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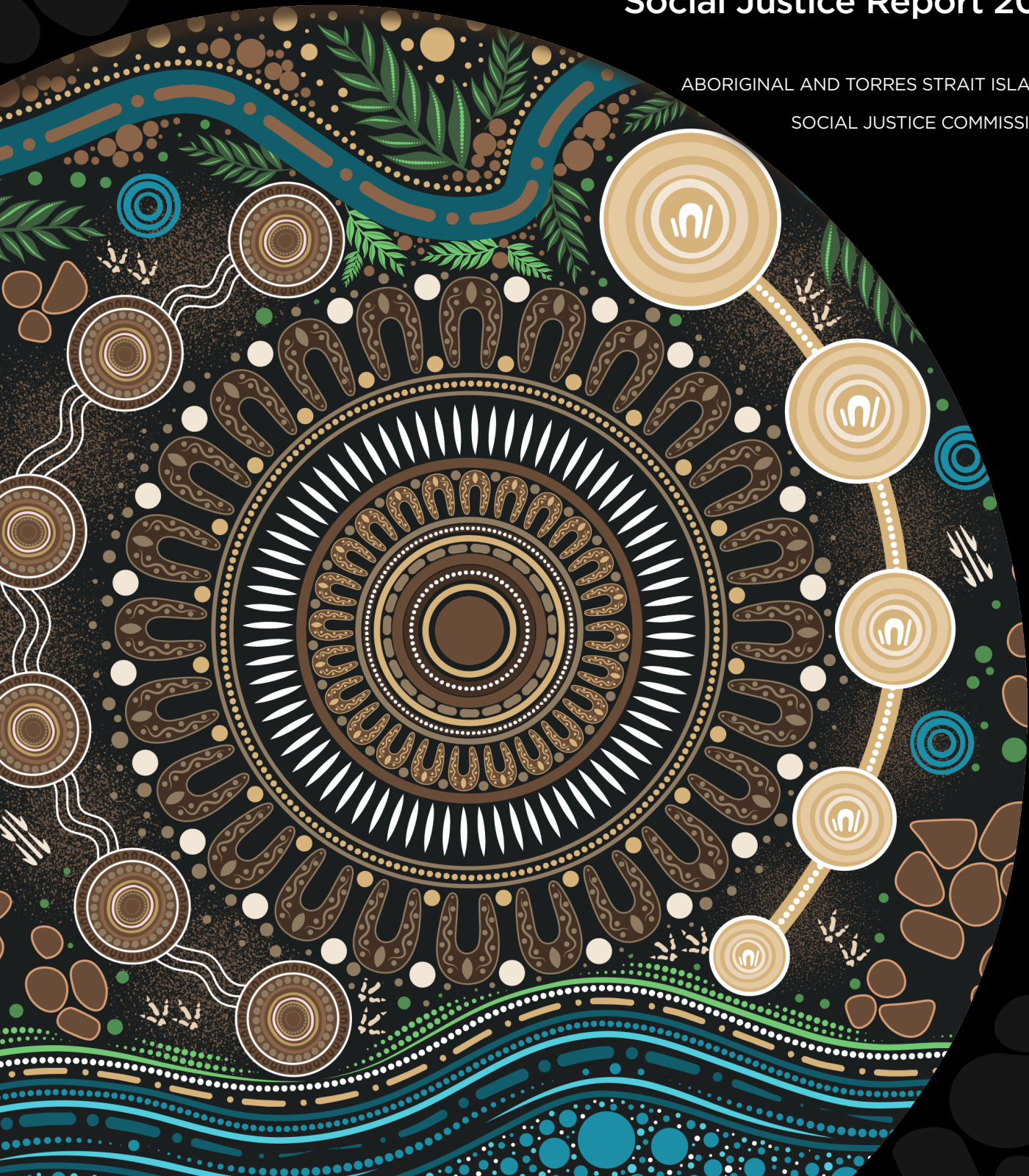
Community Guide

A Fair and Just Future for First Peoples

Social Justice Report 2025

ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER

SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMISSIONER



Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this report may contain images, names and voices of people who may be deceased.

Please note that the locations for photos throughout this report have been intentionally removed so as not to identify people and place.

Acknowledgments

The **Community Guide to A Fair and Just Future for First Peoples: Social Justice Report 2025** was drafted by Darren Dick, Katie Kiss, Libby Gunn and Nick Devereaux (in alphabetical order).

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner thanks the following Australian Human Rights Commission officers and staff for their assistance: Allyson Campbell and Hugh de Kretser.

Dedication

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner pays respect to the First Peoples mentioned throughout the report and acknowledges all those who participated in and provided their voices to inform the agenda for a fair and just future for First Peoples.

The *Social Justice Report 2025* and all related publications including this Community Guide are dedicated to the life and legacy of our friend and colleague Tara Apps, a strong, proud Ngunnawal Wiradjuri woman. Tara's deep sense of personal and cultural integrity defined her. She championed the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with unwavering commitment and insisted that truth-telling, respect and community leadership remain at the centre of all we do. We recognise the significant contribution Tara made to the work of the Australian Human Rights Commission and to the production of the *Social Justice Report 2025* in particular, upon which this Community Guide is based. We also acknowledge the important work she undertook previously at the Productivity Commission and the Coalition of the Peaks and the connections she developed across the sector. We honour her leadership, her generosity, and the fierce love and pride she held for her culture and her people. May Tara's legacy continue to shine through all who carry this work forward.

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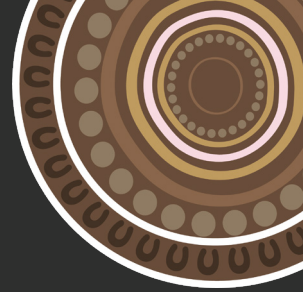
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About the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner



Katie Kiss is the sixth person to be appointed to the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner (the Social Justice Commissioner). She commenced her role on 3 April 2024.

The role of Social Justice Commissioner was created in 1993 in response to the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC),¹ and the National Inquiry into Racist Violence (NIRV).²

The mandated functions of the Social Justice Commissioner, outlined in section 46C(1) of the *Australian Human Rights Commission Act 1986* (Cth), are:

- © to promote discussion and awareness of human rights in relation to Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders;
- © to undertake research and educational programs and other programs, for the purpose of promoting respect for the human rights of Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders and promoting the enjoyment and exercise of human rights

by Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders;

- © to examine enactments and proposed enactments, for the purpose of ascertaining whether they recognise and protect the human rights of Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders and to report to the Minister the results of any such examination.³

Under section 209 of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), the Social Justice Commissioner also has a responsibility to report to the Attorney-General about the operation and effect of the Native Title Act and its effect on the exercise and enjoyment of human rights of Aboriginal persons and Torres Strait Islanders.⁴

Commissioner Kiss is a proud Kaanju and Birri/Widi woman who was born and raised in Rockhampton, Central Queensland on the lands of the Darumbal People and now lives in Magun-dgen/Meanjin on the lands of the Yuggera, Turrubal and Quandamooka Peoples.

She was previously the Executive Director of the Interim Truth and Treaty Body supporting Queensland's Path to Treaty and held senior positions in the Queensland Government, including Chief of Staff to the Minister for Seniors, Disability Services and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships and Senior Advisor to the Deputy Premier.

Commissioner Kiss also previously worked for eight years at the Australian Human Rights Commission, where she was the Director of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Team.



Forward by Commissioner Kiss



This Community Guide is a succinct overview of the *A Fair and Just Future for First Peoples: Social Justice Report 2025* (the Report), which is my first report as Social Justice Commissioner.

The Report makes 25 recommendations which respond directly to the voices of First Peoples across Australia, heard through the *Informing the Agenda* project, and to the evidence gathered across each chapter.

I want to thank the communities who shared stories and perspectives with me and my team. Your dedication to advocating for our peoples inspires hope for a just and equitable nation in which our children thrive, our culture is honoured and our rights are respected.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to face deep and persistent challenges: over-incarceration, the disproportionate removal of children, unequal access to housing, health, education, and infrastructure, ongoing racism, and environmental pressures intensified by climate change.

But alongside these challenges is so much hope and determination. First Peoples are leading solutions grounded in culture, law, and community. The Report amplifies those successes and the possibilities they represent. It sets out a roadmap for change which prioritises full participation of First Peoples in reformed governance systems which respect the human rights obligations to which Australia has committed and establishes robust mechanisms to hold governments accountable.

The Report calls on governments, institutions, and all Australians to listen, act, and walk with us in genuine partnership.

Some recommendations call for immediate action to remedy longstanding failures, such as establishing independent oversight

of deaths in custody, raising the age of criminal responsibility, and giving detainees access to Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) urgently. Other recommendations lay the groundwork for long-term transformation, starting now.

The Report is part of an ongoing conversation, a commitment to voice, treaty and truth, and a testament to the resilience, courage, and strength of our peoples.

Looking ahead, my work as Commissioner will continue to be guided by the voices of our communities, the lessons of past reports, and the enduring issues our peoples face. Accountability, equity, and meaningful progress must define success, not promises alone.

Katie Kiss

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner



Artwork Story: “Gathering for Truth, Treaty and Transformation”

At the centre of this artwork sits the Gathering Symbol, a meeting place of strength, voice and shared purpose. It represents a holistic, inclusive First Nations-centred approach that brings people together as a community - a village moving forward as one. From this central place, knowledge is shared, decisions are shaped and collective strength is formed. It is a reminder that progress comes when people sit together, listen deeply and walk forward side by side.

Surrounding this gathering space are five connected elements, reflecting the Commissioner’s five-year term agenda. These elements represent pathways of action and responsibility, grounded in a strengths-based vision for First Nations peoples and communities.

Together, they show the commitment to move forward with unity after the setback of the Voice Referendum, ensuring that hope and determination continue to guide the journey toward justice and recognition.

On the left side of the artwork are six connected symbols, representing the six term goals that guide the Commissioner’s overarching objective: the pursuit of Truth, Treaty and the transformation of government. Each symbol is joined by flowing lines, showing that these goals are not separate but interconnected - working together to support long-term change.

They symbolise ongoing action, persistence and accountability across the Commissioner's term.

The Shield speaks to the protection of rights - the right to self-determination, participation in decision-making and free, prior and informed consent. It stands for non-discrimination, equality and the respect and protection of culture. The shield holds and protects the strength of First Nations peoples, ensuring that culture and identity remain strong and respected across all systems and spaces.

The Boomerang symbolises the pursuit of Truth and Treaty. It represents the journey toward honest conversations about Australia's past and present, and the return to balance and recognition through treaty. Like the boomerang that returns after its path is travelled, truth always finds its way back, calling for acknowledgement, healing and forward movement.

