

DFIT Rachel O'Connor Item 3 27/4

United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues 2017

Statement

Item 3a

Follow up to the recommendations of the Permanent Forum: Empowerment of indigenous women

Delivered by Ms Rachel O'Connor, Assistant Secretary, Strategy Policy and Coordination Branch,  
Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet

Thank you Madam Chair

Ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women have the opportunity to participate in all areas of society and economy at levels commensurate to their astounding abilities is a priority for Australia.

We are aware that, at this moment, this does not occur consistently. We are also aware of and acknowledge successful Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, including those in this room.

Empowering Indigenous women is not only of personal benefit to the individual, but strengthens the entire community.

Indigenous women in Australia play pivotal leadership roles in their families, through their communities and as contributors to the Australian Economy.

Like many other countries, Australia's Indigenous women and girls often have different life pathways to those followed by non-Indigenous women, taking on caring responsibilities at a younger age, which can then interrupt education and impact on participation in employment through their lives.

A good education and financial security can provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women with more control over their lives, empowering women by reducing their level of disadvantage and supporting positive outcomes for their families and communities.

An empowerment and strengths-based approach will complement the work to stop family and domestic violence and improve outcomes for women and communities.

Stopping violence against women and their children is a national priority and we are currently taking forward our third National Action Plan with this focus. This Action Plan includes specific funding and targeted strategies to address needs and approaches to support Indigenous women and children.

An example of a targeted approach funded under this Plan is trauma informed therapeutic services for Indigenous children affected by family violence to break the cycle of inter-generational trauma.

As well as improving the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous women, Australia is looking at ways to holistically support the social and economic empowerment of Indigenous women, and combine government and community efforts in a meaningful way to deliver action where needed.

We believe that we must ensure Indigenous women are able to access the opportunities available in a country such as Australia – to get the education they want, the jobs and economic opportunities

they want, to have a community in which they are safe and strong leads to healthy families and communities.

Examples of current approaches we are taking to assist the empowerment of Indigenous women and girls include, supporting young Indigenous women's education and aspirations to create a positive cycle of empowerment and enhancing cultural connection and leadership skills to empower Indigenous women and girls to lead and to be a part of decision-making process.

These examples compliment the support we are providing to enhance opportunities for Indigenous women is the Indigenous Business Sector Strategy, as referred to in a previous statement

We were pleased to see the empowerment of Indigenous women as an emerging theme at the Commission for the Status of Women earlier this year. The discussions coincided and reinforced Australia's realisation of the leadership role Indigenous women play in their families, communities, and as contributor to the economy and broader society.