

8 November 2024

Ms Maddy Crowe  
SNAICC Secretariat  
National Family Safety Plan  
SNAICC – National Voice for our Children  
PO Box 1144  
Collingwood VIC 3066

**Via email:** [familyafetyplan@snaicc.org.au](mailto:familyafetyplan@snaicc.org.au)

## ANGLICARE WA RESPONSE: NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER FAMILY SAFETY PLAN

Dear Ms Crowe,

Anglicare WA is pleased to make the following submission with reference to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan (Family Safety Plan).

Anglicare WA is a leading not-for-profit organisation in Western Australia that reaches over 82,000 people each year in times of need by providing support, counselling, accommodation, and advocacy for people impacted by poverty, homelessness, domestic violence, grief, mental health and other forms of crisis or trauma.

We have a long history of working closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as clients, advisors, and partners in social change. We are proud of our history and of the support we provide to nearly 7,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the State each year.<sup>1</sup> We also recognise that our organisation, just like our community and our country, still has a long way to go.

Our vision is a just and fair Western Australia where everyone can thrive. Working towards this vision requires us to directly challenge the barriers to thriving experienced by Aboriginal people across Western Australia and to drive positive outcomes with Aboriginal clients. That is why Anglicare WA continues to work towards the goal of Reconciliation, as per our [Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan \(RAP\)](#), and actively promotes the following principles and practices in all our work:

- Acknowledgement and respect for Aboriginal peoples as the original owners of Australia.
- Acknowledgement of Aboriginal peoples' right to self-determination as per the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

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<sup>1</sup> In WA, the term Aboriginal is used more often than Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and/or First Nations. Throughout the remainder of the document, the term Aboriginal is meant to be inclusive of Torres Strait Islanders.

- Strengthening of our relationship with Aboriginal people and communities.
- Recognition and valuing of the importance of Aboriginal Lore, cultural beliefs, traditions, and ways of being, doing, and knowing.
- Striving for social justice with Aboriginal people by continually improving service delivery and insisting on equity in all aspects of our work.
- Application of a principle of empowerment in all Anglicare WA programs and activities.

The discussion points and recommendations contained within the submission are informed by our reconciliation journey and collated from practice areas across Anglicare WA, centring the views and responses of Aboriginal frontline workers and practice leaders.

We thank you for the opportunity to share our insights. Please direct any enquiries to [karen.aiesi@anglicarewa.org.au](mailto:karen.aiesi@anglicarewa.org.au) or call 08 9263 2059.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M Glasson', written in a cursive style.

**Mark Glasson**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

# ANGLICARE WA RESPONSE: NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER FAMILY SAFETY PLAN

## OVERVIEW

Family and domestic violence (FDV) is a major health, welfare, and social issue that affects many Australians of all ages and backgrounds. However, FDV predominantly affects women and children, with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children being disproportionately affected.<sup>2</sup>

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's experiences of violence are often exacerbated by the very systems and services that are supposed to assist them due to a lack of culturally informed responses. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are also less likely to seek help or report violence because of a mistrust of government authorities and mainstream services.<sup>3</sup>

Anglicare WA recognises the role that it and other mainstream service providers must play in addressing these compounding issues facing the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. We therefore provide the following recommendations in response to **Question 4: How can governments and mainstream services best support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (including workforce and clients), services and solutions?**

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### EMBED THE PRINCIPLES AND PURPOSES OF RECONCILIATION INTO ORGANISATIONAL STRATEGY, GOVERNANCE, AND CULTURE.

We believe that reconciliation is everyone's responsibility. It is imperative to building respectful and trusting relationships with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and providing culturally informed responses to their experiences of violence.

Anglicare WA's reconciliation journey formally started in 2002 with the formation of an Aboriginal Reference Group, which later became the Aboriginal Elders Council, to enable insightful conversations with the Aboriginal community. Since then, our organisation has grown and evolved in our commitment to reconciliation.

We are now implementing our new Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) (2023-26), which is our third RAP and our second Stretch RAP. Finalised with the involvement of Anglicare WA staff, Board, and our Aboriginal Advisory Group (formerly the Aboriginal Elders Council), our Stretch RAP has a focus on:

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<sup>2</sup> In WA Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women accounted for 68 per cent of hospitalisations due to FDV in 2022, the highest since 2005 (72.1%). [Duncan, A., Kiely, D., and Salazar, S., \(2022\), 2022 Women's Report Card: An indicator report of Western Australian women's progress.](#)

<sup>3</sup> Commonwealth of Australia Department of Social Services (2022). [National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032](#), p.72

- ensuring our services are accessible and culturally safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- seeking to deepen and develop stronger relationships with Aboriginal organisations through genuine partnerships and offers of support and guidance when and if needed;
- providing opportunities for Aboriginal employment and career advancement; and
- exploring the possibility of transitioning some of our services to be Aboriginal led.

