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NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Racism, Violence and Hate Against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Submitted by:

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1. Executive Summary

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into racism, violence and hate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Racism, in all its forms, continues to have a profound and harmful impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, their families, and communities, with reported experiences increasing from 39% in 2014 to 54% in 2024.¹

Racism and the intersections of gender

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience racism at the intersection of gender, culture and structural inequality. Racism is not experienced as isolated incidents or individual acts of prejudice. It is cumulative, gendered and systemic. It shapes how women move through public spaces, access services, engage with institutions, participate in workplaces, protect their families and exercise leadership.

These experiences are often compounded by interactions with systems that are not culturally safe, including health, justice and social services. The result is not only individual harm but also broader impacts on wellbeing, participation, safety and trust in institutions. Further, the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women cannot be separated from the ongoing legacy of colonisation. Historical policies of dispossession, forced removal, exclusion and institutional control continue to shape women's contemporary experiences.

This submission draws on the lived experiences, leadership, and expertise of our members across the country. It highlights the cumulative and intergenerational impacts of racism, including everyday microaggressions, systemic discrimination, and overt acts of violence and hate.

The evidence demonstrates that racism is directly linked to adverse health outcomes, including high psychological distress and a suicide rate 2.3 times higher than that of non-Indigenous Australians.² From our engagement with our members, we argue that racism, violence and hate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are sustained through institutional design, unequal power structures and systems that continue to produce disproportionate harm without sufficient accountability.

The Inquiry provides an opportunity to recognise racism as a structural determinant of inequality and to recommend practical reforms that prevent harm, strengthen accountability and invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women-led solutions.

This submission outlines:

- The lived realities of racism, violence and hate experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- The systemic and institutional drivers of these experiences across justice, child protection, health, employment, education and online safety

- The limitations of current legal and policy responses
- The critical importance of community-led solutions

NATSIWA calls for urgent, coordinated and sustained action to address racism at all levels. This includes strengthening legal protections, embedding accountability across systems, and investing in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women-led approaches that are grounded in cultural safety, prevention, healing and self-determination

2. About NATSIWA

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA) is the national peak body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women across Australia. NATSIWA provides a collective national voice to ensure that the leadership, lived experience and policy priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are central to government decision-making.

NATSIWA is one of five National Women's Alliances funded by the Australian Government. Together, the National Women's Alliances play a key role in ensuring women's voices are central to the policy development process by providing community-led, evidence-based and intersectional gender equality advice and civil society expertise to government on areas of greatest impact and influence to *Working for Women: A Strategy for Gender Equality*. As a national alliance, NATSIWA engages with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women across urban, regional, rural and remote communities. This engagement directly informs NATSIWA's advocacy and ensures that lived experiences of racism, violence and discrimination are reflected in national policy and reform processes. NATSIWA works across policy advocacy, systemic reform and community engagement to address the structural drivers of inequality impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. This includes racism, violence and exclusion across key systems such as justice, health, housing, education and employment.

All work undertaken by NATSIWA is grounded in the principles of self-determination, cultural authority and community-led solutions.

3. Methodology / Approach

This submission is informed by:

- Direct engagement with NATSIWA members
- Ongoing advocacy and policy work
- Lived experience shared through consultations, meetings and community engagement
- Recurring themes identified through NATSIWA's national alliance work
- Relevant national data, public reporting and research

The experiences reflected in this submission represent only a portion of the broader experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Many instances of racism, violence and hate remain underreported due to mistrust, cultural unsafety, fear of retaliation and limited confidence in institutional responses.

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All information included in this submission is de-identified to protect the privacy and safety of individuals. This approach reflects the importance of creating safe spaces for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to share their experiences without fear of identification or repercussion.

NATSIWA acknowledges that the experiences reflected in this submission represent only a portion of the broader experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Many instances of racism, violence and hate remain underreported.

