

SAFE, THRIVING AND CONNECTED: **GENERATIONAL CHANGE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**

2020 Generational Change Impact Report





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The Reform Management Office has been established to coordinate a whole-of-government reforms in response to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory's findings and recommendations, working closely with all stakeholders including Aboriginal organisations, non-government organisations and the Commonwealth Government.

All photos courtesy Northern Territory Government



Introduction

In November 2017 the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory (RCPDCNT) handed down its 227 recommendations.

The Northern Territory Government responded with its *Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families* plan released in April 2018. It represented a \$229.6 million investment in relevant programs and services over five years.

Safe, Thriving and Connected describes a series of reforms to better support children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability as well as deliver the Royal Commission's recommendations.

In December 2017 the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (RCIRCSA) delivered its final report. There are 189 relevant recommendations from the RCIRCSA.

The *Generational Change Reform Program* is a single reform approach which encompasses three significant and inter-related reform programs:

- *Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families (2018-2023)* – the formal response to the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory
- *Starting Early for a Better Future: Early Childhood Development in the Northern Territory (2018-2028)*
- Responses to the recommendations from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (2017)

Working with communities, Aboriginal controlled community organisations, community sector organisations, the Commonwealth and local governments, the *Generational Change Reform Program* seeks to co-ordinate programs and services and jointly deliver workable results.

An important component to the success of the reform is the ongoing collaboration between key government agencies. Each department has a crucial role, delivering programs and projects which enhance and complement the work of other agencies.

Working together is also vital to successful relationships with the public, the Aboriginal sector and other non-government organisations – significant stakeholders and contributors to the reform.

Departments have worked hard to also address any replicated efforts – to deliver effectively and efficiently with a coordinated approach across government.

This report outlines the achievements, successful collaborations, ongoing challenges and outcomes of the *Generational Change Reform Program*.

It marks the culmination of two years delivering projects all aimed at keeping Territory families *Safe, Thriving and Connected*. Although many of the initiatives are implemented and have led to ongoing services, systems and programs, there remains a need to be responsive to the needs of Territory children and their families.

Embedding the *Generational Change Reform Program* will ensure the considered, consultative and collaborative approach will continue to be delivered. It will provide a combined and focused effort and continuity for all stakeholders.

We are heading in the right direction and we will continue to work hard to improve the long term outlook for Territory children, young people, families and communities.



How to Read this Report

The *Generational Change Reform Program* consists of six portfolios – Putting Children and Families at the Centre, Improving Care and Protection, Improving Youth Justice, Strengthening Governance and Systems, Preventing Child Sexual Abuse and Supporting Survivors and Victims.

These portfolios address and extend beyond the recommendations of the Royal Commissions and focus on delivering desirable outcomes for families. Each portfolio consists of a number of programs which represent vital areas of reform. In turn, the programs contain specific initiatives designed to help deliver complete programs.

For example, the portfolio of Improving Youth Justice consists of three programs – Police and Young People, Getting Kids Back on Track, and Youth Detention that Works. The program Police and Young People consists of two specific initiatives – Custody Notification and Police Youth Division. While the program Youth Detention that Works consists of three specific initiatives – Youth Detention Operations, Youth Detention Infrastructure, and Youth Detention Services and Programs.

The *Generational Change Reform Schema* which provides the full listing of the *Generational Change Reform Program* is on page 11 of this report.

Status tables under each program provide a brief description of the relevant initiatives to that program and their status. Where an initiative is said to be “underway” it is not yet fully realised as a normal operation but it is on track to being fully implemented. A “completed” initiative refers to the completion of the intent of the initiative and transition to business as usual. For example, although construction may not be complete on a new youth justice facility in Darwin, the project is now part of the core work of Territory Families.

Government agencies mentioned are according to the timeframe this report covers.

Acronyms Used in this Report

| | |
|---------|--|
| ACCO | Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation |
| AMSANT | Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory |
| APONT | Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory |
| CMSA | Client Management System Alignment |
| FaFT | Families as First Teachers |
| NAAJA | North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency |
| NTCOSS | NT Council of Social Services |
| OOHC | out-of-home care |
| PHC | Primary Health Care |
| RCPDCNT | Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory |
| RCIRCSA | Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse |



Executive Summary

The *Generational Change Reform Program* has had an active and productive two years with many initiatives transitioning into agency programs and business as usual. The emerging data demonstrates positive changes in many indicators, but as with most reforms in social services, the outcomes and impacts of changes will not be fully realised for some time.

Productivity Commission¹ figures show a downward trend for all child protection substantiations since 2016/17 (30.5 in 16/17 to 18.8 in 18/19). The figures also show the number of Northern Territory children in out-of-home-care has steadied² and a decline in the rate of Aboriginal young people in detention³.

The timeframes for delivery may have been relatively short, but the difference made under the change reform program to the Northern Territory's child protection and youth justice systems, has been meaningful. A lot has changed for the better over two years.

In 2018 the Northern Territory Government committed \$229.6 million in new funding over five years to "reform and improve services for children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability".

That funding includes allocations of:

- \$11.4 million over four years to establish the coordination hubs and expand the number of Child and Family Centres to 17
- \$22.9 million over four years to improve youth detention operations and reduce recidivism
- \$71.4 million to replace Don Dale and Alice Springs Youth Detention Centres
- \$9.9 million over four years to divert young people from crime and stop future offending
- \$5.2 million over four years to support care leavers to access and secure housing.

From the Family and Children Enquiry Service (FACES) hotline and a new practice framework in Signs of Safety through to establishing new Child and Families Centres, a new Police Youth Division, and youth work camps –

a number of initiatives have been introduced and embedded across the Northern Territory Government and in communities, all part of the *Generational Change Reform Program*.

The environment and systems now operating across the Northern Territory include better partnerships across government agencies, stakeholders and communities, increased service delivery, greater involvement of organisations, and, most importantly more family participation and connection in programs designed to build resilience.

As outlined in this report, there has been significant progress in improving the child protection and youth justice measures, and strengthening the services that prevent families from entering both systems. As well, the collaboration and coordination across government has led to less replication and a more focussed approach on services and targeted programs.

The work of the *Generational Change Reform Program* has also complemented other major government strategies and plans including the *Alcohol Harm Minimisation Action Plan*, *Closing the Gap*, the *Child and Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Plan*, *NT Aboriginal Affairs Strategy*, *Local Decision Making* and the development of a Treaty for the Northern Territory.

The reform is reported against six portfolios. Key achievements so far under each portfolio include the following.



1 *Productivity Commission 2020 Report on Government Services*
2 *Table 16A2, Productivity Commission 2020 Report on Government Services*
3 *Table 17A5, Productivity Commission 2020 Report on Government Services*

Putting Children and Families at the Centre

- The opening of two new Child and Family Centres in Tennant Creek and Katherine and the contracted partnership with Aboriginal Organisations to establish centres in Kalkarindji and Darwin's Northern Suburbs. All established through partnering with local Aboriginal leaders and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.
- Funding to seven communities with a total of 32 local initiatives aimed at enhancing family and children services through the Child and Family Community Fund.
- Expanded the Healthy Under 5 Kids: Partnering with Families program across the Northern Territory including the development of eLearning tools to support remote practitioners.
- Funding provided to four Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to implement and provide the Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting (MECSH) program to improve parenting outcomes and ensure children are ready to start school.
- Established Families as First Teachers: Stay Play Learn programs in 15 communities, including the recruitment of community hearing workers who provide ear and hearing health promotion.
- Partnering with the Menzies School of Health Research (Menzies) for the 'Hearing for Learning' Program Joint Venture initiative research project.
- Amended the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* to provide for early support for families, reduce the number of children in out-of-home care and improve court orders and the legal process to better protect children.

Improving Care and Protection

- Embedded the Signs of Safety practice framework focussing on holistic family safety assessments and support.
- An almost 80 percent increase in intensive family support over two years.
- Implementation and operation of the new Housing for Young People's Program in Darwin with arrangements underway for a similar service to be established in Alice Springs and Katherine.
- Partnered with Aboriginal organisations to introduce the Aboriginal Carers Growing Up Aboriginal Children grants.
- An increase in the proportion of Aboriginal children in care with relatives/kin or other Aboriginal carers.
- Collaborated with Tangentyere Council to develop *Children, Safe, Family Together* – a comprehensive culturally safe Aboriginal kinship care services model, which has been recognised nationally.
- Launched the new Intensive Therapeutic Residential Care (ITRC) model for up to 100 young people, funded at \$200 million over five years.

“There’s actually been significant improvement throughout the (child protection) sector for the first time in decades.”

National Association for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect, National Manager Prevention Strategies Lesley Taylor
(*Northern Territory News*, 8 Sept. 2020)



Improving Youth Justice

- The opening of the new \$3.53 million Palmerston Youth Drop-in Centre - \$7.42 million in grant funding has been provided for this service over five years.
- Invested \$4.54 million across five years to develop new short and long-term youth intervention work camps at Seven Emu Station near Borroloola.
- The first Back on Track youth bush camps held for young people who have a high risk of offending and re-offending. The bush camps were operated by Creating a Safe, Supportive Environment (CASSE) and MacDonnell Regional Council Youth Services (MacYouth) and include specialist case management to change behaviour.
- Finalised designs for new youth justice facilities in Darwin and Alice Springs.
- Released the Tennant Creek Youth Action Plan – developed with a local youth action group, the plan reflects the voices of young Tennant Creek residents and their aspirations for the future of their community.
- Released the Back on Track: Cutting Youth Crime Plan to tackle youth crime by investing in programs that provide early intervention and prevention, diversion, consequences, rehabilitation and alternatives to detention.
- Passed amendments to the *Youth Justice & Related Legislation Amendment Act*. The amendments give police and the courts more discretion to choose the right consequences for young offenders, remove barriers to youth diversion programs, improve the application of bail and ensure consistency in young people's access to legal assistance, information, and privacy.
- Community Youth Diversion grants of \$3.155 million provided to non-government organisations in Alice Springs, Katherine, Ngukurr and Darwin to establish local programs that change the behaviour of young people and divert them away from the youth justice system.
- A new Aboriginal Elders and Mentors Program launched at the Alice Springs and Darwin youth detention centres. Developed in partnership with North Australia Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), the program brings strong Aboriginal role models into the youth detention centres.
- Renewed Community Youth Diversion (CYD) programs in more than 12 remote communities across the Top End and Central Australia providing \$3.155 million in grants to new service providers.

Strengthening Governance and Systems

- Delivered the first Story of Our Children and Young People publication – a significant outline of data across almost 100 measures. The publication supports outcomes-based monitoring and evaluation across the Territory, split across regional boundaries. Planning for the next version is underway.
- Through the Children and Families Tripartite Forum, began the development of a 10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the Northern Territory. The Forum also provided guidance on the Productivity Commission's study into expenditure for children in the Northern Territory.
- Increased the resources of the Office of the Children's Commission by \$580,000 per annum (from July 2018).
- Increased the uptake of Local Decision Making principles by agencies. For example, the establishment of more Community Led Schools and Local Engagement and Decision Making Committees.
- Continued development of the project to deliver a new client information system and data brokerage service for child protection and youth justice. The government has allocated \$66.9 million over five years for the project which will also provide cross-government data integration.
- Improvements to the complaints system, encouraging more feedback, particularly from children in care.
- Began co-developing the Coordinated Funding Framework with the Commonwealth Government in partnership with the Children and Families Tripartite Forum.

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

- Signed up to the National Standards for Working with Children Check and Child Safe Standards and Principles.
- Implemented a sexual abuse prevention education program for children in care.
- Amended *Teacher Registration Act 2004* to expand the Teachers Registration Board's power to take disciplinary actions and increase transparency in decision making.

Supporting Survivors and Victims

- Became a full participant in the National Redress Scheme.
- The Northern Territory Redress Coordination team continued to investigate and process claims relating to Northern Territory institutions.
- Continued to support victim offender conferencing.
- Launched the first Northern Territory Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework 2020-2028.
- Introduced the Safe, Respected and Free from Violence Prevention Grant program to fund violence prevention activities across the Northern Territory.

"Some of the child protection and out-of-home care data suggests that those reforms are beginning to have a discernible positive impact on the wellbeing of children in the Northern Territory."

Office of the Children's Commissioner
Annual Report 2018-19.

Investing in Generational Change

In response to the Royal Commission into the Prevention and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory, the Northern Territory Government has been investing in generational change for children, families and communities.

In 2018, the new funding allocated included:

| | | | |
|----------------------------|--|---------------------------|---|
| \$229.6 MILLION | in new funding over five years to reform and improve services for children, young people and families experiencing vulnerability. Including: | | |
| \$11.4 MILLION | over four years to establish the coordination hubs and expand the number of Child and Family Centres to seventeen | \$5.7 MILLION | over four years to work with families and introduce family group conferencing |
| \$1.2 MILLION | over three years to operate the Youth and Children's Court in Alice Springs | \$5.2 MILLION | over four years to support Care Leavers to access and secure housing |
| \$2.8 MILLION | over four years to improve care and protection practice | \$5.4 MILLION | over four years to transform out-of-home care |
| \$9.9 MILLION | over four years to divert young people from crime and stop future offending | \$12.9 MILLION | over four years to effectively and constructively engage young people |
| \$22.9 MILLION | over four years to improve youth detention operations and reduce recidivism | \$71.4 MILLION | to replace Don Dale and Alice Springs Youth Detention Centres |
| \$2.5 MILLION | over four years to expand the oversight of child protection and youth justice systems | \$8.9 MILLION | over four years to empower local decision making and community-led reform |
| \$2.5 MILLION | over four years to build the evidence base for approaches and evaluate what's working | \$66.9 MILLION | over five years to develop a new platform to manage cases and share information |

It built on the 2017-18 investment which included:

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| \$18.2 MILLION | per year invested in strengthening youth diversion and bail support | \$1.1 MILLION | over ten years invested in improving housing in remote Aboriginal communities |
| \$1.75 MILLION | per year for after-hours services for young people in Alice Springs and Tennant Creek | \$4 MILLION | per year supporting Families as First Teachers sites across the Territory |
| \$32 MILLION | over four years for early intervention and support for school students with challenging behaviours, disabilities and mental illness | \$92 MILLION | over four years invested to strengthen schools and support services for students |
| \$15.5 MILLION | per year to provide specialised services to tackle alcohol misuse and dependence | \$3 MILLION | per year invested in Family Enhanced Support Services for earlier, better support to families |
| \$5 MILLION | per year to support increased police resourcing and recruitment | \$1 MILLION | per year to expand the Nurse Home Visiting Program |

