

# STORY OF OUR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

NORTHERN TERRITORY 2019



## Acknowledgements

In the spirit of respect, the authors acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country and recognise their continuing connection to their lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures; and to elders past and present.

We wish to thank the many individuals who have engaged in the development of this Story and in particular to those who have contributed the featured stories. We also thank the data custodians who have assisted with preparation and release of the datasets and John Glover and Sarah McDonald at the Population Health Information Development Unit (PHIDU) at Torrens University who prepared some of the data tables.

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Cover photos: Children and young people of the Northern Territory

# Message from the Minister for Children



## **My Government's commitment to improving the lives of our children is at the heart of our decision-making.**

The Story of Our Children and Young People is an integral part of that commitment. It shares critical baseline data on children and young people from across our regions and Greater Darwin.

This will help ensure that, together, we have the most complete picture available, so we can make more informed decisions to help those who need it most, from the antenatal period to young adults.

This inaugural Story of Our Children and Young People has been deliberately prepared independent of Government under the guidance of the Editorial Committee and Menzies School of Health Research. I thank them for their work.

We have done this to ensure that we, in Government, maintain a fully objective view of what is happening in the lives of our children and young people. This, in turn, allows my Government to build on its hard work with a sharp and renewed focus into the future.

Some of the data is confronting, but it serves to make us more determined to improve the lives of all our children and young people in the Northern Territory.

*Michael*



**Minister for Children,  
the Honourable Michael Gunner MLA  
Chief Minister of the Northern Territory**



# Foreword

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**Storytelling is an integral part of life. From an early age, stories play a vital role in learning and development. We have strong oral cultures in the Territory. Stories help explain how the land came to be shaped and inhabited; the seasons and changing nature of the landscape; what foods to hunt or gather, and when; spiritual beliefs and practices; family and cultural conventions; social etiquette and more.**

This is a story about the wellbeing of our children and young people. In fact, it is many stories. Every one of our children and young people are unique. Each one of them is a story. In the work of our Committee to guide and inform the development of the Story, we were mindful of the diversity of our children and young people; culturally, geographically and developmentally. This diversity influences and shapes our distinctive Northern Territory community and it was important that it also inspired and shaped this Story. We have sought to create a Story with locally relevant indicators of wellbeing and with local case studies that demonstrate success in meeting the needs of our children and young people. The Story is also enriched with cultural stories of wellbeing.

This Story has been guided by both national and local leadership. It is underpinned by the national research of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth and The Nest outcomes framework, but it has also been shaped by a locally developed framework using cultural metaphors of our First Nations peoples. Through the work of our Committee and the team at Menzies, we have brought together 48 key indicators, and 20 case studies and cultural stories of wellbeing which begin to tell the many stories of our children and young people.

This Story is a resource to inform planning and decision-making for the service of our children and young people. We commend it to you and urge you to use the information it provides.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "H D'Antoine".

**Heather D'Antoine**  
Chairperson  
Editorial Committee



A handwritten signature in blue ink.

**Peter Pangquee, BM**  
Deputy Chairperson  
Editorial Committee

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# Executive Summary

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## BACKGROUND

The commitment by the Northern Territory Government to commission a State of the Children report, as it was initially known, was born from the consultation phase of Starting Early for a Better Future, the Northern Territory Government's early childhood development strategy. Since 2006, State of the Children reports in Australia have informed planning and decision-making for the service of children and young people. The idea for a Northern Territory report was tested during the consultation phase of the early childhood development strategy throughout 2016-17. There was general agreement of a need to address the demand for information across the early childhood development sector. Non-government organisations and community members wanted access to locally relevant data to enable local decisions. A biennial commitment by the Northern Territory Government for a State of the Children report was a key action in Starting Early for a Better Future, launched in April 2018.

In late 2018, work began on this first Story of Our Children and Young People (the Story). Ongoing consultation during this time confirmed the importance of an independently written Story to provide both a regional and a Territory perspective. Menzies School of Health Research was approached to further develop and write the Story, in partnership with the Northern Territory Government.

An Editorial Committee with expertise and experience in policy development, service delivery and research in early childhood, child and youth wellbeing, was formed in early 2019. The Editorial Committee's role was to inform, guide and make decisions in the development of the structure and content for the Story. There was ongoing targeted consultation throughout the development of the Story, which included the testing of the Aboriginal framework.

## INTENT

This Story provides a summary of the wellbeing of our children and young people. It is the first, in what will be a series of biennial stories, intended to track progress and provide a vehicle for local stories to be told. Key indicators, mapped over six domains, measure wellbeing from the antenatal period to young adulthood.

This is a resource for all levels of government; non-government organisations; Aboriginal controlled organisations; and regional and community leaders, working for the service of children and young people in the Northern Territory. This Story is also a resource for the whole community to understand more fully how we can contribute to better outcomes for our children and young people. For the first time, comprehensive data across multiple measures of wellbeing for children and young people are presented not only for the Northern Territory as a whole, but for Greater Darwin and regional areas, providing a clearer understanding of the distinct characteristics of our children and young people across the Territory. Together with the growing number of community stories, this provides an emerging network for information about children and young people to inform and guide policy, planning, decision-making and practice.

## RATIONALE

There are many stories within these pages. For many of our children and young people, their lives are flourishing, they are loved and healthy, and have opportunities to learn and participate. However, across many measures, the data also highlight a distressing story, as a disproportionate number of our children and young people face significant challenges from their early years. As they progress through life, they continue to fall behind.

It is of critical importance to address the many challenges influencing the wellbeing of our children and young people. There is considerable work in progress to improve outcomes for children and young people in the long term. In this Story, the case studies provide an indication of what is going well for children, young people and families. In addition to the data and case studies, cultural stories of wellbeing highlight a rich cultural diversity which shapes family practices as children and young people develop. The case studies and cultural stories of wellbeing are a small snapshot into the good work and cultural stories present throughout the Northern Territory. Further examples will be profiled in the next Story.





While the data within these pages highlight many stories, the Editorial Committee was cognisant of the substantial literature that informs services in early childhood and youth wellbeing, much of it specific to the challenges in the Northern Territory. And so, the Story includes a simple and direct approach in the presentation of measures, with a factual narrative which provides context and description of the results but deliberately refrains from providing interpretation or opinion.

There was much discussion during consultations, about whether or not to provide data specific to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations. There were some who held the strong view we should not present separate results for the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal population because all children and young people are our shared responsibility. Others argued separate information informed differential responses. There were also many measures for which separate information was not available. For this first Story, the decision was made to present the data for all children and/or young people for all measures.

The Story is told for the Northern Territory, Greater Darwin and the five regions. Context is provided, when available, by including comparative Australian data. There are recognised limitations in the data. Much of the available data is service response based and reports deficits as opposed to positive outcomes. This is particularly the case for health and child protection indicators. In some cases, there was data available for the Northern Territory, but not at regional level. There was also a number of indicators identified where information was not available. Gaps in data availability are examined in Appendix I. It will be a priority to continue to seek relevant local indicators for the wellbeing of children and young people before the next Story is published.

## FRAMEWORK AND STRUCTURE

The Story is underpinned by the national research of the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth and its development of The Nest outcomes framework for children and young people.

The Story also acknowledges the ancient authority and traditions of Aboriginal people by using a locally developed framework which applies cultural metaphors. This Aboriginal framework was developed by a cultural reference group of the Editorial Committee, led by its Aboriginal members. Consultations with Aboriginal people from across the Territory saw the further development and modification of the Aboriginal framework.

In the Aboriginal framework, cultural stories or metaphors were chosen to represent some of the many distinct stories from the Aboriginal groups present in the Territory. They provide insights into the distinctiveness of Aboriginal life and cultural

practices to ensure overall wellness for children, young people, families and communities. These stories can be related to the many other cultural and family traditions in our community.

The metaphors used were selected to be readily interpreted using the six domains of The Nest. These six domains of wellbeing for children and young people are the pillars around which this Story is written:

1. Being loved and safe – Coolamon
2. Having material basics – Tree
3. Being healthy – Hunting and gathering
4. Learning – Oral tradition
5. Participating – Spear, boomerang and dilly bag
6. Positive sense of identity and culture – Kinship system.

While we are separating elements of wellbeing, in life they are intrinsically linked and so there is crossover between domains. For example, access to the internet could be attributed to a child or young person having material basics or being able to participate in education and training. Also there are elements of living within community in whatever form it takes, be it family, school, sporting clubs etc. that can be explored within being loved and safe, being healthy, learning and participating. We have attributed indicators to the domains in which they are most commonly reported.

There are three sections to this Story:

- The first section includes the introduction which highlights the child centric approach used in the development of this Story and its framework. It also includes overviews of the people of the Northern Territory, Greater Darwin and the regions used in the Story, outlining their distinct characteristics
- Domain chapters 1 to 6 in the second section, outline how our children and young people are faring against the selected indicators of wellbeing across the six domains
- The Story concludes with the final section which includes the steps from this Story to the next, identified data gaps and references, as well as glossary and list of measures.

The data, case studies and cultural stories of wellbeing within these pages highlight many stories. It is important to address the many challenges influencing the wellbeing of our children and young people. This Story provides a rich resource to inform policy, planning, decision-making and practice in the service of our children and young people. This is the first in a series of publications, with a commitment to revisit the Story and review our collective progress in 2021.



# Introduction

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Children and young people are central to our communities. A child is first a member of a family, then a community and then the wider society, all having an impact on a child's development to differing degrees. The most crucial relationships for child development are those within the child's immediate surroundings—within the family, with caregivers or guardians.

Bronfenbrenner's Model of Human Development speaks of the importance of environment in a person's lifelong development, but particularly in the early years.<sup>(1)</sup> It also highlights the interconnectedness of the different systems around the child (Figure 1). For example, the school has a significant role in the development of a child, but also the relationship between the parents and the teacher has a direct influence on the child's development. Importantly, a child's development is impacted by what people do at all levels—individual, family, community and society. What we do and how we work together is crucial to improving outcomes for the wellbeing of children and young people.

There has been an increasing recognition of the significance of the first 1000 days, from conception to two years, of a child's development.<sup>(2)</sup> Through this period the child is both adaptable and vulnerable, with influences during this time having lifelong implications. This Story itself was born from a focus on early childhood development, but it is also acknowledged that development, toward physical and emotional maturity, continues through childhood and into young adulthood. For these reasons this Story provides information on measures from influences before birth to measures of participation at age 24 years.

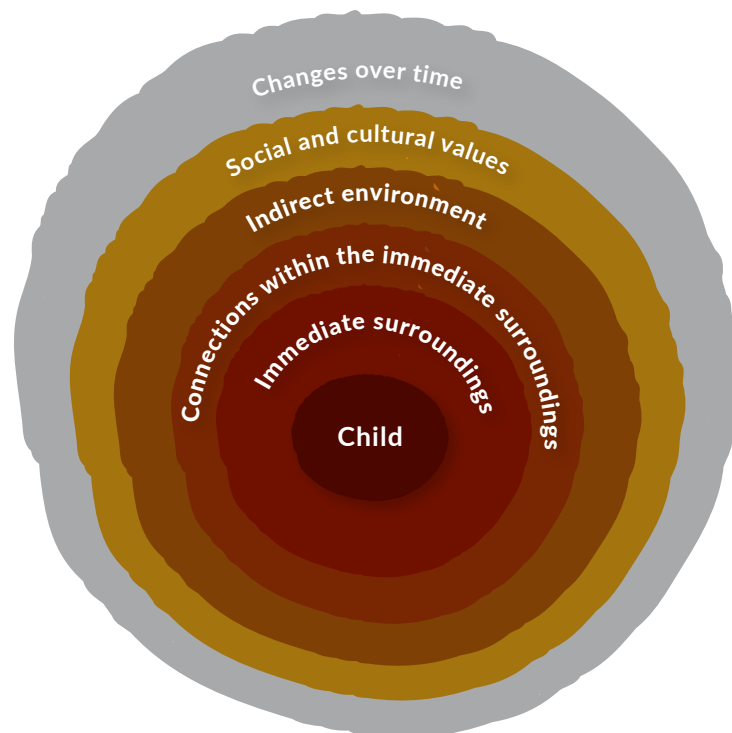


Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's Biological Model of Human Development  
Source: Developed from Bronfenbrenner's Biological Model of Human Development. <sup>(1)</sup>

# AN AUSTRALIAN FRAMEWORK FOR THE WELLBEING OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Similar stories to this one used local frameworks up until 2013 when the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) launched The Nest. The Nest built on existing work and drew together understandings from consultations and conversations with the child and youth service sector, and children and young people from across the country.

The Nest is a theoretical framework and one practical application of this is ARACY's Common Approach (Figure 2). Placing the child at the centre, surrounded by circles of influence from family relationships to community, The Nest mirrors Bronfenbrenner's philosophy of child development. In its action plan for the wellbeing of children and young people aged 0-24, The Nest refers to six outcome areas, or domains.<sup>(3)</sup>

Through the research, it was determined that for children and young people to be well, they need to:

- be loved and safe
- have material basics
- be healthy
- be learning
- be participating
- have a positive sense of identity and culture.

Each of these six domains are intrinsically linked. This echoes the interconnectedness Bronfenbrenner described and is also consistent with Aboriginal values. A child cannot be healthy, for example, without a strong sense of being loved and safe. A young person may struggle to participate in the community without having had learning experiences throughout their life. Everything is interconnected. It is one story.

In the telling of a story, in the making of decisions and policies, there is a need for structure, a way to shape the story. And as such, The Nest has helped shape numerous stories since its development. In the Northern Territory, the Child Friendly Alice Community Profile, the State of the Children Report Palmerston, Sanderson Alliance's work and 1000 voices in Tennant Creek, among others, have all been shaped around the six domains of The Nest.



Figure 2: ARACY's Common Approach®  
Source: Copyright ARACY 2019. All Common Approach resources are to be used following Common Approach® training. Please visit [www.aracy.org.au](http://www.aracy.org.au) for training details. Reproduced with permission.

## ABORIGINAL FRAMEWORK

Bronfenbrenner's Model and The Nest are recent constructions that echo the much older and holistic nature of Aboriginal ways of knowing, being and doing. While this Story is underpinned by the national research of ARACY, it acknowledges the ancient authority and traditions of Aboriginal people by using a locally developed framework which applies cultural metaphors. This framework was developed by a cultural reference group of the Editorial Committee, led by its Aboriginal members, and modified through conversations with Aboriginal people from across the Territory.

The Aboriginal framework also has the child or young person in the centre (Figure 3). The baby rests in a traditional bed made from wood, known as a Coolamon in some areas, otherwise known as a bassinette or cot. Children and young people form the inner circle, surrounded by a second circle of parents, uncles, aunties and those within the family

across that generation. This circle also includes local service providers such as schools and clinics, and other people working with families. The third circle represents grandparents, elders and those within the family across that generation. It also includes cultural authority groups, government, policy and decision makers. Around the circles of people, are four groups of people talking and working together.

Everything is connected by travel lines which illustrate movement and flow, as everything co-exists. The movement is in all directions as people have responsibilities to each other. Through the kinship system, everything and everyone is connected including to the sun, moon, stars and universe. It is important for everyone to be working together and communicating with each other. The dots around the outside hold the framework together, demonstrating a wholeness. The dots also allow for movement in and out of the framework.



Figure 3: Aboriginal Framework

Source: Developed by a cultural reference group of the Editorial Committee and modified through conversations with Aboriginal people from across the Northern Territory. Painted by Cian McCue.

# METAPHORS AND THE NEST DOMAINS

In the Aboriginal framework, significant elements of Aboriginal culture are highlighted. These cultural stories or metaphors were chosen to represent some of the many stories from across the Territory. They provide insights into Aboriginal life and cultural practices to ensure overall wellness for children, young people, families and communities. These stories can be related to the many other cultural and family traditions present in our community.

The metaphors used were selected to be readily interpreted using the six domains of The Nest. These six areas of wellbeing for children and young people are the pillars around which this Story is written.

## Being loved and safe

### *Coolamon*

It is important for children and young people to grow up in a loving and safe environment. The Coolamon is a large bowl like carrier made from the wood of a tree. It is also known by other names, such as *Guluman* in the Ngukurr area and *Nanathi we* in the Wadeye area. It is a traditional cot and keeps babies safe, strong and healthy. The baby in the Coolamon is surrounded by other children, adults and wider family. It is safe, loved and cared for by all generations.



## Having material basics

### *Tree*

It is important for children and young people to have access to the material basics in life such as housing, food, clean water, sanitary systems and transport. Trees can provide essential items such as wood and bark for housing and to build canoes for travel. They are also used to make tools for hunting and personal safety such as spears and boomerangs. Trees are a source of bush food and medicine. They also bring family and community together, gathering under trees for shade, meetings and other purposes.



## Being healthy

### *Hunting and gathering*

It is important for children and young people to have their health needs met. Connection to land and culture through hunting and gathering ensures a healthy lifestyle – physically, developmentally and mentally. Plants and animals provide important food sources to maintain a healthy diet. For example, goannas are hunted for their meat, as well as the fat and intestines being used for medicine. It is about sustaining an active and healthy lifestyle, providing good nutrition and health for yourself and your family.



## Learning

### *Oral tradition*

It is important for children and young people to be learning throughout their lives. There is a strong oral tradition in Aboriginal culture, as well as other cultures present in the Territory. Elders and grandparents sit with children and young people to pass on knowledge. Key principles and ideas are taught over time and are passed down from one generation to another. Learning happens in all elements of life, including about The Dreaming, language, law, cultural practices, family relationships and history.



