Asserting the Modern Matriarchy:

A Guide to Inform the Development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs

MODERN MATRIARCH

We Honour All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women. Because of Her, We Can.

'She' – our founding mothers, the first women who have walked this land for millennia and have birthed and nurtured centuries of our people into existence.

'She' – who has carried our stories and knowledge, so we hold in our hands today our societal values of intergenerational learning, care and responsibility for our land, our families and communities.

Embedded within these values are intrinsic lessons of our complex kinship structures and cultural practices. These teach us of collective leadership, collaborative and inclusive decision-making, negotiation and cooperation, the reciprocal sharing of resources, life-long education and the foundational understanding that an individual's health and wellbeing is intimately attached to the health of our country, our surrounding environments, and our families and communities.

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A note on terminology
Throughout this Guide, we generally use the term 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' when referring to the First Nations' peoples of Australia.

Professional disclosure statement
The report on which this Guide is based was completed by Karen Milward Consulting, Karabena Consulting and EMS Consultants. It has been prepared in good faith based on the research and information available to us at the date of publication without any independent verification. We do not guarantee the accuracy, completeness or currency of the information. Karabena Publishing does not accept any liability if this Guide is used for an alternative purpose, nor to any third party in respect of this Guide.

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Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the Traditional Owners of all the lands across Australia and pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging. We also acknowledge the commitment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in supporting each other to reach their leadership potential. Their knowledge, stories and experiences have improved the lives of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who want to assert themselves as Modern Matriarchs, and will continue to do so. The authors acknowledge the leadership of our women, and the strong, proud and resilient culture represented.

Glossary of Terms

Australian Indigenous Estate

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold a rich base of assets and rights, which are collectively referred to as the Indigenous Estate. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples now own or have controlling interests in some 40 per cent of the Australian landmass under various forms of native title and legislation. In the past 40 years, the repossession and growth of the Indigenous Estate by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have been significant.

Indigenous Estate assets

These include tangible assets – the land and waters of the Estate, and the resources located on or within it, and intangible assets – cultural and intellectual property rights, as they exist in forms of expression (arts, dance, music, language), traditional cultural, environmental and bioscience practices, and other forms of traditional knowledge.

The Indigenous Estate continues to grow through:

+ the acquisition, development and management of land;

+ the flows of funds from royalties and rents from resources, land use and other agreements, and the investment of those funds, both domestically and internationally;

+ the development and growth of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses; and

+ the revitalisation or enhancement of intellectual and cultural property and knowledge, and new forms of expression and works.

Implementing gender equity and women-inclusive programs will be inextricably linked to the Australian Indigenous Estate. Matriarchal lineage provides authority for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to lead discussions and make decisions for Country, benefit from on-Country economic development and fulfil cultural obligations including leading ceremonies, promoting songlines and maintaining stories from Country.

Data sovereignty

The right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to govern the collection, ownership and application of data about their communities, peoples, lands and resources.

Life-course approach

The life-course concept recognises both the opportunity to prevent and control diseases at crucial stages of life from pre-conception through pregnancy, infancy, childhood and adolescence to adulthood. The term is also used to describe the critical periods in a person's life that have specific cultural significance and herald new relationships, obligations and responsibilities.

Matriarchy

This is a social unit governed by a woman or group of women. In Australia, many tribal affiliations and cultural centeredness stress the relatedness through women rather than men. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can point to families in which a woman has become the dominant figure or matriarch.

Megatrends

A megatrend is a significant shift in environmental, economic and social conditions that will play out over the coming decades. The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (or CSIRO) has identified seven megatrends:

1 Limited natural resources with rising demand.

2 Growing pressure on biodiversity and ecological habitats.

3 A shifting world economy powered by a developing Asia.

4 An ageing population with a retirement savings gap and growing health care expenditure.

5 The rise of online retail, teleworking and collaborative consumption patterns.

6 A new and rising consumer demand for experience over products.

7 The innovation imperative – accelerating technological advancement and the importance of innovation.

Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
ATSIC	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission
DATSIP	Department of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (Queensland)
DPC	Department of [the] Premier and Cabinet
IBA	Indigenous Business Australia
NITV	National Indigenous Television
NSW	New South Wales
RAPs	Reconciliation Action Plans
SA	South Australia
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
VAAF	Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework
WA	Western Australia

About this Guide

This Guide provides evidence for use in the design and delivery of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs (hereafter Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs).

The purpose of the Guide is to develop a comprehensive evidentiary foundation to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's cultural responsibilities, leadership aspirations and links to economic empowerment. It will also assist us in formulating topics and lists of guest speakers for a community of practice in which our women can continue their leadership growth and opportunities.

The Guide explores the following key areas and questions:

+ Defining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership: How does Australia define their leadership (in policies, strategies or programs)? How does this compare to other approaches and international literature?

+ Accessing quality data: Are there adequate data (in Australia and other contexts) to assess the effectiveness of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership programs on gender-equality and broader development outcomes? What is the quality of these data?

+ Linking leadership with empowerment: is there evidence to link Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's economic empowerment with improved leadership outcomes? What does the evidence say and what is the quality of this evidence?

Methodology

The process used to review the academic and grey literature involved database searches, following reference lists from critical articles, Google searches, more comprehensive reading and the sourcing of documents from clearinghouses and relevant websites. Examples of search terms used include Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, women's leadership, leadership, theory of change + leadership, women + coalition, women + leadership + evaluation, and women + decision-making and women and self-determination.

Our perspective

Developing this Guide has made us realise that we are not merely promoting the learning of new knowledge and skills, but are advocating for a significant change in mindset – the taking on of a new worldview and the adoption of an alternative paradigm. The Guide promotes a different approach to engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in leadership, in that it is asking people to step outside their bounded intellectual and cultural silos and reach towards transdisciplinary and multi-stakeholder consensus. We are respectfully building upon positivist scientific methods, particularly those that closely align with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scientific traditions, philosophies and worldviews (Abdilla & Fitch, 2017). We hope this new perspective will bring about the change in mindset that we feel must occur for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership to be recognised, valued and made a reality.

How this Guide will support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

This Guide will equip Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who complete our leadership and coaching programs with the skills:

1 To interrogate local, State/Territory and national policies, programs and measures to ensure that representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women do not perpetuate colonially structured falsehoods and instead reassert their matriarchal rights and responsibilities.

2 To advocate for gender equity in all policy, programming and measures associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in national and international contexts.

3 To facilitate discussions about the ability of gender equality legislation to impact reforms in Australia, and the opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to achieve gender equality through the implementation of Treaty negotiations, such as those occurring in Victoria (Aboriginal Victoria 2020).

4 To work with our First Nations' men around their views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's roles, responsibilities and leadership styles, and to address issues of patriarchal beliefs and leadership that mitigate men's capacity for nurturance (Arabena 2017).

5 To challenge the narratives in current policy initiatives and leadership opportunities to ensure that these align with the fully human and whole-of-community context in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women live.

6 To implement leadership initiatives starting with the identification of their family aspirations, and the role and contribution of each family member to achieving their personal and collective goals.

7 To participate in governance and leadership opportunities that align with their values, and their capacity to contribute and lead initiatives in government, not-for-profit and entrepreneurial endeavours.

8 To identify and advocate for mentoring and coaching opportunities that work for them in their stage of development.

9 To identify their aspirations, hopes and ambitions and be able to develop a strategy to achieve their stated goals and dreams for themselves and their family.

For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to achieve these capabilities, the consultations and program development will utilise the leadership framework developed by Aboriginal lawyer, academic and former UN Rappatour Professor Megan Davis (2012). In discussing the leadership of First Nations' women in a colonised country, Davis extends the welfare and economic work of Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen that focused on the aspirations of those women who experience vulnerability, and of moral philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2001) who contextualises women's aspirations as appropriate to the circumstances of their lives. In addition to this framework, and in full recognition of women whose matriarchial lineages are concerned with all aspects of the Indigenous Estate, this Guide can be used to support the development and implementation of locally led and nationally coordinated Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs structured around the social, cultural, economic, spiritual and ecological elements of women's lives.

Structuring the program to align with First Nations' women's aspirations for leadership, and the circumstances in which they live, will give them a complete personal knowledge of their rights to the following:

1 A quality life – being able to live a life of reasonable length, and not dying prematurely or before one's life is so reduced as to be not worth living.

2 Bodily health and safety – being able to have good health, including reproductive health, nourishment and adequate shelter.

3 Bodily integrity – being able to move freely from place to place secure against violent assault, including sexual assault, marital rape and domestic violence, and having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and choice in matters of reproduction.

4   Senses, imagination and thought – being able to use the senses, to imagine, to think and to reason in ways that are informed and cultivated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's ways of knowing, being, doing, imaging and thinking.

5   Emotions – being able to have attachments and not having one's emotional development blighted by fear or anxiety.

6   Practical reason – being able to conceptualise what constitutes a good life and to engage in critical reflection about planning one's own life.

7   Affiliation – being able to recognise and show concern for other human beings and animals, and to engage in various forms of social interaction based on compassion.

8   Control over one's environment – (a) politically: being able to participate effectively in political choices that govern one's life with the rights of political participation, free speech and freedom of association; (b) materially: being able to hold property and the right to seek employment on an equal basis with others; (c) in work: being able to exercise practical reason and enter meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

In considering the realities of modernity in Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women need access to leadership strategies that are:

1   Informed by, and adhere to, protocols and forms of cultural leadership that are credible, strategic, connected and sustainable.

2   Embedded in co-design and co-implementation, and that draw on the many perspectives, expertise, disciplines and sectors in local and regional areas.

3   Invested in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander economies – trade routes, exchange programs, matriarchal-led entrepreneurship and seasonal engagements in products and goods – as well as mainstream Australia's economic modelling for current and future initiatives.

4   Founded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander implementation science and the development of culture-led workforces.

5   Based on a respectful and responsive system of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership to contribute to improved outcomes, efficiencies and equity by working with individuals, families, communities and the workforce.

6   Able to identify and address 'adaptive preferences', in which culture and cultural expectations limit or neglect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's autonomy.

7   Supportive of women identifying their aspirations, hopes and ambitions for themselves and their families.

8   Defined by a coaching, mentor and support strategy that will create a community of practice in which it is safe to share and celebrate the achievement of their aspirations.

The evidence shows that investments in the combination of these forms of strategies support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to progress their personal leadership aspirations without compromising their accountabilities to others. What is also essential is that women seek to achieve their leadership aspirations within a community of practice that is safe, cultural and supportive.

Policy levers: Innovation at scale

Implementing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership combines important themes and tensions, theory and empirical evidence to address one of the significant challenges of our time – the need for gender equity. This approach is not the easy road. Facilitating First Nations' women's leadership requires us all to take on different and challenging dimensions within our policies and practices (AHMAC 2016).

The evidence in this Guide describes the policy levers needed to implement a high-quality leadership program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, including those that allow participants in the program:

+ To explore the 'best scales' at which to manage resources, research and policy formulation – through participants finding the necessary financial, human, informational and other resources, and at what scale, to support their leadership aspirations.

+ To bridge the conceptual and methodological divide between policy and praxis – with a focus on enabling Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men become to stronger agents in their own agendas for change (Fiocco 2019).