Our reconciliation journey and current Stretch RAP provides insights that governments and mainstream services can draw upon.

In support of the commitments outlined in our Stretch RAP, each of our place-based services will have a local RAP engagement plan which will seek to actively involve the local voices of Aboriginal people in the design and delivery of services.

In addition to our Aboriginal Advisory Group, our Aboriginal Engagement Team provides guidance and support to Anglicare WA's reconciliation action planning. The Aboriginal Engagement Team also ensures that strategic focus and all areas and levels of the organisation are deeply informed by the voices and perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Governance and reporting are critical to ensuring that our Stretch RAP is embedded in organisational culture and supports positive outcomes. Its implementation is regularly monitored through organisational performance and accountability mechanisms that promote transparency and create time and space for all Anglicare WA staff to improve their participation in reconciliation.

### Insights from Anglicare WA staff

"Anglicare WA is doing stuff that is ahead of the sector. We have cultural governance because Aboriginal people make decisions as a collective. Setting up the [Aboriginal Advisory Group], which feeds into the Board and Executive, ensures we're supported in the decisions we make. It's an advisory group that has teeth. [There is] space for truth-telling and speaking courageously."

"You first have to have cultural awareness otherwise people will not go on the journey. You don't know what you don't know but then you can't unlearn what you know."

"[Build] the cultural intelligence of the organisation before making big decisions to make sure we walk with community."

"Reconciliation moves at the speed of trust."

## **BUILD RESPECTFUL AND TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS.**

Anglicare WA's success as a provider of services to people across Western Australia is largely determined by our ability to establish and sustain relationships with the people we serve, with other service providers and within the communities in which we work.

Without trust, respect, compassion and knowledge of culture, we are not able to meet the needs of Aboriginal clients and communities. We need to engage meaningfully with Aboriginal stakeholders to ensure that our services are culturally informed and appropriate.

Anglicare WA is committed to building strong and meaningful relationships between Aboriginal peoples and other Australians. We see great value in strengthening those relationships as they will provide more appropriate and inclusive services to Aboriginal communities. Building strong relationships with Aboriginal peoples and communities will provide an inclusive and informed environment in which healing and reconciliation can take place.

### **Insights from Anglicare WA staff**

"Healing and truth-telling are pivotal for any Aboriginal community to move forward."

"We're a very relational people. If you can't relate on a personal level, we'll find it difficult to trust you, and your ability to influence, manage, and guide us diminishes."

"We're human beings, not human doings. How do we want to be in the world? We want to be trustworthy and trusted."

## **ENSURE SERVICES ARE ACCESSIBLE AND CULTURALLY SAFE FOR ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLE.**

Anglicare WA offers a range of FDV services to assist victim survivors of FDV. We also work with perpetrators of violence. In the 2023/24 FY, 4,022 people were supported by FDV services, of which 1,015 (25 per cent), were Aboriginal. When this data is broken down by region, the client cohort of our FDV services in the North West is disproportionately Aboriginal people, echoing broader data trends of Aboriginal overrepresentation among those experiencing violence.

Our place-based and person-centred approach means the unique needs of our clients are always at the forefront of our work. We recognise that to deliver services in Aboriginal communities we must establish strong local relationships. These relationships are developed slowly and gradually, demonstrating constancy and establishing trust, waiting to be invited in and then allowing the community to lead the way.

Building a culturally intelligent workforce is also a critical component. Anglicare WA has developed training programs and resources to cultivate cultural competence and sensitivity among staff members so that staff can effectively engage with Aboriginal service users in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner.

In alignment with our local RAP engagement plans, Anglicare WA has many services that are collaborating effectively with local Aboriginal peoples in the design, development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of services.

Embedding Aboriginal culture into the design and use of built spaces (i.e., sites/offices where services are delivered) is also important to ensuring cultural safety and accessibility, and something that Anglicare WA can improve on.<sup>4</sup>

Examples of some of our services that have adapted to meet the needs of Aboriginal peoples and communities and ensure accessibility include:<sup>5</sup>

- Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) Kalgoorlie
- Kimberley Sexual Abuse Prevention and Support
- Family Domestic Violence Response Service
- Kutjungka Youth – Indigenous Australians Health Program.

