



natsiwa

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER WOMEN'S ALLIANCE

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National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA) is the peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Australia. The leadership team of Directors are First Nations women each representing States and Territory across Australia. NATSIWA is funded by the Australian Government to bring together the issues and voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's organisations and individuals across Australia.

Submission on the First Nations Disability Forum – Design and Implementation Considerations

On behalf of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA), we welcome the opportunity to contribute to the establishment of the First Nations Disability Forum. Below are our recommendations and insights regarding the design and role of the Forum.

Role of the Forum

The Forum should:

1. Advocate for the rights and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with disabilities, ensuring alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).
2. Provide a culturally safe and inclusive space for decision-making, representation, and collaboration.
3. Act as a key advisory body to government and stakeholders on policy development, program implementation, and systemic barriers affecting First Nations people with disabilities.
4. Support community capacity-building and amplify grassroots voices in national decision-making processes.

Membership of the Forum

Membership should:

1. Include diverse representation from across urban, regional, and remote areas, reflecting community diversity.
2. Prioritise the inclusion of First Nations people with lived experience of disability, their families, and carers.

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3. Incorporate gender balance and representation of all age groups to ensure an inclusive perspective.
4. Engage representatives from community-controlled disability organisations, advocates, and cultural leaders.

Selection of Members

1. Develop a transparent and community-led nomination process.
2. Ensure the selection panel includes First Nations disability advocates and community leaders.
3. Incorporate mechanisms for rotating membership to ensure continuity and fresh perspectives.

Representation Across States and Territories

1. Adopt a state-based and territory-based subcommittee model to capture local issues and solutions.
2. Fund regional hubs or mechanisms to engage local communities and report back to the national Forum.
3. Establish clear lines of communication and reporting between state/territory groups and the national body.

Governance of the Forum

1. Embed First Nations governance principles, including shared decision-making, accountability to community, and cultural integrity.
2. Develop a governance framework that integrates the perspectives of people with disabilities, carers, and advocates.
3. Create an independent, First Nations-led secretariat to support the Forum's operations.

Funding Considerations

1. Fund the operational costs of the Forum, including meetings, travel, accessibility needs, and secretariat support.
2. Invest in community consultations and capacity-building initiatives.
3. Support research and data collection aligned with Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles.

Relationship with Existing Mechanisms

1. Collaborate with existing disability advocacy networks, government bodies, and community-controlled organisations.
2. Define clear roles and relationships to avoid duplication of efforts and ensure complementarity.

3. Advocate for systemic reforms based on evidence and lived experiences shared through the Forum.

Implementation and Review

1. Implement the Forum through staged phases, starting with pilot programs to refine its structure and operations.
2. Conduct regular reviews with transparent reporting to assess the Forum's effectiveness and community impact.
3. Establish indicators for measuring cultural safety, accessibility, and community engagement.

NATSIWA strongly supports the establishment of a shared decision-making mechanism that honours self-determination and cultural leadership. The Forum should serve as a vital step towards addressing systemic inequities and empowering First Nations people with disabilities, ensuring their voices and experiences are central to shaping inclusive policies and services.

Wendy Anders

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