**10h00 – 13h00 Tuesday 9 July 2024: *Item 6: Country engagement***

Associate Professor Sadie Heckenberg

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium

Yamandhu Marang

Thank you, Madam Chair and Congratulations, on your election. I am Sadie, from the Wiradjuri Nation of Australia and I recognise and pay respects to Elders and Ancestors from all Indigenous Peoples here today. I speak to you as a representative of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Higher Education Consortium and as a OHCHR Indigenous Fellow.

We thank Australia for their detailed response to the EMRIP Visit to Western Australia and are pleased to hear the commitment to Closing the Gap targets.

We know as Indigenous people that strong families and connection to culture grows children who flourish, access educational opportunities and become leaders.

This is why we urge board action to stop the harmful polices that negatively affect our children and their connections to family and culture.

Australia has not implemented all the recommendations of the Bringing Them Home Report and the EMRIP report showcased how this can lead to a landscape of disempowerment and more children being taken from our families.

This a global issue faced by many Indigenous Peoples and we urge the government to review policies that: Allow Adoption without parental consent; require English as the language of educational instruction; and increase already high youth detention. We must learn from our past mistakes and work towards a future that includes the cultural understandings and lessons learnt from our Elders.

Indigenous specific curriculum is needed in all service provision qualifications, with particular focus on social work degrees. We must no longer graduate a future workforce that perpetuates the ways of the past. Further, all employees in government departments that oversee or directly engage with Indigenous children’s welfare should receive cultural training and that is reviewed regularly. We must always consider the UNDRIP, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women with particular reference to GN 39 every time we make a decision regarding our children.

We call for the Recommendations of the EMRIP visit to WA to be Implemented in full

We call for the Recommendations of the Bringing Them Home Report to be implemented in full and that all current policies be reviewed for harmful practices to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I leave you with a quote for the Uluru Statement from the Heart: “When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country”

Mandaang Guwu / Thank you