

Question 1:

What are the key priorities and actions the Family Safety Plan should focus on to create real and sustainable change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families?

1. Community-Centric Approaches:

The plan should focus on community-led initiatives that empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This means actively involving elders and community leaders in decision-making processes to ensure solutions are culturally relevant and tailored to the unique needs of each community.

2. Integrated Support Services:

A holistic network of services, that readily transitions between community, mainstream and government services, is crucial. This network should address interconnected issues such as family violence, mental health, substance abuse, and legal matters. By integrating these services, families can receive comprehensive support that tackles the root causes of their challenges.

3. Long-Term Funding Models:

Developing sustainable funding models is essential for the ongoing success of community organisations. These models should provide long-term financial security, including dedicated funds for preventive programs aimed at educating the community about family safety.

4. Education and Awareness Campaigns:

Launching culturally appropriate educational campaigns will raise awareness about family violence, legal rights, and available resources both within communities and with service professionals. Utilising social media as a primary platform for these campaigns is vital, as many First Nations people have access to these tools. Additionally, increasing the frequency of drop-in sessions by various service providers can help disseminate information effectively. Having third party drop ins are also essential for confidentiality and privacy among the community members.

5. Data Collection and Research:

Prioritising the collection of disaggregated data will help us better understand the unique experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. This information is crucial for guiding policy development and resource allocation.

What Safety Could Look Like:

Safety in our communities mean creating culturally safe spaces where individuals feel secure sharing their experiences without fear of judgment. Workshops utilising art, food, sports, and other community activities can facilitate open dialogue and help break down barriers.

Service providers need to adopt trauma-informed approaches, undergoing mandatory training that acknowledges the impacts of colonisation and intergenerational trauma. This understanding is vital for addressing the specific needs of First Nations peoples with respect and sensitivity.

Additionally, legal aid, mental health, and crisis intervention services must be easily accessible and culturally appropriate, especially in communities who do not access services, either

through mainstream or indigenous specific organisations. Ensuring that these services are affordable and respectful of cultural differences will encourage more individuals to seek help.

Confidentiality is another cornerstone of safety. Drop-in services that prioritise privacy are crucial, especially in small communities where anonymity can be compromised. Third-party services can help maintain trust and confidentiality, allowing individuals to seek help without fear of being recognised.

Question 2:

If there were no barriers, how would your community address FDSV?

1. Strengthening Community Leadership

Empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls to take on leadership roles is vital. This could be facilitated through targeted training programs, mentorship opportunities, partnerships and dedicated funding for women-led or youth focused initiatives. It's equally important to develop mentorship programs for male leaders to enhance community cohesion.

Establishing men's groups for those who have experienced family violence, and those who use violence is crucial. Creating safe spaces for men to discuss their experiences is essential, as societal expectations often discourage them from opening up. The system needs to be more accessible for men seeking support, acknowledging that many do not feel comfortable discussing their vulnerability.

Service providers must undergo training to recognise the intergenerational aspects of family violence and that their experiences deserve attention and respect. By fostering a culture where everyone feels validated in their experiences, we can create a more supportive environment for healing.

2. Holistic Healing Pathways:

Culturally sensitive healing programs should incorporate traditional practices and land-based healing, aligning with community protocols. These programs must be developed with community input to ensure they are effective and relevant.

3. Improving Service Awareness:

Increasing awareness of available services through community outreach and partnerships with local organisations is essential. For instance, events like the ATSI Wellness Expo by Canberra Health Services provide great platforms for community members to learn about available services. Similar events should be organised regularly, promoted through social media, pamphlets, and word of mouth to maximise reach.

4. Collaboration Among Services:

Establishing strong partnerships among service providers ensures a coordinated and effective response to family violence. Regular training and workshops can enhance the skills of service providers in culturally safe practices, making it easier for them to connect with and support our community members.

Barriers and Gaps:

Access to services remains a significant barrier for many community members. Transportation challenges, financial constraints, and stigma can hinder individuals from seeking help. Addressing these issues through mobile outreach and telehealth options can make a substantial difference in improving access to vital services.

There is also a critical need for more First Nations liaisons officers and lawyers within all organisations. These roles facilitate bridging cultural gaps but often lack ongoing financial support. Increasing funding for these positions would ensure that our community members receive culturally appropriate assistance.

Furthermore, many individuals lack a clear understanding of their legal rights and available supports. Targeted education and outreach initiatives are crucial to empower our community members, equipping them with the knowledge they need to seek help confidently. By addressing these gaps,

Question 3:

What does culturally appropriate and holistic service provision look and feel like?

1. Cultural Safety:

Services must prioritise cultural safety, ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people feel understood and respected. This requires staff training in cultural competence and sensitivity to the unique histories and experiences of these communities.

2. Funding for Liaison Officers and Lawyers:

Increasing funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander liaison officers and Lawyers is essential for ensuring culturally responsive service delivery.

3. Comprehensive Support:

Holistic service provision must address the entire individual or family unit, considering not only immediate issues of violence but also mental health, substance abuse, financial stability, and community engagement.

4. Community Empowerment:

It is crucial to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families have a voice in the services they receive throughout the justice and social welfare sectors. Establishing regular feedback mechanisms will allow services to adapt and respond to the evolving needs of the community.

Current Gaps:

Addressing the lack of consistent funding for Aboriginal liaison and legal positions across the sectors, such as those at Legal Aid ACT. This gap creates significant barriers in service provision and impacts the support available to our communities.

Identifying areas that are lacking in resources, particularly in remote communities. Advocating for the development of these services is essential to ensure that everyone has access to the support they need.

Proof of identity is another challenge. Many individuals who were removed from their communities as children face difficulties in proving their Aboriginal identity. Intergeneration trauma must be recognised. This adds a layer of complexity when accessing services or even

applying for First Nations funded position – addressing this can make the system more equitable.

Finally, ongoing training for service providers in culturally safe practices and trauma-informed care is essential. Continuous education ensures that service providers can effectively support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, fostering trust and understanding in the care they provide.