

REVIEWING IMPLEMENTATION OF  
THE ABORIGINAL AND  
TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER  
CHILD PLACEMENT  
PRINCIPLE  
NORTHERN TERRITORY  
2019



**SNAICC**  
National Voice for our Children

**Table of Contents**

1. Introduction .....3

2. Overview – Northern Territory .....5

3. Prevention.....7

4. Partnership .....9

5. Placement.....11

6. Participation.....12

7. Connection.....13

## 1. Introduction

This report reviews the progress of the Northern Territory Government in implementing the full intent of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle (ATSICPP). This review is conducted on the basis of the best practice approach set out in SNAICC, 2017, [Understanding and Applying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle – A Resource for Legislation, Policy, and Program Development](#) and SNAICC, 2018, [The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: A Guide to Support Implementation](#).

It considers changes in the implementation of the five elements of the ATSICPP – prevention, partnership, placement, participation and connection – described in the diagram below across five interrelated system elements, since the comprehensive baseline analysis SNAICC released in April 2018 ([2018 Baseline Analysis](#)).<sup>1</sup> These system elements are legislation, policy, programs, processes and practice. The current review therefore only considers ATSICPP implementation efforts over the past year (from 1 May 2018 – 30 April 2019).

It is important to note that the review is somewhat limited in scope. It has a particular focus on child safety, protection, and family support service systems, and the work of government departments with primary responsibility for those systems. For example, the prevention element of the ATSICPP covers a broad scope of systems and multiple departmental responsibilities for universal service provision in areas such as health, education, and disability; however, these broader support systems are largely outside the scope of this review.

This review is based on available documentation gathered through a desktop review and input provided by the Northern Territory Government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sector leaders.

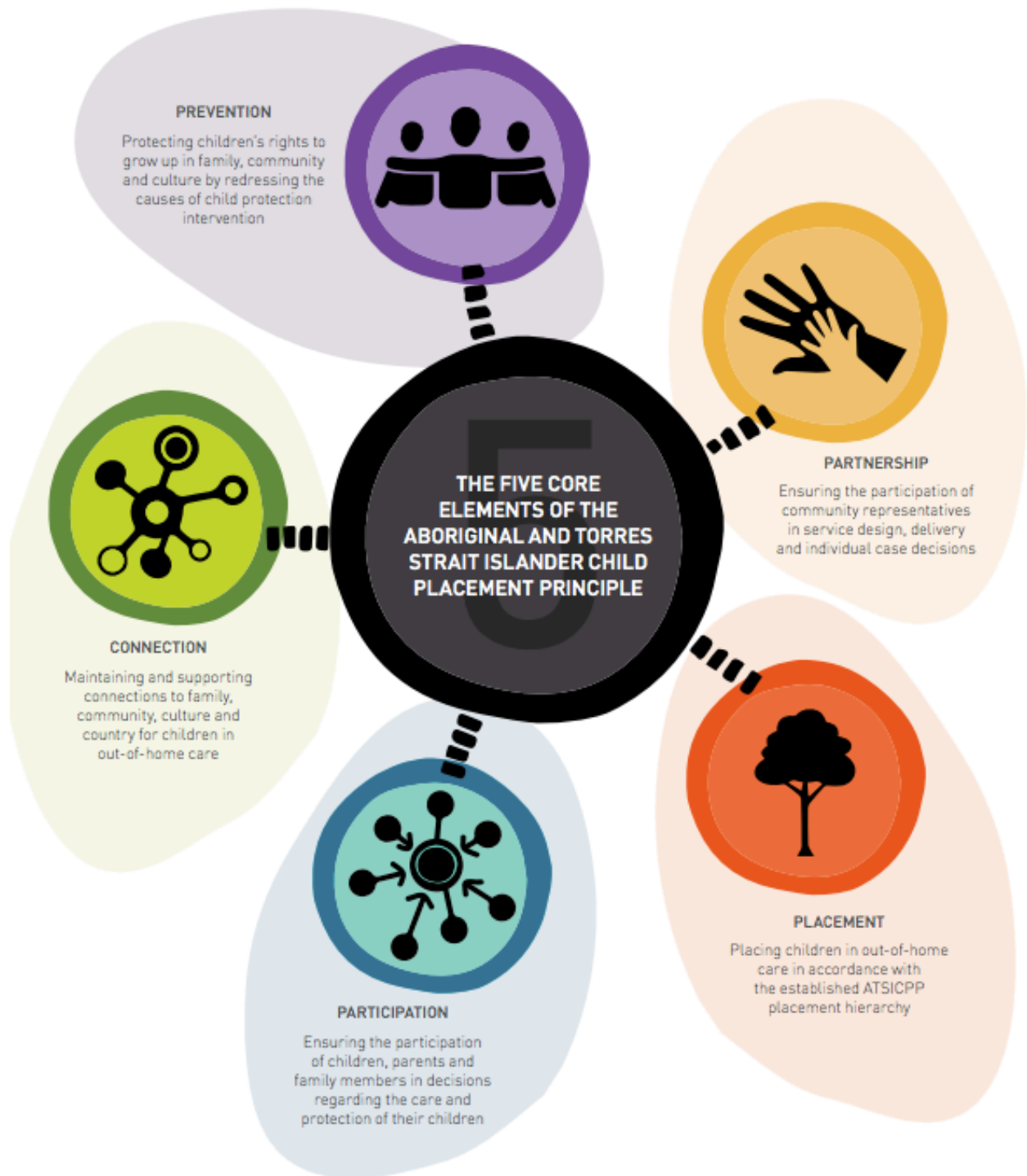
The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Working Group for the National Framework for Protecting Australia’s Children has guided the development of this report and equivalent reviews for each state and territory jurisdiction. The Working Group is tasked with ensuring implementation of the ATSICPP in line with the agreement under the Fourth Action Plan to “uphold the five elements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle to recognise the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children to be raised in their own culture and the importance and value of their family, extended family, kinship networks, culture and community.”<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this review, which will take place annually for all Australian states and territories, is to establish the current status of implementation of the ATSICPP in each state and territory in order to measure progress towards enhanced implementation.

