

# COMMUNIQUÉ

4 March 2022

The Children and Families Tripartite Forum (the forum) held its first meeting of 2022 in Darwin.

The Forum was chaired by Ms Donna Ah Chee, who welcomed members and observers from the Northern Territory and Australian Governments, Northern Territory Council of Social Service (NTCOSS), North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA) and Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APO NT).

The meeting began with a **Welcome to Country from Larrakia Elder, Janneen McLennan** who reflected the importance of coming together, and working together, for Territorian children. She also acknowledged the passing and the contributions of Nanna Nangala Fejo, who had played a critical role in helping Australians to understand the tragedy of the Stolen Generations. Ms McLennan also reflected on the impact of the Stolen Generations policy that continued to be felt by Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory today,

Northern Territory Government ministers the **Hon Lauren Moss MLA** and the **Hon Kate Worden MLA** engaged with the forum. Minister Moss, the Minister for Children, congratulated the forum, confirming that the NT Government has endorsed the 10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families (Generational Strategy) and the related Coordinated Investment Framework. She also flagged the opening of the Darrandirra Children and Family Centre and new reforms which will strengthen information sharing within the education sector.

Minister Worden, Minister for Territory Families and Urban Housing, provided an update on the investment into family, domestic and sexual violence. She also outlined actions underway and the significant contribution of community sector to this work.

The community sector representatives raised serious concerns with the Ministers about the continued use of spit hoods by police in the Northern Territory and requested that the Northern Territory Government legislate to ban the use of spit hoods on children across all custodial settings.

Australian Government ministers, **Senator the Hon Anne Ruston**, the **Hon Ken Wyatt AM, MP** and the **Hon Michelle Landry MP** sent their apologies for the meeting. However, via letter they confirmed the Australian Government's endorsement of the Generational Strategy and Coordinated Investment Framework and their commitment to implementation.

The forum endorsed the **10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families** consultation report and glossary. They discussed next steps including communicating the strategy to stakeholders and the Terms of Reference for a Generational Strategy Steering Group. Rob McPhee, CEO of Danila Dilba Health Service was confirmed as the independent Aboriginal Chair of the Steering Group.

The forum also reviewed the Australian and NT governments **Coordinated Investment Framework** agreement and reiterated its importance in enabling funding to be distributed more effectively in the children and family system.

Officials from the NT and Australian Governments presented to the forum on data, strategies and programs relating to **domestic, family and sexual violence** in the Territory. They discussed the intersection between alcohol consumption and domestic violence rates. The forum acknowledged the good work occurring but agreed that further prevention work is necessary and referred the discussion to the Steering Group to consider in the context of the implementation of the Generational Strategy

The National Indigenous Australians Agency provided the forum with an overview of the new **Territories Stolen Generations Redress Scheme** and outlined how people may apply.

Expert in children with disabilities in the child protection and youth justice systems, Birri Gubba-Urangan woman **Jody Barney** joined the forum to present on her work and her recommendations on improving the system for people with disabilities. The forum discussed the need to further consider solutions to better support children with disabilities, including those with hearing loss, within the system, and committed to exploring Jody's recommendations in greater detail

The forum was presented with the latest data relating to the safety of children and families. The forum noted small decreasing trend in the number of Aboriginal Children in out-of-home care at the population level in the Northern Territory, however expressed concern with the greatly increased number of Aboriginal children in detention in the NT. The forum agreed that the data is vital in informing forum discussion and decision-making, and where system reforms need to be targeted.