

**61th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
National Women's Alliances Submission on
Australia's Priorities for the Emerging Issue / Focus Area –
The Empowerment of Indigenous Women**

- 1.1. Indigenous women experience significant levels of disadvantage and discrimination due to the interaction between racism, gender and colonial legacies of dispossession and cultural pressure. This intersectional disadvantage forms the frame within Indigenous women's economic disadvantage must be viewed.
- 1.2. We commend to the Australian Government the *Political Position Document and Plan of Action of the World's Indigenous Women*, adopted at the World Conference of Indigenous Women in Peru 2013 as a framework for action at CSW61.
- 1.3. We ask Australia to:
 - 1.3.1. State the need to affect the implementation and demonstrate commitment of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in recognition of the human rights of Indigenous women;
 - 1.3.2. Urge the adoption of measures that ensure the full and effective participation of Indigenous women in all aspects of society; as well as measures aimed at promoting the empowerment of Indigenous women and the realisation of their rights;ⁱ
 - 1.3.3. Advocate for language which recognises the impact on Indigenous women of histories of trauma, dispossession of lands and people in histories featuring the disempowerment of Indigenous women from colonialism;
 - 1.3.4. Advocate for recognition of the effect of violence on Indigenous women and address the consequence of colonialism, and the intersecting issues that are drivers of violence against Indigenous women. Advocate for recognition of the need to train police and other first responders to respond appropriately to violence against Indigenous women;
 - 1.3.5. Advocate for language which requires States to address racism, stereotyping and stigma;
 - 1.3.6. Advocate for Agreed Conclusions which specifically reference the need to respect the knowledge and experience of Indigenous women and to support local, community generated Indigenous-oriented women's services. States must undertake to build service systems and involve Indigenous women in the design and delivery of programs and services that are culturally competent and able to respond to the needs of Indigenous populations through sustained investment in qualified workforces and strengthened relationships between government and the Indigenous community controlled organisations;
 - 1.3.7. Highlight the links between the empowerment of Indigenous women and improved data collection regarding the lives of Indigenous women and advocate for the development of indicators for measuring progress which are relevant to the lives and culture of Indigenous peoples.ⁱⁱ

1.3.8. Advocate for improvements in access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) for Indigenous women, particularly in rural and remote areas;

1.3.9. Advocate for the provision of universal access for Indigenous women to basic health care, legal advice, housing and education in settings and forms which are culturally appropriate and local to communities;

1.4. We note that the Paris Agreement makes only limited reference to Indigenous peoples and their role in combatting climate change. We urge the Australian delegation to push for acknowledgement that the role of Indigenous women as the stewards of their ancestral lands and of their traditional knowledge is essential to the implementation of COP21 and all efforts to address climate change.

The National Women's Alliances thank the Australian Government for this opportunity to provide views and look forward to working with the Australian Delegation to continue its advocacy in these areas.

ⁱ Language consistent with *"Indigenous women: beyond the ten-year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action"* Resolution E/2005/27. 2 and *"Indigenous women: key actors in poverty and hunger eradication"* Resolution E/CN.6/2012/L.6

ⁱⁱ See for example, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2009. *Measuring the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples*. Cat. no. IHW 24. Canberra: AIHW.