---

<sup>1</sup> SNAICC – National Voice for our Children (2018). Baseline Analysis of Best Practice Implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Child Placement Principle: Northern Territory. Available at <https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/ATSICPP-Baseline-NT-Final-April-2018.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Commonwealth of Australia (2018). Fourth Action Plan 2018-2020: Supporting Families, Communities and Organisations to Keep Children Safe. Available at [https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01\\_2019/dss-fourth-action-plan-v6-web-final.pdf](https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/01_2019/dss-fourth-action-plan-v6-web-final.pdf).



## 1. Overview – Northern Territory

Since the 2018 Baseline Analysis, the government has been undergoing legislative reforms to the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* (NT) to give effect to the intent and direction of the recommendations of the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory (Northern Territory Royal Commission) and the NT Government's reform direction. As legislative amendments were passed in 6 August 2019, outside of our review period (1 May 2018 - 30 April 2019), the changes and their impact on implementation of the ATSICPP will be discussed in detail in the 2020 compliance review.

Alongside legislative reform, the Northern Territory is amid a number of policy and program reforms. The *Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families* continues to be implemented and the Signs of Safety model is being rolled out. In addition, the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance Northern Territory (AMSANT) has been funded to co-design a comprehensive early intervention family support service to be delivered by Aboriginal health services/ACCOs. Other promising initiatives include the first of 11 new child and family centres being built in Tennant Creek, increasing supports available to children at risk of entering care, as well as their families. Further, Territory Families has endorsed, and made a commitment to implement over the next five years, a new kin care model called Children Safe, Family Together, developed by Tangentyere Council Aboriginal Corporation (Tangentyere Council) in consultation with a number of Aboriginal community controlled organisations (ACCOs). Territory Families has also funded Ngurratjuta/Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Tangentyere Council to pilot kin care programs as part of the Aboriginal Carers Growing Up Aboriginal Children program. Both the new model and these pilots reflect a shift by Territory Families towards prioritising family and kin care placements.