+ To revitalise relationships, governance and accountability that are essential for their lives.

+ To identify opportunities to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership.

Innovation can and will occur when women in leadership roles work together to experiment with new policy instruments and processes. It will also require opportunities and pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership to be taken up across different institutional settings. The challenge for policy makers is to ensure that the gender equity policy works over the longer term by incorporating gender, local, cultural, environmental, social and economic concerns that play out in the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, their families and communities. Policy makers, program developers, service providers and other leaders will need to make space for, and encourage broader participation by, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in public life.

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Asserting the Modern Matriarchy

Australia, partitioned for millennia from all other landmasses by sea, produced a vast number of endemic species that supported First Nations' civilisations to establish trade, social and spiritual relationships within and between Indigenous peoples in Australia, Asia and Oceania (Langton 2011; Keen 2006; Thomson 1949).

Our nation's lands and waters were shaped by its First Nations' peoples to ensure abundance and predictability – the foundation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' cultural life, health and wellbeing (Gammage 2012; Pascoe 2018).

Founded on the legal fiction of *terra nullius,* despite 65,000 years of human habitation, in 1901 the federation of British colonies ushered in a new nation, one which privileged ideological, political, social and scientific beliefs that subjected generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to forced removals, massacres, exclusion and discrimination. The legacies of these experiences are still evident, requiring our First Nations to assert human rights agendas in international arenas, to address inequities through community-controlled organisations, and to politicise the burden of ill health across and between multiple generations of our people (Galbraith 2000; Sutton 2001; Pettman 1991).

It is this context – pre-contact abundance and the legacies of post-colonial impoverishment and transgenerational trauma – that sets the scene through which to assert contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership in Australia. Leadership is not a foreign concept to Aboriginal and Islander women, with many examples of strong women's leadership and participation in the fields of political action, justice and equity, health service delivery, law, entrepreneurialism and democratic and national building efforts.

Our leadership credo is embedded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' concept of health and wellbeing, which is a whole-of-life view that includes the cyclical concept of life-death-life (NAHSWP 1989). It is:

> **… not just the physical wellbeing of an individual, but refers to the social, emotional and cultural wellbeing of the whole community in which everyone can achieve their full potential as a human being, thereby bringing about the total wellbeing of their community.** (NACCHO 2006)

Thus, improving the health and wellbeing of our people requires policymakers, programmers and practitioners to extend current Western leadership models to include the social and cultural determinants of health and wellbeing (Australian Government 2017b). This imperative to broaden the concept of health and wellbeing is emphasised in public discourses and strategic initiatives, as exemplified by this statement from Lowitja Institute Chairperson Pat Anderson (1996):

> **Our identity as human beings remains with our land, to our cultural practices, our systems of authority and social control, our intellectual traditions, our concepts of spirituality, and to our methods of resource ownership and exchange. Destroy this relationship, and you damage — sometimes irrevocably — individual human beings and their health.**

Increasingly, leaders are becoming aware of global megatrends that are likely to impact on our future in Australia (Hajkowicz, Cook & Littleboy 2012; 2018). By 2050, these megatrends will both set the foundations for our life in the twenty-first century, recognising that humans are an integral part of the Earth's system, and, more importantly, collectively shape its future. This awareness equips us with the potential to transform our shared knowledge cultures in Australia, which are based on principles essential for the health and wellbeing of all Australians and species endemic to our nation.

For more than 60,000 years, matriarchs have contributed to the health of ecosystems as the primary context for achieving health and wellbeing among First Nations' populations. This contribution aligns with the aspirations held by so many of our young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have a new relationship with our local environments (SEEDMOB 2020), and amplifies the calls from younger people around the world to care for the integrity of our bio-systems (Brundtland Commission 1987; Belam 2019).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership opportunities

This Guide recognises that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are underrepresented in leadership roles in Australia, and that leadership and coaching programs need to promote more women into decision-making positions and to make decisions on programs that impact upon their lives and communities (DPC Victoria 2018). These programs should align with global evidence on gender equity while considering the specific circumstances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in urban, regional and remote locations across Australia. This alignment corresponds with targets and measures for working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, organisations and the wider community to drive action and improve life outcomes beyond 'closing the gap' that will achieve long-term, positive generational change for First Nations' peoples, families and communities.

Despite women's voices having been at the forefront of co-designing and leading discussions on self-determination, we still need significant structural and systemic transformation to bring about gender equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (Aboriginal Victoria 2018). For example, after examining the Victorian Treaty process (Aboriginal Victoria 2020), we found there was no specific focus on gender. Similarly, the *Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018–2023* or VAAF (Aboriginal Victoria 2018) on progress towards 'closing the gap' and achieving intergenerational change limits Victorian-based First Nations' women to the following categories:

+ Carriers of children (child and maternal health).

+ Impacted by family violence and a necessary contributor to whole-of-community strategies to collectively break the cycles of violence.

+ Optimisers of their children's learning outcomes from an early age to high school.

+ Overrepresented in the justice system (as individuals, not as mothers or partners of justice-involved children or partners), and needing culturally safe and effective justice prevention, early intervention, diversion and support programs.

+ Needing opportunities to participate in Victoria's workforce in all sectors and at all levels as part of a commitment to achieving equity.

+ Mothers of children removed into the child protection system, or represented as family members capable of caring for child protection-involved children in kinship care arrangements (Aboriginal Victoria 2018).

Despite the many photographs of happy Aboriginal girls and women throughout the Framework's Chapter 3: Measure, closer examination of the VAAF, closer examination of the discourses embedded in the policy perpetuates disempowerment through ideologies that represent First Nations' women as 'vulnerable', 'victims', 'vessels', 'carers' and as participants in the colonial project. Additionally, the measures used to understand the success or contribution of cultural and on-Country programs are largely determined by colonial state instruments. These and other colonial instruments have governed how, why and where women can access Country

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or promote culture. In the VAAF, the language used to describe and represent Victorian First Nations' women speaks to how their conduct is regulated and their identities constructed. It also defines what it is about their lives that are worthy of measuring, practising and facilitating (Humphreys 2008).

In Queensland, the State Government's *DATSIP 2019–2023 Strategic Plan, Revised for 2020–2021* does not refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women, rather to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders, thereby emphasising geographical not gendered categories (DATSIP 2020). The data sources underpinning the strategy *Our Future State: Advancing Queensland's Priorities* combine information about men and women, and categorise by age rather than gender (Queensland Government [n.d.]). Thus, it does not define specific strategies for women or for men, but simply focuses on adults and children. For example, in asserting the number of babies born healthier, *Our Future State* emphasises that a good start to life begins before conception and is influenced by a mother's health and wellbeing and good antenatal care, without acknowledging the role of fathering and men's responsibilities to their children during the early formation of their families (Queensland Government [n.d.]).

The Northern Territory Government's *Everyone Together: Aboriginal Affairs Strategy 2019–2029* emphasises family, children and communities (Northern Territory Government 2019). It recognises the critical importance of culture, land and connection but does not refer to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women separately, but rather to Territorians, children and adults. The comparisons in *Everyone Together* are between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

In Western Australia, the State Government's *Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy* identifies a representation of men and women on their advisory committee, but has little or no reference to the aspirations of Aboriginal women separate to those of men (DPC WA 2019). The matriarchial lineages in Western Australia are strong, but not well facilitated through the current strategic development process. Instead, there is an emphasis on the services that Aboriginal women might access through the community-controlled sector, but their engagement was described as being voluntary. Maternal health check-ups, playgroups and support for people, families and communities are being invested in for families to make personal and empowered decisions, but again the strategy is silent on elements of fathering and families.

The *South Australian Aboriginal Affairs Action Plan 2019–2020* refers to Aboriginal people, Aboriginal offenders, Aboriginal Health Workers and Aboriginal businesses, and has identified specific services – such as breast and cervical cancer screening programs – that will target women (DPC SA 2019). The evidence of a gender enabler is not clear, except in the instance where young boys who are disengaged from school are eligible for additional school and culture programs through Clontarf College.

The New South Wales Government's Aboriginal Affairs Strategy, the *OCHRE Plan*, focuses on 'Opportunity, Choice, Healing, Responsibility and Empowerment' for Aboriginal people and communities, but there are no gendered aspects as to how government programs and strategies will impact the lives of men and women (NSW Government 2013). Similarly, Tasmania's Office of Aboriginal Affairs holds a vision to 'advance Aboriginal affairs in Tasmania through the provision of quality advice and assistance to the Tasmanian Government and through effective support to the Aboriginal community of Tasmania'. However, it is silent on the issue of gender and the health and wellbeing elements specific to women and girls (Department of Communities Tasmania 2020).

However, all these strategies do demonstrate a commitment by Australian governments to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, which is to be achieved predominantly through the implementation of enablers that:

+ prioritise culture;

+ address trauma and support healing;

+ tackle racism;

+ promote cultural safety; and

+ transfer decision making power and resources to communities.

Additional infrastructure, business development and workforce capacity strategies are also evident, as is a range of education strategies pivotted toward addressing disengagement from school and recidivism in the prison system. As these commitments do not include a gender enabler,

our Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will also need to focus on gender equity principles and measures as they apply to self-determination to reverse the impacts of the racist and sexist ideologies of colonialism. This is because these ideologies continue to entrench Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's identity within subordinate sexualised roles and, as such, do not provide support for the rise of the modern matriarchy.

Commitments that include gender **and** race will be an unfamiliar way of representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's voices. However, encouraging the leadership aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women will necessarily disrupt:

+ the racism and power relations they have historically endured from non-Indigenous women;

+ the claims of professionals invested in speaking about and on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women;

+ the burden on them of bearing the brunt of media sensationalism and racial stereotyping; and

+ inaccurate representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with detrimental effects (Huggins et al. 1991).

The premise of this Guide is that it is critically important for women to feel empowered in all situations, and to have the opportunity to represent themselves free from discourses that perpetuate colonial-inspired falsehoods. Those women who participate in the Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs based on this Guide will be able to review Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-focused policies, programs and measures to ensure that representations of them are not based on these falsehoods. They will also be able to work towards embedding gender equity into all policy, programming and measures associated with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in Australia and, more specifically, in the States and Territories in which they live.

Self-determined leadership: The rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women

Many existing women's leadership programs are predominantly focused on Board participation, program delivery and organisational executive management opportunities. However, the leadership aspirations of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women may have more breadth than the goals articulated in these programs. Evidence suggests that when women are in the company of other women who, independent of their circumstances, are prepared to grow, transform and heal from intergenerational trauma, that they leave the program with a greater sense of purpose and power in their lives (Watego & Scott 2014). Inclusive programming provides a basis for what it means to live a self-determined life.