The Hands and Feather represent the transformation of government and the establishment of new systems that affirm rights, provide genuine accountability and ensure positive access to justice. The hands reflect people working together to reshape systems, while the feather symbolises truth, voice and fairness guiding this transformation.

Flowing through the artwork are the river and waters, seen at both the top and bottom. Water represents life, continuity and connection. It reminds us that journeys are ongoing and that change flows across generations. These waterways connect all elements of the artwork, symbolising the movement of people, ideas and progress across time and place.

The vertical flowing lines along the sides represent a deep connection to land - Country holding memory, story and identity. They ground the work in the strength of place and remind us that all progress is anchored in connection to land and community.

The colours throughout the artwork reflect the origins of Ms Kiss - a proud Kaanju and Birri/Widi woman who grew up in Rockhampton on the lands of the Darumbal People in Central Queensland. Earthy ochres speak to land and ancestry, while blues and greens reflect water, growth and renewal. Together, these colours honour heritage, place and the ongoing journey forward.

This artwork tells a story of gathering, protection, truth and transformation. It honours the strength of First Nations peoples and communities while mapping a shared path toward justice, recognition and self-determination - a journey walked together, guided by culture, community and Country.

About the Artist - Lani Balzan



Lani Balzan is a proud First Nations artist whose work is grounded in culture, community and connection to Country. Drawing on her heritage and lived experience, Lani creates contemporary Aboriginal artworks that honour traditional storytelling while speaking powerfully to present-day journeys of truth, justice and self-determination.

Her practice is deeply informed by her connection to land and water, and by the strength of community - the village that gathers, listens and moves forward together. Through intricate dot work, flowing linework and symbolic design, Lani weaves layered narratives that reflect resilience, continuity and collective strength. Each element within her compositions carries meaning, carefully placed to reflect interconnected responsibilities, shared purpose and cultural protection.

In developing this artwork for the Commissioner's report, Lani worked thoughtfully with the themes of Truth, Treaty and the transformation of government systems. The central gathering symbol reflects her belief in a holistic, inclusive First Nations-centred approach - one that brings people together in strength and unity, even in the face of setbacks. Surrounding symbols such as the shield, boomerang, hands and feather represent rights, accountability, participation and justice, reinforcing the report's commitment to advancing First Nations peoples' rights in Australia.

The flowing river motifs and vertical land patterns speak to continuity - the understanding that progress moves like water, guided by Country and carried by generations. The colour palette honours cultural identity and place, reflecting deep ties to ancestral lands and the communities that shape and sustain her.

Lani's work is both cultural expression and contemporary advocacy. Through her art, she creates visual spaces where story, policy and purpose meet - ensuring that culture is not an addition to the conversation, but the foundation upon which it stands.

website: www.aboriginalartbylani.com.au



Key messages



A fair and just future for First Peoples in Australia is possible. First Peoples must be supported and enabled to lead the way, and governments need to match their own commitments with meaningful action.

The evidence in the Report shows that First Peoples continue to innovate and collaborate on successful solutions to problems affecting their communities.

The Report makes 25 recommendations that provide a roadmap for governments to move beyond rhetoric, to act with integrity, and to ensure the strength, courage and determination of First Peoples is met with structural reform and genuine accountability.

These recommendations respond directly to the voices heard through the *Informing the Agenda* (ITA) project, where the Commissioner ran forums with First Peoples communities across the nation.

First Peoples must be able to participate fully and freely in decisions that affect them.

- ◎ Participation is a fundamental human right, crucial for democracy, good governance and better outcomes.
- ◎ There are currently no enduring, representative national structures for First Peoples.
- ◎ The Report calls for independent mechanisms for truth-telling, agreement-making, and genuine shared decision-making.
- ◎ The failure of the 2023 Referendum on a Voice to Parliament does not mean that the need for representative structures is any less pressing.

Indigenous-led solutions work – governments must follow their lead.

- ◎ When First Peoples design and lead programs, outcomes improve.

- ◎ Governments must scale and properly resource Indigenous-designed initiatives across policy areas including youth justice, housing, health, child protection and education; and support and properly resource community-controlled organisations.

A rights-based approach is the pathway to real change.

- ◎ Australia has made international human rights commitments but has not embedded them fully into domestic law.
- ◎ Weak human rights protections leave First Peoples disproportionately exposed to rights breaches, discrimination and systemic harm.
- ◎ A national Human Rights Act, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) implementation plan and implementation of the National Anti-Racism Framework (NARF) are essential steps.
- ◎ A rights-based system benefits all Australians: when social structures reflect diverse values and worldviews – including those of First Peoples – they become more inclusive, effective and fair for everyone.
- ◎ Embedding enforceable human rights in our domestic laws improves accountability and, consequently, trust in our social systems and governments. This leads to a more cohesive society where everyone feels included and respected.

Systemic accountability is urgently needed.

- ◎ Decades of failure and weak accountability have allowed governments to defer, delay or dilute reforms.

- ⦿ A persistent failure to act on landmark inquiries – including the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) – has deepened mistrust and reinforced cycles of harm.
- ⦿ Governments must hold themselves to the same standards they impose on communities. This must include embedding robust accountability mechanisms into legislation and funding arrangements.

Rebuilding relationships needs truth-telling and agreement-making.

- ⦿ We need to rebuild relationships within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and between First Peoples and non-Indigenous Australians to move forward together.
- ⦿ Rebuilding relationships requires a shared understanding based on truth and an agreed way forward. To be able to forge agreed pathways, First Peoples must have a representative voice.

Access to justice remains unequal and continues to drive disadvantage.

- ⦿ First Peoples experience over-policing, mass incarceration, high rates of child removal and a lack of control or independent oversight over the relevant systems having this impact.
- ⦿ The solution to over-representation of First Peoples in justice and corrections systems is meaningful implementation of human rights and investment in community-led, prevention-based alternatives that are proven to work.

Land justice is central to wellbeing, identity, culture and the everyday enjoyment of rights.

- ⦿ Country is inseparable from identity, health and collective flourishing. Denial of land justice results in denial of all our other rights.
- ⦿ The current laws impacting on land justice are complex and do not deliver meaningful, consistent or sustainable land justice. This includes native title,

land rights, cultural heritage, and environmental protection regimes.

- ⦿ Comprehensive reform of all relevant policy and legislation is needed. Reformed land justice policy and legislation must align with UNDRIP, respond to the lived experience of First Peoples in these systems, and be undertaken in partnership and with the full participation of First Peoples.

The report calls for:

- ⦿ **Independent national mechanisms** for participation, truth-telling and agreement-making.
- ⦿ **A national Human Rights Act** and full implementation of the UNDRIP and NARF.
- ⦿ **Stronger accountability structures**, including: independent oversight and accountability mechanisms for Closing the Gap (CTG) targets and deaths in custody; transparent data; and an urgent shift to long-term needs-based funding.
- ⦿ **Protection and expansion of community-led initiatives** and culturally safe services.
- ⦿ **Raising the age of criminal responsibility**, banning solitary confinement for children, and ensuring detainees have access to Medicare and PBS.
- ⦿ **Comprehensive land justice reform** in partnership with First Peoples and aligned with international human rights standards.

First Peoples' voices – Informing the Agenda



The *Informing the Agenda* (ITA) project was a national listening initiative that engaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people across the country on:

- ◎ priority issues impacting their families and communities and
- ◎ the solutions they consider necessary to improve outcomes.

The listening tour laid the foundations for the Report.

Chapter 1 of the Report brings together the lived experiences of First Peoples from our most remote regions to major centers. It amplifies the voices of our Elders, young people, those working in our community organisations, those living with disabilities, and those who identify as LGBTIQ+.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner commenced her term at a critical point in time for First Peoples who were experiencing a general feeling of rejection in their own country after the failure of the 2023 Voice Referendum and the subsequent dismantling of truth and treaty processes in Queensland and the Northern Territory.

The ITA project sought to hear directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about:

- ◎ how we move forward after the Voice Referendum
- ◎ how we progress and utilise mechanisms to realise our rights
- ◎ what issues are most urgently in need of attention
- ◎ the expectations First Peoples have of the Social Justice Commissioner.

What we heard

More than 1,600 respondents shared their lived experience through a wide spectrum of stories, thoughts, feelings and perspectives.

Across the country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people expressed a sense of pride in and drew strength from their culture, identity and spirit. They are absolute about their distinct status as the First Peoples of this land and are determined not to be erased, diminished or assimilated.

Of critical concern to all communities engaged was:

- ◎ the clear connection between the assimilation and removal laws, policies and practices of the past and contemporary laws, policies and practices that target and disproportionately impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities
- ◎ the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in custody, particularly among children and young people
- ◎ the increasing numbers of First Peoples dying in custody and dying by suicide
- ◎ the overwhelming pervasiveness of structural and systemic discrimination and interpersonal racism directed towards and experienced by First Peoples.

Echoing generations of calls for basic human rights that most Australians take for granted, First Peoples across the country reinforced the need for:

- ◎ respect, including for Elders and youth
- ◎ representative structures that promote participation in decision-making

- ⦿ a strong and protected cultural identity and recognition of land and water rights
- ⦿ good healthcare, safe and secure homes, quality education, and meaningful work
- ⦿ strong community organisations and control over data
- ⦿ fair policing and justice
- ⦿ an honest media that tells the truth
- ⦿ long-term funding arrangements designed and controlled by communities.

Participants spoke clearly about what is required to uphold the rights, dignity and self-determination of First Peoples.

They highlighted the minimum standards articulated in the UNDRIP, the commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (the CTG National Agreement) and the importance of justice, good governance, accountability, cultural strength, community-led services, and safe and equitable systems.

There was widespread concern about the lack of progress on both the implementation of the UNDRIP (adopted by the Australian Government in 2009) and the socio-economic targets and priority reforms committed to under the CTG National Agreement (signed by all Australian governments in 2020).

Communities emphasised that First Peoples know what works and are doing their share of the heavy lifting when it comes to achieving improved outcomes. This is despite the volatility of the political and legislative (enabling or disabling) operating

environment, which communities spoke about many times throughout the ITA tour.

That volatility results in impulsive and ever-changing laws and policies that influence industry and sectoral practice, dominate the focus and operational capacity of our advocacy and service delivery organisations, and compromise the provision of critical and culturally responsive services.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have been telling governments what is required for generations. The problem is not a lack of awareness or evidence. It is a lack of political will.

This was discussed repeatedly at ITA consultations.

While governments across the country are signing up to support improved outcomes, they are failing to deliver.

