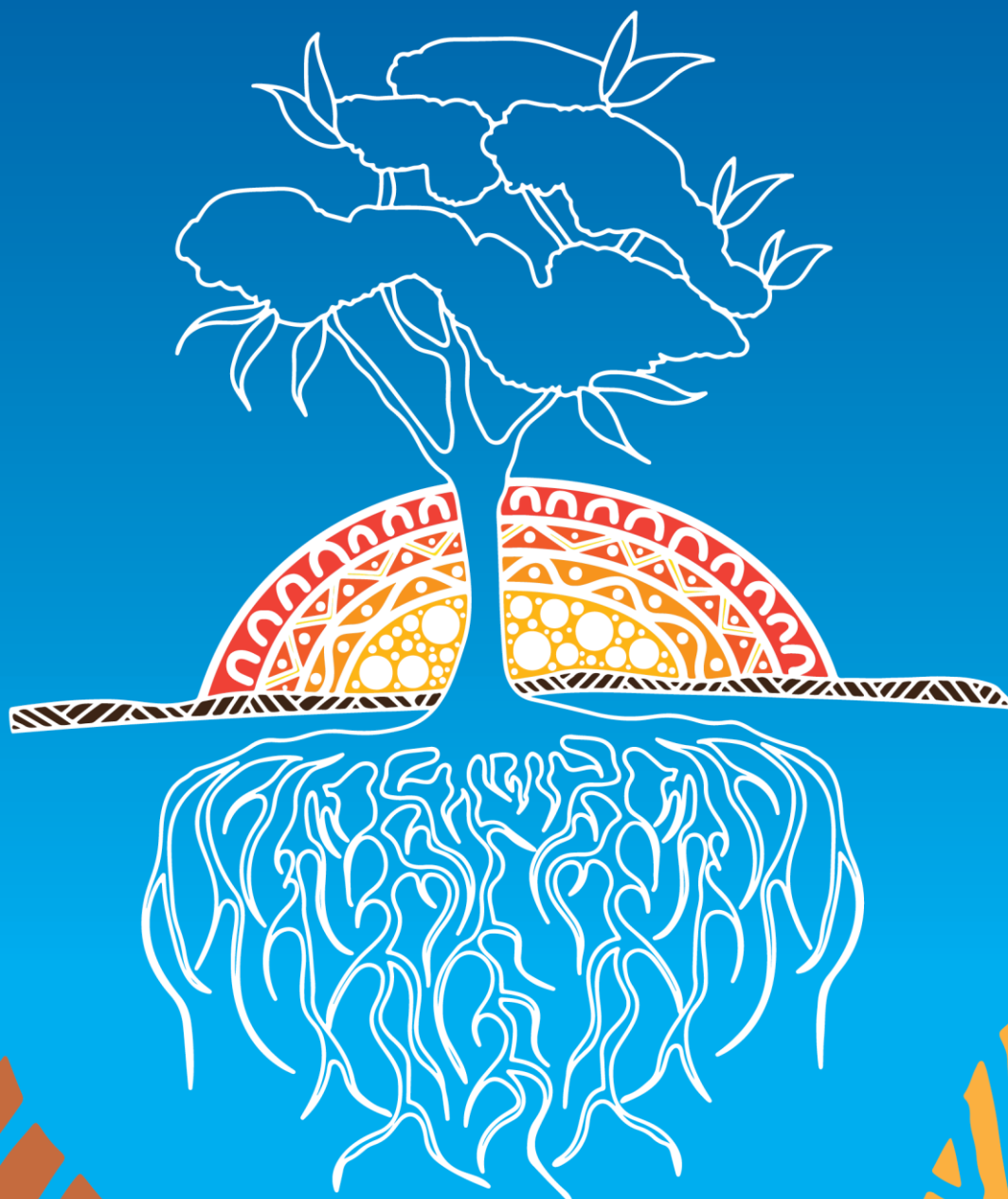


KIDS SAFE, FAMILY TOGETHER,  
COMMUNITY STRONG

# Consultation Report

*10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the Northern Territory*



Australian Government



Aboriginal Peak Organisations  
Northern Territory (APO NT)





# INTRODUCTION

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCO	Aboriginal community-controlled organisation
APO NT	Aboriginal Peak Organisations of the Northern Territory
NAAJA	North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NGO	Non-government organisation
NTCOSS	Northern Territory Council of Social Service
LGBTQIA+SB	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, sistergirl and brotherboy
TFHaC	Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities



# INTRODUCTION

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The development of a 10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the Northern Territory (the Generational Strategy) was a recommendation by the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory. The Generational Strategy creates a shared vision and policy framework to strengthen coordination and improve the effectiveness of the service system for children, young people and families in the Northern Territory.

The Generational Strategy was co-designed by the Children and Families Tripartite Forum, which includes members from the Australian Government, Northern Territory Government, Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APO NT), North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) and the NT Council of Social Service (NTCOSS).

To develop the Generational Strategy, a working group was formed with representatives from each Tripartite Forum member, and an Aboriginal Expert Advisory Group was set up to provide advice on the consultation process and strategy content. The working group undertook consultations across the Northern Territory on themes relevant to the Generational Strategy to inform the content and commitments.

The Consultation Report contains a summary of the information obtained during consultations. It outlines the approach the group took to engagement with communities and organisations, and it details the themes that were heard, including any regional differences.

The report is structured in two parts: phase one – targeted consultation and phase two – public consultation. The Tripartite Forum would like to acknowledge the generosity of the many people who shared their stories, experience and expertise. This information was instrumental in shaping the Generational Strategy.

## WHO WE CONSULTED WITH

To develop the Generational Strategy, consultations were held across the Territory from June to October 2021. We spoke to more than 100 organisations and groups, including more than 340 people and received 25 written submissions. A full list of who was consulted can be found in Appendix One.

## APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

The engagement approach aimed to understand and build upon existing work in each region; test and refine the development of the Generational Strategy; and capture community needs and aspirations for children, young people and families.

The approach consisted of two main phases:



1. Targeted consultation:
  - a. internal scoping with the organisations and government agencies the Tripartite Forum members represent
  - b. targeted engagement with community groups and service providers across the Territory, taking a regional approach.
2. Public consultation, whereby all stakeholders had the opportunity to provide comment on the draft Generational Strategy.

The first phase of engagement involved internal scoping within member organisations and a review of existing evidence to form consultation questions.

Targeted consultation with community groups and service providers was then held in each region of the Northern Territory, including in regional centres and at least one remote community in each region.

Detailed records were kept of each consultation, and at the end of phase one, the data underwent thematic analysis. This was done by reviewing, organising, coding and interpreting the information. The data was also analysed for regional variations.

This thematic analysis informed a draft Generational Strategy, which was tested during phase two – public consultation. In October 2021, the draft Generational Strategy was publicly available on the Have Your Say website.



Those who had participated in phase one consultations, relevant organisations and the public were invited to provide feedback through written submission or via an online survey.

This report contains an overall summary of the key themes that resulted from the two phases of consultation. While similar themes emerged in all phases of consultation, for clarity, this report is structured in two sections, phase one – targeted consultation and phase two – public consultation.

## WHAT WE HEARD

We heard about the key priority areas that families, communities and organisations want to see change in over the life of the Generational Strategy. This feedback shapes the strategic direction of the Generational Strategy and development of future action plans.

# PHASE ONE

## Targeted consultation

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### WHERE WE WENT

We visited all six Northern Territory regions:

- Greater Darwin: Darwin, Palmerston
- Top End: Maningrida
- East Arnhem: Nhulunbuy, Yirrkala
- Big Rivers: Katherine, Barunga
- Barkly: Tennant Creek, Ali Curung
- Central Australia: Alice Springs, Titjikala.

More than 115 service providers, community groups and individuals participated in this phase of the consultation across the Northern Territory (see Appendix One for full list). Three multi-stakeholder workshops were held in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs, with a total of 55 attendees from a range of service providers and organisations. Small-group or targeted one-on-one sessions were held in all regions.

### WHAT WE ASKED

Each consultation session was tailored to the audience and expertise of the participants. However, the main questions we sought to answer were:

- What changes do you want to see to improve the wellbeing and safety of children, young people and families?
- What does success look like for the Generational Strategy?
- What strengths are there in your community, and how can we build upon what is already working well?
- What kinds of supports and services should all children and families have access to?
- How can we recognise (past and present) truths and support healing for children, young people and families?
- How do we best recognise Aboriginal worldviews and ways of knowing, being, learning and doing?
- What does good partnership look like in children and family services, and how do we put this into practice?
- How can we create a community-led service system for children, young people and families?
- What roles should community leaders play, and how can community leadership in decision-making be strengthened?
- What needs to happen for Aboriginal community-controlled organisations (ACCOs) to be ready to provide more services for children and families?
- What is the role of non-government organisations (NGOs) to support a community-led service system? What needs to happen for NGOs to be ready for this role?
- What should the funding and contracting system look like to support the system?
- How can we use data and evidence to inform and improve outcomes for children, young people and families?
- How can we establish effective monitoring and evaluation for the Generational Strategy?