Generational Change Reform Schema

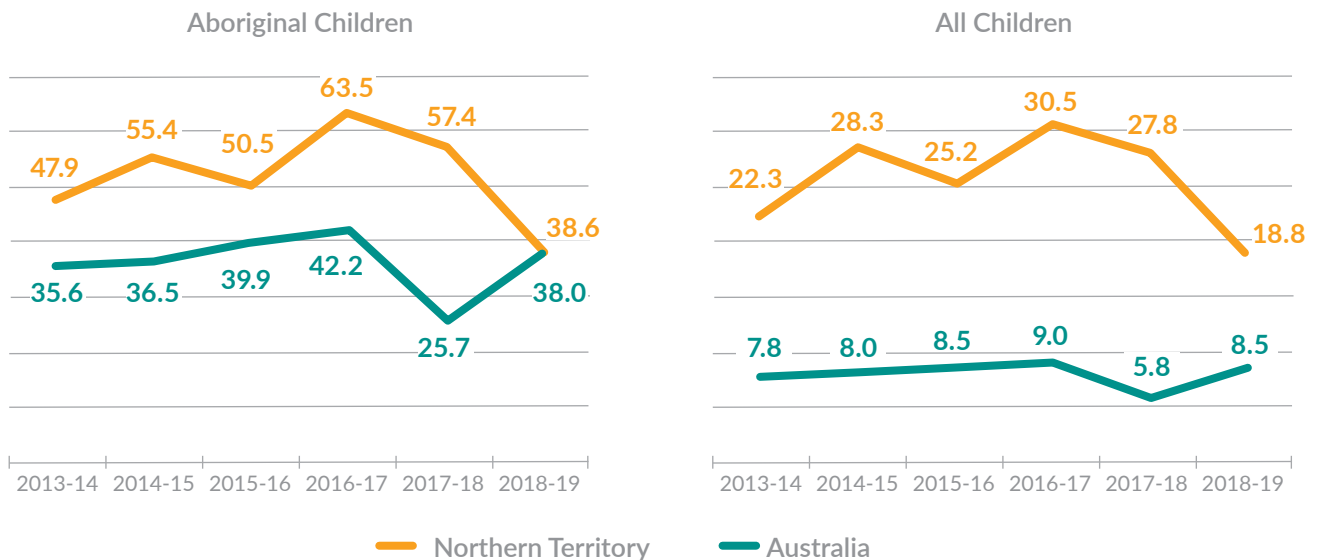
| 1. Putting Children and Families at the Centre | | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1.1 Prevention and Early Support | 1.2 Work with Families and Children | 1.3 A Legal System for Families | 1.4 Support Transition and Restoration | | |
| Ready to Learn | Family Group Conferencing | Representation and Advocacy | Supported Accommodation for Care Leavers | | |
| Getting it Right for Life | Preserve Contact with Family | A Single Act for Children | Transition from Detention and Through-Care | | |
| Family Support Services | Respect Children's Voices | Training for the Legal Profession | Transition from Out-of-Home Care | | |
| Children and Family Centres | | Youth and Children's Court | | | |
| | | Youth Parole | | | |
| 2. Improving Care and Protection | | | 3. Improving Youth Justice | | |
| 2.1 Care and Protection Practice | 2.2 Children in the Child Protection and Youth Justice Systems | 2.3 Transforming Out of Home Care | 3.1 Police and Young People | 3.2 Keep Children out of Detention | 3.3 Youth Detention that Works |
| Reporting and Investigation | Meeting the needs of Children in Care who are involved with Youth Justice | Foster and Kinship Care and Aboriginal Out-of-Home Care | Custody Notification | Youth Engagement Grants | Youth Detention Operations |
| Clinical Practice and Case Management | | Trauma Informed and Therapeutic Care | | | Youth Detention Infrastructure |
| Care and Protection Orders | Responding to complex behaviour in Out-of-Home Care | Out-of-Home Care Governance and Oversight | Police Youth Division | Youth Justice Programs | Youth Detention Services and Programs |
| 4. Strengthening Governance and Systems | | | | | |
| 4.1 Advocacy, Accountability and Quality Improvement | 4.2 Managing and Sharing Information | 4.3 Community-led Responses | 4.4 Evidence-based Practice | 4.5 Coordinated Effort Towards Better Outcomes | |
| Commission for Children and Young People | Information Management and Sharing | Local Decision Making | Research and Evaluation | Operational Coordination and Service Integration | |
| Internal Accountability and Complaints | | | Reporting and Monitoring | Strategic Coordination | |
| | | | | Developing Workforce Capacity | |
| 5. Preventing Child Sexual Abuse | | | 6. Supporting Survivors and Victims | | |
| 5.1 Child Safe Organisations | 5.2 Sexual Health and Harm | 6.1 Redress and Civil Claims | 6.2 Support and Professional Care | 6.3 Supporting Survivors and Victims through the Justice System | |
| National Child Safe Standards | Problematic and Harmful Sexual Behaviours | National Redress Scheme | Community Support Services | Limitation Periods | |
| Foster and Kinship Carer Register | Online Safety | Civil Claims | Counselling and Psychological Care | Police and Survivors and Victims | |
| Working with Children Checks | Child and Community Education | Liability and Non-Delegable Duty | Institutional Support | Survivors and Victims in Court | |
| Teacher Registration | Children in Out of Home Care | | Sexual Assault Services | | |

Outcomes of the Reforms

Care and Protection

Children subject to child protection substantiation per 1,000 children

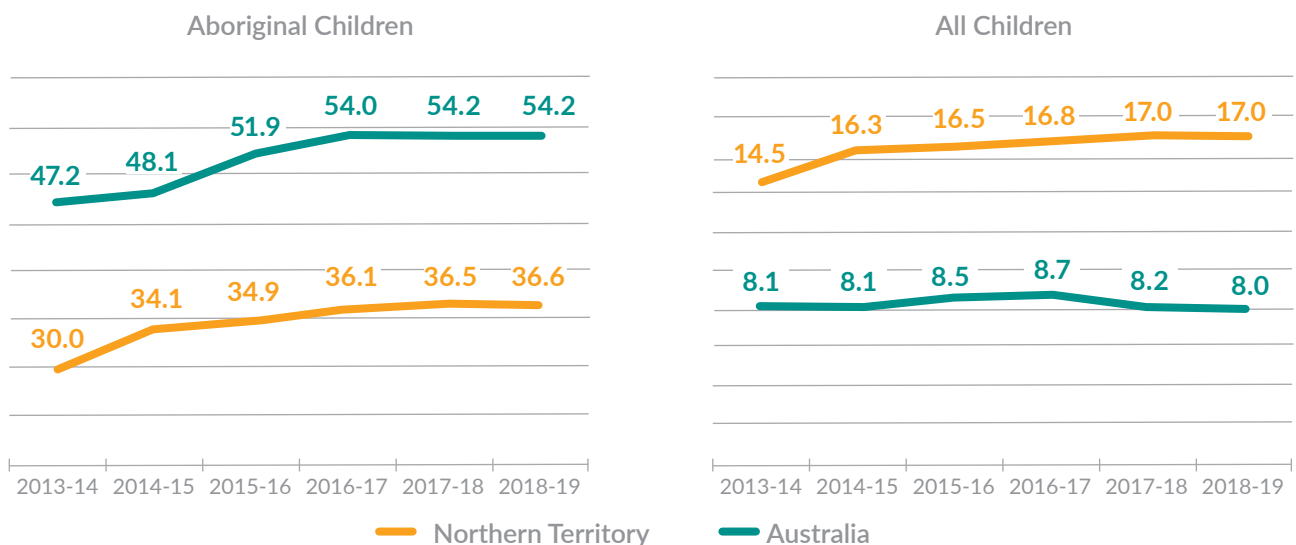
Source: Report on Government Services 2020 - Table 16A1



Since 2016-17, there has been a significant decrease in the number of children subject to substantiation for child abuse and neglect in the Northern Territory. Between 2016-17 and 2018-19, there was a 39% decrease in the rate of Aboriginal children substantiated, with the NT rate for Aboriginal children now comparable to the Australian rate.

Children in Out of Home Care at 30 June per 1,000 children

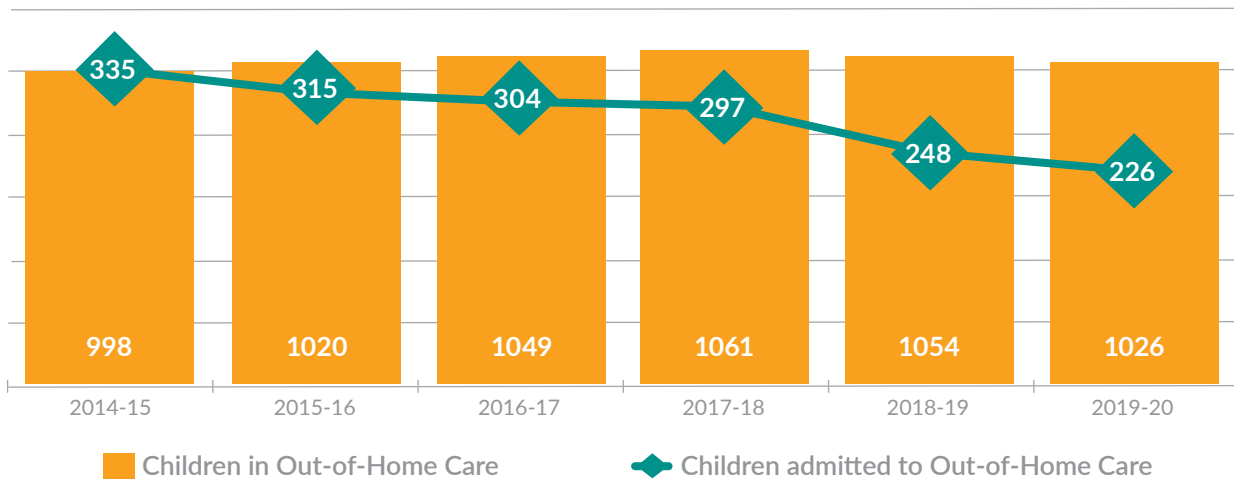
Source: Report on Government Services 2020 - Table 16A2



The proportion of Aboriginal Children in out-of-home care in the Northern Territory continues to be well below the Australian rate. However given the disproportionate representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care around Australia and the size of the Aboriginal population in the NT, the NT continues to have the highest rate of children in out-of-home care in Australia.

Children in Out-of-Home Care and Children Admitted to Out-of-Home Care

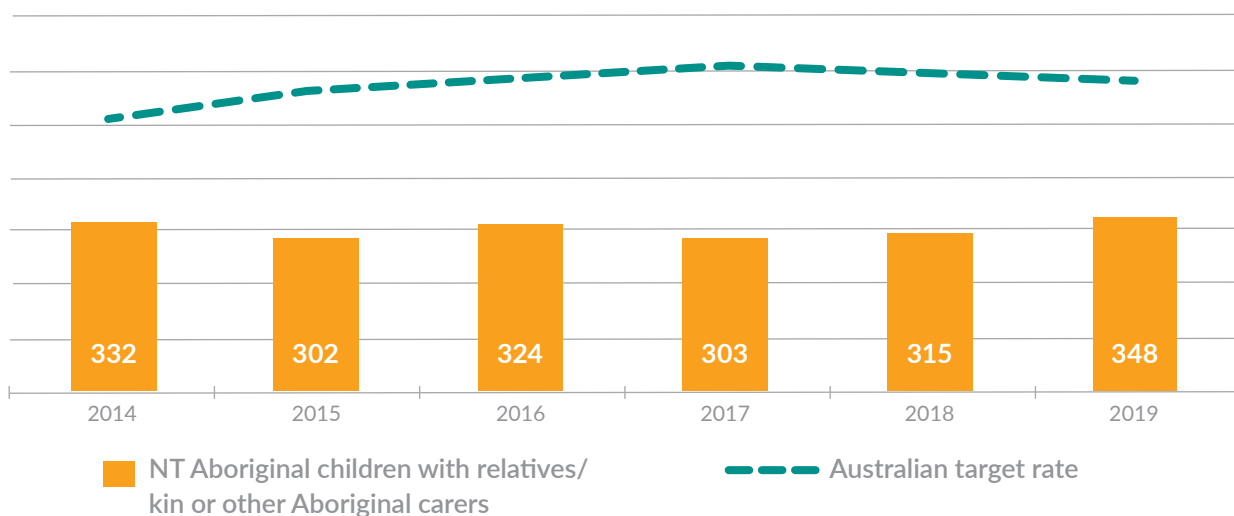
Source: Territory Families Annual Report 2019-20



The overall number of children in out-of-home care has decreased since 2017-18 and reflects a significant reduction in the number of children admitted to out-of-home care each year. Between 2015-16 and 2019-20, the number of children admitted to out-of-home care each year in the NT decreased by 28%.

Aboriginal children in care with relatives/kin or other Aboriginal carers

Source: Report on Government Services 2020 - Table 16A21

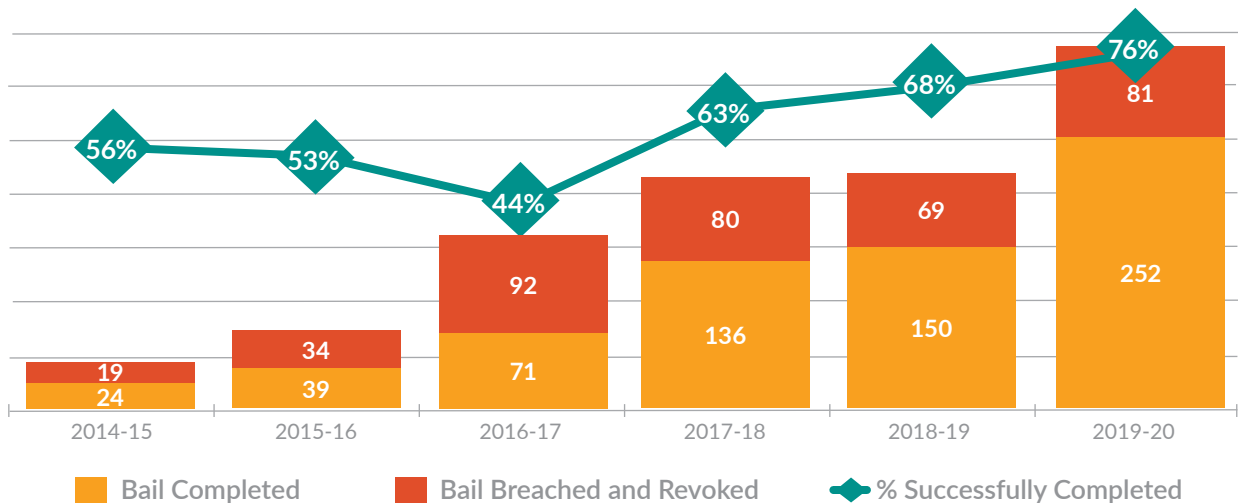


Since 2017, the number of Aboriginal children placed with Aboriginal carers has increased by 14% in the Northern Territory, however the total proportion remains well below the Australian average rate. During 2020, the Northern Territory Government has expanded partnerships with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations to engage and support Aboriginal carers through the Aboriginal Carers Growing up Aboriginal Children program.

Youth Justice

Bail Orders for Young People in the Northern Territory

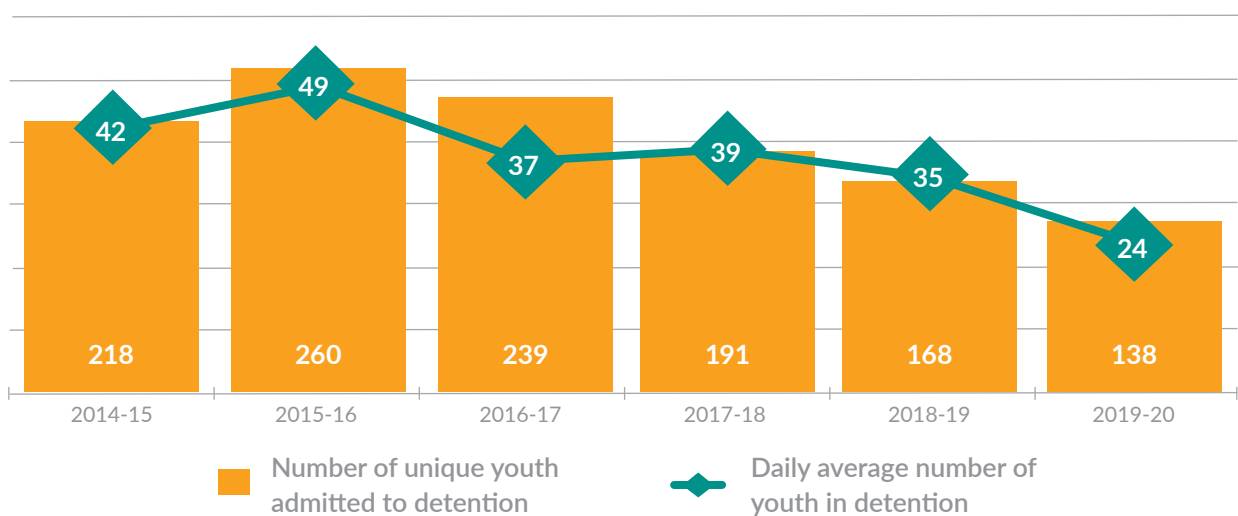
Source: Territory Families Annual Report 2019-20



Since 2015-16, the number of bail orders for young people in the Northern Territory has increased more than 3 fold. Over the same period the proportion of young people successfully completing bail has also increased from 53% of bail orders in 2015-16 to 76% of orders in 2019-20.