Business as usual is not an option. If we are to achieve the outcomes to which we say we are all committed, we will need transformation grounded in real partnership and the sharing of power and authority, and structural and systems reform that centres culture, community and Country.

Support for national truth-telling and healing and growing our young people – our next generations – into strong, proud, cultural and community leaders is key to breaking cycles of intergenerational harm. It is critical to shifting to a space where we – First Peoples in partnership with Australian governments and the Australian people – are instead building intergenerational health and wellbeing.



Informing the Agenda: project engagement locations throughout Australia

INT'L.

- ◎ Baku, Azerbaijan

NT

- ◎ Darwin
- ◎ Yirrikala
- ◎ Alice Springs
- ◎ Tennant Creek

TSI & NQLD

- ◎ Yarrabah
- ◎ Cairns
- ◎ Cooktown
- ◎ Thursday Island
- ◎ Badu Island

CQLD

- ◎ Mount Isa
- ◎ Rockhampton
- ◎ Gladstone
- ◎ Woorabinda

SEQLD

- ◎ Brisbane
- ◎ Roma
- ◎ Cherbourg

ACT

- ◎ Canberra

WA

- ◎ Broome
- ◎ Port Headland
- ◎ Geraldton
- ◎ Perth

SA

- ◎ Ceduna
- ◎ Port Augusta
- ◎ Adelaide

VIC

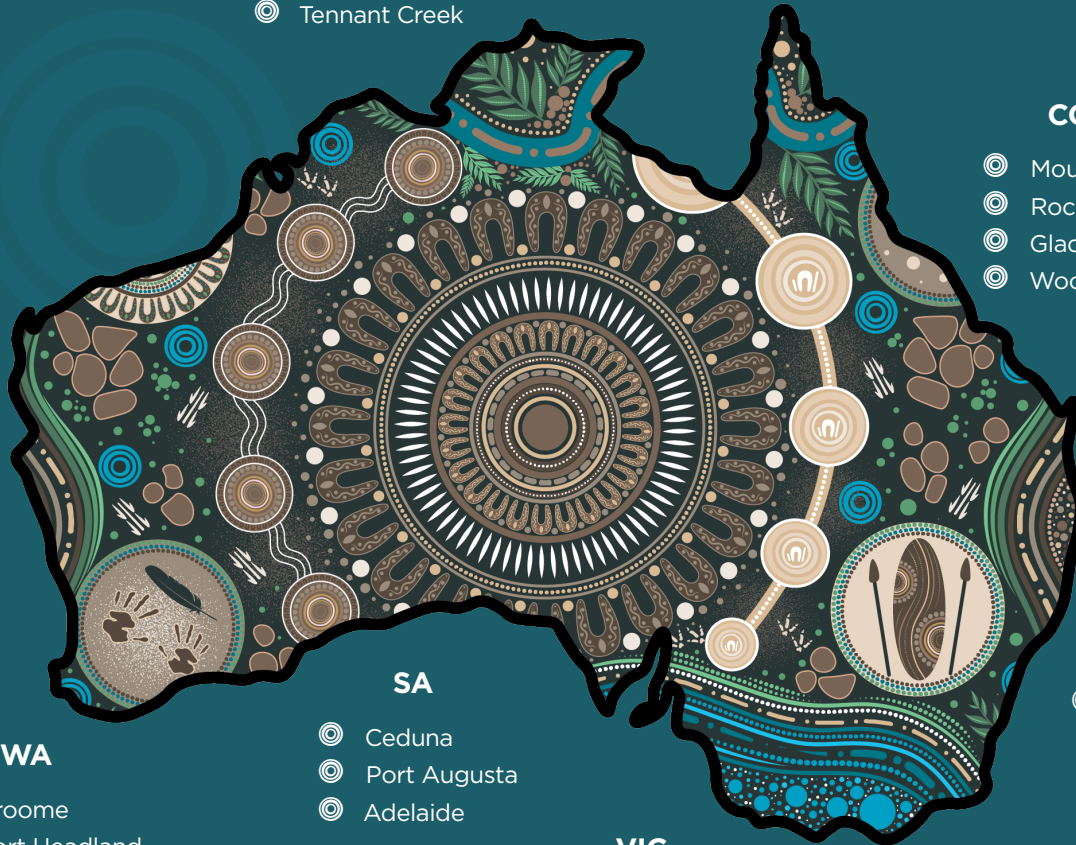
- ◎ Mildura
- ◎ Shepparton
- ◎ Melbourne
- ◎ Warrnambool

TAS

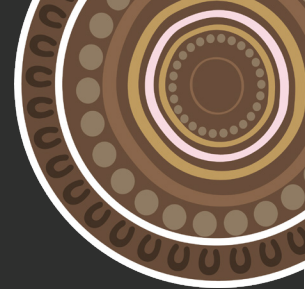
- ◎ Hobart
- ◎ Launceston

NSW

- ◎ Kiama
- ◎ Mount Druitt
- ◎ Redfern
- ◎ Wagga Wagga
- ◎ Dubbo
- ◎ Bourke
- ◎ Parkes
- ◎ Nyngan
- ◎ Moree
- ◎ Coffs Harbour



A fair and just future for First Peoples



The *Blueprint for a fair and just future for First Peoples* (the Blueprint) in Chapter 2 of the Report sets out the Commissioner's reform agenda for First Peoples.

The vision

The Blueprint sets out a vision for a future where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can fully and freely exercise and enjoy their human rights – cultural, social, civil, political and economic – and where they are supported by systems that uphold self-determination, dignity and equality.

A fair and just future for First Peoples can only be achieved when:

- ⦿ historical injustices are addressed in ways that ensure they are not repeated
- ⦿ rights are accepted as inherent (not granted)
- ⦿ transformation and systemic reform are grounded in strengths-based community-led approaches
- ⦿ governments and institutions act with integrity, are accountable to the communities they serve, and uphold their commitments.

The overarching goal of the Blueprint is to centre First Peoples in decisions that affect them. This requires that the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the state is reframed. This would move us beyond rhetoric to genuine reform and along a clear path to securing better outcomes into the future.



Theory of change

The Blueprint outlines 5 critical foundations that are reinforcing and interdependent. Failure in one of these areas undermines progress in all others.

The 5 interdependent foundations are:

1. *Promoting the full enjoyment of rights by First Peoples* – without enforceable protections, rights will continue to be denied. Australia must implement a National Human Rights Framework, including a Human Rights Act and a national plan to implement the UNDRIP.

2. *Fostering systemic integrity and accountability* – systems and institutions must be re-designed to prevent harm, not merely react and respond to it. Independent oversight, Indigenous data sovereignty, fiscal accountability and compliance mechanisms are critical to ending systemic failure.
3. *Increasing First Peoples participation* – national representative structures and mechanisms that promote full participation in social, cultural, political and economic decisions, agreement-making and truth-telling are not optional – they are foundational to democratic legitimacy and rights realisation.
4. *Assuring access to justice* – the need for each of the CTG targets, including the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in child protection, youth and criminal legal systems, is the predictable result of intergenerational discriminatory laws and practices. Governments must prevent harm, ensure culturally safe services and take responsibility for violations of rights and for those that die while in state care.
5. *Rebuilding the village* – building strong, self-determining communities requires sustained investment (by First Peoples and governments) in culture, good governance, just laws, respectful relationships, and healing.



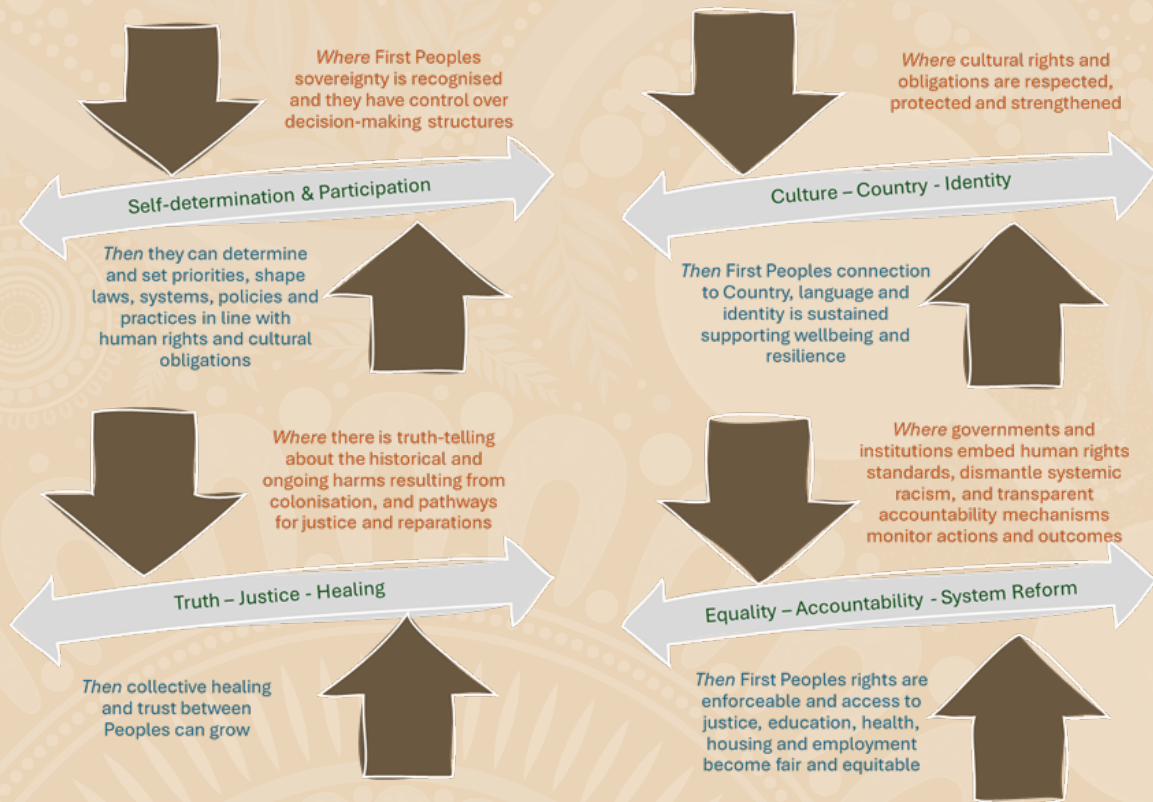


Figure 1: Theory of Change - A logical approach to reform

Call to action

The Blueprint identifies the stakeholders who impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, as represented below.



Figure 2: The stakeholders that impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and communities

Governments are key stakeholders and enablers in the fair and just future mapped out by the Blueprint. Importantly, their role is one of facilitator, guided by the aspirations and objectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Governments accepting and embracing this role involves sharing power in the reframed relationship and acting with integrity and accountability by following through on promises.

