

# First Nations Framework



*\*First Nations is used in reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of Australia in respect to the preferred traditional nation names and/or language groups.*



2020 – 2022





Rachel Abdulla. Acrylic on canvas.

*Working to  
Overcome the division  
between  
Aboriginal and  
non-Aboriginal people  
by building a movement  
of courageous women  
who will commit to  
healing tomorrow by  
acting today.*

### *Rainbow Serpent Seeing*

The Rainbow Serpent is an integral to beliefs and culture for Aboriginal people.

The Rainbow Serpent is associated with ceremonies about fertility, abundance and creation, as well as the organisation of the community and the keeping of peace. The Rainbow Serpent sent us deities to live amongst us and guide us.

The story is of the Rainbow Serpent, she represents the world's oldest continuous story of creation. This is the story of what she sees. She acknowledges the past; evolution without ideological pollution or conquering and without influence from outside sources.

She lives in the present; where non-Aboriginal people come together with Aboriginal people to fight our truth, justice, forgiveness, healing, reparation, and love. Working to overcome the division between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people by building a movement of courageous women who will commit to healing tomorrow by acting today.

She sees the future; that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a story to tell. In listening to our stories and acknowledging the truth, we can all begin the healing process and journey together towards reconciliation. This journey together can help us all remove our personal spiritual barriers of pain, hurt, anger, forgiveness, pride and fear of the unknown.

So we journey together towards a reconciled future that brings about transformative change in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and Australia as a nation.



## Acknowledgement of country

WSSSA acknowledges that the land we work on is the traditional lands of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and we pay our respects to elders, past, present and emerging.

WSSSA acknowledges and respects that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are the First Nations people of this country and recognises them as traditional owners and occupants of South Australian land and waters. WSSSA acknowledges that the First Nations people never ceded sovereignty, and remain strong in their enduring connection to land and culture.

## Foreword

WSSSA's collective vision is to foster an environment that recognises and embraces First Nations knowledge and cultures. The First Nations Framework in an important achievement to enable us to walk together in the spirit of reconciliation. Reciprocity, respect, and partnership are the key concepts of reconciliation that will guide our work. WSSSA is committed to deep listening. Aboriginal women have been saying for a long time they want family violence to stop and they know their solutions. Professor Irene Watson and Professor Aliene Moreton-Robinson kindly remind non-Aboriginal women that solutions to family violence will not come from patriarchal western societies, but from Aboriginal women. Aboriginal women have connection to land, cultural sustenance, political will and self-determination. The solutions are embedded in cultural practices derived from knowledge that is outside the experience and knowledge of whiteness. The Framework is togetherness and WSSSA's commitment to amplifying voices of First Nations women.

WSSSA is a women's domestic and family violence service that provides an integrated response to its clients through the provision of specialised, accessible and flexible models of service delivery. WSSSA has a strong and varied history, delivering services across diverse cultures and backgrounds. WSSSA's practice framework is underpinned by a **safety first approach** which seeks to ensure that the safety and empowerment of women and their children is paramount in all aspects of service delivery and advocacy.

The safety of women and their children is achieved by ensuring that violence is recognised as soon as possible, providing immediate responses to violence and facilitating safe and seamless pathways through service systems.

The WSSSA Statement and Values is underpinned by a gender power analysis that recognises the structural and social impact of power in our society, and the dislocation and dispossession caused by colonisation on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Men's violence against women is Australia's most significant gender equality issue (Summers A 2015). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women experience the intersection of gender and racial oppression. WSSSA recognises the unequal access to social, political and economic power between women and men, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples, and how this imbalance leads to violence against women.

## Governance oversight

WSSSA oversight of the First Nations Framework (and accompanying business plan) will be by the First Nations Governance Committee with support from the WSSSA Chief Executive Officer.

The First Nations Governance Committee will provide an accountability and oversight mechanism and are responsible for:

- Operational oversight and monitoring implementation of strategic directions and performance outcomes
- Facilitating information sharing
- Identifying gaps, risks and challenges

## Implementation & reporting

The Business Plan will inform the work of the Committee and individual work plans. These plans will be developed and reviewed annually.

Progress against the First Nations Framework will be reported to the Board of Management quarterly by the Chief Executive Officer.





## Our Vision

*WSSSA aims to build a culturally focused, safe and healing organisation for First Nations women, families and community, respecting their wisdom, place and voice. We will be a service of excellence for First Nations peoples and their employer of choice.*

## We will do this by:

- *Recognising the historical impact of colonisation and the following intergenerational disruption on First Nations women, men and children*
- *Privileging First Nations peoples through acknowledging and respecting their ancient and current wisdom and their diverse cultures, communities and experiences*
- *Ensuring this knowledge directly influences our attitudes, values, skills, actions, policy, services and outcomes for First Nations clients*



