Yerrabi
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Empowering Generations of Culturally Strong, Thriving, Aboriginal Children Families & Communities

Yerrabi Yurwang response to: Consultation: National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032: Second Action Plan consultation paper.

About us: Yerrabi Yurwang Child and Family Aboriginal Corporation is an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation, established in 2019 due to the high unmet health and wellbeing needs of the local Aboriginal Community residing in Canberra's North, part of the traditional lands of the Ngunnawal People. Yerrabi Yurwang provides a wide range of wholistic services, including health, housing, out-of-home-care, and family support.

Below is our submission to the consultation, framed around the consultation questions:

1. Prevention. What actions can governments, workplaces, industries, schools, families and individuals take to stop violence before it starts?

Prevention activities are key to any attempt to root out violence against women and children in Australia. The activities detailed in the report only go some way towards prevention.

The document discusses prevention mostly in the context of increasing public understanding of the "gendered drivers of violence", and related educational messages. While these activities are important, they do not address the root causes of violence against women and children.

The activities outlined in the document fail to acknowledge the lived reality of the increased economic hardships and poverty that impact peoples' lives. While violence against women and children exist across all levels of society, poverty and lack of economic independence is a key determinant that impacts and exacerbates living situation and choices for women escaping abuse.

In this context, the continued state of deep inequality in Australia, the lack of reparations and economical justice, the deep-seeded economic and social inequalities that result from the still-unresolved crimes of colonisation, are important to understand the wider context for the continuing poor outcomes for Aboriginal people.

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The violence inside the home is a reflection of the systemic violence which shaped Australia from the start of colonisation. There is no acknowledgement of this context in the document, and we feel it is imperative to properly understand the overarching context of violence in which interpersonal and family violence occur.

2. **Services and support. How can services and supports work better for people who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing, family, domestic or sexual violence? (also addressing question 6: What makes it easier for people to access support or services related to family, domestic or sexual violence?)**

In the context of Aboriginal communities, there is clear and mounting evidence that wholistic, community-controlled services are the best practice in offering overall care for people who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing family domestic and sexual violence:

- **Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs)** have a long established history since 1971, operating by and for the local community, and offering a wide range of services at no cost to patient. This is the one-stop approach where all wraparound health social and emotional support and protection is being provided within the culturally safe context of their community. ACCHOs are culturally safe spaces for our community members to seek support and healing, and ACCHOs also lead the way in advocacy around Aboriginal community safety matters. This means that investing in a strong ACCHO sector also contributes to future policy development around safety matters, supports safer communities for Aboriginal people.
- **Wholistic wraparound care**: given the complex nexus of violence with ill-health, economic hardship, systemic racism and oppression, ACCHOs are best placed to ensure that people with complex needs who are victims or at risk of violence get the best type of protection and support. This is crucial to ensure that people receive the right support for complex level of needs.
- **Policy and advocacy:** the sector supporting women and children escaping violence needs to also be on the front foot as advocates to withdraw and change harmful policies, and ensure that the policy environment is responsive to the on-the-ground community-based service providers who have the knowledge and understanding to impact the policy process.

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Wholistic frameworks developed from within the Aboriginal Community Controlled Sector exist through the last several decades of work. These frameworks should be referenced and refreshed, rather than 'reinventing the wheel' with a new consultation process to develop the same advice every few years. Below we reproduce one such framework:

Framework: Aboriginal Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing. National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, 2014.

1. Focus on children, young people, families and communities
1.1 Strengthening fa milies to raise healthy, resilient infants, children, and young people.
1.2 Recognising and promoting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander philosophies on wholistic health and healing
1.3 Responding to grief, loss, trauma and anger.

2. Strengthen Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services
2.1 Building a skilled and confident workforce able to provide mental health and social and emotional well being services within the Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Sector.

3. Improved access and responsiveness of mental health care
3.1 Facilitating improved access and responsiveness of mainstream mental health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

4. Coordination of resources, programs, initiatives and planning.
4.1 Providing optimal funding and coordination in order to improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and social and emotional well being.
4.2 Improving coordination, planning and monitoring mechanisms.

5. Improve quality, data and research
5.1 Developing and publishing culturally appropriate data and research that reflects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mental health and social and emotional well being issues and that underpin improved service delivery.

More recently, Yerrabi Yurwang have developed a detailed Social Health Model proposal, to strengthen existing systems in the ACT Aboriginal context . That model establishes a single culturally safe entry point for all families, supported by integrated pathways with specialised, multidisciplinary programs for a unified coordinated Family Journey. This proposal is currently (July 2026) in draft form, and it is an example of the sort of framework and roles that should be supported within community embedded organisations to ensure the best wholistic and culturally safe services available.

