



SiS Tasmania Written Submission

Second Action Plan (National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032)

31 July 2026

As an advocate for law reform, justice and equity for all Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples, SiS Tasmania ('SiS') welcomes the opportunity provided by the Department of Social Services to comment on the Second Action Plan (National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032).

SiS is a Family Violence and Prevention Legal Service ('FVPLS') that specialises in supporting Aboriginal victim-survivors of family violence with legal and non-legal services. SiS is a program of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service ("TALS"), a Tasmanian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation ('ACCO') and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service ('ATSILS') that specialises in criminal, civil and family law matters for Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples.

SiS is also a member of the First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence ('FNAAFV'), a peak national body for specialist FVPLSs.

In this submission, SiS will speak to the questions offered in the Second Action Plan summary paper.

TERMINOLOGY

In this submission any reference to Aboriginal peoples is to be understood as encompassing Torres Strait Islander peoples. Other terms may be respectfully used to reflect the language used in source materials, legislation, policy and existing frameworks.

The use of acronyms throughout this submission reflects standard practice in policy documents where lengthy titles or recurring terminology appear. Each acronym has been defined at first mention and is used consistently to improve readability without altering the substantive content of the submission. A glossary of acronyms is also provided below for ease of reference.

ACCO – Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation

AYDC – Ashley Youth Detention Centre

ATSICPP – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle

ATSILS – Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Service

CLE – Community Legal Education

FNAAFV – First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence

FVOIP – Family Violence Intervention Program

FVPLS – Family Violence and Prevention Legal Service

ICC – Integrated Case Coordination

LAT – Legal Aid Tasmania

SiS – SiS Tasmania

TALS – Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service

THE SECOND ACTION PLAN

The National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032 ('the National Plan') is the Australian Government's 10-year roadmap to ending family, domestic and sexual violence. Under this roadmap, the First Action Plan has delivered more than 583 initiatives, supported 1400 organisations and helped over 449,000 people who are experiencing, or have experienced, family, domestic and sexual violence.¹ However, it is acknowledged that there is still much work to be done.

The Second Action Plan is an opportunity to assess the impact of the First Action Plan and consult support services, victim-survivors and sector leaders as new challenges emerge. This identifies service gaps, strengthens implementation, improves coordination, and distributes resources to where they are most needed

Ending violence against women and children remains one of the most significant challenges facing Australia. In relation to Aboriginal peoples, the National Plan tells us that Aboriginal women and children continue to experience violence at much higher rates, and that current responses often fail to keep them safe.² The National Plan makes it clear that ending violence against women and children requires coordinated, evidence-based, culturally safe action across governments, sectors and communities.³ The development of the Second Action Plan seeks to provide us with a framework to drive these standards and ensure an equitable, sustained impact.

SIS RESPONSE

As a FNAAFV member, and the only Tasmanian based FVPLS, SiS are well placed to speak to the persistent, disproportionately high rates of violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women and children.⁴

Too often the police, courts and service responses have failed to keep Aboriginal women and children safe, exacerbating distrust in the system intended to protect them. In response to this, we must better understand the underlying factors that drive Aboriginal overrepresentation as victim-survivors and perpetrators of family violence.⁵ This will help develop culturally safe, trauma-informed responses that facilitate self-determination and community-led decision making.

SiS are of the view that there must be a resistance to framing the ongoing violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women and children as a purely service delivery problem. Additionally, SiS advocate for prevention efforts that look beyond individual behaviour change and encompass broader structural change. To truly develop a pathway forward, there must be recognition of the ongoing impacts of colonisation, structural inequalities, systemic racism, economic disadvantage and social marginalisation and how they have contributed to Aboriginal women and children experiencing more frequent and severe family violence.⁶

¹ ANROWS and Department of Social Services, *Evidence to Action: informing direction for the Second Action Plan - Consultation Paper in support of the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022-2032*, Australian Government (May 2026).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Department of Social Services, *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026-2036*, Commonwealth of Australia (accessed 7 July 2026).

Further to this, SiS maintain that the Second Action Plan must align with the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle* ('ATSICPP'), the *National Plan on Closing the Gap* and the Aboriginal-led approach outlined in *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036*. This ensures consistency and clarity while avoiding duplication that can impede Aboriginal self-determination.