## Participating

### *Spear, boomerang and dilly bag*

It is important for children and young people to be actively participating, among their peers and within the community. Spears, boomerangs and dilly bags represent active participation in Aboriginal community life. Spears are used for hunting and fishing and in competitive leisure activities, a dilly bag is used to gather seeds and fruit, boomerangs are used for hunting and as clapping sticks in music and dance.



## Positive sense of identity and culture

### *Kinship system*

It is important for children and young people to have a positive understanding of their human identity and culture. Everything in Aboriginal life is connected to and given its place in the kinship system. It is about the whole universe, the planets, stars, moon and sun - everything is connected. When this system breaks down or when something is missing, there is disconnection and dysfunction. Elders across many cultures present in the Territory are passing on cultural knowledge to younger generations.



Throughout chapters 1 to 6, we will tell the story of our children and young people across these six domains. Forty-eight indicators, and 20 case studies and cultural stories of wellbeing have been collated from mapping national and local priorities for the wellbeing of children and young people. The Story is told for the Northern Territory, Greater Darwin and the regions. Context is provided, when available, by including comparative Australian data. There are some areas where the data is not available to tell the story. Identified gaps in data availability are examined in Appendix I.





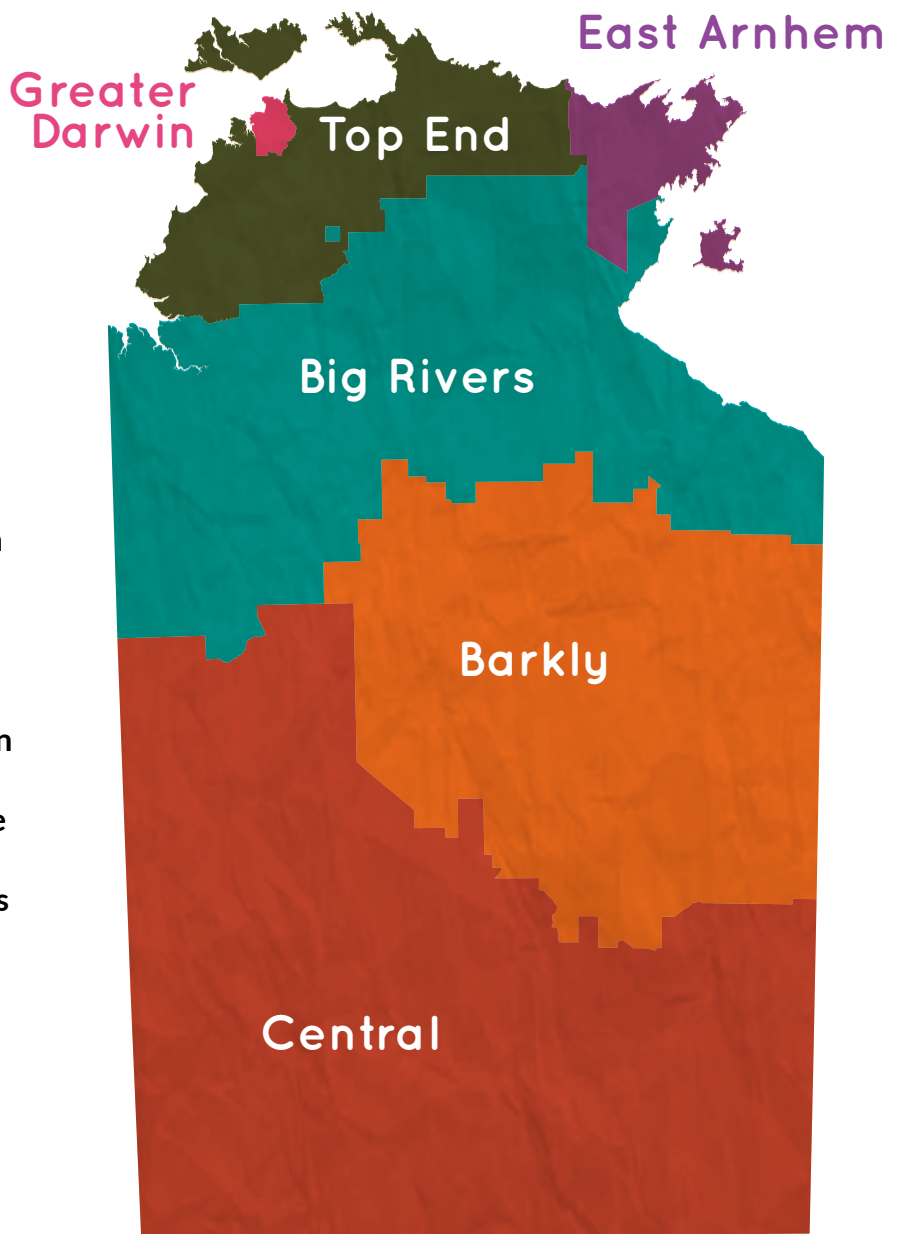
# People of the Northern Territory

The Northern Territory occupies nearly one sixth of the Australian landmass and is home to just under 1% of the Australian population.

The Northern Territory Government divides the Territory into five regions: Top End, East Arnhem, Big Rivers, Barkly and Central, with Darwin recognised as a metropolitan centre.

This Story has aligned to this regional structure with one exception. The city of Palmerston and Litchfield Council are part of the Top End region, however many of the reported measures in this Story are more similar to Darwin than the balance of the Top End region. Therefore, for the purposes of this Story, Palmerston and Litchfield are included with Darwin as Greater Darwin (see map).

In this section, we explore the people of the Northern Territory, looking at a number of measures of population, language and culture, education, employment, families, and children and young people.

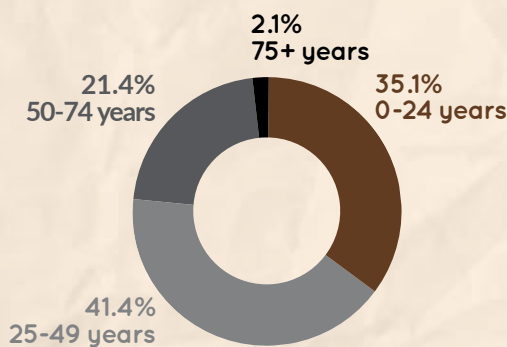




# Northern Territory

## POPULATION

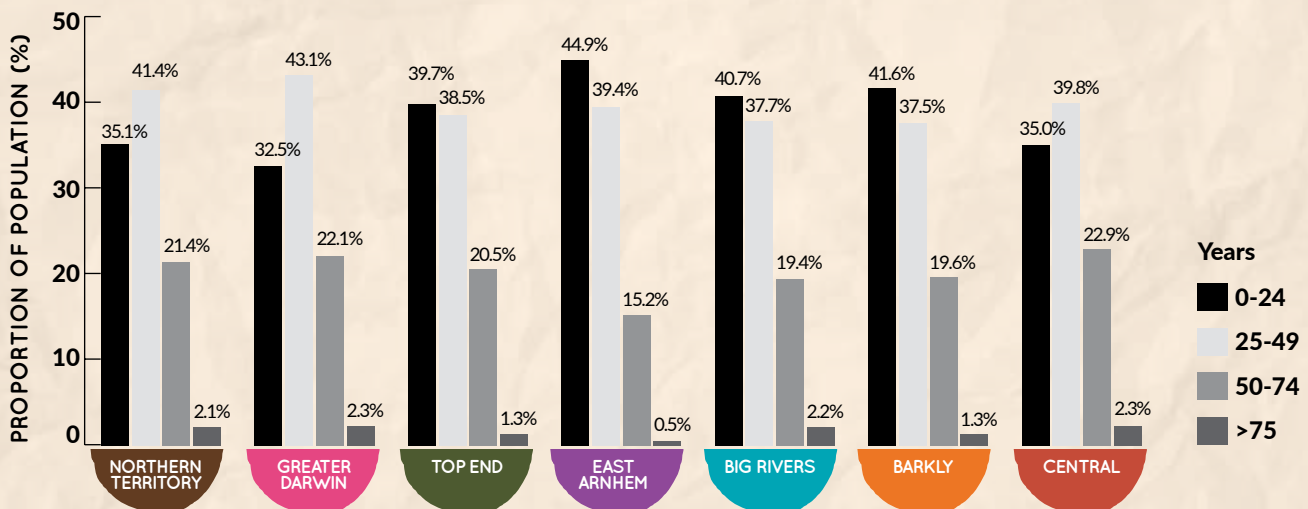
The Northern Territory population is 247,491 with 2 in 5 people living outside Greater Darwin. Nearly 1 in 3 Territorians are Aboriginal people and more than 1 in 5 were born overseas. There is regular migration in and out of the Northern Territory. In 2016, almost 1 in 7 people had lived interstate five years earlier.



<b>247,491</b>	Population
<b>30.3%</b>	Aboriginal people
<b>22.6%</b>	Overseas born
<b>13.8%</b>	Population who lived interstate five years earlier

Children and young people make up the greatest proportion of the population in all regions except for Central, with Greater Darwin also being an exception (see graph below).

## AGE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION



Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017.

## LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

A rich cultural diversity is part of what makes the Northern Territory a unique place to live, work and bring up a family. This multicultural environment is significant as a child is first born into relationship, primarily with family. Aboriginal culture is rich and diverse, with over 100 Aboriginal languages and dialects spoken throughout the Territory.<sup>(4)</sup> Territorians were born in approximately 170 countries and speak around 160 foreign languages in the home. The Northern Territory has the highest proportion of people who speak a language at home other than English of all states and territories.<sup>(5)</sup> Of the Territory's children and young people aged 0-24, over 1 in 4 (26.3%) have one or more parents born overseas.<sup>(4)</sup>

58.0%

Almost 6 in 10 people speak only English

15.3%

1 in 6 people speak an Aboriginal language at home

## EDUCATION



40.8%

4 in 10 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification

12.7%

For 1 in 8 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest year of education

16.0%

For 1 in 6 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education

## EMPLOYMENT



73.2%

More than 7 in 10 people of working age (15-64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

3.5%

3.5% of the working age population are unemployed

## FAMILIES



22.1%

About 1 in 5 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families

79.5%

4 in 5 single parent families have a female as the head of the family

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



35.1%

The Territory is young with about 1 in 3 people aged 0-24

35.6%

About 1 in 3 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.



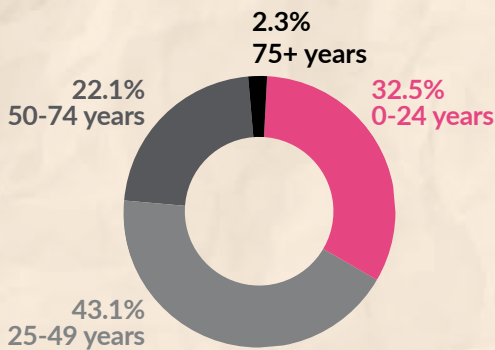
# Greater Darwin

The Greater Darwin area comprises of the capital city Darwin, the city of Palmerston and the surrounding rural areas of Litchfield Council. The city of Palmerston and Litchfield Council are part of the Northern Territory Government's Top End region, but for the purposes of this Story, are being reported with the city of Darwin.



## POPULATION

Greater Darwin contains 60.2% of the Northern Territory's population, with 148,884 residents. The population is older, on average, than the regions, with the highest proportion of the population aged 25-49 (43.1%). It is a multicultural centre with 1 in 3 people born overseas and 1 in 8 people are Aboriginal people. In 2016, 1 in 6 people had lived interstate five years earlier.



148,884

Population

11.9%

Aboriginal people

37.3%

Overseas born

16.2%

Population who lived interstate five years earlier

## LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Greater Darwin is a multicultural centre and cultural celebrations are numerous and diverse. They include the Harmony Day Soiree, World Music Festival, NAIDOC week, as well as Nepalese, Thai, Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Greek, Indonesian and Italian Festivals to name a few. The area also hosts popular sporting, arts and music, car and bike, rodeo and horse-racing events. There is the annual Royal Darwin and Freds Pass Rural shows, and regular community markets throughout Darwin and Palmerston, as well as Coolalinga and Berry Springs.

After English, the most common languages spoken at home are

3.1%  
Tagalog/  
Filipino

2.3%  
Greek

2.3%  
Chinese

<1%

Less than 1% of the population speak an Aboriginal language at home

67.9%

Almost 7 in 10 people speak only English

## EDUCATION



47.9%

Almost 1 in 2 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification

14.3%

For 1 in 7 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest level of education

14.1%

For 1 in 7 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education

## EMPLOYMENT



70.4%

7 in 10 people of working age (15-64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

3.3%

3.3% of the working age population are unemployed

Major employment industries are public administration and safety, construction, and health care and social assistance.

## FAMILIES



18.4%

Almost 1 in 5 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families

76.9%

About 4 in 5 single parent families have a female as the head of the family

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

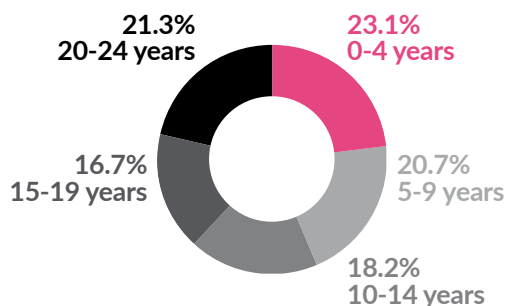


32.5%

1 in 3 people are aged 0-24

13.4%

1 in 7 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people



The highest proportion of children and young people (23.1%) are aged 0-4.

In 2016, over 450 young people contributed to the City of Darwin's Youth Strategy.<sup>(6)</sup> They stated that they:

- valued employment and the opportunities it can bring
- aspired to have more activities for young people
- aspired to have a safer community.

In 2018, a survey of 150 young people from Palmerston<sup>(7)</sup> revealed young people aspired to have:

- more activities
- opportunities for families to learn new skills
- a safer community overall that looks after vulnerable children and families.

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.



# Top End

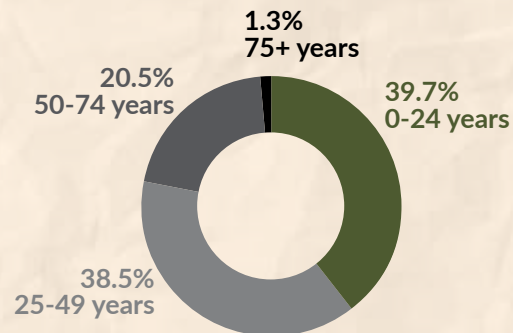
The Top End region incorporates the north/north-east section of the Territory including the Tiwi Islands. It encompasses six townships which include Batchelor, Jabiru and Adelaide River. The region also consists of 17 communities including Wadeye and Maningrida, four town camps and 138 outstations. For the purposes of this Story, the city of Palmerston and Litchfield Council, which are part of the Northern Territory Government's Top End region, are being reported with Greater Darwin.



## POPULATION

Top End has a population of 17,190 people. The highest proportion of the population is aged 0-24 (39.7%) compared with the working and retired populations. 3 in 4 people are Aboriginal people and 1 in 7 people were born overseas. In 2016, 5.5% of people had lived interstate five years earlier.

<b>17,190</b>	Population
<b>74.1%</b>	Aboriginal people
<b>13.7%</b>	Overseas born
<b>5.5%</b>	Population who lived interstate five years earlier



## LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The Top End has a strong Aboriginal culture. From the salt water and seaside communities, to river, plain and escarpment country, local communities work with the uniqueness of their land. There is an array of small community events happening every week, as well as larger events which as well as being important for locals, also attract visitors. Such events include the Tiwi Islands Grand Final and Art Sale, a Taste of Kakadu Festival, the Mahbilil Festival Jabiru, Wadeye Festival, NAIDOC Day and International Women's Day. The region is home to numerous art and culture centres including Injalak Arts Centre in Gunbalanya, Bawinanga's Maningrida Arts and Culture, and Bábbarra Women's Centre, Marrawuddi Gallery, and Munupi, Tiwi Designs and Jilamara art centres of the Tiwi Islands.

**27.7%** Almost 3 in 10 people speak only English

**62.2%** About 6 in 10 people speak an Aboriginal language at home, with Murrinh Patha, Tiwi and Kunwinjku being the most common

## EDUCATION



18.9%

Almost 2 in 10 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification

10.6%

For 1 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest level of education

27.7%

For almost 3 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education

## EMPLOYMENT



67.0%

2 in 3 people of working age (15-64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

6.0%

6% of the working age population are unemployed

Major employment industries are education and training, public administration and safety, and health care and social assistance.

## FAMILIES



28.4%

About 3 in 10 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families

82.4%

About 8 in 10 single parent families have a female as the head of the family

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

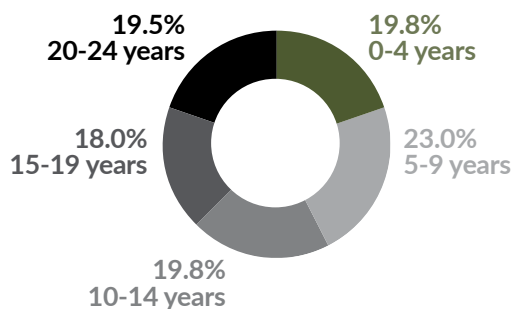


39.7%

4 in 10 people are aged 0-24

82.3%

About 8 in 10 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people



The highest proportion of children and young people (23.0%) are aged 5-9.

