

# SUBMISSION

Friday, 22 December 2023

## **AMA submission to Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality**

Submitted online via: <https://wiyiyaniuthangani.humanrights.gov.au/framework-for-action>

### **Introduction**

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) is committed to advocating for improved health and life outcomes, and to close the gap in health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the provision of culturally safe care. Achieving this would allow for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to participate in all aspects of society in the best of health. Providing culturally safe health care requires truth telling, redressing the historical impacts of colonisation, which continue to persist, and eliminating the institutionalised racism that currently exists within the Australian health system.

The AMA supports the designing of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani framework, and establishment of the First Nations Gender Justice and Equality Institute, as an opportunity to better the health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls, by recognising the links between gender justice, equity and health.

### **Social Determinants of Health**

A person's health is shaped by the social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions they live in. Health inequities typically arise because of inequalities within society. Health inequities are avoidable and can be associated with forms of disadvantage such as poverty, discrimination, and access to goods and services.<sup>1</sup> In order to achieve health equity, the focus must not only be on treating disease and modifying risk factors, but also focus on the underlying social determinants of health that influence population health and wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>

A better understanding of the impact that gender inequity and injustice has on health outcomes is needed. Achieving gender equity requires removing unfair, unjust, and avoidable disparities in health. An equity approach supports policies and practices that allocate resources to groups according to their differing needs and seeks to reduce the obstacles that prevent all genders from realising their potential for health.<sup>3</sup> Improving the overall health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls, is intertwined with improving equity, access, and justice in their communities.

### **Cultural Safety**

The AMA asserts that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have a right to access appropriate, affordable, evidence based, accessible and responsive health care, where they feel respected and culturally safe.

Cultural safety is central to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their interaction with the health system. It describes a state, where people feel enabled to access health care that is appropriate to their needs, expect to receive effective, high-quality care, have trust in the service, and challenge personal or institutional racism when it is encountered. Cultural safety is based on shared respect, and means that there is no denial or challenging of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identities and knowledges.<sup>4</sup>

The AMA acknowledges it is vital that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, knowledges and experiences are prioritised in policy setting, service delivery and evaluations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. Culturally safe practices must be embedded in the First Nations Gender Justice and Equality Institute, including self-determined and strength-based approaches. Ensuring cultural safety should be a core principle of the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework, as it relates to data collection and providing a culturally safe space for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls to share their experiences.

## Conclusion

The AMA looks forward to seeing the progress made on the Wiyi Yani U Thangani Framework for Action for First Nations Gender Justice and Equality, and the development of the Institute under this framework. The opportunity through this framework, to improve gender justice and equality, can in turn have positive impacts on the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls, and their communities more broadly.

## Contact

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<sup>1</sup> Whitehead, M. (1992). The concepts and principles of equity and health. *International Journal of Health Services* 22(3):429–45.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Medical Association (2020) Social Determinants of Health Position Statement. Retrieved 07/12/23 from: <https://www.ama.com.au/articles/social-determinants-health-2020-1>

<sup>3</sup> Australian Medical Association (2023) Submission to National Strategy to Achieve Gender Equality. Retrieved 07/12/23 from: <https://www.ama.com.au/articles/ama-submission-department-prime-minister-and-cabinet-national-strategy-achieve-gender>

<sup>4</sup> Australian Medical Association (2022) Cultural Safety Position Statement. Retrieved 07/12/23 from: <https://www.ama.com.au/articles/ama-position-statement-cultural-safety-0>