Prevention

The family violence sector must develop a robust macro level framework that proactively addresses the underlying contributors that influence violent behaviours, in addition to post-offence education and interventions. Investment in prevention mechanisms over the long term, for all demographics, is critical to addressing the structural and social drivers of violence, and subsequently, curbing the unacceptable levels of family violence in the community.

How governments invest in the social support and early intervention sectors impacts the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Often governments allocate funding via inflexible, short term models, that undermine the sectors' ability to deliver effective, long-term programs, build community trust, remain fluid to changing social needs and maintain workforce stability.⁷ Short term funding can also create an industry churn, where organisations repeatedly establish, evaluate and conclude successful initiatives instead being able to embed them long term.⁸ This also impacts staffing, as valued, skilled employees may leave an organisation, or not seek out roles, as they strive for long term job security. Lastly, the inter-agency competition for funding can drive a high turnover of service providers, which is less efficient and poor value for public money. Short term funding models can see resources re-allocated to another organisation which either 1) simply duplicates pre-existing services; or 2) develops a new service that is be misaligned with previously successful initiatives.⁹ This can undermine progress and make funded programs redundant.

It is vital that significant, long term funding and resources are allocated to the delivery of prevention and early intervention services for Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal women and children experience violence that is more frequent and severe than other women and children in Australia, with the drivers of this violence not always the same as for non-Indigenous peoples.¹⁰ The vision set out by *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036* states that a response to the violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women and children must be culturally safe, trauma-informed and enable self-determination for community-led solutions.¹¹ This means that services must be designed by those who understand the kinship systems, cultures and connection to Country, which in turn will promote greater safety and healing.¹²

⁷ Social Ventures Australia, *Department of Social Services: Reforms to strengthen the community sector* (March 2024).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid (n 6).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

For Aboriginal women and children experiences of family violence are shaped by the legacy of colonisation, dispossession and intergenerational trauma, intersected by systemic racism and social disadvantage. To prevent this legacy from continuing to result in violence, Aboriginal men must have access to early intervention programs that are culturally relevant, promote community-led healing and acknowledge the history that steers them towards violent behaviour.¹³

To effectively deliver culturally safe, self-determined, community-led prevent strategies, long term funding and resources must be reallocated to ACCOs, FVPLSs and ATSILSs. This will demonstrate a fundamental shift from the institutions and mainstream services that have historically caused harm and failed to recognise and respond to the drivers of family violence in Aboriginal communities.¹⁴ Appropriately funding ACCOs and FVPLSs to develop genuine, community-led intervention models extends beyond mere collaboration and will drive self-determination, choice, control and legitimacy for Aboriginal peoples.¹⁵ This will lead to ACCOs and FVPLSs possessing a substantive, rather than tokenistic, role,¹⁶ with government involvement being facilitative rather than directive. This will drive more effective and sustainable outcomes for Aboriginal peoples.

Services and Support

This submission has spoken to the need for long term, well-funded intervention programs, including dedicated services for Aboriginal peoples. However, there are other service gaps within the sector that need attention.

First, while community service organisations generally place a strong rhetorical emphasis on cultural safety, there needs to be consistent, ongoing, sector wide cultural training standards with clear requirements for Aboriginal-led decision making in the workplace. A common risk for non-ACCOs and mainstream organisations is assuming that ‘one off’ completion of cultural training ‘ticks the box’ and equates to cultural competency and safety.¹⁷ To legitimise cultural safety, a proportional representation of Aboriginal peoples must be incorporated in leadership roles and operational structures. This strengthens decision-making by embedding lived experience and cultural knowledge into practice, which will improve engagement with Aboriginal peoples. Additionally, it’s imperative that organisations develop a framework for measuring workplace cultural safety. This will help expose gaps and hidden forms of disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal peoples such as racism, cultural load and identity strain.¹⁸ In developing these structures SiS implore collaboration with ACCOs and the Aboriginal community. Investing funds and resources into organisational cultural competency will ensure both individuals, and the workplace structure, are informed, safe environments for Aboriginal peoples. In turn, this will drive more effective, and culturally connected and competent, service delivery.¹⁹ However, while a collaborative approach would improve cultural competency, SiS maintain the clear position that a specialist FVPLS, ACCO or ATSILS should be prioritised and funded to deliver services for Aboriginal peoples before mainstream organisations.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Australian Human Rights Commission, *Self-determination and Indigenous peoples* (4 August 2023).