The evidence and lived experience presented in this submission should not be read as a collection of isolated examples. Rather, they point to recurring patterns of harm across systems and settings. These patterns are consistent with national evidence showing that self-reported experiences of racism among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples range from 16% to 97%, highlighting both the prevalence and variability of racism across different contexts.¹

4. Lived Experience of Racism, Violence and Hate

Racism is not an abstract concept for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women; it is a daily lived reality that shapes how women move through the world, access services, participate in workplaces, and experience safety in their own communities and beyond.

Our members consistently report experiencing racism across all areas of life, including in healthcare settings, workplaces, education systems, public spaces, and online environments. These experiences range from everyday microaggressions to overt acts of racism, harassment, and violence. While individual incidents may be dismissed or minimised, the cumulative impact is profound and deeply harmful.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience racism through intersecting forms of discrimination shaped by gender, socioeconomic inequality and institutional power. These experiences are distinct and are not fully captured through race-based or gender-based analysis alone.

Women often describe needing to navigate environments where racism is anticipated, rather than unexpected. This may involve making decisions about where it is culturally, psychologically and physically safe to seek support, how to advocate within systems, or how to protect cultural identity and family wellbeing.

Common experiences include:

- questioning or denial of identity
- stereotyping, and assumptions about capability, parenting, and behaviour
- dismissal of expertise, authority or leadership, despite holding leadership roles and significant cultural and professional knowledge
- exclusion from decision-making environments
- scrutiny linked to cultural expression or visibility
- racialised and gendered abuse in public and online spaces

4.1 Case Studies

Case Study: Racial targeting and intimidation during the Referendum

A NATSIWA member described an incident during the Referendum process where, while waiting at traffic lights, her vehicle was spat at due to the display of Aboriginal-inspired number plates. The incident left her feeling shocked and deeply unsettled. She also reported feeling fearful and receiving hostile looks while wearing an Aboriginal work shirt in a public setting during the campaign.

This example demonstrates how racism is enacted openly in public spaces and reinforced during nationally significant events. It highlights the normalisation of racially motivated behaviour and the resulting impact on women's sense of safety and belonging.

Case Study: Physical assault in public spaces with no accountability

A NATSIWA member reported being verbally abused in a public space by a group of non-Indigenous individuals. The abuse included explicit racial slurs, derogatory comments about her identity as an Aboriginal woman, and threats of physical harm. The situation escalated into physical violence, with the woman pushed to the ground and struck. Bystanders were present but did not intervene. The attack occurred in daylight, in a commonly used community location, reinforcing the normalisation of such behaviour and the lack of immediate accountability.

This case reflects the escalation of racism into physical violence and the absence of community or institutional intervention. It highlights both the normalisation of harm and the lack of immediate accountability in public settings.

Case Study: Misinformation and political intimidation by public officials

A NATSIWA member reported the distribution of misinformation by an elected official during the Referendum period. A local Liberal MP funded and distributed a letter to households claiming that Native Title would result in 35,000 local properties being taken. This claim was unfounded and unsupported by evidence. Similar messaging was shared through the Member's media channels. The circulation of misleading and inflammatory information contributed to fear, division, and an increase in racist attitudes within the community.

These experiences are not isolated. Public expressions of racism, particularly during nationally significant events, reinforce the visibility and normalisation of racist behaviour. For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, these moments heighten fear and vulnerability, as racism is not only experienced privately but enacted openly in public spaces. Women describe navigating environments where racism is anticipated rather than unexpected, requiring constant adjustment of behaviour, language and engagement to mitigate risk. This includes decisions about where it is safe to go, how to present, and whether to speak or remain silent.

Microaggressions play a significant role in this experience. While often dismissed as minor, they reinforce harmful stereotypes and contribute to environments where more overt forms of

racism can occur without challenge. Over time, this creates a cumulative burden that impacts confidence, participation and wellbeing.

The cumulative effect of these experiences contributes to ongoing stress, hypervigilance and withdrawal from public, professional and community environments.