Despite this progress, Aboriginal children were 11.5 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than their non-Indigenous peers in 2017-18, an increase from 11.1 since the Baseline Analysis was conducted, and a rate above the national average of 10.2 times.<sup>3</sup> Disturbingly, Aboriginal children make up 89.3% of the out-of-home care population in the Northern Territory.<sup>4</sup>

The Northern Territory spent 23.9% of child protection funding on family support and intensive family support services in 2017-18<sup>5</sup>, but just 2.4% of child protection expenditure went to ACCOs in the same period.<sup>6</sup> This remains well below what is expected of a jurisdiction where the overwhelming majority of children in out-of-home care are Aboriginal, and where there must be greater investment in ACCOs to do the work necessary to prevent children from entering care, to ensure culturally connected placements for children who are removed, and reunify children in out-of-home care with their birth families as soon as possible. The majority of work, such as the case management of Aboriginal children and the development of cultural plans, remains with Territory Families. Disappointingly, implementation of the broad Aboriginal out-of-home care strategies developed in Central Australia and the Top End has only minimally progressed, and the fuller intent of the strategies is yet to be addressed and realised.

The Children and Families Tripartite Forum continues to provide a forum for structured high-level engagement between the Northern Territory and Australian governments and the community sector regarding children and families experiencing vulnerability and child protection issues. However, there remains no dedicated Aboriginal peak body that could be involved in the design of policies and services that impact on Aboriginal children and families, nor a dedicated children's commissioner for Aboriginal

---

<sup>3</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2019. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

<sup>4</sup> Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services – Chapter 16 – Child Protection, 2019, Table 16A.2.

<sup>5</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2019. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

<sup>6</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2019. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

children and young people that is on equal footing with the principal children's commissioner in the Northern Territory.

Overall, significant reforms are required for all five elements of the ATSCPP to be fully embedded across all systems elements in the Northern Territory.

## 2. Prevention

There have been no legislative changes in the reporting period. Since the 2018 Baseline Analysis, the government has been undergoing legislative reforms to the *Care and Protection of Children Act 2007* (NT) to give effect to the intent and direction of the recommendations of the Northern Territory Royal Commission. As legislative amendments were passed in 6 August 2019, outside of our review period (1 May 2018 – 30 April 2019), the changes and their impact on implementation of the ATSCPP will be discussed in detail within the 2020 compliance review.

On the policy front, in April 2018 the Northern Territory Government allocated \$229 million in new funding to *Safe, Thriving and Connected: Generational Change for Children and Families* – its plan to deliver the recommendations of the Northern Territory Royal Commission, focusing on strengthening early, targeted support for vulnerable families and children. As part of this plan, Territory Families invested \$6.5 million to construct the Tennant Creek Child and Family Centre – the first of 11 new centres to be built across the Northern Territory over the next five years. Sector leaders inform that a further \$11.4 million has been committed over four years to establish coordination hubs and expand the number of Child and Family Centres to 17. Child and family centres aim to improve a range of wellbeing outcomes for children and families experiencing vulnerability by supporting them to access services to address their needs. This includes addressing any child safety issues within families to prevent their need for further involvement with the statutory child protection system. Territory Families informs that the services provided by these centres will be delivered by ACCOs.

Further, the new family and kin care model, Children Safe, Family Together, discussed in detail in the ‘placement’ section, emphasises that family-led decision-making should be embedded in family preservation efforts to “explore how these efforts can be supported in the best interests of the child” to prevent child removals.<sup>7</sup> No specific funding has been provided for this, however.

