

COMMUNIQUE

1 November 2022

The Children and Families Tripartite Forum (the forum) held its fourth meeting of 2022 in Alice Springs. The forum was chaired by **Ms Donna Ah Chee**, who welcomed members and observers from the Northern Territory and Australian Governments, Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS), North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) and Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APO NT).

The **Welcome to Country** was from Arrernte woman **Ms Kumalie Kngwarraye Riley** who shared the stories of children growing up in Alice Springs today and how elders and families used to gather in mbantua, a sacred land, to share their stories and educate their children.

The forum was joined by Northern Territory Government Minister the **Hon Kate Worden MLA** via videoconference. The **Hon Lauren Moss MLA** sent her apologies. Australian Government Ministers, the **Hon Linda Burney MP** and the **Hon Amanda Rishworth MP** sent their apologies however, Minister Rishworth provided a recorded message to notify the forum of the **Australian Government endorsement of Kids Safe, Family Together, Community Strong 10-year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the Northern Territory and the Coordinated Investment Framework**. Minister Rishworth outlined how the Strategy closely aligns with work underway through the Closing the Gap National Partnership Agreement and *Safe and Supported*, the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children.

Minister Worden, on behalf of Minister Moss and the Northern Territory Government, thanked the Australian Government for endorsing the Strategy and approving the Framework. Minister Worden updated the Forum on the work underway to establish five new Child and Family Centres across the Northern Territory and acknowledged the financial support provided by the Australian Government to establish a new youth hub in the northern suburbs of Darwin. **She also provided updates on the ban on spit hoods in custodial settings and on NT legislation which raises the age of criminal responsibility to 12 and repeals mandatory sentencing for certain offences.** Minister Worden thanked the Australian Government for the additional \$10.7 million in the Federal Budget for prevention, response and recovery from domestic, family and sexual violence.

The Independent Aboriginal Chair of the **Generational Strategy Steering Group**, **Mr Rob McPhee**, updated the Forum on progress towards the first Action Plan under the 10 Year Generational Strategy. **The Forum discussed the priority action areas put forward for the first Action Plan** including the need to inform and align the actions with existing work underway across Governments and the community sector on Cultural Security and Healing.

The Group Manager, Families Group from the Commonwealth Department of Social Services, **Ms Tarja Saastamoinen**, updated the Forum on the alignment of the **Connected Beginnings and the Communities for Children Facilitating Partners programs** with the principles outlined in the Coordinated Investment Framework. The proof-of-concept review indicated broad alignment of these programs with the Framework's principles. The Community Sector highlighted the need for increased transparency in bilateral funding arrangements between Governments. The Northern Territory Government noted that transparency of funding in relation to children and family services was a key principle under the Coordinated Investment Framework which will facilitate better transparency.

The Forum also discussed issues raised through presentations from:

- **Mr Marcelo Munoz** from the Productivity Commission who provided an update on the Community-Level Data Project, a key enabling initiative under the Coordinated Investment framework;
- **Professor Gary Robinson** from the Menzies School of Health Research who presented preliminary findings of the evaluation of the *Safe, Thriving and Connected* the Northern Territory Governments reform agenda; and
- The **NT Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities** on the evaluation of amendments that were made to the Youth Justice Act in May 2021. The Community Sector agreed on the need to progress the evaluation as a priority so that the quantitative impacts of the amendments can be known and understood.

Following the quarterly review of key outcome indicators for children and young people, the Forum agreed to **focus on strategies and resourcing to address the continuing decline in school attendance rates across the Northern Territory** at the next Tripartite Forum meeting. Members expressed their continuing concerns relating to the rates and agreed on a need for a deeper discussion on the issues and an examination of programs and projects seeking to address school attendance.