

Response to the Women's Safety Summit Statement of 7 September 2021

Equality Rights Alliance congratulates the drafting team responsible for the Statement from the Women's Safety Summit and thank all of the victim/survivors, experts, service providers and others who contributed to the discussions. Your bravery, energy and determination is what has got us this far.

ERA also congratulates the Federal Government on its recognition at the Summit of the role played by gender equality in the success of the National Plan and on the focus on primary prevention at the Summit. This approach increases the chances of long-term success for the National Plan, and we look forward to working with the Federal and State Governments on the intersections between the new National Plan and broader work on women's economic security.

ERA acknowledges that many critical voices were limited or missing during the Summit, including the voices of women with disability, migrant and refugee women, women in rural, regional and remote areas, LGBTIQ+ people, older women and young women. We congratulate our sister Alliance, NATSIWA, on Sandra Creamer's successful role at the Summit and we particularly thank the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates who provided such compelling testimony and solutions to the Summit. ERA strongly supports the call for a National Plan for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and their children and notes that this would build on the similar recommendation made by the CEDAW committee in 2019¹.

ERA's members wish to add the following to the Statement of the Women's Safety Summit:

- The Second National Plan must be evidence-based and must be informed by the review of the First National Plan, currently being conducted by KPMG. Drafting the Second National Plan before the outcomes of the review are known risks repeating the failures of the First National Plan. The drafting of the Second National Plan must be given sufficient time and resourcing to produce a document which will serve women well for the next ten years.

¹ CEDAW/C/AUS/CO/8 July 2018, Para 52(f): "*Elaborate, in collaboration with indigenous women and girls, a specific national action plan on violence against indigenous women and girls.*"

- If the second National Plan is to do more than simply respond to gendered violence and abuse, it must explicitly address the role of **primary prevention** and particularly the need to change the values and structures which underpin and enable gendered violence. We welcome the calls in the Summit and the Statement to base the Plan in a primary prevention framework. Violence against women cannot be prevented unless the factors which cause that violence are addressed. Primary prevention is the key tool for preventing and ending violence against women and must be explored in detail in the second National Plan. We recommend that the National Plan reference and incorporate the approaches outlined in Our Watch's *Change the Story*.
- The inclusion of a primary prevention approach to gendered violence in the second National Plan must contain two key elements – it must address the **attitudes and norms** which excuse or even encourage violence against women, and it must address the **structural drivers of gender inequality** which both inculcate those attitudes and norms and which place women at a structural and economic disadvantage when experiencing violence. In particular, the second National Plan needs to address the **drivers of women's economic disadvantage**, such as the gendered wage gap, industrial gender segregation, unpaid work, barriers to women's leadership, education and training and barriers to accessing early childhood education and care. It also needs to address those structural issues which compound this economic disadvantage for women seeking to leave or recover from violence, such as the lack of safe and affordable housing, barriers to effective legal action, issues with the operation of Family Law, barriers to accessing both short- and long-term health and mental health care and difficulties in accessing emergency payments or financial support. Substantial investment in increasing social housing stock needs to be a priority.
- The National Plan must include in its aims the **protection and implementation of women's human rights**, particularly the implementation of Australia's obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. The National Plan must also note the linkages with the National Action Plan on **Women, Peace and Security**. Gender-based violence should be considered as part of a broader understanding of peace and security. A country is not safe and secure unless all people, including women, experience peace in their daily lives.
- It is critical that the approach taken by the Plan to addressing structural gender inequality is **intersectional** in its approach, recognising that a diverse range of inequitable power structures and social norms contribute to the experience and prevalence of violence in the lives of women. We welcome the Statement's recognition of this requirement and add that an understanding and acknowledgement of the role of colonialism, ableism, homophobia, racism

and agism in building cultures which tolerate, encourage and/or ignore violence against women must be included in the second National Plan as part of the structural approach to addressing the drivers of violence against women. The National Plan must supported by the implementation of the recommendations set out in *Wiyi Yani U Thangani* report.

- The second National Plan and the resulting action plans must be developed using a co-design process that puts the voices and experiences of a diverse range of **victim/survivors at the centre of the process**. We welcome the reference to the role of victim/survivors in the Statement, and add that, while the involvement of experts and professionals is essential to the development of the Second National Plan, it is not a substitute for listening to, understanding, and incorporating the direct lived experiences of victim/survivors in the Plan's direction and focus.
- Finally, the Plan requires a robust ongoing performance monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework which is sufficient to track progress towards the National Plan's targets and outcomes. In order to assess and demonstrate the achievements of the National Plan as a whole, it is essential that the National Plan develop new targets in collaboration with experts and Victim Survivors. The framework should include targets relating to primary prevention, identify data sources and generally improve transparency of outcomes. The identification, collection and use of data needs to be carefully considered in consultation with different populations of women, as there is significant risk that misguided data processes can retraumatise or further marginalise women, particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. The monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework needs to be adequately and separately funded, and specific additional funding must be provided to services to participate in evaluation processes.

ERA recommends that the Federal Government consider the implementation of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) as a supporting mechanism for the implementation of the National Plan. GRB would allow more accurate tracking of those elements of the federal budget which provide broader support to the implementation of the plan, rather than being confined to tracking direct expenditure. A primary prevention approach to the National Plan will result in actions across a wide range of areas of funding and activity, not all of which will be captured in the direct accounting of expenditure under the National Plan. GRB will allow the Federal Government to track and make transparent the ways in which the broader budget is working to support the National Plan.

ERA looks forward to working with the Commonwealth on the implementation of the new National Plan on Violence Against Women and their Children.