## WHAT WE HEARD

The first draft of the Generational Strategy was based on the feedback collected from this first phase of targeted consultation.

Consultation findings are grouped below according to the questions listed above. Additional themes are documented wherever indicated.

## WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE FOR THE GENERATIONAL STRATEGY

Across all the consultations, we heard that the Generational Strategy should form a long-term commitment to make lasting, intergenerational change for children, young people and their families in the Northern Territory at each stage of life.

The Generational Strategy must transform the way that governments and organisations listen to and work with communities. The Generational Strategy must build upon the strengths of children, young people and their families and embed ways to ensure accountability.

We heard that Territorians want to see that children and young people:

- **are happy**
- grow up **strong together** with their families and kinship networks
- feel **belonging and pride** in their identity and culture
- **are valued**, listened to and make choices for themselves
- have a safe and comfortable **place to call home**
- **dream of a bright future** for themselves and receive **the support** they need to get there.

We heard other key measures of success for the Generational Strategy must include that:

- **Families are empowered** with the opportunities, knowledge, tools and resources they need to raise their children in the way they choose.
- **Families and community members have a voice** and feel ownership over decisions, processes and systems that affect them.
- **Organisations work together effectively** to provide coordinated, wraparound support that best meets the holistic needs of children and families in their community.
- **Racism, discrimination and inequities** are actively addressed and reduced.
- **The Territory has a thriving Aboriginal workforce** and empowered Aboriginal leadership across all communities and sectors.

## EXISTING COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND HOW TO BUILD ON WHAT ALREADY WORKS


We heard about many areas of strength where communities are currently supporting children, young people and their families. We also heard where further effort and investment should be directed to enable better outcomes.

The existing strengths we heard about included:

### Children, young people and their families

**Cultural strengths** – children and young people and their families feel safe, stable, connected and supported through family and kinship networks; they learn and are guided by the wisdom of Elders; they experience wellness through access to Country, bush foods, traditional medicine and healing; and they understand their history and identity through ceremony, song, dance, art and stories.

**Children and young people want to share their ideas and views** – young people want to speak up and get involved, as they understand their own needs and can offer new ideas and enthusiasm. Children and young people have a lot to offer and want to be involved in decision-making.



**Families have a strong connection and commitment to their children** – children are deeply loved. Parents and extended families (particularly grandparents) are doing everything they can, sometimes despite extremely challenging circumstances, to provide stability and the best possible opportunities in life for their children. Families are resilient and are involved in planning, decision-making and finding solutions.

## Places and communities

**Community members taking initiative** – many people have strong local knowledge and are dedicated to the communities they live and work in. They are going above and beyond their roles to support children, young people and families, and they plan together for new and innovative approaches to community needs. Examples include:

- groups of strong local women across the Territory who are working in schools supporting children's bilingual education and providing leadership and expertise in culturally responsive child development
- Jurnkkurakurr Volunteers in Tennant Creek.

**Local staff showing commitment and investing time and effort** – many local staff are working hard to build relationships and trust between community members, government agencies and organisations, working closely with Elders for better outcomes for children and young people.

**Local organisations working together for coordination and collective impact** – these efforts achieve a more integrated service system offering continuity and holistic wraparound support; better value and use of existing resources through collaborative efforts; increased communication and data capability, information sharing and support between organisations; and coordinated approaches to community engagement and feedback. Examples include:

- Child Friendly Alice
- Big Rivers Early Years Network
- Palmerston Indigenous Network
- Grow Well Live Well Palmerston.

## Services

**Partnerships between organisations underpinned by respect, trust and communication** – these are most successful when complementary skills and efforts are brought together to fill identified gaps, strengthen the supports offered to communities and mutually benefit each partner organisation.

Many examples were shared of informal collaboration and partnership approaches using existing resources for local benefit. Some informal approaches grew into formal partnerships over time once trust, relationships and mutual benefit was established.

**Services and programs developed through local design, governance and delivery** – many examples were provided about local service delivery responses that embed strategic planning and decision-making roles for community leaders, as well as providing local employment. These examples often provide holistic, culturally relevant, trauma-informed and empowering supports. Examples of successful programs and services include:

- services that empower and equip families to care for their children, such as Families as First Teachers, Baby Families and Schools Together, and Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting
- local, cultural responses on country for youth suicide prevention, diversion and alternatives to detention
- ranger programs, particularly learning on country programs
- culturally informed education models such as through independent schools, bilingual education, both-ways curriculum development and training local teachers
- the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust, including support for interstate exposure trips for youth to 'get a vision for the future'
- Djäkamirr birthing on country program in Galiwin'ku
- supports incorporating art therapy, allowing people to tell their own stories
- cultural groups to support and advise on complex child protection and youth justice cases, such as Mikan Child Protection Reference Group in East Arnhem as well as Njamareya Cultural Group in Maningrida



- Mala'la Community Wellness Program, especially the family therapy that is offered
- service navigation work by Connected Beginnings and Wangkatayre Group
- Alekarenge School and training offered in the community for youth
- Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup bush garden and bush medicine programs
- Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group, including 'Boys Can Girls Can' family violence prevention education work
- Kalkarindji Child and Family Centre.

## SUPPORTS AND SERVICES ALL (CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES SHOULD HAVE ACCESS TO

We heard clearly that children, young people and families want access to a wide range of holistic supports and services, in a timely and supportive way, and suited to their needs. Some of the areas of greatest need and areas that represent gaps in service or access included:

- **Housing, shelter and safe spaces** that are flexible in design and appropriate for a range of needs for women, men, boys and girls, young people and family groups.
- **Support for basic needs**, particularly financial security, nutritious food, power, quality drinking water, technology and transport.
- **More support for young people** as an age group including development and recreation programs and activities, hangout spaces, mental health, sexual health, alcohol and other drugs support, education and training support, and employment pathways.
- **More support for, and involvement of, men**, particularly programs for fathers and grandfathers, men's wellbeing and mental health, healthy relationships, employment and training.

We also heard some contextually specific points about supports and services, including:

**Towns and remote communities** – services are sometimes duplicated in larger towns, whilst remote communities experience large service gaps and only inconsistent access to services

**A list of supports and services** people want more of is listed in Appendix Two of this summary. Whilst not exhaustive, the list provides a thorough range of services sought by those we consulted.

We also heard important feedback about the way services can be better, including:

- **More support at the prevention and early intervention stages** – services should mostly focus on supporting families and provide them with the knowledge, skills and resources to thrive whilst addressing the holistic needs of children and young people.
- **Better access to supports and services in remote communities** – many regional and remote families don't feel they have appropriate access to the supports they need. This includes fly-in, fly-out service models that do not enable local knowledge and relationships or the flexibility and time needed for better outcomes. Supporting families to stay safely in their communities also reduces the need to travel to towns and regional centres where they may encounter difficulties such as lack of accommodation and financial strain that can lead to further family problems.
- **Catering to population mobility and seasonal/fluctuating demands** – organisations and services need the ability to scale up or respond to emerging needs based on the movements of families. For example, during funerals and ceremony, community events, wet season and dry season, school holidays, and travel to regional hubs for services and supports, including for court appearances.
- **Addressing the needs of diverse gender and age groups across the life course** – the unique needs of all genders, age groups and life-transition stages need to be considered. Gaps were commonly reported for primary school-aged children who are not yet old enough for middle school-aged programs, as well as more youth-specific programs and supports, and bridging from education into employment.
- **Embed quality approaches that meet community needs** – including culturally safe, trauma-informed, and therapeutic assessment and supports; enhanced strong, trusting relationships; improved service accessibility, including language, transport and outreach options; and holistic, integrated, wraparound support.



## HOW TO RECOGNISE PAST AND PRESENT TRUTHS AND SUPPORT HEALING FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

We heard very strongly that intergenerational healing provides an essential foundation for better outcomes for future generations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and families in the Territory.

The first step towards healing is truth telling. We heard that it is important truth telling involves:

- **listening to people's stories** to understand the impact on them
- **recognising history** and talking honestly about past and continuing harm
- **taking ownership of mistakes** and acknowledging when trust has been broken.

The main sources of ongoing harm described include:

- **the history of colonisation** in Australia, exemplified by long-term assimilationist policies imposed on Aboriginal peoples
- **forced removals**, in what is now known as the Stolen Generations, and its intergenerational impacts
- **the Northern Territory Emergency Response**, more commonly known as 'the Intervention'
- systemic and institutional racism
- **the child protection system**, including mandatory reporting and overrepresentation of Aboriginal families in child removal
- **the justice system**, including disproportionate numbers of Aboriginal youth in detention and subjected to the court and policing systems

People described a broad range of actions and approaches that are needed to help facilitate healing. Many of these areas were consistent with the aims of the Generational Strategy, with some areas being explored in further detail throughout each section of this report.



The main themes we heard about how to achieve healing included:

- **Recognising the impacts of intergenerational**, individually-experienced and collective trauma on children, young people and families.
- **Embedding trauma- and healing-informed** approaches for children, young people and families at the community, services and systems levels.
- **Repairing trust and rebuilding relationships** through deep listening and improving the practices, attitudes and systems that are causing harm.
- **Recognising the value, strengths and self-determination** of families and communities and empowering them to lead their own solutions.
- **Providing sufficient opportunities, time and space** for families, kin and communities to heal together, particularly through cultural and spiritual practices (including ceremony) on and off country, as well as activities and supports that promote physical, social and emotional health and wellbeing.