Across the Top End, parents desire for their children to:

- be connected to their communities and culture
- be safe and stay safe
- be healthy when they are born, as they grow and as they have children of their own
- have access to early learning opportunities and a good quality ongoing education.

Parents also desire:

- to have enough income to be able to buy food
- to keep food safe to ensure children stay healthy
- that all children have enough to eat.

Top End parents want to protect their children from community violence and stop it before it becomes generational violence or trauma. To do this, community members desire a safe shelter for their children so that they have a sense of security, feel supported and well connected to their peers, community adults and to their country.

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.



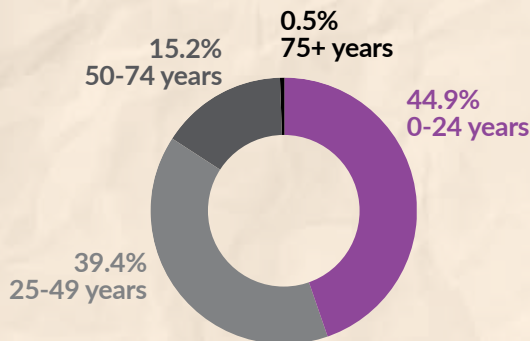
# East Arnhem

The East Arnhem region incorporates the north-east tip of the Territory and covers a landmass of over 33,000km<sup>2</sup>. The major centre is Nhulunbuy, there are 10 other communities and over 70 homelands.



## POPULATION

East Arnhem has a population of 14,522 people. It is a young region with the highest proportion of people aged 0-24 (44.9%) of any region in the Territory. About 7 in 10 people are Aboriginal people, and 1 in 8 people were born overseas. In 2016, about 1 in 11 people had lived interstate five years earlier.



14,522	Population
72.7%	Aboriginal people
12.1%	Overseas born
8.7%	Population who lived interstate five years earlier

## LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Yolŋu and Anindilyakwa families are actively engaged in culture through ceremony and have a deep connection with their land and seas. The annual Garma Festival provides an Aboriginal cultural exchange event and a national forum for Aboriginal policy debate. Several smaller annual festivals are held in the region's communities. Most communities have an arts centre, Buku-Llarngay Mulka Centre in Yirrkala having established an international reputation. Nhulunbuy has a strong volunteer culture with over 30 registered clubs and associations. Many of them engage children and their families in community events, the arts, music, and sport and recreation.

25.9%

1 in 4 people speak only English

62.2%

About 6 in 10 people speak an Aboriginal language at home

Yolŋu Matha is the main Aboriginal language spoken (48.1%) in East Arnhem

48.1%



## EDUCATION



22.1%

About 2 in 10 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification

13.3%

For more than 1 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest level of education

21.1%

For about 2 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education

## EMPLOYMENT



70.5%

7 in 10 people of working age (15-64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

4.5%

4.5% of the working age population are unemployed

The major employment industries are education and training, health care and social assistance, public administration and safety, and mining.

## FAMILIES



30.5%

3 in 10 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families

79.2%

8 in 10 single parent families have a female as the head of the family

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

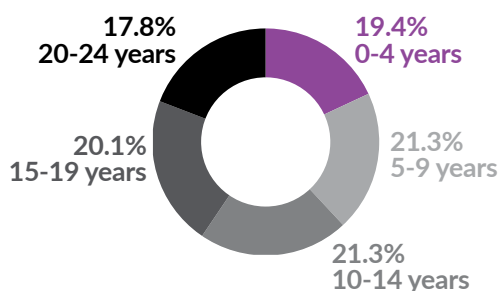


44.9%

More than 2 in 5 people are aged 0-24

76.2%

About 3 in 4 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people



There is almost an even split across the age groups of children and young people.

Yolrju and Anindilyakwa leaders want their children to grow up strong in two worlds:

- Strong in the language, culture, knowledge and wisdom of their ancestors and leaders
- Strong in Balanda (Western) knowledge to ensure they can prosper through jobs and business on their country, and to interact with the broader world for generations to come.

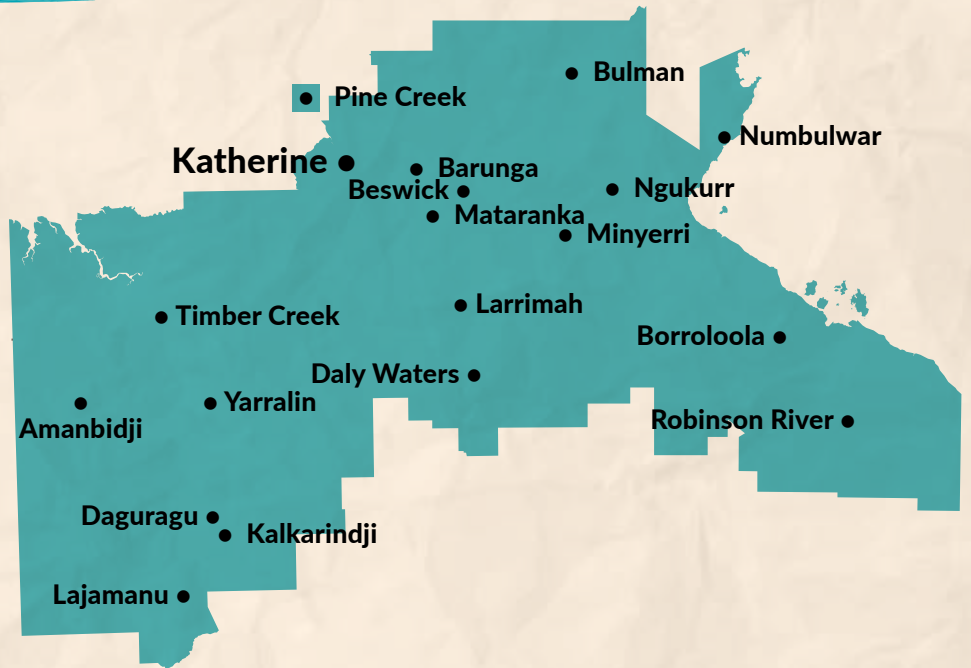
Leaders want to ensure children and young people have the best opportunities to thrive, and to ensure that in education, children and young people grow up with a strong cultural identity, but also can be successful in the Western World. Leaders also want to ensure their long-standing, unbroken cultural structures are recognised and are working with government through agreement-making processes such as Local Decision Making.

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.



# Big Rivers

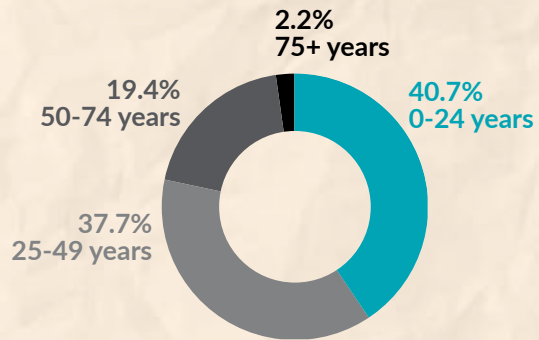
The Big Rivers region sits in the mid north, with borders that span the width of the Territory. Its major centre is Katherine and it also includes over 20 communities and over 100 homelands and outstations.



## POPULATION

Big Rivers has a population of 21,479. More than half the population are Aboriginal people and 2 in 10 people were born overseas. Big Rivers has the third highest proportion of children and young people, aged 0-24, of any region in the Territory (40.7%). It also has a high proportion of people aged 25-49 (37.7%). In 2016, about 1 in 10 people had lived interstate five years earlier.

<b>21,479</b>	Population
<b>57.8%</b>	Aboriginal people
<b>21.5%</b>	Overseas born
<b>11.9%</b>	Population who lived interstate five years earlier



## LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Aboriginal people of the region frequently engage in hunting and gathering and enjoy sharing in their culture through a number of festivals including Barunga Festival, Walking with Spirits Festival in Beswick and Freedom Day Festival in Kalkarindji. Cultural expression is diverse and celebrated through a rich tapestry of other events such as the Mataranka Rodeo, Pine Creek Gold Rush Festival, Yugul Mangi Ngukurr Festival and the Lajamanu Sports Festival. With a strong agricultural history and current status as the agri-business hub of the Territory, the region holds the Katherine Show as well as other horse-racing and camp drafting events in town and on surrounding cattle stations.

**45.5%** Almost half of the population speak only English

**34.2%** 1 in 3 people speak an Aboriginal language at home

Kriol (19.5%) is the most common Aboriginal language spoken

**19.5%**

## EDUCATION



27.9%

Almost 3 in 10 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification

8.2%

For about 1 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest level of education

19.8%

For 2 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education

## EMPLOYMENT



80.3%

8 in 10 people of working age (15-64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

3.5%

3.5% of the working age population are unemployed

Major employment industries are public administration and safety, health care and social assistance, education and training, and construction.

## FAMILIES



25.2%

1 in 4 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families

83.3%

About 8 in 10 single parent families have a female as the head of the family

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

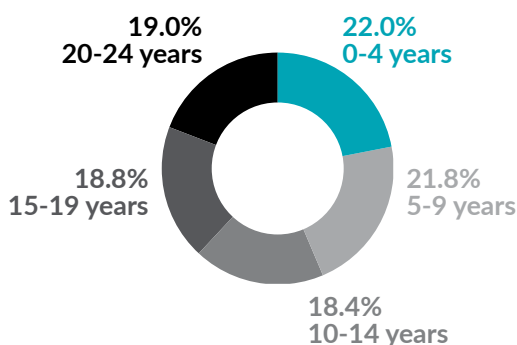


40.7%

4 in 10 people are aged 0-24

64.1%

Over 6 in 10 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people



The highest proportion of children and young people (22.0%) are aged 0-4.

While there is a unique blend of communities, cultures and history in the region, there is a common aspiration to create thriving opportunities for children and young people and to promote opportunities for them to be valued and respected. Recent consultations with young people and community members from across the region identified the need for:

- after-hours activities to engage young people
- youth leadership development opportunities
- accessible primary health and wellbeing services
- learning and job pathways and safe places to live in.

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.



# Barkly

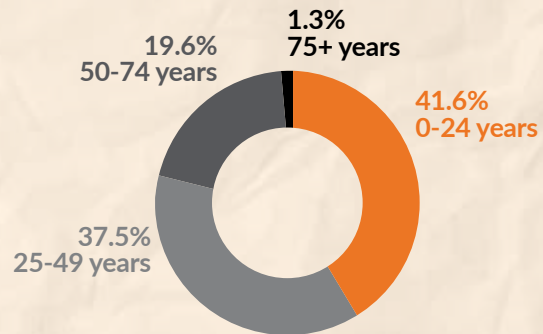
The Barkly region has a landmass of 322,500km<sup>2</sup>. It sits in the centre of the Northern Territory and has borders with the Big Rivers and Central regions, as well as Queensland. Tennant Creek is the one major town, incorporating nine town camps or Aboriginal community living areas. There are also 13 communities and 74 outstations in the region.



## POPULATION

Barkly has a population of 6,935 people. More than 7 in 10 people are Aboriginal people and more than 1 in 6 people were born overseas. Barkly has the second highest proportion of children and young people, aged 0-24, of any region in the Territory (41.6%). In 2016, 1 in 10 people had lived interstate five years earlier.

<b>6,935</b>	Population
<b>73.2%</b>	Aboriginal people
<b>17.7%</b>	Overseas born
<b>9.9%</b>	Population who lived interstate five years earlier



## LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The region is vast and rich in culture. For thousands of years, the region has been home to no less than nine Aboriginal groups, and today numerous language groups are represented. In addition to traditional ceremony, expressions of culture include the annual Desert Harmony Festival, featuring local art and music, the Nyinkka Nyunyu Art and Culture Centre, and the Papulu Apparr-kari Language Centre, all in Tennant Creek. There is also a fascinating history of communications, explorers, pastoralists and mining in the region. The communities engage in vibrant art and several galleries are open to visitors. The region also hosts popular sporting, camp drafting, bronco branding, rodeo and horse-racing events, in Tennant Creek and on cattle stations, and there is the annual Agricultural Show held each July.

**46.3%** Nearly half the population of Barkly speak only English

**37.0%** More than 1 in 3 people speak an Aboriginal language at home

**9.3%** Alyawarr (9.3%) is the most common Aboriginal language spoken

## EDUCATION



26.9%

About 3 in 10 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification

9.1%

For about 1 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest level of education

20.0%

For about 2 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education

## EMPLOYMENT



68.1%

7 in 10 people of working age (15-64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

5.5%

5.5% of people are unemployed

Major employment industries are public administration and safety, health care and social assistance, education and training, and agriculture, forestry and fishing.

## FAMILIES



32.7%

Nearly 7 in 10 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families

82.5%

More than 8 in 10 single parent families have a female as the head of the family

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

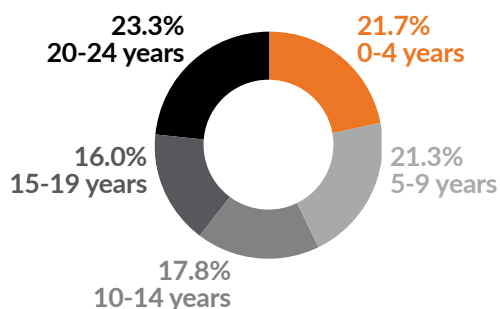


41.6%

About 2 in 5 people are aged 0-24

75.6%

3 in 4 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people



The highest proportion of children and young people (23.3%) are aged 20-24.

In 2018, the 1,000 Voices community consultation was conducted, reaching children and adults in the Tennant Creek area.<sup>(8)</sup> It revealed 'The Big Eight' community aspirations:

- children gaining a quality education
- children are with their families and parents are supported to be involved and accountable for their children
- addressing problem drinking, particularly for parents
- ensuring all children and families have appropriate, stable housing
- the community coming together as one
- children have fun and safe activities to engage them after school hours
- stopping fighting and violence (among children and adults)
- living in a beautiful and clean town.

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.



# Central

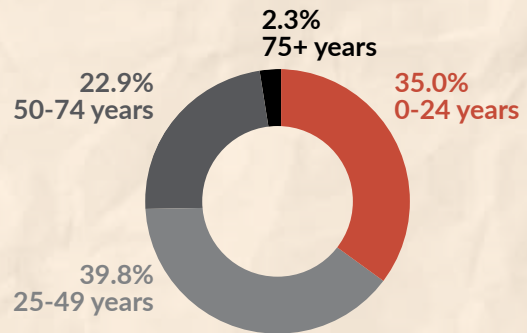
The Central region covers approximately 549,969km<sup>2</sup>. It sits at the southern end of the Territory. The region includes the major centre of Alice Springs and 27 communities, 16 town camps and over 200 outstations.



## POPULATION

Central region has a population of 38,481 people. Almost 3 in 10 people were born overseas, while 4 in 10 people are Aboriginal people. The greatest proportion of the Central population is aged 25-49 (39.8%), and when compared to the other regions, has the highest proportion of individuals aged 50-74 (22.9%). In 2016, more than 1 in 10 people had lived interstate five years earlier.

<b>38,481</b>	Population
<b>42.4%</b>	Aboriginal people
<b>28.3%</b>	Overseas born
<b>11.4%</b>	Population who lived interstate five years earlier



## LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The Aboriginal cultures of the Central region underscore and shape community; they are fostered in significant cultural institutions such as Akeyulerre, Alice Springs Desert Park, the Strehlow Centre and the Institute for Aboriginal Development. The spectacular landscape is richly inscribed with stories, song lines, history and tradition from the Aboriginal ancestors through to contemporary cross-cultural society. Annual arts, music and sporting events include the Desert Mob art exhibition and marketplace; Bush Bands Bash; Country Clash football carnival; Youth Arts and Music festival (YAM Fest); NAIDOC week and the Phoney Film Festival. Iconic activities in the region include the Finke Desert Race, Camel Cup, Henley-on-Todd dry river boat race, the Parrtjima Festival in Light and the Uluru Field of Light.

**52.8%** About half the population speak only English

**22.7%** About 1 in 5 people speak an Aboriginal language at home

Arrernte language dialects (10.6%) are the most common of the Aboriginal languages spoken

**10.6%**

## EDUCATION



37.1%

Almost 4 in 10 people (aged over 15) have a higher education qualification

10.6%

For 1 in 10 people (aged over 15), Year 12 is their highest level of education

14.7%

For 1 in 7 people (aged over 15), Year 10 or equivalent (including Year 11, Certificate I and II) is their highest year of education

## EMPLOYMENT



84.9%

More than 4 in 5 people of working age (15-64 years) participate in the workforce (employed or actively looking for work)

2.7%

At 2.7%, Central has the lowest proportion of unemployment of the NT regions

Major employment industries are public administration and safety, education and training, and health care and social assistance.

## FAMILIES



25.5%

1 in 4 families with children aged under 15, are single parent families

83.5%

More than 8 in 10 single parent families have a female as the head of the family

## CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

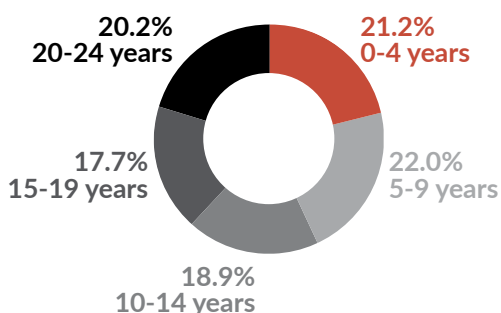


35.1%

Over 1 in 3 people are aged 0-24

48.1%

Almost 5 in 10 children and young people, aged 0-24, are Aboriginal people



The highest proportion of children and young people (22.0%) are aged 5-9.

