National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council

Submission

Engagement on the Establishment of a National Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Peak Body

October 2025

NATSIAACC

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Acknowledgement of Country

NATSIAACC acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which we work, live and gather, as well as Country throughout Australia, and their enduring connections to land, sea and community. NATSIAACC acknowledges that these lands and waters were never ceded, and we acknowledge the sovereignty and self-determination of the Traditional Owners.

NATSIAACC pays its deepest respects to Elders past and present and recognise the continued cultural and spiritual connection to Country and/or Island Home, community, culture and knowledge.

NATSIAACC thanks them for their wisdom and courage, and for sharing their ways of knowing, being and doing – teachings that guide us to cherish and protect our Elders and Older People.

This always was, and always will be Aboriginal Land.

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National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council

About

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council (NATSIAACC) is the national peak body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ageing and aged care. NATSIAACC works to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Older People can access support and care that is culturally safe, trauma aware and healing-informed, and recognises the importance of their personal connections to community, Country and/or Island Home.

NATSIAACC is building a membership base of:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled providers of ageing and aged care, and
- Entities with an interest in culturally appropriate ageing and aged care services.

NATSIAACC's founding Directors are all leaders in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ageing and aged care provision.

Our Vision

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are thriving, healthy, strong, with ongoing cultural connections in their older years.

Our Purpose

NATSIAACC supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander older peoples, their families, and communities to identify, engage in, advocate for, and lead systemic reform to embed culturally safe practices across the aged care and ageing sector.

With thanks

NATSIAACC thanks its members, stakeholders, and other peak bodies for their valuable contributions to this submission and for generously giving their time to support older Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Funding

NATSIAACC is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the Department). NATSIAACC has been in operation since 2022. In the context of the current aged care reforms and the need for extensive advocacy, input, and leadership in the sector, it will be necessary to provide additional funding to support NATSIAACC to provide the input and engagement required to ensure that the reforms deliver much needed support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Older People.

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Executive Summary

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Ageing and Aged Care Council (NATSIAACC) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the establishment of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (FDSV) Peak Body. NATSIAACC is the national peak body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders, Older People and the organisations that support them across the ageing and aged care sector.

This submission is grounded in self-determination, cultural safety, healing and community-led governance, consistent with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and other government commitments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. NATSIAACC emphasise the centrality of Elders and Older People, who are too often invisible in FDSV policy and service design, and whose safety and dignity must be explicitly recognised.

Vision and Purpose

Cultural framing: In our cultures, safety and wellbeing are collective responsibilities grounded in kinship, respect, and connection to Country and/or Island Home. A national FDSV Peak Body must therefore uphold the authority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to design, lead, and govern responses to violence in ways that honour our Elders, Older People and cultural lore/law.

NATSIAACC supports the draft vision - '*All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples throughout Australia are culturally safe, strong and empowered, and living free from family, domestic and sexual violence*'—but recommends strengthening it to:

- Embed healing and intergenerational wellbeing as core principles across the life course, including for Elders and Older People.
- Recognise Elders as cultural protectors and knowledge holders, and commit to safe ageing in homes, community and aged care settings.
- Acknowledge that safety, empowerment, and cultural strength are interdependent and must be community-led.

This approach reflects the National Agreement on Closing the Gap—particularly Priority Reform One (shared decision-making), Priority Reform Two (strengthening the community-controlled sector), and Outcome 16 (Elders are supported to live long and healthy lives). It also aligns with the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032 and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031.

Risks and Mitigations

The primary risks to the Peak Body's success include tokenistic engagement, short-term funding, and lack of cultural legitimacy. These risk disproportionately harm Elders and Older People by entrenching neglect, under-reporting and lack of culturally safe support. Mitigation requires:

- Genuine partnership agreements with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peaks including (but not limited to) NATSIAACC, NACCHO, SNAICC, NATSILS and others – under the Coalition of Peaks Framework.

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- Long-term, flexible funding agreements to sustain community-led initiatives, delivery and evaluation.
- Embedding accountability through Closing the Gap reporting mechanisms and shared governance structures.

Resources and Support

To be effective, the Peak Body will require sustained core funding for operations, workforce, and community engagement. Dedicated resources are needed to support consultation with remote, regional, and urban communities, as well as culturally governed workforce development focused on leadership, trauma-aware and healing-informed care, and policy advocacy. Data and research partnerships must comply with Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles (Maiam Nayri Wingara), ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples ownership and control of data and stories, including aged care specific FDSV research and responses acknowledging Elder abuse as part of the FDSV continuum.

Name Recommendations

NATSIAACC proposes the following culturally grounded name options for the new Peak Body:

- MAARA – Moving Against Abuse, Restoring Aboriginal Authority – National Council for Cultural Safety and Family Healing
- MAARIA – Moving Against Abuse, Restoring Indigenous Authority.
- MAVRIA – Moving Against Violence, Restoring Indigenous Authority.

Option prefix: NATSI (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) (e.g., NATSIMAARA, NATSIMAARIA or NATSIMAVRIA). These names reflect collective healing, restoration of authority, and cultural safety as core to ending violence and rebuilding community strength.