Youth Detention in the Northern Territory

Source: Territory Families Annual Report 2019-20

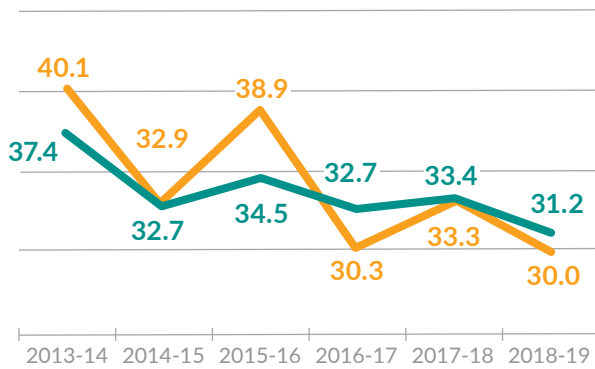


Since 2015-16 there has been significant reductions in the number of young people admitted to detention each year, and the daily average of young people in detention. Between 2015-16 and 2019-20, the number of young people admitted to youth detention at least once during the year has decreased by 47% with 122 fewer young people admitted. Over the same period the daily average number of young people in detention has decreased by 51%.

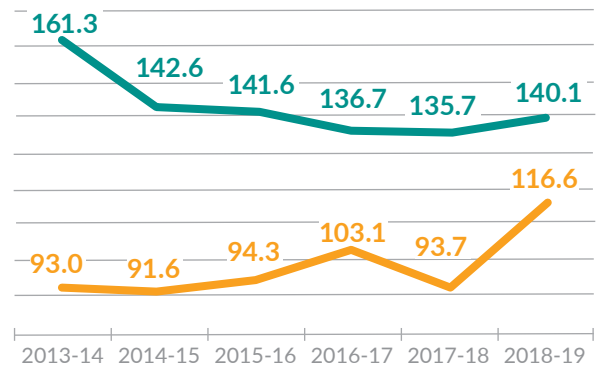
Aboriginal young people in detention and subject to community-based supervision

Report on Government Services 2020 - Tables 17A5, 17A6

Rate of Aboriginal young people in detention on an average day per 10,000 young people (Table 17A.5)



Rate of Aboriginal young people subject to community-based supervision per 10,000 young people (Table 17A.5)



— Northern Territory — Australia

Considering the nationally comparable data reported in the Report on Government Services, the rate of Aboriginal young people in detention in the NT has been below the national rate for the last three years. In 2018-19, the Northern Territory also recorded a significant increase in the rate of Aboriginal young people subject to community based supervision as further alternative to detention programs were implemented.



Putting Children and Families at the Centre

This reform approach includes early intervention and prevention projects and programs designed to support families earlier and avoid issues escalating into crises. The portfolio also includes programs to reorientate the legal system towards a child and family centred approach, and actions to ensure that the voices of children and families are heard and respected.



Putting Children and Families at the Centre

The portfolio has four program areas: Prevention and Early Support, Work with Families and Children, A Legal System for Families, Support Transition and Restoration. These ensure initiatives are in-step with the aim to help Territory children and their families to be healthy, happy, safe and thriving.

1.1 Prevention and Early Support

Families and children are being helped in culturally secure ways to keep them strong and make communities safer.

Prevention is better than a cure and early support is vital to help ensure the health of the family unit and the broader community.

The sooner Territory families and children are on their way to thriving, the less intervention is needed in future years, and a healthier society is the result.

Initiatives range from assistance and intervention actions through to targeted strategies and dedicated structures.

The achievements and continued work in this area are an investment into the future.

1.1.1 Ready to Learn

All Northern Territory children are born ready to learn – we need to tap into their potential, create the ideal learning environment and help develop their love of learning.

The continued success of initiatives such as Families as First Teachers (FaFT) Stay Play Learn, Literacy for Parents and language, conversational reading and pre-numeracy programs, work towards creating a successful transition to “big” school.

The FaFT program has expanded across the Northern Territory with all 15 identified FaFT Stay Play Learn sites operational. The Stay Play Learn programs deliver quality early learning and build parents’ capacity to engage with their children’s early learning. They also provide a partnership between parents, schools and their communities to improve the home learning environment. Additionally, Community Hearing Workers have been employed in communities to work within the FaFT Program to provide ear and hearing health promotion to families.

Literacy for Parents programs build parenting capacity as well as providing further education for parents. It increases the family involvement in a child’s early learning programs.

Under the Northern Territory Government’s *Starting Early for a Better Future* reform a commitment was made to “expand a range of language, conversational reading and pre-numeracy programs for children and families throughout a range of services”.

Initiatives aiming to meet that commitment as well as help create a better, more encouraging learning environment include The Little Scientist Program and the NT Preschool Maths Games. The Little Scientist Program is training for educators to gain confidence to deliver Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) learnings to young children.

The NT Preschool Maths Games were the first in a suite of preschool games developed through a partnership with the University of Melbourne to enhance the STEM curriculum in Northern Territory preschools and early childhood services.

Responses from program participants have been positive and supportive.

Most of the initiatives instigated under the Ready to Learn banner have been introduced and are now ongoing programs.

Measuring the success of these initiatives is ongoing as is monitoring their progress to ensure they remain current and relevant.

Putting Children and Families at the Centre

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|---|--|-----------|
| Families as First Teachers – Stay Play Learn programs | Using the Abecedarian Approach Australia to build parents' capacity to engage in their children's early learning | COMPLETED |
| FaFT – community hearing workers | Establish community hearing worker positions to work with the FaFT program | COMPLETED |
| Early Childhood Education and Care Quality | Education Department work with early childhood and care providers to improve the quality of services | COMPLETED |
| Language, conversational reading and pre-numeracy programs: Little Scientists, Reggio Emilia NT Pilot | Little Scientists helps early childhood educators support young children to explore Science Technology Engineering and Maths The Reggio Emilia approach values the child as central to their own learning. Based on the principles of respect, responsibility and community | COMPLETED |
| NT Remote Assistant Teacher Preschool Package | Tiered and scaffolded support for remote assistant teachers leading out of scope preschool programs | COMPLETED |
| Family involvement and child attendance in early learning programs: Literacy for Parents | Builds parenting capacity as well as supporting them to achieve age appropriate benchmarks in literacy | COMPLETED |
| Review of NT Early Childhood Transitioning Policy Package | Examining the impact of the package which supports the sector to provide families with inclusive and welcoming transition to school experiences | COMPLETED |

1.1.2 Getting it Right for Life

In order to encourage a consistent healthy approach over a lifetime, it's important to "get it right for life". It's about ensuring all Territory children are born healthy, remain healthy and thrive.

Working towards success in this vital area of nurturing is not a short term proposition, but one that requires ongoing work within all programs which strive towards embedding a positive impact for children and families in the Northern Territory.

Initiatives under this program are as wide ranging as they are necessary – targeting important areas of child health and addressing the challenges in early childhood, hearing health and early intervention. The program also includes the NT Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Strategy – a nationally aligned strategy tackling lifelong damaging yet entirely preventable disease.

Addressing Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) in the Northern Territory 2018-2024 is a strategy which outlines a whole of government approach and includes a focus on prevention, education and reduction of the impact of FASD on families and the community. The strategy is an important element of the Generational Change Reform.

Another key initiative is the Healthy Under 5 Kids: Partnering with Families (HU5K-PF) program. This is a standardised universal child health and developmental screening program, which supports families with children 0-5 years old and promotes a partnership between the family and health professional to empower and build the confidence of parents and care givers.

Expansion of this program across the Northern Territory has continued and included developing eLearning tools to support remote practitioners to deliver the HU5K-PF program.

PROGRAM STUDY: *Helping families – helping communities*

From yarning circles through to reductions in drug use, the positive influence of the Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home Visiting (MECSH) program continues across the Northern Territory.

MECSH is a sustained nurse home visiting program specifically targeted to improve outcomes for children and their families by building parents' capacity to provide safe, responsive care and a home environment that supports children's learning.

It is one of many initiatives operated through the Department of Health and helping address the Generational Change Reform area of Prevention and Early Support.

MECSH is operating through four Northern Territory Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHO) - Anyinginyi Health in the Barkly Region, Miwatj Health in East Arnhem, and Katherine West Health Board and Sunrise Health in the Big Rivers Region.

Among the many achievements of the program in the past 12 months:

- There has been an increase in newborn and four-month vaccination visits
- Local community workers are bringing a significant number of families into clinics for overdue immunisations and child health follow-ups

- Some mothers receiving MECSH visits are now attending child health visits more regularly
- At some of the yarning circles provided by MECSH staff, community members including the men have been talking about family violence
- One mother has reported reducing her substance use with the support of regular MECSH home-visits, and another MECSH mother, arriving back in community after having her baby, proudly informed the MECSH nurse that she had given up smoking.

The program is a proactive, positive approach. Besides the focus on the family unit, the program is proving to be valuable at a community level.

For example, at one location, MECSH program staff are collaborating with the local council and non-government organisations to facilitate family education picnics and cooking demonstrations.

And community men's groups are making bookcases and garden boxes out of recycled barge crates, building fire pits for community use and planning salad gardens – coming together because of the MECSH efforts.

The MECSH program will undergo a full independent evaluation by Menzies School of Health Research.



PROGRAM STUDY: *Partnering with Families*

The Healthy Under 5 Kids: Partnering with Families (HU5K-PF) program builds partnerships between families and health professionals. It provides the care and support needed to empower families to become confident parents and caregivers and aims to support optimal child health and development.

Testimony from one on-the-ground health professional:

“The roll out of the HU5K-PF program to remote communities in Central Australia has enabled clinicians to identify remote living children that have potential developmental delays, this has enabled early referral and intervention.

“In one remote community a family meets with me every time I visit the community, as they see my visit as a way of extra support. I have been able to liaise with appropriate services, the hospital or with the Children’s Development Team to assist the family and to help explain things in a way they understand. Some times when I drive into community I see the mother in the distance smiling and waving, she comes to the clinic not long after so I can hold her baby and check him over.

“This young mum appears more confident within herself and her parenting skills. She has been empowered with knowledge to bring up her sons.

“In another community I have been able to build a relationship with a father. He visits the clinic every time he sees me in the community, he talks to me glowingly about his son and his hope for him for the future. He loves knowing his growth is tracking well and his blood is strong. This father is praised every visit for the tremendous job he is doing in bringing up his son and the way he is teaching him his own culture with special bush trips together.

“I have also heard other Remote Child and Family Health Nurses talk of similar experiences since the HU5K-PF program began in Central Australia. The introduction of the HU5K-PF program has helped to build relationships and engagement with families in remote communities.”

From Borroloola to Minjilang – HU5K-PF positive impacts

A Borroloola HU5K-PF and Family Health Nurse, has set up a room in the library at Borroloola School, next door to the Families as First Teachers (FaFT) program. She attends at least once a week, joining in activities and completing HU5K-PF and Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) assessments. Families are invited to attend the Primary Health Clinic for immunisations or further treatment and future plans involve offering the NT Childhood Immunisations Schedule at FaFT. The new FaFT based child health program has been a successful collaboration between two organisations with similar goals – enhancing the growth and development of remote community children in their early years.

Minjilang twins Alexandra and Alexia, were the first remote children in the Top End to experience pain free Haemoglobin monitoring. With new Haemoglobin spot check monitoring capabilities, the non-invasive, portable and handheld devices allow for increased coverage and compliance with the Northern Territory’s childhood anaemia reduction program. They have become part of the HU5K-PF service. A low red blood count can be easily and quickly identified and therefore treated earlier. This new point of care test equips our remote health teams significantly better to reduce the rates and impact of childhood anaemia.

Putting Children and Families at the Centre

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--|--|-----------|
| Maternal Early Childhood Sustained Home visiting (MECSH) program | A service delivery strategy aiming to provide a range of family supports provided by registered nurses | COMPLETED |
| Healthy Under 5 Kids: Partnering with Families (HU5K-PF) program | A universal standardised child and family health program for all families with children 0-5 years of age | COMPLETED |
| Family as First Teachers (FaFT) Hearing Health Partnership | Local community members work as part of the FaFT team to promote healthy hearing | COMPLETED |
| Hearing Health Joint Venture 'Hearing for Learning' | Focused on hearing health aiming to address services gaps in identified remote NT communities | COMPLETED |
| NDIS Early Childhood Early Intervention Scheme | Assisting the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme's (NDIS) Early Childhood Early Intervention (ECEI) scheme in the Northern Territory | COMPLETED |
| NT FASD Strategy | A NT Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Plan aligned to the National Strategic FASD Action Plan | COMPLETED |

1.1.3 Family Support Services

A series of reforms aimed at delivering services, with the community sector, to support families and parents to raise strong, healthy and safe children by providing support before, during and after contact with the care and protection system.

The government's commitment to expand the work around the dual pathways model saw the implementation of the Family Enhanced Support Service (FESS). This model supports vulnerable families, diverting them from entering the child protection system by referring them to support services.

The Family Support Services reforms have moved the action further and seen the implementation and embedding of several initiatives including the Family and Children Enquiry Service (FACES), an online reporter tool, the NT Council of Social Services service directory and an Early Intervention Family Support Model (designed by the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory).

In 2019-20 Territory Families commenced 779 Family Support cases and 631 Strengthening Families cases to

provide active support and intervention for families.⁴

For the same time frame, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare Report highlighted a 79 percent increase in the number of families receiving intensive family support in the Northern Territory.

Work continues on collaborative funding and planning sessions between the Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government agencies for Family Support.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|-------------------------|---|-----------|
| Family Support Services | Relevant support services aimed at helping families avoid the child protection system | COMPLETED |

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Putting Children and Families at the Centre

1.1.4 Child and Family Centres

For children and families in community settings, connections are important.

They bond the community, help retain harmony and are vital for requesting and receiving important support services.

The Child and Family Centres provide a focal point to coordinate the delivery of support services for children and their families within a community.

The Government has committed to establishing 11 new centres and expanding the six existing centres.

Each centre is unique according to its location but all work to a common model developed in consultation with the Children and Families Tripartite Forum.

The centres are developed with local Aboriginal leaders and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations with local families encouraged to participate.

New centres established so far: Big Rivers (Kalano Association) and Tennant Creek (Julalikari). Work continues with Wadeye (Thamarrur Development Corporation), Kalkarindji (Gurindji Corporation), East Arnhem, Alice Springs and the northern suburbs of Darwin (CAAPS).

Expansions and planning for expansions have been underway for the six existing Child and Family Centres operating in Gunbalunya, Larapinta (Alice Springs), Maningrida, Ngukurr, Palmerston and Yuendumu.

Also connected to the Child and Family Centres is the Child and Family Community Fund which allocates up to \$260,000 per year to communities with the Centres to fund priorities for families of children from birth to five years old.

After many requests, a flexible approach was used for the latest allocations (May/June 2020) under the fund. Priority was given to where funding needed to be reprioritised to support community resilience to COVID-19.

Establishing and expanding the centres and continuing the Child and Family Community Fund are embedded projects which continue to contribute positively towards the wellbeing of local children, their families and their communities.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|---------------------------------|--|----------|
| Establishment of 11 new centres | Child and Family Centres are a focal point for integrated services for children and their families | UNDERWAY |
| Child and Family Community Fund | For communities with centres with priorities for families of children from birth to five years old | UNDERWAY |



PROGRAM STUDY: *Child and Family Centres Kick Off*

A place belonging to families – Marlungku-kari

Tennant Creek families have a new place to find support.

The new Child and Family Centre named in the Warumungu language as “a place belonging to families”, is operated by Julalikari Council Aboriginal Corporation.

Open in late June, Marlungku-kari Child and Family Centre will assist families in Tennant Creek to access quality and culturally responsive programs and services that will address their needs.

Located in the Tennant Creek Primary School grounds off Thompson Street, next to the preschool and co-located with Families as First Teachers (FaFT), the Centre has been well received with local families showing interest in the programs.

The Northern Territory Government is investing \$11.4 million over four years to establish 11 additional Aboriginal Community Controlled Child and Family Centres expanding the network of centres to 17 (six already exist).

With the opening of the Marlungku-kari Child and Family Centre, there are now eight centres in the Territory. The Big Rivers Child and Family Centre in Katherine operated by Kalano Community Association, opened in February this year.

The services and programs at each centre will be driven by the local community, as part of Local Decision Making principles, and are designed to help families and communities build their capacity to raise happy and healthy children.



Help flows around the Big Rivers.

Opened in February 2020 then closed for COVID-19 measures in April 2020, the Big Rivers Child and Family Centre has had a challenging beginning.

In a demonstration of versatility, the Big Rivers Child and Family Centre focus was redirected to providing assistance to community members needing to get home.