## HOW TO BEST RECOGNISE ABORIGINAL WORLDVIEWS AND WAYS OF KNOWING, BEING, LEARNING AND DOING

Whilst the Generational Strategy is for everyone, we heard about the disproportionate impacts of the child protection and youth justice systems on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, young people and their families. We heard about some key ways to embed Aboriginal ways of knowing, being, learning and doing across all aspects of the Generational Strategy to achieve our goals. Examples include:

- **Recognising the value of Aboriginal knowledge** and wisdom and support knowledge translation efforts – create opportunities for local development of resources, curriculum, programs and approaches that are based on Aboriginal cultural concepts and knowledge relating to children and families. Support the adaptation of Western ideas and evidence into culturally relevant concepts and language.
- **Embedding, supporting and promoting** approaches for Aboriginal children and young people that allow them to learn and grow in ways relevant to their culture – including parenting support at each stage of their



development into adulthood; education inside and outside of the school environment; and supports for physical, social and emotional development.

- **Providing more opportunities** for children and young people to connect with their cultural identity – better-resourcing for remote communities, outstations and homelands, which provide an important environment for cultural identity, connection, learning and strong family and kinship relationships. Support for increased transport options and country visits/camps as well as digital technology to increase cultural learning and participation online.
- **Enabling families to exercise self-determination**, greater voice and influence in decision-making – allowing time, space and support for families to be active participants in decisions around their children's lives and to work together as a community within kinship, cultural leadership and governance structures.
- **Creating a strong Aboriginal workforce** is essential to working in culturally appropriate ways with families and delivering on the above priorities.

## WHAT GOOD PARTNERSHIP LOOKS LIKE IN (CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES)

We learned that good partnerships between and within **organisations and government agencies** involved in the children, young people and family service system share common elements of success. Good partnerships are underpinned by:

- **Strong relationships** – built on the foundations of existing relationships, or the investment of time and effort in developing trusting and respectful relationships inclusive of all relevant stakeholders.
- **Principles and practices** – that demonstrate reciprocity, equality, flexibility, adaptiveness, commitment and mutual accountability and are clear about power and expectations within and among all parties.
- **Strong governance** – including the necessary and sustained supports to enable this.
- **Clear roles** – based on strengths, recognising the unique contributions from different stakeholders, with clarity about responsibilities and who is funded to deliver specific aspects.
- **Active collaboration** – including setting clear boundaries and parameters, and jointly developing a shared vision and strategy that goes beyond the interests of any individual partner.
- **Supportive processes** – consideration of approaches to communication, reporting back, sharing information appropriately, respecting privacy and confidentiality, planning and problem-solving.
- **Resources** – including time dedicated to strengthen the partnership. Resources such as wages, training, frontline and back-end support for individual organisations, and funding secretariat functions for collective action.
- **Working together at the systems and strategic level** – in addition to collaboration at an operational or frontline level.

In addition to the above, we learned that good partnerships with local Aboriginal organisations, such as ACCOs, are underpinned by:

- **Processes that empower ACCOs and support self-determination in the partnership** – including sunset clauses in service delivery partnerships and plans for how to transition out of the partnership or how the partnership will evolve. This must be guided by what the ACCO wants from the partnership; ACCOs have the final decision.
- **Two-way approaches** – teaching and learning that goes both ways between partners, including knowledge of both Western and Aboriginal knowledge systems. Practise approaches that reflect this, such as partnering local Aboriginal community facilitators with visiting specialist staff.
- **Culturally safe partnerships** – investment in cultural education for non-Aboriginal people and organisations.
- **Recognition of cultural expertise** – recognition that ACCOs know what they are doing even if they are working in a different way to other practice norms.
- **Recognition of strengths** – ACCOs have a role in navigating relationships and frontline work with Aboriginal community members, and non-Aboriginal NGOs have a role in providing back-end/back-of-house support.
- **Supporting local Aboriginal employment** – prioritise hiring local Aboriginal people.

- **Strengthened ACCO capacity** – through back-end support, building the evidence for ACCO-led service delivery and assisting with accreditation hurdles.

We also learned that successful partnerships with **communities** are underpinned by:

- **Community-led decision-making** – the partnership enacts or furthers the community's objectives, is initiated by the community, is place-based and positions the community at the centre to drive the partnership.
- **Commitment to community engagement** – includes relationship building and support for diverse members of the community to participate and work together.
- **Openness and transparency** – clarity about the process, who is accountable and what are the practical implications of the partnership (e.g., funding, grant writing, service support).
- **Results** – community members can see things happening because of their participation.
- **Local factors** – time is taken to learn and understand the local context, gather knowledge and work in an appropriate language.

We learned that **partnerships face challenges** when the following factors are present:

- **Competition for power or resources** – when NGOs compete with local Aboriginal organisations and ACCOs for service contracts or duplicate existing services already provided by local Aboriginal organisations and ACCOs.
- **Work occurs in silos** – when organisations and government do not share information or demonstrate good partnerships.
- **Strong personalities** – this can be in both a positive and negative sense. A partnership is vulnerable when it succeeds because of the positive contribution of a talented individual rather than shared collective capacity or when individuals disproportionately influence the partnership in negative ways.
- **The local context is not understood** – generic approaches may miss vital local factors.
- **Turnover of staff** – and associated impacts on relationship continuity, organisational knowledge and stability.
- **Low motivation** – a low appetite for supporting the partnership work.

Overall, most stakeholders saw that partnerships could add value in the right context. We heard several **aspirations for partnerships**, including to:

- develop evidence and research capability
- upskill staff and community members
- support a child and family-centred approach to service provision
- align with other regions or share knowledge and success stories
- respond to community faster and better
- fill the gaps in service delivery
- provide culturally appropriate services
- provide exposure to different professionals and organisations to help young people develop positive relationships and perceptions
- draw on unique expertise and knowledge to solve problems
- get extra hands to make change happen.



We also heard some **contextually specific** points in addition to the general themes above, including:

**In the East Arnhem region** – we learned that partnerships might not always be the right way forward, especially if something is working the way it is now, and that there may already be informal partnerships that work well.

**In the Top End region** – we learned that schools could improve the way they work in collaboration with other services – e.g., night patrol identifies children who are at risk or disengaged and could pass this information onto the school so they could offer more support early on.

**In the Barkly region** – we learned that there was an issue with different stakeholders working in silos.

**Government** – we learned that stakeholders would like to see more investment in working together from the government agencies that work with children and families (e.g., TFHaC) and that people value the Australian and Territory governments working together (e.g., on the Generational Strategy).



**Remote Aboriginal communities** – we learned that partnerships with Aboriginal communities are successful when they include the factors summarised above, as well as:

- being guided by local Aboriginal people and their own priorities
- recognising that local and cultural knowledge is a vital ingredient in service planning and provision.

## HOW TO (CREATE A COMMUNITY-LED SERVICE SYSTEM FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES)

We heard support for community-led planning to inform the service system for children, young people and families, and there were many ideas about how this could be done well. We heard that a range of people and groups need to be involved in the community planning process.

Successful community planning that engages with the whole community includes:

- utilising existing groups and local structures (these may be sufficient)
- involving people who are affected by what is being considered in the planning
- senior people and Elders
- men and women
- young people (may be best engaged in a group rather than as individuals)
- Aboriginal representation, including cultural authority groups or representation from different clan, family and language groups
- multicultural communities – people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds can't be considered a homogenous group – e.g., the experience of refugees is very different to non-refugees
- people with a disability
- people from the LGBTQIA+SB community
- existing clients and service users
- different people might need to be involved at different stages of the planning process.

We heard that successful community-led planning groups identify clear roles for representatives, including:

- The role representatives play in sharing information back with the community, seeking solutions, continuing the conversation, bringing information back to meetings and problem-solving.
- Representatives must have strong and trusting relationships and be accessible to their community so that their voices are heard during planning.
- Representatives allow for differences of opinion while working towards the same goal.

We heard mixed views about whether organisations should be involved in community planning. Some of the factors raised were:

- **ACCO boards often have place representation** – community members might want a trusted organisation to represent them,
- **Service providers who work with client groups** – may have helpful information to contribute to community planning, but if service providers are involved, they need to participate through a process separate from that with community members.
- **Community membership should be given weighting** – there should be more community members than organisations participating in community-led planning.

We heard many ideas about what people want to see in a **community planning process**. Some of the important factors were:

- **Key principles** – processes that demonstrate a commitment to transparency, trust, flexibility, longevity, responsiveness, community control, empowerment, self-determination, valuing diverse kinds of knowledge, sharing knowledge, positive change, community ownership, evidence-informed decision-making and consistent communication.