The Blueprint issues a clear call to action – recognising that as Australians we all have a role to play in improving life outcomes for the most vulnerable in our communities:

- ◎ *First Peoples* – must drive the change they aspire to, asserting and exercising the rights they are entitled to; restoring cultural, social and collective foundations of First Peoples villages; and actively participating in and informing decisions that affect them.
- ◎ *Australian Governments* – must move beyond rhetoric and genuinely commit to securing a concrete foundation for substantive rights-based reform by dismantling systems that perpetuate harm through racism and exclusion; genuinely promoting First Peoples empowerment, participation and self-determination by sharing power; and actively enabling the creation of a shared future that embraces the ancient cultures of Australia’s First Peoples as part of the national identity.
- ◎ *Allies, Partners, Peak Bodies, Industry, Service Providers* – must walk alongside and work in partnership with First Peoples, promoting dignity, cultural safety, equality and non-discrimination internally and externally; and acting with care, respect and integrity in our spaces.
- ◎ *Non-Indigenous Australians* – must be supported to engage in truth-telling and informed public dialogue that builds understanding of and respect for First Peoples, their cultures, histories and rights; and a collective commitment to justice, healing and respect for difference.

A national framework for change

The Blueprint reinforces the Priority Reforms under the CTG National Agreement through interconnected domains of reform – structural, sectoral and enabling.

These are underpinned by foundational principles of truth, justice, self-determination and healing.

The 5 critical foundations summarised above (promoting the full enjoyment of rights by First Peoples, fostering systemic integrity and accountability, increasing First Peoples participation, assuring access to justice and rebuilding the village) are the ‘priorities and pathways for change’.

The final component of the Blueprint is the monitoring, evaluation and learning framework.

Recommendation 1

All Australian governments should ensure that their laws, policies and practices are consistent with the Blueprint for a fair and just future for First Peoples.



A Blueprint for a fair and just future for First Peoples

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures are strong, respected and celebrated; Communities are thriving and self-determining; and First Peoples live in dignity – free from systemic and structural discrimination, violence, and abuse – and fully enjoy the rights they are entitled to. Truth is told, justice and equity is embedded and Australia, as a shared nation, is grounded in respect for difference, healing and human rights.

Domains of reform

Structural reforms	Sectoral reforms	Enabling reforms
Foundational changes needed to embed systemic integrity, uphold human rights and dismantle structural racism in laws, systems, policies and services	Responses necessary to address injustices and inequities in law, policy and service delivery	Mechanisms that guarantee genuine participation, accountability and self-determination

Foundational principles

Truth	Justice	Self-determination	Healing
Full and honest truth-telling about the historical and contemporary impacts of colonisation on First Peoples' lives in the shaping of the Australian nation	Recognition and respect of First Peoples' sovereignty and rights, grounded in structural justice and non-discrimination; systemic integrity; and accountability for past and ongoing harms	Autonomy, self-governance and genuine participation in determining, developing and administering priorities and strategies for exercising the right to development in all areas of life	Recognition and healing of intergenerational trauma supported by culturally grounded approaches

Priorities and pathways for change

1. Promoting the full enjoyment of rights by First Peoples

2. Fostering systemic integrity and accountability

- Human rights, including the rights of First Peoples, are embedded across law, policy, practice and service delivery – including through:
- ☉ a National Human Rights Framework and a National Action Plan to implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
 - ☉ the implementation of the National Anti-Racism Framework (NARF)
 - ☉ redesigning systems and programs to reflect First Peoples' lived experiences and worldviews to support the National Agreement on Closing the Gap (CTG).
 - ☉ Supporting First Peoples to understand their rights and working with governments to apply them in practice.

- National structures are strengthened to promote integrity and accountability and uphold rights in line with international obligations. This would enable:
- ☉ community-led solutions to drive change in achieving cultural and social determinants
 - ☉ transformed relationships and government systems through recognition of plural legal systems (linked to CTG Priority Reforms)
 - ☉ the establishment and application of robust compliance and accountability mechanisms at all stages of decision-making
 - ☉ compliance with Indigenous data sovereignty
 - ☉ independent oversight and review.

3. Increasing First Peoples' participation

- First Peoples govern their own affairs, set priorities and fully participate in all decisions that affect them – including at every level of government so that:
- ☉ First Peoples' authority is enshrined in representative structures, agreements or treaties between First Peoples and the state
 - ☉ free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is the standard applied for any law reform, policy or project affecting First Peoples
 - ☉ independent and self-determined participation of First Peoples in domestic and international fora is supported.

4. Assuring access to justice

- Systems are fair, culturally safe, accountable and rights based. They:
- ☉ ensure equality before the law and address systemic and structural racism
 - ☉ prevent harm and end discriminatory laws and practices
 - ☉ invest in culturally safe, community-controlled prevention and early intervention programs and restorative justice approaches
 - ☉ provide appropriate remedy when rights are violated including national processes for reparations, restitution and justice for historical and ongoing harms.

5. Rebuilding the village

- The impacts of colonisation are addressed by restoring the cultural, social and collective foundations of First Peoples' villages through:
- ☉ strengthening cultural authority, kinship and community governance
 - ☉ respecting First Peoples legal systems and dispute resolution practices – First Peoples Law is respected alongside Australian law
 - ☉ supporting and promoting healing of intergenerational trauma and ensuring safety and dignity
 - ☉ fostering respectful public dialogue and stronger relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Monitoring, evaluation and learning framework (MEL Framework)

The Commissioner will use this Blueprint to guide work undertaken during her term. In doing so, she will consider:

- ③ progress against the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, including progress on Priority Reform 3 and the establishment and operation of independent monitoring mechanisms (IMs)
- ③ content of the proposed National Action Plan on the UNDRIP and the NARF
- ③ progress under multiple national frameworks: for example, *Safe and Supported, Our Ways-Strong Ways – Our Voices – National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family Safety Plan*
- ③ outcomes and reforms to native title and other land justice legislative arrangements.

Assessment will be provided through the Social Justice Report.

Text box 1: A Blueprint for a fair and just future for First Peoples

Increasing First Peoples' participation



Participation is a prerequisite for democratic legitimacy and effective policy outcomes. The right to participate requires active, free, meaningful and accessible participation in decisions that impact on a person or group's human rights.

Participation enables the advancement of all human rights. It plays a crucial role in the promotion of democracy, the rule of law, social inclusion and economic development. It is essential for reducing inequalities and social conflict. It is also important for empowering individuals and groups and is one of the core elements of human rights-based approaches aimed at eliminating marginalisation and discrimination.⁵

The right to participate enables the right to self-determination. The collective right of Indigenous self-determination is protected in the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) and the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR). The UNDRIP also articulates this collective right. Its application must be free from any kind of discrimination and requires that States consult and cooperate in good faith with Indigenous Peoples.⁶



Self-determined mechanisms needed for participation

As explained in Chapter 3 of the Report, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to experience a lack of enduring, self-determined mechanisms to enable full participation in decisions that affect their lives.

This reflects a lack of compliance with international standards and basic principles and mechanisms of participation afforded to other Australians.

The Australian Government should take actions to ensure the full participation of First Peoples, including:

- ◎ Recommit to the Uluru Statement from the Heart – Voice, Treaty and Truth, recognising that representation must be achieved in different ways given the defeat of the Voice Referendum.
- ◎ Establish a national framework for genuine participation through independent, adequately resourced representative structures.
- ◎ Establish a Makarrata Commission to support truth-telling, agreement-making and education reform to restore trust and legitimacy.

Too often, the existing mechanisms of participation – from parliamentary presence and advisory roles to partnership structures and representative bodies – have been conditional, fragile, or government-controlled.

There has been an increase in political participation through representation in parliaments by elected Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander members and senators.

However, there is an absence of formal national structures, such as those previously in place in the form of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples.

This absence means there are no mechanisms at the national level, nor many at the state and territory levels, that support collective engagement on the determination of priorities and development of solutions, even if only to inform parliamentary representatives.



Additional barriers to full participation

There are many additional barriers to effective participation, including, for example:

- ⦿ a lack of bipartisan political commitment to First Peoples engagement mechanisms
- ⦿ political cycles undermining long-term objectives
- ⦿ the absence of legal protections and legislated advisory structures and representative mechanisms
- ⦿ under-resourcing of First Peoples organisations and communities.

Additionally, full participation in decisions that affect them requires that First Peoples participation and contributions be informed, and that they are afforded equal treatment within the education and employment sectors.

For decades now, but particularly recently, political and media narratives have promoted mis- and disinformation, creating division and disunity among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and further straining the relationship between First Peoples and the broader population. The Voice Referendum was a heartbreaking example of how mis- and disinformation has played out.

In education, the disproportionate application of exclusionary practices such as the suspension and exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students not only compromises the right to access education and commitments to education targets, it has a catastrophic impact on the lives of those excluded individuals and their families.

In employment, the Centre for Indigenous Peoples and Work and the Gari Yala survey looked at the perspectives and experiences of First Peoples in employment.

Connected to that work, this chapter:

- ⦿ examines the success of the Indigenous business sector
- ⦿ highlights barriers and risks to key government policy initiatives, including for example the impact of black cladding on the success of the Indigenous Procurement Policy
- ⦿ considers how the *Murru waaruu* approach informs economic participation into the future.



Combining political voice and economic strength – Murru waaruu

True self-determination requires both political voice to shape decisions, and economic strength to sustain them.

The *Murru waaruu* Outcomes Report came out of a comprehensive seminar series and calls for a paradigm shift in First Peoples economic policy ‘away from social policies directed at welfare and simple mainstream industry participation, to a strategic commitment to policy underpinning sustainable First Nations wealth creation’.⁷

Murru waaruu provides policy reform ideas for co-designing a national economic self-determination policy framework. The ideas include:

- ◎ a legislative framework for optimal reform underpinned by UNDRIP
- ◎ land rights reform to support First Peoples to unlock economic opportunities without compromising underlying rights
- ◎ freshwater reform to increase First Peoples’ access to water allocations licensed for economic purposes
- ◎ sea Country reform that supports increased First Peoples’ participation in the Blue Economy (sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth)
- ◎ cultural and intellectual property rights reform to protect the significant economic value of First Peoples’ cultures and knowledges
- ◎ reform to rights in financial assets to enable access to equity in beneficial interests in trusts, statutory and other structures held by First Peoples
- ◎ a framework for treaties and other constructive agreements to underpin or enable the negotiation of enabling structures and other measures that realise First Peoples’ goals and aspirations for economic self-determination.⁸

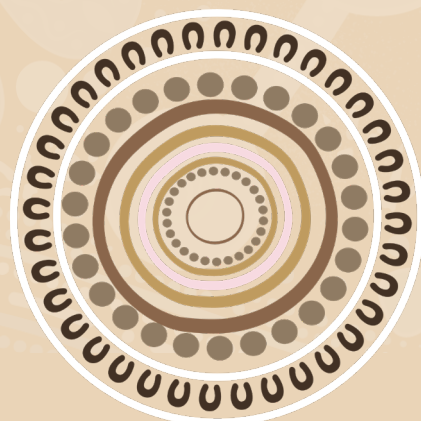
Text box 2: Combining political voice and economic strength – *Murru waaruu*

Participation rights for First Peoples benefits everyone

Enabling and facilitating the full participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is not only beneficial to First Peoples and their communities locally. In ensuring the participation of the most vulnerable communities, all Australians have their participation rights further understood, respected and protected.