The Social Health Model Program Logic is as follows:

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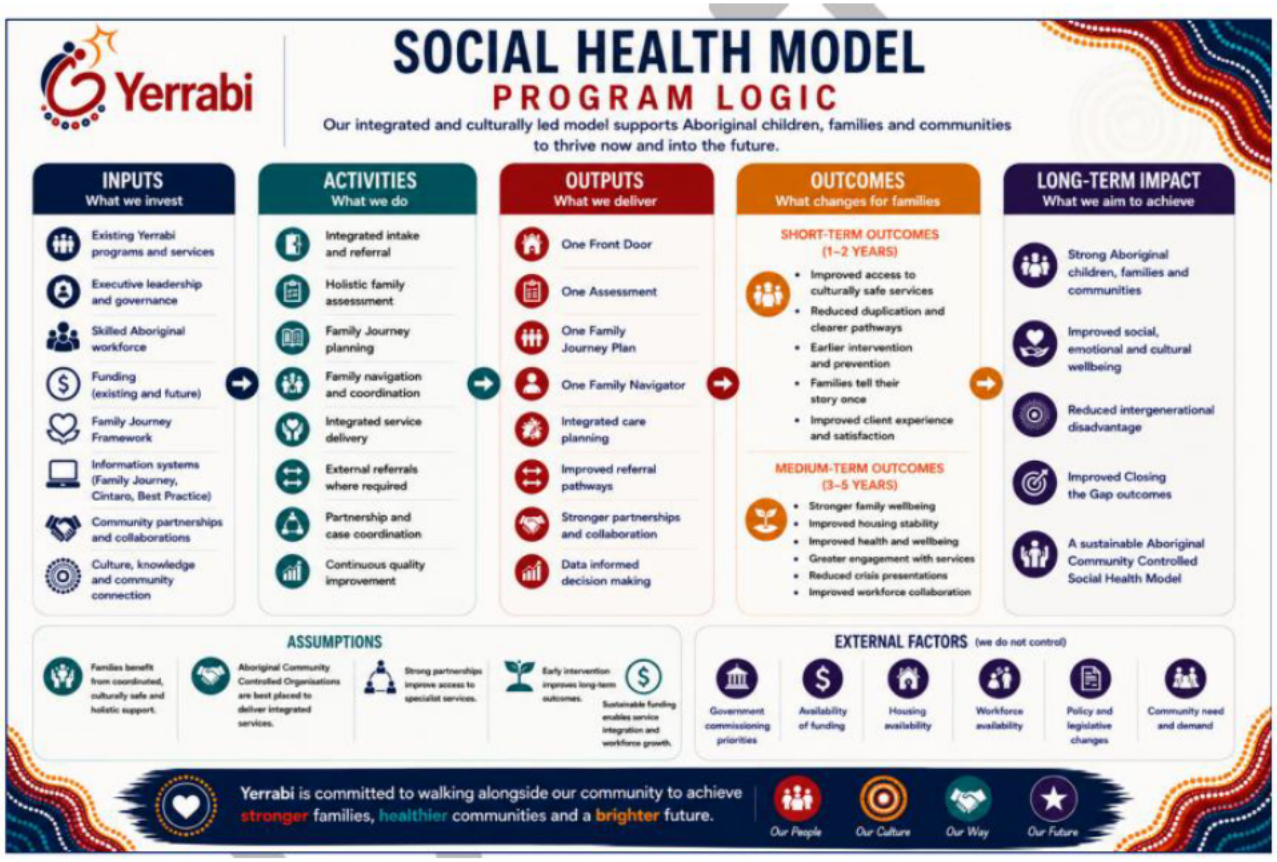

3. Children and young people. How can communities and services best support children and young people to stay safe from violence?

Children and young people must be supported in a way that is:

- Culturally safe, within Community, by service providers who are based in the local community where children live, if possible. For Aboriginal children in Out of Home Care, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP) must be followed.
- Wholistic – as discussed above, ensuring that children receive as much of the services and support that they require in an interconnected way, rather than fractured services spread across different agencies.

However, at Yerrabi Yurwang we are incredibly alarmed with the regression in the developmental indicators for children, as reflected in the cumulative data from the tri-annual Australian Early Development Census (AEDC).

Specifically in the context of Aboriginal children in the Australian Capital Territory, unfortunately we see that the regression is evident on the national scale as well. Ensuring that children are developmentally on-track across all social and emotional developmental domains is key to ensure that children are safe overall.

4. People who use violence. What more can be done across the community to promote healthy, safe relationships and strengthen accountability for people who use violence?

Violence is a societal-level problem. It threatens the very fabric of our social relations and connections. As discussed, present-day Australian society is built on unresolved violence and theft. We need to start with understanding violence on the societal level first, which is then replicated and reflected in family and interpersonal violence.

This is another area where prevention becomes key. Ensuring strong social and community support network, ensuring that social and economic support is available, ensuring that mental and physical health support is available and appropriate, and proactively ensuring that barriers for access are identified and removed. This approach is crucial to ensure strengthening of the social bonds that help prevent the use of violence.

While the most immediate priority is the safety and wellbeing of people, it is important that we as a sector offer support and services for people who use violence, focusing on reform of violent behaviour and, if possible and safe, re-integration into community.

5. Recovery and healing. What would make the biggest difference in helping people and families to recover and heal after being affected by family, domestic and sexual violence?

ACCHOs have a strong focus on healing. It is part of the commitment to long-term, wholistic support, which includes physical, social, and emotional support.

One area critical to ensure appropriate support for people affected by family domestic and sexual violence, is housing. Homelessness rates for Aboriginal people in Australia is almost 10 times higher than non-Aboriginal Australians

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(based on Special Homelessness Services client numbers report, 2024-25). Moreover, women record higher rates of homelessness compared to men: 62.4% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people experience homelessness are women (59.4% for other Australians).

Ensuring the right wholistic support, including as required housing support, is a critical piece of the puzzle alongside physical, social and emotional wellbeing needs that must be met in order to allow recovery and healing. Ensuring that this all occurs within community in a culturally safe way is why ACCHOs must be supported as part of this strategy.

For further details, please contact [redacted]

Kind regards

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Chief Executive Officer

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