Additional Comments

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Older People, family and domestic violence cannot be separated from the broader determinants of wellbeing—housing, aged care, social connection, and access to culturally safe services. The Peak Body should therefore collaborate closely with NATSIAACC and other national peaks to integrate Elder and Older People safety within health, ageing, and community reform agendas. True safety for our Elders and Older People is achieved when their authority, voices, and rights are recognised in all systems that affect their lives.

Membership and Governance

Cultural framing: Governance in our communities has always been guided by kinship, Country and/or Island Home, and cultural lore/law. A national FDSV Peak must reflect this by embedding cultural legitimacy, Elder guidance, and local authority into every aspect of its structure and decision-making.

NATSIAACC supports a tiered membership model - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations as full members, and other service providers and individuals as associate members. This upholds self-determination and aligns with Closing the Gap Priority Reform Two, while enabling respectful partnerships with non-Indigenous organisations. For Example, aged care providers

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should work under Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership when support Elders and Older People experiencing family violence.

Community Control

Beyond the Closing the Gap definition, community control must include:

- Cultural accountability to local community structures, including Elders' Councils.
- Transparency in decision-making and adherence to cultural protocols.
- Data sovereignty and community ownership of evidence and stories.
- Healing and trauma-informed practice embedded in governance and service design.

Governance Structure

Representation should reflect geography, gender, lived experience, skills and age, ensuring strong Elder and intergenerational participation. Establish an Elder Advisory Council, gender balance and urban/regional/remote representation. The governance model should mirror the Coalition of Peaks' shared decision-making approach. A Cultural Governance Framework should underpin operations, ensuring respect, reciprocity, and collective decision-making are at the heart of the Peak Body's leadership.

Conflict Resolution

Adopt a culturally grounded, Elder-led Conflict Resolution Framework that priorities yarning, consensus-building and restoration over punitive measures. Document conflicts and resolutions to support learning and transparency.

Activities and Functions

Cultural framing: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership is collective, relational, and grounded in culture. The Peak Body must therefore lead with cultural authority, guided by Elders and community wisdom.

Leadership and Influence

The Peak Body should shape culturally grounded and evidence-informed policy that centres the experiences of Elders and Older People. It should commission community-led research into the intersections of FDSV, ageing, and Elder abuse within cultural, historical and intergenerational contexts, while mentoring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to strengthen leadership and governance development. Promote cultural safety across systems so mainstream aged care, health and family violence services are accountable to communities. Coordinate collaboration across peaks, governments and providers for consistent, culturally safe prevention, early intervention and response. Run public awareness and education campaigns led by community, highlighting respect for Elders, intergenerational connection and strength, and cultural healing.

Monitoring and evaluation frameworks to be co-designed with communities and must be culturally grounded, ensuring initiatives are accountable, transparent, and responsive to community needs. This approach directly advances Closing the Gap Priority Reform One (shared decision-making) and Priority Reform Two (building the community-controlled sector).

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Policy and System Reform

The Peak Body must influence national policy and legislation to embed Elder safety and cultural integrity within all FDSV frameworks. Advocate for culturally safe, trauma-aware and healing-informed reforms that address Elder abuse and neglect. Reforms should promote culturally safe service delivery and accountability across aged care, health, and social systems. This includes collaboration with NATSIAACC to align with the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032, Safe and Supported, and the Aged Care Reform Agenda.

Sector Strengthening

The Peak Body should focus on building governance capability, workforce development and sustainable funding models across Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous service sectors. Provide guidance on embedding cultural safety intro regulatory frameworks and commissioning. Promote information sharing and strategic guidance on national policy developments.

Knowledge, Data and Evidence Building

The Peak Body must champion community-led research including Elder abuse and FDSV experiences of Older People. Ensure practices align with Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Data Governance. Building capability for communities to access and use meaningful local data will empower local decision-making, strengthen service design, and inform national advocacy grounded in evidence and culture.

Collaboration and Coordination

The Peak Body should establish formal partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peaks—including NATSIAACC, NACCHO, SNAICC, and others—under the Coalition of Peaks Framework. These partnerships will ensure a coordinated, culturally consistent approach to policy reform and service integration. Collaboration should extend to aged care regulators (e.g., Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission), governments, academic institutions, and survivor networks to strengthen cultural safety and systemic accountability.

First-Year Priorities

1. Establish governance structures with strong Elder Representation and intergenerational participation.
2. Formalise partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peaks to ensure whole-of-life responses.
3. Conduct national consultations to map FDSV risks and protective factors, including specific priorities for Elders and Older People.
4. Embed Indigenous Data Sovereignty protocols and culturally informed evaluation frameworks.
5. Advocate for sustained funding and inclusion of Elder safety in national policy frameworks.

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Conclusion

The establishment of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence Peak Body represents a historic opportunity to restore cultural authority, heal communities, and protect our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders and Older People. NATSIAACC emphasises that cultural safety, community leadership, and Elder inclusion are non-negotiable. With genuine partnership and sustained investment, this Peak Body can drive transformative change and ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of all ages live safe, strong, and connected lives.

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