As we know from global debates concerning environmental protection and climate change, all Australians benefit from the ancient wisdom, traditional knowledge and connection to Country held by Indigenous Peoples. These provide critical insight into, and support for, minimising impacts and establishing sustainable solutions.

All Australians, and indeed all citizens of the world, have a vested interest in supporting the fullest participation of Indigenous peoples in our civil societies.





Recommendation 2

The Australian Government should work in partnership with First Peoples to establish a national representative mechanism. The mechanism should be independent from government, based on the Paris Principles model,⁹ and have a sustainable source of funding based on domestic ‘future fund’ models.¹⁰

Recommendation 3

The Australian Government should work in partnership with First Peoples to establish a national Makarrata Commission with the mandate and powers to conduct a national truth-telling process and to design a national agreement-making process.

Recommendation 4

The Australian Government should fund public awareness and educational activities to run in parallel to the Makarrata Commission’s national truth-telling process. These activities should build understanding of First Peoples’ human rights and the ongoing consequences of colonisation in Australia.

Recommendation 5

All Australian governments should ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people can fully participate in education by embedding Indigenous designed, culturally safe, and personalised learning models into schooling systems. This includes resourcing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled education organisations and Indigenous-led schools, and ending disproportionate use of exclusionary practices such as suspension and expulsion.

Recommendation 6

State and territory governments which do not have reparation schemes for historic practices of stolen wages in place should take urgent action to establish them.

Promoting the full enjoyment of rights by First Peoples



When we think about human rights, it's about kindness, so how do we use that well, how can we say here are the rights and this is what it looks like in practice? – Online ITA Participant

The international human rights framework provides a pathway to remedy inequality and rights violations.

Australia prides itself on being a founding member of the UN and a human rights defender on the international stage. However, its codification of human rights obligations has been largely neglected.

It is in this context that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to experience disproportionate levels of systemic harm, inconsistent recognition of rights across jurisdictions, and limited access to remedies when rights are breached.

An outline of the international human rights framework and an analysis of the limited progress Australia made in giving effect to its obligations is set out in Chapter 4 of the Report.

Australia's human rights commitments

Australia currently reports against the 7 core human rights treaties. These are the:

- ⊙ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- ⊙ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- ⊙ International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)
- ⊙ International Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- ⊙ Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- ⊙ Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)
- ⊙ Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Mechanisms within the international human rights system which aim to hold states accountable to their obligations include:

- ⊙ UN member states report periodically to treaty bodies in connection with each of the human rights treaties.
- ⊙ Complaints can be made against UN member states through UN treaty committees in connection with respective human rights treaties.
- ⊙ Every 5 years, each UN member state is assessed through a peer review process on its overall human rights record, known as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

In January 2026, Australia participated in the international peer review of its human rights performance through its 4th UPR. In total, over the four UPRs in which Australia has participated, 234 of the 1,122 recommendations provided to Australia by Member States specifically relate or refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They focus on the need to:

- ⊙ promote constitutional recognition of First Peoples
- ⊙ address racism and discrimination
- ⊙ improve protections for women and children exposed to violence

- © protect the human rights of children more generally (including for example by raising the age of criminal responsibility).

In addition to the major international human rights treaties which Australia has signed and ratified, Australia formally adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Right of Indigenous Peoples¹¹ in 2009.

The UNDRIP does not give rise to any new or 'additional' rights for Indigenous peoples. Rather, it:

- © 'elaborates on existing human rights standards and fundamental freedoms [contained within the binding human rights treaties] as they apply to the specific situation of Indigenous peoples'¹²
- © provides guidance to governments, businesses and the public to understand how the right of Indigenous Peoples to self-determination is intrinsically linked to rights to cultural maintenance and revitalisation and other universal rights like health, education and housing.

Communities, civil society organisations and businesses can all participate independently of governments in implementing the UNDRIP. For example, businesses can incorporate the UNDRIP into strategic and operational planning.

Australia's human rights performance

Australia's lack of a national human rights framework or a national human rights act has left it an outlier among Western liberal democracies. Failure to set out Australia's international human rights obligations in national legislation has undermined:

- © the representative and self-determining participation of First Peoples
- © the integrity of Australia's human rights commitments and the ability for citizens to uphold their rights
- © First Peoples' access to justice through the full realisation of individual and collective rights
- © the capacity for First Peoples to heal and engage in the world on their own terms, given the ongoing trauma being inflicted at a systemic level and the lack of acknowledgement and understanding of the impact of systemic discrimination.



Where human rights protections do exist in Australia, they are fragile and vulnerable to parliamentary override. First Peoples are disproportionately impacted by these failings in our inadequate rights protection system.

One of the key human rights protections in Australia is the suite of national anti-discrimination legislation, including the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) (RDA). Among several weaknesses, the RDA has suffered from the Australian Parliament overriding or suspending it when governments have passed legislation implementing policies that the RDA would otherwise prohibit. Notably, this has only happened to allow laws which would knowingly undermine the rights of and discriminate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities:

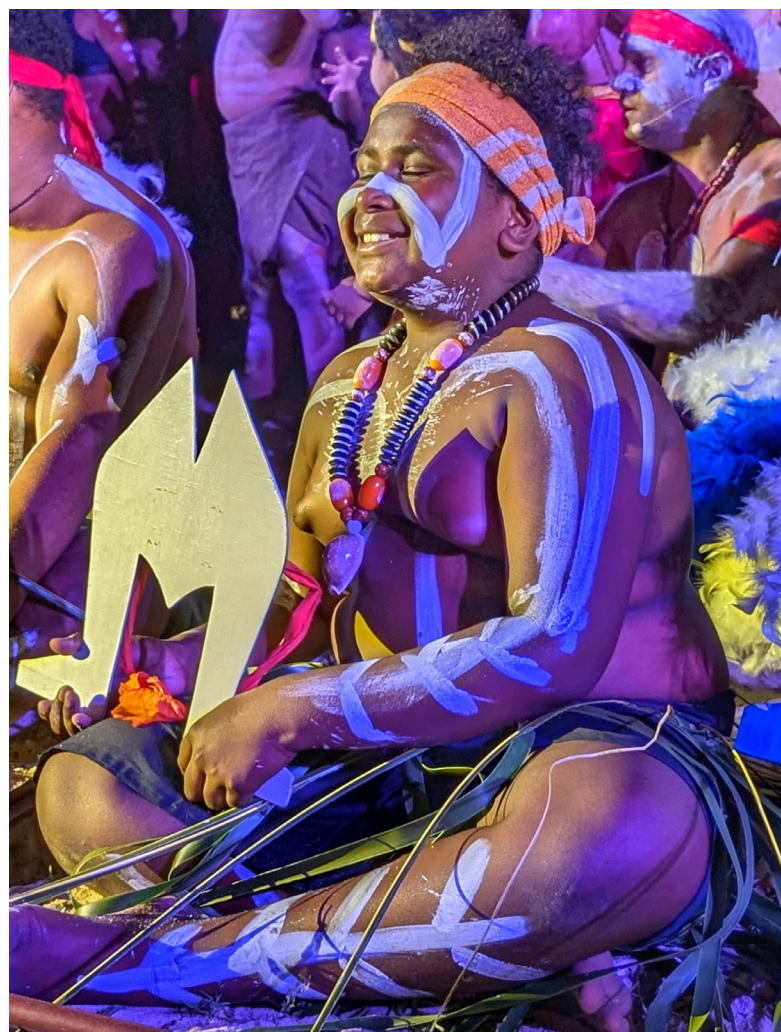
- ◎ the *Hindmarsh Island Bridge Act 1997* (Cth), which removed rights to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage¹³
- ◎ the *Native Title Amendment Act 1998* (Cth), also known as the 10-Point Plan, which limited the scope of the RDA and diminished the native title rights of First Peoples¹⁴
- ◎ the Northern Territory Emergency Response (the ‘Intervention’) in 2007, which overrode a number of human rights protections for Indigenous peoples living in prescribed communities in the NT.¹⁵

Since 2017, we have seen a consistent increase in discrimination complaints to the Australian Human Rights Commission by First Peoples. Most complaints by First Peoples concern racial discrimination (between 57 and 70% of all complaints made by First Peoples between 2017 and 2024).

We have also heard consistent accounts of increased racism experienced by First Peoples in the wake of the failed 2023 Voice Referendum.

Government initiated royal commissions and national inquiries have been conducted with the intention of identifying and remedying significant human rights breaches.

Governments have referred parliamentary inquiries that seek to provide advice on progressing the implementation of international obligations. This includes the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



Affairs inquiry into the application of UNDRIP in Australia that reported in November 2023, and the Joint Committee on Human Rights inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework that reported in May 2024.

Yet most of the recommendations from these inquiries have not been responded to or actioned, and compliance with our international human rights obligations remains critically unsatisfactory.

The challenge for the Australian Parliament is to determine how these rights should be enjoyed and made meaningful for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within the political and legal systems of the Australian Nation State. Importantly, the participation of First Peoples is both necessary and integral to the way governments respond to the application of the rights articulated in UNDRIP.¹⁶

Recommendation 7

The Australian Government should implement the recommendations of the following major reports within this term of Parliament:

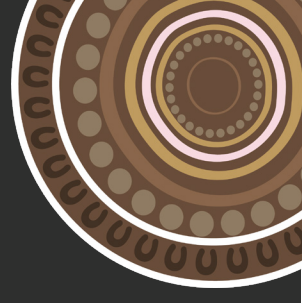
- ◎ 'Revitalising Australia's commitment to human rights: Final report of the Free and Equal project' by the Australian Human Rights Commission
- ◎ 'Inquiry into Australia's Human Rights Framework' by the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights
- ◎ 'Report of the Inquiry into the Application of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in Australia' by the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

Key actions recommended in these reports include the introduction of a national human rights framework that includes a national Human Rights Act, national human rights education plan, and a national implementation plan for the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Recommendation 8

The Australian Government should support the independent and self-determined participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in domestic and international human rights fora, including through an appropriate funding allocation to facilitate the Indigenous Human Rights Network. This should include investment in training and mentoring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people to engage in international advocacy, ensuring intergenerational continuity of leadership and capacity.