5. Structural Drivers of Institutional Racism

Racism experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is embedded within the systems and institutions that are intended to provide support, protection and opportunity. Racial experiences are sustained not only through individual behaviour, but through institutional arrangements that shape decision-making, access, accountability and power. Across systems, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women describe experiences of disproportionate surveillance, culturally unsafe service design, unequal credibility and fragmented responses that can make navigating support more difficult.

The strongest evidence from women's justice and family violence advocacy demonstrates that systems do not operate in isolation. Housing insecurity, family violence, criminalisation, child protection intervention, poverty and service exclusion can reinforce one another. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, contact with one system may increase exposure to another. This means racism is often experienced not through a single interaction, but through interconnected pathways across institutions.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, institutions are not always experienced as neutral providers of support. Across health, justice, child protection, housing, education and employment systems, institutional responses can influence who is believed, who is protected, who is monitored and who is excluded.

At the same time, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women consistently demonstrate leadership in navigating these systems, advocating for family safety and sustaining connection to culture and community.

The issue is not a lack of resilience or capability among women. Rather, it is that institutional systems are not consistently designed to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's authority, strengths and self-determined solutions.

5.1 Justice System

Across the justice system, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience over-policing and criminalisation while also not being adequately protected when seeking help. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are incarcerated at a rate 21 times higher than non-Indigenous women, and this rate continues to increase.¹

Justice responses frequently fail to recognise the intersection of racism, gender-based violence, trauma and historical mistrust. For women experiencing family violence, contact with police and courts may be shaped by fear of not being believed, fear of criminalisation, or fear that engagement with one system will trigger intervention by another.

A central issue is the criminalisation of women who should be receiving safety, healing and support. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are victim-survivors of violence may be treated as offenders, non-compliant clients or risks to be managed. This is particularly harmful where women are misidentified as perpetrators, where trauma responses are interpreted as aggression, or where poverty and housing insecurity are treated as individual failure rather than structural disadvantage.

This creates a harmful paradox. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women can be over-scrutinised by justice systems while under-protected when they seek safety.

Prisons and punitive justice responses are not places of healing. They can compound trauma, disrupt family and community connections, increase the risk of child removal, and entrench barriers to housing, employment and long-term safety. Responses to racism, violence and hate must therefore prioritise prevention, diversion, healing, culturally safe legal support and community-led alternatives to criminalisation.

5.2 Child Protection

Child protection systems are a significant site where racism, gender and colonial legacy intersect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are disproportionately impacted by child protection intervention and are frequently assessed against non-Indigenous standards of parenting, family structure and wellbeing that may not reflect cultural authority, kinship systems, collective caregiving practices or community responsibility.

Aboriginal standards of care in child protection are grounded in self-determination, cultural authority, and the recognition that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities are best placed to determine what safety and wellbeing look like for their children. These standards prioritise kinship, connection to culture and Country, and collective caregiving, rather than narrow, deficit-based assessments grounded in Western family models.

For the state to recognise and respect these standards, child protection systems must shift from punitive, risk-focused responses to approaches centred on prevention, family preservation and cultural safety. This includes investing in Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, recognising kinship care, and ensuring that safety is understood holistically encompassing cultural, emotional and community wellbeing, not only physical risk.

Without embedding Aboriginal standards of care, current systems will continue to over-surveillance, misinterpret and disproportionately remove Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, reinforcing intergenerational harm rather than supporting families to thrive.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children remain significantly over-represented in out-of-home-care, with children approximately 9.6 times more likely to be placed in care across all states and territories.² This over-representation cannot be separated from the historical and ongoing impacts of colonisation, including the legacy of the Stolen Generations, intergenerational trauma, poverty, unequal access to culturally safe support services and severing of connection to kin, culture and Country.

For many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, engagement with child protection systems occurs within a broader context of institutional mistrust. Experiences of surveillance, scrutiny and deficit-based assessment can shape how women interact with services and whether support is sought early.

