

1 November 2025

SNAICC – National Voice for our Children
By email: familysafetyplan@snaicc.org.au

Dear SNAICC Family Safety Plan team,

Subject: Letter of Support for the design of the Family Safety Plan

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of the Family Safety Plan (the Plan). This Plan will be a valued tool towards shifting systems across Australia to be more responsive, inclusive and caring for First Nations peoples, ensuring that they lead healthy and safe lives. I recognise and greatly appreciate the work of SNAICC in producing the Plan under the Department of Social Services, and thank Minister Rishworth in supporting community-led development and implementation of the Plan. Along with the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Institute team, I would like to emphasise my support and interest in collaborating and assisting in shaping the Plan as it intersects with Wiyi Yani U Thangani.

The Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) Project and ongoing work of the Institute, puts forward a range of holistic and interconnected actions, outcomes and 'Ways of Working' as a framework to form First Nations gender-responsive policies and create the conditions for intergenerational wellbeing and safety. This approach is set out in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Change Agenda (Change Agenda) and is a culmination of over 7 years of engagement with thousands of First Nations women, girls and gender-diverse peoples across Australia.

Wiyi Yani U Thangani takes an intersectional approach, centring First Nations women and girls, inclusive of Sistergirls, trans and cis women, and strives to foster a responsive movement for gender-diverse individuals. Through our engagements, particularly recent focus groups with lesbian, bisexual, queer women and non-binary mob, and women with trans experience, we recognise the significant importance of ensuring their unique needs are responded to in this Plan.

Wiyi Yani U Thangani provides the evidence that First Nations women are vital to transforming systems to end violence and revitalise cycles of intergenerational wellbeing. Women hold extensive knowledges about maintaining social and ecological equilibrium; supporting the healthy growth of babies and educating children; keeping families and communities strong and connected; sustaining societal safety; and

protecting children and families against danger. When First Nations women are invested in, and their lives, roles and knowledges are recognised and reflected in surrounding systems, children thrive, economies grow, communities are cohesive, and harms and violence are minimised.

The Change Agenda is a visionary '*Blackprint*' for systems change, through a human-rights based and gender-responsive lens. The three layers of outcomes of the Change Agenda are the change our women want to see—a world that deeply values, celebrates, and enables all of who we are, and that ensures we are free from discrimination, inequalities, traumas and violence. The below 'Life Outcomes' speak directly to family safety:

- Our babies are born, live and age in safe, healthy and sustainable communities
- Our care work is central to the redefining and functioning of systems
- We are financially secure, safe, free, living and working within meaningful economies
- We are strong and powerful in all of who we are
- Our knowledges, songs, ceremonies and languages are protected and lived
- We have voice in the decisions that impact our lives
- Our healing practices on Country and in Community are transforming system
- We have control over our bodies which are safe and respected.

The gender justice lens which has shaped this work highlights the need for fundamental and necessary systemic change. The Change Agenda documents an approach that considers the drivers of justice and equality so as to target root causes of inequalities and structural discrimination— including racism and sexism which are significant drivers of violence in the lives of First Nations women and children. Although there is an absolute need for crisis response work, only systemic change work can robustly address and overcome the seemingly intractable issues of family violence, poverty, trauma, drug and alcohol use, and high rates of incarceration, detention and child removals. I strongly recommend aligning the Plan with the outcomes of our Change Agenda, as they are designed to simultaneously reduce harms and violence through systemically enhancing empowerment, self-determination and health and wellbeing.

To realise these outcomes, the Change Agenda puts forward a comprehensive practice approach, describing how this change needs to occur across the elements of the system: the policies, structures and laws that safeguard or undermine our rights; the behaviours, norms and assumptions that influence decision-making; and the relationships and power dynamics that hold systems in place. In the context of the Plan, this means responding to family safety across systems – driving actions to create the

enabling conditions to realise First Nations gender justice as critical to family safety. In particular, the Change Agenda documents a series of 'System Shift Outcomes' which seek to change governance and decision-making structures, and institutional practices.

These structural reforms are also reflected in the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Women's Safety Policy Forum Outcomes Report (2022), which sets out a pathway for the design of effective plans to end violence against First Nations women and children. These include sustainable investment that emphasises preventative, community-led measures; the establishment of a 'First Nations women and children's safety policy think tank'; mechanisms to gather meaningful data; and promotion of shared responsibility between state, territory and Commonwealth governments. As the Outcomes Report details, through the voices of Forum participants, pursuing family safety requires governments to listen deeply and collaborate with First Nations communities at all stages of the Plan, and shift accountability and power to communities to establish genuine partnerships where women have direct responsibility and power over the decisions that impact their lives and communities.