Fostering systemic integrity and accountability



Chapter 5 of the Report considers the principle of systemic integrity – the alignment of words and actions across governments – as the standard by which accountability is measured, tested and enforced.

Systemic accountability manifests in the frameworks and practices through which governments are answerable for the exercise of their power and the consequences that follow when obligations are not met.

Fostering systemic integrity and accountability provides assurance to citizens that government and other public institutions act in accordance with agreed principles and create the conditions through which truth and legitimacy are built.

Integrity and accountability are necessary conditions under which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' rights can be realised in practice.

True accountability requires more than oversight of government processes. It also depends on who controls the information on which accountability is based.

It requires community access to information and the capacity for community to be fully informed when making decisions. Calls for Indigenous data sovereignty highlight that when governments retain authority over the collection, interpretation and release of data, they determine not only what is measured but whose perspectives count.

While governments frequently commit to change, they do so without creating the systems necessary to deliver it, which undermines trust, accountability and critical reform initiatives.



History of unanswered calls for integrity and accountability

Australia has a long history of First Peoples calling for recognition, partnership, and self-determination. To date, there has been a persistent lack of systemic integrity and accountability reflected in the failure of governments to translate commitments into structural reforms that result in better outcomes.

Australia has seen some important steps forward – constitutional change in 1967, the passage of the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) and the *Native Title Act 1992* (Cth), the National Apology to the Stolen Generations in 2008, the adoption of the UNDRIP in 2009 and the 2020 CTG National Agreement. However, in effect, many of these steps have delivered recognition without lasting reform, promises without delivery and commitments without mechanisms to guarantee compliance.

Further, communities most often bear the burden of compliance, with limited reciprocal accountability required or demonstrated by governments against their obligations. While Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations are subject to extensive reporting, evaluation and oversight requirements, government performance is far less scrutinised.

For decades, governments have commissioned inquiries, received reports and made commitments without the follow-through required to build trust and deliver justice. Weak accountability mechanisms allow governments to defer, dilute or disregard obligations and recommended evidence-based reforms without consequence.

One key example is the failure to fully implement the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) more than 34 years ago.

Worthy commitments will continue to be undermined while governments do not hold themselves to the same standards

of integrity and accountability that they impose on communities and organisations.

Reframing the role of government

Systemic integrity in Indigenous affairs cannot be understood without reference to governance. Enabling governance is not about relinquishing responsibility but about reframing the role of government: from one that directs and controls to one that actively supports, safeguards and strengthens First Peoples' authority.

The 2012 Social Justice Report highlighted the importance of good governance in creating an enabling environment that promotes systemic integrity and accountability. It identified three dimensions of governance that must all function well for systemic success.



Figure 3: Key elements to ensure good governance and systemic integrity

- ◎ *Community governance* – communities are supported to exercise cultural authority and self-determination.
- ◎ *Organisational governance* – Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations which operate with legitimacy in their communities, are empowered to meet the needs of the community and have the capabilities needed to meet the requirements of the broader governance environment.

- © *Governance of government* – governments act with consistency, coherence and transparency, create an enabling environment for communities and organisations to thrive and are accountable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

As highlighted in the reviews of the CTG National Agreement conducted by the Australian Productivity Commission and the Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, public sector accountability is severely lacking. The federated system of government where responsibility for outcomes is handballed between the federal government and state, territory and local governments, creates conflict and avoidance, and ultimately the denial of rights.

As part of her 5-year agenda, the Social Justice Commissioner is focusing on Priority Reform 3 of the CTG Agreement: transforming government and addressing systemic and structural racism. Within Priority Reform 3, clause 59 sets out key elements of transformation, including:

- © identifying and eliminating racism
- © embedding and practicing meaningful cultural safety
- © delivering services in partnership with First Peoples
- © increasing accountability through transparent funding allocations
- © supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures
- © improving engagement with First Peoples.

Making these changes needs a deeper understanding of how transformation actually occurs, not just renewed commitments. It includes systems change, capacity development, behavioural and culture change, and relationship building. Transformation is an ongoing process of reshaping the conditions of governance.

Addressing ‘rights ritualism’

Foundational to fostering systemic integrity and accountability will be to ensure all Australian governments are subject to mechanisms which uphold Australia’s international human rights obligations.

Australia has been criticised for ‘rights ritualism’ – the use of the language and processes of human rights to deflect scrutiny rather than enable it.

For example, Australia has repeatedly argued at international fora, including as part of its UPR assessment, that ‘current federal laws are consistent with the spirit of the Declaration’ with little to no detail on how they do this.

Australia’s actual obligation is to deliver not on the spirit but on the substance of the Declaration and it currently lacks the mechanisms to put this into effect.

Another example of rights ritualism in Australia is the establishment of First Peoples advisory committees and working groups to provide expertise and advice on government policy, when those bodies are not representative nor self-determining and when the advice from such bodies is often ignored.

Without rigorous, outcome-focused accountability mechanisms, commitments and purported reforms will continue to be performative, and will work to disable rather than enable effective governance, thwarting positive practical outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Good practice example: Path to Treaty Act and Public Sector Act

A good practice example of what is possible when government systems embed cultural authority and accountability is the Queensland *Path to Treaty Act 2023* (Qld). Together with reforms under the *Public Sector Act 2022* (Qld), this legislation and the process of its development reframed the relationship between Government and First Peoples in Queensland.

Through the Path to Treaty Act, the Queensland Government created the statutory First Nations Treaty Institute and the Truth-telling and Healing Inquiry. In doing so, it embedded cultural authority, truth-telling and shared decision-making in law.

Under the Public Sector Act, agencies were required to implement Reframing the Relationship Plans to ensure cultural capability, shared governance and integration with CTG commitments. These reforms were noted by the Productivity Commission as exemplars of enabling structural change. They demonstrate how governments can move beyond token gestures and enact new structures of integrity and partnership.

Disappointingly, in late 2024, the Queensland Parliament repealed the Path to Treaty Act without consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Text box 3: Good practice example: Path to Treaty Act and Public Sector Act



Recommendation 9

The Australian Government should provide the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner with formal observer status within Closing the Gap Partnership structures.

Recommendation 10

The Australian Government should establish a national framework for Indigenous fiscal self-government that replaces short-term funding with needs-based formulas that provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations with direct, long-term, sustainable funding (including monitoring and evaluation capacity).

Recommendation 11

The Australian Government should carry out transparent, independent financial and performance audits of Indigenous-specific and mainstream expenditure to ensure spending delivers on Closing the Gap commitments and community priorities.

Recommendation 12

The Australian Government should implement binding data-sharing and governance agreements across all levels of government that uphold Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles. The agreements should ensure accountability to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through measures informed by, and agreed to by, communities themselves.

Recommendation 13

Australian governments should incorporate into their Cabinet and Parliamentary Handbooks a requirement that all legislative, policy and program proposals align with Australia's human rights obligations to First Peoples, including the UNDRIP.

Recommendation 14

The Australian Government should accept and implement the National Anti-Racism Framework (NARF).

Recommendation 15

The Australian Government should build rights-based performance requirements into funding agreements with states and territories. Performance indicators should align with the UNDRIP, implementation of the Closing the Gap priority reforms and progress against the Closing the Gap socio-economic targets. Jurisdictional performance reporting should be subject to rigorous independent monitoring and evaluation (in accordance with clause 67 of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap).

Rebuilding the village



The health and wellbeing of First Peoples is impacted by social, cultural and political factors. Having the social and governance systems in which we live reflect our ways of knowing, being and doing is an important part of that picture. All peoples flourish when they live according to their own cultural worldviews.

Currently, Australian governance systems do not reflect First Peoples' ways of knowing, being and doing. So, in addition to the social and cultural determinants of health, we need to rebuild our political determinants. This includes rebuilding our own decision-making systems and processes and our legal and judicial systems based on our Law, norms and values, using structures and processes that resonate with the values of our communities. It also includes the need for mainstream systems and processes to acknowledge the role they play and to make changes to include the values of our communities.

In Australia, colonisation, systemic racism and settler-colonial governance has fractured Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community cohesion, undermined Elders, and displaced Indigenous Law and identity.

The individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples to self-determination, participation in decision-making, non-discrimination and respect for and protection of culture are critical to maintaining, nurturing and reasserting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander world views and to addressing the inequality and disadvantage we face.

Chapter 6 of the Report highlights the need to 'rebuild the village'. Rebuilding the village encompasses prioritising the renewal and ongoing maintenance of First Peoples' cultural authority, kinship and collective

responsibility as the foundations for strong, self-determining communities.

Rebuilding the village is grounded in key principles of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Law and legacy, and it reinforces the status of First Peoples who have never ceded Country or sovereignty. First Peoples hold inherent rights which are enshrined in international human rights law. These rights exist regardless of whether governments respect them.

Rebuilding the village is an approach that builds on a spirit of collectivism – Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing – based on the presumption that every member of the family, clan and nation has a role to play in supporting individual wellbeing and collective good.

There are several pathways for rebuilding the village, such as cultural revival, language revitalisation, restorative justice, Indigenous Nation Building, truth-telling, international advocacy and respectful allyship. Rebuilding requires both internal healing and external accountability.

Rebuilding the village is an intergenerational responsibility: a legacy to honour ancestors and a foundation for future generations to flourish.



Rebuilding the village in the context of colonialism

To rebuild the village, we need to fully understand the context regarding how First Peoples exist in modern Australia – a relatively new nation that, through the colonial process, has sought to assimilate those who have occupied and cared for these lands for over 65,000 years.

This colonial context brings huge challenges to individuals, to communities and to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples collectively. It requires that we ask key questions to build understanding of First Peoples historical and contemporary lived experiences and their immediate and future requirements to effectively navigate two worlds without losing their culture and identity:

- ◎ What will it take for village rebuilding to succeed?
- ◎ How do we strengthen and recognise cultural authority in decision-making across our communities and clarify which groups have responsibility for particular issues?
- ◎ How do we balance the roles and responsibilities of different community members, including Traditional Owners and those who have long-standing connections through residence and relationships?
- ◎ What dispute mechanisms are needed to deal with these matters that largely arise because of external interference yet must be resolved to avoid conflict and encourage harmony?
- ◎ How can the harm caused by disconnection and contested identity be addressed?
- ◎ What processes are appropriate for bringing people home? What responsibilities come with reconnecting to community, both for those trying to reconnect and those supporting reconnection?
- ◎ How might individuals who have experienced disconnection learn about our relational systems and our Laws?

