



Central Australian
Aboriginal Congress



TANGENTYERE
COUNCIL



SNAICC
National Voice for our Children



North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency



The Central Australia Aboriginal Community-Controlled Out-of-home Care Steering Committee

COMMUNIQUE – APRIL 2019

On February 26 2019 the Central Australia Aboriginal Community-Controlled Out-of-home Care Steering Committee and SNAICC – National Voice for our Children brought together leaders from communities and service providers in Alice Springs to discuss next steps in implementation of the Central Australia Aboriginal Community-Controlled Out-of-home Care Strategy (the Strategy).

A total of 34 people from 12 organisations attended the forum, including representatives from: Akeyulerre, Central Australia Aboriginal Congress (CAAC), Central Australia Aboriginal Family Legal Unit (CAAFLU), Children's Ground, Larrakia Nation, Northern Territory Council of Social Services (NTCOSS), Northern Australia Aboriginal Justice Agency (NAAJA), Tangentyere Council, Territory Families, Strong Grandmothers Group from the Central Desert Region, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency (VACCA), and SNAICC.

We are all guided by a shared goal to ensure that Aboriginal children and young people are safe and have the opportunity to thrive. There is broad support among participant organisations for the Strategy, and recognition that its implementation will require strong commitments from all stakeholders. After over a year of community members working to develop the Strategy, there is a strong and united call from community-controlled organisations in Central Australia for the Northern Territory Government to respond and detail how it will support and resource the Strategy's implementation.

Background

Over the last 18 months SNAICC has been facilitating consultations with Aboriginal communities and representatives of the community-controlled service sector in Central Australia. Consultations have been focused on informing the creation of the Strategy, and have included meetings with leaders of community-controlled services, Aboriginal Elders, and community representatives across Central Australia.

A local steering committee was convened for strategy development and includes representatives of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, Tangentyere Council, North Australia Aboriginal Justice Agency, Northern Territory Council of Social Services,

Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara (NPY) Women's Council and Territory Families (the Steering Committee).

The Strategy

The Central Australia Aboriginal Community-controlled Out-of-home Care Strategy describes the priorities for community-controlled child protection service delivery that were identified during the consultations and shaped by the Steering Committee. It sets out a future model of service delivery with four core components:

1. **Localised cultural authority** enabled by support for the establishment and involvement of Community Child Safety Leaders groups within each community, including in regional and remote locations;
2. **Child safety hubs** delivered by community-controlled organisations and providing a full range of services that support children, families, and carers where there are child protection concerns, including out-of-home care case management;
3. **Specialised support for families** through referral networks that engage the range of services that can address the drivers of child protection intervention and support families to stay together or reunify; and
4. **An Aboriginal community-controlled peak body for children and families** to provide representation, policy leadership, and support for sector development.

The strategy describes 12 interconnected strategic priority areas and related actions for implementing them over the next 5 years. The **Strategy Executive Summary** is included as **Attachment A**.

The Forum

Over the course of the day, discussions were focused on the priority areas for improving outcomes for Aboriginal children and families in Central Australia, and what is required for successful implementation of the Strategy. Participants observed the following:

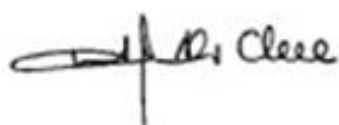
1. Empowering Aboriginal children, families and communities to have a voice in child protection decision-making was an essential component of the Strategy.
2. The priority of the Strategy is to ensure that Aboriginal children grow up safe and connected to family, community, culture and Country, and that a focus on early intervention is key to achieving this.
3. There is a lack of clarity over what resourcing is available to enable the self-determination of communities in child welfare service delivery. There needs to be a genuine commitment to transferring responsibility for child and family services to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations.
4. Existing methods for sharing child safety and wellbeing data are not accountable to Aboriginal communities. An Aboriginal Children and Young People's Commissioner is essential for ensuring accountability and promoting the rights of our children.

Next steps

Based on the outcomes of the forum and the priorities that were identified by participants, the Steering Committee requests the following:

1. That the Northern Territory Government provides a formal response to the Central Australia Aboriginal Community-Controlled Out-of-home Care Strategy.
2. That the Northern Territory Government commits resources for the implementation of the Strategy and communicates the details of this commitment to the Aboriginal community-controlled sector in Central Australia.
3. That, in partnership with the Steering Committee, Territory Families scopes the locations for Aboriginal Community-Controlled Child Safety Hubs, develops initial program guidelines for their operation, and a commissioning plan and timeline for their establishment. The Steering Committee notes that this should include a commitment for progressing a hub that services NPY lands and will require further consideration of interstate protocols for meeting the needs of children and families in the cross border region.
4. Building on the existing leadership of the Steering Committee, establish an Aboriginal community-controlled organisation-led executive group to input to and oversee the initial stages of implementation for the Strategy. The executive group should have responsibility for developing and progressing an establishment plan for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled children and families peak for Central Australia. The Steering Committee notes that the executive group should include representation from the Barkly Region.
5. Establish a model of Aboriginal Family-led Decision-Making in partnership with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and commence pilot delivery.
6. Establish a dedicated Aboriginal Children and Young People's Commissioner in the Northern Territory, on equal footing with the NT Children's Commissioner.

Signatories



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