In addition, Territory Families has adopted the Signs of Safety model to child protection casework, which is progressively being rolled out. The Government reports that this model will support with preventing Aboriginal children from entering out-of-home care, though there is limited information on how this model will seek to achieve this. To coincide with the rollout of Signs of Safety, agency staff have attended sessions on how to embed the five elements of the ATSCPP in their work and how to align the elements with the Signs of Safety framework. Further, Territory Families reports that an Aboriginal practice leadership framework has been designed to support its Aboriginal staff to be at the centre of Signs of Safety implementation and to deliver Aboriginal community engagement with the rollout.

In a positive step, Territory Families funded AMSANT to co-design a comprehensive early intervention family support service to be delivered by Aboriginal health services. Aboriginal Health Services were identified as best placed to provide an early response, as they may already be working with a community or be located closer to the family. In 2018, Territory Families also launched the Family and Children Enquiry and Support (FACES) hotline. This hotline refers families to intensive family and parenting services, some of which are delivered by ACCOs. Territory Families reports that the hotline has already resulted in more families accessing crucial supports before they hit crisis point, though there is no data available on how many families have accessed the necessary supports. In addition, Territory Families expanded the Northern Territory Social Services Directory, an online tool which provides information to families about where they can access support and assistance; though, again, it is unclear how many Aboriginal families have accessed this directory to date, whether Aboriginal organisations were consulted in the service’s design, nor whether they are involved in its delivery.

---

<sup>7</sup> See [https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/722598/Tangentyere-Children-Safe,-Family-Together.pdf](https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0006/722598/Tangentyere-Children-Safe,-Family-Together.pdf).

A new localised model of early intervention is also being supported by Territory Families with the set-up of the Mikan Community Reference Group by community Elders in East Arnhem Land. The group provides the statutory agency with advice on individual child protection cases, including in relation to finding kinship carers. The group also works with the East Arnhem care and protection office to reduce the risk of child removals in the local community and, in some cases, is involved in developing action plans to divert children from the out-of-home care system. Sector leaders report that this partnership between the Government and the local community has helped to prevent child removals, place children who needed to be placed in care within the care of extended family, and reunify some children with their families.<sup>8</sup> Sector leaders also report that the group has allowed Territory Families to build better relationships with families in the community and empowers Aboriginal people to take a leading role in decision-making about their children.<sup>9</sup>

In 2017-18, 23.9% of child protection funding in the Northern Territory went to family support and intensive family support services.<sup>10</sup> This is the second-highest proportional investment in family support and intensive family support services when compared with child protection spending across Australian states and territories. Further, of the number of children commencing intensive family support services in 2017-18, 78.1% were Aboriginal.<sup>11</sup>

Aboriginal children were 11.5 times more likely to be in out-of-home care than their non-Indigenous peers in 2017-18, an increase from 11.1 since the Baseline Analysis was conducted and a rate above the national average of 10.2 times.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>8</sup> AMSANT. (2018). Aboriginal community voices on proposed Child Protection and Youth Justice reforms in the Northern Territory. Available at <http://www.amsant.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Listening-and-Hearing-are-Two-Different-Things-Final-Report-6-July-2018.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> AMSANT. (2018). Aboriginal community voices on proposed Child Protection and Youth Justice reforms in the Northern Territory. Available at <http://www.amsant.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Listening-and-Hearing-are-Two-Different-Things-Final-Report-6-July-2018.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2018. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

<sup>11</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2018. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

<sup>12</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2018. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.



### 3. Partnership

There have been no legislative changes in the reporting period.

The Children and Families Tripartite Forum continues to provide a forum for structured high-level engagement between the Northern Territory and Australian governments and the community sector regarding children and families experiencing vulnerability and child protection issues. A number of representatives from ACCOs sit on this forum. This forum and the Assistant Commissioner at the Office of the Children's Commissioner, who is Aboriginal, play an important role in keeping government accountable and ensuring implementation of important government commitments. However, the Assistant Commissioner has limited powers and functions to carry out this work effectively. There remains no dedicated commissioner for Aboriginal children and young people with the requisite powers to conduct investigations into systemic issues impacting Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory.