The embedded fear of child removal presents a significant barrier to reporting family violence and engaging with support services, including police and the courts. For many women, seeking help can result in increased surveillance, investigation and the risk of removal, rather than support, prevention and family preservation.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are also frequently viewed through a “failure to protect” lens, even when they are themselves victim-survivors of violence or navigating unsafe housing, financial stress or limited service access. This framing can individualise responsibility while overlooking the broader structural conditions that influence safety and wellbeing.

This creates a gendered and racialised dynamic in which women may be held accountable for managing risk within families while having limited authority over the structural conditions shaping that risk. In practice, women can experience heightened scrutiny without receiving the culturally safe, preventative and family-centred support required to strengthen wellbeing.

An Indigenous-centred strengths-based response requires child protection systems to move beyond punitive and risk-focused approaches towards models grounded in prevention, early support, cultural safety and family preservation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women must be recognised both as parents interacting with systems and as decision makers and experts in what best supports children, families and communities to thrive.

5.3 Health System

The Australian health system reflects systemic racism through experiences of dismissal, misdiagnosis and lack of cultural safety. Positive health and well-being outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are dependent on culturally appropriate, accessible and consistent care. However, access to such care remains limited.

Culturally appropriate, accessible and consistent care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is grounded in cultural safety, respect, and continuity of care across services. It requires recognising the impacts of colonisation, trauma and racism, and ensuring that women are supported in ways that reflect their cultural identity, community connections and lived realities.

For example, a woman seeking support for family violence should be able to access a culturally safe service where she is supported by Aboriginal staff or in partnership with Aboriginal organisations, her safety is understood within the context of family, culture and community, and she is not required to repeatedly retell her story across multiple systems. Instead, services should work together to provide coordinated, wraparound support including housing, health care and legal assistance.

Without culturally appropriate and consistent care, women are more likely to disengage from services and remain unsupported. Embedding this standard across all systems is essential to building trust, improving access and achieving equitable outcomes.

While Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs) play a critical role, not all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women feel safe accessing these services. Concerns relating to confidentiality, community dynamics and stigma can act as barriers. As a result, many women seek care through mainstream services, which may involve long wait times, travel, cost, and a lack of cultural safety. This contributes to disengagement, untreated illness and further strain on the health system.

Distrust of the Western medical system remains a significant issue for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, shaped by historical and ongoing experiences of racism and institutional control, including those linked to the Stolen Generations.

Health must be understood alongside housing, justice, child protection and family violence. Poor health outcomes are not produced by clinical access alone. They are shaped by racism, poverty, housing insecurity, trauma, unsafe services and the cumulative burden of navigating systems that do not consistently recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's expertise in their own lives.

5.4 Employment and Education

In workplaces and education systems, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women face structural barriers, tokenism and retaliation for speaking out. Experiences of cultural unsafety, racial discrimination and exclusion are widely reported. The Gari Yala Report (2020), based on a survey of over 1,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, highlights widespread experiences of racism in employment settings, including unfair treatment, exposure to racial slurs and lack of cultural safety.³

Caring responsibilities also significantly impact workforce participation. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are more likely to take on unpaid care roles, often due to limited access to services. Approximately 24 per cent of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people live with disability, further increasing care responsibilities within families and communities.⁴

These systems do not operate in isolation. They intersect and compound harm, reinforcing disadvantage and eroding trust in institutions. The outcomes experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are not incidental, but the result of ongoing systemic failure.

This is reflected in national data, with key Closing the Gap targets relating to justice, child protection and safety remaining off track.⁵ This demonstrates that current systems are not only failing to reduce inequality but are actively reproducing it.

5.5 Online Racism, Hate and Safety

Online environments have become a significant site of racism, hate and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women,

particularly those living in regional and remote areas, experience technology-facilitated abuse in distinct ways, including racialised sexism and targeted harassment.⁹

Residing in regional and remote areas also creates additional barriers to seeking help, including limited access to services, fewer support options, and reduced digital safety resources.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women report that online abuse is often sustained and escalates across multiple platforms, making it difficult to avoid or disengage. In some cases, this abuse extends beyond the digital environment, creating concerns for personal safety.

