



A national responsibility

Actions towards reconciliation and preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Our Watch report for 2023

**Our
Watch**



Preventing violence
against women



Acknowledgements

Our Watch acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land across Australia on which we work and live. We pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise the continuing connection Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have to land, sea, culture, knowledge and language for over 65,000 years.

As a non-Aboriginal organisation, Our Watch understands that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is a problem facing the whole community. As highlighted in Our Watch's national resource *Changing the picture*, there is an intersection between racism, sexism and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Our Watch has an ongoing commitment to the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, who continue to experience violence at significantly higher rates than non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who continue to lead the work of sharing knowledge with non-Aboriginal people and relentlessly advocate for an equitable, violence-free future in Australia.

Front cover image by Jesse Tyssen, provided by Tangentyere Women's Safety Group.

Taken on the Day of Action against Domestic and Family Violence in response to the coronial inquest into the deaths of four Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory. September 2023 in Mparntwe Alice Springs.

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Foreword

Over the past year, Our Watch has continued its commitment to a vision of an Australia where all women and their children live free from violence.

As Chair and Deputy Co-Chair of Our Watch, we are pleased to share our third annual *A national responsibility* report.

Our Watch specifically acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience disproportionately high rates of violence due to the combined impact of racism, colonisation and gender inequality. It is our national responsibility to address this violence. We will only achieve our vision when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and communities are safe, and their contributions are celebrated.

The evidence shows us that gendered violence is not a part of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, but a consequence of colonisation that continues to devastate women and communities.

To us, as a leader in primary prevention in Australia, this means that a critical part of our job is to address the ongoing impacts of colonisation. We take this responsibility seriously and aim to use our national reach to amplify support for actions towards reconciliation and healing, as well as looking inward to our organisational practices.

Alongside the National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children, we welcomed the release of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan 2023-25 as a significant step towards a national commitment to a safer, more equal future. These important strategies to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are built on the expertise and tireless advocacy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, victim-survivors and communities.

Over decades, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, men and communities have been leading this work in addition to their paid work, and many other community roles and responsibilities. Yet, for too long, systems and structures have shut Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities out. We will continue to work purposefully alongside government to centre these voices.

We also continue to work closely alongside, and be guided by, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partners to amplify their expertise and ensure that their voices are at the heart of everything that Our Watch does.

In this report, you will find an overview of Our Watch's activities and progress throughout 2023, including our work to raise awareness, change attitudes and drive systemic change.

We have also taken significant steps internally to recognise the colonial load, defined on page 10, on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff members working in this space by introducing a Cultural Knowledge Recognition package. Their generosity in sharing cultural knowledge and commitment to Our Watch's shared vision of a violence-free future for all women is an invaluable asset to our organisation and is now recognised through appropriate remuneration.

We thank all Our Watch staff, partners and supporters for their ongoing support, without which our work could not continue.

Together, we are working towards a future where every person is safe, respected and valued regardless of their gender or cultural background.

***Chair, Moo Baulch OAM and
Co-Deputy Chair, Vicky Welgraven AM
proud Adnyamathanha woman***



Our Watch Chair, Moo Baulch OAM and Our Watch Co-Deputy Chair, Vicky Welgraven AM

About this report

This report outlines how Our Watch is working towards reconciliation and preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Covering 2023, this is the third of three annual *A national responsibility* reports. *A national responsibility reports from 2021 and 2022* are available on the Our Watch website.

There are many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, men, families, communities, practitioners, and organisations working to prevent violence and foster respectful relationships, strong families and communities. We play an ongoing role to support and amplify this work.

We are committed to deep listening and learning from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities. Connected to this is our effort and commitment to address ongoing impacts of colonisation and racism internally as an organisation and outwardly facing in everything we do.

Guided by our partners, stakeholders, and the communities we work with, some elements of our work are confidential and are not included in this report.

This report is informed by the following three documents.



Changing the picture (2018)

Responding to expert advice calling for a specific resource focused on the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, Our Watch launched *Changing the picture* in 2018.

