

COMMUNIQUÉ

2 July 2019

The Children and Families Tripartite Forum (the Forum) held its third meeting of 2019 in Alice Springs. The meeting was chaired by Ms Donna Ah Chee, who welcomed representatives and observers from the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments, NT Council of Social Service, North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency and Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory.

The thematic focus for the July meeting was Family and Community Decision Making, in addition the Forum had requested a briefing from Northern Territory Police on the treatment of young people in Alice Springs.

The Hon. Dale Wakefield, Minister for Territory Families, attended the July meeting and discussed issues related to youth justice, the Back on Track program, and the assessment and treatment of young people. The Forum congratulated Minister Wakefield for responding to the needs of vulnerable young people and increasing the number of youth programs in Alice Springs.

The Forum continued its discussion on the scope and direction for the Coordinated Funding Framework. The Forum agreed that the focus of the framework should be early intervention and prevention services for families and children. The Forum also agreed that local communities should have a strong role in the design and delivery of services.

The scope for the Coordinated Funding Framework, once finalised by the Forum, will be provided to the Productivity Commission to inform its study into government expenditure on children and families services in the Northern Territory that prevent harm to children. The Forum's advice on the scope of the Coordinated Funding Framework will also be provided to the Northern Territory and Commonwealth Governments to promote a new approach to planning and funding children and family support services and to working with the community services sector.

Presentations and key reforms were provided and discussed with the Forum:

- ▶ Policing in Alice Springs – NT Police described its programs and approach to dealing with young people in Alice Springs. The Forum welcomed the decrease in the number of young people in detention and noted the progress NT Police has made in implementing the Youth Division.
- ▶ Local Decision Making – the Department of the Chief Minister provided an overview on implementation of Local Decision Making and described how it is being implemented in East Arnhem.
- ▶ Transformation of the Out of Home Care System – Territory Families discussed progress of reforms to improve the out of home care system. The Forum agreed this is a significant reform and welcomed the downward trend of children entering out of home care and the increase in the number of Aboriginal Kinship carers.
- ▶ Care and Protection practice reforms – Territory Families discussed implementation of Family Group Conferencing and the Signs of Safety Practice Framework. The Forum welcomed the work of Territory Families to improve child protection practice and supported their focus on increased engagement with families and involving them in decisions that concern their children.