In addition, there remains no dedicated Aboriginal peak body that could be involved in the design of policies and services that impact on Aboriginal children and families, despite calls by a number of Aboriginal organisations to establish one.<sup>13</sup> Just 1.8% of family support funding went to ACCOs (a decrease of 5.2% since 2016-17) and just 14.9% of intensive family support funding went to ACCOs.<sup>14</sup> Overall, just 2.4% of child protection expenditure went to ACCOs in 2017-18.<sup>15</sup> This indicates that Aboriginal organisations have limited opportunities to provide the culturally safe supports needed to prevent Aboriginal children from entering care. Territory Families continues to fund SNAICC to provide advice on legislative, policy and practice reforms pertaining to Aboriginal children and families in the child protection context.

Territory Families engaged with SNAICC and Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory (APONT) to develop Aboriginal out-of-home care strategies in Central Australia and the Top End respectively. While Territory Families reports that it is developing a response and committed implementation plans for these strategies, sector leaders report that the processes have significantly stalled and the full intent of the strategies is yet to be addressed and realised. The case management of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care remains the responsibility of Territory Families rather than of ACCOs.

In early 2019, child protection and family support staff, as well as executive leadership from Territory Families attended SNAICC workshops on embedding all five elements of the ATSICPP and on ways to advance implementation of the ATSICPP across policy and practice.

On another positive note, Territory Families did fund Tangentyere Council to develop a new kin care model (discussed in the placement section) and fund AMSANT to co-design a comprehensive early intervention family support service to be delivered by Aboriginal health services (discussed in the prevention section).

Territory Families recently developed and is implementing the Aboriginal Cultural Security Framework, which shapes a whole of agency approach to building culturally proficient services, systems and governance. Territory Families informs that the framework was developed in consultation with more than 600 people made up of internal Territory Families staff and representatives from approximately 30 external organisations and partners, over one-third of which were ACCOs. The Framework identifies how Territory Families can strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal people and communities, promote a workforce that encourages understanding and respect for cultural diversity, and work towards a system where Aboriginal people are empowered to make decisions about Aboriginal families. Sector leaders inform that Territory Families staff have been trained on this new framework, though it is unclear how

---

<sup>13</sup> The Central Australia Aboriginal Community-Controlled Out-of-home Care Steering Committee (2019). Available at [https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/CentralAustralia\\_OOHC\\_Forum\\_Communique.pdf](https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/CentralAustralia_OOHC_Forum_Communique.pdf).

<sup>14</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2019. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

<sup>15</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2019. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

implementation of the various steps of the framework is progressing. In addition, Territory Families is consulting with ACCOs in the development of its family group conferencing model; though it is unclear whether ACCOs will be funded to deliver the model. This is discussed in greater detail in the 'participation' section.

Territory Families recently established and commenced rollout of the Remote Service Delivery Framework, after broad consultation. This framework sees agency staff transferred to remote communities to develop partnerships with Aboriginal communities and take a place-based approach to addressing child protection matters in partnership with community. This framework is almost fully implemented in the Southern Region and implementation is ongoing in the Northern Region. Staff based in 21 remote communities have developed consultation plans with those communities for engaging with them. There is no information on what this place-based approach will otherwise look like.

Territory Families has also revised some of its procedures to improve partnerships. When the agency responds to the death, illness or injury of an Aboriginal child in out-of-home care, an Aboriginal community worker or Aboriginal cultural advisor must be included in the process wherever possible and the response should also involve relevant family and significant persons. Further, when there is end-of-life planning for an Aboriginal child in care, Territory Families reports that the hospital's Aboriginal liaison officer should be included in the planning process to support the child and family and to assist participants to understand cultural customs and protocols. However, again, it is unclear how these procedures are enabled in practice and whether independent Aboriginal organisations are engaged to support families and children. On a positive note, sector leaders report that Territory Families, along with the Department of the Chief Minister, are progressing work on creating local decision-making agreements with ACCOs to increase community control around decision-making.<sup>16</sup> It is unclear how many agreements have been entered into and progressed at this stage.