Operators the Kalano Community Association restarted the centre after a couple of months in lockdown to the delight of local families looking to access the support services offered by the centre.

Before the lockdown, the centre had been gaining momentum seeing 785 people, including 270 children, through its doors five weeks into operation.

Following its reopening in early June, the Centre saw a steady flow of client return with numbers increasing each week (as at 30 Jun 2020).

Community initiatives for community fund

The Child and Family Community Fund is open to on-the-ground initiatives in each community with a Child and Family Centre. The fund allocates up to \$260,000 a year to fund priorities for families of children from birth to age five years.

The activities are chosen by the local community. Among those funded in 2019/20 include:

- A Baby Families and Schools together (Baby FAST) program at Ngukurr
- Trauma informed resources in Warlpiri language at Yuendumu
- Revitalising Yuendumu parks to be more child-friendly and functional
- Community Laundromat at Gunbalanya
- Gunbalanya Young Family Program
- Transport 25-35 seater bus for Big Rivers region.

Putting Children and Families at the Centre

CASE STUDY: *Working together for stronger families*

A mother in a remote community was struggling with excessive marijuana use and deteriorating mental health. The mother has primary care of her daughter, and her maternal grandmother reported concerns for both mother and child, requesting support to help her address her issues.

The grandmother developed a good rapport with the Territory Families case worker, welcoming her into the home to talk about her worries. During interactions with family, the local clinic continued to raise concerns for the wellbeing of the child, due to the mother's presentations at the clinic reporting thoughts of self-harm. The grandmother was identified as a strong support for her granddaughter and she was able to advocate on her behalf and encourage her to voluntarily attend and receive treatment from the Mental Health Unit, while the grandmother cared for the child. The worker assisted the grandmother to enrol the child at crèche while she received respite for a few hours a day. Upon the mother's exit from the Mental Health Unit she resumed care of her daughter, reduced her cannabis use, ended a violent relationship and made the decision to relocate back to her community of origin. Reports indicate there has been no further contact with the mother and child.

1.2 Work with Families and Children

Families are actively engaged as partners in improving outcomes for their children and their communities, and are involved in decisions affecting them.

The Work with Families and Children program is aimed at ensuring children and families are involved in the design and delivery of services, and services reflect their needs and preferences.

It's important for those who need the programs and services are informed and active in any decisions regarding their participation, to "own" their involvement and to know they are supported.

Projects and initiatives under this program range from measures to preserve contact with family (for incarcerated youth) through to deeper engagement of children on relevant policy issues. This work is involved and complex and continues to be delivered.

CASE STUDY: *Collaboration leads to family*

In a case involving three children from a Central Australian community being taken into provisional care in Alice Springs, Women's Safe House and Remote Family Support Service (RFSS) staff worked tirelessly on a solution for their care. Through close collaboration with the remote staff, they were able to locate the families of the children in community and lead a family meeting in community to discuss safety concerns. The RFSS worker put a safety plan in place that was supported by the Team Leader and the children were returned to the care of family.



Putting Children and Families at the Centre

1.2.1 Family Group Conferencing

Family Group Conferencing brings children, young people, families, service providers and child protection professionals together to discuss child safety and protection concerns. The discussions are aimed at developing and implementing agreed responses to ensure a child's safety and wellbeing.

The suggestion through the recommendations of the RCPDCNT was supported in principle by the Northern Territory Government.

A Family Group Conferencing service delivery model has been co-designed with the legal sector. Further consideration is required to ensure the co-designed model is relevant to current operations. This will occur through the Single Act.

Meanwhile, through the Signs of Safety Practice Framework, family conferencing has become a key feature in child protection case work. It is an embedded practice, under Signs of Safety, which offers many advantages including encouraging an important collaborative approach by all parties.

The Signs of Safety Practice Framework also encourages working relationships which give parents and families "a voice", empowering them to be at the centre of decision making.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|---------------------------|---|-----------------|
| Family Group Conferencing | A mechanism to engage and empower families in decision making | BEHIND SCHEDULE |

1.2.2 Preserve Contact with Family

For young detainees, preservation of contact with family and family support is an important element of rehabilitation.

To help address this, the Northern Territory Government committed to removing restrictions on contact with family in youth detention and introducing appropriate mechanisms and supports for detainees to maintain connection with family while in detention, such as communicating using video technology.

Initiatives in this program include a review of detainee security ratings, development of better remote telephony connections and encouraging and facilitating more face-to-face visits.

Meanwhile investments have been made in video conferencing at the current youth detention centres. As well, there are no restrictions on contact with family in youth detention, and visiting hours have been increased on weekends to strengthen and preserve family relationships.

This has an ongoing impact of enhancing the rehabilitation of young detainees.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|---------------------------|--|-----------|
| Detainee security ratings | All three measures are designed to maintain and encourage contact between detainees and their family – to provide a family friendly environment at detention centres and use technology to support contact | COMPLETED |
| Remote telephony | | |
| Face-to-face visits | | |

Putting Children and Families at the Centre

1.2.3 Respect Children's Voices

To better understand the issues faced by children and young people it's important to actively listen to what they have to say. Creating an environment of trust as well as implementing mechanisms to enable better capture of children's voices are important elements in respecting their views.

The Northern Territory Government agreed with the RCPDCNT recommendations providing for a mechanism "to enable children and young people to participate in the development and implementation of policy relating to, and any rules of, (out-of-home care and youth detention) institutions".

The government has implemented a number of initiatives which are delivering positive outcomes and providing platforms for children and young people to be heard.

From the Youth Advisory Group at Darwin's youth detention facility and regular meetings between Territory Families' executives and young people in care through to funding the CREATE Foundation to support young people in care and care leavers to advocate for their rights – many strong and effective initiatives have been introduced and continue to provide a vital service.

Like many other initiatives undertaken through the *Generational Change Reform Program*, these are implemented and ongoing.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|---|--|-----------|
| Mechanisms for children to engage in policy/legislation | A way to ensure children and young people in the care and protection and youth justice systems get a chance to express their views on policy and legislation | COMPLETED |
| Detainee representation | Providing a means for young detainees to be heard | COMPLETED |
| Child involvement in decision making | A way to ensure children in care are involved in their care and case planning | COMPLETED |

CASE STUDY: A simple request – instant action

The Executive Leadership Group (ELG) of Territory Families has been listening very closely to local children in care. At least twice a year the ELG hosts a group of kids in care with the help of the CREATE Foundation.

The body representing the voices of children and young people with an out-of-home care experience, CREATE is a key stakeholder and contractor.

At one of the ELG and CREATE kids meetings many thoughts and ideas were put forward except for one shy 13-year-old who said he didn't have anything much to say.

As the meeting continued however, the young man found his voice and finally spoke up.

He told the meeting he had been in care a few times and every time he went to a carer "they know everything about me but I know nothing about them".

He simply asked if there was a way he could find out a little about his carer before being sent to live with them.

The ELG acted upon the genuine plea and as a result, those going into care now receive a carer profile before placement. A simple request fulfilled which speaks volumes.



Putting Children and Families at the Centre

1.3 A Legal System for Families

Children, young people and families involved in legal matters will be effectively engaged through a culturally appropriate and family-focussed legal system.

The legal system must be fair and accessible and never more so than those parts of the system dealing with children and families.

The Northern Territory Government is developing a child and family focussed legal system that acknowledges those in contact with, or at risk of being in contact with the child protection and youth justice systems often have complex and multifaceted needs.

This is not about completely changing or reinventing the system. It is about working towards a more trauma informed and culturally secure approach for challenged and vulnerable families.

Because of the complexity of the challenges in this area, it's important to work on reasonable changes in a steady timeframe. It is important work which should not be rushed. As well, there are a number of dependencies which influence the achievements aimed for under this program. Much is underway with more to be done.

1.3.1 Representation and Advocacy

The RCPDCNT made recommendations pertaining to adequate and available representation for young people in the justice system.

There is continuing work around the proposed Northern Territory Aboriginal Justice Agreement which will aim to:

- reduce reoffending and imprisonment rates of Aboriginal Territorians
- engage and support Aboriginal leadership
- improve justice responses and services to Aboriginal Territorians.

The Government funds the Responsible Adult Support Program and has issued guidelines for representing children.

Additionally, the government committed to ensuring children and young people are represented in contested legal matters and are supported by capable adults.

The Legislative Amendment Advisory Committee advised legislative changes were not necessary as ensuring proper representation and support occurs in practice.

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--|--|-----------|
| Legislative reforms regarding representation | Changes to ensure children and young people are represented in contested legal matters and are supported by capable adults | COMPLETED |
| Law and justice groups | | |



Putting Children and Families at the Centre

1.3.2 A Single Act for Children

The Northern Territory Government committed to conduct “further consultation on the design and content of a Single Act for child safety and wellbeing”.

There have been several necessary legislative amendments since 2017, providing for a range of measures including improved access to legal representation, protecting young people’s rights while in detention, improved care planning and court orders, creating early intervention powers and obligations and better access to bail and diversionary programs.

The significant legislative changes also provided for:

- mandated early assessment, intervention and support to families with child safety concerns;
- reduction in the length of time young people are held in remand;
- improved access to legal assistance while in police custody;
- clarity on use of force, restraints, separation and searches;
- improvements to care planning requirements to ensure they are in language and involve cultural authority; and
- creation of “community youth justice officers”.

The legislative reform program includes work towards a Single Act for Children while providing for necessary changes in the immediate future.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|---------------------------------------|--|----------|
| Establish the Single Act for Children | A single piece of legislation to replace the Care and Protection of Children Act 2007 and the Youth Justice Act 2005 | UNDERWAY |

1.3.3 Training for the Legal Profession

The RCPDCNT recommended officers of the court, lawyers and judges should be trained in youth issues and expert advice sought in matters relating to children with complex needs. The recommendation was supported by the Northern Territory Government which acted with key stakeholders such as the Law Society NT, to implement appropriate training opportunities.

Training programs designed to further understanding and knowledge of children and young people’s development and behaviour have been offered to local judicial staff and legal professionals.

Work continues on sourcing suitable training opportunities. The non-government sector continues to be a significant partner in this work and there are a number of mechanisms available for further input from key stakeholders.

The 2020 Conference Sub-committee was established with representatives from NAAJA, NT Legal Aid Commission (NTLAC), Solicitor for the NT (SFNT), Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) and Attorney General’s Department (AGD) (Courts). The conference was postponed from March 2020 to November 2020, with a focus is on practical skills for practitioners.

Committees have also been formed to tackle targeted training needs. For example, the Children’s Court Training Executive Steering Committee consists of executive managers from NTLAC, NAAJA, the Law Society of the NT (LSNT), DPP and the Managing Judge of the Children’s Court.

There is also a Youth Proceedings Education Committee which is planning to deliver specialised practitioner training.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|-----------------------------------|--|----------|
| Training for the Legal Profession | Increase training opportunities for judicial staff to further their understanding and knowledge of children and young people’s development and behaviour | UNDERWAY |

Putting Children and Families at the Centre

1.3.4 Youth and Children's Court

This project centres around the establishment of a Youth and Children's Court in Alice Springs and the introduction of measures (in both Central Australia and the Top End), which ensure Aboriginal children and families are not disadvantaged in the court due to language or cultural barriers.

The Northern Territory Government committed \$1.2 million over three years to operate the Youth and Children's Court in Alice Springs.

As a result of this project there has been greater involvement of the Department of Education's Youth Court Liaison Officer with improved information sharing; further involvement of local stakeholders through the Project Reference Group; and updating of youth services mapping specific to Central Australia.

As well, there are two dedicated Youth Justice Court Officers based in Darwin and one in Alice Springs.

The Chief Judge appointed a lead Children's Court Judge in Alice Springs in March 2020 and the court has started operating in a non-specific court room.

While there have been unavoidable delays in some aspects of the project, progress continues in a positive direction.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|---|---|----------|
| Youth and Children's Court in Alice Springs | Establish a Youth and Children's Court in Alice Springs | UNDERWAY |

1.3.5 Youth Parole

In the Northern Territory very few young people appear before the Parole Board. For example in 2019/20, there was only one young client for the Board. However, if a young person does appear before the Parole Board it is necessary to ensure there is the capacity and expertise available on the board to meet the requirements outlined in the RCPDCNT.

These include Aboriginal representation on the board and taking a therapeutic and collaborative approach when decisions are made.

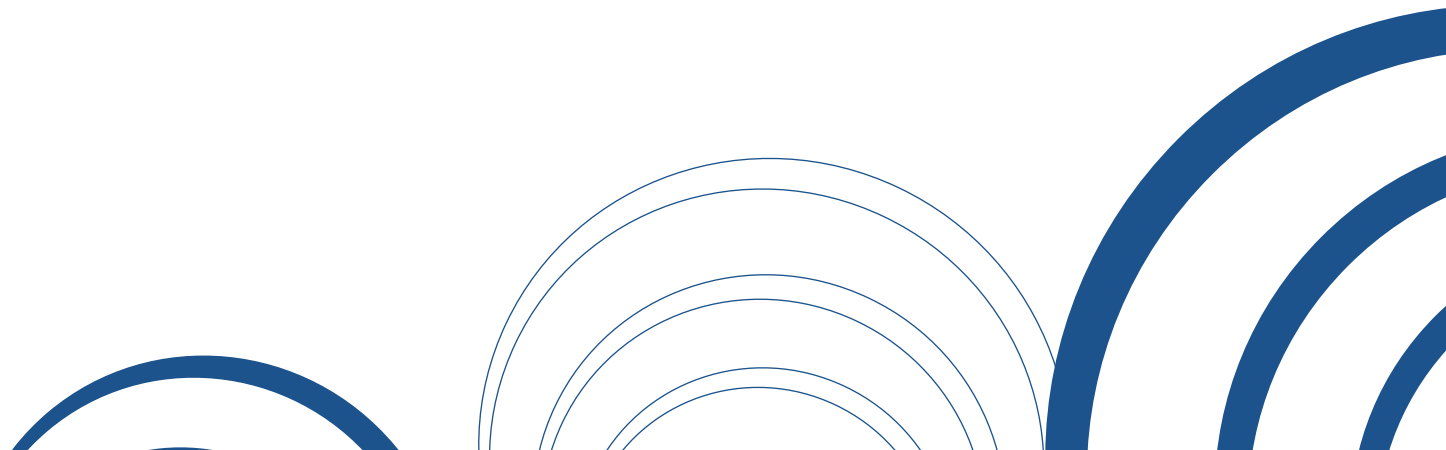
It is not the usual practice of the Parole Board to have young people appear before it on a hearing although it has the power to make those arrangements if required.

There have been moves to implement practice reforms to improve the experiences of youths before the Parole Board if they appear, and engagement with the NAAJA to explore the newly funded youth through-care program in Central Australia.

Note: the impact of this reform may be limited due to the small number of youth parole matters. As at 31 May 2020 there was only one youth in detention with a non-parole period.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Youth before the Parole Board | Ensure the Parole Board has the capacity and expertise to fulfil the requirements of the RCPDCNT | COMPLETED |



Putting Children and Families at the Centre

1.4 Support Transition and Restoration

Children and families who have experienced vulnerability or crisis successfully transition from crisis to productive, rewarding lives.

It is important to support children and young people as they transition from out-of-home care and the youth justice system to help them on their journey to more positive lives.

To help address this need, the Northern Territory Government has implemented a number of measures aimed at supporting community re-integration by young people – the programs include Supported Accommodation for Care Leavers, Transition from Detention and Through-Care, Transition from Out-of-home care.

Working with young people and their families, community organisations and other agencies on possible solutions, this is integral to the successful impact of reforms.

CASE STUDY: *Housing helps young people*

Julie* entered into the Housing for Young People Program after leaving the residential care program mid-2019. Her property is immaculate at inspections, her payments are always up to date and she actively engages with the supports and workshops available. During her time in the program, so far she has completed a year of study towards her chosen career and her first round of placements for her degree. Mission Australia reports that Julie obtained part-time employment late last year and has continued to work to ensure she is well positioned to cope with her first rent increase at the one-year participation mark.

* not her real name

1.4.1 Supported Accommodation for Care Leavers

The Northern Territory Government has been working to determine a new and effective way to implement better support for those young people leaving care.

The government allocated more than \$5 million over four years from 2018-19 to establish a housing brokerage and support service for young care leavers.