¹⁶ National Indigenous Australians Agency, *Co-Design Lessons Learned Report* (June 2023).

¹⁷ Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care, *Improving Cultural Competency* (accessed 26 March 2026).

¹⁸ Diversity Council Australia, *Leading Practice* (accessed 26 March 2026).

¹⁹ Ibid (n 15).

Another issue concerns how police respond to family violence matters as first responders. Identified concerns include the misidentification and the criminalisation of victim survivors, discriminatory practices against Aboriginal peoples, and the minimalization of family violence complaints.²⁰ For Aboriginal women, these issues deny them access to support services and protection, while exposing them to the justice system. It also exacerbates an already high distrust in police among Aboriginal women, which may discourage them from reporting abuse in the future.²¹ The *Harm in the Name of Safety* report states that the harms to victim-survivors from police responses are so serious and widespread, that they simply cannot be fixed with increased training and education. It is argued that a fix would see alternative community-based responses, that decentralise police as first responders, expanded and better invested in.²² The report concludes that police intervention is an ineffective response mechanism, therefore steering victim-survivors towards community-controlled specialist services where they can receive the safe, trauma-informed support will better provide the resources they need to recover.²³ To achieve this however, family violence support service frameworks need to be appropriately funded and resourced to meet increased demand.²⁴ This includes a commitment to the provision of long term funding to Aboriginal-controlled family violence support services.

An example of a 'police centred' response is found in Tasmania, where the government introduced the *Safe at Home* service system in 2004. This system involves a range of services working together to mitigate risk and facilitate safety to family violence victim-survivors and their children, while holding perpetrators accountable for their behaviour.²⁵ The *Safe at Home* system reports use of a 'pro-intervention', human services approach strategy to deliver on these objectives.²⁶

However, there are some concerns with the function of the *Safe at Home* system, with some features inconsistent with its goal. First there are concerns with 'pro-arrest' police policies aimed at alleged family violence perpetrators.²⁷ This empowers police to arrest the accused, irrespective of the wishes of the other party, contradicting the 'pro-intervention' strategy²⁸ and exposing families to the risks outlined in the *Harm in the Name of Safety* report²⁹.

Second, the *Safe at Home* system utilises an Integrated Case Coordination ('ICC') approach to managed family violence matters in Tasmania. ICC meetings are held once per week and involve representatives from several state government departments who share information on family violence matters and take action to keep people safe.³⁰ Whilst the meetings' purpose is not a primary concern, there are aspects of the ICC approach that raise

²⁰ Flat Out, *Harm in the Name of Safety* (accessed 28 January 2026).

²¹ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Family, domestic and sexual violence: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people*, Australian Government (24 February 2026).

²² Malins, P and Caulfield, L, *Harm in the Name of Safety: Victorian Family Violence Workers Experiences of Family Violence Policing*, Flat Out (August 2025).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Department of Justice, *Safe at Home*, Tasmanian Government (9 December 2024).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Hobart Community Legal Service Inc, *Safe at Home* (20 March 2018).

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid (n 20).

³⁰ Ibid.

concern. It is noted that neither the ICC³¹, or the wider *Safe at Home* service system³², has a body that directly represents Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples and relies solely on the input of mainstream services.³³ This is not acceptable and must be rectified as a priority by respecting existing, trusted ACCO and ATSILS relationships by imbedding them in the *Safe at Home* system. This will ensure that culturally safe, community-led interventions are at the forefront of addressing family violence issues in the Aboriginal community.

Additionally, it is clearly stated that Tasmania Police are the ‘gatekeeper’ of *Safe at Home*.³⁴ As stated in the *Harm in the Name of Safety* report, centralizing police as the authority on family violence responses has proven to drive misidentification, minimize family violence complaints and perpetrate discriminatory practices against Aboriginal peoples.³⁵ These issues have seen victim-survivors grow an increasing distrust in police, and develop a preference for intervention from community-controlled specialist services.³⁶

Misidentification carries significant consequences in family violence matters as it denies victim-survivors justice and increases their exposure to further family violence and criminalisation.³⁷ Evidence tells us that misidentification is alarmingly common as the police and courts aren’t recognising ongoing patterns of abuse or coercive control, or the perpetrators attempts to weaponize the legal system.³⁸

Unfortunately, misidentification is more likely to be experienced by Aboriginal women, and is seen as a key driver to their disproportionate criminalisation in family violence matters.³⁹ The higher exposure of Aboriginal women to misidentification is attributed to inadequate, culturally inappropriate assessment tools, systemic racism, over-policing and communication barriers.⁴⁰ SiS strongly recommends that any reforms to family violence responses explicitly acknowledge and address the higher rate of Aboriginal women being misidentified. To achieve this, SiS refer to the views offered regarding the provision of long-term funding for Aboriginal controlled services, and the importance of sector wide cultural competency.