Self-determination is not a new concept. For decades, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have fought for self-determination and their right to make decisions on matters that affect their lives and communities (Aboriginal Victoria 2018). The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN 2007) describes self-determination 'as the ability for Indigenous peoples to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development'. The Declaration also describes it as 'a right that relates to groups of people, not only individuals' (Aboriginal Victoria 2018). Aboriginal Professor of Law Megan Davis (2012) asserts the Declaration 'has not put a spotlight on how the right to self-determination should be managed internally within Aboriginal groups themselves, especially regarding Aboriginal women, gender and violence'. Davis shares that:

> **The state-centric focus of the right and the patriarchal nature of Western public institutions inculcated Aboriginal political culture and institutions to the detriment of Aboriginal women's rights and status in Aboriginal communities. There are many examples of the marginalisation and exclusion of Aboriginal women.**
>
> (Davis 2012:80)

Further, Davis asserts there is evidence showing that Aboriginal women were marginalised from the development of land rights legislation and land councils, with anthropologists privileging the stories and status of Aboriginal men over women. She also refers to the many examples where customary Aboriginal law/lore has been used to mitigate harsh sentencing in crimes of violence against Aboriginal women (Davis 2012). In these ways, First Nations' women have been marginalised in the Western and cultural legal systems, and positioned as unequal to men. In some instances, 'cultural' rights have been shown to privilege all men – both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous men – over the fundamental human rights of First Nations' women and children (Bell 1984).

The now defunct Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) – the State-centric institutional form of self-determination conceived of and legislated by the State – in an evaluation of its programs and services found that it had had limited effectiveness in meeting the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (ATSIC Office of Evaluation and Audit 1995). The evaluation concluded that women had had little involvement in formal ATSIC decision-making processes (with Lowitja O'Donoghue and Pat Turner as notable exceptions), and few had been familiar with or had access to ATSIC's programs and services (Davis 2012). Its conclusion was that ATSIC had failed to deliver self-determination to women. Langton (1988) noted that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's concern with ATSIC was that decisions affecting 'them, their communities and families were made with limited input from the women these decisions would most effect'. The ATSIC evaluation is a powerful reminder of how Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women were so often excluded from bodies that were designed to achieve self-determination.

Such systemic exclusion highlights the need for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to participate in decision making as a fundamental right of self-determination. Again, looking to the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework, and in relation to self-determination, it states:

> **While UNDRIP gives us a language to talk about self-determination, Aboriginal Victorians must not feel constrained by definitions set out in UNDRIP. Inherent to self-determination is the right of Aboriginal Victorians to define for themselves what self-determination means. We have heard from the community that Aboriginal self-determination encompasses a spectrum of rights that are necessary for Aboriginal Victorians to achieve economic, social and cultural equity, based on their own cultural values and way of life. This includes rights to:**
>
> › **not be discriminated against**
>
> › **enjoy language, culture and heritage**
>
> › **land and natural resources**
>
> › **have access to the necessities of life and be economically self-sufficient**
>
> › **make decisions that impact their lives from a position of wellbeing and empowerment**
>
> › **'grassroots community' having ownership and responsibility for their affairs and their communities, including through designing and delivering policy and services on their terms, setting their funding priorities and holding their service providers accountable.**
>
> (Aboriginal Victoria 2018:22)

Davis (2012) advocates for policy frameworks that are founded on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. However, she cautions against policy positions predicated on the assumption that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men are aligned with each other and with the Aboriginal rights movement. In an analysis of contemporary policies in Australia, we found no current policy framework in which there is an acknowledgment of Indigeneity, no policy accomodating the different experiences of Indigeneity by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women, and little acknowledgment of the gendered supports required to realise the goals and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as being different to those of men. This analysis aligns with Davis's assertion that even though there are racialised policy and legal positions, it is difficult to assert the racialised and gendered approaches that are needed to engage with both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women on achieving their aspirations. Davis asserts:

> **'Indigenous peoples' is taken as a universal and singular standpoint for political strategy. This assumption means that there has been no need to interrogate self-determination in terms of what it means to women and what impact it has upon their lives. Strategically, it is more effective to engage with the state if Aboriginal men and women are united.** (Davis 2012:81)

It is the right of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to determine for themselves what their leadership, governance and accountability systems will look like (Deshong 2017). Australian First Nations' women have participated in, and contributed to, the governance of one of the Earth's oldest harmonious, culturally diverse democracies (Dudgeon & Bray 2017). Invasion, colonisation and systems of patriarchy have disrupted the practice of women's knowledge systems, undermined their cultural authority, and subjected them to catastrophic human rights abuses (Kuokkanen 2012; Burns 2018).

These generational abuses have also had a personal impact:

> **Aboriginal women know that as a collective, they are sicker, poorer, less educated, more likely to be unemployed, less skilled, attend more funerals, and face more significant numbers of their families in jail and dying younger… women also know they are subject to higher levels of violence, racism and sexism with many more regarding themselves as marginal and a minority than non-Indigenous women.** (Fredericks et al. 2010:11)

Despite these troubles, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have continued to support and aspire to leadership positions in families and communities and community-controlled organisations (NACCHO 2018). First Nations' women have achieved distinctiveness in diverse and rewarding leadership roles while continuing to fulfil cultural, community and familial responsibilities (Timms & Hitch 2018). Thus, leadership programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women need to be accurate and respectful of their contribution, which is based on millennia of women's knowledge, matriarchal responsibility, centuries of resistance and the constancy of protection.

This Guide is founded on the belief that all women have the right to live in a safe society with equal access to power, resources and opportunities (DPC Victoria 2016). While this may be a contemporary consideration for societies in which women were, for centuries, considered chattels in marriage without property title or rights (Vitalis 2017; Wade 1894), Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have strong traditions in gender equity. From pre-contact times, the tradition of matriarchal lineages gave women full access to, and participation in, the productivity of the Indigenous Estate. In modern times, gender equity was incorporated into the constitution of the now-disbanded National Congress of Australia's First Peoples (Australian Government 2013).

Even though the rich tradition of gender equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women continues – through their participation on Boards, in managerial positions and in community organisations – there are still challenges, particularly for those who live in unsupported and stressful environments (Weetra et al. 2016; Our Watch 2018). These challenges require women to shift their focus away from participation in structures to reconstituting what it means to live a fully human, dignified life. Davis, in considering the framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership, focused on the theories of Sen and the work of Nussbaum (2001), which showed local correlations between poverty and gender inequality with:

1 women in many cultures not treated as individuals with their own needs and aspirations; and

2 poverty affecting what women hope for, what they love, what they fear and what they can do (Nussbaum 2000).

Building on Sen's theories, and exploring those gendered assertions made by Nussbaum (2001), Davis concluded that any leadership program claiming to be a vehicle for self-determination needs to address the concern that women limit their expectations (2012). Nussbaum identified that women's autonomy is often overlooked or considered difficult to achieve, and that women in particular are vulnerable to adjusting their expectations to fit those imposed by their culture and community (Nussbaum 2001). Sen, Nussbaum and Davis have all tried to identify ways of encouraging women to consider what a dignified life means.

In considering these ideals, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will need to include the following aspirations. That, as a minimum, all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women:

+ have a life worth living;

+ are able to move freely from place to place;

+ are safe from the experience of violence;

+ can express themselves without being controlled, coerced or abused;

+ experience their sexuality positively and can practise safe sex, use contraceptives and determine the number and timing of children born to them;

+ cultivate their senses, imagination, thinking and reason;

+ have pleasurable experiences;

+ have positive and influential attachments and the full range of emotional experiences without being blighted by fear or anxiety;

+ form personal opinions, understand what is good for them as individuals and engage in critical reflection about the planning of their own lives;

+ have compassion and empathy, and the ability to act to promote justice, friendship and experience self-respect and non-humiliation;

+ can be concerned for animals, plants, and the world of nature;

+ have the opportunity to play and enjoy recreational activities;

+ are able to control their own environment, including their political, material and relationship choices; and

+ have the right to be employed on the same basis as others.

These elements align both with the matriarchal experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women pre-colonisation, and with the personal and practical aspects of a leadership or a coaching course that is specific to women and acknowledges the environments in which they must achieve their aspirations.

Challenging the narratives

Cultural diversity among First Nations' groups is common, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Australia have rich and unique traditions in which leadership can be 'inherited, conferred by age, status, cultural authority, social standing and local knowledge' (Haebich 2014). However, women's leadership has been compromised by the extreme biases embedded in Western narratives that speak to the 'dawn of colonisation', thereby presupposing that European conquest was 'a good thing'.

As a result, Western narratives contain falsehoods about the role of women in Aboriginal civilisations, agriculture, aquaculture, philosophies, food acquisition and land-based innovation (Pascoe 2018). This view was confirmed through the work of Luger (2018) who found that these falsehoods were reinforced by colonialist written histories that not only exclude Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives but seldom refer to the experiences of First Nations' women at all. Oral traditions have, for tens of thousands of years, provided the foundations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' artistic and linguistic expression, but have generally been overlooked and often actively excluded from the account of Australia's nationhood. As a result, the contributions and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and in particular the voices of our women 'have been all but silenced'. As Luger (2018) states:

> It is precisely because this historical narrative is biased that righting this wrong isn't as simple as cherry-picking the names of notable Aboriginal women and inserting them into textbooks or other media.

Luger's work reminds us that, in improving public understanding of the importance of First Nations' women to our history, it is not enough simply to highlight the prominence of some women leaders; rather, the entire narrative must be restructured.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have started to interrogate both the power implicit in colonial discourses and the contemporary construction of our women's identity. Transforming this narrative is important and disruptive, with Professor Maggie Walter's work proving that deficit indicators are founded on long-term structural inequalities rather than the inadequacy of First Nations' peoples. She states that the gap between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians cannot be closed until structural issues – such as social and political marginalisation, racism and paternalism – are addressed (Walter 2010).

This Guide focuses on empowering contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to lead the way in rethinking, reframing and relearning a new story, one that incorporates our voices. In doing so, today's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are living in the tradition of their ancestors, whose societies and nations were often matriarchal.

Women's leadership, in this context, follows a complex system of rules that is informed by an identity that is fluid, multi-layered, ceremonial and, in some instances, language based. Leadership and coaching programs must, therefore, support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women reclaim the tradition of female leadership, which is the antithesis of Australia's Anglo, male-dominated perspective of history, and the gendered leadership models that pervaded our twentieth-century institutions, organisations and practices.

Teasing out the strand of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's achievement from the historical record shows the overwhelmingly negative narrative and the many obstacles they faced through the eras of protectionism and assimilation, and the long-term impact of being disallowed to participate in the Australian economy (Pascoe 2018). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, however, have recounted their stories in other ways – in books, films, theatre, dance, song, storytelling and the visual arts. It is through these means that Australians can reconstruct their perception of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as being 'invisible' and instead see the extent and power of our leadership and cultural knowledge.

Furthermore, from the work undertaken by women anthropologists and the new readings of historical resources, we now understand that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's status was both equal and complementary to that of men. Women played significant roles in the economic sphere as food providers and as nurturers and carers of children. They were also responsible for their community's health and wellbeing, led women's spiritual rituals, transmitted intergenerational knowledge and acted as custodians of Country and sacred sites. The significance of their roles in society found expression in fictional accounts, celebrations and stories that recognised and responded to the power of female ancestral beings. In Taungurung legend, for example, it was a woman whom Balayang pulled from the Goulburn River and instructed to live with the Kulin men as their equal (Healy 2016).