This resource recognises that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is shaped by the intersecting drivers of, racism, the ongoing impacts of colonisation and gender inequality. It outlines the essential actions to be undertaken by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations, as well as non-Indigenous people and organisations, to address the underlying drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Changing the picture builds on existing work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, advocates, scholars, practitioners and organisations that have been speaking out, working, and publishing in this field for decades. To amplify these voices, the development of this resource was guided by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Group.



Reconciliation Action Plan

In 2020, we launched our *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan*, which commits us to take meaningful action to advance reconciliation in ways that are sustainable and strategic.

Based around the three core pillars of relationships, respect and opportunities, our Reconciliation Action Plan sets goals and milestones to advance reconciliation by leveraging our sphere of influence. *Changing the picture* is central to our Reconciliation Action Plan.



Change the story (2021)

Change the story is the national framework for the primary prevention of violence against women. Revised and updated in 2021, it outlines actions needed at all levels of society – from individuals to schools, workplaces to governments – to address the underlying drivers of gender-based violence and to stop it before it starts.

Change the story highlights how the ongoing impact of colonialisation intersects with gender to shape how violence is experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and identifies the type of preventative actions that are needed.

Our governance and operations

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee

The Our Watch Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee was established in 2022. Many of the achievements covered throughout this report are a result of knowledge and expertise within the Steering Committee.

Co-chaired by the CEO and Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, the Steering Committee is comprised of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and Board members, as well as key non-Indigenous staff.

The Steering Committee strengthens our work to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children by providing guidance, expertise and identifying areas for improvement across the organisation. It responds to formal requests for assistance from Our Watch staff on any projects, documents and protocols related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as well as its own priorities.

It is crucial that the Steering Committee operates under the principle of self-determination, and provides a safe and collegial space for Aboriginal Board and staff members.

In 2023, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee's key outcomes included:

- Endorsing the Cultural Knowledge Recognition package for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees (covered on page 10).
- Coordinating development of work in ethics, Indigenous data sovereignty, and Indigenous cultural and intellectual property.
- Advice to the CEO ahead of the Northern Territory coronial inquest (covered on page 16).
- Critical guidance in the development of the Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy role.
- Support and feedback on projects to deepen cultural competency of managers working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander team members.
- Advice to Our Watch on media, policy and organisational positions on national issues such as 26 January, the Reconciliation Action Plan and policy and document advice.
- Support and advice to strengthen coordination of all work at Our Watch related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, communities and organisations.

Our people

In 2023, Our Watch had:

- 4 Aboriginal staff members
- including 2 identified roles, and
- 3 Aboriginal Board members.

In June 2023, Karen Iles, a proud Dharug woman was appointed to the Our Watch Board.

Alongside Vicky Welgraven AM and Desmond Campbell, Karen Iles is the third Aboriginal Director currently on the Our Watch Board.

Co-Deputy Chair of the Our Watch Board

The Our Watch Board has made an ongoing commitment that at least one Co-Deputy Chair will always be an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person. This is an important decision that is the result of scoping and consultation throughout 2023.

Vicky Welgraven AM, a proud Adnyamathanha woman, was named the first Aboriginal Co-Deputy Chair of the Our Watch board.

“Violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is nothing less than a national crisis. Whilst violence against women and their children is shockingly prevalent across all communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience violence at a rate three times higher than non-Indigenous women.

“Violence against women is not part of traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. It’s perpetrated by men of all cultural backgrounds. We Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have always been central to caring for family and I look forward to ensuring our voices are at the heart of Our Watch’s work to prevent this ongoing national shame.”

— Vicky Welgraven AM

Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy

In June 2023, Our Watch appointed its first Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy, Regan Mitchell, a proud Wiradjuri-Ngunnawal woman.

This is an identified position which was developed following internal and external consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

Reporting to the CEO, the role is a pivotal part of our organisation’s leadership and has been created to lead strategic decisions to guide our approach to preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

The Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy holds key stakeholder relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders, advocates, communities and organisations to help us ensure that Our Watch plans, policies and strategies are effective and responsive to the needs of communities.