Children and Young People

In response to violence perpetrated against children and young people, we must look beyond relying on statutory child protection services. While at times there is a need for intervention by way of surveillance or even removal of a child from their family, priority must be given to avoiding these measures by strengthening family support mechanisms.⁴¹ Evidence tells us that we need to build strong communities where families are supported, where children are seen and heard and, where appropriate, recognised as victim-survivors in their own right and have

³¹Ibid (n 25).

³²Ibid

³³Wilcox, K, *Island Innovation, Mainland Inspiration: Comments on the Tasmanian Family Violence Act*, Alternative Law Journal (accessed 28 July 2026).

³⁴Ibid

³⁵Ibid (n 20).

³⁶Ibid.

³⁷Gleeson, H, *Police are still misjudging domestic violence and victims are suffering the consequences*, ABC News (31 March 2022).

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence, *The First Nations Advocates Against Family Violence submission on the Domestic and Family Violence and Victims Legislation Amendment Bill 2025* (April 2025).

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Stronger communities, safer children: Findings from recent Australian research on the importance of community in keeping children safe*, Australian Government (accessed 10 July 2026).

input into the decisions that impact them.⁴² To achieve this, it is imperative that communities and organisations collaborate, and that government policy enables services to be well co-ordinated and appropriately funded.⁴³

It is noteworthy to acknowledge a paper produced by Legal Aid Tasmania ('LAT') titled *Children First: Children in the Child Safety and Youth Justice System*. This paper discusses the crossover of youth clients between the child safety and youth justice systems. LAT's paper informs that children who are involved with the child safety system are overrepresented in the youth justice system, with 'crossover children' making up 15% of all youth justice files.⁴⁴ This overrepresentation is further entrenched for Aboriginal children, with almost 50% of Aboriginal children under 14 years old charged with an offence being 'crossover children'.⁴⁵ This data supports the notion of prioritising early support mechanisms for the most vulnerable and marginalised children in our community. This approach will mitigate the risk of prolonged separation from family and ongoing entrenchment in the child safety system and ultimately will divert children away from the justice system.⁴⁶

In 2023, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care peaked at nearly 23,000, which represented 41% of all children in out-of-home care at that time.⁴⁷ In fact, Aboriginal children remain over 10 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than non-indigenous.⁴⁸ These figures are concerning and work against the ATSICPP, which aims to keep children connected to community and culture with community-led preventative and reunification strategies.⁴⁹

The fact that Aboriginal children are grossly overrepresented in out-of-home care is reflective of the ongoing impacts of colonisation, intergeneration trauma, systemic racism and inequitable access to family support mechanisms.⁵⁰ These factors also contribute to increased experiences of family violence, of which removing children from the home becomes a primary risk management response.⁵¹ When combined with other factors that result from family violence, such as homelessness or poverty, both of which Aboriginal peoples experience disproportionately, we find that victim-survivors are increasingly penalised for violence committed against them.⁵² This can create barriers to Aboriginal women reporting family violence or seeking support, as they fear the removal of their child or exposure to risk, in addition to experiences of misidentification, social isolation and community shame.⁵³

A report produced by Human Rights Watch raised concerns with regards to how services respond to Aboriginal children who are exposed to family violence. The report stated that family violence is the most common reason

⁴² NAPCAN, *Stronger communities, safer children: Findings from recent Australian research on the importance of community in keeping children safe*, Australian Government (accessed 10 July 2026).

⁴³ *Ibid* (n 41).

⁴⁴ Legal Aid Tasmania, *Children First: Children in the Child Safety and Youth Justice System* (July 2021).

⁴⁵ *Ibid*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*.

⁴⁷ Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, *Family Matters* (25 February 2025).

⁴⁸ Remeikis, A, *Out-of-home care for Indigenous children to be all Aboriginal controlled*, The Guardian (25 September 2024).