For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in public or visible leadership roles have reported receiving repeated racial abuse, threats of violence, harassment and gendered abuse following media appearances, advocacy work or public commentary. This abuse is often amplified through social media platforms, where racist narratives are reinforced and spread rapidly.

Online racism contributes to a broader silencing effect, limiting participation in public discourse and discouraging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women from engaging in leadership, advocacy and community representation. Existing digital safety frameworks and dialogues are not adequately equipped to respond to normalised racialised and gendered harm. Platform moderation systems and algorithms may fail to recognise culturally specific forms of harm, while reporting pathways can be inaccessible, inconsistent or ineffective, exasperating the initial experience. Online racism must therefore be understood as an extension of broader systemic and societal racism. Without effective regulation, accountability and culturally safe responses, online environments will continue to enable and normalise psychological and physical harm.

6. Effectiveness of Laws and Protections

While legal frameworks exist to address racism, discrimination and violence, they remain insufficient in practice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Current legal processes are frequently complex, inaccessible and retraumatising. Women are required to navigate systems that are not culturally safe, often placing the burden on individuals to report, prove and respond to racism. The Western system of justice and protection requires the individual to identify and substantiate racism, even where harm is cumulative, institutional or experienced across multiple settings over time. It also places responsibility on those experiencing harm, rather than holding institutions and systems accountable.

Importantly, existing legal frameworks do not adequately capture systemic and cumulative forms of racism. The experiences most commonly reported by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, including exclusion, bias, stereotyping and institutional discrimination often fall outside the scope of what can be effectively addressed through current laws. This creates a significant accountability gap between lived experience and legal recognition.

Furthermore, for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, is a lack of trust in legal and institutional responses, driven by both historical and ongoing experiences of racism within these systems. This contributes to underreporting and reluctance to engage with formal complaint mechanisms.

For women who pursue legal avenues, the process can be lengthy, adversarial and emotionally taxing, with uncertain outcomes. This further discourages engagement and reinforces the perception that reporting racism will not result in meaningful change.

As a result, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women choose not to report experiences of racism, violence or discrimination, not because the harm is insignificant, but because the systems intended to respond are not trusted to deliver safe or effective outcomes.

7. Current Responses — What is Working and What is Not

Government responses to racism, violence and hate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples remain fragmented, short-term, and fundamentally inadequate.

Despite repeated commitments, there has been a continued failure to address the structural drivers of racism. Current approaches are largely reactive, focusing on awareness and individual behaviour, rather than institutional accountability, structural reform and sustained investment and recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions.

7.1 What is working

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led approaches consistently demonstrate what supports safety, healing and long-term change. These approaches are grounded in cultural authority, lived experience and community leadership, and prioritise prevention, safety, healing and long-term outcomes.

Effective responses are therefore holistic rather than siloed. They recognise that women may require intersecting supports that can only be met through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led service delivery, community-controlled organisations, trauma-informed and culturally grounded approaches, prevention and healing responses and solutions that centre self-determination.

7.2 What is not working

As outlined in this submission, the existing approach is not only ineffective, but it also allows racism to continue without consequence. Without clear accountability, institutions are not required to change, and the burden remains on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to navigate unsafe systems.

There are several features that continue to limit protection:

- Fragmented anti-racism policy architecture,

- Complaints-based accountability systems,
- Short-term funding arrangements with limited resourcing and a lack of structural support,
- Inconsistent cultural safety obligations respected by the system,
- Limited institutional consequences for racism,
- Inadequate recognition of systemic and cumulative harm, and
- Insufficient investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women-led solutions

These features demonstrate the persistent gap between policy commitments and implementation. Governments have committed to systemic reform through the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, yet progress against the Priority Reforms remains limited. This reflects a broader failure to shift power, embed accountability, and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led solutions.¹²

Where there is government funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations, there is a further systemic imbalance, where our organisations are expected to deliver outcomes without being provided the authority or investment required to do so effectively. The ongoing failure to invest in and scale community-led solutions represents a missed opportunity to address racism, violence and hate in a meaningful and sustainable way.