In 2018, the *Child Friendly Alice* survey<sup>(9)</sup> of over 600 adults in the Alice Springs area revealed people want their children and young people to grow up:

- safe and free, with safe spaces and environments
- with a good education, good employment and career opportunities
- loved and cared for, with happy and healthy lives
- respected and living in harmony, with strong families and social networks.

These themes were mirrored in the aspirations of the 400 children and young people surveyed, who want to have:

- more opportunities and places to cool down, play sport, participate in recreation and go shopping, with more activities and services
- better schools, education options and housing
- less crime and better safe spaces and security.

Aboriginal community groups advocate for community-led responses to family and domestic violence and other forms of violence that impact young people such as jealousy and bullying, management of drug and alcohol use and gambling, and environmentally healthy living conditions to ensure positive, safe and healthy home lives.

Data source and year: ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017; ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016; ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

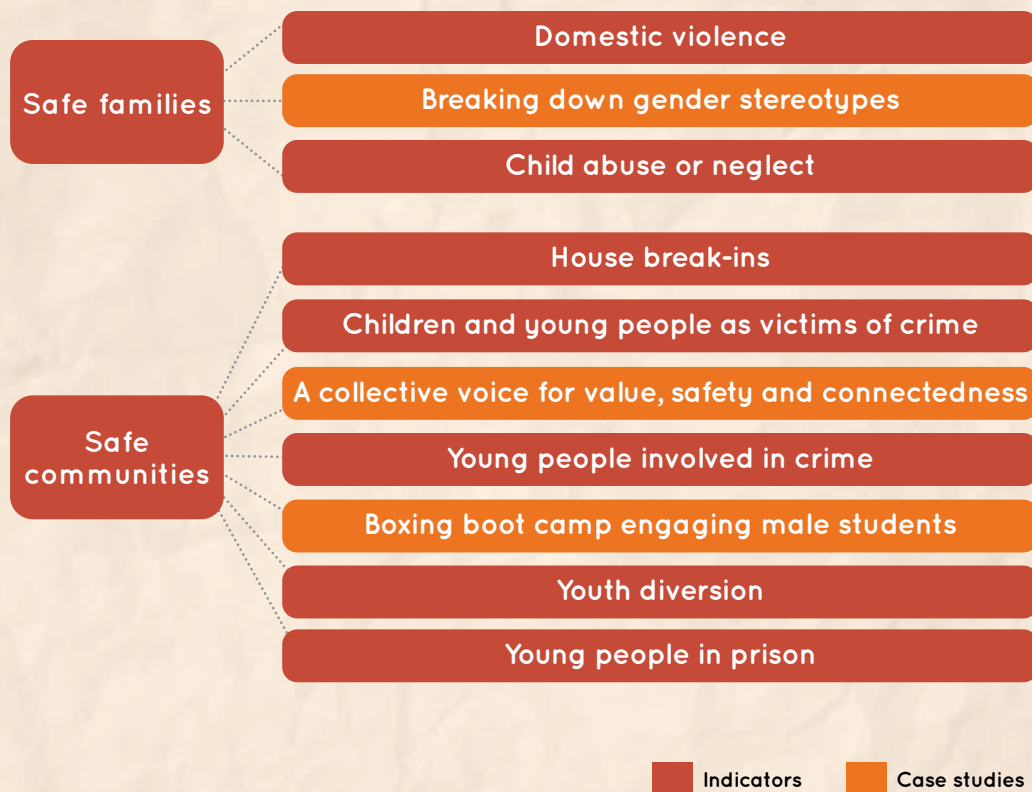


## Domain 1

# Being loved and safe

It is important for children and young people to grow up in a loving and safe environment. Children and young people need positive family relationships as well as positive connections with other people. They also need to be safe. The physical and emotional safety of a child are critical elements to their healthy early development, their ability to socialise, to understand society and determine their own future.

In this domain, two outcomes of safe families and safe communities, are explored through seven indicators and three case studies:





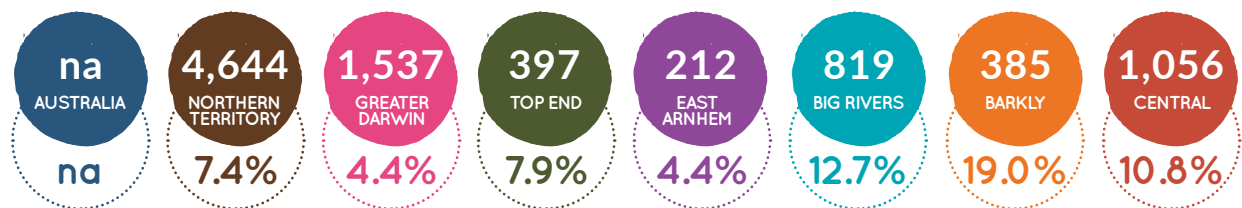
# 1.1 Safe families

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child identifies that a happy, loving and understanding family environment leads to harmonious development of a child's personality.<sup>(10)</sup> In the Northern Territory this right is reflected through legislative protection of children and families, from child abuse and neglect and from domestic violence.<sup>(11, 12)</sup>

## 1.1.1 Domestic violence

One attribute of a safe family environment is that it is free from violence. Witnessing or being the victim of violence can lead to physical, psychological and social impacts on individuals and their families.<sup>(13)</sup> These impacts include injury, disability, mental health issues, absenteeism and loss of employment. In the Northern Territory, children who are exposed to domestic violence are reported to child protection services as being harmed or at risk of harm, including from emotional abuse associated with witnessing domestic violence.

### Number and proportion (%) of children, aged 0-17, in notifications with domestic violence recorded as a contributing factor



Data source and year: NT Department of Territory Families (special tables), 2018-19; proportions estimated using ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017.  
 Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data includes 238 children who were interstate residents.

In 2018-19 about 7 in 100 NT children, a total 4,644 children were reported in child protection notifications for which domestic violence was recorded as a contributing factor. The proportion of children reported to be exposed to domestic violence varied from about 4 in 100 children in Greater Darwin (4.4%) and East Arnhem (4.4%) to 19 in 100 children in Barkly (19.0%).

### Number of domestic violence incidents where children, aged 0-17, were the subject of violence or heard/saw the incident



Data source and year: NT Police, Fire and Emergency Services (special table), 2018-19.  
 Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data includes 44 children with an unknown address.


In 2018-19 there were 1,227 incidents in the NT in which children aged 0-17 were either subjected to violence or heard/saw domestic violence. The number of reported incidents varied across the NT from 45 in East Arnhem to 381 in Greater Darwin.

*Mums Can, Dads Can*

# MUMS CAN BE STRONG



Changing attitudes and beliefs to stop violence before it begins.



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*Mums Can, Dads Can*

# DADS CAN HAVE FUN WITH KIDS



Changing attitudes and beliefs to stop violence before it begins.



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# MUMS CAN HAVE FUN WITH KIDS



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## BREAKING DOWN GENDER STEREOTYPES

The Mums Can, Dads Can project is a family, domestic and sexual violence primary prevention pilot project developed by Town Camp community members in Alice Springs. The project aims to challenge rigid gender stereotypes about the roles of men and women in regard to parenting and builds on the work currently done by the Tangentyere Family Violence Prevention Program.

National and international evidence demonstrates gender inequality and rigid gender stereotypes are a significant predictor of violence. Parents have a large influence on gender role socialisation of their children and it is hoped the Mums Can, Dads Can project will influence parents in their modelling of the next generation of parents.

This project is working with community members to identify unhelpful stereotypes and is developing and promoting key alternative messages which are culturally appropriate and resonate with the Alice Springs Town Camp communities. It is community strength based, fun and enjoyable. The project sends a powerful message to community members about gender stereotypes particularly in the context of mothers and fathers.


Posters show images of residents engaging in activities that are 'typically' seen as men's or women's roles and they are flipping those gender stereotypes.

*Mums Can, Dads Can*

# DADS CAN BE GENTLE



Changing attitudes and beliefs to stop violence before it begins.



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## 1.1.2 Child abuse or neglect

Child abuse and neglect refers to behaviours or treatment that either harms or is likely to harm a child or young person. The actions may be intentional (abuse) or unintentional (neglect).<sup>(14)</sup>

In the Northern Territory, all adults, aged 18 and over, are required to report (notify) to child protection services if they reasonably believe a child or young person has been harmed or is likely to be harmed.<sup>(11)</sup>

Notifications are reviewed by the intake team within the Northern Territory Government and where appropriate, are referred for investigation or support.

### Number of notifications of child abuse or neglect

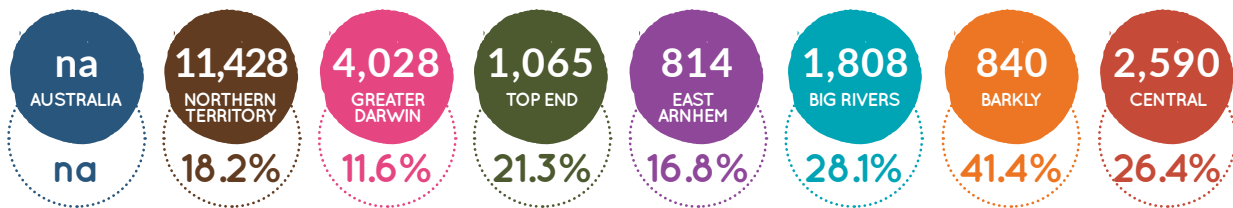


Data source and year: Australia: AIHW Child Protection Collection, 2017-18. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Territory Families (special table), 2018-19.

Note: NT data include 474 notifications for children who were interstate residents.

In the NT in 2018-19, there were 23,427 notifications of child abuse or neglect, which is a reduction from 24,743 notifications in 2017-18.<sup>(15)</sup> The number of notifications in the NT, is substantially more than expected if based on approximately 1% of the Australian population, for which there was a total of 396,234 notifications in 2017-18.<sup>(15)</sup>

### Number and proportion (%) of children, aged 0-17, with notifications of child abuse or neglect



Data source and year: NT Department of Territory Families (special tables), 2018-19; proportions estimated using ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017.

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data include 283 children who were interstate residents.

Some children are reported on more than one occasion in a year. In the NT, in 2018-19, there were 11,428 children who were reported a total of 23,427 times. In 2018-19, about 2 in 10 NT children (18.2%) were notified to the intake team for child protection services. The proportion of children with notifications varied across regions from about 1 in 10 children in Greater Darwin (11.6%) to about 4 in 10 children in Barkly (41.4%).

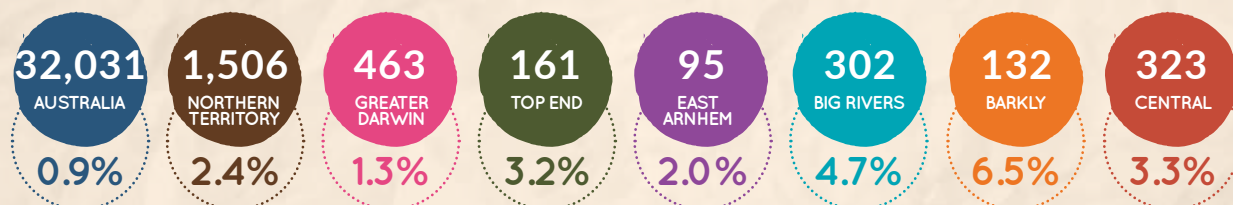
## Number of substantiated investigations for children, aged 0-17



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW Child Protection Collection, 2017-18. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Territory Families (special table), 2018-19.

Note: 1. Australian data exclude NSW due to a change in the data system. 2. NT data include 25 cases involving interstate residents.

## Number and proportion (%) of children, aged 0-17, who were the subject of a substantiated investigation



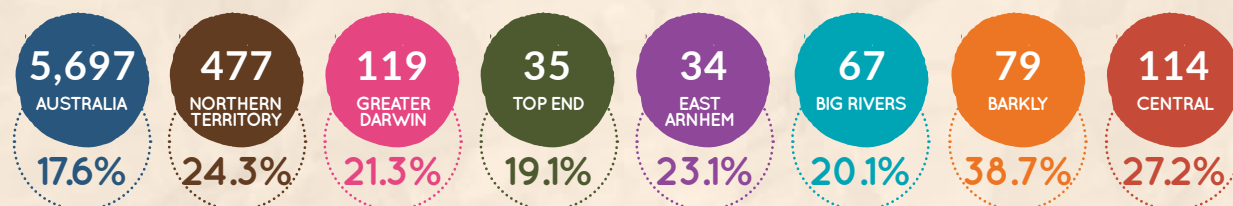
Data source and year: Australia: Child Protection Australia Data tables 2017-18. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Territory Families (special tables), 2018-19; proportions estimated using ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017.

Note: 1. Australian data exclude NSW due to a change in the data system. 2. NT data include 25 children who were interstate residents.

Substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect are those notifications confirmed by investigation.

In the NT, in 2018-19, there were 5,808 completed child protection investigations in relation to 4,117 children. From these investigations there were 1,553 substantiated cases of child abuse and neglect involving 1,506 children. In the NT, more than 2 in 100 children (2.4%) experienced a substantiated episode of abuse or neglect, in 2018-19, which was greater than about 1 in 100 children across Australia (0.9%) for the latest available year. The proportion of children with a substantiated episode of abuse or neglect varied across the NT from about 1 in 100 children in Greater Darwin (1.3%) to more than 6 in 100 children in Barkly (6.5%).

## Number and proportion (%) of children, aged 0-17, who were the subject of resubstantiation, within 12 months



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children (2019), 2016-17. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Territory Families (special table), 2018-19.

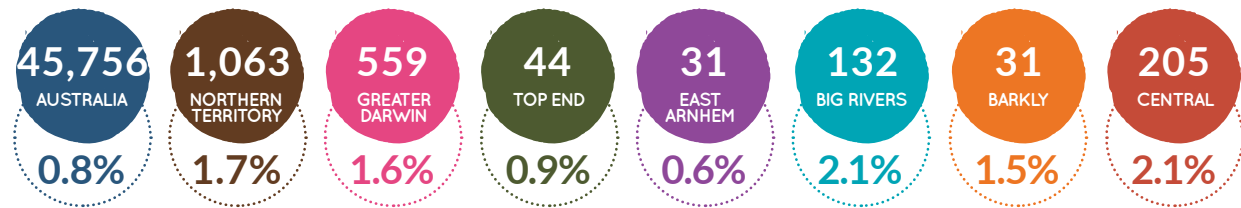
Note: 1. Australian data exclude NSW due to a change in the data system. 2. NT data include 29 children who were interstate residents.

Resubstantiation refers to children who were the subject of a substantiated episode of child abuse and neglect who are then the subject of a further substantiation within three to 12 months.<sup>(16)</sup> The resubstantiation rate is used as a measure of the effectiveness of child protection services.

In the NT about 1 in 4 children (24.3%) involved in a substantiated episode of child abuse or neglect were the subject of at least one subsequent substantiated episode within the following 12 months. In the latest available data, the resubstantiation rate varied across the NT from about 1 in 5 children with an initial substantiation in Greater Darwin (21.3%) to almost 2 in 5 children in Barkly (38.7%).

Provision of care to children out of their usual family residence is referred to as 'out-of-home care'. A child can be placed with an alternative caregiver on a short or long-term basis. Children in out-of-home care are highly vulnerable and may come from a background of abuse, neglect or economic disadvantage.<sup>(17)</sup>

### Number and proportion (%) of children, aged 0-17, in out-of-home care



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW, Child protection Australia (2019), 2017-18. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Territory Families (special tables), 2018-19; proportions estimated using ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017.

Note: 1. Numbers are estimated at a point in time, Australian data are based on 30 June 2018 and NT data on 1 July 2019. 2. NT data include 61 children who were interstate residents.

In July 2019, there were 1,063 children in out-of-home care in the NT, which was almost 2 in 100 NT children (1.7%). This is greater than 1 in 100 children reported for all children across Australia (0.8%). The location of placement varies not only with need but also with the availability of carers, which is reflected in the varying distribution of children in care across NT regions. The proportion of children in care in different regions varied from about 1 in 200 children in East Arnhem (0.6%) to 1 in 50 children in Central (2.1%).

## 1.2 Safe communities

We want our children to live in safe communities. While the immediate environment around a child is critical for wellbeing, the safety of the broader community can impact on a child's sense of security and development of trusting relationships with other adults.

### 1.2.1 House break-ins

The number of reported house break-in offences for houses with children is not available, however there is data on all house break-in offences. This was chosen as one measure of community safety as it relates to a child's sense of safety in their neighbourhood and at home. Having a break-in take place in an individual's home, whether they are present or not, can be a frightening experience and can influence a child's emotional wellbeing and trust.

#### Number of house break-in offences



Data source and year: Australia: ABS, 4510.0 Recorded Crime – Victims, Australia (2019), 2018. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table), 2018-19.

Note: 1. There is a marginal difference in counting rules, Australian data are counts of victims and NT data are counts of offences.

2. NT regional data are reported by standard ABS geography (SA3) which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

3. NT data includes 5 offences with an unknown address.

A total of 2,472 house break-ins were reported in the NT in 2018-19. The number of house break-ins throughout the NT ranged from 68 in East Arnhem to 1,068 house break-ins in Greater Darwin.