We have had to, and continue to have to, ask these questions within our communities and come up with ways that we can heal from the damage wrought by colonisation.

After more than two centuries of imposed Western systems, rebuilding requires multiple hands and demands effort on many fronts and at all levels – local, regional, state/territory, national and international.

For many decades, First Peoples have been actively engaging in the global Indigenous village. Connection to, and participation in, global movements has strengthened both Indigenous advocacy capacity and the capacity for healing.



The primary focus and responsibility for rebuilding the village lies with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. However, governments and non-Indigenous people need to play a role in enabling and supporting First Peoples to be able to do this.

We must call on the allyship of non-Indigenous people to grow their awareness of racism and to continue to stand up for, and alongside, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is a crucial part of rebuilding the village that means Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people do not have to do this work alone. In this context, the NARF presents an important opportunity to promote and create the conditions for greater social cohesion and equality for all people who call Australia home.

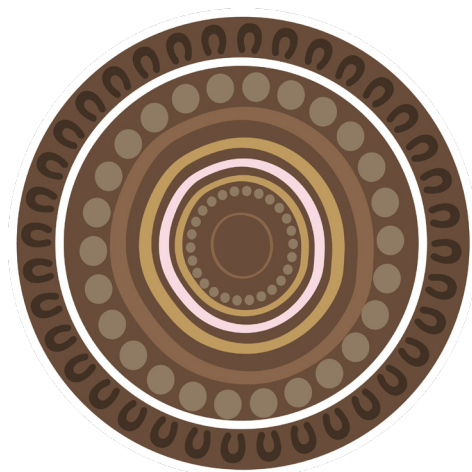
As discussed above in relation to transforming government, Australian governments have a particularly critical role in creating an enabling environment and reforming systems so that they support rather than disable First Peoples' efforts to rebuild the village.

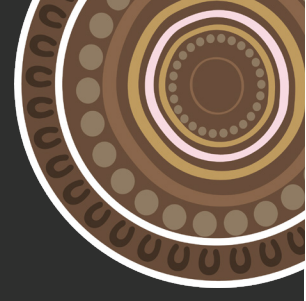
In all of these contexts and levels, the collective work of truth-telling in its many forms is vital in facilitating new forms of social relationships within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and between First Peoples and the broader Australian population. Rebuilding the village depends on the healing that can only come with shared understanding and a shared pathway forward that we agree on based on that shared understanding.

Recommendation 16

All Australian governments should prioritise sustained and long-term funding to support community-led initiatives essential to rebuilding strong and thriving First Peoples communities. These initiatives include:

- © practices that restore cultural authority and promote nation-building, good governance and community-facing accountability
- © restorative justice approaches that promote dispute resolution and peacemaking
- © language revival programs
- © cultural camps and healing forums
- © intergenerational learning on Country and knowledge transfer and mentoring.





Access to justice

Chapter 7 of the Report conceptualises ‘justice’ in its full and positive sense as the moral and ethical compass across all policy areas. Access to justice requires an ability to:

... seek and obtain remedies for wrongs through institutions of justice, formal or informal, in conformity with human rights standards.¹⁷

When discussing justice, it is important to remember the context, discussed in Chapter 6, of the state-sanctioned dismantling of Indigenous governance and cultural authority, legal systems, kinship structures and connections to Country, culture, language, family and community.¹⁸

The denial of equal access to justice and equal enjoyment of human rights – including the right to self-determination – continues to impact First Peoples across all aspects of life.

A Human Rights Act which establishes a positive duty for governments to uphold rights would prevent rights breaches by fostering a culture of respecting rights. It would also provide all people in Australia, including First Peoples, with meaningful ways to seek remedies when their rights are breached.

The success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led initiatives demonstrates the efficacy of approaches which are designed and governed by our communities.¹⁹ Given we know these approaches work, the right to equality and non-discrimination demands that they be the approaches that Government invest in.



Injustices in criminal justice and child protection systems

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experience deep and ongoing injustices in the criminal justice system, including over-policing, mass incarceration, child removal, and deaths in custody.

These injustices are rooted in colonisation, systemic racism, and the failure of governments to act on landmark inquiries such as the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) and the *Bringing Them Home* report.

There are now (and have been for a long time) crisis levels of exposure of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the criminal justice system and its drivers.

In 2023, researchers found 8 ‘social determinants of justice’ that increase the risk of incarceration:

- ◎ having been in out-of-home (foster) care
- ◎ receiving a poor school education
- ◎ being Indigenous
- ◎ having early contact with police
- ◎ having unsupported mental health and cognitive disability
- ◎ engaging in problematic alcohol and other drug use
- ◎ experiencing homelessness or unstable housing
- ◎ coming from or living in a disadvantaged location.²⁰

Historical and contemporary child removal policies have produced, and continue to produce, intergenerational, individual and collective trauma for families and communities.²¹ The ‘care-to-prison pipeline’ between state child removal and increased likelihood of exposure to the justice system and incarceration is a significant factor in the crisis levels of criminalisation of First Peoples.²²

Too often, welfare agencies interpret issues such as overcrowded housing, lack of access to nutritious food, inadequate clothing or missed medical appointments as neglect. In reality, these are the predictable consequences of systemic poverty and structural disadvantage. Surveillance and intervention into First Peoples families by child protection authorities – as opposed to working with and supporting families to thrive – increases the risk of child removal and of those children becoming incarcerated during their lifetimes.

There is a ‘largely hidden national crisis’²³ in the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with cognitive disability in the criminal justice system. Further, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander LGBTIQ+ people are also an over-represented population in prisons, and that group experiences disproportionately high levels of discrimination, violence and trauma.²⁴

Youth justice crisis

‘Youth justice’ policies across Australia have resulted in extremely high rates of imprisonment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people.

Detention has been repeatedly found to damage children’s mental health and increase the likelihood of further offending and disadvantage.²⁵ Despite this evidence, most jurisdictions have failed to raise the age of criminal responsibility above the age of 10 and some have introduced retrograde ‘adult crime, adult time’ measures in direct breach of Australia’s human rights obligations.

Research highlights that once children enter the justice system, they are likely to face further breaches of their rights, and that the conditions of detention increase their exposure to harm.²⁶



In several jurisdictions, these conditions include being held for extended periods in police watchhouses with adult offenders²⁷ and other adult facilities. In the Northern Territory they also include the re-introduction of spit hoods to restrain young people and children in prisons, overturning a recent ban on their use.

Inadequate oversight mechanisms in the justice system

Despite Australia's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT), independent oversight mechanisms for places of detention are inadequate. We call for Australian jurisdictions to make good on Australia's commitment to put national preventative mechanisms (NPMs) in place as a matter of urgency.

There is also a long-standing and urgent need for a national independent monitoring mechanism to ensure transparency and accountability in relation to deaths in custody and the implementation of related reform commitments.

We need national leadership to promote and enact evidence-based reforms in criminal justice and related systems. Leadership is required to drive a shift in focus to investment in evidence-based alternatives to incarceration that foster safety, belonging and opportunity, starting from the health, developmental and cultural needs of children and young people. This includes expanding existing approaches like Justice Reinvestment. It also includes incentivising governments to embed international human rights standards within justice systems.



Recommendation 17

The Australian Government should enable access to Medicare and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme-subsidised medicines for people in custody.

Recommendation 18

The Australian Government should provide national leadership on the establishment and implementation of appropriate standards and protections concerning child safety and youth justice interventions, through:

- a. expediting the full implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (OPCAT), including through legislative reform to establish and give effect to enforceable national standards for the treatment of people in detention
- b. implementing the recommendations of *Help Way Earlier!* including amending the *Crimes Act 1914* (Cth) to set the age of criminal responsibility at a minimum of 14 years, ban the use of solitary confinement for children, and implement nationally consistent monitoring of child detention facilities
- c. sustained needs-based investment in community-led prevention and early intervention programs operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations to address the structural drivers of First Peoples' over-representation in the justice system
- d. establishing and resourcing an independent oversight function to monitor, report on and encourage compliance with Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody recommendations and Closing the Gap commitments.

Recommendation 19

The Australian Government should refer to the Australian Law Reform Commission an inquiry into the conduct of police and coronial investigations into Indigenous deaths and critical incidents in custody across Australia to identify a best practice approach. As part of the inquiry, the ALRC should consider:

- a. best practice international approaches to investigations into Indigenous deaths and critical incidents in custody
- b. whether the establishment of national minimum standards for investigations of Indigenous deaths and critical incidents in custody would be beneficial, and the content of such standards, drawing on international guidance such as the International Committee of the Red Cross 'Guidelines for Investigating Deaths in Custody'
- c. whether, and if so, what, legislative, policy and practice reforms are necessary to ensure best practice police and coronial investigations that are compliant with any proposed national minimum standards, and Australia's international human rights obligations
- d. the benefits and feasibility of establishing a national, harmonised approach, including the establishment of a national investigatory mechanism; and the options for federal authorities to be tasked with conducting independent investigations, particularly where a state or territory police or custodial officer has been involved in the death or critical incident
- e. appropriate independent complaint processes for the families of victims of deaths in custody.

Recommendation 20

The Federal Minister for Communications should work in partnership with First Nations Media Australia, the Australian Communications and Media Authority, the Australian Press Council, the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, and the e-Safety Commissioner to develop and introduce measures to strengthen media accountability and promote accurate reporting of youth justice issues, including:

- a. a dedicated Youth Justice Media Code of Practice and
- b. mandatory training on compliance with the Youth Justice Media Code of Practice for journalists covering youth justice stories.

Land justice



For First Peoples, justice is inseparable from Country. Country is the foundation of identity, Law, governance, culture and spirituality. Connection to Country underpins social and emotional wellbeing and shapes kinship, responsibilities and collective identity. Connection to Country is not peripheral but central to health and collective flourishing.

International human rights standards affirm the relationality between Law and Country. The UNDRIP recognises First Peoples' rights to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned lands, territories and waters. It also affirms First Peoples' right to uphold their responsibilities to future generations.

In this context, we can see that failure to secure land justice represents a breach of fundamental human rights. Further, breaches of rights associated with land justice impact our rights more broadly. Without land justice, the enjoyment of other rights – including health, housing, education and the practice of culture – is undermined. Recognition and restoration of traditional rights to land and water provide a pathway to healing, cultural maintenance, sustainability and empowerment.