Stories about the role and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in pre-contact times are embedded in Dreamings founded on the Pleiades constellation and others. These stories, which contain instructions on how to live, have been handed down orally for thousands of years from one generation to another (Bhathal 2006). As a result, celestial female beings have a place and purpose in traditional knowledge systems across Australia, and make women contributors to, and holders of, inter-generational cultural knowledge. Dreaming stories provide another critical element in defining women's leadership, and the rights and responsibilities of First Nations' women to enact this knowledge.

Where and when possible, Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs must focus on narratives that frame participants' capacity for, and contribution to, leadership initiatives in their own families and communities (Stringer 2012). Through engaging with pre-contact, colonial and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership stories, women undertaking these programs will be taught how to analyse discourses and narratives critically and to develop leadership roles and responsibilities that complement their life, values and circumstances.

Principles: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women-centred leadership

Australia's First Nations' women hold a wide range of views regarding the specifics of contemporary community leadership. For example, some believe that an essential strategy for improving the position of women involves building up management, economic, social and human infrastructure (Collard et al. 2005). We have devised the following women-centred principles, a list that is still to be tested, added to and adopted in consultation with the advisory groups and with the community:

+ Women are treated with dignity, respect and fairness (cultural respect).

+ Women's artistic and familial obligations are recognised (cultural recognition).

+ Women have the right to access leadership and coaching programs that are supportive of their current and future aspirations, independent of where they are in their life's journey (non-judgmental).

+ Women have the right to access learning and participate in culturally safe spaces and culturally empowering groups (empowerment).

+ Women have the right to take responsibility for their own happiness, contentment and work/life balance (rights and obligations).

+ Women have the right and the responsibility to foster supportive networks that are unique to them, and to contribute to lifting each other up not tearing each other down. (Fostering a culture of celebration and achievement to overcome the 'shame factor'.)

To ensure these principles are adhered to in our Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs, the authors suggest using benchmarks established by the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC 2018) guidelines for conducting ethical research with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and to use co-design principles to develop and evaluate the programs.

Women have the right and the responsibility to foster supportive networks that are unique to them, and to contribute to lifting each other up not tearing each other down.

Defining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Leadership

This Section encompasses literature that reviews cultural leadership, women's engagement in the colonial state, nation-building and democratic projects in Australia and, despite several gaps identified in the data, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership in entrepreneurial activities. It will also provide a clear definition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership for use in the development of our Leadership and Coaching Programs.
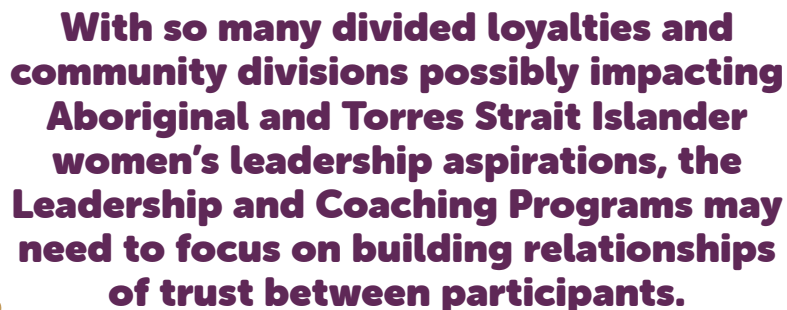
Cultural leadership

As in most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, women have played a central role within families, governance structures and ceremonies, while both men and women had vital roles in sustainability, sharing cultural knowledge and participating in multi and intergenerational activities within communities (Salmon 2000). Although all adults enjoyed considerable personal autonomy, kinship relations reflect a complex system that is not captured by existing non-Indigenous definitions of family. In Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, both women and men focused and benefitted from the following four platforms of family functioning and ways of life, as identified by Lohoar, Butera and Kennedy (2014):

+ **Collectivity** – a valuing of interdependence, group cohesion and community loyalty are vital features of Aboriginal and community life.

+ **Exploration** – offering individual members and their children the opportunity to explore the world around them and develop the skills needed to negotiate the myriad of pathways to adulthood.

+ **Respect for Elders** – Elder wisdom-based societies value the enriching contributions that Elders make to their communities through supporting others to understand the practical elements of life.

+ **Spirituality** – families and communities who engage in spiritual practices can have a stronger sense of identity, are more likely to connect with, support and help one another and to cope better with life's challenges.

These four platforms are especially important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in leadership positions, as they recognise and value the roles and responsibilities that women have in their families and the intergenerational exchanges that facilitate good relationships. Haebich (2014) was able to observe the following leadership attributes that need to be considered in the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs. In assessing women's leadership, Haebich found:

1. Leaders are shaped by their family and community, culture and history.

2. Leadership comes with maturity and the leader's personal abilities to overcome the compounding issues, such as discrimination, education, employment and challenging life circumstances.

3. Leadership qualities include honesty, courage, compassion, perseverance and passion for their cause.

4. Leaders foster resilience, confidence, assertiveness, a sense of humour and altruism.

5. Leaders have respect for Elders, bring community people together, confront issues, and have a shared vision.

6. Leaders are motivated to catalyse change, address disadvantage, promote self-determination and empower women's leadership in cooperation with Aboriginal men.

> **With so many divided loyalties and community divisions possibly impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership aspirations, the Leadership and Coaching Programs may need to focus on building relationships of trust between participants.**

Through this shared approach to asserting the modern matriarchy, women leaders gain respect as knowledge holders who take responsibility for transmitting this knowledge down the generations. Haebich (2014) acknowledges that women leaders can face burnout due to the number of complex challenges they have across different facets of their lives. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will need to consider the personal sacrifices that participants will have to make given the heavy demands of work and family, and their feelings of obligation to care for others and to put others' needs before their own (Davis 2007).

So many of the articles referring to women's leadership remind program implementers to accommodate women's accountability to community expectations. For example, community people sometimes refer to the 'crab in the bucket' syndrome in which the community defines the acceptable thresholds of the achievements of others to hold an individual back. This is a variation on the 'tall poppy syndrome', the cultural phenomenon of mocking people who pursue self-improvement or are perceived to 'think highly of themselves'. There also needs to be a stronger focus on the impact of 'lateral violence', in which displaced envy or jealousy is levelled against peers rather than adversaries. With so many divided loyalties and community divisions possibly impacting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

women's leadership aspirations, the Leadership and Coaching Programs may need to focus on building relationships of trust between participants.

Despite these limitations, we also need to celebrate the role of women in charting the course of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in Australia (Pettman 1992). Women have been central in the development and delivery of modern-day declarations, including the Uluru Statement from the Heart (Referendum Council 2017), and the Imagination Declaration written by a group of young people and delived by a young woman at the Garma Festival (NITV 2019). Both documents are statements that activate a rights agenda that, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, has been destroyed, disregarded and made invisible in dominant societies.

Lineal concepts of leadership, engagement and hierarchical notions of empowerment have replaced the holistic concepts of physical and mental health and wellbeing that have been long underpinned by core cultural values and perspectives, healing practices and traditions designed to strengthen collective identities and cultural continuity (Choi et al. 2016; Salmon et al. 2019). To be effective, women's leadership must, therefore, cultivate personal autonomy, promote kinship roles and responsibilities, encompass resilience, foster identity, and support the health and wellbeing aspirations of individuals, families and communities.

Referencing the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Model (Gee et al. 2013) and the Mayi Kuwayu: The National Longitudinal Study of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Wellbeing Project (Salmon et al. 2018; Jones, Thurber & Chapman 2018), this Guide promotes the following six key elements as necessary for achieving good health and wellbeing:

1. **Connection to Country** – closely related to identity and attachment with the physical environment, this element facilitates a sense of belonging and connection (see, for example, Smethurst 2020).

2. **Indigenous beliefs and traditions** – based around relationships, identities and cultural traditions, and incorporates healing, traditional medicine and gendered knowledge systems and practices.

3. **Indigenous language** – includes verbal, written and body languages as vehicles for expressing culture and teaching it to others; language is the basis for cultural knowledge, economies and trade.

4. **Family, kinship and community** – knowing and being part of a community and having responsibilities, obligations and duties in extended families, community life, local initiatives and political issues.

5. **Cultural expression and continuity** – the actions taken to express attitudes, beliefs, customs and norms often in the form of dances, songs, storytelling, ceremony and the sharing of food, celebrations and the representation of values.

6. **Self-determination and leadership** – facilitating people's control over decision making and resources assists collective thinking and actions that benefit people influenced by the decisions made.

These six elements are vital, not so much to achieve gender equity in dominant societal discourse, but to heal the roles and responsibilities between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and men. Our children and grandchildren need both men's and women's capacity for nurturance and leadership in the twenty-first century. Nationally, these domains are also embedded in the Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan, 2013–2023 (Australian Government 2017a).

Cultural determinants are premised on extensive and well-established knowledge networks that exist within communities and in community-controlled sectors. The implementation of these is consistent both with themes in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples or UNDRIP (UN 2007) and with Australia's commitments to meeting the 2030 Sustainability Targets (UN 2015; UN 2008). Policies, programs and services must, therefore, ensure a strengths-based approach that supports women, families and communities to exercise choice and control. This approach to women's leadership advocates for all members of communities:

+ to reinvigorate cultural roles and responsibilities particular to clans, lineage, kinship and language-based affiliations;

+ to structure governance arrangements to facilitate, engage with and transmit cultural knowledge between and across generations;

+ to support leadership balanced with good health and wellbeing;

+ to establish cultural clan-based plans to facilitate multiple generational participation in leadership activities; and

+ to build on the principles of reciprocity and caring that is fundamental to communitarian societies.

Many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics, authors, rights activists and others have written about the colonial project, a centuries-long, ongoing campaign to annihilate, define, subordinate and exclude First Nations' peoples across the continent (Foley 2003; Watson 2016). When combined with the sexualisation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and the imposition of colonial ideals about patriarchal relations, the voices of First Nations' women have been rendered mostly unheard and ignored. Despite this, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia have managed to survive within the colonial matrix, informed by their own world views, knowledge and relationships to Country.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership in the public sector

In 2017, June Oscar AO gave the University of Melbourne's Naarm Oration on the topic of Resilience and reconstruction: the agency of women in rebuilding healthy families, communities and organisation (Oscar 2017). She spoke of Aboriginal women's leadership in advocacy, as intellectuals, as spokeswomen and as business owners. She also talked of the many women who realise their leadership potential in public service administration, taking the time to understand and trying to influence the mechanisms of government to achieve significant and sustained solutions for communities. In so many of these roles, however, women experience both praise for their decisive leadership and condemnation for selling out (Cripps & Taylor 2009).

Of course, there are various leadership programs already available that support women into executive roles in government in a bid to create environments that encourage other women into leadership positions, to exercise leadership effectively within organisational structures and to learn about practices that present specific challenges for women. In these programs, participants are also provided with an opportunity to build networks of support and to develop practical skills to enhance their leadership practice. These courses support women to engage with diverse interests, values and perspectives, communicate authentically and influence with impact (Australian Public Service Commission 2018).