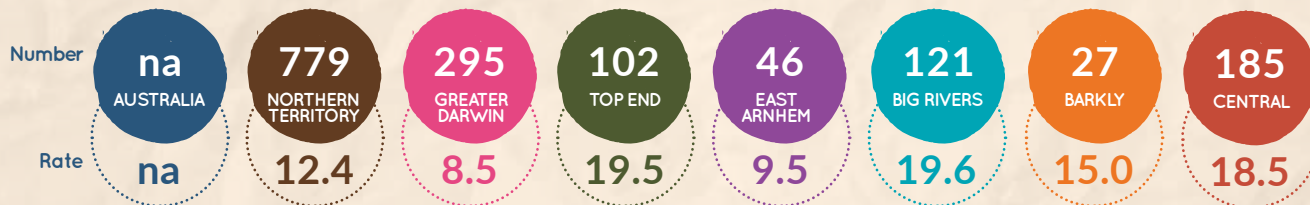


## 1.2.2 Children and young people as victims of crime

Seeing or being subject to violent crime can be a traumatising experience for a child or young person, and can shape their view of the community, their peers or other adults, and themselves. It can influence a young person's ability to develop strong, positive relationships which is an important aspect to living a healthy and happy life.

Crimes against the person are those that are performed against the will of another individual. These typically result in bodily harm, such as physical assault or battery. Children are one of the most vulnerable groups of people to such crimes.

### Number and annual rate (per 1,000 population) of victims, aged 0-17, of an offence against a person

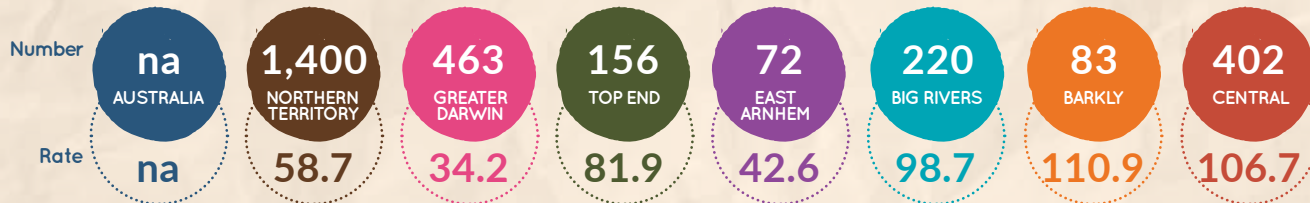


Data source and year: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table), 2018-19; rates estimated using ABS 3235.0 – Regional Population by Age and Sex, Australia, 2018.

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data includes 3 children with an unknown address. 3. Crimes are counted once for each incident. Victims may be counted more than once, for different incidents, in a year. 4. NT regional data are reported by standard ABS geography (SA3) which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

Across the NT, during the period 2018-19, there were 779 victims of an offence against the person, who were children aged 0-17. This is an annual rate of 12 victims per 1,000 children. The rate varied across the NT from 8 per 1,000 children in Greater Darwin to 19 per 1,000 children in the Top End and Big Rivers.

### Number and annual rate (per 1,000 population) of victims, aged 18-24, of an offence against a person



Data source and year: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table), 2018-19; rates estimated using ABS 3235.0 – Regional Population by Age and Sex, Australia, 2018

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data includes 4 young adults with an unknown address. 3. Crimes are counted once for each incident. Victims may be counted more than once, for different incidents, in a year. 4. NT regional data are reported by standard ABS geography (SA3) which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

Young adults aged 18-24, were more likely to be victims of crime than children. Across the NT, in 2018-19, there were 1,400 crimes in which young adults were victims, which was an annual rate of 59 per 1,000 young adults. The rate varied across the NT, from 34 crimes per 1,000 young adults in Greater Darwin to 111 per 1,000 young adults in Barkly.



## A COLLECTIVE VOICE FOR VALUE, SAFETY AND CONNECTEDNESS

A coalition of nine Palmerston city schools recently established Student Voice Positive Choice. It is dedicated to generating a culture of optimism in schools and the wider Palmerston community. Intended to change the narrative, it comes with an uplifting sentiment to support students to feel safe, connected and valued. 'It's about spreading positivity and giving people another perspective about our youth', said Palmerston College Year 12 student Jack Hogarth.

Practically, a Student Voice Positive Choice 'hub' is formed in each school with 10 students across the year levels. These hubs lead various creative initiatives in the schools and wider community; such as morning student welcomers at the school gates and inclusive group sports at lunch times. Each school term a student-led summit is held with hub members from across the member schools to assess what is working well, changes needed and new ideas.

The positive message has been spreading around the local community with buses now branded with the message. Bakewell Primary School Acting Principal Cindy McLaren said, 'Student Voice Positive Choice helps students make positive choices, have a strong voice in the community, and work together to stand up for what is right, supporting students' safety, sense of connectedness and value'.

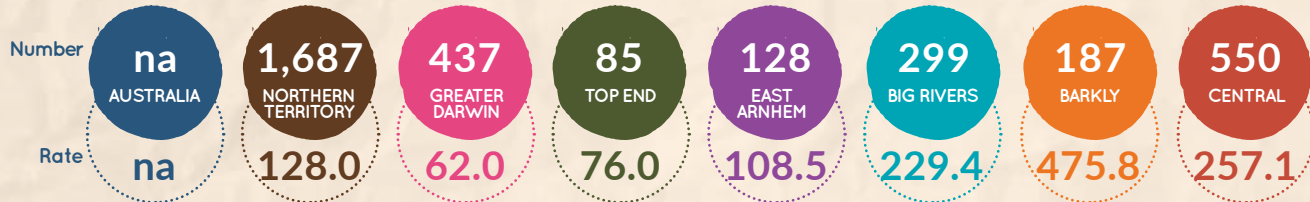
Embodying the mantra of Let's Be Awesome, Let's Be Respectful, Let's Be Brave and Let's Be Positive, the group of schools aim to inspire ongoing changes by building positive student identities, celebrating their successes, building leadership capacity and instilling confidence to empower others.

Photo: Students from the nine Palmerston schools with their positive message for the community

### 1.2.3 Young people involved in crime

There are separate justice systems for young people and adults. Young people under the age of 18 are subject to the Youth Justice Act 2005 (Northern Territory).<sup>(18)</sup> At present, the age of criminal responsibility is 10 years, in the Northern Territory. There are different reasons why a child or young person might commit a crime, and there are varying degrees of severity of crime. Crimes committed by young people can influence the sense of community that other young people feel with their peers, and can heavily impact the opportunities for future employment for young offenders.

#### Number and annual rate (per 1,000 population) of apprehensions of males, aged 10-17



Data source and year: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table), 2018-19; rates estimated using ABS 3235.0 – Regional Population by Age and Sex, Australia, 2018.

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Apprehensions are calculated as one event for a person for one date. 3. NT regional data are reported by standard ABS geography (SA3) which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story. 4. NT data includes 1 male with an unknown address.

#### Number and annual rate (per 1,000 population) of apprehensions of females, aged 10-17



Data source and year: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table), 2018-19; rates estimated using ABS 3235.0 – Regional Population by Age and Sex, Australia, 2018.

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. (nr) not reportable because of small numbers. 3. Apprehensions are calculated as one event for a person for one date. 4. NT regional data are reported by standard ABS geography (SA3) which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

Of all apprehensions of young people in 2018-19, 1,687 involved male young people and 414 involved female young people. Across the NT, the rate of males aged 10-17 apprehended ranged from 62 to 476 apprehensions per 1,000 males in the age group. The rate for females apprehended is much lower, ranging from 10 to 84 apprehensions per 1,000 females.





## BOXING BOOT CAMP ENGAGING MALE STUDENTS

After spending some time at Taminmin College as school-based Senior Constables, Kris Jockers and Ben Streeter saw there was a need to run something unique for some of the male students. The aim was to give them an outlet for energy and exercise and to help them focus and engage in the school learning environment.

Both fathers, they were keen to work with the boys in a physical, challenging and positive environment. Together with the school, they developed the Boxing Boot Camp, a four-week program engaging Years 7-9 male students for hourly sessions of physical training to exercise both their mind and body. 'We work with them in a safe and fun environment teaching teamwork, motivation, body movement, discipline and communication. Each session starts with active sharing about the issues of the previous week, with officers offering advice, support and life skills to help the students try to understand and manage their emotions.'

It is a student's choice to be involved, and some have attended before school in their own time to participate. 'The program has had a strong impact on student physical, social and intellectual development. Kris and Ben know young people and they have a toolbox of strategies to influence the positive behaviour of our students', said lead wellbeing teacher, Carmel Le Lay.

Photo: Kris and Ben working with students from Taminmin College

## 1.2.4 Youth diversion

Young people who come into contact with police may be diverted from the youth justice system. Youth diversion data captures a range of measures including verbal and written warnings, family group conferences, victim-offender group conferences and drug diversions. Youth diversion programs such as victim-offender group conferences are designed to support the young person to learn about the implications of their crime, to make amends for the harm caused and to change their behaviour.

A young person can be referred to more than one type of diversion when they come in contact with police. The same young person may come into contact with police more than once in a single year.

### Number of youth diversions for young people, aged 10-17



Data source and year: NT Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Services (special table), 2018-19.  
 Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data include 33 events for young people with unknown address.

During 2018-19, young people aged 10-17 were provided with 712 diversions. The majority of these 712 diversions were written or verbal warnings (59.6%), followed by family group conferences (32.6%) and victim-offender group conferences (5.8%). The number of diversions varied across the NT, with the largest number in Big Rivers (191).

## 1.2.5 Young people in prison

In the Northern Territory, when a young person aged 18 and over is charged or proven guilty of a criminal offence they are subjected to the law as an adult. The measure below is based on an average of the number of people in prison on the last day of each month in 2018-19. It includes prisons and work camps, but excludes any young people aged 18 in youth detention.

### Daily average number of young men, aged 18-24, in NT prisons



Data source and year: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table), 2018-19.  
 Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data include 7.7 days for young men from interstate or with no known address. 3. NT regional data are reported by standard ABS geography (SA3) which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

### Daily average number of young women, aged 18-24, in NT prisons



Data source and year: NT Department of Attorney General and Justice (special table), 2018-19.  
 Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT data include 0.3 days for young women with no known address. 3. NT regional data are reported by standard ABS geography (SA3) which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

In the NT, on an average day, there were 288.2 young men and 15.1 young women, aged 18-24 in NT adult prisons during the 2018-19 period. Most young men, on any day, had a residential address in Central (95.6) or Greater Darwin (63.8). More than half of the young women in prison were from either Greater Darwin (5.5) or Central (3.3).



NORTH  
TERRITORY  
COLLEGE

NT YOUTH  
ROUND TABLE

NAME TAG

NORTH  
TERRITORY  
COLLEGE

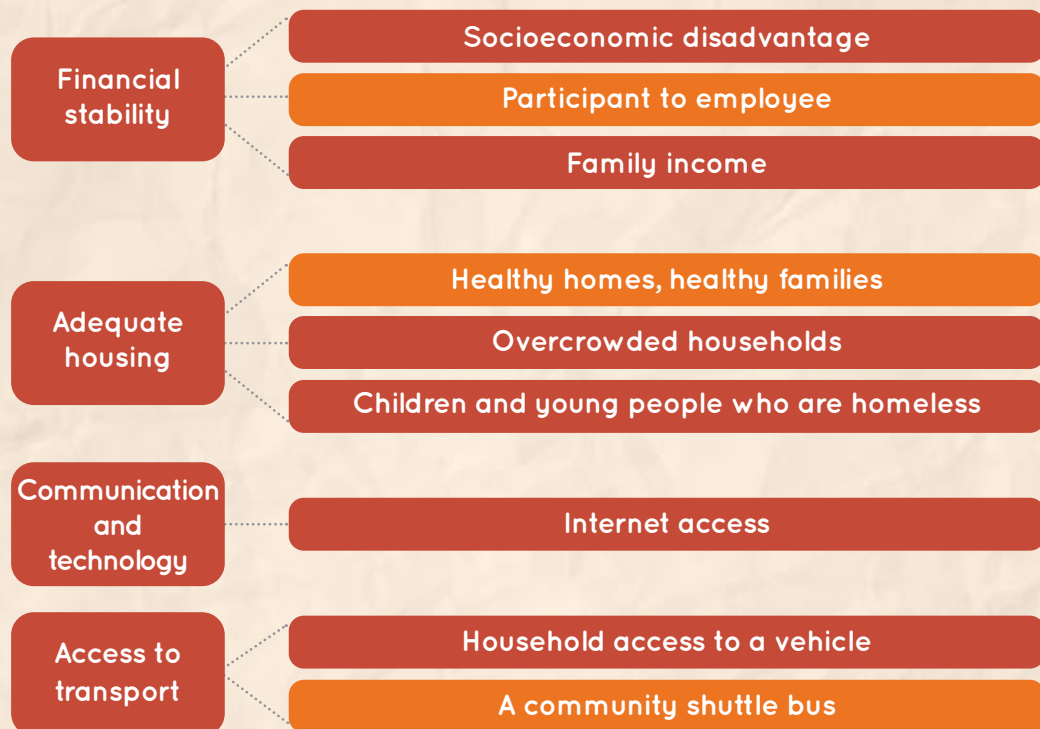


## Domain 2

# Having material basics

It is important for children and young people to have the material basics they need in life. Things like a house to live in, access to healthy food, clean water, clean sanitary systems, cooling and clothing. A family also needs the financial capacity to provide for these essentials. These are foundational elements to enable children and young people to flourish.

In this domain, four outcomes of financial stability, adequate housing, communication and technology, and access to transport, are explored through six indicators and three case studies:



■ Indicators    ■ Case studies

# 2.1 Financial stability

## 2.1.1 Socioeconomic disadvantage

The Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) are a series of measures which use Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data relating to income, employment, education and housing to provide an indication of relative advantage and disadvantage of regions around Australia. One of the measures is the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage (IRSD) which is an index of relative disadvantage. (19) IRSD gives Australia a base score of 1,000. Areas with scores below 1,000 indicate relative socioeconomic disadvantage and areas that score above 1,000 lack disadvantage.

### Scores for relative socioeconomic disadvantage



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing 2016, prepared by PHIDU (special table).

The NT has a score of 939, which is closest to Tasmania (958) and South Australia (979).<sup>(20)</sup> There is substantial variation across the NT, with Greater Darwin at 1,039, while Top End and Barkly have the greatest levels of disadvantage (646 and 679 respectively) of the NT regions.





## PARTICIPANT TO EMPLOYEE

Maggie Kerinaia is a young mother from Wurrumiyanga on the Tiwi Islands. In 2015 she participated in a parenting program called Let's Start, run by Menzies. 'I first was nervous, but I liked it, that program, it was good. I liked to meet other parents, talk about our kids, play with them. I felt better as a parent. My mum and my partner came sometimes, to have a look'.

On completion of the program, Maggie was approached by Menzies to work with them. 'I was not sure, felt nervous, I have never worked before. My mum and my partner said I should try it, they said it would be good. So I started'.

Maggie has been working for the program, now named Play to Connect, for over three years. 'I work with families, so they can become stronger parents, look after their kids. I explain things in Tiwi to them and they talk to me about their kids. I can see how this changes them, that they are having a good time with their children. I can see the difference on their faces after they come to the program'.

Employment has made a positive impact on Maggie and her family. 'Before I came to the program I was struggling, I went to the card games as I needed to make money for food and power. Working changed my life, it changed mostly everything. I feel stronger and better now'.