⁴⁹ Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Placement Principle* (25 February 2025).

⁵⁰ Department of Education, Children and Young People, *Outcomes Framework: Child Safety, Care and Youth Justice*, Tasmanian Government (April 2026).

⁵¹ Perpitch, N, *Human Rights Watch report shows DV, homelessness can lead to Indigenous children being taken into care*, ABC News (27 March 2025).

⁵² *Ibid*.

⁵³ *Ibid* (n 21).

Aboriginal children were removed from the family home, yet it is often done hastily and without offering culturally safe support.⁵⁴ The report added that Aboriginal victim-survivors often experience housing instability and poverty, both of which are viewed as ‘neglect’ by authorities and subsequently can result in child removal.⁵⁵ The report concluded that authorities are simply forcing Aboriginal peoples into cycles of despair as they fail to protect them from family violence or provide adequate supports, and then weaponize their vulnerable circumstances.⁵⁶ The trauma experienced by victim-survivors is then exacerbated by the authorities, who punish them further by removing their children.⁵⁷

In making recommendations to improve responses, the Human Rights Watch report stated that early intervention, that is genuinely about helping, not policing, and is led by ACCOs, is the best way to address the overrepresentation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care and ensure victim-survivors are offered culturally safe support.⁵⁸ This approach aligns with the aims of the ATSI CPP, that centre on prevention, cultural connection, community leadership and self-determination as being fundamental to the safety, wellbeing and identity of Aboriginal children and families.⁵⁹ These same principles are also reflected in the *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036* report that strongly drives agency, self-determination and a strengths-based approach as the way to address family violence in Aboriginal communities.⁶⁰

It is also critical that Aboriginal children be included in decision-making processes that impact them. This upholds their right to self-determination, builds resilience and strengthens their trust in the systems designed to protect them.⁶¹ There is also significant value in ensuring children’s access to independent and culturally appropriate assistance to help them maintain agency in decision-making.⁶² The principle of Aboriginal self-determination must extend to children, who have long experienced persistent and systemic overrepresentation in the youth justice⁶³ and child protection systems⁶⁴. Involving, educating and empowering Aboriginal children to make informed decisions will facilitate better access to supports and help break the cycle of disadvantage and disempowerment.⁶⁵

The significant role that early education regarding relationships and family violence can have on young people cannot be overlooked. It is acknowledged that there are critical knowledge gaps that impact a child’s development, especially if they are exposed to family violence in the home.⁶⁶ These gaps can be bridged via school programs, in conjunction with those facilitated by the community legal education sector. This will increase

⁵⁴ Ibid (n 51).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid (n 49).

⁶⁰ Ibid (n 6).

⁶¹ Office of the Children’s Guardian, *Empowerment and Participation: A handbook for organisations working with children and young people*, NSW Government (December 2021).

⁶² Rights in Action, *Advocacy for Children: Protecting and Promoting Rights and Wellbeing* (23 September 2024).

⁶³ Productivity Commission, *Closing the Gap Information Repository*, Australian Government (2025)

⁶⁴ Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Child protection and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children*, Australian Government (January 2020).

⁶⁵ Victorian Public Sector Commission, *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination*, Victorian State Government (2025).

⁶⁶ Dorney, J, *Early childhood: The invisible scars of domestic and family violence*, Australian Education Union (accessed 23 July 2026).

young people's knowledge, instil positive relationship traits and drive awareness on what family violence, gender inequality and disrespectful relationships look like.⁶⁷ For Aboriginal young people, it is imperative that culturally competent, community-led organisations deliver education sessions to enhance relevance and understanding.⁶⁸ In Tasmania, TALS and SiS operate a Community Legal Education ('CLE') program that provides information about the law to Aboriginal communities, as well as schools and institutions with Aboriginal youth, as a preventative strategy that aims to help young people avoid or address legal matters.⁶⁹ Under the CLE program, a specific workshop regarding the identification and development of healthy relationships has been developed and facilitated.

