Fay Fuller
Foundation

Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs

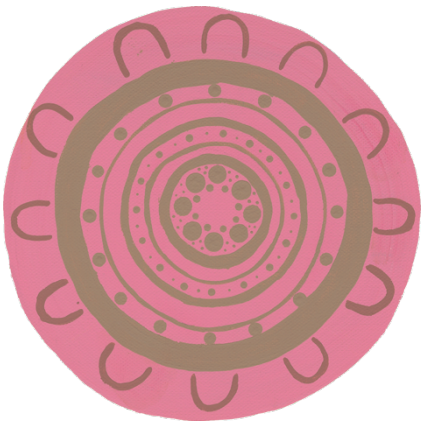
Inquiry into Racism, Hate and Violence Directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

June 2026

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that these offices sit on the lands of the Kaurna People and that they have been and continue to be the custodians of this place.

We commit to remembering that the ground beneath our feet is infused with wisdom, stories, and songs that reach beyond our knowing. We are committed to collaboration that furthers self-determination and as we go forward we will continue to listen, learn, and be allies for a healing future.



Artwork by Iteka Ukarla Sanderson-Bromley

We extend this acknowledgement to all First Nations Peoples and pay our respects to Elders of the past, present and into the future.

About us

The Fay Fuller Foundation is a grouped entity, consisting of a private philanthropic organisation and health promotion charity in South Australia. The focus of the Foundation is to distribute resources and work in partnership with communities leading their own futures; grounded in connection, culture, identity and collective care.

We are a principles and purpose driven organisation, grounded in strong belief that communities are the experts in their own lives. We aim to create spaces that enable community to inform and lead the development of approaches that are fit for purpose, contextualised, and recognise existing strengths and assets to support the conditions for mental health and wellbeing.

Our purpose for this submission

"The truth is that we would not exist without historic access to profit from unceded Aboriginal lands and waterways across this place now called Australia. Being open about this truth provides a foundation from which we can meaningfully pursue reconciliation now and into the future. It compels and focuses us to act, to challenge inequitable systems, to centre First Nations knowledge and ways of being, and to be an open and visible leader in our sector when it comes to reconciliation action"

- Fay Fuller Foundation Reconciliation Statement

As a Foundation, we keep at the forefront of our minds the deep roots of racism, hate and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia. This extends to the systems that we work within and are part of.

Those roots continue to drive injustice across multiple domains for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; but, in particular, creating barriers to both accessing and controlling resources that communities need to address their own aspirations and challenges.

Our submission responds to the following Terms of Reference:

1. The nature, prevalence and impact of racism, hate and violence towards First Nations people, including trends over time: Highlighting the importance of truth-telling in the philanthropic sector – to acknowledge history, better understand ongoing forms of structural racism and violence, and move towards different ways of engaging in philanthropy.

3. Initiatives that are effective in combating racism targeted at First Nations people and reduce individual and collective harm: When philanthropy moves resources towards community-led and controlled approaches – centring First Nations knowledge and grounded in relationships and partnership – there are powerful possibilities to challenge structural racism and promote community wellbeing.

Acknowledging racism, hate and violence in the philanthropic sector

An important step in challenging racism, hate and violence in all its forms is to name where it shows up – and acknowledge our own unique positions to either challenge or perpetuate systems and patterns.

In conversations about structural racism and its impacts, we observe that the philanthropic sector can, at times, be quiet or overlooked. The heart of philanthropy is individuals and communities sharing resources for collective benefit; and the hope and potential for positive community outcomes means that, in some spaces, philanthropy is celebrated without public scrutiny. In other spaces, power dynamics between funders and fund seekers create imbalances, inhibiting open and honest conversation about what are ultimately shared histories but differing experiences.

The reality is that many systems of modern philanthropy in Australia are tied to structural racism. Where there is structural racism, hate and violence towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is ultimately present. The laws, policies and practices that shaped these systems were built around colonial structures, intended to disenfranchise and control Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The impacts of the past 250 years can be seen clearly in a philanthropic sector that holds significant financial resources but largely excludes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from either accessing or controlling where those resources are directed. This exclusion was built and continues to be maintained through reinforcing harms tied to colonisation:

Origins of financial wealth: Much of the wealth accumulated in private funds has historically been built – or continues to be built – through the dispossession and exploitation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Country.

Access to financial wealth: Intergenerational experiences of racism and violence have prevented many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities from holding the financial wealth required to participate in structured philanthropic giving. This includes through impacts of Stolen Wages, Stolen Generations, racialised policing and criminal justice systems, and discrimination across health and social services.