Photo: Maggie in her work uniform, about to go and speak with families

## 2.1.2 Family income

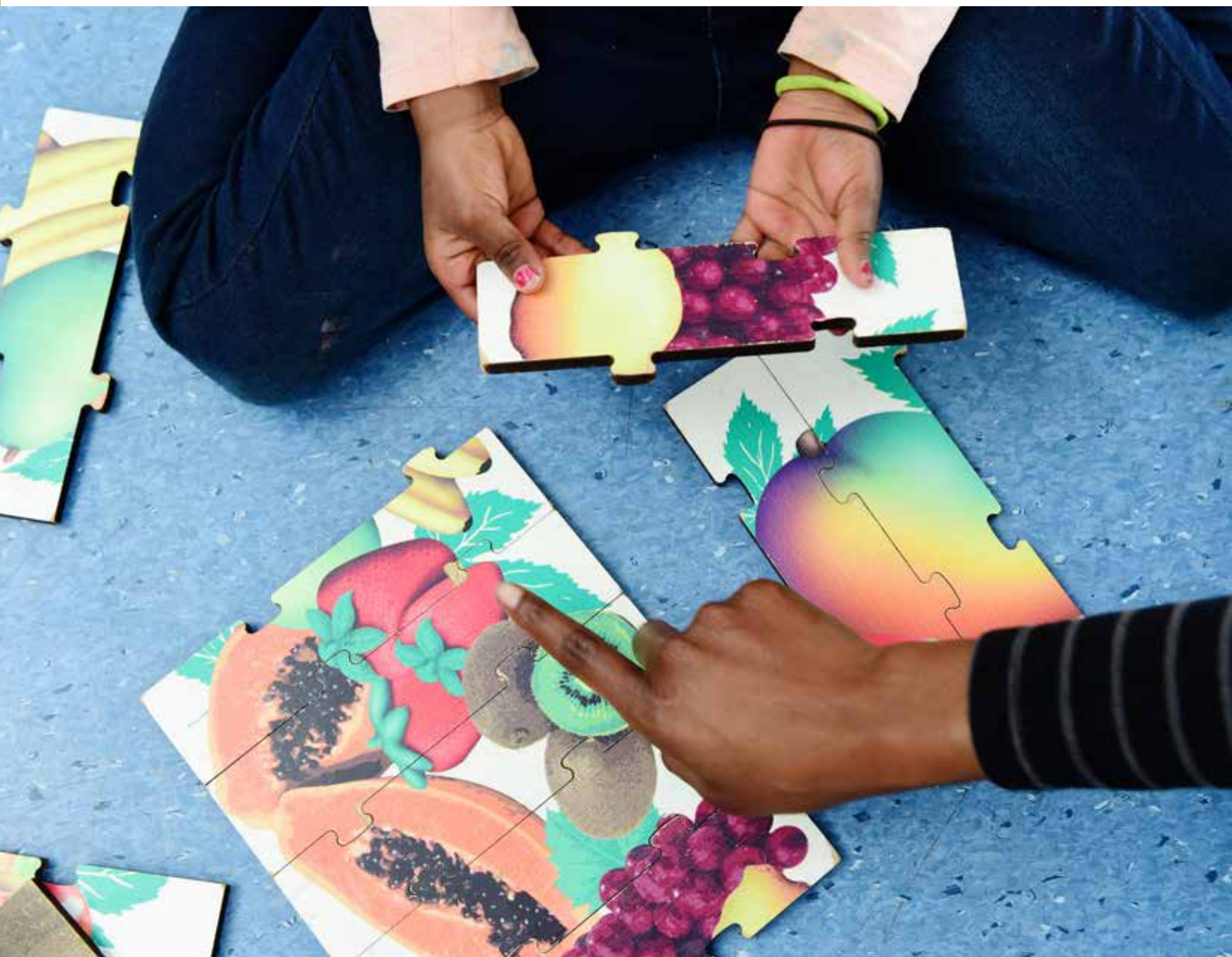
The ability of families to afford the material basics depends on income, expenditure and size of the family.<sup>(21)</sup> Households with children aged 15 and under with an annual income under \$37,378 are considered low income households.<sup>(22)</sup> In 2017-18, the average equivalised disposable weekly income for households in Australia was \$1,062 and in the Northern Territory was \$1,243 (excluding households in very remote areas).<sup>(23)</sup>

### Proportion (%) of children, aged 15 and under, in low income households



Data source and year: Australia: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: Department of Social Services, June 2017; ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016.  
Note: Households are private dwellings only.

More than 1 in 4 NT children (27.5%) live in low income households, which is greater than Australia (19.0%). Low income households are not spread equally across the NT, ranging from about 1 in 6 households in Greater Darwin (15.7%) to 1 in 2 households in Barkly (51%) and the Top End (50.2%).





## HEALTHY HOMES HEALTHY FAMILIES

In 2017, Wadeye community leaders identified a need for good coordination between services related to health and housing to maximise the outcomes of efforts in the community.

The Healthy Homes Model was established by Thamarrurr Development Corporation, to coordinate relevant services and address the gaps in supporting local people to look after their homes and improve the health and wellbeing of families. Over the past 18 months, 20 families have been referred through the Wadeye Health Clinic when children are at risk of health problems. In addition, there have been five self-referrals, as well as 186 homes treated for pests and 96 animals desexed.

The program sees staff visit the family home and with the family, make a plan for an initial clean and then follow ups. 'The program has improved communication and coordination between a range of services in the community. This collaboration has facilitated positive outcomes in a range of areas and maximised the impact of the overall program in improving the health and wellbeing of families', said Robert Faughlin, Healthy Homes Coordinator.

Although working collaboratively can take some time to perfect, local people and service providers together are seeing the benefits of the program. There are already improvements to home hygiene, the living conditions of families and animal health. 'We are helping people who need a hand to maintain their home, yard and even their animals - to keep people healthy', said Joseph Tipiloura, Healthy Homes Supervisor.

Photo: Julian from the Healthy Homes team removing rubbish

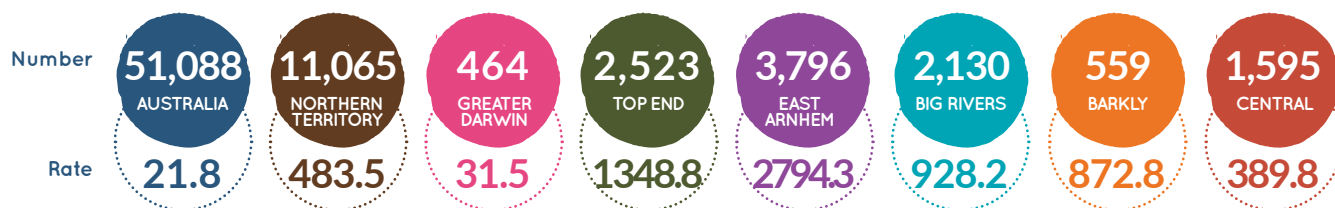


## 2.2 Adequate housing

### 2.2.1 Overcrowded households

Household occupancy is influenced by the age of occupants, their ability to relocate, and the condition, location and size of the property. Overcrowding occurs when a house is too small for the number of occupants. The ABS defines severe overcrowding as when four or more extra bedrooms would be needed to accommodate the number of people usually living in a residence.<sup>(24)</sup> Australian guidelines suggest one bedroom can accommodate two children under five years, two children under 18 years of the same sex and couples. A room is considered overcrowded when two people over the age of 18 years, not being a couple, share the same room.<sup>(25)</sup>

Number of people and rate (per 10,000 of the population) living in severely crowded dwellings



Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing: Estimating Homelessness, 2016.

Note: 1. Rates are expressed as number per 10,000 population of usual residents. 2. NT regional data are reported by standard ABS geography (SA3) which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

Across Australia in 2016, 21.7% of people living in severely overcrowded dwellings were living in the NT. The number of people living in severely crowded dwellings varies across the NT from 464 in Greater Darwin to 3,796 in East Arnhem. These numbers can also be expressed as rates. In Australia about 21.8 people per 10,000 population live in severely crowded dwellings. The comparable NT rate is almost 20 times greater at 483.5 people per 10,000 population. There is great variation in rates across the NT reaching 2794.3 people per 10,000 population in East Arnhem.

### 2.2.2 Children and young people who are homeless

Almost half of homeless Territorians (48.6%) are aged under 25 years. The definition for homeless includes people living in temporary arrangements, boarding houses, supported accommodation, tents or sleeping out, and severely crowded dwellings. While poverty is a common feature of homelessness, other factors such as family and domestic violence, overcrowding, physical and mental health issues and intellectual disabilities may also play a role in children and young people being homeless.<sup>(26)</sup>

Proportion (%) of children and young people, aged 0-24, who are homeless



Data source and year: Australia: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

Across the NT there is a wide variation in the proportion of homeless children and young people. In 2016, the proportion in Greater Darwin was 1 in 100 children and young people (0.9%), a little higher than for Australia (0.6%). In the regions, as many as 1 in 3 children and young people (35.4% in East Arnhem) were homeless.

## 2.3 Communication and technology

### 2.3.1 Internet access

Access to internet services is now considered a necessary requirement for education, training, employment and social interaction. Most households in Australia had internet access at the time of the last census in 2016,<sup>(27)</sup> however households in remote areas of the Northern Territory remained less likely to have access due to the cost and geographic challenges associated with service provision.

Proportion (%) of households where internet was accessed from dwelling



Data source and year: Australia and NT: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016. Greater Darwin and regions: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

In 2016, more than 7 in 10 NT households (72.8%) had internet services, which was lower than the coverage for households across Australia (83.2%). Across the NT, internet access was much lower outside Greater Darwin (84.8%), particularly in the Top End (59.5%) and Barkly (57.9%) where about 3 in 5 households had access to internet services.

## 2.4 Access to transport

Lack of access to transport can affect a child or young person's capacity to access healthcare, to participate in learning or employment, to connect with country and cultural practices such as hunting and gathering, and to engage with the broader community. Outside the major towns, transport is a significant challenge for children, young people and their families.

### 2.4.1 Household access to a vehicle

While the major centres of Darwin and Alice Springs have public transport, young people in other parts of the Northern Territory need access to a motor vehicle for transport. Younger children generally depend on motor vehicles within their immediate household.

Proportion (%) of dwellings with no motor vehicle



Data source and year: Australia and NT: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016. Greater Darwin and regions: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

Almost 1 in 10 households in the NT (9.7%) do not have a motor vehicle, which is greater than 1 in 14 households across Australia (7.3%). The distribution of households without a vehicle varies from about 1 in 20 in Greater Darwin (5.3%) to 3 in 10 in Top End (33.2%) and East Arnhem (30.5%).





## A COMMUNITY SHUTTLE BUS

The Katherine Child and Family Community Advisory Group, using Local Decision Making principles, determined that transport was the greatest need for young families in Katherine.

The Katherine Child and Family Centre Community Advisory Group received funding through the Community Child and Family Fund to purchase a 25-35 seat coach to enable young families to travel safely from the surrounding communities to attend appointments and access support services and to return home afterwards.

The shuttle follows a set route covering residential areas between the Katherine Child and Family Centre and Myalli Brumby, Rockhole, Binjari, Katherine North including the hospital, Katherine East including Geyulkgan and Katherine South.

Children, young people and families are able to access services in Katherine, where they may have previously been unable to. The Community Advisory Group, with representatives from each of the Katherine and surrounding communities, will work to ensure that local children and family's needs are being met by the service.

Photo: Freya and Zeberiah from Katherine

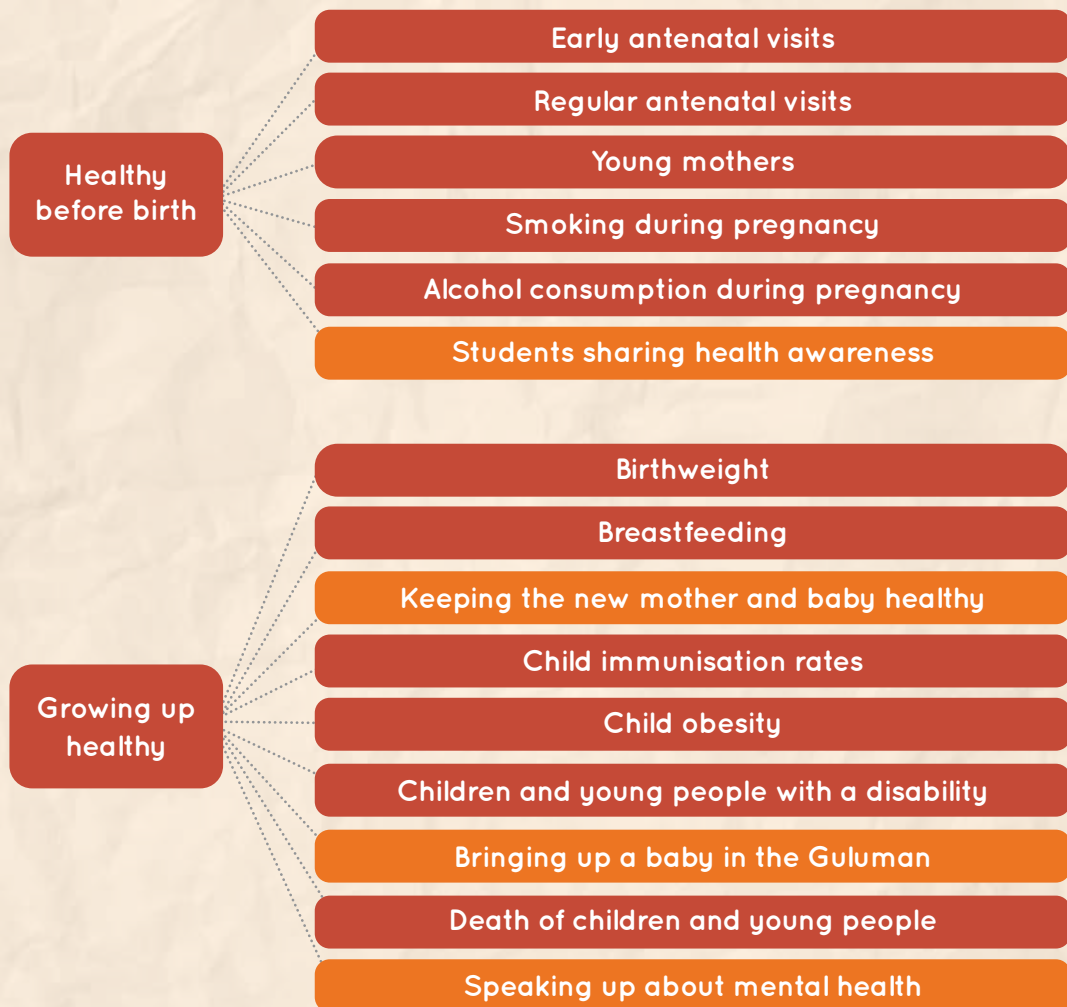


## Domain 3

# Being healthy

It is important for children and young people to be healthy, including physical, developmental, psychosocial and mental health. Until around the age of 25 years individuals continue to develop. This is not only physically but also by the maturing of neural connections in the brain. It is essential to take good care of the health and wellbeing of children and young people to ensure optimal health and opportunity in adulthood.

In this domain, two outcomes of healthy before birth and growing up healthy are explored through 11 indicators and four case studies:



Indicators Case studies

## 3.1 Healthy before birth

A normal pregnancy lasts about 40 weeks. The care provided, and the actions taken to ensure the health of the mother and unborn child during pregnancy, are important determinants of birth outcomes. Many factors including the age of the mother, the mother's diet, the physical and emotional health of the mother and access to medical care all contribute to a newborn baby's health. In all states and territories in Australia, midwives and other birth attendants record information on the health of mothers and babies during pregnancy and birth. This information is combined to provide information on the health of all mothers and babies across Australia.

### 3.1.1 Early antenatal visits

Antenatal care is the support provided by health care professionals to pregnant women to ensure optimal health.<sup>(28)</sup> Early antenatal care in the first trimester (less than 14 weeks of pregnancy), is associated with better health outcomes for both the mother and baby.

**Proportion (%) of mothers with first antenatal visit in first trimester (less than 14 weeks)**



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection, 2017. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2017.

Notes: 1. Australian data may be incomplete for some states. 2. NT regional data are reported by NT Department of Health geography which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

In 2017, more than 8 in 10 women (84.1%), who gave birth in the Territory, had an early antenatal check. This is greater than the proportion reported for Australia (72.0%).

### 3.1.2 Regular antenatal visits

Regular visits provide opportunity to monitor the health of the mother and baby. It is recommended that a woman has at least seven antenatal visits in a full-term pregnancy.<sup>(29)</sup>

**Proportion (%) of mothers who attended less than seven antenatal visits**



Data source and year: NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2017.

Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT regional data are reported by NT Department of Health geography which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

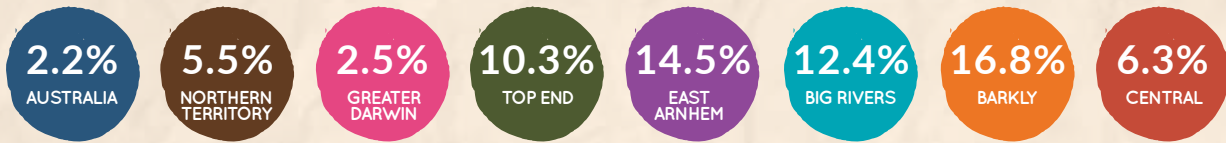
In 2017, nearly 2 in 10 women (17.9%) who gave birth in the NT had less than seven antenatal visits. The proportion varied across the NT from about 1 in 6 women in Greater Darwin (15.4%) and East Arnhem (15.5%) to 1 in 4 women in Big Rivers (23.9%) and Barkly (26.0%).



### 3.1.3 Young mothers

Pregnancy is a critical and challenging period for women. Teenage motherhood is not only a risk to the mother's and baby's health but also affects the mother's opportunities for education and employment and access to social supports.<sup>(30)</sup>

Proportion (%) of births to women aged under 20



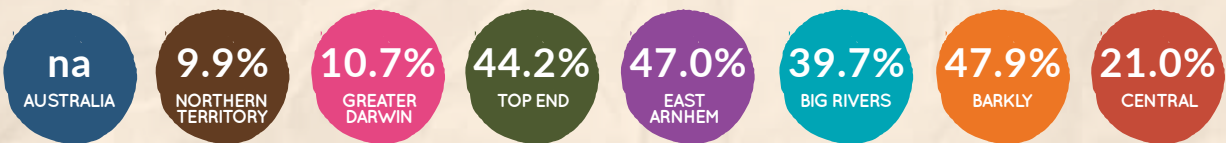
Data source and year: Australia: AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection, 2017. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2017.  
Note: NT regional data are reported by NT Department of Health geography which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

In 2017, 5 in 100 mothers (5.5%) who gave birth in the NT were aged under 20, which was greater than the 2 in 100 mothers (2.2%) in Australia. There was substantial variation across the NT from about 3 in 100 mothers in Greater Darwin (2.5%) to about 15 in 100 mothers in East Arnhem (14.5%) and Barkly (16.8%).