- **Communities have genuine decision-making power** – communities want to see a major change and a strong commitment to handing over power. This includes:
  - recognition that what comes from the community is going to look different from what has come from the system
  - clarity about where the decision-making power starts and ends
  - bi-partisan commitment and clarity around the policy authorising environment
  - the need to formally weight community decision-making – e.g., the Empowered Communities initiative gives community 75% decision-making weight
  - government needs to be able to take a step back, hand over power and allow for mistakes to happen so community can learn from them
  - planning needs to start with community needs, not the funding available
  - giving community agency over the timing of the process
  - community-led decision making is underpinned by a community development approach.
- **Processes that build on what is already in place** – good community planning builds on existing knowledge, relationships and leadership structures. It respects and seeks advice from existing planning groups, even if a new planning group is to be set up. It has access to information and can learn from what has happened before in the local context. Where possible, it doesn't duplicate existing structures.
- **Culturally appropriate processes, that ensure cultural safety** – this means developing a process that suits local people, incorporates local language and allows time to translate concepts and build meaning and understanding for all parties.
- **There is enough time** – to ensure the process is inclusive, builds strong and trusting relationships and promotes healing.
- **Community planning processes use appropriate methods of community engagement** such as:
  - establishing strong buy-in from the start
  - community setting the agenda, aims and methods to achieve a community vision
  - community views being actively sought by talking to people
  - meetings occurring in neutral places (organisations may not be considered neutral)
  - meetings occurring regularly
  - there are opportunities for people with quieter voices to participate in ways that suit them (e.g., not only big meetings).
- **Collaboration from start to finish** – co-design processes establish common goals and a shared forward agenda. There is a clear commitment to a place-based collaborative approach.
- **Facilitators who support the process** – are open and honest, respected by the community, have local knowledge and good relationships with community members and groups, and are seen as neutral. The facilitator should not have a role in directly related funding decisions.
- **The process is resourced** – including via funding to support community participation (paying participants for their time), strategic work, governance and capacity building, planning, logistics and infrastructure, and interpreters. Appropriate resourcing might also include secretariat support and establishing specialist sub-groups. Basic needs to support people to participate, including transport, access to technology, digital literacy, and support to continue conversations (one meeting is not enough).
- **Community-led planning groups have access to information and data** – to support informed decision-making.
- **There is accountability and oversight** – the planning process needs to include set responsibilities and accountability for all parties. This is to ensure planning follows through into implementation, and appropriate feedback loops communicating back to community members about how decisions are made and enacted. Organisations need to be willing to listen to and work with community leaders to achieve this, and there must be a way for community concerns about service providers to be addressed. It is also important that community representatives are accountable to their communities for their decision.
- **Capacity building to support community-led processes** – good planning requires a range of skills at the individual, community and organisational level including:
  - governance training and support to enable informed participation in the planning process
  - strengthened capacity for facilitating roles
  - skills and knowledge to make informed decisions

- recognition and management of conflict(s) of interest
- organisations and government capacity to listen to community leaders, Elders, members and working together to implement community priorities.

We also heard some **contextually specific points** about what people want to see in a **community planning process** in addition to the general themes above, including:

**Remote Aboriginal communities** – we learned that there are different, sometimes competing, views about who should lead community planning. There was no consensus about who is best to lead planning. Some of the people we spoke to in remote communities were strongly against government having a role in facilitating the community planning process. In some areas, the Central Land Council was recognised as having the infrastructure, knowledge and experience in areas of consulting and planning, but some people said that their role in relation to royalties was a potential problem. Facilitators may need to be selected on a one-by-one basis.

**In the Top End** – we learned that Maningrida Homelands school is an example of good local governance, as the school focused on community aspirations and building the capacity of board members to understand Western systems.

**In the Big Rivers region** – we learned that in Katherine it is important to recognise divisions in the town that may affect people's willingness to participate in community planning.

**In the Barkly region** – we learned about the **Barkly Regional Deal (BRD)**. The BRD is an initiative of three levels of government centred on the Barkly region that provided an important opportunity during the development of the Generational Strategy to focus on how regional planning has been attempted in the NT. We heard important lessons about:

- Inclusivity of decision-making bodies: Concerns were raised by community members and service providers that the BRD governance is too heavily weighted towards government representation. Many stakeholders expressed the view that community don't feel a part of the BRD. Stakeholders expressed the view that the governance needs to be inclusive of Aboriginal representation.
- Allowing sufficient time for inclusive planning processes: Consultation to develop the priorities of the BRD was too short. Transparency needs to increase, which can be achieved by community nominating the appropriate planning process.
- Community leading the way: Community is looking for action. The preference is for communities to have the first say, then organisations. There needs to be more work to actively seek views by talking to people directly. Some people expressed the view that the BRD has had insufficient consultation. As a result, they told us that priorities under the BRD are not necessarily those identified by community.
- Regional approaches require regional representation and action: The BRD governance needs to be a group that's acceptable to the broader region, as some community members and organisations felt the BRD is yet to benefit the region outside of the regional centre of Tennant Creek.
- Options for Generational Strategy alignment: Some people in the community don't want the BRD group to plan the Generational Strategy because they don't think the BRD is working well enough to support another process such as the Generational Strategy. Other stakeholders expressed the view that the Generational Strategy should build on existing structures like the BRD.



We heard different views about **how to define a community** for the purpose of community planning, including:

- Community should be defined at the most local level possible because every community is different.
- Boundaries will be influenced by geography, language or cultural groups, affiliation to religious groups etc.

We also heard some **contextually specific points** about **how to define a community** in addition to the general themes above, including:

**Remote Aboriginal communities** – we learned that most communities in the Northern Territory could be regarded as historical settlements where government decided people must live, but the Aboriginal way is based around country/ancestral estates and families/language groups. Community boundaries need to account for this.





**Town camps** – we learned that each town camp is different and has its own identity and should be considered its own community (which is a lesson learnt from local decision making processes). Town camps in Central Australia have language groups represented in their committees with established processes to identify problems and solutions. Bagot community in Darwin also prefers planning to happen at the town camp level.

**In the Central Australia region** – we learned that some people want something more local to allow for unique characteristics of the town of Alice Springs and its difference from the broader region. Some people considered it important to enable flexibility around how/when to incorporate town camps, noting that a smaller scale for planning is better to provide adequate representation on planning committees. Other considerations included:

- mobility and frequency of visitors to town camps
- the difference between communities and suburbs (town camps are communities)
- how you define a community will impact on how each place can access funding
- existing structures that are working well shouldn't be duplicated (e.g., Child Friendly Alice) – it is better to improve representation in existing structures instead of starting new ones.

**In the East Arnhem region** – we learned that some people think that Nhulunbuy, Yirrkala, Ski Beach and the various homelands should all be their own community. Small-group planning could also feed into a scaled-up process by sending a representative from each smaller group to a larger group.

**In the Greater Darwin region** – we learned that some people think community planning for Palmerston needs to be separate from community planning for Darwin to account for the differences in demographics and needs between the two areas, as well as site-specific established networks and plans that are already in place.

We heard some ideas about **what community plans should include**. Major themes from this feedback include:

- Community data snapshots to inform planning are a good idea but need to be tested against local knowledge and both need to have influence. Census data can be unreliable.
- Service mapping to inform decision-making.
- Community plans should provide choice over who provides local services.
- Community plans should provide opportunities to feed into the way programs are delivered in a community.
- Need for data and understanding of the local social context to inform planning – e.g., Akeyulerre Centre in Alice Springs has done a mapping process of all the families in town to see how everyone fits in and how they link together. This supports their service planning and delivery work.
- Planning needs to consider mobility of people.
- Community has a role in monitoring whether plans have been effective.
- Monitoring/evaluation and consultation need to be considered from the start, including criteria for success, service mapping and planning to address needs.
- Accountability of service providers is part of community-led service system and needs to be included in the planning process from the start.
- Planning has a focus on implementation.
- Some issues communities can work together on, but others require specialisation and specific context.
- It is important to consider how to include philanthropic sources of funding in planning.

We also heard consistent mention of a few **key barriers to building a community-led service system** for children and families:

- constantly changing government policy and practice
- government as barrier to enacting community planning/local decision making – there have been a lot of plans and consultations with community in the past, but comparatively little commitment, follow through or accountability.



## WHAT ROLE COMMUNITY LEADERS SHOULD PLAY, AND HOW TO STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP IN DECISION-MAKING

We heard clearly that the role community leaders play in decision-making should, where possible, be identified by the community. Respect for cultural ways of determining leadership is vital.

To support this, it is important that the right people are involved in community leadership and decision-making roles, as discussed in the section above. We also heard some suggestions about **what roles** might be important for **leaders to play in community decision-making processes**. These include:

- **Working with young people** – to bring them in at all stages and to support learning for younger generations.
- **Decision-making about children and families** – leaders want to be involved about decisions that may lead to child removal. Community leaders may have knowledge of what can be done to support a family locally.
- **Taking time** – to get their community on board and ready to participate in planning, in a culturally appropriate way.
- **Circle sentencing** and other mediation processes – Elders can be important links at multiple points of the system (e.g., police working with Elders when they engage with young people during early contact with the youth justice system).
- We heard that having **strong leaders is important** for many reasons, including:
  - role modelling – seeing Elders and leaders being respected
  - mentoring – to support young people and adults to join leadership structures (e.g., organisational boards)
  - recognition of cultural skills – seeing diverse cultural knowledge and skill respected and valued supports strong positive identities for young people
  - support communities to problem solve – with resources to back leaders' ideas and set the future direction.