Internally, this role has strengthened our coordination by reporting directly to the Our Watch Board on all activity related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Embedding our Reconciliation Action Plan

The Reconciliation Action Plan assists Our Watch in building strong and mutually beneficial relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and organisations. It underpins all the organisation's activity and provides a framework for accountability to ensure we always consider reconciliation as part of our work.

The Reconciliation Action Plan also provides a framework for developing staff competency and understanding around Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories and knowledges. Staff competency and knowledge in this area is essential to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's voices are heard and prioritised in the prevention of violence in their own communities.

Our *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan* was developed with Reconciliation Australia in 2020 and was due to be completed in 2022, however it was extended to 2023 due to rapid organisational growth and the impact of COVID-19.

At the end of 2023, all deliverables in the Reconciliation Action Plan were complete or ongoing, except for one related to the Our Watch Ambassador Program, which was not completed due to the disbandment of the ambassador program in 2022.

Integrating *Changing the picture*

A key action from our *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan* was to:

- Include, as part of regular planning processes, exploration of each team's current and future role in implementing *Changing the picture* in key projects and/or functions.

Changing the picture has been integrated in various ways into Our Watch teams' planning process and implementation, including by

- Prevention in Action – development and delivery of *Changing the picture* workshops and community of practice sessions, capacity building of community and mainstream organisations, development of training and learning resources which aim to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in key settings.
- Government Relations, Policy and Evidence – inclusion of prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as an ongoing policy priority.

- Innovation – planning of the Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) funded projects has been informed by the drivers, actions and principles in *Changing the picture*. In particular, through the extension of work from *Connected communities* into the *Preventing violence against women in selected migrant and refugee communities*.
- Marketing and Communications – seeking opportunities to amplify Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander expertise and community-led solutions, sharing social media posts which recognise important days and weeks for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and amplifying the voices of Aboriginal led prevention work.
- Corporate Services – significant changes to internal policies to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, and learning and development for non-Indigenous staff.

Relationship Framework

The Our Watch Relationship Framework was finalised in September 2023. It is a structured and intentional approach to working with stakeholders external to Our Watch.

A power analysis of the dynamics within all our working relationships is embedded throughout the Relationship Framework and is integral to the processes we use when working collaboratively. This power lens is vital to our working relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

Our approach to working relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations is defined by the principles of respect, self-determination, data sovereignty and community ownership, control and leadership.

The Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory (APO NT) Principles, authored by Aboriginal Peak Organisations in the Northern Territory, provide guidance on how non-Indigenous-led organisations should work with Indigenous organisations, and are embedded throughout the Relationship Framework.

Cultural Knowledge Recognition

Our Watch acknowledges that colonial load results in additional work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workplace.

Colonial load includes expectations to speak on behalf of, and educate, non-Indigenous colleagues about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the ongoing impacts of colonisation.

To formally recognise and appropriately remunerate this additional work, the Cultural Knowledge Recognition package was presented to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee for endorsement.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees at Our Watch receive:

- A \$5,000 (+ super) per annum cultural load allowance.
- Superannuation paid at 2% higher than the superannuation guarantee amount.

- 2 additional days of paid leave per annum for wellbeing purposes.
- Up to an additional \$5,000 per annum each year to fund professional development related to leadership development.
- Access to clinical/cultural supervision through an Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander specialised service.

These benefits are in addition to the recent inclusion of Cultural and Ceremonial Leave and an extended definition of 'family' for the purposes of Personal and Compassionate Leave.

While this package demonstrates a commitment to recognise and remunerate cultural knowledge, Our Watch will continue to invest in a workplace culture of safety and mutual respect to minimise impacts of the colonial load.



Cultural competency

Our Watch supports and encourages non-Indigenous staff to increase their understanding and amplify recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, histories, knowledge and rights, and the impacts of colonisation and racism, through cultural learning.

All job descriptions include specific references to engaging with diverse groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

All new starters are required to undertake cultural competency training delivered by Aboriginal organisation.