### 3.1.4 Smoking during pregnancy

Tobacco smoking by the mother during pregnancy is a major hazard for the unborn child and is associated with increased risk of pre-term birth, placental complications and perinatal death.<sup>(31)</sup>

Proportion (%) of women who reported smoking during pregnancy



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection, 2017. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2017.  
Note: NT regional data are reported by NT Department of Health geography which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

Across Australia, in 2017, 1 in 10 women (9.9%) reported smoking during pregnancy. Smoking in pregnancy is more common in the NT where 2 in 10 women (20.1%) reported smoking. Across the NT, the proportion of women who reported smoking in pregnancy ranged from 1 in 10 women in Greater Darwin (10.7%) to almost half of the women in East Arnhem (47.0%) and Barkly (47.9%).





### 3.1.5 Alcohol consumption during pregnancy

Good nutrition is important in pregnancy and some substances can harm the unborn child. Alcohol consumption by the mother during pregnancy is a major risk for a range of conditions in children by affecting the development of the unborn child including having an adverse effect on gene expression and fetal development. These conditions are collectively referred to as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD).<sup>(32)</sup>

Alcohol can harm the fetus at any stage in pregnancy and health authorities recommend ‘for women who are pregnant or planning a pregnancy, not drinking is the safest option’.<sup>(33)</sup> A significant proportion of women drink alcohol early in pregnancy and stop as soon as they know they are pregnant. There is no information available on patterns and volume of alcohol consumption in early pregnancy. We report the proportions of women consuming alcohol at the time of first antenatal visit and in late pregnancy (in third trimester), which is an indicator of higher risk.

#### Proportion (%) of babies exposed to alcohol in first trimester of pregnancy



#### Proportion (%) of babies exposed to alcohol in third trimester of pregnancy



Data source and year: NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special tables), 2017. Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Data for NT regions are reported by NT Department of Health geography which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

In the NT, in 2017, almost 5 in 100 women giving birth reported consuming alcohol at the time of the first antenatal visit. The proportion varied across the NT from less than 2 in 100 women in Greater Darwin (2.2%) to about 1 in 5 women in Barkly (20.8%). The proportion of women who reported consuming alcohol fell substantially in all regions by the third trimester. At this time about 2 in 100 women consumed alcohol across the NT (2.2%) with the proportions across the NT ranging from less than 1 in 100 in Greater Darwin (0.7%) to 1 in 12 women in Barkly (8.3%).







## STUDENTS SHARING HEALTH AWARENESS

The Ramingining Health Day was an initiative of senior school students to help promote the effects of exercise, alcohol misuse and smoking on health. 'There is a lot of health issues in our community, so we decided to hold a community health day in Ramingining', said Year 12 student Nellie Garrawurra.

The Health Day event was set up outside the busy community office for maximum visibility. Students focused on core themes of physical activity, alcohol misuse, smoking and healthy eating. Students facilitating the 'hands on' workstations encouraged everyone to have a go. Participants watched changes in heart rate before and after exercise, tested their upper and lower body strength, their body fat percentage, used alcohol goggles that mimic the effects of coordination loss, and measured their carbon monoxide levels with smokerlyzers. 'Everyone including young women in the community were really shocked at what smoking did to their bodies and health, and they all know a lot more about health issues after their visit. I feel strong and proud about this achievement', Nellie said.

The day was well attended and proved to be an excellent collaboration between the Ramingining senior school, Menzies HealthLAB and the Ramingining community. 'The community health day was a really positive experience. I felt like I was sharing important knowledge with my community, and the year 12 students were setting a strong example to the community', Nellie said.

Photo: Year 12 students Nellie and Ainsley running the nutrition station

## 3.2 Growing up healthy

The health of the child in the first months of life is crucial for long-term health and development. A child is particularly vulnerable through the early years and is reliant on carers for their physical and emotional needs. As children grow into adulthood it is important they are supported to maintain good nutrition, physical, mental and emotional health.

### 3.2.1 Birthweight

The birthweight of babies will vary as the result of a range of influences, including the characteristics of the parents, the health of the mother during pregnancy and the length of gestation at time of birth, but for each child there is a birthweight which is associated with optimal outcomes. A widely used indicator for newborn babies in need of particular attention is a birthweight of less than 2,500g, or 'low birthweight'.<sup>(34)</sup> A low birthweight baby may have difficulty feeding and gaining weight, maintaining body temperature and may be prone to infection. A low birthweight is also associated with an increased risk of conditions in adult life including diabetes, renal disease and cardiovascular disease.<sup>(30)</sup>

#### Proportion (%) of babies with low birthweight (defined as less than 2,500g)



Data source and year: Australia: AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection, 2017. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Perinatal Data Collection, prepared by NT Department of Health (special table), 2017.  
Note: 1. Birthweights for live-born babies only. 2. NT regional data are reported by NT Department of Health geography which varies marginally from the geography used elsewhere in this Story.

In the NT, in 2017, 1 in 12 babies (8.4%) were born with low birthweight which is greater than 1 in 15 babies across Australia (6.7%). The proportion varies throughout the NT from about 1 in 16 babies in Greater Darwin (6.9%) to 1 in 6 babies being low birthweight in Top End (16.9%).

### 3.2.2 Breastfeeding

It is recommended for optimal health and development, that babies be exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life at which time solids are introduced. Breastfeeding improves the nutritional, physical and psychological wellbeing of the infant and the mother.<sup>(35, 36)</sup>

#### Proportion (%) of children fully breastfed



Data source and year: Australia and NT: ABS, National Health Survey, 2014-15. Greater Darwin: ABS National Health Survey, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2014-15.  
Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Australian and NT measures exclusive breastfeeding to around 4 months. 2. Greater Darwin measures to 3 months.

The most recent available information on breastfeeding, based on a survey in urban areas of the NT, from 2014-15, reported 7 in 10 NT children (69.4%) were fully breastfed for the first four months of life, which is greater than the Australian rate of about 6 in 10 children (61.6%).





## KEEPING THE NEW MOTHER AND BABY HEALTHY

'My name is Thevi and I am of Indian/Tamil heritage and these are the practices of my family after a child is born. My grandparents migrated to Singapore from Sri Lanka for work and I am second generation born in Singapore.

In our culture after a baby is born, the mother and infant stay at home for one month. This allows time for the baby's immune system to build up before vaccinations. It also allows time for the mother to adjust and to get used to breastfeeding. There are specific diet practices during this time. New mothers do not eat chilli, spices, dahl, cabbage and other foods that generate too much heat or wind. Also cooling foods like watermelon are avoided and fatty foods with a lot of oil. Foods like turmeric and coriander are encouraged as they provide nutrients for the mother and the baby through breast milk and are good for healing.

On the 31st day after the birth of the child, the family call the Hindu priest to the house to bless the child and the couple. Prior to the blessing, the head of the baby is shaved to cleanse the baby from any remnants from the womb (blood, fluids etc.) and to make the hair thicker. After the shaving, sandalwood is placed on the baby's head to cool the body.

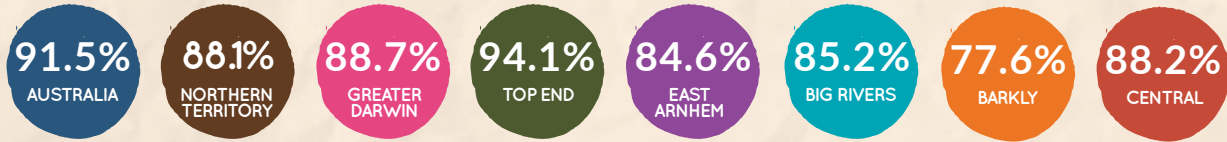
Our traditions are passed on orally through the shared knowledge of aunties, uncles, mums and dads. Culture changes with time and things are different now. I can see my daughter passing on some of the traditions'.

Photo: Thevi with her daughter Venaska

### 3.2.3 Child immunisation rates

Vaccination provides protection for children against a wide range of harmful infections and is associated with health and socioeconomic benefits.<sup>(37)</sup> The National Immunisation Program provides a series of free vaccines, recommended at specific ages. A key measure of the effectiveness of the immunisation program is whether children are fully immunised, with the recommended vaccines, at the age of two (24-27 months).

Proportion (%) of children, at age 2, who are fully immunised



Data source and year: Australia: Australian Immunisation Register, 2016. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: Australian Immunisation Register, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2018.

The proportion of children fully immunised at two years of age in the NT (88.1%) was slightly less than the figure for Australia (91.5%). There was some variation in immunisation coverage across the NT from nearly 8 in 10 children (77.6%) in Barkly to over 9 in 10 children (94.1%) in the Top End.

### 3.2.4 Child obesity

Children and young people can gain weight quickly, which is influenced by factors including amount and type of physical activity, dietary habits, hormonal changes and heredity. Overweight and obesity refers to excessive weight, which is associated with increased risk of a range of health conditions for young people which may continue in adulthood.<sup>(38)</sup>

Proportion (%) of children and young people, aged 5-17, who were overweight or obese



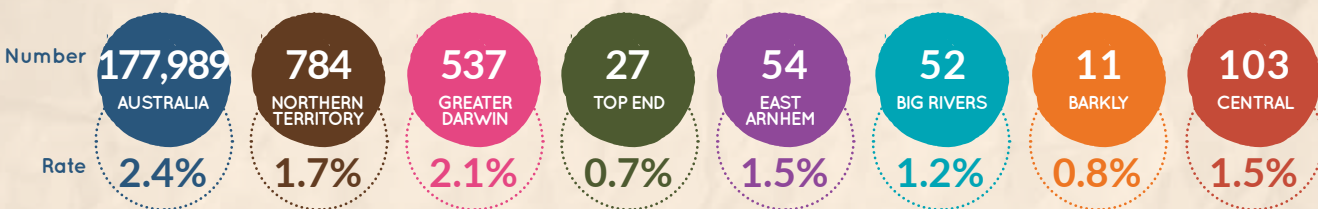
Data source and year: ABS: 4364.0.55.001 - National Health Survey: First Results, 2017-18.  
Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. NT results were reported for ages 2-17 years combined.

In 2017-18, more than a quarter of Australian children and young people aged 5-17 (26.1%) were overweight or obese. There was a similar percentage (26.4%) for NT children and young people aged 2-17.

### 3.2.5 Children and young people with a disability

A young person with severe or profound disability needs support to complete daily activities. These activities may include self-care, mobility or communication. A question on 'core activity need for assistance' has been developed for inclusion in the ABS Census.<sup>(39)</sup> There is a small amount of data on disability in young people, especially those in remote Aboriginal communities. The ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) provides more comprehensive data but has limited geographic reach, which is why it is not used here.

Number and proportion (%) of children and young people, aged 0-24, with a severe or profound disability



Data source and year: Australia and NT: ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016. Greater Darwin and regions: ABS Housing and Population Census, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

In the NT, almost 2 in 100 children and young people (1.7%) have a severe or profound disability. The reported proportion varies from less than 1 in 100 children and young people in Barkly (0.8%) and Top End (0.7%) to more than 2 in 100 children and young people in Greater Darwin (2.1%).



## BRINGING UP A BABY IN THE GULUMAN

'In Ngukurr, we have a way to grow up a baby in a Guluman. I have seen one when I was a little girl, my mother used to carry my little sister around with it. When the baby goes in the Guluman, leaves go in first. It is a soft comfortable bed for babies to sleep in. My mother carried the Guluman, with my sister inside, under the arm. It is safe for little bubs to be in it when the mums are cooking or fishing.

The Guluman is also a spiritual way of teaching babies about their surroundings, in our country. It is a spiritual shield, protecting the child. It connects the child to the land and culture, places culture at the centre of the child's life. It teaches them, so when they are older, they know things. It brings healing, helps keep babies strong and healthy. It makes sure the baby grows straight, not crooked.

When the babies are crawling, they are strong in their legs, back and bones. The Guluman gets put away for the next generation to come.

The Guluman was a central beginning for life. It was sacred for women. The kids were not allowed to play with it. Men and teenagers were not allowed to touch it. If the Guluman breaks, it breaks our spirit too'.

Marlene Andrews, Ngukurr

Photo: Marlene with a Guluman at the Guluman Child and Family Centre, Ngukurr

### 3.2.6 Death of children and young people

Systematically reviewing the causes of death in a population is important for understanding health and behavioural changes which can inform prevention strategies and policy. Leading causes of death in Australia differ across age groups.

Infant mortality is the number of deaths of children in a population before their first birthday and is expressed as the number of deaths per 1,000 live births in a year.<sup>(40)</sup> Up to about four weeks of age, infant deaths are most commonly associated with complications in pregnancy and birth. After this period, infant deaths are increasingly the result of hazards from the wider environment such as malnutrition and infections, often in conjunction with poor parenting skills and inaccessibility to appropriate health services.<sup>(30)</sup>

#### Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)



Data source and year: Australia and NT: ABS 3303.0 Causes of Death, 2017. Greater Darwin and regions: Australian Coordinating Registry, Cause of Death Unit Record Files, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2011-15.  
 Note: (nr) not reportable because of small numbers.

In 2017, the infant mortality rate for NT was 8.5 deaths per 1,000 live births which was more than twice the rate for Australia. Across the NT, from 2011-15, the infant mortality rate varied from 3.7 in Greater Darwin to 12.7 in Top End and 13.7 in East Arnhem.

Among children aged 1-14 years, land transport accidents, such as car crashes, are the leading cause of death, while among those aged 15-24, intentional self-harm and car crashes are the leading causes.<sup>(41)</sup> Intentional self-harm is injury or death that was purposefully inflicted, and in some cases intent or purpose cannot be determined. Suicide is defined as intentional self-harm, which a coroner has determined was a deliberate act to end one's own life.<sup>(42)</sup>

#### Death rate (per 100,000 population) for children, aged 1-14



#### Death rate (per 100,000 population) for young people, aged 15-24



Data source and year: ABS 3303.0 Causes of Death, 2017.  
 Note: 1. (nr) not reportable because of small numbers. 2. ABS rates are based on preliminary death data and are subject to revision.

In the NT in 2017, there were 11 deaths of children aged 1-14 years. This is a death rate of 22.0 deaths per 100,000 population and is twice the rate for Australia (10.5 deaths per 100,000).<sup>(43)</sup> In 2017, for NT young people aged 15-24, the death rate was 106.3 deaths per 100,000 population. This rate was three times the rate for Australia.



**'I wanted to create a community to let people know they are not alone'**

## **SPEAKING UP ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH**

In Year 11 Mitchell Ford lost a good friend to suicide. 'The days and weeks following his suicide I felt empty. I was angry at him for believing this was his only option. Angry at myself for not knowing he was in pain'

Wanting to raise awareness of the challenges of depression, Mitchell created PRVT Apparel, a clothing line with the mantra 'Speak Up, Speak Out, Stand Up, Stand Strong, Stand Together' PRVT is an abbreviation for prevention. 'I wanted to create a community to let people know they are not alone, there is help available', Mitchell says.

Mitchell is concerned suicide remains the top cause of death for young people in the Northern Territory. 'Here in Katherine, I haven't seen it talked about much. Having the thoughts is not good but being afraid to talk about it is the real problem. We need capable people around to have the conversations'. Mitchell has committed 20% of PRVT Apparel profits to local charity Headspace to support service delivery.

'If you are in pain you need to know that you are not alone; you are loved. Things can get better, things will get better ... reach out ... find help. Never forget that there is always help available to help the pain stop. Seeking help is extremely hard sometimes but it is worth it'.

Photo: Mitchell wearing a T-shirt from his clothing line (Photo provided by Katherine Times)



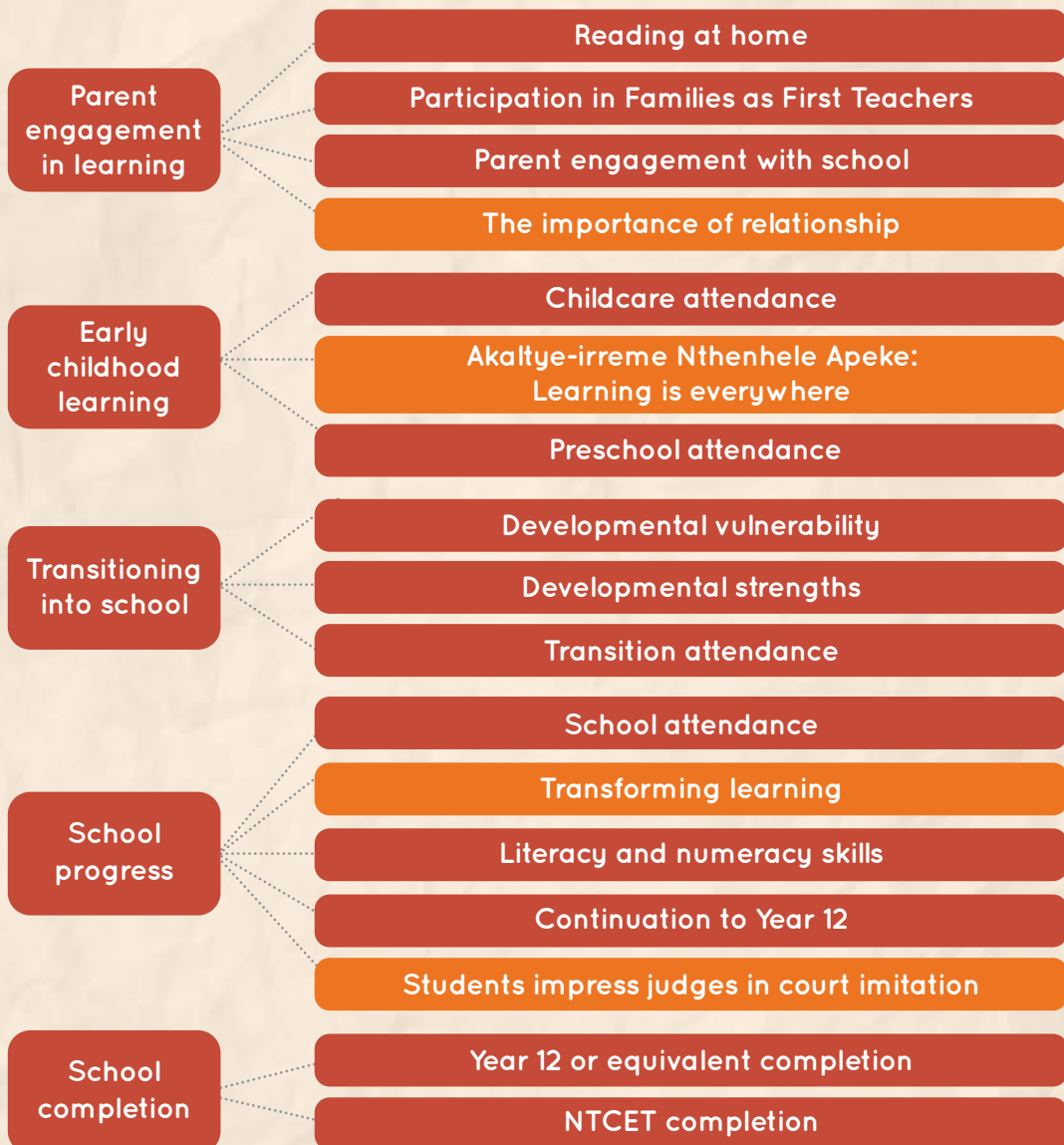
# Domain 4

# Learning

It is important for children and young people to be continually learning in both formal and informal ways. Children can learn at home with family, through interaction with the wider community and in formal settings, such as school.