Access to the philanthropic sector: Structures of private philanthropy that were built to maintain privacy and anonymity for donors have created a sector that is often closed, often lacks transparency, and is largely created by people from financially wealthy backgrounds.

"The philanthropic space is a very elitist and exclusive 'club' that makes it difficult for people without the right connections or right backgrounds to enter."

- The Centre for Social Impact & Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research[1]

Figures about philanthropic funding for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led initiatives tell a harsh story of this exclusion. In Australia in 2022-23:

- 1.5% of philanthropic funding was directed to programs intended to benefit Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- 0.9% was directed towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led and controlled organisations; however
- Two out of the ten largest funders for these programs had an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander board member.[2]

These figures hold significant implications for the quantum of resources available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to lead community solutions.

When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' knowledge and perspectives are not centred in decision-making processes that impact them, this is a form of structural racism. As a result, resources intended for "benefit" may not be aligned with community aspirations – or at times, actively undermine community efforts and advocacy.

[1] The Centre for Social Impact & Jumbunna Institute for Indigenous Education and Research, *From colour blind to race conscious: A roadmap to action diversity and inclusion in Australian philanthropy* (2023).
[2] Philanthropy Australia (2025) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Funders Reporting Survey.

> *"Structural violence is evident where systems provide support only after crisis has occurred … or where early, preventative and culturally grounded solutions are deprioritised"*
>
> - The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body[3]

Structural racism is also present in the ways that remaining funds are distributed or invested.

Who is receiving the other 98.5%?

For the 98.5% of philanthropic funding not directed towards Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander programs, it is important to recognise that some may support causes or organisations that reinforce inherently racist structures, whether by design or effect.

Most funding, however, is directed towards charitable purposes intended to improve lives and strengthen communities. But without Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives shaping funding decisions, even well-intentioned efforts can have unintended consequences. They can entrench local power dynamics, direct resources away from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander infrastructure and leadership that benefits whole communities, and widen gaps in capability and influence.

Where are endowments invested?

Similarly, the billions of dollars held in philanthropic endowments should not be treated as neutral. While some progress has been made in shifting how philanthropy invests, much of this wealth is still managed through practices focused primarily on maximising financial return. This can include investment in sectors that have profited from the exploitation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and Country.

[3] The ACT Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elected Body, *Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs: Inquiry into Racism, Hate and Violence Directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people* (2026).

In this way, philanthropic capital can continue to support systems that concentrate wealth and influence among those who benefit from the ongoing dispossession of First Nations people.

The above discussion only scratches the surface. A much deeper truth-telling process is required; one that sits beyond the breadth, timing and process limitations of this Inquiry. For that process to be legitimate and meaningful – both in how it is undertaken and what it leads to – it requires leadership and engagement from within the philanthropic sector

This truth-telling must be accompanied by accountability for action.

Accountability for racism, hate and violence in the philanthropic sector

In recent decades, there has been an increasing focus on acknowledging the colonial roots and impacts of modern philanthropy, both in Australia and globally. More organisations are engaging in truth-telling practices and expressing commitment to progressing change.

But these processes are voluntary and many simply do not engage. For those who do, there remain common challenges with translating acknowledgment of racism into accountability for anti-racism or reconciliation action.

"Truth telling without consequence is extraction".

- The Reverend Dr and Pastor Ray Minniecon[4]

Formal accountability mechanisms to promote self-determination and other human rights for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander often centre around the role of government. It is commonly said that private sectors are, instead, regulated more fluidly through their social license to operate – with the financial and reputational

[4] Rev. Dr. and Pastor Ray Minniecon, Scarred Tree Indigenous Ministeries, St John's Glebe, *A just response to the inquiry into racism, hate and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples* (2026).

consequences of public criticism and disengagement disincentivising unethical behaviour or actions.

But the privacy and lack of transparency in philanthropy excludes many from this accountability mechanism.

At its worst, social licence can be used as a tool to legitimise racism, hate and violence. Social licence is not static. Public sentiment can shift quickly in response to major events, political campaigns, media narratives and broader public debate. For companies and individuals that profit from the dispossession of First Nations peoples, this creates a dangerous incentive to shape public discourse in ways that protect their own interests.

This can include amplifying racist narratives, undermining First Nations rights and leadership, or reframing justice and self-determination as threats to the broader public good. Many of these companies and individuals hold significant influence across media, politics, law and public policy, giving them the power to shape not only how issues are discussed, but what responses are seen as acceptable.

For philanthropic foundations, this matters because social licence shapes what is seen as possible, legitimate and worthy of support.