There are two promising programs that have improved partnerships between government and ACCOs: the Mikan Community Reference group, discussed in the 'prevention' section, and the Aboriginal Carers Growing Up Aboriginal Children program, discussed in the 'placement' section. These present important opportunities for expansion across the Northern Territory to benefit all Aboriginal children and families.

---

<sup>16</sup> See [https://dcm.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/442289/local\\_decision\\_making.pdf](https://dcm.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/442289/local_decision_making.pdf).

#### 4. Placement

There have been no legislative changes in the reporting period.

There have been significant policy reforms since the 2018 Baseline Analysis concerning kinship care. Recognising that Aboriginal children in out-of-home care should be placed with their families and that ACCOs are best placed to find placements for Aboriginal children, Territory Families has funded the development of a new kin care model called Children Safe, Family Together. Tangentyere Council developed the model through extensive consultation and drawing upon the expert advice and support of the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency. According to sector leaders, the model provides a comprehensive approach to identifying, recruiting and supporting Aboriginal family and kin carers that is evidence based and responsive to unique community needs.

A key focus of the model is increasing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and community control, and ensuring that families and communities are involved in key decision-making processes around the care and protection of their children. Attached to the model is a blueprint for implementation that can be tailored to the needs of individual communities within the Northern Territory. These implementation guidelines also offer strategies for building the capacity of ACCOs to deliver family and kin care-based services. The Northern Territory Government has endorsed the model and committed to its full implementation across a five-year period.

Alongside policy reform, Territory Families has funded Ngurratjuta/Pmara Ntjarra Aboriginal Corporation, Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation and Tangentyere Council to pilot kin care programs as part of the Aboriginal Carers Growing Up Aboriginal Children program. Territory Families has supported these Aboriginal organisations to take the lead in finding family for Aboriginal children who are unable to live with their parents and recruiting and supporting Aboriginal kin carers. Since these programs were introduced, 42 Aboriginal children have been placed with Aboriginal carers (an increase of 18% since the previous year).<sup>17</sup> Sector leaders have informed that while this is a very positive step, it is important that Territory Families refers cases to ACCOs early so that kin carers can be found for children at the earliest stage possible.

In 2017-18, 33.3% of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care were placed with family, kin or other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island carers and the same percentage was placed with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers only.<sup>18</sup> Northern Territory has the second-lowest rate of placement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers in Australia.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2018. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

<sup>18</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2019. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

<sup>19</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2019. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

## 5. Participation

There have been no legislative changes in the reporting period.

Territory Families reports that the new Signs of Safety model will enhance expectations around how the agency engages with children, parents, families and the community in decisions regarding the care and protection of their children. Further, Territory Families reports there is greater emphasis on ensuring families and children have access to interpreters, and providing financial and other supports to assist parents, guardians or those caring for a child to attend court proceedings. This is particularly relevant for remote families. Territory Families reports that it is also placing greater focus on supporting families to access court-ordered case conferences aimed at reaching agreed outcomes on the care of children. However, there is no information available on how these supports to families to meaningfully participate in decision-making are enabled in practice, nor on their outcomes.

Territory Families has funded Price Waterhouse Coopers Indigenous Consulting to develop a family group conferencing and family-led decision-making model to enhance participation in decision-making for Aboriginal families. However, sector leaders have informed that there has been minimal consultation on the development of this model. Further, it is unclear when this model will be rolled out and whether ACCOs and independent Aboriginal facilitators will facilitate these processes. Research highlights the importance of Aboriginal family-led decision-making processes being supported by an independent facilitator through ACCOs, with processes controlled by non-Indigenous professionals and services at risk of being ineffective to empower families and communities.<sup>20</sup> While strong partnerships with government child protection services are essential to any model of family-led decision making, a best practice effective and culturally strong model of Aboriginal family-led decision-making is led by ACCOs.