The Housing for Young People's Program test and learn phase was conducted until June 2020. Following the commencement of service delivery in June 2019 with Mission Australia (for the tenancy component of the program) and Anglicare NT (for the support element), a total of 23 formal applications were received by the end of June 2020. The program has been expanded to include Katherine.

Mission Australia and Anglicare NT work with each individual to source appropriate housing and transition them into a tenancy under the program. The service will be available for young people who have left care up until they are 25 years old.

Evaluation of the program is ongoing although early indications are positive.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--|---|-----------|
| Supported Accommodation for Care Leavers | Establish a housing brokerage and support service for young people leaving care | COMPLETED |

Putting Children and Families at the Centre

1.4.2 Transition from Detention and Through-Care

The Northern Territory Government supports the Commonwealth Government's investment in through-care in the Northern Territory for Aboriginal young people involved in the youth justice system.

The government pledged to work with the Commonwealth and the Aboriginal controlled community sector to ensure the through-care service is based on evidence and integrated with other Government and community sector services.

Territory Families has been working with the NAAJA to support implementation of the Commonwealth funded through-care program in Alice Springs and Darwin. This through-care service is provided to Aboriginal young people detained in the Alice Springs and Don Dale youth detention centres.

Through-care is the coordinated provision of support to a detainee until they are living safe and productive lives away from the youth justice system.

This project is also interlinked with the detention centre replacement project.

Other related initiatives are those conducted through the Department of Education including training programs delivered in the youth justice centres and aligned to mainstream schools.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|----------------------------|--|----------|
| Through care case support | Work with the Commonwealth and the Aboriginal controlled community sector to ensure that through care service is based on evidence and integrated with other relevant services | UNDERWAY |
| NAAJA through care service | | |

1.4.3 Transition from Out-of-Home Care

Recognising the move from out-of-home care is a vulnerable time for young people, the Northern Territory Government has recognised the importance of strong support structures and committed to build on its efforts.

To help improve the outcomes around transition from out-of-home care in the Northern Territory, three additional Transition from Care Officers have been recruited. They are an integral part of a successful program to ensure Territory children and young people leaving care do so with quality care planning and advice.

The additional Transition from Care Officers were employed to support quality leaving care plans and case management systems by strengthening collaborative cross agency planning and prioritising cross agency responsiveness to young people transitioning from the care of the Chief Executive Officer. Along with Case Managers, the Transition from Care Officers have established formal leaving care planning meetings that prioritise young people and their views, developed referral pathways for young people and enhanced frontline workers' skills and knowledge of leaving care case management.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--|---|-----------|
| Additional Transition from Care Officers | The recruitment of additional transition from care officers and improvement in the quality of care planning advice for young people transitioning from out-of-home care | COMPLETED |



Improving Care and Protection

This reform portfolio includes the programs and projects designed at improving the child protection, family support and out-of-home care systems in the Northern Territory. It has a focus on working with Aboriginal families to keep their kids safe.



Improving Care and Protection

The portfolio has four program areas: Care and Protection Practice, Children in Child Protection and Youth Justice Systems, Transforming Out-of-Home Care and Justice Responses to Child Abuse. Initiatives under each program area are aimed at meeting an overall objective of improving the care and protection of children in the Northern Territory.

2.1 Care and Protection Practice

Children are protected from harm, and children and families entering the child protection system receive high quality responses informed by contemporary practice.

This program is about improving the mechanics of the systems and practices that will support positive outcomes for Territory children and their families.

Much of the work outlined through the Royal Commission had already been underway when the recommendations were made in the Commission's final report. Many of the initiatives about to be implemented or already embedded reach further than the RCPDCNT recommendations around systems improvements.

For example, improvements to the Central Intake Service were already underway and the role is more than just a reporting/notification system.

Also introduced in 2018 and now embedded is the Signs of Safety practice framework – a fundamental change which is focussed on working with families to keep their children safe. It centres on holistic family safety assessments and support and has moved child protection processes away from an incident and risk focussed response.

Signs of Safety encourages case workers to develop their engagement skills, be more transparent and responsive to meet the needs of children, young people and families.

2.1.1 Reporting and Investigation

The Northern Territory Government understands the need to raise public awareness about the process for raising legitimate concerns about a child's safety and wellbeing, and for an efficient and accurate assessment and response to these notifications.

The Government supported the RCPDCNT recommendations to improve the key factors in improving the reporting and investigation of child protection cases in the Northern Territory.

The Central Intake Service is often the first contact for professionals and the public with reports of concerns about children.

Following a service restructure in January 2019, it now provides three complementary services which respond to the needs of the community – family and parenting support, child protection and general enquiries.

The restructure has also allowed for the implementation of a call triage system to ensure that the most appropriate responses are provided to the issues raised by notifiers.

A dedicated Senior Practice Leader is also now co-located with the Central Intake Service. This role is building a stronger professional workforce through continual audits, practice forums and professional development training and is leading the Central Intake Service in the introduction of the Signs of Safety practice framework.

The design and procurement of an online reporting tool was allocated \$50,000 in funding. The new online Professional Reporters Tool provides an understanding of mandatory reporting obligations, how to report, types of harm and recognising signs of harm and exploitation.

Territory Families is collaborating with partner agencies to incorporate child protection training as part of their induction programs. NAPCAN continues to provide mandatory reporting training for community notifiers across the Northern Territory.

The online tool includes a Professional Reporters Guide which was developed in consultation with internal and external stakeholders.



Improving Care and Protection

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|------------------------------|---|-----------|
| Triage team | All aimed at improving the reporting and investigation of child protection cases in the Northern Territory. Includes an internal working group to screen intakes and identify appropriate action and development of a new mandatory reporter guide. | COMPLETED |
| Online reporting tool | | |
| Professional reporters guide | | |
| Senior Practice Leader | | |

2.1.2 Clinical Practice and Case Management

The Northern Territory Government committed an additional \$2.4 million over four years from 2018-19 to establish a Clinical Practice Directorate in Territory Families, staffed with experienced practitioners to improve child protection practice and the professional delivery of statutory services.

The Clinical and Professional Practice Directorate has been established and is guided by the Clinical Governance Professional Practice Committee. It has implemented a number of initiatives including intensive practice sessions across the Territory; group supervision to new practitioners; and practice guidance where required.

More recent work includes developing and facilitating practice sessions to enhance domestic violence informed practice. For example, Domestic and Family Violence Awareness, Domestic and Family Sexual Violence (DFSV) high risk factors, mapping the perpetrator's pattern of coercive control etc.

Directorate staff also continue to provide mentoring to new staff, DFSV case mappings, Signs of Safety mappings (both internal and external), facilitate group supervision and provide other supports as requested.

Work has been ongoing towards increasing the allocation of workforce to remote communities. Territory Families has also entered into a collaboration with Charles Darwin University to offer up to 25 employment opportunities per annum to graduates of Social Work or Psychology.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|-------------------------------|---|-----------|
| Clinical Practice Directorate | Establish a Clinical Practice Directorate to improve child protection practice and professional delivery of statutory services. | COMPLETED |
| Signs of Safety | Enhance domestic violence informed practice. | |

Improving Care and Protection

2.1.3 Care and Protection Orders

Improvements across care and protection legislation have been made including the introduction and passing of amendments to the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* in August 2019.

These provided for more autonomy for carers in the day-to-day decisions for the child in their care.

Complementing the law reform, a new policy and procedure regarding a Carer's Authority to Provide Consent has been approved, a guideline/checklist regarding Decision Making for Carers has been developed and the Carer's Handbook has been updated.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--------------------|--|-----------|
| Stage 2 law reform | Relevant and appropriate changes to the <i>Care and Protection of Children Act</i> | COMPLETED |



Improving Care and Protection

2.2 Children in the Child Protection and Youth Justice Systems

Children and young people in care who are also engaged with the youth justice system are effectively case managed and helped to avoid future offending.

Too many children and young people in care become involved in the youth justice system. Their vulnerabilities mean they are at greater risk and there is an imperative to provide services and programs which address their needs and help them to address risky behaviour.

They are often referred to as “crossover youth”. The following initiatives are designed to help stop that behaviour and find better pathways with and for these vulnerable young people.

2.2.1 Meeting the needs of children in care who are involved with Youth Justice

The RCPDCNT recommended the creation of a specialised unit for crossover youth and their issues.

The Northern Territory Government recognised the need for such a unit and acknowledged a higher risk of uncoordinated responses for crossover youth.

This program focusses on strengthening case continuity by building the capacity of child protection case management teams. The Crossover Case Management Unit has been working with at risk youth and their families to address the challenges facing them and coordinate responses with other agencies.

The Connected Youth Justice Framework has been completed and work is continuing to ensure alignment between funded providers.

Quality support work is a fundamental part of meeting the needs of “crossover youth”. Since early 2019, the Crossover Case Management Unit has been at the frontline of working with the youth, their families and various government agencies.

It is challenging and complex work which is having a steadily positive impact.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--|---|-----------|
| Continuity of case management | Build capacity of child protection management teams to strengthen case management continuity and to provide for the needs of “crossover” youths | COMPLETED |
| Cross portfolio training and development | | |

Improving Care and Protection

2.2.2 Responding to Complex Behaviour in Out-of-Home Care

Team work is often required to tackle the complex behaviour demonstrated by young people in care. The Northern Territory Government appreciates the value of joint approaches and committed to build on the existing efforts of agencies and develop and implement “a collaborative inter-agency approach between Territory Families, Northern Territory Police and out-of-home care service providers”.

Relating directly to police responses and especially to situations where young people have escaped from out-of-home care, this program has seen the creation of a Protocol for Police Contact with Children Living in Therapeutic Residential Care.

The now established protocol mandates assessing each instance of police engagement to evaluate whether the engagement was warranted, and to determine whether the Therapeutic Residential Care services and Territory Families after-hours supports are being appropriately used.

This is a crucial factor in trying to keep children/youth in care out of the justice system.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------|
| Police and Out-of-Home Care | A collaborative interagency approach to provide therapeutic and appropriate responses to children and young people who abscond from OOHC and engage in criminal behaviour | COMPLETED |



Improving Care and Protection

2.3 Transforming Out-of-Home Care

Children who require out-of-home care are cared for in culturally secure, trauma-informed, therapeutic environments and by their families where possible.

Out-of-Home Care is the care of children aged 0–17 years old who are unable to live with their parents or primary caregivers. It involves the placement of a child with alternate caregivers on a short- or long-term basis.

Transforming Out-of-Home Care is a key program of initiatives many of which have already been implemented across the sector. It has been an essential focus of Territory Families which has been working with stakeholders to improve the system.

As well, the Northern Territory Government has invested \$5.4 million over four years, specifically aimed at programs and projects which have helped transform out-of-home care in the Northern Territory.

Many of the initiatives also support the policy of prioritising children being placed with safe family members and increasing the number of Aboriginal family and foster carers in the Northern Territory.



PROGRAM STUDY: *Community of Practice*

Territory Families hosted the first Community of Practice meeting in July 2020 with partner organisations working to transform the out-of-home care system and increase the number of family and foster carers.

Six Aboriginal controlled organisations, the Foster Kinship Carers Association Northern Territory (FKCANT) and the CREATE Foundation attended the Community of Practice meeting in Darwin.

The Community of Practice provided an essential gathering of key organisations to share and reflect on their experiences in transforming the out-of-home care model, and implementing new initiatives to improve family finding, carer recruitment and assessments and ongoing support of carers and families.

Organisations attending the session included Kalano Community Association, Larrakia Nation, NPY Women's Council, NT Stolen Generation Aboriginal Corporation, Tangentyere Council, and Yalu Aboriginal Corporation.

Tangentyere Council spoke about the importance of cultural knowledge and community connections in successful family finding. They also emphasised the importance of developing new and culturally appropriate ways to assess carers.

Larrakia Nation provided interesting and thorough case studies about carer assessment and placements, and the importance of early and continuous engagement with the child's family members to ensure a successful placement.

There was extensive discussion about sharing information between organisations, particularly given the transient nature of Northern Territory families.

The Community of Practice provided a valuable meeting for service providers and the Northern Territory Government to consider ways of working together and sharing solutions to similar challenges in family finding, foster and kinship carer recruitment, carer assessment and the provision of ongoing support to carers and families.

Improving Care and Protection

2.3.1 Foster and Kinship Care and Aboriginal Out-of-Home Care

Foster care is the temporary custody or guardianship of children whose parents/primary care givers are unable to look after them.

Kinship care is the care provided by relatives or a member of a child’s social network when a child cannot live with their parents.

Aboriginal Out-of-Home Care is provided by Indigenous carers and can include, but is not limited to, kinship care.

These three options are the basis of the Northern Territory’s out-of-home care system.

There has been a strong commitment to modernising and positively changing the system, not just from the Northern Territory Government but also sector organisations.

Already accomplished, several initiatives including the introduction of a grants program to improve support to kinship and foster carers, and the delivery of Aboriginal out-of-home care strategies in the Top End and Central Australia.

The extensive and ongoing work and commitment to improving and reforming the system continues to progress.

Relevant organisations have also received grants for the provision of services enabling more Aboriginal children currently in or entering care, to be placed with Aboriginal foster/family/kinship carers in the Northern Territory.

Detailed, region specific service planning has been undertaken for Aboriginal Carer Services, both in context of COVID-19 restrictions and future service delivery.

The impact of the improvements has been evident on the ground with the number of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care stabilising, up 0.1 per 1000 as at 30 June 2019⁵. The proportion of Aboriginal children in care with relatives/kin or other Aboriginal carers was up from 33.3 percent in 2018 to 36.9 percent in 2019⁶.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--|---|-----------|
| Out-of-Home System reform | A system which revises the structure of out of home care, increases Aboriginal kinship carers, increases Aboriginal children in care being supported by Aboriginal families | COMPLETED |
| Aboriginal Out-of-Home Strategy | | |
| Aboriginal Kinship and Foster Carer grants | | |

5 Table 16A2, Productivity Commission 2020 Report on Government Services

6 Table 16A21, Productivity Commission 2020 Report on Government Services



Improving Care and Protection

2.3.2 Trauma Informed and Therapeutic Care

Trauma Informed Care is an approach which recognises and acknowledges trauma and its prevalence, alongside awareness and sensitivity to its dynamics, in all aspects of service delivery.

Therapeutic Residential Care is intensive and time-limited care for a child or young person in statutory care that responds to the complex impacts of abuse, neglect and separation from family. This is achieved through the creation of positive, safe, healing relationships and experiences informed by a sound understanding of trauma, damaged attachment, and developmental needs.

The Northern Territory Government has recognised the need to implement a trauma informed care approach and therapeutic residential care. Residential care is being redesigned as intensive therapeutic care which will support children and young people in out-of-home care with identified complex mental health, disability and emotional and behavioural issues.

As a move towards a model, current General Residential care contracts have been extended to facilitate implementation of Intensive Therapeutic Residential Care.

The program also includes further initiatives encouraging and promoting professional foster care. This includes updated guides for foster and kinship carers, and updated training for foster and kinship carers. Information sessions on Aboriginal Carer Services have been conducted at regional offices and the Aboriginal Translation and Interpreter Service is on board to translate the first carer training modules and documents into Warlpiri (with more languages to be considered).

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|----------------------------|--|-----------|
| Intensive Therapeutic Care | Support to those with identified complex mental health, disability, emotional and behavioural issues | COMPLETED |
| Professional Foster care | Develop and establish a professional stream of foster care, to respond to the targeted therapeutic needs of children and to care for children with complex needs | UNDERWAY |



Improving Care and Protection

2.3.3 Out-of-Home Care Governance and Oversight

Part of the transformation process for out-of-home care is the need to identify service solutions matched to the needs of children, the introduction of an accreditation scheme and development of specific measures to monitor the wellbeing of children in care.

The Northern Territory Government has continued to support the most effect solutions to the governance and oversight of out-of-home care. The Quality Assurance Program introduced in late 2018 continues to deliver on assessing the standard of care and care services. The program is expanding and providing valuable feedback to and from the out-of-home care sector.