When public discourse is influenced by those who benefit from dispossession, racism can be normalised and First Nations rights, leadership and self-determination can be framed as threats, rather than necessary foundations for justice. This directly affects the environment in which philanthropy makes decisions – what it funds, who it listens to, where it invests, and what forms of change it is prepared to back.

It also risks expanding the boundaries of acceptable public debate to the point where bad faith actors are treated as legitimate voices, even when their influence works to undermine First Nations justice.

Philanthropy therefore has a responsibility to be alert to how its own funding, investments, relationships and public voice may either challenge or reinforce these dynamics. Remaining neutral in the face of racist narratives is not a neutral position. It can allow harmful ideas to gain legitimacy, narrow the space for First Nations-led change, and protect the systems that have produced and sustained inequity.

In the context of this social landscape, and the absence of strong accountability pathways, there are significant challenges in structurally embedding responsibility for anti-racism action. These challenges are not unique to philanthropy and are felt in a variety of ways across both public and private sectors.

The roots of these challenges can be found in Australia's unfinished business of Makarrata – agreement-making that sits alongside truth-telling.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

- *Uluru Statement from the Heart*

The Uluru Statement from the Heart provides a clear roadmap for moving towards accountability and action, grounded in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community priorities.

Its components – Voice, Treaty, Truth – are interwoven. For non-Indigenous people and organisations, including our own Foundation, acknowledging history is not for its own sake and it is not enough. It is part of moving towards a different relationship between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous people in Australia.

A different way

The inquiry will no doubt have repeatedly heard the call for greater investment into community-led, culturally grounded, and preventive and healing initiatives – with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decision-making central to both funding processes and initiative design.

There is extensive evidence detailed in submissions and hearings for this Inquiry, connecting self-determined solutions with improved community wellbeing. These solutions actively promote cultural rights, and social and emotional wellbeing. They also support resilience and healing at an individual and community level, acting as protective factors to reduce harms from racism, hate and violence.

Resourcing and empowering communities to share their own stories of the strength and success of culturally grounded and self-determined solutions is an important part of shifting racist narratives. But it must be coupled with accountability for media and social media outlets to prevent the publication and spread of racism and hate speech on their platforms.

For the philanthropic sector, owning accountability for structural racism requires shifting practice to embrace different ways, guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and meaningfully directing resources towards community-led healing, solutions and wellbeing.

The growth of the Indigenous-led philanthropy movement – internationally and in Australia – is opening important discussions about how to make private funds and investment work for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This includes through strengthening community organisations and leadership in relevant sectors, addressing the consequences of intergenerational inequity in wealth holding flowing from racism and violence, and building out community-led mechanisms for determining funding priorities and decisions.

"I'd also like to see mainstream foundations utilise Spinifex Foundation SA and other Indigenous-led funders for advocacy and centring culture and processes and decision making, using the cultural expertise and knowledge that we possess. Doing thing the proper way, according to community and cultural guidance. It's one thing to say, "Yes, we're going to get this cultural guidance." It's another thing to implement it."

- Warren Miller, CEO, Spinifex Foundation SA[5]

As just one example, Spinifex Foundation SA – an Indigenous-led fund in South Australia – is ensuring that funding priorities, processes and decisions are informed by and for the benefit of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in South Australia. It operates as a community-led model of funding that centres cultural authority, strengthens local governance and supports sustainable wellbeing outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

There is powerful potential in non-Indigenous philanthropic and government funders working in partnership alongside Indigenous-led funds to reshape funding systems, and flow resources towards culturally grounded, community-led initiatives.

"We want to create pathways for First Nations people to access resources outside of current structures, shape how and in what ways they interact with philanthropy, and to evolve and influence sustainable change while preserving our cultural identity"

- First Nations Philanthropic Funding Working Group[6]

We hope that this Inquiry can be part of progressing important conversations about structural mechanisms to promote these different ways of working. And we hope to see the Inquiry make recommendations that drive:

- Action towards a Makarrata Commission, moving towards Treaty and Truth
- Civic society accountability – including for private sector organisations and funders – to promote the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

[5] Warren Miller, quoted in an article authored by The Wyatt Trust, "'Come sit with us': Warren Miller's invitation to mainstream foundations to heed Indigenous guidance", 25 March 2026, *Institute of Community Directors Australia* (online) <https://www.communitydirectors.com.au/articles/come-sit-with-us-warren-millers-invitation-to-mainstream-foundations-to-heed-indigenous-guidance>.

[6] Published by Spinifex Foundation SA (online), <https://www.spinifexfoundationsa.com.au/advocacy/>.

- A renewed focus on moving resources for community-led healing and wellbeing solutions, centring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge and leadership in decision-making.