Anglicare WA also invests in Aboriginal consultants to better inform our practices and considerations around what complimentary services can be provided (e.g., traditional healing practices) to supplement existing services.

However, providing accessible and culturally safe services does not mean mainstream organisations need to run services that look exactly like those of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs). Not all Aboriginal people will access services in the same way. Rather, mainstream organisations should still play to their strengths while being accessible and culturally safe to provide Aboriginal communities with the opportunity of choice.

This is also important in small communities where people would rather access a mainstream service that is not connected to their family or kin instead of an ACCO. The anonymity and confidentiality that mainstream organisations can provide is valued and can make small communities feel safe.

It is important to note that constraints within funding contracts can inadvertently create barriers to providing culturally safe and accessible services due to prescriptive activities and inflexible service models and outcomes. Therefore, the tender process, outcomes commissioning, and reporting requirements must also be culturally secure.

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<sup>4</sup> [Ruah's Centre for Women & Children](#) is a good example of how incorporating Aboriginal culture into the design and use of the built environment enables accessibility and cultural safety.

<sup>5</sup> For further details, please see [Anglicare WA's 2019-2022 Stretch RAP](#).

### Insights from Anglicare WA staff

“There needs to be pressure put on organisations to ensure that they've got activity around supporting Aboriginal people, especially when the demographics are high (for the services accessed).”

“Whatever our vision is we need to reflect it within our services. A lot of organisations don't reflect these values into their workplace.”

### Insights from Anglicare WA staff

“The tender process needs to incorporate social justice, human rights principles, and international human rights obligations into their criteria.”

“We're getting better at it, but we are bound to clinical foundations...and we probably need to be better at how we recognise the non-clinical side of things and how that might work in conjunction with the clinical side of things.”

“We need to ask ourselves, why are we delivering a particular service in a particular way and could it be done in a more culturally appropriate way. We need to ask ourselves those questions more frequently.”

“We don't want to be the same as the ACCO down the road because then that means there is no choice. Opportunity of choice...creates options for people to consider what they want.”

## **DEEPEN AND DEVELOP STRONGER RELATIONSHIPS WITH ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS THROUGH GENUINE PARTNERSHIPS AND OFFERS OF SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE WHEN AND IF NEEDED.**

Several ACCOs have been instrumental in enabling Anglicare WA to learn, reflect, and move forward positively to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities toward self-determination. They have also challenged the organisation's position on how it supports ACCOs and builds capacities. This means recognising our privilege when working with ACCOs and acknowledging that ACCOs know their communities and strength.

Consequently, we offer support and guidance to ACCOs when and if needed and undertake mutual capacity building and knowledge sharing activities in partnership with ACCOs.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> When ACCOs seek our support and guidance, it is often with back-end support such as client management systems, data and outcomes measurement frameworks, reporting templates, and policies and procedures.

Learning is two-way. We also walk with ACCOs in a culturally informed, safe, and respectful way.

As a result, Anglicare WA has established successful relationships and partnerships with ACCOs over the years to deliver services to the Aboriginal community and support positive outcomes. The Derby Family Violence Service provided in partnership with the Emama Nguda Aboriginal Corporation and the recently established FDV Broome Hub are key examples.

### Insights from Anglicare WA staff

"The FDV Hub is a great example. We're good at this, you're good at that. The roles are so clear. We stay in our lane. We're willing to adapt but recognise that maybe rather than us adapting elements of our service to work in a particular way, that's when we should be partnering. That's when we should recognise that someone can do that better than us."

"By the time Emama Nguda came in, Anglicare had already embedded in its workforce that everyone is fair, everyone is equal, everyone is one. Very important. Felt like a true partnership. That goes right up to the boss man, Mark Glasson."

"Mark is approachable, and it doesn't matter where we might sit in the organisation or the partnership, anyone of us can go up to him and approach him with almost anything."

### Insights from Anglicare WA staff

"We've been in the space longer than most, so we have a lot to share."

"Mutual capacity-building is key. Sharing of knowledge goes both ways."

"Use the term capacity building with caution. It can be a loaded word. A lot of ACCOs have been around for a while and know a lot."

"Other not for profits can be guarded and gatekeep information and knowledge. ACCOs were surprised at our generosity in terms of sharing practical tools."

