doesn't work, and why. Effective Indigenous data governance empowers Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to make the best decisions to support their communities and people in the ways that meet their developmental needs and aspirations.

There are existing frameworks that can uphold data sovereignty such as the use of the OCCAAARS Framework for First Nations Data Sovereignty (Kowa, n.d.), which addresses the calls to support the movement of First Nations Data Sovereignty from theory into practice for both Community and others. It is a conceptual framework for researching, evaluating and designing First Nations programs, initiatives and organisations.

OCCAAARS Framework elements for consideration:

- Ownership
- Control
- Custodianship
- Accessibility
- Accountability to First Nations
- Amplify the voice of the community

- **Relevant and reciprocal**
- **Sustainable self-determining**



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