Chapter 8 of the Report highlights weaknesses in land justice systems. This includes major concerns with the native title system and fragmented cultural heritage regimes which leave sacred sites vulnerable and erode First Peoples' ability to safeguard their cultural heritage.



Failure of current laws to secure land justice

Current legal frameworks fall short of meeting the international human rights obligations of Australia in relation to land justice. Although native title has delivered some meaningful recognition of rights for some communities and some positive practical outcomes, many argue that native title does not amount to nor deliver 'land rights'.²⁸ Native title is undermined as a practical rights-delivery system for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in a number of ways, including that native title:

- ⦿ is limited in scope
- ⦿ is subject to extinguishment
- ⦿ provides inadequate or no compensation, with the embedded access to compensation only activated recently through the Timber Creek High Court decision
- ⦿ has never been properly resourced and relies on systemic subsidisation by First Peoples groups and individuals' unpaid labour.

Coordinated legislative reform is needed across connected regimes such as native title, land rights and cultural heritage. The interaction of those regimes is an example of the ongoing challenges experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in engaging with the native title system. We need to rethink the current implementation of laws and policies designed to 'rectify the consequences of past injustices' so Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

'receive the full recognition and status within the Australian nation to which history, their prior rights and interests and their rich and diverse culture fully entitle them to aspire'.²⁹

There are now 3 decades of Native Title Reports and recommendations from the Office of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner. We reiterate wide-ranging and long-term concerns in relation to:

- ⦿ a lack of genuine free, prior and informed consent in the design and operation of the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth)
- ⦿ the onerous burden of proof and connection requirements
- ⦿ the power imbalances built into the system which disadvantage native title holders
- ⦿ the lack of meaningful, robust and enforceable procedural rights within the system
- ⦿ the trauma and conflict that it has contributed to in our communities
- ⦿ the lack of positive practical impact in reviving the most fulsome substantive rights possible.



Recent developments in native title and land justice

Chapter 8 of the Report contains a section outlining native title determination and Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) statistics. It highlights that there was an increase in future act applications in the 2025 reporting period; as of 30 June 2025, there were over 1500 ILUAs registered and 652 native title determinations on the register.

Chapter 8 also notes some significant recent cases relevant to land justice, including domestic case law on compensation and United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) case law on the effective lack of due process within the Australian native title system.

***Commonwealth v Yunupingu* [2025] HCA 6**

This High Court decision built on the 2019 Timber Creek High Court decision to award compensation for the economic, cultural and spiritual losses associated with the extinguishment of native title by past acts in the Northern Territory. The High Court in *Yunupingu* found that native title is a property right like any other property right; if the Commonwealth removes that property right, native title holders are entitled to 'just terms' compensation under the Australian Constitution.

Wunna Niyaparli – UN case

In 2019 the Wunna Niyaparli people submitted a complaint to the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). The complaint concerned the effective participation of Indigenous Peoples in mechanisms for the determination of their rights to traditional territory. The Committee found that Australia has an obligation to provide due process guarantees to the Wunna Niyaparli people in determining the native title rights and interests over land they claim is theirs, and that the native title system failed to do that.³⁰

ALRC review of the future acts regime

Chapter 8 also includes comment on the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) review of the future acts regime.

The Australian Human Rights Commission supports proposals suggested by the ALRC, including those which would aim to:

- ⦿ bring the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) into line with its original intent and deliver actual land justice
- ⦿ properly resource and support Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs) with independent funding in perpetuity, including sufficient funding for the community healing and empowerment roles that PBCs are called on to fulfill
- ⦿ introduce meaningful consequences for non-compliance or bad faith acting by third parties
- ⦿ properly resource the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT) to appropriately support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples engaging in the native title system
- ⦿ harmonise existing cultural heritage and native title legislative regimes to manage the impact of future acts and align those systems with environmental protection and biodiversity conservation regimes.

Climate change

Climate change is a further layer of complexity in relation to native title, cultural heritage, land management and human rights more generally. Indigenous peoples are disproportionately affected by climate change with heightened risks of dispossession, cultural loss and marginalisation.³¹

In 2022, the United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) found that Australia violated its positive obligation to take appropriate action on climate change, to the detriment of Torres Strait Islanders.³² In its response to that UNHRC decision, the Australian Government did not accept the recommendation to award compensation to the claimants.³³

Subsequently, the Federal Court held that the Australian Government does not have a common law duty of care to protect its citizens from the impacts of climate change.³⁴

The Torres Strait 8

In 2019, inhabitants of four small, low-lying islands in the Torres Strait complained to the UNHRC that Australia had failed to adapt to climate change, upgrade seawalls or reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These failures meant the Australian Government violated Torres Strait Islanders' rights to culture and to be free from arbitrary interference with their private life, family and home, as protected under the ICCPR.

In October 2022, the UNHRC ruled that the Australian Government had violated its positive obligation to take appropriate action on climate change. These violations included failing to adequately protect Torres Strait Islanders against the adverse impacts of climate change. The UNHRC recommended local inhabitants be compensated for the Australian Government's inaction.³⁵

The Australian Government confirmed that it agrees that climate change is impacting lives and cultural practices. Yet, it did not accept the recommendation to award compensation to the claimants.³⁶

Pabai v Commonwealth [2025] FCA 796 (Pabai Pabai)

In July 2025, the Federal Court handed down judgment in Pabai Pabai, after the Torres Strait Islander applicants first filed their case in 2021.

The applicants argued that the Commonwealth owed a duty to Torres Strait Islanders to set greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reduction targets in line with the 'best available science' on climate change, and that the Commonwealth breached that duty of care when setting its targets in 2015, 2020, 2021, and 2022.

Judge Michael Wigney found that:

- ⦿ although the Australian Government's emissions targets were not based on a consideration of the best available science, emissions policy is a matter for the Government to determine, not the courts
- ⦿ under Australian law the Australian Government does not owe a duty of care to protect its citizens from the impacts of climate change or to fund adaptation measures
- ⦿ there is no provision in Australian law under which the Australian Government could be found negligent and ordered to pay compensation for matters of government policy.

Text box 4: The Torres Strait 8 case at the UN

Text box 5: Pabai Pabai climate change case



Recommendation 21

The Australian Government should amend the *Native Title Act 1993* to ensure consistency with Australia's international human rights obligations and address longstanding concerns about the Act, including by:

- a. establishing a presumption of continuity in the acknowledgment and observance of traditional law and custom of the relevant native title claimant society
- b. shifting the burden of proof to the respondent once the native title applicant has met the relevant threshold requirements in the registration test
- c. enabling the revival of native title on Crown land where historical extinguishment currently applies, for example in relation to marine parks and reserves
- d. accounting for the impacts that future acts may have on native title rights and interests in areas outside of the immediate footprint of a future act, including waterways and rights and interests associated with water
- e. strengthening procedural rights, including by:
 - i. reviewing time limits under the right to negotiate
 - ii. shifting the onus of proof onto the proponents of development.

Recommendation 22

The Australian Government should ratify Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169).

Recommendation 23

The Australian Government should ensure that Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs) are appropriately supported to meet their responsibilities by:

- a. allocating sufficient ongoing funding to an independent Prescribed Bodies

Corporate (PBCs) Operating Fund to guarantee PBC funding in perpetuity

- b. providing resources to enable PBCs to fulfill the community healing and empowerment roles needed to address the harms caused by the native title system.

Recommendation 24

The Australian Government should establish a specifically resourced First Nations advisory group to advise on reform and support reform implementation with respect to the *Native Title Act 1993* (CTH) and intersecting legislative regimes.

Recommendation 25

The Australian Government should strengthen cultural heritage protections by:

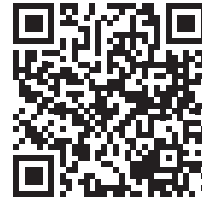
- a. amending federal cultural heritage and environmental protection and biodiversity conservation legislation to set national minimum standards which are consistent with Australia's international human rights obligations, including through:
 - i. enshrining the principle of self-determination and enabling Traditional Owners to determine which areas and values are significant and worthy of protection
 - ii. enshrining the principle of free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) and enabling the appeal and overturning of decisions where this standard is not upheld
 - iii. prohibiting agreements that restrict Traditional Owners from publicly raising concerns about heritage protection or exercising their rights under heritage legislation
 - iv. establishing enforceable and meaningful penalties for breaches
- b. commissioning, in collaboration with state and territory governments, a national mapping and truth-telling project in relation to cultural heritage that has been damaged or destroyed.

Where can I find more information?

The Social Justice Report 2025 can be found on the Australian Human Rights Commission's website or scan this QR code.



The Informing the Agenda (ITA) report constitutes a chapter of the Social Justice Report 2025 but is also published separately and can be found on the Australian Human Rights Commission's website or scan this QR code.



The Social Justice Commissioner's page on the Australian Human Rights Commission website contains information on Commissioner Katie Kiss's ongoing work, as well as the work of previous Social Justice Commissioners. This includes information on the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody (RCIADIC) and the Bringing Them Home Report.

For information on the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, there are existing resources available online. Further resources will be prepared over the course of Commissioner Kiss's 5-year term.

The Australian Human Rights Commission website also contains more information on a federal Human Rights Act in Australia.

Discrimination complaints

The Social Justice Commissioner does not receive or deal with individual complaints of discrimination. There is a separate complaints function at the Australian Human Rights Commission which is administered by a separate section of the organisation.

If you think you have been treated unfairly because of your race, disability, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, or age you can get information about the complaints process by contacting the Australian Human Rights Commission's National Information Service.

We can:

- ☉ Talk to you about what happened, give you information about your rights and answer your questions
- ☉ Try to find someone else to help you if the Commission can't
- ☉ Help you put your complaint in writing, if you need this
- ☉ Look into your complaint
- ☉ Help you to resolve your complaint.

Making a complaint

It doesn't cost anything to make a complaint.

Contact us:

- ☉ by phone on 1300 656 419 (local call) or TTY: 1800 620 241 (toll free)
 - ⇒ the phone line is open Monday to Friday between the hours of 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM AEST.
- ☉ in writing, including by email to infoservice@humanrights.gov.au.
 - ⇒ Please note that the form and its details will be stored in the 'sent items' folder of your email account. If other people can access your email and the information in it, delete the message once it's sent.

You can make a complaint online by going to <https://humanrights.gov.au/complaints>

For more information about making a complaint, scan this QR code.



If you need an interpreter you can call the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) on 131 450 to be connected to the Australian Human Rights Commission.

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