People Who Use Violence

There cannot be a dependency on incarceration or increasing punitive measures to change violent behaviour. Evidence tells us that investment in restoration-based approaches, with programs and policies aimed at addressing the long-term socio-economic issues that drive violence, have a greater impact on behavioural change.⁷⁰ SiS agrees to the notion that investment in such measures would yield greater community safety and elicit behavioural change in perpetrators of family violence. However, it is acknowledged that in Tasmania there are ongoing gaps in delivering family violence intervention programs. In 2025, less than 50% of those enrolled in the Department of Justice's Family Violence Intervention Program ('FVOIP') completed it,⁷¹ with reasons for this not made publicly available. Additionally, the Respectful Men's Program delivered by Tasmanian Prison Service has experienced operational issues due to staff shortages, resulting in low participation.⁷² Service delivery issues such as these are unacceptable and simply must be addressed as a priority.

However, there also cannot be a reliance on 'reactive' programs that are tied to sentencing or punishment after an act of family violence has occurred. There must be sustained funding into early intervention and education programs to proactively address the range of social and structural determinants that increase the risk of people developing, and normalising, family violence behaviour. Our Watch, a sector leader in preventing violence against women, have championed the importance of evidence-based work to 'stop violence before it starts'.⁷³ This work includes strengthening early intervention and trauma-informed responses for both children and adults.⁷⁴ Additionally, Our Watch implore governments to tackle underlying social and structural stressors that increase the likelihood of intimate partner violence against women.⁷⁵ In Tasmania, this approach was identified and pushed by the Department of Justice's *Strategic Plan 2022-2027*, where it stated they are committed to promoting early intervention and building client-centred, enhanced services.⁷⁶ However, the reality is that there has long been an under-investment in social, community and family violence supports by the Tasmanian

⁶⁷ Our Watch, *The evidence for respectful relationships education* (accessed 23 July 2026).

⁶⁸ Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Community Legal Education* (accessed 23 July 2026).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Knight, B, *Deterrence is sentencing's dirty secret, says NSW law expert*, UNSW Sydney (16 July 2020).

⁷¹ Badger, T, *Liberals Must Act on Family Violence*, The Greens (2 March 2026).

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Our Watch, *Statement in response to the March Quarterly Essay* (17 March 2025).

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Department of Justice, *Strategic Plan 2022-2027*, Tasmanian Government (accessed 16 January 2026).

Government, which has resulted in services not being able to meet demand.⁷⁷ It is noted that SiS are the only FVPLS operating in Tasmania and do not receive any direct funding from the Tasmanian Government.

Unfortunately, many of the social issues that lead to contact with the justice system, including exposure to family violence, are more often experienced by Aboriginal youths.⁷⁸ This can only truly be addressed by investing in specialised, community-led early intervention programs, facilitating greater access to Aboriginal youth support services⁷⁹, acknowledging connection to community and culture as a strength and recognising the already established relationships and trust with existing ACCOs.⁸⁰

With regards to adults, Aboriginal women experience the highest rates of family violence in the country.⁸¹ Furthermore, Aboriginal men are significantly overrepresented as recorded perpetrators.⁸² To truly address the elevated rates of family violence perpetrated by Aboriginal men, this overrepresentation must be understood within the broader context of colonisation, dispossession, intergenerational trauma, over-policing and structural disadvantage.⁸³ This overrepresentation is also exacerbated by ongoing systemic discrimination, which has limited access to the resources that could have addressed the issues that condition Aboriginal men to perpetrate family violence.⁸⁴ In considering the above, SiS maintain that responses to Aboriginal-centred family violence must understand the broader context that facilitates such behaviour. Additionally, responses must include community-led early intervention, healing programs that promote connection culture and the delivery of culturally safe, trauma informed behavioural change programs.⁸⁵

Access to Support, Recovery and Healing

This submission has outlined the need for well-funded, community-led support for Aboriginal victim-survivors, in particular women and children. Additionally, there have been thoughts offered regarding the provision of intervention programs that target the issues that condition Aboriginal men to perpetrate family violence.

The biggest issues faced largely relate to insufficient funding and resource allocation, and inconsistent consultation with ACCOs which hinders access to culturally safe supports and interventions.⁸⁶ These issues exist despite community-led, culturally safe principles being embedded in policy and practice frameworks across jurisdictions, as well as commitments made under the *National Plan on Closing the Gap*.⁸⁷ Change cannot be achieved unless governments deliver on commitments made and institutions and systems are transformed via proper investment.

⁷⁷ Full Stop Australia, *Safe Homes, Families and Communities: Tasmania's Third Action Plan for Family and Sexual Violence* (May 2022).