Also underway, consultation with Territory Families regional staff and Aboriginal Carer Services providers has occurred to develop specific and clear grant agreements and service plans. These are measures which provide a solid grounding for better, improved out-of-home care.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--------------------------------|--|-----------|
| OOHC Quality Assurance Program | A Quality Assurance program across OOHC services | COMPLETED |





Improving Youth Justice

The Improving Youth Justice reform portfolio includes the programs and projects designed to improve the youth justice system in the Northern Territory and ensure that there are effective interventions that provide appropriate consequences for young people who offend and work to stop future offending. The portfolio also includes a suite of measures to prevent young people from entering the youth justice system.

Improving Youth Justice

The portfolio has three key programs: Police and Young People, Keep Children out of Detention, and Youth Detention that Works.

3.1 Police and Young People

The community is safer through Police working effectively and engaging with young people, and focussing on practices that prevent offending.

Police are integral to a well-functioning, effective youth justice system. Their interactions with young people through their policing role is pivotal in determining a young person's future. Northern Territory Police have an ongoing commitment to work with the community and focus on improved and better approaches in youth justice. Providing specialised youth services, developing training packages, working with key stakeholders in both the government and non-government sectors – police have achieved much and continue to strive for better outcomes.

3.1.1 Custody Notification

The Custody Notification Service for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people was a pre-existing Commonwealth and Northern Territory Government commitment. The service, operated by NAAJA, began operation in 2019.

The service requires police to notify a service representative as soon as a child or young person is arrested and brought into custody for an offence in the Northern Territory. It promotes the wellbeing of Aboriginal children and adults who are in custody by enabling the Custody Notification Service provided to refer them to health services, interpreters and legal assistance that are culturally secure.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|-----------------------------|---|-----------|
| Custody Notification Scheme | Police to notify an appropriate lawyer as soon as a child or young person is brought into custody | COMPLETED |

3.1.2 Police Youth Division

The Northern Territory Government recognises the benefit of Northern Territory Police engaging and working with young people, their families and their communities to promote pro-social behaviours and divert youth at risk of offending.

It has supported the Northern Territory Police Force establishment of a specialised unit to manage police services for young people who offend, are at risk of offending, or may be in need of care and protection.

Since the establishment of the Police Youth Division in 2019, there have been many achievements including: developing and implementing youth focussed education and training packages, updating policies and processes, building positive relationships, and enhancing school based policing.

The Division continues to evolve and remain alert to youth issues and changing circumstances.

CASE STUDY: A simple example of youth diversion at work

Charlie* was a 13 year old youth involved with a group of others in an aggravated assault. He was on a dangerous pathway and was not initially deemed suitable for Youth Diversion due to the nature of the offence. However, after work with the Police Youth Diversion Unit he was accepted and referred to non-government service providers.

Charlie participated in workshops run by No More Campaign workers, had weekly contact with his case worker and took part in a victim conference. Subsequently he gave the victim an apology letter and gift, both of which were well received.

The youth successfully completed the diversion program and victim conferencing and has not reoffended.

* not his real name

Improving Youth Justice

CASE STUDY: *Diverting away from crime*

Darren* is a 17 year old who came to the attention of the Police Youth Diversion Unit because of an aggravated assault during a party in 2019. His was a complex case because a domestic violence order had been taken out at the time of the assault and was being dealt with separately. Darren thought he should attend court to deal with the matters together.

He had little trust in the justice system as he had been the victim of an aggravated assault earlier in 2019 and that process was still underway.

Unit officers explained the youth diversion process to him and what it involved. He responded positively to it and was soon undertaking the program. Darren:

- attended his appointments with his case worker
- attended sessions on one punch and peer pressure, responsible use of alcohol and a cyber-safety session by Northern Territory Police
- took part in a Family Conference accompanied by his mother where he took responsibility for what he had done.

Darren has changed his group of friends since the incident. Throughout his diversion he maintained full-time work in grounds maintenance sometimes travelling to Katherine for the week but still making time to attend case management sessions.

He has not come to police attention since completing the diversion program.

* not his real name

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|-----------------------|---|-----------|
| Police youth division | Reforms to ensure police work effectively with young people in the youth justice system | COMPLETED |
| Training program | | |
| Policy Development | | |

Improving Youth Justice

3.2 Getting Kids Back on Track

Children and young people who offend or at risk of offending are provided evidence-based interventions that stop continued offending before they end up in detention.

Addressing youth disadvantage includes the need to divert young people away from the justice system and keep them out of detention. Successful diversion programs must be well executed. And the success of the diversion programs must be based on proven methodologies.

The Northern Territory Government's investment in youth diversion includes strong partnerships with the non-government sector – an essential stakeholder in tackling issues relating to youth detention.

As the positive impact of these programs is realised, work continues in all areas of need in youth diversion.



PROGRAM STUDY: *A safe place to go*

Youth in Palmerston have a new venue to explore.

The Palmerston Youth Drop-In Centre provides an alternative “safe space” for young people in the region. An initiative under the Palmerston Youth Action Plan, the centre was a project developed under a partnership between the Northern Territory Government and the City of Palmerston Council.

The YMCA NT is operating and managing the Centre and working with the Larrakia Nation to deliver cultural activities and arrange for the transport of young people to a safe environment when the centre closes each day. \$7.42 million in grant funding has been provided for this service over five years.

The centre caters for young people aged 10-17 years, providing leadership opportunities and ways young people can be involved in designing and delivering activities. It is fully supervised and includes security and monitoring systems to ensure the safety of young people, staff members, the community and businesses.

Activities include cooking classes, music lessons, sharing of cultural knowledge, sexual health and safe relationship education, positive peer group and recreational activities.



PROGRAM STUDY: *New work camps focus on practical learning*

Seven Emu Station, a property near Borroloola, is the latest location for at-risk young people to find a better pathway.

The Northern Territory Government has invested \$4.54 million across five years to develop new short and long-term youth intervention work camps at the station. The Jarrdimba Bayamuku Aboriginal Corporation delivers the camps which provide intensive intervention to break the cycle of crime.

The camps build young people's cultural knowledge and identity, understanding of consequences, development of personal responsibility, work ethic and experience, and problem solving skills.

They focus on practical learning, Vocational Education Training and work programs such as land management, tourism, construction and managing an organic cattle station.

Young people attending are accompanied by support staff (eg case workers, youth workers and Elders) who work with and provide assistance to the Jarrdimba Bayamuku camp staff.

Improving Youth Justice

3.2.1 Youth Engagement Grants

The Northern Territory Government is investing \$12.9 million over four years (from 2018-19) to provide programs to young people targeted at addressing the needs of at risk and vulnerable youth across the Northern Territory, and establishing three new Regional Youth Program Coordinators in Darwin/Northern Suburbs, Katherine and Tennant Creek.

Community Youth Diversion providers have been selected with grant agreements in place for youth diversion programs.

One project through the grants scheme has been the Palmerston Youth Drop In Centre with the City of Palmerston Council. The centre will engage at risk young people between 10-17 years of age and provide them with a safe, inclusive space with supervised activities year-round.

The Youth Engagement Grants have also provided funding towards the development of Regional Youth Action Plans – strategies which are unique to their region aimed at empowering disengaged and vulnerable young people.

Plans have been completed or are well underway for Palmerston, Darwin, Katherine, Mparntwe/Alice Springs and East Arnhem.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|-----------------------|---|-----------|
| Regional Youth Grants | Aimed at funding organisations to provide programs addressing the needs of at risk and vulnerable youth | COMPLETED |

3.2.2 Youth Justice Programs

Significant investment has been made into youth justice programs across government.

Partnering between agencies and with the non-government sector, the Northern Territory Government has recognised the importance of a cooperative effort to address the complex and unique issues influencing local youth particularly those in the justice system.

Funding has included:

- \$12.9 million over four years to effectively and constructively engage young people
- \$9.9 million over four years to divert young people from crime and stop future offending
- an additional \$518,000 per year from 2018-19 to expand bail services including programs for young women in Darwin and young people with high risk complex needs
- an additional \$506,000 per year from 2018-19 for electronic monitoring
- an additional \$250,000 per year from 2018-19 to enable Victims of Crime NT to continue supporting victims involved in restorative justice processes with young people.

Youth justice programs implemented throughout the *Generational Change Reform* include the expansion of restorative youth justice conferencing through to the establishment of the Youth Services Directorate which provides oversight and management of community youth programs.

Through these programs, partnerships with organisations such as the Community Justice Centre, Jesuit Social Services, community and Aboriginal organisations and local councils have strengthened.

More recently the Back on Track Program has yielded some positive results – as a 30 June 2020 58 young people were in the Back on Track Program with a further five eligible youths waitlisted and two pending assessment/consent.⁷

Back on Track addresses at-risk behaviour, consequences and giving back to the community, life skills and cultural connection, and family capacity and responsibility. It also supports re-engagement with education, training and employment and empowers young people to make safe decisions for themselves, their families and the community as a whole.

Improving Youth Justice



Another initiative is the Bail Support Program which supports youth on bail and other court orders including good behaviour orders and suspended sentences. The program continues to be monitored with continuous improvements in clinical oversight and case management where required.

More than 200 young people have received bail support services including supervision and accommodation since the service began.

In 2019-20, 252 young people completed bail orders, at a rate of 76 percent. Both the number and percentage of young people who have completed bail orders continues to rise from 2015-16 when there were 39 young people who completed bail orders and a completion rate of 53 percent.⁸

As well as expanding Restorative Youth Justice Conferencing (RYJC), improvements have been made to the service. A practice framework, guiding principles and service standards have been developed as part of the initiative.

74% of young people who undertook a youth justice conference in 2018-19 had not re-offended as at 30 June 2020.

Meanwhile Jesuit Social Services continue to provide coordination and convening services for court referred conferences with an expanded catchment scope negotiated to include Back on Track and Pre-sentence Conference convening in the Alice Springs and Tennant Creek regions.

Helping to address issues in communities, 11 new Community Youth Diversion providers have been selected and will help deliver services across six regions – Northern, Big Rivers, Barkly, Central, Central Desert and Greater Darwin.

The Youth Outreach and Re-Engagement Teams established in 2017 have grown to include more than 65 youth outreach officers based across the Northern Territory. Since the program began, an average of 450 young people have received case management support each year. This includes more than 250 young people on court-ordered supervision and about 200 young people participating in voluntary case management.

There are several programs completed or underway and many are now part of normal operations by agencies and the non-government sector.

Improving Youth Justice

CASE STUDY: *Tennant Creek's Johnno* works towards a different pathway*

Johnno* is a local 14-year-old Indigenous youth living in Tennant Creek. He has been participating in the Saltbush Pathways to Success Program – a program offering support to young people to help them find a positive way forward.

Saltbush Pathways to Success customised their engagement with Johnno to develop his capability to participate in a mandated Group Conference.

For a month, Johnno was an active participant with Saltbush Pathways to Success in his preparations. In previous engagements, he would seem overwhelmed by the Group Conference process. However, with adequate support and preparation that adapted to his strengths and weaknesses, this saw to Saltbush Pathways to Success working with Johnno to:

- Recognise the impact his offending actions had upon the victims and the community
- Develop practical life skills and engage in educational focus activities
- Participate in mentoring sessions to develop self-confidence
- Developed a presentation on his response to the questions for the Group Conference
- Contributed to Saltbush's giving back to community activities in response to the COVID-19 emergency, by creating care packages on behalf of Barkly Regional Council, Youth Links.

Johnno presented at the Group Conference and was overwhelmed by the foreign setting and number of people. With the support of Saltbush as well as his other nominated support people, he developed an outcome plan and has since made progress by writing a letter of apology to his victim.

Johnno has committed to continuing his engagement within the community and the Saltbush Pathways to Success team are very proud of his efforts and participation in the program and look forward to celebrating his future successes.

* *not his real name*

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|---|--|-----------|
| Back on Track Bail Support | Programs offering young people sentencing options, alternatives to detention and bail support services | COMPLETED |
| Electronic Monitoring | Continue electronic monitoring of young people on bail | COMPLETED |
| Court Diversions and Restorative Justice Conferencing | Expand and improve Restorative Youth Justice and Victim Offender Conferencing | COMPLETED |

Improving Youth Justice

3.3 Youth Detention that Works

Young people in detention are housed in secure therapeutic facilities that support their rehabilitation and receive the help, guidance and structure necessary to stop future offending.

A strong youth justice system includes ensuring detention facilities for young people who have committed offences enable the delivery of high quality therapeutic programs; education services; and interpersonal and life skill development opportunities. The facilities also offer training opportunities for young people to help divert them away from future criminal enterprise.

3.3.1 Youth Detention Operations

Effective youth detention is linked with the use of modern operating facilities with trauma informed care and the implementation of practical strategies.

Committed to providing appropriate services and recognising the importance of responding to young people in detention in a manner appropriate for their age, maturity level and needs, the Northern Territory Government has invested \$22.9 million over five years from 2017-18 to improve youth detention operations and reduce recidivism.

While work is underway on the youth detention replacement project, a Youth Detention Program Model of Care has been drafted and forms a subset of the Youth Justice Framework.

The model of care is intended to set out the philosophy, practice and operational direction of services to young people while in a detention setting.

To deliver these strategies and programs at the youth detention centres, it's important to work well in partnership with communities, organisations and other government entities.

For example, social and emotional wellbeing services delivered by Aboriginal health organisations and the development of an Elders and Mentors Framework in partnership with NAAJA.

Already completed and in place has been a review of behaviour management strategies, recruitment of specialist staff and better training for Youth Justice Officers.

The issue of using adult correctional facilities for youth detention has also been resolved legislatively to no longer allow the temporary accommodation of youth detainees in custodial correctional facilities. Further legislative changes are planned to limit the length an adult facility can be declared a youth detention facility.

Other important changes include an emphasis on Youth Justice Officer recruitment resulting in a significant increase in female Youth Justice Officers, the inclusion of Aboriginal cultural competence and safety in the delivery of education programs, more individual assessments for new detainees to help inform future interactions with them, and improved staff training.

New Youth Justice Determinations have been also implemented. Among the changes – as a priority, young people are placed in the detention facility nearest to their usual place of residence. As well, when a young person is transferred long distances, their family and lawyer are consulted where possible.

The continuation of these improvement initiatives reflects the strong commitment the Northern Territory Government has to ensuring better, more constructive youth detention operations are in place.



Improving Youth Justice

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|------------------------------|---|-----------|
| Youth Justice Operations | A Youth Justice Model of Care Framework to ensure the Northern Territory youth justice system provides quality care, supervision and guidance for all young people in detention | COMPLETED |
| Transfer to adult facilities | Changes to cease the temporary accommodation of youth detainees in custodial correctional facilities | COMPLETED |

PROGRAM STUDY: *Playing a different tune*

Young detainees are tapping into positive creativity with a music education and training program that aims to engage people in creative arts and provide opportunities for them to express themselves.

The SoundED program is delivered several times a week at Don Dale Youth Detention Centre. Among some of the revealing compositions:

- Town I was raised in - delivered in spoken word by a detainee who talks about being away from his home town, of his ancestors and how his bad habits and bad decisions led to him being in detention. The haunting chorus is delivered by another young man singing in Yolngu Matha about his grandparents, how they miss him and that he wants to return to his country to be with them again.
- A group of young people sing and speak about bouncing back from adversities, getting better and how music and the Balanced Choice program has impacted their lives.

The Balanced Choice Program runs up to seven times a week at the Centre and aims to promote physical and mental health through the balance of body, mind and spirit.

Improving Youth Justice

3.3.2 Youth Detention Infrastructure

The key initiative of new youth justice facilities in Darwin and Alice Springs has progressed substantially in the last year. The Northern Territory Government has committed \$71.4 million to replace the old youth justice facilities in both centres.

Both designs have now reached 100 percent completion through a co-design process which focussed on meeting functional requirements of all facility users and visitors, as well as ensuring design principles are focussed on outcomes for young people.

Local company Halikos Pty Ltd has been awarded the \$55.1 million construction tender for the development of the new Youth Justice Centre in Darwin while Alice Springs company, Asbuild NT has been awarded the \$13.1 million construction contract for the redevelopment of the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre.

Consultation across both projects has been wide ranging including Aboriginal Controlled Organisations, service providers, staff, and importantly, young people in youth detention.

The investment in the facilities and the importance of their impact necessitates careful and steady planning and implementation.