Furthermore, I strongly recommend that the Plan is underpinned by a robust measurement, evaluation and learning (MEL) framework that moves away from rigid activities, targets and outputs and instead looks holistically at the system, tracking insights against community priorities, principles and aspirations. These insights are what the Wiyi Yani U Thangani MEL approach calls 'signals' which are what women hear, see and sense that tell us if change is occurring. These signals are found in our women's stories, songs, dances and Law as rich sources of data, which are used with quantitative data, to provide a holistic view of the current state of systems. Against each outcome, the Change Agenda includes the signals that women express will be present when change occurs—for example, we will know we are progressing the outcome of 'Our babies are born, live and age in safe, healthy and sustainable communities' when we see or hear our children playing outside and laughing more; when we are not being worried about getting good food and feeding our families; or when our children are eager to learn and are very respectful of their Elders. I encourage the Plan to engage with the signals in the Change Agenda and its approach to MEL, to sit alongside government enforced measures to provide two-way accountability for the Plan.

The below Appendix highlights Wiyi Yani U Thangani documents and other key resources which further provide a robust evidence base for understanding the experiences of First Nations women, girls and their communities, and articulates systems reform actions. To date, the work of Wiyi Yani U Thangani stands at the most comprehensive and intersectional engagement with First Nations women in Australia, and the establishment of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Institute represents a world-first



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providing a First Nations gender justice lens to address and safeguard the rights of First Nations peoples. It is through the work of practice-based research; engaging and elevating women's voices; gathering of evidence, knowledge and stories that are governed and owned by First Nations women; and translating evidence for policy reform with government and stakeholders across all sectors, that the Institute aims to be a transformative space of influence.

While this work is grounded in the knowledges and stories of First Nations women, it is important to emphasise that this work benefits everyone. As we address systemic challenges that maintain systems of patriarchy, dominance, violence, and discrimination, everyone benefits in reweaving our collective social fabric to become more caring, inclusive and enabling.

I am eager to further engage with SNAICC on the development of the Plan, and to drive change across the lives of First Nations women, families and children. I reiterate my support and confidence in SNAICC in developing the Plan as a useful and critical tool for systems change, and look forward to our future collaboration.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to members of my team, Sophie Spry (Co-lead – Partnerships & Design), Banok Rind (Co-lead – Impact & Engagement) and Niamh Kealy (Research & Policy) – emails below.

Yours sincerely

June Oscar AO
Chair, Wiyi Yani U Thangani Institute

CC'd: Sophie.spry@anu.edu.au; banok.rind@anu.edu.au; Niamh.kealy@anu.edu.au



APPENDIX

- [Wiyi Yani U Thangani Report: Securing our Rights, Securing our Future Report](#) (2020)

This landmark report details the lived experiences, values, needs and aspiration of women across the country, including their reflections on community safety, racism and discrimination (Chapter 5), interactions with the police and judiciary system (Chapter 6), and child protection (Chapter 7). Physical and cultural safety is also responded to within the Report in regard to accessing services and supports (Chapter 8), and in spaces which support their health and wellbeing (Chapters 12 and 13), education (Chapter 14), and economic participation (Chapters 15 and 16). Fundamentally, the Report highlights the lack of safety and support felt across all systems built on patriarchy and colonialism.

- [Implementation Framework](#) (2021)

The Implementation Framework provides direct actions within these spheres shaped around four thematic areas: Leadership and Decision-making; Language, Land, Water and Cultural Rights; Societal Healing and Intergenerational Wellbeing; and Economic Justice and Empowerment. These areas are interrelated and mutually dependent. Safety is a theme woven throughout these actions, whereby actions in one areas ripple positive change across other areas. Safety is also explicitly articulated as actions towards alleviating poverty and driving economic and financial empowerment (Actions 6.2, 7.2, 7.3, 8.1 and 8.3)

- [First Nations Women's Safety Policy Forum](#) (2022)

The Wiyi Yani U Thangani First Nations Women's Safety Policy brought over 150 participants together including First Nations community members, practitioners, researchers, specialist experts and government participants to consider how to address the root causes and drivers of violence, as the government prepares to deliver on its commitment to develop a standalone National Plan to End Violence against First Nations Women and Children (standalone National Plan). This Outcomes Report is a contribution to setting out the pathway for transformational change and the steps required for how to move forward in designing effective plans and policies to end violence.

- [Caring About Care](#) (2024)

In collaboration with researchers at the Australian National University and the University of Queensland, the Caring About Care report explores First Nations women's



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experiences and interpretations of care. The Report shows that First Nation women do larger amounts of unpaid care work, which is linked to the impacts of ongoing colonisation. The Report calls for re-shaping of public policy to centre, value and support the care work that First Nations women do, which is deeply tied to keeping families safe.

- Orange Compass and Early Years Catalyst's *Systems Mapping Report* (2022)

This report provides a useful articulation of systems mapping; responding cyclically from before the start of life and beyond its end; and recognising the caring and society sustaining work performed by women and communities and enabling these knowledge and practices to guide decision-making.

