

**Statement to Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care  
(SNAICC)  
Re: Territory Families update to inform the 2017 Family Matters Report**

The Northern Territory Government created the Department of Territory Families, bringing a whole of life approach to supporting families and placing child protection and youth justice within a broader framework of prevention and early intervention.

The establishment of Territory Families creates, for the first time in the Northern Territory, the opportunity to take a cohesive approach to supporting vulnerable families. This includes a review of clinical practice and support services, and the development of clinical governance and care coordination frameworks that will support children at risk, and vulnerable families at any point across Territory Families' service system.

**Working with, and investing in Non-Government agencies, including Aboriginal organisations**

The Northern Territory Government is committed to designing a better child protection and youth justice system by co-designing and partnering with the non-government sector and Aboriginal communities and organisations (including Aboriginal medical and justice agencies), peak bodies, foster and kinship carers and young people themselves. This is in recognition that those on the ground, such as non-government organisations and community members, have a range of expertise, knowledge and lived experience to bring to the table. The Northern Territory reform agenda is major and the government understands that to succeed all parties must be engaged.

Territory Families has recently confirmed its partnership with the Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory, an alliance comprising of Aboriginal justice, medical and land council agencies, and the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care. The partnership will accomplish design, consultation and establishment of a strategy to create and build Aboriginal led and managed out-of-home care services in the Northern Territory.

**Child Protection Policy**

There are two major reforms to the child protection system currently planned and underway. These are the progression of a plan to outsource out-of-home care to the non-government sector and the introduction of a dual pathways model. Both reform projects incorporate a number of election commitments of the current government.

Territory Families is leading the government's commitment to plan the transition of out-of-home care services to the non-government sector within seven years which is aimed at increasing standards and quality of care outcomes for children in care.

The Plan to transition out-of-home care to the non-government sector project incorporates the Northern Territory Government's commitments to:

- grow and develop Aboriginal non-government organisations focused on looking after children in out-of-home care;
- Auditing the out-of-home care sector; and
- Ensuring Aboriginal children requiring care will be supported by extended Aboriginal families.

The Northern Territory Government has committed to provide earlier support for families who would not otherwise receive a service through the current child protection process.