While the new facilities are underway, the current detention centres have had the necessary enhancements to help improve the safety and wellbeing of young people in detention and the work environment for staff and other service providers at the centres.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--|--|----------|
| Construction of new Youth Justice Facilities | Replace the Don Dale Centre in Darwin and the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre | UNDERWAY |

3.3.3 Youth Detention Services and Programs

Improving and strengthening the provision of relevant and effective services and programs in youth detention facilities is integral to delivering an effective youth justice system.

The Northern Territory Government recognises education and training, health and wellbeing, support and intervention all play a vital role in successful rehabilitation. Coordinating such programs is a necessity to ensure synergies are not overlooked.

A memorandum of understanding between the Department of Education and Territory Families is providing a guiding framework for liaison between the two agencies in regards to the education of young people in detention. It provides senior executive oversight and a sharp focus on improving educational outcomes for young people.

There is improved access to information to allow identification of support needs and facilitate early intervention and improved communication between case management and Department of Education staff – when information is requested it is provided or justification is given if it cannot be accessed.

Differentiated literacy and numeracy classes have been established. Meeting the individual needs of detainees regarding their education is an important factor in their successful learning.

There is a wide range of education and training programs within youth detention in Darwin and Alice Springs which continue to deliver positive results.

Improving the health and wellbeing services at both Darwin and Alice Springs youth detention centres is an ongoing mission.



Improving Youth Justice

Health services in Alice Springs Youth Detention

Medical treatment services and general practitioners are available on site, with psychological counselling services sometimes available on site. Young people in detention require specialist mental health services.

Access to comprehensive medical assessment and treatment services are provided daily by Primary Health Care (PHC). General practitioners are available on site Monday to Friday, with psychological counselling services sometimes available on site provided by the Central Australian Congress Social and Emotional Wellbeing (SEWB) developmental psychologist.

Young people in detention require specialist mental health services. The required specialist mental health service is determined to be outside the scope of practice that can be provided by PHC medical practitioners. While acute mental health services have improved for young people more capacity is still required by specialist child and youth mental health service teams to contribute to the essential ongoing therapeutic assessments, care and management plans of youth in detention.

Health services in Darwin Youth Detention

The PHC service provision in the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre transitioned to Danila Dilba Health Service on 1 July 2020.

There are sufficient medical officers available and rostered and access to the delivery of PHC Services to young people in detention is provided daily. Mental health screening is incorporated within all clinical assessments including reception, health checks and all existing care plans. Medical treatment services, General Practitioner and PHC nursing staff brief intervention counselling services are readily available onsite.

Upon reception/new admission each young person is provided with a comprehensive medical and health assessment. Mental health screening is incorporated within all clinical assessments including reception, Day 5 health checks and all existing care plans within the Primary Care Information Service.

General Practitioner services include mental health screening and referral if required. Work continues to facilitate forensic mental health services.

Top End Mental Health Service has finalised an agreement for a new telehealth and visiting service by a Forensic adolescent psychiatrist which will be a significant improvement in services.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--|--|-----------|
| Education and Training: Strengthening governance arrangements | Programs aimed at improving the efficiency and effectiveness of delivering education and training to young detainees | COMPLETED |
| Access to information to allow identification of support needs and facilitate early intervention | | |
| Differentiated learning pathways | | |
| Building a skilled workforce | | |
| Health and Wellbeing: Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre | Improve health and wellbeing services for detainees at the Alice Springs Youth Detention Centre | UNDERWAY |
| Health and Wellbeing: Don Dale Youth Detention Centre | Improve health and wellbeing services for detainees at the Don Dale Youth Detention Centre | UNDERWAY |



Strengthening Governance and Systems

The Strengthening Governance and Systems reform portfolio include programs and projects designed to increase scrutiny and accountability of services for children and families experiencing vulnerability and put in place strong systems and processes that ensure efficiency, coordination and efficacy.

Strengthening Governance and Systems

Making up the portfolio are the following programs: Advocacy, Accountability and Quality Improvement, Managing and Sharing Information, Community-Led Responses, Evidence-Based Practice and Coordinated Effort Towards Better Outcomes.

4.1 Advocacy, Accountability and Quality Improvement

Organisations and Departments working with families are held to account for ensuring that the services they provide reflect, or are on a monitored pathway towards best practice and are achieving desired outcomes.

For better outcomes and solid results the backbone of all programs, project and initiatives is a strong organisation focussed on delivering and working to constantly improve and build on a healthy, productive system.

It is not about creating more bureaucracy or processes and procedures. It is about ensuring there is the best effort employed with the most efficient way to work towards positive achievements.

Key to ensuring agencies and organisations are on target is an appropriate level of accountability and monitoring.

Improvements in this area are ongoing and long term.

4.1.1 Commission for Children and Young People

The Office of the Children’s Commissioner is an independent office responsible for ensuring the wellbeing of vulnerable children.

Resources for the Office have been increased to significantly expand the capacity of the Office including enabling it to commence monitoring conditions at youth detention facilities. From July 2018, the operational budget of the Office was increased by \$580,000 per year.

As well as dealing with complaints about services for vulnerable children, undertaking inquiries related to the care and protection of children, monitoring government relevant decisions and responses, and monitoring the administration of the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007*, the Commissioner is also an advisor to the Northern Territory.

The Commissioner may be required to respond from a Northern Territory perspective to a range of national policy issues and also provides information and advice to government on matters relating to vulnerable children.

The new Commission for Children and Young People remains under consideration.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--|--|----------|
| Commission for Children and Young People | A new Commission for Children and Young People | UNDERWAY |



Strengthening Governance and Systems

4.1.2 Internal Accountability and Complaints

The Northern Territory Government is committed to strengthening the processes and systems to receive and act on complaints from carers, clients and families.

Increased accountability will be progressed with the development of the Single Act for Children and Families. This work steadily continues.

Work is also continuing on the development of a framework for monitoring residential care facilities.

Territory Families has improved its complaints system to encourage more feedback, particularly from children. Children in care are also asked for their feedback about complaints processes and what steps can be taken to enhance the way the agency listens to and responds to their concerns. The intention is to improve their care experience by having a better understanding of their needs. Territory Families has created and distributed young people specific materials to promote awareness of the Territory Families complaints team as a point of contact if they are unhappy with the services they are receiving.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|---|---|-----------|
| Increased Accountability | Legislative amendments to introduce a test of recklessness in the consideration of immunity | COMPLETED |
| Internal Accountability and Complaints Management | Strengthen the process and systems to receive and act on complaints from carers, clients and families | COMPLETED |



Strengthening Governance and Systems

4.2 Managing and Sharing Information

Best practice care and support for children, young people and families is enabled and underpinned by contemporary information management approaches and systems.

Up-to-date, relevant and clear information and knowledge is important to better manage the welfare and wellbeing of vulnerable children, young people and their families. Well defined, accessible and efficient information delivery services are necessary as are reliable data and information exchange mechanisms.

These changes and updates are projects which require detailed, considered mapping and which have long-lasting impacts across agencies and the broader sector.

4.2.1 Information Management and Sharing

This highly technical area is being addressed by multi-agency project teams. The Northern Territory Government is investing \$66.9 million over five years (from 2017-18) to develop and implement a new client information system and data brokerage service for child protection and youth justice.

The Client Management System Alignment (CMSA) project will deliver an enhanced replacement to the current Community Care Information System and provide cross-Government data integration.

As well, a new data brokerage service will introduce a secure environment for agencies working with children and families experiencing vulnerability to access relevant and timely information about the children and families with whom they work.

The upgraded and replaced systems will equip workers with the data and information they need to assist vulnerable children and families, effectively and efficiently.

Progress around these projects has been challenging. Steady inroads are being made with market research activities underway.

Work already in place includes an information sharing webpage and guidelines and scoping on the compatibility between the child protection and youth justice data systems.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--|---|-----------------|
| CMSA system replacement | A new client information system and data brokerage service for child protection and youth justice | UNDERWAY |
| Territory Families Data Brokerage | An information exchange scheme with nationally consistent provisions across info sharing, info access and roles and responsibilities for preventing, identifying and responding to child sexual abuse in institutional contexts | BEHIND SCHEDULE |
| Establish an information exchange scheme | Five key principles relating to records and record keeping, "to a level that responds to the risk of child sexual abuse occurring within the institution" | UNDERWAY |



Strengthening Governance and Systems

4.3 Community Led Responses

4.3.1 Local Decision Making

Local communities and Aboriginal controlled organisations have a central role in designing and delivering services, particularly in remote communities.

Local Decision Making (LDM) is a priority commitment of the Northern Territory Government and provides a pathway for communities and community representative bodies to have greater involvement, including control, over their identified needs and aspirations through the progressive transition of service delivery and decision making back to the local level.

The government has committed \$8.9 million over four years to empower local decision making and community-led reform.

Currently, there are four signed LDM agreements in various stages of implementation, between the Northern Territory Government and:

- Anindilyakwa Land Council – signed 14 November 2018;
- Yugul Mangi Development Aboriginal Corporation – signed 28 May 2018;
- Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation – signed 2 November 2018; and
- Gurindji Aboriginal Corporation – signed 19 November 2018.

In addition to these agreements, the Northern Territory Government has signed Statements of Commitment with four communities or community representative bodies to explore LDM opportunities, including:

- Kardu/West Daly (Thamarrurr) alliance – signed 13 November 2018;
- Yolngu region – signed 30 May 2019;
- Blue Mud Bay and homelands (Djalkiripuyngu) – signed 26 July 2018; and
- Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation – signed 4 July 2019.

Where there is no LDM agreement or Statement of Commitment in place, agencies have indicated how they are conducting their business in accordance with the LDM principles. Particular examples include:

- The Department of Corporate and Information Services is consulting with Alpururulam, Bulla and Belyuen residents to deliver telecommunication and/or broadband services in these communities. The Department is also working with key local stakeholders in West Daly, including Kardu Diminin and the Thamarrurr Development Corporation, around the proposed Wadeye Government Business Centre. This includes a community recommendation for an alternate location for the Centre, as well as building the capacity and capability of these organisations to develop and operate a commercial property.
- The Department of Education has established Community Led Schools in Gunbalanya, Yirrkala, Yuendumu, Lajamanu, Nyirripi and Willowra. The Department has also established Local Engagement and Decision Making committees in 17 schools and is working with 61 schools across the Northern Territory.
- The Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics continues to work with Aboriginal corporations across the Northern Territory to undertake road maintenance contracts.

The new Child and Family Centres are being controlled by local communities and include local governance structures supported by LDM. Where possible, they are being operated by Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations. As well, most of the site based negotiations for the Centres include Local Advisory Groups consisting of community leaders, representing the views of locals and guidance on relevant issues for the area.



Strengthening Governance and Systems

Treaty

The ongoing work around a Treaty matches the cooperative and collaborative approach underpinning the *Generational Change Reform Program*.

In late June 2020 the NT Treaty Commission, led by Professor Mick Dodson AM, released its *Treaty Discussion Paper*. The paper is designed to inform a Territory-wide community consultation process to assess whether a consensus or majority view exists with First Nations people on all or any of the matters raised in the paper.

The Discussion Paper focuses on three reasons for a treaty:

- To address Unfinished Business and provide justice to Aboriginal Territorians for past wrongs;
- Where there is genuine Aboriginal control and self-determination there are better outcomes; and
- Following High Court decisions, including the 2019 “Timber Creek Native Title” case, negotiation may be better than litigation for all parties.

The Commission has begun an 18 month consultation process and aims to collect submissions by 30 June 2021.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|----------------------------|---|-----------|
| LDM Agreement | A group of initiatives designed to increase the role of local communities in designing and delivering services particularly in remote communities | COMPLETED |
| Regional Network Expansion | | |
| ACCO Development | | |



Strengthening Governance and Systems

4.4 Evidence Based Practice

Service models and practices are underpinned by research and evidence, and supported by comprehensive planning, monitoring and evaluation.

Good data and evidence are crucial tools to maintain the integrity of programs as well as measure the impact of services and initiatives. Understanding the impact of the reform agenda is critical to ensuring the reforms are making a difference.

Two main areas provide those measurements: Research and Evaluation, and Reporting and Monitoring.

Work under these programs is ongoing – there are many options relating to identifying need and filling the gaps.

The Northern Territory Government continues to work with external expert providers to identify research and evaluation gaps as well as future research and evaluation opportunities.

4.4.1 Research and Evaluation

The Northern Territory Government recognises good research and reliable evaluation is invaluable for progressing and resourcing effective initiatives.

The government has allocated up to \$750,000 in 2018-19 and 2019-20 to commission further research in the Northern Territory to:

- carry out prevalence, needs, service mapping and service referral studies to gather information about the needs of children, families and subpopulations, and what services are currently available to meet those needs;
- understand the characteristics and needs of children and young people who have been in both out-of-home care and detention; and
- develop a tool appropriate for usage in the Northern Territory to identify young people for whom intensive support and intervention would be successful in avoiding involvement in the criminal justice system.

The most recent initiative activated is work with the Australian Institute of Family Studies to progress the evaluation of the Child and Family Centres.

All communities involved in the study have been engaged and ethics approval processes have commenced.

Menzies School of Health Research is progressing the research into the characteristics of children and young people in the child protection and youth justice systems.

Meanwhile, the Northern Territory Government has allocated \$250,000 in 2020-21 to commission an evaluation to understand the impact of the reforms under the *Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families* and *Starting Early for a Better Future* programs.

The evaluation would look at what has changed, what impact has occurred and whether it has been effective. It is anticipated this evaluation will support the development of future programs and services to improve outcomes for children and families in the Northern Territory.

The evaluation will not only provide an independent analysis into whether the initiatives and reforms have improved the outcomes for children and families in the Northern Territory, but will also capture recommendations from the Productivity Commission Study *Report into the Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory* by looking into the systemic implementation of the overall program reform.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|----------------------------|---|----------|
| RCPDNT identified research | Further research into full spectrum of child protection and detention in the NT. Design and implement monitoring and evaluation measures across programs. | UNDERWAY |
| Evaluation design | | |

Strengthening Governance and Systems

4.4.2 Reporting and Monitoring

The Northern Territory Government is continuing to make improvements to existing data in the warehouse and identify data collection solutions.

It includes steps to introduce additional data collection and reporting mechanisms to improve monitoring and reporting of children and families experiencing vulnerability.

Work is also continuing for datasets to be brought into the warehouse through the continued development of data management tools.

This includes full compliance with national minimum datasets for juvenile justice and child protection.

Over the last four years, the reform to the youth justice system has included a focussed effort to improve the collection and use of evidence on the performance of the system. Monitoring of data provides the opportunity for evaluation and improvement.

Data collection and reporting mechanisms continue to be improved with additional work mapped across government agencies to ensure relevant data projects are in sync.

For example, the government has launched an online data reporting form for service providers to use when reporting back to the department.

Another reporting and monitoring project, *The Story of Our Children and Young People* was released in November 2019, and is a comprehensive outline of Territory and regional data across all areas of child and youth wellbeing. For the first time, data across almost 100 measures is presented to Northern Territory Government regional boundaries, supporting outcomes based monitoring and evaluation across the Territory. The information was also presented in regional snapshots to support local engagement and understanding. Planning for the 2021 Story is underway, which will have the additional component of an interactive online data platform.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|---|---|-----------|
| National reporting Reporting Systems | Additional data collection and reporting mechanisms to improve monitoring and reporting of children and families experiencing vulnerability | COMPLETED |



Strengthening Governance and Systems

4.5 Coordinated Effort Towards Better Outcomes

Government will work in partnership with local communities and the community sector to develop and successfully implement a long-term strategy to improve outcomes for children and young people.

To help address duplication across services and programs, it is important all stakeholders – jurisdictions, government and non-government – work together in a coordinated effort.

Not only does it help stop the waste of funding and resources, a coordinated approach is a strong signal to children, young people and their families that they are an important priority.

Effective coordination has been recognised as a basis to better outcomes in social services.

The Northern Territory Government continues to work tirelessly on coordinated approaches with other jurisdictions as well as internally between agencies and with non-government organisations. It is an ongoing effort and there is a need for vigilance as services and programs evolve and resource priorities change.



4.5.1 Operational Coordination and Service Integration

The Northern Territory continues to work with South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland on opportunities to share learnings and collaborate on initiatives, projects and programs that improve the lives of children and families.

Cross-border cooperation and coordination is an ongoing policy approach on child protection and youth justice matters.

