

Second meeting: Monday 15 October 2018

Communiqué

At its second meeting held on 15 October 2018, representatives of the Children and Families Tripartite Forum (the Forum) agreed on the Forum's two year rolling Work Plan. This Work Plan identifies the issues and projects in *Safe, Thriving and Connected* that the Forum will be closely involved in progressing.

Reform priorities identified in the Forum's Work Plan on which it will provide advice to governments and to those agencies leading implementation include:

- development of eleven new Child and Family Centres (including one at Tennant Creek) to support local vulnerable children and families, with local implementation to be based on co-design and local decision making;
- introduction of Family Group Conferencing to increase the involvement of immediate and extended family in decisions about their children when child protection and youth justice services are involved;
- supporting children and young people transitioning away from child protection or youth detention, with a particular focus on expanding the through-care service and establishing a housing brokerage service;
- transforming the Out-of-home Care program;
- design and operation of the new secure Youth Justice Centres which will replace the existing Detention Centres;
- the proposed Productivity Commission Study and the development of a Commonwealth-NT Coordinated Funding Framework;
- the development of the 10 year Generational Strategy for Children and Young People.

Several of the Forum's priorities were then discussed in greater detail. Following a presentation from Territory Families staff on the planning and consultation underway for the new Youth Justice Centres, the Forum provided advice on ways to ensure strong ongoing engagement of Forum members in the ongoing planning process, in particular Aboriginal Controlled Organisations. Work underway on youth diversion initiatives was also considered and discussed in some detail. Forum representatives underscored the importance of working with young people and their families as part of the work program.

The afternoon session commenced with a presentation from Professor Steve Guthridge from the Menzies School of Health Research. Professor Guthridge outlined findings from the NT Data Linkage Study that identifies early life factors that increase the likelihood of contact with child protection services and factors influencing school attendance.

The remainder of the afternoon was dedicated to an in-depth exploration of the Child and Family Centres program. Topics discussed included the core characteristics of the service model and factors for consideration in the Government's selection of sites for the additional Centres to be established. Attention was drawn to international evidence pointing to better outcomes being achieved by vulnerable families who had access to maternal and child health care, early childhood learning opportunities and parenting support. The Forum discussed the requirement for robust network support to the centres while also recognising the importance of local decision making and local control of service delivery. At the end of the discussion, the Forum agreed on the advice it will provide to the NT Government on these issues.