We heard that it is important to support leaders to do the vital work they do in communities. In addition to points raised in the section on capacity building for community planning, we heard **support for community leaders** could include:

- Training opportunities, including:
  - learning both-ways
  - strategic skills
  - English language proficiency and access to interpreters and information in language
  - understanding mainstream systems
  - official certificates e.g., Ochre card
  - providing space and opportunity for leaders to contribute to evidence needed for decision-making.

## WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN FOR ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY-CONTROLLED ORGANISATIONS (ACCOS) TO BE READY TO PROVIDE MORE SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

We learned that some of the key factors that can support ACCOs to take on more services for children, young people and families are:

- Supporting ACCOs to strengthen their capacity by:
  - **Strengthening governance** – ongoing and embedded governance training, including to build confidence to speak, mentor younger leaders, strengthen leadership, develop skills to access and interpret data, undertake and interpret evaluations, make high-level decisions and understand risk to the organisation. Including evaluating the potential risks of expanding beyond core business if the organisation is not ready.
  - **Strengthening organisational processes** – support to strengthen risk management and financial compliance capacity, back-end system management and reporting support, less red tape, developing organisational agility and build capacity to apply for grants (particularly for small organisations).
  - **Strengthening practice** – building the capacity of organisations to provide more holistic and wrap-around support to families, providing opportunities to learn from experts, valuing the work that local



Aboriginal frontline workers do (they often see things before others do, they do the prevention work, staying up all night etc.), supporting service models that apply knowledge of kinship and country, and culturally safe practices.

- **Adequate resourcing to support capacity building and transition** – real costs reflected in funding agreements, resources for mentoring and service capacity building, funding for strategic planning and evaluation (at system level as well as organisational level), resourcing for planning and evaluation to be done in culturally appropriate ways, increased certainty about funding to improve staff retention and promote service continuity.
  - **Enabling learning by doing** – allow ACCOs to make mistakes or not get it perfect the first time around – transition is about a testing period, ironing out the bumps and building trust.
  - **Preparing organisations and communities for transition to Aboriginal organisational control** – transitioning services needs a lot of thought and careful planning. If it is not done well, people needing to use services are at risk. It was suggested that the first 12 months should be a testing period, and organisations should not be punished for not meeting goals in this period, in recognition that generational change is a goal that will require time.
  - **Allowing time for gradual change** – allowing adequate time to build capacity will lessen risk, so government needs to be empathetic, patient and understanding of ACCOs, permitting time to build capacity, not expanding too quickly or into new areas until prepared. This may extend to unintended reputational risk, especially within community, if core business is not maintained.
- Providing support for ACCOs to work closely with Aboriginal communities through:
    - **developing culturally appropriate language** and resources– e.g., to discuss concepts like family violence
    - **documenting and recognising local Aboriginal knowledge** – to recognise culturally specific understandings of families and incorporate this into an organisation's service delivery and practice
    - **upskilling the entire community** – as an approach to effective service delivery rather than focussing on upskilling a single organisation
    - **maintaining relationships on the ground** – ACCOs offer continuity on the ground, while other organisations come and go from community
    - **working informally where appropriate** – there is a lot of pressure (because of reporting to key performance indicators) to refer people to services when it's not necessary.
  - **Strengthening Aboriginal control** – Aboriginal staff need to be employed at all levels in organisations. 'Aboriginal controlled' in practice, not just on paper. Non-Aboriginal employees/managers need to plan for transition to local Aboriginal staff, transitioning services to organisations that communities trust.
  - **Enabling the development of culturally appropriate programs** – new programs and resources that are culturally appropriate and locally designed, recognition of cultural competencies and valuing Aboriginal knowledges.
  - **Providing adequate support to non-Aboriginal NGOs working in the transition space** – training for non-Aboriginal people, e.g., Anti-discrimination training, Aboriginal languages, planning for stepping back and transitioning.



We also learned that strengthening the local Aboriginal workforce is essential to support ACCOs to take on more, or improve services for children, young people and families. Suggestions included:

- **More pathways to employment:**
  - creating jobs and building career pathways into caring roles and other developing industries
  - more entry-level positions and resourcing to enable career progression.
- **Addressing structural barriers to employment:**
  - jobs accompanied with housing
  - transport
  - support to retain jobs
  - appropriate wages
  - education and training system needs to support employment pathways for local Aboriginal people.

- **More support and appropriate training opportunities:**
  - support to get people work ready and build understanding of workplace behaviours in a Western way, including services that help transition into employment from school and prison
  - workplace mentoring
  - school holiday work opportunities for youth
  - ongoing training and career development from school onwards, including continued upskilling and professional development instead of bringing in already qualified outsiders, ensuring training is locally relevant
  - training both ways: Aboriginal and mainstream worldview/systems, culture and language
  - a bigger role for schools, including schools creating more opportunity for children to see/experience role models, e.g., for children to learn early how a criminal record might affect them later, how employment systems work, preparing children for vocational training, and schools working in partnership with other organisations to create education and training pathways for children
  - more apprenticeships and traineeships
  - training about reporting to funding bodies
  - training that supports local Aboriginal people to work with children in their community
  - training in technology
  - non-accredited training to be valued
  - infrastructure to support education and professional development, e.g., workplaces have space for people to study at work.
- **Culturally appropriate workplaces and employment opportunities:**
  - workplaces that are culturally safe, respect cultural roles and the kinship boundaries of Aboriginal staff, e.g., not providing service to family members/inappropriate family members
  - flexible workplaces including casual work options, realistic employment with steps for growth, workplaces that support people to go to ceremony and enable people to work on programs that are adapted to the local context
  - workplaces that support working through issues with home life, including individual and vicarious trauma
  - positive workplace cultures that support a team environment, allow employees to make mistakes, recognise difficulties employees face, welcome and value local staff and provide help with workplace documentation requirements
  - supportive management that values staff, has time and patience, respect, flexibility, understands the local situation and builds trust.
- **Supporting continuity and retention of staff:**
  - community strategy for jobs development – strategic planning with community and people with commitment and expertise
  - need to consider current and future local employment opportunities
  - supporting the community to have a say in who gets hired
  - flexibility in the recruitment process to hire Aboriginal staff
  - fair and equitable wages for Aboriginal people.
- **Support for working parents:**
  - provision of childcare
  - flexible work arrangements for parents
  - family-friendly workplaces.

We heard that barriers to strengthening the local Aboriginal workforce include:

- **Administrative hurdles** – including difficulty obtaining ID, birth certificates Ochre cards.
- **Criminal history** – can be identified as prohibitive to employment access.
- **Training in prison** – increasing training can improve employment opportunities when released.
- **Systemic racism** – particularly in employment processes and workplaces: local people always have to 'prove' themselves.
- **Cultural barriers** – difficulties with managing some cultural/family conflicts.



We heard that barriers to transitioning more services to the ACCO sector include:

- **Competition for services** from non-Aboriginal-controlled community organisations.
- **Accreditation requirements** – can be a barrier and allows NGOs to be prioritised and win funding over ACCOs.
- **Turnover of non-Aboriginal staff** – it can take a long time to re-establish relationships and build trust with new workers.
- **Low numbers of Aboriginal staff** – lack of Aboriginal co-workers can be a deterrent for some people.
- **Community conflict** – where there is no consensus about which ACCO should take on a service, or where there is conflict and instability that affects the ACCO.
- **Partnership and transition hesitancy among other organisations** – fear/hesitancy of other organisations about supporting transition to ACCOs when they're worried about impact on their own organisation including financial sustainability.

## WHAT THE ROLE OF NGOS COULD BE IN A COMMUNITY-LED SERVICE SYSTEM

We learned that the role of NGOs in a community-led service system could include:

- **Taking a place-based approach to service provision** – including using a cultural lens, amplifying the voice of Elders and leaders in the service system, and collaborating to achieve collective goals.
- **Supporting long-term systematic change:**
  - whole-of-sector advocacy for what's required to support community aspirations for the service system
  - resourcing and enabling strategic planning
  - building sector capacity to use data to influence planning and measure change.
- **Supporting the transition to ACCO-led service delivery** when the community wants this, and in addition to points made in previous sections:
  - support ACCOs to fill service delivery gaps
  - support ACCOs with additional resourcing in times of high need
  - provide specialist skills and services
  - provide support with building networks and service mapping
  - support smaller organisations to share in service delivery.