In a related approach, the Northern Territory Government continues to work with the Commonwealth to improve education, housing and health services for Aboriginal people living in remote areas.

Another key initiative is the drafting of a Service Integration Framework – an outcome of the Early Childhood Integrated Services Strategic Forum. The framework should help provide for the re-establishment of the service integration element of the Families as First Teachers program.

It is a model for system change. It is about changing the conditions that are holding the problem in place and provides the roadmap to achieving large scale, transformative system shift and achieving generational change for children and families.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|---|--|---|
| Operational coordination | Coordination with other jurisdictions to improve cross-border cooperation and coordination on child protection matters | UNDERWAY |
| Early Childhood Integrated Services Framework | A systemic support framework for Early Childhood Integrated Services, through the Integrated Service Strategic Forum | Superseded by the 10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families |

Strengthening Governance and Systems

4.5.2 Strategic Coordination

Key elements in encouraging strategic coordination across the sector are the functions of the Children and Families Tripartite Forum. The ongoing work of the Tripartite Forum provides a vital link to address an identified need for structured and sustained high level engagement across all stakeholders.

The Tripartite Forum membership is: the Northern Territory and Commonwealth governments with the community sector represented by APONT, NTCOSS and NAAJA.

The Tripartite Forum continued to meet during 2019/2020 and provided guidance to:

- The development of a 10-year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the Northern Territory (Generational Strategy)
- A response to the Productivity Commission's study into Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory final report
- Family and community decision making
- The importance of baseline data on the wellbeing of children as outlined in the Story of Our Children and Young People.

The Generational Strategy was conceived through the RCPDCNT.

The purpose and intent of the Generational Strategy is to capture whole of government child-focused actions.

A scoping paper on the Generational Strategy is being developed and a working group is being established to develop the draft Strategy.

In its deliberations over the Productivity Commission's final report, the Forum provided comment and feedback particularly in relation to:

- Development of community plans, with a preference for regional level plans informed by community level data, need and aspirations;
- Issues regarding data, how it is collected, used and whether or not is made publicly available;
- Review and evaluation mechanisms that include community voices and which are adequately resourced;
- The importance of investing in capacity building and infrastructure to support the delivery of effective services, including the provision of housing in remote communities for staff;
- Longer funding contracts that are supported by a relational contracting approach and which include transition to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations; and
- Increased oversight to report on progress, noting the potential impact of the Tripartite Forum and the need for increased resourcing for the secretariat body, the Reform Management Office.

The Northern Territory Government has also supported the intent of recommendations from the Productivity Commission study into *Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory*.

The Forum continues to work on a Coordinated Funding Framework, setting policies for an agreed approach to the planning, funding and delivery of services for families and children in the Northern Territory.

The initiatives under Strategic Coordination will continue to provide valuable insight, guidance and support for services and programs for vulnerable children and families.



Strengthening Governance and Systems

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--|---|-----------|
| 10-Year Generational Strategy | A 10 year plan to capture whole of government child-focussed actions and map them against a social outcomes framework | UNDERWAY |
| Ministerial Advisory Council | A Ministerial Advisory Council to provide specific advice on improving outcomes for NT children | COMPLETED |
| Story of Our Children | Also referred to as State of the Children report. Includes baseline data on the status against key indicators of child wellbeing | COMPLETED |
| Children and Families Tripartite Forum | A forum comprising NTG, Commonwealth Government and relevant Non-Government Organisations to develop a shared, generational strategy for children and families underpinned by robust evaluation and a coordinated funding framework | COMPLETED |
| Family Support Co-Funding Framework | A joint Commonwealth-Territory Co-ordinated Funding Framework | UNDERWAY |
| Productivity Commission report recommendations | Coordination of the response to the recommendations contained in the report <i>Expenditure on Children in the Northern Territory</i> | UNDERWAY |



Strengthening Governance and Systems

4.5.3 Developing Workforce Capacity

Having a skilled workforce is essential for delivering reform. The workforce needs of the Northern Territory human services sector was identified in the industry-led Human Services Industry Plan. The industry partners who developed the plan were National Disability Services, AMSANT and NTCOSS. The Plan is aspirational and sets out a vision for the human services industry and what they see as their priorities in the coming ten years, it also articulates how they will achieve these priorities. This is an ongoing piece of work that will continue under the governance of the Northern Territory Government/Non-Government Partnership Group.

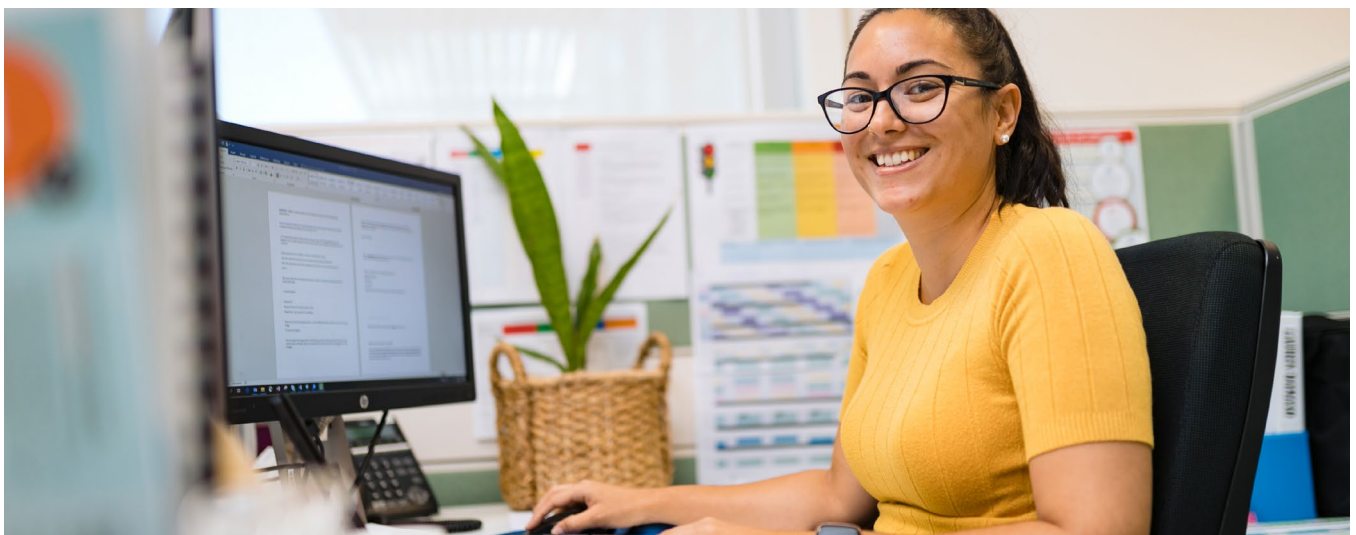
Developing an Aboriginal workforce across the Northern Territory Government is a key priority with actions across four key themes: Targets for Aboriginal Employment and Participation; Engagement and Support; Attraction and Retention of Aboriginal People; and Whole of Career Development to Build Capability and Careers.

Individual agencies continue to develop their own strategies to complement the Northern Territory Government’s overarching priorities. For example, Territory Families has issued its Aboriginal Workforce Plan 2020-2024 with four key focus areas: Profile and Leadership; Recruitment; Induction and Development; Retention and Inclusion.

A positive and effective approach on Indigenous employment has seen the new Child and Families Centres delivered by a team of Aboriginal officers working with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations as well as other Northern Territory government entities.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|-----------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Human Services Workforce Strategy | Develop a strategy aimed at building workforce capacity in the human services area | COMPLETED |





Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

The programs in Preventing Child Sexual Abuse recognise that all children deserve to be safe, happy, protected from harm and are designed to prevent and respond to the sexual exploitation of children and young people in the Northern Territory.

Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

Making up the portfolio are the following programs: Child Safe Organisations, Sexual Health and Harm.

5.1 Child Safe Organisations

The Northern Territory Government agreed to implement the National Standards for Working with Children Check and Child Safe Standards and Principles in 2018. It is progressing implementation of the National Standards in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government and key stakeholders.

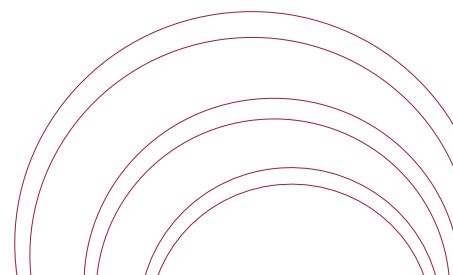
Also under consideration, a nationally consistent foster and kinship carer register and nationally consistent teachers registration.

Northern Territory Government agencies are assisting Child Safe Organisations to implement the standards.

Many of the suggested changes are subject to legislative change and to be considered as part of the development of a Single Act for Children in the Northern Territory (legislation to ensure the safety and wellbeing of children are central in decisions and policy development).

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|---|--|----------|
| National Child Safe Standards Child Safe Standards | Adopt national child safe standards, legislate for the standards | UNDERWAY |
| Foster and Kinship Carer Register | Establish a carers register, consider appropriate legislative and administrative arrangements required for a carers register | UNDERWAY |
| Working with Children Checks | Encompassing 36 recommendations providing for updated, consistent and simplified approaches and legislation for Working with Children Checks | UNDERWAY |
| Teacher registration recommendations | Consider improvements to teacher registers, information sharing between authorities and nationally consistent provisions | UNDERWAY |



Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

5.2 Sexual Health and Harm

The Sexual Health and Harm program consists of initiatives aimed at addressing problematic and harmful sexual behaviours, online safety, child and community education and the sexual health of children in care and detention.

It is a complex and complicated area which requires an informed and tolerant approach.

Some of the reform under this program is behind schedule. The nature of many changes suggested by the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (RCIRCSA) means there is need for further exploration with the Commonwealth and non-government stakeholders.

The Northern Territory Government has committed to supporting in principle most of the recommendations from the RCIRCSA and continues to build the data collection and consult with stakeholders, including the Aboriginal Health Forum.

The Northern Territory's first ever Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Framework has been developed and released. The Framework includes a priority action to review responses for children and young people engaged in harmful sexual behaviours and work with providers to strengthen responses and ensure a connected, coordinated and collaborative response.

NT Health operates a network of specialised sexual health clinics – Clinic 34s – which provide discreet and confidential testing, treatment and management of sexually transmissible and blood borne viral infections.

In addition, NT Health released the first NT Sexually Transmissible Infections and Blood Borne Viruses Strategic and Operational Plan 2019-2023 last year, which will strengthen stakeholder coordination and collaboration toward improved sexual health outcomes for Territorians. The Sexual Health and Blood Borne Virus area along with Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC), review the STI in Children reporting guidelines and toolkit.



Preventing Child Sexual Abuse

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|--|--|-----------|
| Problematic and Harmful Sexual Behaviours | National Office of Child Safety established a working group which has been delayed due to disruption from pandemic. | DELAYED |
| Clinical and Therapeutic Services for Child Sexual Abuse | Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) provide forensic medical and some counselling services to adults and children. | ONGOING |
| Online Safety | Better online safety education, training, frameworks. Commonwealth-led | COMPLETED |
| Child and Community Education Sexual Health Taskforce | A multi-agency taskforce to oversee the delivery of new policies, programs, practices and campaigns to prevent and respond to the sexual exploitation of children and young people in the Northern Territory | UNDERWAY |
| Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence reduction | A sexual violence prevention and response framework as part of the first action plan of the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework | UNDERWAY |
| Children in Out-of-Home Care Sexual Health of Children in Care and Detention | Policies and procedures review, implement a sexual abuse prevention education campaign for children in care, review notifications, investigations, outcomes | COMPLETED |





Supporting Survivors and Victims

The Supporting Survivors and Victims portfolio includes programs which aim to provide the best possible support mechanisms for victims as well as supporting their needs. The programs recognise survivors and victims should be helped to be empowered including providing them with the tools to thrive.

Supporting Survivors and Victims

Making up the portfolio are the following programs: Redress and Civil Claims, Support and Professional Care, Supporting Survivors and Victims through the Justice System.

6.1 Redress and Civil Claims

The Northern Territory Government is a full participant in the National Redress Scheme (a recommendation by the RCIRCSA). The scheme provides eligible survivors with a monetary payment, access to counselling and psychological care, and a direct personal response (apology from the responsible institution).

The NT Redress Coordination Team, along with Northern Territory Government agencies, continues to investigate and process claims relating to NT institutions both pre and post government.

This is ongoing work and will continue to progress the claims brought forward by survivors and victims.

The Northern Territory Government has undergone an open consultation process on the RCIRCSA recommendations on liability and a non-delegable duty of care. Government accepted the recommendations made as a result of that consultation and intend to present a Bill to implement those matters in the second half of 2021.

PROGRAM STUDY: *Helping to address past wrongs through Redress*

The Northern Territory Government has been working with institutions based in the Northern Territory across claims relating to their operations both pre and post Self Government.

The claims range from cases in the 1930s through to 2009. Of the 37 claims submitted as at 30 June 2020, 19 involved female claimants and 18 were male. Sixteen of the claims have been deemed eligible, three are new and 18 are pending further investigation. Redress offers have been sent to six claimants with five accepting so far. The five redress amounts total almost \$405,000.

Claims, investigations, offers are ongoing across the scheme.

Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|----------------------------------|--|-----------|
| National Redress Scheme | To provide eligible survivors with a payment, access to counselling and a direct apology from the responsible institution (RC recs spread across the report) | COMPLETED |
| Civil Claims | Guidelines providing for responding to claims for compensation concerning allegations of child sexual abuse | COMPLETED |
| Liability and Non-Delegable Duty | Legislation providing for a non-delegable duty on institutions | UNDERWAY |



Supporting Survivors and Victims

6.2 Support and Professional Care

To help survivors and victims, there is a need for access to good professional care from community support and sexual assault services through to counselling and psychological care.

The Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARC) in Darwin and Alice Springs offer 24 hour access to medical, legal and counselling information. The SARC program is provided by Northern Territory Health Services and works with non-government organisations on services and issues relating to support for survivors and victims.

The extensive reach of the SARC program includes working with other specialist services to deliver the best possible assistance and advice on related matters, for example, domestic violence services.

As well, work has been done to encourage more institutional responsibility especially where a survivor has indicated a desire to engage with the institution.

This sensitive area requires strong commitment and a steady hand. The work of the SARC program continues to grow - including further consideration of the RCIRCSA recommendations relating to existing specialist sexual assault service gaps.



Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------|
| Community Support Services | Fund dedicated community support services for victims and survivors in, to provide an integrated model of advocacy and support and counselling to children and adults who experienced childhood sexual abuse in institutional contexts | UNDERWAY |
| Counselling and Psychological Care | Support, facilitation, expansion of counselling and psychological care services by practitioners with appropriate capabilities to work with clients with complex trauma | COMPLETED |
| Institutional Support | Northern Territory institutions to offer a direct personal response to survivors | COMPLETED |
| Sexual Assault Services | Address existing specialist sexual assault service gaps by increasing funding | UNDERWAY |

Supporting Survivors and Victims

6.3 Supporting Survivors and Victims through the Justice System

The Northern Territory Government offers various support mechanisms for survivors and victims. These include funding and in kind support for Victims of Crime NT as well as partnerships with specialist services to provide help to those in need.

RCIRCSA recommendations relating to the removal of limitation periods for damages, further specialist training for police, extended reporting channels (eg from prison), more thorough prerecording of witness's evidence and the establishment of a registered intermediary scheme are all under further consideration.

It is important the system is improved and positively progressed for the sake of survivors and victims. In order to make such changes, it's also important they are considered in the context of the unique Northern Territory environment.

More discussions and options are expected to be discussed by agencies and stakeholders while the Northern Territory Government considers the best approaches to move forward on the recommendations.



Status of the Program

| Initiative | Brief Description | Status |
|----------------------------------|--|----------|
| Limitation Periods | Legislation to remove limitation period that applies to a claim for damages by a survivor of child sexual abuse in an institutional context | UNDERWAY |
| Police and Survivors and Victims | Broad changes to policing agencies to encourage reporting of allegations of child sexual abuse including further specialist training, relationship building, and a "guarantee of service" | UNDERWAY |
| Survivors and Victims in Court | Wide ranging measures including: prerecording of the entirety of a witness's evidence in child sexual abuse prosecutions, provision of qualified intermediaries to help in communicating with vulnerable witnesses, legislation review | UNDERWAY |

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