



OFFICE OF THE ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONER

Statement: International Women's Day 2025

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have long been at the forefront of human rights advocacy, shouldering the weight of both historical injustice and ongoing systemic discrimination while continuing to fight for justice, equity, and self-determination. Their leadership, deeply grounded in cultural knowledge, community strength, and collective responsibility, is fundamental to addressing inequalities that persist across Australia.

Despite tireless efforts, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls remain disproportionately impacted by poverty, gender-based violence, child removal, and criminalisation. Aboriginal girls in Australia face some of the most severe disparities in life chances, with lower access to quality education, overrepresentation in school suspension and exclusions, higher rates of out-of-home care placements, and a heightened risk of contact with the youth justice system—often from an alarmingly young age.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women's advocacy strengthens families, drives accountability, and demands justice, yet their work is frequently met with systemic exclusion, inadequate resourcing, and, at times, direct retaliation for speaking truth.

The enduring strength and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and girls must be met with more than acknowledgment—it must be met with concrete commitments, systemic reform, and sustained action to eliminate the entrenched inequalities that persist across Queensland and Australia. This includes:

- **Advance gender justice** within the Closing the Gap framework, ensuring explicit and measurable actions address the disproportionate burden of poverty, violence, and criminalisation on Aboriginal women and girls.
- **End the overrepresentation of Aboriginal girls in out-of-home care and youth detention** by prioritising culturally led, rights-based approaches to child protection and youth justice.
- **Ensure access to quality education and safe schooling environments**, eliminating exclusionary disciplinary policies that disproportionately impact Aboriginal girls.
- **Properly resource and protect First Nations women human rights defenders**, recognising their critical role in shaping policy and advocating for structural change.