What WSSSA will be, know and do as:	BEING: Our attitudes ad values	KNOWING: Our skills and knowledge	DOING: Our actions
<p>Individuals, teams and across all levels of the organisation Individuals, teams and across all levels of the organisation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We will be non-judgmental &amp; understand our own biases &amp; privileges</li> <li>● We will deeply listen to First Nations clients &amp; colleagues &amp; respect that knowledge</li> <li>● We will open our 'cultural lens' and challenge our 'cultural blindness'</li> <li>● We will respect all diversity and what it brings to this organisation</li> <li>● We will be honest about what we know &amp; don't know</li> <li>● We will be curious, open and flexible</li> <li>● We will do what we say we will</li> <li>● We will be allies to First Nations peoples</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We will all build our cultural awareness including understanding key cultural concepts and historical facts</li> <li>● We will act responsibly in our privilege across all levels of the organisation</li> <li>● We will see, hear and understand racism</li> <li>● We will understand the intergenerational impact of colonisation on First Nations women, men and children</li> <li>● Whilst we know we are fundamentally supporting women in crisis, we aim to build our knowledge and skills to advocate for and provide earlier intervention and supports following the crisis</li> <li>● We will be clear on what is expected from us in practicing with First Nations clients and be accountable for our practice</li> <li>● We will develop our knowledge and skills in understanding how Aboriginal lived experience intersects with social services and we will work to make this experience better.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● We will hold each other accountable and responsible to our values</li> <li>● We will call out and walk with people that are experiencing racism</li> <li>● We will build and maintain our cultural fitness</li> <li>● We will quality assure our cultural competence and fitness</li> <li>● We will have conversations about important issues including feminism and what this means for First Nations women and the place of men in this work</li> <li>● We will explore ways in which the voice of the First Nations child is recognised through all our services.</li> <li>● We will embed therapeutic and trauma sensitive approaches that are culturally competent across our organisation</li> <li>● We will work alongside and take direction from our Aboriginal colleagues, deeply listen and practice to build our cultural competence</li> <li>● We will be leaders in contributing to the public debate and awareness of domestic and family violence</li> <li>● We will actively seek to engage with First Nations community in this dialogue.</li> </ul>

*We will achieve this through developing our governance, organisational learning & service innovation, policy and procedures with a change management process that supports all levels of the organisation to learn and implement these practices.*

## Objective 1 – Governance

Suggested Actions	Performance Targets	Lead	Due Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure First Nations representation on WSSSA Board and its Committees.</li> </ul>	First Nations members on WSSSA Board  Identify commitment through Board Charter	WSSSA Governance Committee	Ongoing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an overseeing governance group to support &amp; guide the implementation of the WSSSA First Nations Framework.</li> </ul>	Terms of Reference developed  Members of Committee confirmed	CEO	August 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop &amp; implement an all of service Reconciliation Action Plan.</li> </ul>	Consultation process implemented  Action Plan developed and implemented  Relationship with Reconciliation SA	First Nations Governance Committee	Jan 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider how WSSSA's team and organisational structures may need to change to support WSSSA's First Nations Cultural Competence Framework.</li> </ul>	Embed in whole of Organisational Structure review as per WSSSA Strategic Plan	CEO	June 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Aboriginal specific senior leadership position/s through defining the role and position in the agency and building the resources required to effectively implement this/these positions.</li> </ul>	Embed in whole of Organisational Structure review as per WSSSA Strategic Plan	People and Culture Manager In consultation with First Nations Governance Committee	June 2021

**Objective 2 – Organisational learning and service innovation**  
Build our capacity to work effectively with First Nations peoples by:

Suggested Actions	Performance Targets	Lead	Due Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing an on-going approach to learning from new research and evidence, particularly where it is First Nations- led and building this into practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.</li> </ul>	Develop practice framework underpinned by co-design and service innovation	Chief Operating Officer	June 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing and implementing a community consultation, co-design and service innovation approach with First Nations communities including ensuring visibility in the community.</li> </ul>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing and implementing Learning Circles or Communities of Practice to focus on topics including Feminism and bringing an First Nations lens to this, the place of men in domestic and family violence services, bringing the voice of the child through this work and working with the child protection system.</li> </ul>	Review and implement Training and development priorities to incorporate framework	Training and Development Manager	February 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building a shared learning site on the intranet for all staff access that includes readings and resources relevant to First Nations people and community.</li> </ul>	SharePoint site updated and learning site in place	Training and Development Manager	October 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing an approach to cultural supervision and peer learning for WSSSA First Nations staff with these staff.</li> </ul>	Cultural supervision framework in place	People and Culture Manager  In consultation with First Nations Governance Committee	December 2021



**Objective 2 – Organisational learning and service innovation**  
Build our capacity to work effectively with First Nations peoples by:

Suggested Actions	Performance Targets	Lead	Due Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop Aboriginal specific specialised domestic and family violence training for implementation within WSSSA at all levels and across the social service system that includes building cultural awareness, fitness and competence in direct work with First Nations clients.</li> </ul>	<p>Cultural competency Training for Board and leadership completed</p> <p>Ongoing training to be implemented for whole of organisation</p>	<p>People and Culture Manager</p> <p>Training and Development Manager</p>	December 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a collective approach to supporting non- Aboriginal staff to build their cultural competence and be held accountable for their practices. This will be First Nations led and will support managers in staff supervision and performance improvement.</li> </ul>	<p>Consultation framework with key staff to be implemented</p>	<p>People and Culture Manager</p> <p>In consultation with First Nations Governance Committee</p>	June 2021