Statement on 26 January

Following our first statement in 2022, Our Watch published a [statement on 26 January 2023](#) to stand in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and highlight the importance of collectively building a future that is safe, equal and respectful for all people in Australia.

Similar to the 2022 statement, the 2023 statement makes the link between our mandate to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, and the decolonising framework in *Changing the picture*.

This statement was shared widely on social media and via our monthly e-newsletter, which reaches key stakeholders in the prevention sector and government.

Referendum on the Voice to Parliament

The 2023 Voice Referendum asked Australians to vote on the establishment of a national body enshrined in the constitution with the purpose of advising the government on legislation relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Through our Reconciliation Action Plan, Our Watch committed to amplifying Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices on issues that are important to communities.

We purposefully engaged with, listened to and learned from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people about the impact of the Voice Referendum.

Year of Learning

When the Voice Referendum was announced in 2023, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee discussed the best way to encourage Our Watch staff to engage with the complexities of the Referendum.

Using the “Voice, Treaty, Truth” themes from the Referendum campaign, the Steering Committee initiated what became known as the Year of Learning.

The Reconciliation Action Plan Working Group led this initiative and invited external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander speakers to address the entire organisation. The speakers were:

- **Voice:** Jade Ritchie, a Gooreng Gooreng woman and Director at the National Indigenous Australians Agency. She was an official spokesperson for the ‘Yes to a Voice in 2023’ and provided a clear and compelling argument for voting Yes.
- **Truth:** Professor Juanita Sherwood is a Wiradjuri woman and specialist in Aboriginal women’s health and cultural safety. She discussed the theme of Truth in relation to structural racism in the healthcare system.

- **Treaty:** James Thompson is a Yorta Yorta man from the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria. He spoke in depth about what a Treaty would look like in Victoria, its purpose and potential outcomes.

It was imperative this work was not solely a listening space. Though listening is an important way to engage in cultural learning, after each presentation, key staff shared an action for all staff to consider embedding the knowledge shared in our practices.

Evaluation at the end of the Year of Learning found that overall, staff had deepened their knowledge and felt more confident about taking action and doing self-directed learning.

Our Watch public statement on the Referendum on the Voice to Parliament

Our Watch's public statement on the Voice Referendum was developed in consultation with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee and the Board.

During the consultation, all Committee and Board members had an opportunity to provide feedback where different opinions were encouraged and valued.

The Our Watch Board considered the range of options and opinions provided by the Steering Committee, and decided to release a public statement supporting a Yes vote.

We acknowledge and value the many cultures, languages, and communities within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, each with different perspectives, contexts, and experiences. These differences reflect the richness and breadth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

In this context, Our Watch's organisational position for the referendum was not necessarily representative of all staff members, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

"Our Watch is a national organisation dedicated to the primary prevention of violence against women and their children.

"Our Watch supports a Yes vote in the Voice referendum as a step towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices being heard and valued on critical matters impacting their communities, and in the hope that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children's safety is prioritised to prevent violence.

"Our position on the Voice referendum is part of Our Watch's commitment to addressing the ongoing impacts of colonisation and challenging racism and sexism to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

"We acknowledge and value the many cultures, languages and communities within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with different perspectives, contexts and experiences. These differences reflect the richness and breadth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures. In this context, Our Watch's organisational position for the upcoming referendum is not representative of all staff members, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff.

"As a non-Indigenous organisation, Our Watch understands that violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children is not an 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander problem.'

As highlighted in Our Watch's national resource *Changing the picture*, the evidence clearly shows the intersection between racism, sexism and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

"Our Watch has an ongoing commitment to the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children, who continue to suffer from violence at a significantly higher rate than non-Indigenous women. We acknowledge all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who lead the work of sharing knowledge with non-Indigenous people and relentlessly advocate for an equitable, violence-free future in Australia.

"Challenging racism and addressing the ongoing impacts of colonisation is a critical component of preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Some public commentary related to the referendum is discriminatory, hurtful and reflects deeply embedded structural violence.

"In this referendum year, more than ever, Our Watch will show up for and walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, families and communities to work towards meaningful and long-lasting change."