Without decisive action to shift power, embed accountability and invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women-led approaches, current responses will continue to fall short and the harms outlined in this submission will persist.

8. Recommendations and Solutions

Racism, violence and hate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women will not be addressed through incremental change. It requires structural reform, sustained investment, and enforceable accountability across all systems.

8.1 Strategic Priorities

- Embed enforceable accountability mechanisms across all systems, including justice, health, child protection and education, with clear consequences for failure
- Formally recognise systemic racism as a primary driver of violence, inequality and exclusion in all policy and legislative frameworks
- Commit to long-term investment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women-led prevention, safety and healing solutions
- Strengthen legal protections to ensure racism, hate and discrimination are effectively addressed in practice, not only in principle
- Mandate cultural safety as a condition of funding, accreditation and service delivery across all government-funded institutions
- Transfer decision-making authority to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and community-controlled organisations

8.2 Detailed Recommendations

Legal and Policy Reform

- Amend the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 to explicitly recognise and address systemic, cumulative and institutional racism
- Introduce enforceable protections against online racism, hate speech and technology-facilitated abuse, with clear obligations on digital platforms
- Establish independent oversight bodies with authority to investigate and address systemic racism across government systems

Justice System

- Implement targeted reforms to address the over-policing and incarceration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women
- Expand investment in diversion, prevention and community-led justice responses that prioritise safety, healing and rehabilitation
- Require all justice agencies to adopt culturally safe, trauma-informed approaches to family violence and victim-survivor support

Child Protection

- Set enforceable targets to reduce the over-representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care
- Redirect funding towards prevention, early intervention and family support, led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations
- End punitive “failure to protect” practices that disproportionately impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers

Health

- Mandate cultural safety standards across all health systems, with accountability measures for non-compliance
- Provide sustained, long-term funding to Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations to deliver culturally safe care
- Address systemic racism in healthcare through workforce reform, accountability mechanisms and improved access to services

Online and Media Regulation

- Introduce enforceable regulation requiring digital platforms to prevent, monitor and respond to racism and hate
- Establish clear standards and accountability for media reporting to prevent the reinforcement of harmful stereotypes
- Ensure accessible, culturally safe support services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experiencing online abuse

Community-Led Solutions

- Commit to long-term, flexible and secure funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women-led organisations
- Recognise and resource Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as leaders in preventing violence and addressing racism
- Support governance, leadership and decision-making at the community level

Data, Monitoring and Accountability

- Require comprehensive national data collection on racism, violence and hate, disaggregated by gender and location
- Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander data sovereignty across all systems and datasets
- Mandate transparent, public reporting on progress against Closing the Gap Priority Reforms, with consequences for inaction

9. Conclusion

Racism, violence and hate against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are not isolated or incidental, they are systemic, persistent and embedded across the structures that shape everyday life.

The evidence presented in this submission demonstrates that these harms are not the result of individual behaviour alone but are driven and reinforced by institutional systems that continue to fail Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Despite longstanding awareness and repeated commitments, meaningful progress has not been achieved. The continued failure to address systemic racism reflects a lack of accountability, insufficient investment, and an unwillingness to implement the structural reforms required.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, the consequences are immediate and ongoing, impacting safety, health, wellbeing, participation and life outcomes.

This Inquiry presents a critical opportunity to move beyond acknowledgment and deliver substantive change.

Without decisive action to address systemic racism, embed accountability and invest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women-led solutions, the harms outlined in this submission will continue.

The time for incremental change has passed. Structural reform is required, and it is required now.

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We acknowledge the strength, courage and generosity of members and contributors who have shared their lived experiences, insights and expertise. These contributions form the foundation of this submission and reflect the realities faced by women across communities.

NATSIWA also recognises that sharing experiences of racism, violence and discrimination can be deeply personal and, at times, difficult. We thank all contributors for their trust and for the knowledge they have provided to inform this work.

All contributions have been de-identified to ensure the privacy, safety and confidentiality of individuals.