### Objective 3 – Policies and Procedures

Suggested Actions	Performance Targets	Lead	Due Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an early intervention and long- term support, commitment statement for First Nations clients and community (that can be used by services to ‘reach for’ when working with clients and advocating for future funding.</li> </ul>	Make available statement to internal and external stakeholders that provides framework when working with clients and advocating for services	Chief Operating Officer In consultation with CEO	September 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a position statement that defines the role of Allies in walking alongside First Nations staff and clients.</li> </ul>	Have in place commitment and statement	CEO	September 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a First Nations employment policy that ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ lived experience is recognised and includes a recruitment policy and consideration of applying First Nations exemptions to specific roles.</li> </ul>	Policy in place	People and culture Manager	December 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a policy that supports the intersection of work with the child protection system.</li> </ul>	Policy in place	Chief Operating Officer	July 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop an “Aboriginal Cultural Consultant or consultancy” policy/procedure that clearly explains the role of this position/role and how practitioners can access and then practice with this.</li> </ul>	Policy in place Position in place	Chief Operating Officer	December 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add “being, knowing, doing” expectations into professional development and management processes.</li> </ul>	Expectations in place	People and Culture Manager	February 2021

### Objective 3 – Policies and Procedures

Suggested Actions	Performance Targets	Lead	Due Date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a policy/approach to contributing to public awareness raising about Domestic and Family Violence.</li> </ul>	Policy and public awareness framework in place	First Nations Governance Committee	June 2021
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the code of conduct to ensure that racism will not be tolerated in the workplace</li> </ul>	Code of conduct reviewed and distributed	People and Culture Manager	August 2020
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that the work of the First Nations Cultural Competence Framework is directly linked with the work of the WSSSA practice framework.</li> </ul>	Framework in place	Chief Operating Officer	December 2021



# Timeline

Timeline	2020						2021						2022					
	Jan	Mar	June	Aug	Sept	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	June	July	Sept	Oct	Dec	Jan	Mar	June	Sept

Objective 1: Governance																			
Ensure First Nations representation on WSSSA Board and its Committees and build capacity of our First Nations staff so is embedded within our leadership and succession planning.	<i>Ongoing</i>																		
Establish an overseeing governance group to support & guide the implementation of the WSSSA First Nations Framework.																			
Develop & implement an all of service Reconciliation Action Plan.																			
Consider how WSSSA's team and organisational structures may need to change to support WSSSA's First Nations Cultural Competence Framework.																			
Develop Aboriginal specific senior leadership position/s through defining the role and position in the agency and building the resources required to effectively implement his/these positions.																			

# Timeline

			2020					2021						2022				
Jan	Mar	June	Aug	Sept	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	June	July	Sept	Oct	Dec	Jan	Mar	June	Sept	Dec

## Objective 2 – Organisational learning and service innovation Build our capacity to work effectively with First Nations peoples by:

Developing an on-going approach to learning from new research and evidence, particularly where it is First Nations- led and building this into practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients.																			
Developing and implementing a community consultation, co-design and service innovation approach with First Nations communities including ensuring visibility in the community.																			
Developing and implementing Learning Circles or Communities of Practice to focus on topics including Feminism and bringing an First Nations lens to this, the place of men in domestic and family violence services, bringing the voice of the child through this work and working with the child protection system.																			
Building a shared learning site on the intranet for all staff access that includes readings and resources relevant to First Nations people and community.																			
Developing an approach to cultural supervision and peer learning for WSSSA First Nations staff with these staff.																			
Develop Aboriginal specific specialised domestic and family violence training for implementation within WSSSA at all levels and across the social service system that includes building cultural awareness, fitness and competence in direct work with First Nations clients.																			
Develop a collective approach to supporting non- Aboriginal staff to build their cultural competence and be held accountable for their practices. This will be First Nations led and will support managers in staff supervision and performance improvement.																			

# Timeline

Timeline	2020						2021						2022					
	Jan	Mar	June	Aug	Sept	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	June	July	Sept	Oct	Dec	Jan	Mar	June	Sept

## Objective 3 - Policies and Procedures

Develop an early intervention and long- term support, commitment statement for First Nations clients and community (that can be used by services to 'reach for' when working with clients and advocating for future funding.																				
Develop a position statement that defines the role of Allies in walking alongside First Nations staff and clients.																				
Develop a First Nations employment policy that ensures Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' lived experience is recognised and includes a recruitment policy and consideration of applying First Nations exemptions to specific roles.																				
Develop a policy that supports the intersection of work with the child protection system.																				
Develop an "Aboriginal Cultural Consultant or consultancy" policy/procedure that clearly explains the role of this position/role and how practitioners can access and then practice with this.																				
Add "being, knowing, doing" expectations into professional development and management processes.																				
Develop a policy/approach to contributing to public awareness raising about Domestic and Family Violence.																				
Review the code of conduct to ensure that racism will not be tolerated in the workplace.																				
Ensure that the work of the First Nations Cultural Competence Framework is directly linked with the work of the WSSSA practice framework.																				