Spreading the word on *Changing the picture*

In 2023, Our Watch developed and delivered two new training packages to support the prevention of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children. These training packages are underpinned by the evidence from *Changing the picture*.

In addition to these two training packages, one-off and bespoke training was delivered to non-government organisations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, professional organisations and services including Strong Women for Healthy Country, National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO) and No to Violence. In 2023, these activities reached 576 people across the nation, with just over half engaging with *Changing the picture* at a conference or panel discussion.

General training package

These training workshops were designed for anyone working in prevention with five sessions across 10 weeks. The workshops were led by both Our Watch staff and expert external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander presenters. The key principles of the workshops were cultural safety and centring Indigenous voices.

One session focused entirely on the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men in prevention. This session was led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men. Participants were invited to develop their own action plan across the five sessions.

89% of participants who responded to the evaluation survey were highly satisfied with the workshop series, rating it very good to excellent.

In check-in sessions conducted three, six, and nine months after the workshops, participants shared how they were applying their new skills and knowledge. One participant reported they had started to embed *Changing the picture* across their whole organisation; another who felt they had greater cultural awareness and had the confidence to step up to challenge processes that were not culturally safe; and another had shared their knowledge with colleagues.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander training package

This training package was designed for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people working in the broad space of prevention. The format was a two-and-a-half-day intensive workshop.

The training includes follow-up sessions every three months, for up to a year, after the workshops and are designed to offer a peer support space. Post-delivery surveys for this workshop indicated that 83% of respondents indicated a moderate to major increase in knowledge of prevention topics, including understanding the ongoing impacts of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities.

Submissions and evidence to government

Our Watch provides expert policy advice, information and support to inform government decision-making and to drive evidence-based legislative, regulatory and policy approaches at a Commonwealth, state and territory level.

Our advice in relation to preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children is grounded in *Changing the picture* and draws on the expertise of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee

This section of the report outlines some of our key submissions to government from 2023.

Submission on Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action and First Nations Gender Justice Institute

In December 2023, Our Watch provided a [submission on the design of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality and the establishment of a First Nations Gender Justice Institute.](#)

Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) is an initiative led by the Australian Human Rights Commission to elevate the voices of First Nations women and girls. The project aims to support the structural change needed to achieve First Nations gender justice and equality.

The First Nations Gender Justice Institute based at the Australian National University, will elevate and invest in the voices and solutions of First Nations women and girls to drive social, economic and ecological impact.

The focus of the consultation was on data, measurement and evaluation approaches that could be used for the Framework and Gender Justice Institute.

We encouraged the Committee to ensure alignment between evaluation approaches in the Framework and the National Plan (and associated action and implementation plans).

There is substantial alignment between Wiyi Yani U Thangani and *Changing the picture*. Our submission emphasised the need for the framework to highlight actions across all levels of society, in key settings, and identify the roles and responsibilities of governments and other stakeholders to advance gender equality for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children.

We welcomed the opportunity to engage further with the Commission and the new Gender Justice Institute about ways we can align with and support this work.

Submission to the Inquiry into the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People

In August 2023, Our Watch provided a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Inquiry into the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

Under UNDRIP, along with various other international human rights instruments, Australia is subject to multiple obligations to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Drawing on *Changing the picture*, our submission detailed the mechanisms to strengthen Australia's adherence to UNDRIP and prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Our recommendations called for:

1. The Australian Government to develop and implement an UNDRIP Implementation Action Plan, which is led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
2. The Australian Government to support initiatives that address the ongoing legacies of colonisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, families, and communities and that are informed and developed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
3. The Australian Government to continue to support the development of a National Anti-Racism Framework by the Australian Human Rights Commission as well as its implementation, with a specific focus the legacies and ongoing impacts of colonisation for non-Indigenous people, and across Australian society.
4. The Australian Government to apply a gendered and intersectional approach in the development and implementation of policies, programs and services that impact and support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Northern Territory coronial inquest

Our Watch was invited to give evidence on 8 November 2023 at the coronial inquest into the deaths of Miss Yunupingu, Ngeygo Ragurk, Kumarn Rubuntja and Kumanjaya Haywood, who were killed by current or former partners.