There are also other Aboriginal career and leadership programs in the public sector that have been developed to support those candidates in substantive roles who are demonstrating leadership potential and want to progress their career to a more senior management and executive level. One such program is run by the NSW Public Service Commission. Focused on Aboriginal cultural identity and based on the concepts of 'two worlds',

the program supports participants to navigate the intersection between Aboriginality, community and public sector leadership, to build knowledge about strengths and identify opportunities for development, and to develop self-awareness, capabilities aligned to benchmarking exercises and skills to manage multiple stakeholders (NSW Public Service Commission 2019). One of our Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will be modelled on this approach to support those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with roles and responsibilities in the public sector.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership in higher education

Universities across Australia now have Indigenous Employment Strategies and Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs), and are pushing an enrolment agenda for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. However, there is still an issue with the concept of 'decolonisation' (Ryan 2019). Dr Tess Ryan speaks of her leadership experience in academic institutions as having to deal with resistance to her presence:

> **There is still a resistance to us in subtle and overt ways — through that older white anthropologist who should have left the academy long ago, through to that woman working in the health faculty that only wants to position us blackfellas as being impoverished and sick, or through that Black star academic with the strongest research and teaching output not being given that promotion — this stuff is relentless.**
> (Ryan 2019)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander academics learn to navigate the university environment, and acquire skills that combine in-depth cultural knowledge and ways of being with the requisite legitimate academic milestones and rigour needed to fit into their institutions. Having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women leaders within universities potentially disrupts these institutions in ways that effectively change their very nature. For example, having Aboriginal women currently occupy Provost positions in two of Victoria's Go8 universities[1] is allowing them to challenge the status quo and work towards making change in higher education using resourcefulness, negotiation and the value of free speech. More than a decade ago, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council argued that

> **few things are more critical to the long-term advancement of Indigenous people than increasing the number of Indigenous people in university leadership roles… It is essential to devise ways to encourage universities to focus on institutional leadership.**
> (Rogers 2017)

Despite a few notable exceptions, many Australian universities still have no Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in executive positions, with colonisation, assimilation, racism and sexism continuing to present barriers to them taking up positions for which they are abundantly qualified.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership in employment and workplace relations

According to Penny Scott, an Aboriginal lawyer and workplace relations specialist:

> **Confronting inequality in the workplace is one of the most significant integrity challenges of our time. We're not talking enough about intersectionality at work. People can be double or triple disadvantaged because of their identity and their womanhood.** (Victorian Government 2019a)

Scott is a past participant of the Joan Kirner Young and Emerging Leaders Program, which is open to all Victorian women aged 18–40. Given former Victorian Premier Joan Kirner's commitment to the advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, the program explicitly advocates for them to apply. There are also other Victorian-based women's leadership programs designed to support women of all ages and backgrounds to build their skills, which they do by promoting more women into leadership and decision-making roles, working with partners to have a greater diversity and representation of women on Boards, and recognising and celebrating the achievements of Victorian women (Victorian Government 2019b).

Core and optional elements of these leadership programs include:

+ a program induction session;
+ a leadership development training program;
+ structured networking events to connect with women leaders;
+ individual one-on-one support sessions;

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1   More information on Australia's Group of Eight (Go8) universities is available at: https://go8.edu.au/about/the-go8.

+ development of an individually tailored leadership development plan;

+ individual mentoring sessions with an experienced leader;

+ role-shadowing opportunities with experienced leaders;

+ practical skill-building workshops to support leadership progression;

+ support to gain executive sponsorship within the workplace; and

+ support to undertake self-directed leadership development activities (Victorian Government 2019b).

Although these programs do not offer accredited qualifications, there are provisions for childcare, travel, accommodation and other expenses.

Cultural safety also remains a constant concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in mainstream organisations, where their leadership aspirations are often curtailed by non-Indigenous people's limited understanding of, and bias against, First Nations' peoples (The Guardian 2020). Evidence from beyondblue, for example, suggests that more than 32 per cent of workers in government services have witnessed discrimination against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the workplace (beyondblue & TNS 2014). Thus, for them to thrive at work, cultural safety needs to be embedded across workplace cultures, policies, funding, governance and evaluation methods (Phillips 2019). To realise our leadership potential in the colonial project then is to advocate for non-Indigenous Australians to share power, invest in equality and participate in truth-telling forums across our nation. Only then will Australia truly rebalance and reaffirm democracy and inclusion for our First Nations' peoples.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and the democratic project

Australia's contemporary form of democracy today is representative, and the structure of our modern democracy permits only limited citizen participation in decision making and the formulation of policies that affect both individuals and the community (Fox & Roth 2000). This participation is filtered through the 'ballot box' (Davis 2007), with decisions, policies and public institutional cultures then formulated based on the greatest good for the most significant number. As a result, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander political claims have, up until the recent Treaty process in Victoria at least, been categorised as the 'extraordinary interest claims' of a minority group (Davis 2007).

The Victorian Treaty process, however, heralds a new form of relationship with Victoria's First Nations' peoples and Traditional Owner groups (Graham & Petrie 2018). With a female Treaty Commissioner, Jill Gallagher AO, appointed to establish the parameters of an agreement between the State and First Nations' groups, Treaty discussions have included possible reforms that would see designated seats, electoral rolls and parliamentarians for Victoria's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. This, coupled with the transfer of funding and resources to community-controlled organisations, many of which are managed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and the election of the first Aboriginal woman, Lidia Thorpe,[2] to the Victorian Parliament (and later to the Australian Senate), builds on a rich cultural tradition of women in leadership with responsibility for multi-million dollars budgets. The Treaty process is a significant shift toward self-determination for the entire Victorian First Nations' community.

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2   Thorpe lost her Victorian seat of Northcote in 2018, and in October 2020 became the new Greens Senator for Victoria in the Australian Parliament.

The recent passing of Victoria's Gender Equality legislation (DPC Victoria 2020) also heralds a specific opportunity to understand what these opportunities mean for our women and girls. This is different to a collective agenda that assumes equality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men and women. In part, this is due to our governments configuring 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' as an amorphous and homogenous group, thereby failing to recognise the gendered impacts of colonisation upon First Nations' men and women. It also shies away from the actual differences between the socio-economic status of men and women within the State, and makes assumptions about the neutrality of Victoria's legal and political systems that remain racially biased. Although there is extensive literature examining institutional racism in Australia as it relates to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, there is a significant dearth of literature examining the structural problems as they relate specifically to our women (Davis 2007).

Developing inclusive representative structures: Gender equity

Victoria's Gender Equality Bill – which includes recognising Aboriginal cultural rights and gender equity in Treaty negotiations and outcomes – provides an opportunity to discuss the reform of Victorian public institutions to promote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's health, wellbeing and aspirations. Part of the challenge in developing inclusive structures has been ensuring a genuine involvement by community women and incorporating their values, priorities and aspirations into structural impact assessments and policy (Tsey et al. 2012). Our Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs thus need to create a 'shared space' approach to understand, measure and strengthen the holistic interplay between women's priorities, cultural and community empowerment, and government priorities in education, employment and health (Cairney et al. 2017).

It … shies away from the actual differences between the socio-economic status of men and women within the State, and makes assumptions about the neutrality of Victoria's legal and political systems that remain racially biased.

Such an approach is critical to our understanding of how best to faciliate the participation of First Nations' women in liberal democracies. In a research project reviewing Canadian and Australian women's involvement in dominant systems of power, the final analysis showed striking similarlities between the two countries in terms of the small number of women in leadership positions and concerns for the devaluing of First Nations' women by First Nations' men. This subordinate positioning of women, which occurs when First Nations' men adopt and apply Western dominant patriarchial views (Davis 2011), was a particularly acute issue in Canada, where the *Indian Act 1985* actively excluded Aboriginal women from decision-making.[3]

However, it has also been identified as a concern by Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (Anderson 2016). From the limited number of articles available, it appears that decades of exclusionary policies have impacted Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the same way. Several agencies and government departments have been attempting to address these issues through the development of toolkits, blueprints and programs (AHRC 2013; Department of Health 2017; Oxfam Australia 2020), with the majority of this focus on women's participation in mainstream democratic processes. It is, however, also worth reflecting on the adequacy of representation by women in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander structures. For example, in examining the processes of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission and the role and place of women's leadership, Sanders, Taylor & Ross (2000) found discrepancies in gender participation and representation in ATSIC elections observing that, 'women do not seem to be successful in being elected… nor in attaining higher elected ATSIC office'.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men need to be challenged on their adoption of patriarchial views of women's roles and responsibilities. It is also time to reinvest in matriarchy as the natural leadership position for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and accomodate it across all democratic structures (Arabena 2017). This change is not only necessary, but possible. As a result of the 2003 ATSIC Review (ATSIC Office of Evaluation and Audit 1995), the election-based political structure that replaced ATSIC in 2010, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples, had gender equity embedded in its Constitution. This commitment to equity led then Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick to claim Congress set a 'new benchmark for public organisations in Australia' (AHRC 2010), and to it being a Gold Winner in the Australian Centre for Leadership for Women's Awards in 2013. By embedding gender equality into every level of its governance and management structure, the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples led the way for Australian organisations and businesses to follow (Australian Government 2013).

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3 *Indian Act, RSC 1985*: Under the Act, an Aboriginal woman who married a non-Aboriginal man lost her membership and status as an Indian whereas if an Aboriginal man married a non-Aboriginal woman, his wife gained membership and status as an Indian. In 1985 there were amendments to the Indian Act (Bill C-31) that ended this discrimination but only partially dealt with the discriminatory effects of the Act.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women and Entrepreneurialism

Despite the earliest Australians being entrepreneurs who laboured for the survival of the clan, there has been little written to champion First Nations' female entrepreneurs (Pearson & Duff 2014).

Pearce (2015) identifies that they have been difficult to represent as:

> **… not only do [Aboriginal] women have to be successful in the business world, but also in the 'Indigenous world'. Indigenous women are doubly pressured to establish themselves as authentic businesspeople, but they also must prove themselves in their respective communities as entrepreneurs.** (Pearce 2015:12)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in business set strong examples not just for other women but for all their families and the communities to which they belong. Our Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will be acknowledging and celebrating the myriad identities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female entrepreneurs (Pearce 2015), and supporting the women undertaking the courses to traverse these different identities while challenging the dominant male discourse of entrepreneurship (Roos 2019).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women entrepreneurs from Victoria were sponsored by the Victorian Government and Kinaway Chamber of Commerce[4] to attend the World Indigenous Business Forum in Canada in 2019. Importantly, this global networking opportunity provided valuable insights into the supports required by First Nations' female entrepreneurs around the world, in particular, how women are expected to comply with the masculine norms of the economy or, alternatively, to challenge the male norms embedded in libral democratic economies (Roos 2019). Networks have proven to be highly beneficial for women; not only are they gatherings for like-minded individuals but they also provide access to financing, skills development, mentoring and training.[5] In Victoria, the State Government has also funded a female economic broker position at Kinaway Chamber of Commerce to support female entrepreneurs traverse what has been described as:

> **… the complex amalgamation of Indigenous cultural beliefs and traditions, history, gendered factors and geography, business and financial ability.** (Pearce 2015:157)

Croce (2020) has identified that any combination of these issues will impact Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's capacity to participate in entrepreneurial activities, and advocates focusing attention at the intersection of First Nations' and of women's entrepreneurship. For it is at this junction that we can develop the theoretical and practical approaches needed to be successful, and do so on terms established by women. Indigenous Business Australia supports women to develop these capacities through Strong Women, Strong Business (IBA 2018). The goal of this program is to ensure female entrepreneurs have access to the strategies and structures that facilitate their full and effective participation and access to equal opportunities. IBA's research indicates that many women lack both confidence and the networks to start or scale up a business (IBA 2018), and so are inhibited at micro, meso and macro levels.