## WHAT KINDS OF FUNDING AND CONTRACTING PROCESSES WOULD BEST SUPPORT THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICE SYSTEM

We heard that people wanted longer-term and relational contracts, and for funding that covers the full cost of service delivery. In addition to points raised in earlier sections, themes that came up frequently included:

- **Longer-term contracts:**
  - **Support through secure, continuing funding** – (including five-year contracts) for a range of reasons, including:
    - longer contracts support strategic planning, long-term budgeting and increased security for the organisation/program
    - longer-term funding cycles are important for program continuity, attracting and keeping committed staff, providing wide range of support for families and being able to deliver what families need at the pace that's right for the community.
  - **Longer funding contracts** – in some case, contracts should be longer than five years. To achieve generational change, programs must be funded to run across generations.
  - **Wage increases** – must be embedded in longer-term contracts.
  - **Many contracts are still short-term** – and these affect workforce development, staff retention and service quality.
  - **Funding cuts** – that result from political cycles make it difficult to sustain growth and build on success.

- Funding:
  - Funding for service gaps and strategic planning – invest in strategic work.
  - Funding more services that work towards prevention.
  - Funding for collaboration and service integration – such as collective impact models.
  - **Funding for research** – funding needs to include evaluation and monitoring expenses (collecting data is costly and can become obsolete quickly), building monitoring and evaluation capacity at a local level.
  - **Funding for infrastructure** – including allowing for staff housing and higher costs of infrastructure in remote communities.
  - **Funding the full cost of service delivery** – including all administration costs and salaries, recruitment processes, as well as reflecting the amount of work ACCOs do already but aren't funded or recognised for, as some services are dependent on volunteers.
  - **Funding needs to be consolidated** – multiple funding agreements and small grants create an admin burden that takes away from service provision.
- Relational contracting:
  - **Support for flexibility in how services are delivered** – service plans need to be flexible and broad to allow for innovation and responsiveness. Supportive relationships with contract managers are important and are strengthened by site visits and respect for local knowledge.
  - **Appropriate safeguards and accountability for performance** – e.g., in long-term contracts, organisations should be supported by their contract managers to address problems as they arise. It's important that there is an opportunity for communities to change provider if the service doesn't meet their needs, and that decisions can be made to continue or to conclude funding with appropriate notice for planning and transition.
  - **Reduced administrative burden** – suggestions include fewer budget lines to allow for flexibility.
  - **Outcomes- based reporting** – needs to be flexible, use shared measures across providers, accept that change takes time, be linked to the local context, fitted to the service provider's needs rather the government's, needs to hold providers accountable while ensuring outcomes are meaningful, and be able to capture important narratives.
  - **Funding based only on outputs and key performance indicators doesn't work well** – doesn't provide the right story in terms of actual impact of the program/project.
- Provider selection and tendering processes:
  - **Competitive tendering** – can create tension, reduce budgets and impacts on the quality of service delivery.
  - **Current tender process inhibits collaboration** – there needs to be more room for partnerships and collaboration between service providers in contracting processes. It's also important to avoid placing Aboriginal organisations and NGOs in competition.
  - **Aligned with local decision-making and community-led planning** – tendering processes must include opportunities for community planning to result in direct contracting and give communities the opportunity to have input in procurement and accountability processes.
  - **Service choice** – need to maintain some diversity and choice in service providers, especially in remote communities.
  - **Support local workforce and organisational development** – contracts should embed requirements for developing local staff and strengthening local organisations, rather than contracting interstate organisations that some people feel can undercut local initiatives and capacity building.
- Government coordination:
  - **Aligned contract and grant application dates** – suggestion that these should be aligned across governments and departments.
  - **Reduce duplication and address gaps** – two levels of government are currently still duplicating funding – need to identify gaps and reduce duplication.
  - **Align reporting requirements** – currently they are different for every department – we need to focus on finding achievable solutions to problems and unify reporting on this (e.g., outcomes based).

- Funds pooling and regionalisation:
  - Support for **pooled/co-ordinated funding**.
  - **Philanthropic funding** – consider how to include in regionalisation and manage potential duplication of funding
  - **Resourcing homelands** – regionalised funding often misses homelands.
  - **Needs-based funding** – coordination and planning across communities so funding goes where it's most needed. Limited funding means remote communities can miss out.
- Program design:
  - Contracts would benefit from being **co-designed with community** in planning and early stages.
  - Programs should be **designed around community needs** rather than funding availability.
  - Providers should not have to **change program delivery** if it is working, e.g., government asking a provider to alter a program due to increased demand (at the expense of quality of existing service).


## HOW TO USE DATA AND EVIDENCE TO INFORM AND IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

We heard people discuss the importance of data to support community and regional planning, and continuous quality improvement processes that should underpin programs and services.

We heard that there should be a **strategic and planned use of data to inform and improve outcomes** in the children, youth and family service system.

- **Strategic and coordinated approach** – planning and program design, and monitoring and evaluation of services, must happen together. Evaluations should support continuity of service provision.
- **Data must be collected with a purpose**, not for its own sake.
- **Funding and planning to build a local evidence base** – data collection needs to be resourced to build evidence and to strengthen the capacity to collect, analyse and use data.
- **Emphasis on funding only evidence-based** programs can disempower local solutions – it can be hard to provide evidence beyond promising practice.
  - evidence-based training from elsewhere may not be relevant to the service/place
  - few funded programs allow for evaluation as part of their resourcing.
- **Measuring outcomes:**
  - data should not just look at numbers but consider the effects of the program and change for the service user
  - outcomes need to be long-term and consistently measured
  - outcome measurements can't be homogenous – they need to be flexible to represent the reality of the service/community context
  - it is difficult to measure outcomes, so it needs to be thought through carefully and creatively
  - it may be a combination of services (and other events) in a person's life that enables their life to change – must be able to reflect this.
- **Cultural safety** – should be included in the program assessment.
- **Quality improvement** – reporting processes should be geared towards supporting service development and quality improvement. It is important to measure user satisfaction with a service and evaluation should link to accountability of service providers. Government and service providers should track and measure performance.
- **Strengthening the sector:**
  - Efforts to improve outcomes must occur at the strategic level, not just at the level of individual organisations and programs. Must consider holistically what the community services sector needs to grow and develop.
  - Communities of practice, seminars and other methods of knowledge sharing are a way for organisations to come together and assess how the sector is going.





We heard a lot of feedback about collaboration in **data collection and sharing, and transparency and ethics**. Some of the main themes include:

- government and service providers need to share data, including with community
- government should inform non-government organisations, local Aboriginal organisations and ACCOs what it is using the data it collects for
- data collection and sharing must consider consent and privacy issues
- need to triangulate data from various sources (e.g., government, service providers, people involved)
- data sharing between services can help identify where people need support
- a universal mechanism is needed for accountability purposes – but this can be undermined when the agencies or organisations using it don't talk to each other
- gaps in local data – data often available at a regional/Territory level and not able to inform local initiatives and community decision-making
- data approach needs to be long-term, whole-of-sector, simple, using ethical collection methods
- there needs to be increased accountability and transparency around what is done with the data at organisation and system level.

We also heard ideas about **data collection**, including what should be collected and why. Themes from this feedback include:

- **Collecting local data is important** – each community might need different data to inform their services, and data needs to include local and cultural knowledge.
- **Generic data shouldn't override local knowledge** as there are things it won't capture (e.g., the work that Elders do outside of formal work/hours). Numbers can be interpreted with bias, and it can harm community reputations.
- **Data collection should capture new knowledge and skills**, not only inputs and outputs. Data needs to incorporate new knowledge and skills that are more difficult to capture, including application of therapeutic care.
- **Representative data not always possible** – it is a challenge getting representative data – particularly in small or remote areas.
- **Collective impact models** – use data to support transition, planning and action for change. Data is treated as a community resource and there is commitment to build upon each other's data but also allow for differences between organisations.
- **Service provision** – must be data on what services exist in each community.
- **Screening and referral data** – important to screen all children and to use this data to inform regional priorities.
- **Stories** – data collection must capture the smaller stories, not just high-level outcomes.
- **Strengthen existing data collection efforts** – build on existing data sources to limit duplication. Share data and information between organisations already collecting data.
- Data needs to account for people's **mobility/transience** across regions.
- **Data on strengths and successes** – data needs to include strengths.
- Data collection must be **fit for purpose**:
  - for example, school attendance may not be the best measure of engagement – engagement could be measured by interaction and communication with a child's family
  - some data collected is beyond what a service provider is responsible for – this can be invasive and can harm the relationship between the client and the service provider
  - drive for data in a clinical/medical model can push people into the wrong services – the concept of social and emotional wellbeing is different across communities.

We also heard ideas about **data collection methods**, including how to collect data and who should be involved. Some of the themes from this feedback include:

- **Community review** – a local lens should look over data and have a say in how it is being interpreted and understood.
- **Informal reflections and feedback** – important for continuous quality improvement in services.



- **Young people** – must provide feedback – need to improve ways in which we capture voices of young people.
- **Face-to-face data collection** – is important and a way to fact check data with community.
- Quantitative and qualitative data – both must be valued.

We also heard that **training and capacity building** is important, including:

- information technology training
- data **collection and analysis training** so community can do it and use the data themselves
- **training to interpret** and use data in community planning and service planning and improvement.

## HOW TO ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE MONITORING AND EVALUATION APPROACH

We heard ideas about approaches to monitoring and evaluating the Generational Strategy.

