



AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT AND NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT (COORDINATED INVESTMENT FRAMEWORK)

1. PRELIMINARIES

The Coordinated Investment Framework (the Framework) is an agreement between the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments (the Parties). The Framework outlines the Parties' commitment to working together to plan, fund and deliver services to prevent harm and improve safety and wellbeing outcomes for children in the Northern Territory.

The Framework supports the implementation of the Children and Families Tripartite Forum's 10 Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the Northern Territory (the 10 Year Generational Strategy) by guiding funding arrangements between the Parties to improve coordination and efficiency of government investment in children and families in the NT.

The Framework outlines how the Parties will work together, with local government, communities and service providers, to implement the policy objectives of both the Generational Strategy and the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, through targeted and coordinated investment.



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2. PRINCIPLES

Under the Framework, the Parties agree to commit to long-term continuous planning and flexible embedding of the principles listed below.

Investment by the Parties in children and families in the Northern Territory will, insofar as possible:

- a. Be coordinated and underpinned by regional or community-level plans and priorities.
- b. Be flexible to place-based needs and maximise shared outcomes through transparent funding arrangements and collaboration between the three levels of government, the non-government and private sectors, and communities; with common performance and reporting arrangements within a regional context.
- c. Strive for relational contracting that is:
 - i. Long-term and sustainable
 - ii. Agile and responsive
 - iii. Outcomes-based with streamlined accountability
 - iv. Transparent, with publicly available investment and performance information.
- d. Be iteratively informed by best-practice program evaluation, and the development of consistent regional and community level datasets and a shared and transparent evidence-base.
- e. Foster and strengthen regional and community partnerships and Aboriginal leadership to drive community-control and services reform.
- f. Support culturally safe, trauma-aware and healing informed approaches to service delivery, recognising the unique perspectives and needs of people from diverse cultures and backgrounds.
- g. Align with and reflect the relevant outcomes, targets and priority reforms agreed by all Governments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

3. SCOPE

The Framework encompasses services directly associated with the prevention of harm to children including: early and targeted support; crisis intervention; and transition and restoration.

This is in line with identified priority services aimed at preventing harm to children and improving outcomes for children and families, through the Northern Territory Government *Safe, Thriving and Connected* strategy.

For agreements relating to programs and services in scope, refer to the Catalogue. These include services funded through direct funding by the Commonwealth or Northern Territory Governments, as well as joint funding agreements.



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4. ENABLERS

The Parties agree to identify and move towards the delivery of system enablers that will provide whole of government support to deliver on the intent of the Framework, including:

- a. creating harmonised record keeping practices e.g. location, categorisation;
- b. collating regional and community level data on outcomes, services and investments; and
- c. strengthening of regional and local workforce to be jointly responsible for working with communities, families and children.

These enablers are supported by commitments under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have access to, and the capability to use, locally-relevant data and information to set and monitor the implementation of efforts to close the gap, their priorities and drive their own development.

The Parties recognise that these enablers are essential to improving coordination and efficiency of government investment and also complement the system reforms identified in the 10 Year Generational Strategy. Enablers will be implemented through action plans under the Generational Strategy.

5. GOVERNANCE

5.1 ADMINISTRATION OF THE FRAMEWORK

The Northern Territory Children and Families Coordination Group (the Coordination Group) will manage and implement the Framework with input sought from the Children and Families Tripartite Forum.

The Coordination Group is comprised of senior officers of the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments.

The Coordination Group will work together to establish a joint implementation approach for the Framework. In addition, the Parties agree to implement the Framework by incorporating the Framework within their respective negotiation and funding approval processes.

5.2 AMENDMENTS TO THE FRAMEWORK

This Framework can only be changed by the Northern Territory Government through the Children's Sub-Committee of Cabinet, and the Commonwealth Government through relevant Ministers. This may be done at any time by agreement in writing of both Parties.

Agreements linked to the Framework may be added to, or removed from the Catalogue at any time by agreement in writing through the Coordination Group.



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5.3 DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Any Party may give written notice to the Coordination Group of a dispute under the Framework. The Coordination Group will attempt to resolve any dispute in the first instance. If a dispute cannot be resolved by the Coordination Group, the matter may be escalated to the relevant senior officials, and Ministers.

Any Party may terminate their participation in the Framework at any time by notifying the other Party in writing, following best endeavours to first resolve any matters with the other Party.

5.4 STATUS OF THE FRAMEWORK

The Parties do not intend any of the provisions of the Framework to be legally enforceable, and the sovereignty of each of the Parties in relation to the investment decisions regarding children and families' programs and services is acknowledged. However, this does not lessen the Parties' commitment to the objectives of the Framework.

6. PERIOD OF THE FRAMEWORK

This Framework will commence on signing and will be in force for a ten year period.

7. REVIEW

The Parties agree to commission independent reviews of the implementation of this Framework. These reviews will form part of the reviews outlined in the 10 Year Generational Strategy. The Generational Strategy, including the implementation of this framework, will be reviewed independently at least three times over its 10 year implementation.

Further, periodic reviews of community priorities will be undertaken at the regional level through joint regional planning and collaboration frameworks, together with the Tripartite Forum.

8. REPORTING

The Parties agree to report to the Children and Families Tripartite Forum every year on the administration of the Framework and the extent to which it achieves improved coordination and efficiency of government investment in children and families in the NT.

Public reporting on this Framework will form part of the annual public reporting associated with the 10 year Generational Strategy.



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9. CATALOGUE OF LINKED AGREEMENTS

Individual agreements are to be linked to the Framework through a Catalogue. Whilst they are integral to the overall architecture, they are also agreements in their own right. These agreements are intended to operationalise the Framework.

While agreements linked to the Framework will be developed and implemented as standalone agreements, they will nevertheless seek to align, as far as practicable, with the principles and intent of the Framework.

Linked agreements may take a variety of forms, including but not limited to: Project Agreements; Local Decision Making Agreements, Regional Agreements or Implementation Plans; Funding Service Agreements; and Commonwealth Own Purpose Expenditure (e.g. Indigenous Advancement Strategy).

Signatories to the linked agreements may differ to the signatories to the Framework, for example linked agreements may be signed by the respective Government/s delegated officer, the lead portfolio Minister or include third parties where appropriate.

A Catalogue of linked agreements to the Framework is attached. The Catalogue will be a living document, and will be updated as new projects are developed over time. The intent of the Catalogue is to bring together all relevant investment in child and family services in the Northern Territory into one place.



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The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this agreement as follows:

Signed for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of Australia by



The Honourable Amanda Rishworth MP
Minister for Social Services of the
Commonwealth of Australia



The Honourable Linda Burney MP
Minister for Indigenous Australians of the
Commonwealth of Australia

Signed for and on behalf of the Northern Territory by



The Honourable Natasha Fyles MLA
Chief Minister of the Northern Territory



The Honourable Lauren Moss MLA
Minister for Children
of the Northern Territory



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