⁷⁸ Law Council of Australia, *Youth Justice* (22 May 2024).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Engaging with Indigenous Australia – exploring conditions for effective relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities*, Australian Government (4 October 2013).

⁸¹ Ibid (n 39).

⁸² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Family, domestic and sexual violence*, Australian Government (23 April 2026).

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Safety and justice for First Nations people*, Australian Government (16 October 2025).

⁸⁵ Langton, M, Smith, K, Eastman, T, O'Neill, L, Cheesman, E and Rose, M, *Family violence policies, legislation and services: Improving access and suitability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men*, ANROWS (December 2020).

⁸⁶ Ibid (n 49).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Structural racism and systemic bias remain barriers to accessing justice, safety and wellbeing, with policy and practice framework implementation across jurisdictions remaining poor and incomplete. Transformation goes beyond small adjustments, or ‘ticking boxes’; it requires governments and service providers to facilitate community-led support, invest in improving access, dismantle discriminatory practices and embed cultural safety across every level of policy and service delivery.⁸⁸

Aboriginal women and children will not find healing in systems or responses that have historically caused them harm.⁸⁹ For Aboriginal peoples, culture and connection is a source of safety, resilience and healing, therefore it is imperative that responses are grounded in lived experience and culture, and are strengthened by deep relationships with kin, Country, and community.⁹⁰ The *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036* report provides a foundation for this. The report demands that Aboriginal peoples’ voices, needs and experiences remain central to addressing family violence and places shared responsibility on all governments to deliver this in conjunction with community-led actions that are measurable and held to account.⁹¹

SiS maintain that the biggest difference can be made by aligning the actions of the Second Action Plan with the community-led approach outlined in *Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036*, along with the commitments made in the ATSI CPP and the *National Plan on Closing the Gap*. Underpinning this with sustained commitment, prioritised consultation with ACCOs and Aboriginal communities and resource allocation that matches the challenges faced will provide consistency, clarity and avoids duplication that impedes self-determination.⁹²

CONCLUSION

SiS welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Second Action Plan. SiS recognise the significant impact of family violence in the community and are supportive of measures that seek to improve the safety of victim-survivors and their children and drive behavioural change for perpetrators. With respect to Aboriginal communities, SiS acknowledge that Aboriginal women experience significantly higher rates of family violence and that Aboriginal men are overrepresented as perpetrators of such acts. This is unacceptable and more must be done to curb the high levels of family violence in Aboriginal communities.

Sustained investment in early intervention initiatives must be the priority. The evidence is clear that diverting investment into systems that address the underlying contributors to family violence yields greater results over increased surveillance or punitive measures.

SiS maintain the position that any strategy that seeks to strengthen responses to family violence must be a coordinated, evidence-based effort across governments, sectors and the community. To embed the perspectives and self-determination of Aboriginal peoples, SiS implore governments to continue engagement

⁸⁸ Ibid (n 6).

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

with ACCOs, Aboriginal community leaders, SiS, TALS and other ATSILSs and FVPLSs. This will ensure is that frameworks demonstrate sufficient oversight, contain cultural safeguards, address the perpetuating cycle of disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal peoples and work towards equitable outcomes.

In conclusion, the following is an overview of SiS' recommendations:

- A commitment to long term funding for community legal education and prevention education for children and young people. For Aboriginal youths, this must be delivered by FVPLSs to be the most effective and meaningful.
- A commitment to long term funding and resource provision for specialised, community-led victim-survivor supports. These must be culturally appropriate and work off the already trusted and embedded ACCO and ATSILS relationships and not simply be integrated into mainstream services.
- A commitment to long term funding and resource provision for specialised, community-led family violence education programs for Aboriginal men. These must be culturally appropriate and work off established ACCO and ATSILS relationships and not simply integrated into mainstream services.
- The development of a national family violence response framework to embed trauma-informed, culturally informed practice, co-designed with ACCOs.
- A full implementation of all five elements of the ATSICPP (prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection) and fully fund Aboriginal-led decision making so that families can access support before child removal occurs.
- Ensure the Second Action Plan aligns with the ATSICPP, the *National Plan on Closing the Gap, Our Ways – Strong Ways – Our Voices: National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Plan to End Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence 2026–2036* and other government initiatives.

If you have any questions regarding the views offered in this document, please reach out to me directly.

Warmest regards,



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