Some of the ideas include:

- Monitoring and evaluation must be **linked to community plans**:
  - mechanisms for community voices to be heard in monitoring and evaluating the Generational Strategy are crucial. This should include site visits and reporting back to communities
  - measuring success must include what the community thinks success looks like
  - monitoring and evaluation must be linked to implementation of community and regional plans and should support and enable community and regional planning.
- **Support for a range of evaluation approaches** – including impact and process evaluations and place-based evaluations.
- **Implementation monitoring** – needs to be more regular than annual evaluations.

We heard the importance of **accountability**, and specifically about:

- independent oversight
- implementation oversight
- bipartisan support between levels of government and across funding cycles.

# PHASE TWO

## Public consultation

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A draft of the Generational Strategy was available for public review and comment on the Northern Territory Government's Have Your Say website between October 4 and 25, 2021. Options for feedback included uploading a submission or completing a questionnaire. There were 25 written responses received through this process.

Phase two also included an additional 12 consultations that were targeted to address gaps in engagement from phase one. These included:

- engagements in the Big Rivers region
- engagements in Palmerston.

### Analysis of submission data

A rigorous process was adopted to analyse and incorporate the feedback received during the public consultation phase. The main steps included:

- cataloguing all submissions and consultations
- developing a tool to record all suggested revisions to the draft Generational Strategy
- identifying and analysing feedback data and entering it into the tool
- making relevant changes to the Generational Strategy after discussions amongst partners.

The draft was revised based on the priorities identified in the submissions. Several key overall changes were made based on feedback:

- greater clarity of the rationale and next steps
- actions to support the Generational Strategy's implementation
- supporting documents, including a map of aligned work and a glossary
- section-specific feedback outlined in papers.

### Key themes from the public consultation phase

In summary, major overall themes emerging from the public consultation phase included:

- A need for greater clarity of rationale and scope for the Generational Strategy, including:
  - actions to be undertaken
  - which sectors and government departments the Generational Strategy will apply to, and which sectors and government departments will be subject to priority actions and reforms
  - a program logic to demonstrate how the Generational Strategy will achieve the identified outcomes
  - what the evidence base is for the proposed commitments
  - need for strengthened accountability processes, including governance and independent oversight
  - trauma-informed approaches across the system.
- A need for more or better supports across a wide range of areas. Some of the areas we heard most strongly include:
  - housing, shelter and safe spaces
  - basic needs, including financial security, nutritious food, power, quality drinking water, technology and transport
  - education, including culturally relevant support along a child's learning journey, both inside and outside the school environment, including life skills and pathways into training and employment
  - health, particularly mental health, and social and emotional wellbeing, traditional medicine and healing
  - child protection system, including formal and informal kinship care, connection to culture and reunification
  - justice system, including police, courts, youth justice and corrections.
- A need for more or better support for particular groups, including youth, men, people with disabilities, people living in remote communities, and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

- A need to include more visible examples and incorporation of Aboriginal worldview, such as:
  - two-ways approaches
  - cultural healing practices.

Major themes emerging from public consultation in each of the four areas of commitment (as described in the Generational Strategy) included:

- **Children, Young People and Families**
  - Creating opportunities for children, young people and families to connect with culture and country.
  - Supporting the diverse needs of people in the Territory, including Aboriginal, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTQIA+SB and people living with disabilities.
  - Improving support to keep families together, including for informal kinship arrangements.
  - Improving access to advocacy and support to self-advocate.
  - Prioritising health education and culturally appropriate support during pre-birth, birthing and post-birth.
  - Supporting family-led decision-making.
  - Improving support for Stolen Generations.
  - Improving support for foster carers.
  - Increasing opportunities for screening and assessments.
- **Places and Communities**
  - Clarifying where local communities have decision-making power.
  - Strengthening recognition of the role and influence of schools within the community.
  - Increasing opportunities for people and communities to come together to share learning and knowledge and to plan for the future.
- **Services**
  - Increased consideration of the need for service integration and collaboration.
  - Ongoing support for organisations to strengthen their capacity.
  - Strengthening the local Aboriginal workforce.
- **Systems**
  - Transforming government organisations (aligned with the National Agreement on Closing the Gap).
  - Improving equity in the provision and distribution of services, particularly for remote areas.

# APPENDIX ONE

## Consultation list

We received feedback from the organisations, community groups and individuals listed below. Some of our engagements with these groups and individuals were formal; some involved presentations and feedback; some were part of another existing meeting. Therefore, it is important to note that the degree to which the consultation occurred varied greatly.

Region	Organisations and community groups	
Barkly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ali Curung Community Development Working Group</li><li>• Ali Curung Local Authority</li><li>• Anyinginyi Health Aboriginal Corporation</li><li>• Barkly Regional Council – Youth Services</li><li>• Barkly Regional Deal Backbone Team</li><li>• Catholic Care NT</li><li>• Central Australia Women's Legal Service</li><li>• Central Land Council</li><li>• Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet Regional Network: Barkly Region</li><li>• Julalikari Child and Family Centre</li><li>• Connected Beginnings</li><li>• Grandmothers outside BP</li><li>• Language Centre</li><li>• Tennant Creek Multiagency Community Safety Team</li><li>• NAAJA</li><li>• NIAA</li><li>• Papulu Apparr-Kari Aboriginal Corporation</li><li>• Patta Aboriginal Corporation</li><li>• The Red Cross</li><li>• Saltbush</li><li>• Department Territory Families, Housing and Communities</li></ul>	
Big Rivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup</li><li>• Big Rivers Early Years Network</li><li>• Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet Regional Network: Katherine</li><li>• Kalano Child and Family Centre</li><li>• Katherine Flexible Learning and Engagement Centre</li><li>• Katherine Isolated Children's Service</li><li>• Katherine West Health Board</li><li>• Katherine Women's Information &amp; Legal Service</li><li>• Legal Aid</li><li>• North Australia Aboriginal Justice Agency</li><li>• North Australian Family Legal Services</li><li>• The Red Cross</li><li>• The Smith Family</li><li>• Wurli-Wurlinjang Aboriginal Health Service</li></ul>	
Central Australia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Akeyulerre Healing Centre</li><li>• Anglicare NT</li><li>• Australian Childhood Foundation</li><li>• Catholic Care NT</li><li>• Central Australian Youth Link Up Service</li><li>• Central Australia Women's Legal Service</li><li>• Child Friendly Alice</li><li>• Jesuit Social Services</li><li>• Lutheran Care</li><li>• McDonnell Regional Council – Youth Services</li><li>• NIAA</li><li>• Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet Regional Network: Central Australia</li><li>• Ninti One</li><li>• NPY Women's Council</li><li>• Tangentyere Council</li></ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children's Ground</li> <li>• Congress</li> <li>• CREATE Foundation</li> <li>• Disability Advocate Services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tangentyere Women's Safety Group</li> <li>• Waltja Tjutangku Palyapayi Aboriginal Corporation</li> </ul>
East Arnhem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal Hostel</li> <li>• Anglicare NT</li> <li>• Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation</li> <li>• Australian Regional and Remote Community Services</li> <li>• Datjala work camp</li> <li>• Dhimurru Aboriginal Corporation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• East Arnhem Regional Council – Youth Services and Night Patrol</li> <li>• Gove Crisis Accommodation</li> <li>• Laynhapuy Aboriginal Corporation</li> <li>• Laynhapuy Homelands School</li> <li>• Yolngu Action Group (Yirrkala School)</li> <li>• Regional Children and Families Committee in East Arnhem</li> </ul>
Greater Darwin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anglicare NT</li> <li>• Australian Government Department of Social Services</li> <li>• Autism NT</li> <li>• Bagot community</li> <li>• Carpentaria</li> <li>• Catholic Care NT</li> <li>• Charles Darwin University</li> <li>• City of Palmerston</li> <li>• CREATE Foundation</li> <li>• Dawn House</li> <li>• Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet Regional Network: Darwin, Litchfield and Palmerston</li> <li>• Department of Social Services</li> <li>• Foster and Kinship Carers Association</li> <li>• Grassroots Youth Engagement</li> <li>• Gray Family Centre</li> <li>• Grow Well Live Well Palmerston</li> <li>• Headspace</li> <li>• Kentish</li> <li>• Larrakia Nation</li> <li>• Local Government Association of the NT</li> <li>• Menzies School of Health Research</li> <li>• Multicultural Council of the Northern Territory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deaf Services</li> <li>• Northern Land Council</li> <li>• National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect</li> <li>• Northern Territory Council of Social Service</li> <li>• NT Shelter</li> <li>• Palmerston Community Care Centre</li> <li>• Palmerston and Regional Basketball Association</li> <li>• Palmerston Communities for Children, Red Cross</li> <li>• Palmerston Indigenous Network</li> <li>• Palmerston Children and Families Network</li> <li>• Palmerston Youth Centre</li> <li>• Playgroup NT</li> <li>• Red Cross / Connected Beginnings</li> <li>• Remote Indigenous Parents Association</li> <li>• Save the Children</li> <li>• STEPS Palmerston</li> <li>• Team Health - Child and Family Wellbeing</li> <li>• Territory Care &amp; Support Association</li> <li>• Top End School of Flexible Learning</li> <li>• University of Melbourne PhD student (consultant with Larrakia Nation)</li> <li>• Youth Round Table</li> </ul>
Top End	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bawinanga Aboriginal Corporation</li> <li>• Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet Regional Network, Maningrida</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manayingkarirra Child and Family Centre</li> <li>• Maningrida College</li> <li>• Nawarddeken Academy</li> <li>• NIAA Mala'la</li> </ul>