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4   Kinaway provides business support and advice to Victorian Aboriginal businesspeople. More information is available at: https://kinaway.com.au.

5   For example, see Business in Heels Events, available at: www.businessinheels.com.

Micro inhibitors focus on women's psychosocial situations and include:

+ accepting responsibility for children and family;

+ taking comfort and drawing strength from cultural safety;

+ developing a distinct identity as a role model for others; and

+ displaying unique self-stereotyping as an Aboriginal entrepreneur.

The meso level relates to community values such as:

+ developing social bonds through enterprise; and

+ entrepreneurship and enterprise development as integral to, and not separate from, family and community life.

The macro-level inhibitors comprise external and societal issues beyond the control of Aboriginal women, such as:

+ finance, infrastructure and services;

+ market commercialisation and supply; and

+ social Issues such as racism and risk-taking behaviour.

Despite these inhibitors, women entrepreneurs play a significant role in keeping family and communities connected and engaged with cultural history and connection to places of origin. Women see themselves, their products and services as a manifestation of their Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander selves and their relationship to Country and to other First Nations' peoples. Most hold visions of creating a community-centred, culture-based economy (built on reciprocity, trade, bartering and providing hospitality to others) within a dominant, male-gendered Australian market economy that values transactions over relationships.

Thus, the Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will be premised on our understanding of the relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, culture and money as, oftentimes, monetary gain is a secondary objective for women engaged in business (Mooney & Houston 2004). IBA's Strong Women Strong Business program (IBA 2018), for example, demonstrates that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in business also value culturally appropriate assistance, regular and accredited training, and the connection to like-minded women. Kinaway Chamber of Commerce also acknowledges this need for support, and has invested in a community of practice to develop the cultural, community and social bonds needed to support women entrepreneurs. As what sustains women in business, along with program-ready partners, such as Kinaway and IBA, is their motivation.

Table 1 presents a summary of the motivators that, according to Pearce (2015), drive Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women entrepreneurs.

Table 1 / Motivators for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's small business

Economic	Social
Create a new economy	Cultural maintenance
Generate income	Create new family futures
Run a business	Facilitate children learning from older people
Be economically self-sufficient	Strengthen the community
Work for ourselves	Connect people and Country with non-Indigenous Australians
Not be reliant on government	Improve health, education and housing
Increase employment	

> **Prominent cultural networks in First Nations' communities are linked to extended family members who may hold expectations of the female entrepreneurs in their family to share their business proceeds, which may leave these women with no opportunity to reinvest back in to their business.**

With First Nations' cultural identity grounded in family and kinship obligations, respondents in Pearce's study (2015) also identified resource-based and cultural barriers to their entrepreneurial activities. Prominent cultural networks in First Nations' communities are linked to extended family members who may hold expectations of the female entrepreneurs in their family to share their business proceeds, which may leave these women with no opportunity to reinvest back in to their business. McDonnell's 1999 study, for example, investigated the role and contribution of Torres Strait Islander women entrepreneurs and found that poor access to credit inhibited successful business activity. This observation led to the suggestion that alternative culturally relevant models for credit acquisition were warranted. The Torres Strait Islander women in McDonnell's study expressed that they were motivated to establish their businesses separate from, but attached to, the Australian mainstream consumer-driven society. By adopting this paradigm, they could retain their cultural identity within an alternative framework to the colonial policy of assimilation that had, for centuries, denied them the same opportunities as other Australians (Hughes & Warin 2005; Kaplan-Myrth 2005).

Creating environments that foster entrepreneurial behaviour and leadership

The most considerable challenge for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women entrepreneurs is to find an environment that fosters their entrepreneurial ambitions and leadership. Such an environment would strengthen entrepreneurship and increase the number of business start-ups and more substantial small business enterprises. This could be achieved by promoting business networks, investment in social entrepreneurship models and businesses based on public–private partnerships (Altman 2007). These initiatives would emphasise the application of fundamental business principles, accountability and performance measures, and help to create and strengthen new start-ups by providing them with a variety of valuable services. These could include planning assistance, management oversight, financial support, business incubation facilities, networking and relationship building (Mapunda 2007) – all of which would be invaluable to women developing small businesses.

Cultural blending strategies are also essential in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's business enterprises. This is largely because women will invariably have to balance their business needs with providing for and maintaining family relationships, which can often take precedence over profit maximisation. These cultural strategies are also important in the preservation and maintenance of connections through relationships. Mapunda (2007) reviewed the needs of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian and Tanzanian entrepreneurs and identified that entrepreneurial leadership training would be of great benefit if it:

+ provided entrepreneurial leadership models;

+ exhibited high entrepreneurial behaviour;

+ enabled entrepreneurship and enterprise mentoring for budding and aspiring entrepreneurs;

+ improved self-efficacy for entrepreneurs; and

+ increased entrepreneurial passion and determination to make a positive influence on people's wellbeing. (Mapunda 2007:58)

Of relevance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women entrepreneurs is the ability to make space to celebrate each other's successes. Barriers to overcome include:

+ negative social dynamics – e.g. tall poppy syndrome, lateral violence;

+ self-promotion and marketing being interpreted as arrogance;

+ a lack of capital and the high cost of gaining capital;

+ coming to terms with operating a business – e.g. seasonal variations, increased competition;

+ managing challenges with a supportive management approach;

+ businesses remaining small and focused because of scarce financial resources and limited support;

+ not knowing how to develop and sustain strategic partnerships that allow them to build products while at the same time cutting down on overheads;

+ too much reliance on word of mouth for the promotion and marketing of their products; and

+ finding entrepreneurial champions and using them as role models.

These issues impact on individuals and businesses and provide reasons why our Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will benefit from establishing an alumni Community of Practice to support women in their business ideas, setting goals, balancing their family and business needs, and ensuring their personal wellbeing and financial health. Kinaway Chamber of Commerce, through close engagement with its membership, has identified that timely access to information, financing, networks and support are critically important for entrepreneurial aspirations to be realised (Foley & Brown 2020). To this end, the Victorian Government has funded a Women in Business Development officer position that can be well utilised in the implementation of this program, and in providing ongoing incentives for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female entrepreneurs.

Current financing products, such as the LaunchMe program (Good Shepherd [2018b]), are focused on financial and social inclusion by providing women with the opportunity to develop, finance and launch their own business. Support to access these resources will be essential for success, as will promoting access to microfinancing so women are positioned to create businesses that do not require large amounts of capital to start or build. Furthermore, in addition to the $18 million offered in business finance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, IBA now commits specific funding and tailored programs to support these women in business. Of relevance to our Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs are the IBA's information modules that enable participants both to gain skills and to access resources and mentors for their business journey. Participants will also be able to utilise resources from the Strong Women, Strong Business website and participate in future conferences (IBA 2018).

The unique needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women leaders sometimes excludes them from programming that is ostensibly gender neutral. For example, a training program might be inaccessible to some women if it does not offer childcare services, while others are more comfortable and more confident in women-only entrepreneurial learning environments. In addition, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are often unaware of the range of programs and resources available to them and of the business opportunities that already exist in their communities.

As women are best equipped to understand the needs of other women, it is vital to create programming that is managed by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. Such an approach also provides them with more opportunities to connect with mentors, as well as promising ways to address their unique needs in a culturally appropriate way. Based on the literature, we believe the following actions will make entrepreneurship more accessible to Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

+ Support access to women's entrepreneurial support and the creation of dedicated funds for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's entrepreneurship, including the option of financing and microloans available through Good Shepherd Microfinance (2018a) and larger loans available through IBA.

+ Support women participate in women in business programs and promote women's engagement with Aboriginal Chambers of Commerce in Australia.

+ Develop gender-specific programming, managed by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women (e.g. provide childcare at workshops and training sessions, address topics relevant to them).

+ Measure and evaluate the successes and impacts of the loans, as well as the gaps that still need to be met.

+ Build awareness and facilitate access to timely information, products, services, networks and supports (Larkin 2017).

The need to adopt a life-course approach

The adoption of a life-course perspective is critical for gender equality (DPC Victoria 2016). Not only does the life-course approach identify underlying biological, behavioural and psychosocial processes that operate across a lifespan, but it also recognises age-appropriate, culturally determined sensitivities in family and business engagement (Lynch & Smith 2005). This sensitivity requires communities to promote intergenerational involvement in women's leadership programs, so as to understand and respond to dynamic expressions of family, especially during crucial (and cultural) transition points in a person's life. Much of this approach will lie outside of service system policy and programming but will be referred to in our Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs by talking about the opportunities for mentoring, cultural understanding and guidance within and across generations of Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Implementing Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs

In considering how to implement our Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs, we undertook a comprehensive literature review that identified the following strategies as being critical.

Pre-engagement activities

To foster healthy and trusting relationships in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's knowledge, perspectives and networks can support and sustain the uptake of leadership knowledge, skills and practices. This can be achieved by:

+ Engaging female cultural mentors from among Traditional Owner groups and cultural knowledge holders to come together to build a network of cultural support within the community. This will enhance collective decision making and provide a safe space for mentors to debrief, engage and consider issues of importance in their communities.

+ Supporting cultural leaders to identify public and private cultural information and intellectual property issues in those communities implementing Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs.

+ Developing resources based on library searches, historical documents and the knowledge held by Elders in communities to understand women's leadership expectations within kinship systems.

+ Implementing resource dissemination strategies that strengthen sharing of information and the uptake of knowledge into new forms of digitisation, e.g. NITV documentaries.

+ Identifying strategies that are critical to ensuring governance, accountability and the reciprocal sharing of information supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership knowledge, processes and attitudes.

Local engagement activities

To safeguard and protect people's interests and knowledge, and to support those with cultural connections that have been weakened over time. These activities have resource implications that will need to be factored into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership policy and programming development. This can be achieved by:

+ Developing engagement protocols.

+ Supporting and involving local women's participation and engagement in the co-design, co-development and co-production of leadership policies and programs.

+ Identifying community, family, women's and girls' aspirations, hopes and needs.

+ Involving local people in the delivery and governance of programs.

+ Recognising and co-creating culturally safe and enabling places in which people can practise leadership activities with privacy and confidence.

+ Acknowledging and respecting the roles that Elders, Traditional Owners and other cultural knowledge holders have in the implementation of leadership programs.

+ Deferring to local ways and patterns of knowing, being and doing, and how this information is taught across and between generations.

+ Identifying strategies to ensure equity and power sharing.

+ Investing in community governance, knowledge translation and intergenerational transmission strategies prior to commencing negotiations for program implementation.

+ Facilitating truth-telling, including recognition of connection to Country, the massacre sites and the impact of the colonial project on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Keeping culture strong

To disrupt the current net-deficit conversations about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and to recognise our history, connections, strengths and resilience. This can be achieved by:

+ Promoting local truth-telling in educational settings, health services and local history projects.