"They look to organisations like us who have that technical, corporate knowledge and bigger picture thinking, and use that as a conduit for supporting them to make clever decisions."

### Insights from Anglicare WA staff

“ACCOs are the experts on the ground and ACCOs have been around for ever and ever. ACCOs do need that extra assistance from places like Anglicare WA. It's a kind of given for both Anglicare and Emama Nguda in this partnership. ACCOs also bring that cultural stuff (cultural ways of working), that cultural pedagogy, that cultural methodology, cultural protocols. Anglicare would be somebody that would elevate all of that through the governance frameworks, systems, policies (which is why we're good at advocating).”

### PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER ADVANCEMENT.

In order to provide the best services amongst Aboriginal communities, we need to be an employer of choice for Aboriginal people. This means providing opportunities in the workplace through traineeships and specific strategies that attract Aboriginal employees to Anglicare WA and support their professional development and career advancement. We must also ensure the voice of Aboriginal staff can reach all levels and areas of the organisation to ensure our services are culturally appropriate and that staff are appropriately supported.

Anglicare WA is committed to providing opportunities for Aboriginal employment and career advancement as per our Aboriginal Employment Strategy. Developed in 2020 in consultation with our Aboriginal workforce, Aboriginal Advisory Group and RAP Committee, our Aboriginal Employment Strategy has five focus areas:

- Support culturally inclusive workplaces
- Support, train, develop and retain
- Culturally inclusive recruitment processes
- Increase Aboriginal employment
- Increase and build the representation of Aboriginal people in senior roles

Some examples of our Aboriginal Employment Strategy in action include:

- the establishment of an Aboriginal Staff Network
- an annual Aboriginal Staff Conference (the first one took place last year)
- an Aboriginal EAP service provider ([ABSTARR](#)) that supports Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal staff and provides cultural supervision for frontline leaders and executive
- providing clinical supervision to staff at ACCOs where requested and where feasible
- the development of a Director's position for Aboriginal Engagement

Despite our commitments, recruiting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees remains a challenge. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment numbers currently sit at 5.3% of our workforce of 655 staff, short of our goal of 7%.

We are engaging with Aboriginal staff to consult on the effectiveness of our recruitment, retention and the Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

#### **Insights from Anglicare WA staff**

“Investment made into Aboriginal leadership is a sign of our intelligence.”

“Three leadership positions fielded by Aboriginal people speaks to the investment the organisation wants to achieve. That’s something to be noted as a non-Aboriginal organisation and our desire to do better.”

“Although this organisation has strong leadership and supports Aboriginal employment, there’s still a significant cultural shift to support Aboriginal people in the way that we could if we were at our optimum.”

#### **Insights from Anglicare WA staff**

“We understand the benefits of supporting local people to be employed, because it increases our engagement with the local community.”

“There needs to be enticement to retain staff, which is a difficulty for regional positions.”

“When we bring in a trainee, the first three to six months is letting them know what is expected in the workplace. Some people come from generations of not working in the workplace. Sometimes during that time we unpack trauma and offer EAP services... [We help them] sit in that third space.”

“There needs to be flexibility, openness and willingness to move on the journey with people in terms of understanding workplace expectations and balancing cultural obligations with service delivery expectations and community expectations.”

### **EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF TRANSITIONING SOME OF OUR SERVICES TO BE ABORIGINAL LED**

Anglicare WA continues to consult, listen to, and collaborate with Aboriginal stakeholders and our advisors about our place in delivering services to Aboriginal people and communities while respecting the right to self-determination. We recognise there are some services that may be better delivered by Aboriginal organisations, and we may need to step aside.

We are currently investigating the transition of three appropriate services to ACCOs.

The health sector's successful transition of services to Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations a decade ago can serve as an example for the community services sector of what is possible.

### Insights from Anglicare WA staff

"You can never underestimate the creativity and well thought through solutions that ACCOs have for community."

"I think it's about keeping those ears and eyes and hearts open and celebrating the successes of our ACCO sector when they are actually taking on mainstream services and delivering them really well. We need to celebrate that. I'm not sure we do that yet."

"We don't want to just hand things over to ACCOs because they're ACCOs or set them up to fail. We need to support them to be ready for that transition, otherwise that's not good for the ACCO or for community."

"What can be helpful is recognising the privilege we have that ACCOs don't have. Some ACCOs are large and have some privilege, but small ACCOs don't. [We should] work with government to create parity in that privilege so small ACCOs can start moving in the spaces that we have."