Public consultation phase		
Written submissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Danila Dilba Health Service</li> <li>• Deaf Indigenous Community Consultancy Pty Ltd</li> <li>• Childbirth Education Association</li> <li>• Grow Well Live Well</li> <li>• Children's Ground</li> <li>• Melaleuca Australia</li> <li>• National Children's Commissioner</li> <li>• Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care</li> <li>• Community sector members of Tripartite Forum</li> <li>• Save the Children</li> <li>• Department of Treasury and Finance – Program and Evaluation Team</li> <li>• Child Friendly Alice</li> <li>• NT Stolen Generations Aboriginal Corporation</li> <li>• NT Office of the Children's Commissioner</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Department of Territory Families, Housing and Community Development – Office of Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction</li> <li>• Local Government Association of the Northern Territory</li> <li>• Katherine Isolated Children's Service</li> <li>• Julalikari Pikka-Pikkakari Program</li> <li>• Barkly Regional Deal Backbone Team</li> <li>• Central Australian Aboriginal Congress</li> </ul> <p>Five submissions from individuals were also received.</p>
Greater Darwin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Top End Women's Legal Service (TEWLS)</li> <li>• HIPPY Playgroup Mothers</li> <li>• Grow Well Live Well</li> <li>• Paediatricians at Royal Darwin Hospital</li> </ul>	
Big Rivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Headspace Katherine</li> <li>• Headspace Youth Advisory Group Katherine</li> <li>• Kalano</li> <li>• Banatjarl Strongbala Wimun Grup</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger Communities for Children Knowledge Sharing Seminar</li> <li>• Wurli Service Provider Forum</li> </ul>

# APPENDIX TWO

## Supports and services



The following list indicates those supports and services that we heard were important, mapped against the Generational Strategy's outcome domains. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list of all the supports and services that may be available or are needed across the Territory but reflect what we heard during consultation.

Outcome domain	Support and services examples
All Territorian children, young people and families:  Have mental, physical and spiritual health from conception across all stages of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health education and promotion</li><li>• Sexual health</li><li>• Nutrition</li><li>• Cultural and spiritual health, healing and wellbeing<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ traditional/bush medicine</li><li>◦ connection to culture and country</li><li>◦ traditional healers e.g., Angangkere, Alice Springs</li></ul></li><li>• Mental health, counselling<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ needs to be culturally appropriate, including group counselling options and with Aboriginal counsellors</li><li>◦ suicide prevention including community/cultural responses</li><li>◦ self-care</li></ul></li><li>• Sleep</li><li>• Alcohol and Other Drugs</li><li>• GP and general medical services</li><li>• Midwifery and birth<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ support for birthing on country and culturally relevant maternity practices</li></ul></li><li>• Disability and developmental assessment tools and opportunities<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>◦ Specialist services (e.g., disability, National Disability Insurance Scheme, and foetal alcohol spectrum disorder)</li></ul></li><li>• Medical and mental health/neurological assessments</li></ul>
Have appropriate and secure housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crisis housing/safe houses (gender and age inclusive)</li><li>• Short-, medium- and long-term/permanent housing</li><li>• Support with accommodation rentals</li><li>• Sobering-up shelter</li><li>• Needs to be more safe spaces for people to go to out of the home, not just crisis accommodation but for respite from overcrowding at home</li></ul>
Are connected to culture, community and country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Support for children, young people and families during ceremony, Sorry/funerals</li><li>• Support to keep children in out-of-home care connected with family, community and country</li><li>• Helping people become kinship carers</li><li>• Interpreters</li><li>• Access to country</li><li>• Supporting inclusive community events</li></ul>
Are able to learn, contribute and achieve their aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Early childhood education, childcare, primary school-aged children youth services (8 to 16 year-olds)</li><li>• Adult education, including basic numeracy and literacy</li></ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexibility in school system to better accommodate children's needs – suggestions include night classes, ceremony school/outreach, allowing children to repeat year levels or progress slower to allow for cultural commitments as well, alternative education pathways</li> <li>• Transition support for children going to school in town from remote areas – hard for them being away from country and family</li> <li>• Programs that take young people out on country and learning from Elders</li> <li>• re-engagement with school, distance education, literacy and numeracy – flexible learning</li> <li>• Support for parents to reengage their children into school</li> <li>• Support at times of transition, e.g., school to employment, through mentorship and building pathways</li> <li>• Education and training, including vocational</li> <li>• Employment support services, e.g., help finding a job</li> <li>• Support for children to learn and understand how to navigate mainstream system/balanda ways</li> <li>• Help with documentation and navigating administration e.g., bank accounts, birth certs, licencing, employment requirements</li> <li>• Support for young people to see pathways for work and employment, e.g., work experience, traineeships, junior rangers, opportunities to go interstate and have life experiences to identify goals and interests and create motivation</li> <li>• Training for mums who have left school</li> <li>• General activities for children and young people</li> </ul>
Are empowered to participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specialised support for disengaged children and youth, mentoring, youth action</li> <li>• Having local voices heard – consultation and access to feedback on consultations</li> </ul>
Are cared for, valued and safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting young people to advocate for themselves – including education on what abuse is both from other people and systems/organisations, learning protective behaviours</li> <li>• Community safety</li> <li>• Night patrol</li> <li>• Appropriate policing services</li> <li>• Prevention/safe spaces particularly for youth including sport and rec programs activities and events, 'hangout' spaces</li> <li>• Law and Justice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Legal support and education, including rights</li> <li>○ Complaint and redress mechanisms</li> <li>○ Mediation</li> <li>○ Bush courts</li> <li>○ Support to navigate court system, including advocacy</li> <li>○ Culturally appropriate and community-led restorative justice</li> <li>○ Support for young people on court orders (case management)</li> <li>○ Through care, support post release from prison</li> <li>○ Youth diversion</li> <li>○ Support for families to attend court – e.g., transport or video links to remote families/communities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Support for bail conditions (including accommodation – overcrowded houses won't fit requirements)</li> <li>○ Interpreters and support understanding legal processes (especially requirements to get children back)</li> <li>○ Early legal representation</li> <li>• Prison <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ programs while people are in prison to keep them connected with ceremony, Elders, culture</li> <li>○ post-release support to reintegrate into community and return to culture</li> <li>○ rehabilitation and behavioural change programs so that the cycle doesn't just repeat when they return</li> <li>○ practical support, e.g., financial and transport so that family can visit</li> <li>○ support for families where a parent/carer is in prison and adapting back to the community</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Domestic and family violence services and crisis accommodation</li> <li>• Domestic and family violence prevention, support and behaviour-change programs</li> <li>• Family support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Allowing families to work together to support a child, grandparents working with other family members</li> <li>○ Parenting programs, how to be a parent</li> <li>○ How to parent babies as well as disengaged children</li> <li>○ Early intervention stage – identify children and families who need support and offer that early</li> <li>○ Prioritise keeping children within kinship systems and culture</li> <li>○ Family counselling – 'Not judging but taking them out to country to talk', bringing families together to work through problems together</li> <li>○ Respite for parents, Elders and kinship carers</li> <li>○ Family therapy</li> <li>○ Home visiting and in-home support, particularly for young/new mothers</li> <li>○ Women's and children's groups</li> <li>○ Intensive family support services</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Men's programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Opportunities for men express feelings and reduce stress, e.g., men's shed</li> <li>○ Support for men in their role in family/as fathers</li> <li>○ Fathers' programs that include talking about roles of fathers, basic skills, domestic skills (e.g., cooking, and sharing learnings with their families).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Are financially secure and have material basics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthy, available food and shops</li> <li>• Hot water and hygiene needs</li> <li>• Quality drinking water</li> <li>• Emergency relief</li> <li>• Financial support for informal kinship care, including establishment and ongoing allowances/costs</li> <li>• Financial literacy, counselling and support, including for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ gambling</li> <li>○ avoiding scams</li> <li>○ navigating Centrelink, banking, superannuation</li> <li>○ budgeting</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ consumer rights</li> <li>○ workers' rights</li> <li>• Small business support</li> <li>• Liveable income support</li> <li>• Transport (inclusive of remote communities, outstations and homelands), including school bus</li> </ul>
Have a natural and built environment that supports a high quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to technology, including Wi-Fi, computers for study and personal admin, phone/mobile network</li> <li>• Safe spaces to gather that support cultural, recreational activities and passive relaxation</li> <li>• Access to nature such as bush medicine/bush tucker gardens</li> <li>• Safe outdoor spaces for community gatherings and activities for children</li> <li>• Considering build environment and surroundings of housing – shared community spaces, access to services, public transport etc.</li> </ul>

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Australian Government



Aboriginal Peak Organisations  
Northern Territory (APO NT)



North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency



NTCOSS  
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Council of Social Service