+ Tailoring women's leadership to the needs of local communities, clans and families.

+ Designing and delivering leadership services that are led by local community groups and ratified by Traditional Owners and Prescribed Bodies Corporate agencies.

+ Learning about and engaging with local cultural economies – through bartering, exchange, cultural gifts – and acknowledging these different economies in the development of work, programs and practices.

Promoting and supporting communities being in control

To develop responses that recognise and value the contributions of community-controlled organisations, that facilitate opportunities for intergenerational knowledge transfer, and that support the application of local protocols. This can be achieved by:

+ Advocating for community-controlled organisations and resourcing them to develop and deliver Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs that are appropriate for their community.

+ Engaging Elders and local leaders to lead community consultations using culturally appropriate networks and methods of sharing and communicating.

+ Making efforts to ensure that health and other community services focus on supporting people to achieve their aspirations and having a culturally inclusive workforce that, where possible, is owned and operated by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

+ Facilitating large numbers of women to participate in service or program ideation through design, delivery and evaluation.

+ Promoting different types of planning – for families, clans, men and women – and ensure that agencies in the region respond to these plans in the development of their own.

+ Ensuring that all agencies meet their procurement targets while supporting women in business to build their capacity and become part of domestic and international supply chains.

+ Embedding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership targets in organisational and business governance arrangements, in constitutions, in program delivery, in human resources, in contracts and in negotiated agreements.

+ Linking community development, cultural health promotion, action research and participatory strategies in communities with the implementation of Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs.

+ Resourcing regionalised support networks for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women who are staff in community and mainstream organisations.

+ Seeking engagement between mainstream and community-controlled organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to deliver Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs in communities.

Promoting partnerships, two-way engagement and inclusion

To build capacity in the implementation of Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs and to be accountable for RAPs and other governance commitments made by organisations. This can be achieved by:

+ Ensuring mainstream organisations are led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations in the design and implementation of Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs in their services.

+ Creating a role for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women leaders in the recruitment and retention of staff, including co-designing position descriptions, accountability frameworks and innovation opportunities.

+ Having Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as leaders-in-residence at services, staff networks and cultural training days, staff meetings and in mainstream service delivery.

+ Employing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women leaders to develop regionally relevant cultural training, supports and promotional materials, and to build the confidence of people to state their aspirations.

+ Promoting meaningful partnerships between communities, clans and services recognising and valuing each family's female leaders, and asking them to participate in education, training and employment.

+ Inviting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women leaders to mentor the workforce and have them on training and induction courses and in disciplinary streams within universities and other educational institutions.

+ Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women leaders as having cultural connections, responsibilities, obligations and accountabilities that need to be supported within institutions by the implementation of cultural safety, the elimination of racism and the introduction of two-way educational programs and service delivery.

+ Embedding trauma-informed practices in all elements of leadership training.

Implementing Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will require a shift from top-down, centrally managed planning procedures to participatory, bottom-up, community-driven processes...

Promoting data collection that progresses Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests

To ensure that data are relevant, useful and facilitate cultural strengthening, family empowerment and respect for the role and contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women leaders (Keely 1996). This can be achieved by:

+ Training community researchers and/or have them support community-driven research programs.

+ Identifying strategies for feeding back information to the community.

+ Taking a life-course approach to research agenda setting, implementation, knowledge translation and reporting outcomes.

+ Developing culturally affirming mechanisms to ensure that the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women leaders are incorporated into policy production processes.

+ Supporting the implementation of cultural data collection tools from within communities and with the support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women leaders.

+ Having conversations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women leaders about the future of the nation and what is important about 'living their best life'.

Implementing an innovation agenda

To promote equality and equity through shared decision making, reducing the impact of siloed approaches, and using technological advances to improve leadership outcomes across all ages. This can be achieved by:

+ Promoting system transformation and innovation to facilitate the types of outcomes that support and engage younger generations in the positive experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership initiatives.

+ Engaging women and girls in innovation agendas that promote business and entrepreneurial activities.

+ Employing strategies that operate from the bottom-up to engage individuals, families and community in the formulation of leadership policy and programs.

+ Creating longer term funding cycles that reinforce generational change and transformation.

+ Developing and encouraging the use of relatable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages in all aspects of business development, program implementation and health promotion strategies.

+ Engaging the support of high-profile role models, mentors and champions for doing work 'our way'.

+ Developing the capacity of local reference groups to work within, and refer to, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's cultural knowledge and authority.

+ Identifying strategies (and with an awareness of consent issues) for cultural information to be recorded in ways that acknowledge and draw upon cultural authority structures, leadership and ways of knowing, being and doing.

Community support for Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs

Implementing Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will require a shift from top-down, centrally managed planning procedures to participatory, bottom-up, community-driven processes (Stathi et al. 2017). This change will enable locals to act collectively and promote an enhanced engagement, revitalisation of traditions and increased empowerment (Wahid et al. 2017; MFTWA 2019). The following changes will be relevant for systems and institutions wanting to implement the program based on gender equity:

+ Eliminating institutional obstacles together with introducing beneficial policies that lead to a stronger leadership from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

+ Improving access by community members to opportunities and resources that facilitate the program according to their needs and priorities.

+ Engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women-led businesses.

+ Including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women on Boards or involving them in decision-making positions within organisations.

+ Assessing the extent to which agencies have supported the implementation of Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs, built coalitions and changed and/or improved their work practices (e.g. cultural safety).

+ Measuring the progress/capacity of organisations to support, engage and enhance Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership (e.g. cultural safety).

Building capacity at a local level is an important ingredient for the sustainable implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership, as it not only provides local stakeholders with an opportunity to participate in decision making but also enables community ownership, a key component of empowerment. Other indicators will be on a more personal level, such as:

+ greater self-assurance in their leadership abilities;

+ increased alertness and sharing of views;

+ the sharing of information with their families; and

+ being able to work with a mentor to achieve their life goals (Muir. & Dean 2007).

This is because all women's leadership programs characterise empowerment as a deliberate and continuous process that is grounded in the community. Empowerment incorporates empathy, collective action, critical reflection and reciprocal respect – a process that gives those with a lesser share of important resources better opportunities for accessing and managing such resources. Bennett (2003) adds that empowerment involves strengthening the capacity of communities and individuals to participate, direct and hold accountable those institutions that influence their lives.

For individuals, empowerment includes processes that help them to manage their resources, develop their decision-making abilities, and work cooperatively with others. Approaches involving social mobilisation are frequently classified as empowerment, implying that this is an ongoing process rather than an isolated event. Wahid et al. (2017) actually refer to mobilisation empowerment, a process that extends the connections, capabilities and information necessary for lifelong empowerment. This process can give communities a fresh understanding of themselves and increase cohesion and the potential for cooperation.

Healey, Connolly & Humphreys (2018) emphasise the importance of collaborative approaches for increasing both public participation and the legitimacy of decisions. Such an approach can bring diverse stakeholders together, so can assist in solving complex problems by reducing conflicts and helping to build consensus. What is also needed is an acceptance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's innovation. This is because the successful implementation and uptake of women's leadership may be particular to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge systems embedded in Indigenous implementation science, and not easily identifiable by those outside of the community. Thus, both trust-building exercises and empowerment practices will be a vital addition to the usual qualitative strategies (e.g. informant interviews, focus groups) and quantitative measures (e.g. funds expended on cultural activities, numbers of participants) needed for the successful implementation of Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs.

Measuring outcomes and impacts

Promoting leadership among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women often sits outside organisational structures, despite women's leadership aspirations being embedded in policy, procedures and structures. What we are seeking is a genuine commitment to implementation and evaluation of the impacts of this work, and thus recommend the following strategies.

Process of developing measures

+ Ask women how they would measure success then develop metrics that reflect this vision of success with both implicit and explicit measures.

+ Self-report against existing wellbeing metrics and the development of ongoing measures through Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women-led consultations.

+ Instigate developmental evaluation, i.e. find out how many women contributed to programs and facilitated action to progress improvement of outcomes for women in the community that were aligned to their aspirations.

Strengths-based indicators

+ Key performance indicators that are strengths-based, for example:

  − women being able to identify and have access to support to achieve their leadership goals; and

  − an increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women as ABN (Australian Business Number) holders, who are prepared to form part of local and national supply chains.

+ Locally relevant measures of wellness, connection and empowerment.

+ Sustainability measures that recognise intergenerational trauma cannot be 'healed' in the short term but requires long-term holistic programs to address region-specific leadership processes.

+ Qualitative data collection that utilises arts and performance practices to inform both the development of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership and indicators that are appropriate for communities (Stone et al. 2002).

+ Strengths-based questions to measure health and wellbeing outcomes that are related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership.

+ Anecdotal evidence/storytelling that is considered to be a credible measure.

Successful implementation measures

How do we know when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership has been implemented?

+ everyone wants to be part of the discussion;

+ women and men are healing their relationships;

+ women keep coming back as they want to know more;

+ Elders feel that the younger ones are gaining from the talks and knowledge being passed on to them;

+ language from that Country is spoken in every leadership training program; and

+ every woman has an aspiration plan for herself and her family and is supported to be able to achieve her goals.

Longer term measures of the successful implementation of Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will see communities experience a decrease in indicators that demonstrate a disconnect from cultural determinants (e.g. child protection notifications, poor mental health and high incarceration rates), and an increase in wellbeing indicators (home ownership, effective household budgeting and more acknowledgment of women with leadership qualities and potential).

Data sovereignty

Data sovereignty is the ability for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to govern the collection and use of information relevant to our lives. As stated previously, the implementation of Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will need to be done by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and be relevant to the communities in which they live and work. A range of Indigenous methodologies will be used to achieve positive outcomes, including cultural networking, and place-based and life-course approaches. Data describing the impact of the program – i.e. what is collected, known and used – may include practices that engage women in:

+ Asking the community what they would like to measure and how this should be done.

+ Using both narrative methods – including storyboards, closed and open-ended questions in interviews – and monitoring and evaluation techniques that recognise value 'beyond' quantitative data and 'most significant change' methods.

+ Collecting personal stories of change as indicators.

+ Increasing the use of community-led surveys and focus groups based on locally relevant indicators and priorities.

Self-determination measures

Self-determination is both personal and professional. As a result of Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs, Australia should see:

+ A rise in participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women on community organisation Boards.

+ Gender equity enshrined in the constitutions and RAPs of community and mainstream organisations and enacted through employment processes, policy development and programming.

+ An increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in all levels of government.

+ A growing number of 'on-Country' trips being taken by community women.

+ An increase in women's entrepreneurship and employment.

+ Greater involvement in, and support of, women's leadership aspirations by men.

Cultural education, entrepreneurial and employment opportunities

+ Education and career pathways developed and promoted for and by women.

+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs managed by First Nations' women.

+ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in leadership seeking to facilitate generational change in their families, succession planning within their organisations – and becoming teachers in Women's Leadership and Coaching programs.

