

Great Start Great Future – Northern Territory Early Years Strategic Plan 2016-2020

All Northern Territory children aged up to eight years have a great start that will assist them to grow to be confident, successful and healthy lifelong learners who actively participate in and make positive contributions to their communities and the Northern Territory economy.



Building Block 1

HEALTHY THRIVING CHILDREN

Improve the accessibility and quality of healthcare services to improve children's health and wellbeing outcomes and the environments in which they are raised.

Develop integrated service models to respond to children with complex additional needs, including children with a disability, significant development delay and/or complex social, emotional and behavioural needs.

Priority Actions

1. Strengthen universal child and family health and development programs for fathers and mothers and make delivery more flexible.
2. Develop systems and capabilities in health and education agencies to enable shared management and rehabilitation for hearing loss in Indigenous children.
3. Develop a sustainable cross-agency framework to enable young teenage mothers to complete secondary schooling with wrap around health, education and support services.
4. Improve support, service coordination and pathways across government for children with special and complex needs.

Building Block 2

QUALITY LEARNING

Improve the learning and development outcomes, particularly literacy and numeracy outcomes, of children from birth to 8 years of age.

Strengthen the quality of child and family centred education and care services to support children's learning and development to ensure that our children can become learners for life.

Priority Actions

1. Improve the quality and sustainability of early childhood education and care in the Northern Territory in line with the National Quality Framework to ensure all children have access.
2. Transform preschool delivery to better meet the needs of children and families (through the implementation of a preschool curriculum, fostering greater integration between preschool and care, and investigating the options for expanding three-year old preschool to all vulnerable and disadvantaged children in the Northern Territory).
3. Expand professional development for teachers and educators to enhance their capacity to support children with complex and additional needs.
4. Expand the Families as First Teachers program in remote, urban and rural communities across the Northern Territory.

Building Block 3

RESILIENT FAMILIES

Improve young children's outcomes by engaging parents and the community in quality universal, targeted and intensive programs that promote resilient families who provide safe, nurturing environments in which children can grow.

Increase the capacity of services to identify and respond to children and families affected by trauma and family violence.

Priority Actions

1. Enhance services and resources that provide high quality, culturally appropriate universal parenting and early intervention to families to enhance their parenting capacity.
2. Strengthen targeted and intensive support programs that assist vulnerable families to address safety concerns and prevent future abuse and neglect.
3. Strengthen support services to families escaping domestic and family violence.
4. Develop and implement programs and supports to improve outcomes for children in out-of-home care by improving access to early years programs.

Building Block 4

QUALITY SERVICE SYSTEM

Improve young children's health, socio-emotional and learning outcomes by strengthening service coordination and integration.

Continue to drive quality services through suitable fit for purpose infrastructure, and an emphasis on a skilled workforce supported by evidence and reliable data.

Priority Actions

1. Develop a single identifier from birth to improve the capacity of information technology and data systems to capture and share data across Northern Territory Government agencies on the activity and outcomes of early years programs and services.
2. Develop an integrated services framework for sustainable early years services that support young children's health, socio-emotional and learning outcomes.
3. Develop and implement a Northern Territory early years monitoring and outcomes framework and provide ongoing support to Northern Territory researchers to aid the development of a quality service system.
4. Further professionalise the early years workforce to increase its capacity to deliver quality evidence-based programs.
5. Develop policies to ensure that physical infrastructure supports the provision of quality early years services.

Measures

Improved coverage rates for Northern Territory children fully immunised by age 5.

Decreased child morbidity and mortality.

Improved coverage rates for the Healthy Under 5 Kids Partnering Families Program across the Northern Territory.

Increased numbers of teenage mothers engaging in health and education programs and completing Year 12.

Increased numbers of children enrolled in and attending Families as First Teachers programs and preschool.

Reduced vulnerability of Northern Territory children as measured by the AEDC.

Increased number of early childhood education and care services that meet the national quality standard.

Improved longer term results from NAPLAN assessments.

The implementation of assessment tools to measure the effects of early childhood programs.

A reduction in the number of young children who are the subject of successive substantiations of abuse or neglect.

Increased participation of vulnerable children in preschool and other early childhood programs.

Improved educational outcomes for children in out-of-home care.

An increase in the number of preschool and other early childhood programs delivered by qualified early childhood teachers and educators.

Greater integration of services in a range of available facilities including (but not only) in child and family centres.

A decrease in the number of early years services in premises that are not fit-for-purpose and are below required standards.

Governance

Establish a high-level cross agency steering committee of chief executives to champion, implement, monitor and evaluate progress of the Northern Territory Early Years Strategic Plan supported by a senior officials cross agency working group. The cross agency steering committee will:

- support and monitor implementation of the strategic plan;
- engage the academic, non-government, community and private sectors to improve early years services;
- make recommendations to Government on new investments in early years services; and
- report annually to Government and the community on progress.