On a positive note, Children Safe, Family Together, the new kinship care model designed by Tangentyere Council, includes family-led decision-making processes in both phase 1 and 3 of the model. Adequate resources will be critical to properly implement the model to increase meaningful participation.

Territory Families recently revised its Out of Home Care 'Care Plan' policy and template to increase the voices of children and young people in decision-making. The policy states that, "Care Plans must be developed in a way that encourages and facilitates the participation of the child, their parents, their Carer, professionals who are involved to support the child and their family. For an Aboriginal child, Aboriginal people and agencies must be included."<sup>21</sup> However, there remains no process to enable the participation of Aboriginal children, families and organisations in practice, and it is unclear whether Aboriginal organisations are resourced to support families to participate.

The Mikan Community Reference Group, discussed in detail in the 'prevention' section, is a positive example of including community members in decision-making and has already seen positive results for children and families. However, this model is only running in one part of the Northern Territory.

---

<sup>20</sup> Ban, P. (2005). 'Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and Family Group Conferences', Australian Social Work 8(4), p384-394, 392.

<sup>21</sup> Northern Territory Government. Policy: Care Planning for Children in Care. Available at [https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/692200/Care-Planning-Policy.pdf](https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/692200/Care-Planning-Policy.pdf).

## 6. Connection

There have been no legislative changes in the reporting period. However, there has been policy development to strengthen focus on permanent care orders.

While the Northern Territory traditionally does not use permanent care orders, which risk permanently severing Aboriginal children's cultural and family ties, Territory Families has recently revised its permanent care policy, stating its intention to "increase the uptake of children and young people moving into permanent placements, preferably with family members or significant others, from the out-of-home care system." The policy states that "permanent care arrangements for Aboriginal children must fully comply with the Aboriginal Child Placement Principle and it must be demonstrated that active efforts have been made to find family members who are willing and suitable to become the child's permanent carer."<sup>22</sup> For an Aboriginal child, their stability is grounded in the permanence of their identity in connection with family, kin, culture and country. While it is important that the policy prioritises full compliance with the ATSI CPP, the policy does not define "active efforts," and in a context where the Northern Territory only placed 33.3% of Aboriginal children in care with kin and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers in 2017-18, it is unclear whether Territory Families has the appropriate policy and practice frameworks to ensure that family members are caring for Aboriginal children on permanent care orders. It is concerning that Territory Families is moving towards a permanency approach where there are significant and critical gaps in implementing the ATSI CPP, and inadequate safeguards to ensure the decision is made in the best interests of the child.

Since the Baseline Analysis was conducted in 2018, there remains no government-funded programs delivered by ACCOs that enable family and community participation in care planning or implement contact arrangements or care/cultural plans. There is no ACCO case management or custody and guardianship program. A recent CREATE survey suggests that less than 15% of Aboriginal young people in out-of-home care in the Northern Territory were aware of a personal cultural support plan and that young people had infrequent contact with family members.<sup>23</sup> Further, there is no information available on the quality and level of implementation of cultural plans.

On a positive note, the Northern Territory had the highest rate of Aboriginal children reunified with birth parents within 12 months of admission to care in 2017-18. For every 10 Aboriginal children who were admitted to care in 2017-18, just under 4 children were reunified.<sup>24</sup> Further, in 2017-18, no Aboriginal children were adopted or placed on third-party parental responsibility orders.<sup>25</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Northern Territory Government. Policy: Permanent Care Orders. Available at

[https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0009/425754/permanent-care-orders-policy.pdf](https://territoryfamilies.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/425754/permanent-care-orders-policy.pdf).

<sup>23</sup> CREATE, Out-of-home care in Australia: Children and young people's views after five years of national standards. p.66. Available at <https://create.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CREATE-OOHC-In-Care-2018-Report.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2019. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.

<sup>25</sup> Family Matters. (2019). The Family Matters Report 2019. Melbourne: SNAICC – National Voice for our Children.