Possible topics for the Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs

The sources and adequacy of the curriculum used in implementing our Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will depend on:

+ the social and cultural priorities of families and communities (self-determination);

+ the capacity for women to find balance in their lives, and access appropriate resources and cultural supports through times of adversity; and

+ recognition from the community as to what it means to be an entrepreneur.

Leadership strategies will necessarily both identify gaps in knowledge and create opportunities to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women to achieve their goals. Despite the evidence that collaborative approaches to implementing an Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs are desirable, the literature suggests that significant changes in perspectives and behaviours are required to accomplish this outcome.

Leadership is evident among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, despite the ongoing effects of colonisation and the detrimental impacts of colonial processes on women's health and wellbeing (Johnston et al. 2013). Improving outcomes for women include strategies that better plan and coordinate the actions between governments, communities and service sectors – including mainstream services – to meet the needs of individuals, families and communities. Our Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs will address the impacts of racism and intergenerational trauma on individuals and families, and encourage women to access services, generate new knowledge and use this knowledge to inform both government and community action.

Based on the literature, Table 2 (see p. 36) describes some of the course content groupings.

> **Leadership is evident among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, despite the ongoing effects of colonisation and the detrimental impacts of colonial processes on women's health and wellbeing.**

Table 2 / Course content for the Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs

Possible topic	Subject matter
Asserting the modern matriarchy	+ Understand historical and contemporary representations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership + Own our narrative by overcoming biases + Identify opportunities for gender equity
Learn to lead effectively and authentically	+ Infuse cultural values into your organisational role + Enhance self-awareness and lead with resilience + Take ownership of your career
Maintain culture to unlock your leadership potential	+ Understand your culture in contemporary Australia + Balance the commitments of community, career and character + Recognise the importance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander female leaders to community
Identify individual strengths and areas for growth	+ Examine your leadership traits and how to apply them + Understand where your strengths fit within your community organisation + Recognise growth areas and how to reinforce your skills
Practise authentic leadership and be true to yourself	+ Be aware of the role authenticity plays in effectively leading a team + Advocate for yourself and develop your leadership identity + Find and pursue coaching and mentoring, being a role model and more
Understand and align your cultural and corporate responsibilities	+ Be present in all aspects of your life + Incorporate your personal journey with confidence + Remain genuine to your true self + Be aware of the impact on you of juggling corporate and traditional cultures + Understand how your communication styles affect your life + Practise the art of mindfulness
Develop effective tools to communicate your values	+ Understand your personal and professional needs + Present your values and negotiate your needs effectively within your organisation + Handle difficult conversations with staff or community members
Understand the importance of resilience and confidence for leaders	+ Develop strategies on how to work with people who have differing values to yourself + Learn how to deal with disappointment and setbacks throughout your career + Identify stress triggers and how to avoid them
Embrace and master your finances	+ Understand the role finances play in meeting leadership aspirations Recognise when to make approaches about funding, and when not to + Learn how to develop a business case or portfolio + Consider the impact of your decisions on others and their decisions on you

Achieving the Goal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Leadership

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership in Australia is supported by community aspirations and commitments by State, Territory and Federal Governments to act on a range of international treaties and obligations, including those signed under the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN 2007), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN 2009) and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015).

Achieving the goal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership will need a commitment by policymakers, programmers and community leaders to broaden their practice to include:

+ living sustainably;

+ listening to multiple perspectives;

+ being grounded in collaborative frameworks;

+ acknowledging various forms of evidence;

+ facilitating cultural governance;

+ embracing innovation; and

+ managing people's wellbeing so they can live a good life.

Ultimately, women's leadership is intrinsic to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' aspirations for 'a good life'. This incorporates many different points of view: that of an individual, a family, a community and a population group, as well as social, economic and cultural perspectives. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, however, need the opportunity to define what a good life is in ways that may be region-specific, relate to First Nations' language groupings or reflect the aspirations of communities living along songlines.

In a broader Australian context that encompasses more than material living conditions, the Australian Bureau of Statistics' (ABS) concept of a good life relates to how people evaluate their lives, and whether their lives are worthwhile (ABS 2016; 2017). In 2012 the ABS revised its set of aspirations to link them to broad social themes (ABS 2012) as outlined in Table 3 (see p. 38).

Table 3 / Social statistics theme – Aspirations

Possible topic	Subject matter
Family and community	Australians aspire to a society that nurtures relationships and people support each other
Health	Australians aspire to good health for all
Learning and knowledge	Australians aspire to a society that values and enables learning
Work	Australians aspire to satisfying and rewarding work
Economic wellbeing	Australians aspire to a fair society that enables everyone to meet their material needs
Housing	Australians aspire to have secure places to live that provide a sense of belonging and home and are adequate to their needs
Crime and justice	Australians aspire to a society where people are safe and feel safe, and where justice systems are fair and accessible
Culture and leisure	Australians aspire to value all aspects of life that are important to people and enrich their lives
Governance	Australians aspire to a free society where governance processes are trusted, and everyone is able to participate in decision making which affects their lives
Information and communication technology	Australians aspire to be well informed and connected
Built and natural environment	Australians aspire to healthy natural and built environments, which they connect to, benefit from, care for and sustain for future generations
Population	The characteristics of Australia's population (such as its size and composition) influence, and in turn are influenced by, many aspects of wellbeing

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership can be mapped to each of these aspirations, which are pertinent to the themes of the built and natural environments, culture and leisure, governance, and family and community.

Issues to consider in developing Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs

This Guide emphasises that women's leadership aspirations are best achieved through learning ecologies, reconnecting cultural knowledge systems, being located where people live or gather, and involving family members as teachers and students (Lynch & Smith 2005). This may require women's leadership to be supported through regionally tailored activities and by implementation architecture that is robust and location-specific (Blagg & Anthony 2014).

Leadership and Coaching Programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women need to be culturally safe, ethical, accessible and facilitated in ways that cater to real lived experiences (Behrendt 1993). Their participation in, and completion of, these programs, and their ability to put lessons into action, are dependent on multiple social, emotional, physical and environmental issues, as well as access to services and good governance. Effective programs will extend opportunities for participants to reflect, develop and support each other's leadership aspirations. This might include encouraging the growth of local and regional coalitions to sustain the impact of women's leadership through establishing communities of practice, regular meetings and participation in further professional development and networking opportunities. Evidence suggests that asserting the modern matriarchy in contemporary society will best be supported by Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs that consider the following points in their design and implementation.

> **Leadership and coaching initiatives that start with the identification of family aspirations and the role and contribution of each person to achieving their personal and collective goals.**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women want to achieve their goals and gain confidence in practising culture, participating in governance and protecting themselves particularly during turbulent times. This can be achieved by 'enhancing social support, encouraging healthy interpersonal relationships, supplying spiritual tranquillity and ultimately providing tangible strategies for living and surviving in the world' (Oster et al. 2014).

> **Leadership and coaching strategies need to be informed by, and adhere to, protocols and forms of cultural leadership that are credible, strategic, connected and sustainable.**

The successful implementation of leadership programs will require people engaged in the process to address power imbalances at the community and local levels, and to co-design the development of effective protocols and partnerships. It will also require them to build the competence of families to support both women and men in achieving their goals and to nurture each other's personal autonomy and sense of achievement.

> **Co-design and co-implementation will be critical, particularly for those strategies that draw on the many perspectives, expertise, disciplines and sectors in local and regional areas.**

Preparation will be essential to this approach as leadership operates at a range of scales, including at the household level (GCNA 2018). Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership is both a set of rules, behaviours and standards that guide us in how to view the world, and of public and private leadership practices, some of which are gender specific while others are intergenerational. Cultural leadership links people across places, songlines and with totems. Leadership is not static; it is changing, dynamic and expressed by people irrespective of where they live.

> **The advancement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership is a reinvestment in understanding Indigenous economies – i.e. trade routes, exchange programs and seasonal engagements in products and goods.**

This entrepreneurship needs support from Chambers of Commerce and agencies committed to growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses that align with people's cultural values and reignite participation in, or globalise, First Nations' economies. Facilitating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership in the twenty-first century is an innovation agenda that is premised on cultural authority, ingenuity, governance and accountability, and cultural entrepreneurship.

> A long-term and continued call from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women has been to have the freedom to maintain, transfer or revitalise cultural practices in ways determined by their families, communities and nations.

Embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership in Indigenous implementation science and the development of cultural workforces.

A long-term and continued call from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women has been to have the freedom to maintain, transfer or revitalise cultural practices in ways determined by their families, communities and nations. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership activities are diverse, as they can be:

+ age and gender-specific;

+ funded – e.g. festivals, exhibitions, mentoring and repatriation;

+ formal – e.g. executive-level service delivery, resource management, participation on a Board;

+ informal – e.g. caring for children in extended family arrangements, advocacy and political protest; and/or

+ obligatory – e.g. food sharing, storytelling, genealogical recording, teaching language, and ceremonial such as Welcoming Babies to Country.

A respectful and responsive system of women's leadership will contribute to improved outcomes, efficiencies and equity by working with individuals, families, communities and the workforce.

This needs to be done:

+ to recognise and restore cultural strength;

+ to facilitate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's control over decision making; and

+ to implement strengths-based, sophisticated, enduring and adaptive place-based interventions (Fogarty et al. 2018).

Conclusion

Approaches to the implementation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership are premised on trusting relationships and quality partnerships. For implementation strategies to succeed, all players need to be open, honest and have access to resources that support women's leadership as a life-long protective factor. Transforming institutional frameworks so that service providers can meet the demands of culture-led policy and practice will require time, encouragement and investment.

This Guide demonstrates that working to achieve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership needs to be aligned with First Nations' holistic views of health, wellbeing and self-determination (Arabena, Rowley & MacLean 2014). Women also need the support of men and like-minded non-Indigenous others, and for leadership and coaching programs to build on local innovations, entrepreneurial thinking and action. Efforts to embed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership aspirations in their lives must also be interconnected rather than fragmented. These integrated approaches are especially useful when they allow insights into underlying challenges and facilitate exploration of the demands of sustainable women-led leadership practices. To implement Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership is to recognise the importance of the enduring relationship these women have with their lands, seas and waterways (Daley 2019), all of which they have managed for millennia to promote ecological, spiritual and human health and wellbeing. As such, this is a non-negotiable aspect of the Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs.

Implementing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership necessitates service providers and policymakers to engage with ecological concepts. Such engagement will lead to ecologists, natural resource managers and science institutions, in an Australian context at least, becoming more involved in producing environments that are conducive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's leadership and wellbeing. This co-joined action will move service delivery systems from focusing on human-centric leadership modalities to being inclusive of ecosystem-centric approaches for current and future generations. This task is particular to our age, and one being asked for by so many young people who are advocating for the Australian Government to act on environmental issues – now.

Critical to this effort will be the need to work with women before, during and after the Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs to develop both clear life goals and strategies to achieve those goals. In this way, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women can influence the course of their lives and become agents of change. What these programs need to do is to open the doors to a range of experiences and specific life domains in which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are able to control and structure their lives based on what they learned about their leadership aspirations, styles and practices. The Women's Leadership and Coaching Programs should also be evaluated so we can better understand the diverse nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's social, cultural, economic and political participation in, and citizenship of, their own communities and the Australian nation.

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