Our Watch CEO Patty Kinnersly and Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy Regan Mitchell gave evidence at the inquest that the tragic deaths of these four Aboriginal women were preventable and part of a wider national emergency of violence against women.

“We need commitment to a **holistic response**, with significant investment across the whole continuum from prevention and early intervention work, right through to crisis response work and everything in between.

“If, as a country, we say we really care about this crisis for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men, we will commit to this in a genuine way, in a long-term way, in an intensive way that is culturally safe, community led and that is informed and designed by the people who are living in it and working in it day in day out,”

“An intensive collaborative approach is required that is tailored to the context of the NT that takes in all the layers, and builds on the enormous wisdom and strengths of the oldest continuous culture on earth.”

— Regan Mitchell, Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy

As part of our evidence, Our Watch called for four key actions including:

1.

Building the foundations for primary prevention work and a prevention workforce.

2.

A supportive and collaborative approach where everyone who works across governments, community organisations and the private sector is involved and has a role to play in preventing violence against women and promoting gender equality.

3.

Long-term funding and commitment across primary prevention, early intervention, response, and recovery.

4.

Ongoing commitment to the implementation of respectful relationships education.

Communications

Social media

As part of the Our Watch Social Media Strategy, we identified 'amplification' as one of our content pillars. This focuses on spotlighting partner organisations and voices of victim-survivors.

We shared content from several Indigenous-led organisations and recognised significant Awareness Days including 26 January, Ochre Ribbon Week, NAIDOC Week, Reconciliation Week, Mabo Day and National Sorry Day.

Our highest performing posts are on Awareness Days. The posts used clear language and visuals to help convey complex ideas. They also included actions or messages of hope, and a strong stance of solidarity, which resonated with our audiences.

Our Watch
Published by Sprout Social · 18 October 2023 · 🌐

Preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women is everybody's responsibility.

Evidence clearly shows the intersection between racism, sexism and violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

'Changing the picture' is a national framework that offers a clear set of actions needed to address the drivers of this violence, so we can build a future of safety and respect for everyone.
<https://bit.ly/3aZT13k>

8.4% Engagement rate

795 Engagements

9419 Impressions

482 Link clicks

Our Watch
Published by Sprout Social · 26 January 2023 · 🌐

We recognise that for many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, today is a source of great pain, of deep loss and a reminder of historical and ongoing injustices.

For some First Nations people, it's also an opportunity to celebrate their survival as the oldest living culture in the world and to demonstrate the ongoing strength of their communities and cultures.

Read more of our statement on today on our website: <https://bit.ly/3WYwB5>

8.4% Engagement rate

818 Engagements

10245 Impressions

39 Link clicks



We will continue to recognise Awareness Days on social media and use them as an opportunity to demonstrate Our Watch’s commitment amplifying the good work of other and to walking alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We will also continue to seek out opportunities to elevate the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led organisations and share content from other organisations. This is an effective way to amplify the voices of, and strengthen our connections with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. We will also share from a wider pool of organisations to highlight the work of other groups.

On our social media channels for *The Line* campaign, we work to ensure content is intersectional, relevant and accessible for all young people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. An example of this included the video series *Asking for a Mate*, which featured well known AFL footballer and Yorta Yorta man Jarman Impey, sharing his views on respectful relationships and positive forms of masculinity.

Where appropriate, we will continue to include positive and hopeful messaging. This is aligned with Our Watch’s overall tone on social media and recognises the importance of taking a strengths-based approach to our social media messaging on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Media

Throughout 2023, Our Watch used traditional news media channels to raise awareness of the drivers of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Media coverage with mentions of both Our Watch and the issue of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women included:

- 21 December 2023: [ABC Victoria Statewide](#), *“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are more likely to experience violence because they are also facing the extra layer of racism”* Patty Kinnersly, Our Watch CEO
- 28 November 2023: *“When it comes to ending violence against women, we must forget party politics and forge new alliances”*, by Bridget Archer, Alicia Payne, Larissa Waters, [The Guardian](#), Article facilitated by Our Watch to coincide with parliamentary event they hosted with Our Watch as part of the annual international campaign 16 Days of Activism
- 27 November 2023: *“It’s not OK: Victim tells of her abuse”*, [Daily Advertiser](#), Wagga Wagga
- 15 November 2023: *“Breaking the Silence: Domestic Violence in Australia”*, [Australian Retailers Association](#)
- 10 November 2023: *“DV breeding youth criminals”*, [Northern Territory News](#),
- 5 November 2023: *“Preventing horror: tragedies give rise to intervention plan”*, [The Age](#)
- 4 November 2023: *“Australia is in a domestic violence crisis. Experts say we need a whole of society change”*, [SBS news](#)
- 1 November 2023: *“We must tackle the root causes of violence against women”*, [The Latch](#)
- 1 November 2023: [Radio National Breakfast panel](#) with Patty Kinnersly and Tarang Chawla
- 26 July 2023: Patty Kinnersly on panel discussion about men’s violence against women, [RN Life Matters](#)
- 19 July 2023, *“Domestic violence calls ‘overwhelming’ NT Police”*, Acting Commissioner Michael Murphy says” [ABC online](#)
- 19 July 2023, *“More work needed to stamp out sexual threat and discrimination in parliament for good”*, [The Mandarin](#)

Google advertising

We use Google advertising to drive traffic to Our Watch guidance on [Preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women](#).

- 60,293 impressions
- 5,547 clicks
- 9.2% click-through rate - 6.03% higher than the Google Ads average across all industries.

In 2023, we had fewer impressions than in 2022 due to a smaller advertising budget. However, this budget was used more effectively than the previous year as we had similar number of clicks, therefore a much higher click-through rate. The content was refined based on findings from 2023.

Newsletter

Our Watch sends a monthly e-newsletter to subscribers, mostly from the prevention sector, and government and setting partners. In 2023, the newsletter featured our organisational outputs relating to preventing violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, including:

- Our statement on January 26
- Our statement on the Voice Referendum
- Announcement of the appointment of the Head of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy
- The release of *A national responsibility 2022* during National Reconciliation Week.

Our best performing feature was the release of *A national responsibility 2022* with a 25.5% engagement rate. This demonstrates the interest and shared commitment that Our Watch stakeholders and partners have to putting the principles of reconciliation into practice.

2024 and beyond

Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan

After completing the actions we set out to achieve with our *Innovate Reconciliation Action Plan*, Our Watch applied for and approved to undertake a *Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan*, which is for organisations that are further along their reconciliation journey, according to the Reconciliation Australia framework.

The *Stretch Reconciliation Action Plan* will challenge us as an organisation and individuals to be brave in truth telling and creating social change to advance national reconciliation. It will enable us to continue to systematically improve the cultural safety and security of our workplace, reduce risks associated with everyday micro-aggressions and support self-determining practices in the development of internal and external policies and resources.

This is a whole-of-organisation project and all staff are expected to play a role in advancing reconciliation. Leadership at Our Watch, including Board members and the executive team, will be accountable for the implementation of the new Reconciliation Action Plan. Actions and deliverables will be dispersed across all Directorates.

Governance

We have made a commitment to ensuring that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee remains part of the fabric of Our Watch on an ongoing basis.

This change, along with a commitment to always having at least one Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Co-Deputy Chair, reflect a long-term commitment to amplifying crucial Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices within our organisation.

We are in the process of making the necessary changes to relevant governance documents to ensure the longevity of these commitments.

Strengthening our work

This report is the third *A national responsibility* report.

Through the process of evaluating and reporting on our organisational activities to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children, and actions towards reconciliation, Our Watch will continue to embed the objectives behind this report in all internal and external work.

As a non-Indigenous-led organisation, we are committed to amplifying the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and organisations and ensuring that our primary prevention work is responsive to the needs and shared priorities of communities.

We will continue to listen, learn and be guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people every day as we work towards reconciliation.

Our Watch

Preventing violence
against women