Early education and participation, continual learning, emotional wellbeing and inclusion, and educational achievement are all important for successful progression through life. Active learning and school completion are important in supporting young people leaving school to achieve their goals and have a variety of future opportunities. While the indicators reported in this chapter are focused on formal learning, learning is not just about study at school, it is about all the experiences in the life of a child and young person.

In this domain, five outcomes of parent engagement in learning, early childhood learning, transitioning into school, school progress and school completion, are explored through 13 indicators and four case studies:



Indicators Case studies



## 4.1 Parent engagement in learning

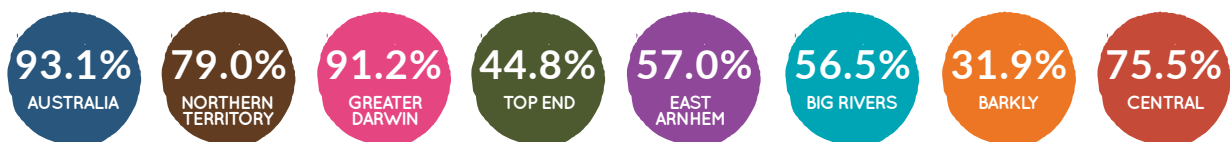
The involvement of parents in their child's education is one of the most important factors in the success of a child at school.<sup>(44)</sup> Parent involvement can take many forms, from reading to a child at home, to paying for private music lessons outside of school, to ensuring the quality of education provided by a school.

### 4.1.1 Reading at home

The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a nationwide data collection that shows how young children have developed as they commence their first year of full-time school. The results are derived from a teacher-completed instrument (or survey) for students, in each school, but are to be understood on a population level.<sup>(45)</sup> A teacher completes the instrument based on their knowledge and observations of the children in their class. Censuses have been undertaken every three years from 2009 to 2018. AEDC data is also used in sections 4.1.3, 4.3.1 and 4.3.2.

Preparing children for school is heavily influenced by parents. In 2018, ARACY found 8 in 10 parents read a book or told a story to their children under two years of age, every week. Reading to children and supporting them to read at home from a young age can assist with the development of reading and cognitive skills.<sup>(46)</sup> In the AEDC, teachers were asked, based on their knowledge of the child: 'Would you say this child is regularly read to/encouraged in his/her reading at home?'

#### Proportion (%) of children who are regularly read to or encouraged to read at home



Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), prepared by Australian Department of Education and Training (special table), 2018.

Note: Results include teachers' responses of 'Somewhat true' or 'Very true'.

There is substantial variation in the results across the NT. In Greater Darwin, more than 9 in 10 children are regularly read to or encouraged to read at home, which is similar to the proportion of children across Australia. In other areas, this proportion is less than 5 in 10 children in Top End (44.8%) and about 3 in 10 children in Barkly (31.9%).



## 4.1.2 Participation in Families as First Teachers

The Families as First Teachers (FaFT) program is an early childhood and family support program, primarily for Aboriginal families in remote communities. The aim of the program is to improve developmental outcomes for children, aged 0-4, by working with families and children prior to school entry. The program activities have an emphasis on both child and adult learning, an approach described as dual generational. Components of the program include adult-child interactions in learning; reading and learning games; health and nutrition; and connecting families with other support services.

### Participation in Families as First Teachers Program

	AUSTRALIA	NORTHERN TERRITORY	GREATER DARWIN	TOP END	EAST ARNHEM	BIG RIVERS	BARKLY	CENTRAL
Number of communities	na	39	4	8	8	9	6	4
Number of children	na	2,633	601	407	459	696	304	166
Average days for children	na	19.0	11.9	25.4	29.4	16.3	15.6	17.0

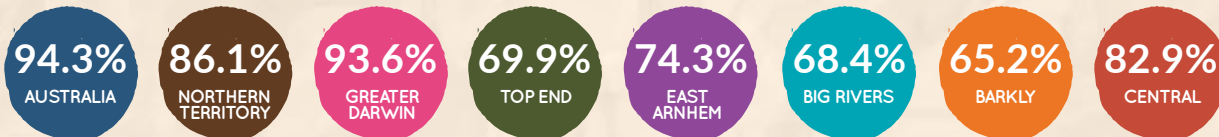
Data source and year: Family as First Teachers (FaFT) program, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.  
 Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. Average days calculated using the weighted average for schools.

In 2018, the FaFT program was available in 39 communities across the NT. A total of 2,633 children participated in the program with the average number of 19.0 days of participation in 2018. Average number of days of participation ranged from 29.4 and 25.4 in East Arnhem and Top End respectively, to 11.9 in Greater Darwin.

## 4.1.3 Parent engagement with school

Active engagement of parents or caregivers at school assists transition of the child into school and reinforces the value of school learning for the child. Similar to section 4.1.1, this measure was also assessed using AEDC results, with teachers asked to respond to the question 'Would you say this child has parent(s)/caregiver(s) who are actively engaged with the school in supporting their child's learning?'


### Proportion (%) of children whose parents or caregivers are actively engaged with the school in supporting their child's learning



Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), prepared by Australian Department of Education and Training (special table), 2018.  
 Note: Results include teachers' responses of 'Somewhat true' or 'Very true'.

The results for this measure demonstrate an overall greater engagement of parents and caregivers at school than the measure of support for reading at home (see 4.1.1). Across the NT the level of parent and caregiver engagement ranged from about 7 in 10 children in several regions to more than 9 in 10 children in Greater Darwin.





**'I do reading and learning games with my daughter. She is learning herself now'**

## THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP

In early 2018, the Families as First Teachers (FaFT) program in Elliott was struggling with a low participation rate and relationships with community members were not strong. The team made the decision to close the program for six months to plan a fresh start. A new Family Educator and Family Liaison Officer were employed to build strong relationships and re-engage families and the community in early childhood learning and development.

The stronger FaFT team built relationships with families by visiting homes, hosting events and being approachable and supportive. They liaised with local and regional stakeholders and services to ensure families and children are exposed to a wide range of activities, support and information. They transformed the FaFT environment into a welcoming, engaging and supportive early learning space. These changes have had a demonstrated result, with participation in FaFT increasing from 48% of Elliott children in Term 1, 2018 to 89% in Term 1, 2019.

'I like going to the FaFT, it feels safe there, people to help if I need help', Karen Cooper says. Parents enjoy the range of place-based programs that promote optimal child development, family engagement in early learning and family support. 'I do reading and learning games with my daughter. It is better for her, she'll know everything when she goes to preschool. She is learning herself now'.

Photo: Jason and Karen with their daughter Amy during a Learning on Country Early Years Transitioning Excursion to the local waterhole

## 4.2 Early childhood learning

Participation and engagement in learning from a young age is essential for children. A child's early learning is shaped by their health, environment, parents, families, play groups and childcare. Quality early childhood education and care plays a crucial role in a child's development.

### 4.2.1 Childcare attendance

Good quality learning before school, which includes play-based learning and intentional teaching, is widely recognised to have an important role in preparing a child for school. Childcare services are defined as services for children aged 0-12, which can include long day care, family day care, outside school hours care, occasional care and other types of care.<sup>(47)</sup> Among the various types of childcare only some are formally regulated and 'approved' by government.

Proportion (%) of children, aged 0-5, attending approved childcare services



Data source and year: Productivity Commission Report on Government Services 2019, 2018.  
Note: (na) not available.

In 2017, less than 3 in 10 NT children (28%), aged 0-5 years, attended approved childcare services, which was less than the reported proportion of 4 in 10 children for all Australian children (43.2%).





## AKALTYE IRREME NTHENHELE APEKE: LEARNING IS EVERYWHERE

'I have over 20 grandkids between six months and 10 years old. Twelve of them have been coming to our early learning activities at Children's Ground since we started it in 2016. None of my grandkids had been to early learning before and some of the older ones have struggled at school where they feel like they have to leave their language and culture at the door.

At Children's Ground, we take them out on their country and show them their place and ancestors, so they know who they are. They are learning from us, their family, and western educators too. We are teaching them in Arrernte and English. When they have their culture and identity with them all day, they are more confident to learn.

All the kids got into the routine from the start. They call it their school. They are learning so much: starting to learn to read, write and speak in Arrernte and in English, learning about their language, land and culture and about their health too. These little kids know more than my older kids do because being on country is important. Everything comes from the land - it's their identity. Being strong in who they are gives them confidence to learn. My older kids and grandkids didn't have the chance to learn like these little kids.

We have over 100 little ones coming to early learning with us. Every year more and more kids and families are coming because they can see their culture and their family respected and valued'.

Lorrayne Gorey, Senior Arrernte Educator and Leader at Children's Ground

Photo: Lorrayne reading with some of her grandkids



## 4.2.2 Preschool attendance

Preschool programs are a strategy for strengthening social, emotional and cognitive development of children in their early years. Preschool services are defined as services which deliver 'a structured, play-based learning program, delivered by a qualified teacher, aimed at children in the year or two before they commence full time schooling'.<sup>(47)</sup> They differ to other forms of early education in that preschool has minimum hours of attendance per week and focused activities.<sup>(48)</sup>

At three and four years old a child's brain is growing rapidly and children are undergoing skill development processes such as learning communication and self-regulation.<sup>(48)</sup> Studies from the UK, Europe and the US have found children who attended two or more years of preschool, when compared to those who attended less, had better development in language, number concepts, sociability and independence at the start of school, and higher Year 12 grades in English and Maths.<sup>(48)</sup> This highlights the long-term impact of preschool years on a child.

Unlike the majority of preschools in Australia, most in the Northern Territory are delivered through schools and are free to attend. Preschools provide a minimum of 15 hours a week for 40 weeks per year, on average, or 600 hours per year.

### Proportion (%) of children, aged 4, attending a preschool program



Data source and year: ABS 4240.0 - Preschool Education 2018, Table 3, 2018; proportions estimated using ABS 3101.0 - Australian Demographic Statistics, June 2018.  
Note: (na) not available.

In 2018, about 8 in 10 NT children, aged four years (79.3%), attended a preschool program, which is similar to the proportion for all Australian children of this age (84.3%).

### Average hours of preschool attendance for children, aged 3 or 4, NT Government schools



Data source and year: NT Department of Education (special table) 2018.  
Note: (na) not available.

Among those children enrolled in NT Government preschools, there was variation in the average hours of preschool attendance for children aged three or four, from 7 hours in Barkly to 14 hours in Greater Darwin.





KS CY



## 4.3 Transitioning into school

Transitioning into school can be a difficult time for children and families, with a change in environment for children and an increase in learning demands. However, shifting from home and playgroups, to formal school settings is an important time for children and families. Research has found that successful transitioning into school can help establish a foundation for positive interactions at school, and educational and social outcomes now and into the future. Effective transitioning is more than just learning about the school and a new environment, and involves processes that start before school and continue through a child's time at school.<sup>(49)</sup>

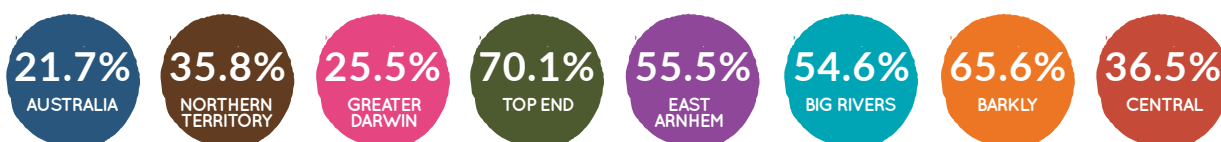
### 4.3.1 Developmental vulnerability

The AEDC measures early development of children across five domains: physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive skills (school based), and communication skills and general knowledge.<sup>(45)</sup>

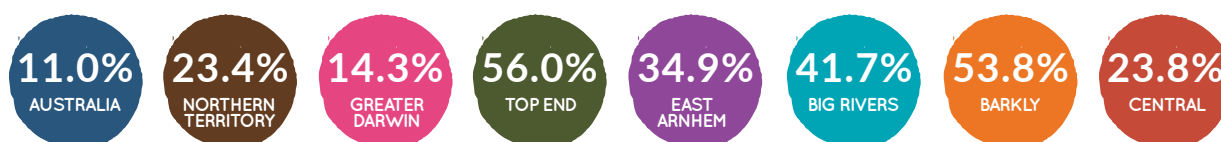
Children with a score in the lowest 10% of the national population in a domain are considered to be 'developmentally vulnerable' in that domain. The measure of 'developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains' or 'two or more domains' are summary indicators of children's readiness for school. To determine which children fall into these groupings, AEDC cut-offs have been set for each domain based on all children who participated in the AEDC nationally in 2009 – the national AEDC population. The 2009 cut-off points apply to all future data collections.

In the following tables these measures are presented as the percentage of children in a region who have at least one (or two) or more AEDC domain score/s below the 10th percentile.

#### Proportion (%) of children assessed as developmentally vulnerable in one or more domains



#### Proportion (%) of children assessed as developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains



Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), prepared by Australian Department of Education and Training (special table), 2018.

In the NT, in 2018, almost 1 in 4 children (23.4%) were vulnerable in two or more domains which is much greater than 1 in 9 children across Australia (11.0%). Across the NT, children who were developmentally vulnerable in two or more domains varied from 1 in 7 in Greater Darwin (14.3%) to 1 in 2 in the Top End (56.0%) and Barkly (53.8%).



### 4.3.2 Developmental strengths

The Multiple Strengths Indicator (MSI) is a summary indicator that measures developmental strengths in the social and emotional development of children, using the data collected from the AEDC. It measures developmental strengths such as self-control, pro-social skills, respectful behaviour towards peers, teachers and property, and curiosity about the world. The indicator also identifies children who have advanced skills in literacy, a particular interest in reading, numeracy and memory, and very good communication skills. MSI differs to the AEDC summary indicators provided in section 6.2.1, as it measures developmental strengths.

The data presented below shows the proportion of children who have either highly developed, well developed or emerging strengths. Highly developed children are those with strengths in 28-39 of the multiple strength indicator items of the census, well developed are those with 19-27 strengths, and emerging strengths children are those with 18 or less.

Proportion (%) of children assessed as having highly developed, well developed and emerging strengths using Multiple Strengths Indicator

	AUSTRALIA	NORTHERN TERRITORY	GREATER DARWIN	TOP END	EAST ARNHEM	BIG RIVERS	BARKLY	CENTRAL
Highly developed strengths	57.5%	43.8%	50.9%	15.1%	31.6%	32.5%	21.5%	44.1%
Well developed strengths	21.8%	21.6%	22.8%	17.6%	17.5%	19.7%	15.1%	22.1%
Emerging strengths	20.6%	34.6%	26.3%	67.3%	50.9%	47.8%	63.4%	33.8%

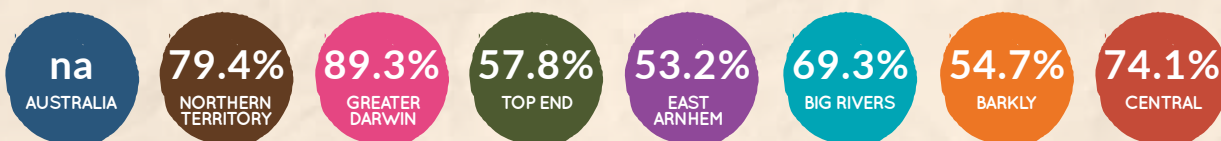
Data source and year: Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), prepared by Australian Department of Education and Training (special table), 2018.

Across the NT, there are varying distributions of children who have highly developed, well developed or emerging strengths. There is a significant proportion of children in all regions with highly developed strengths.

### 4.3.3 Transition attendance

In the Northern Territory, Transition classes are offered at primary school for children aged five before commencing Year 1 at age six. The Northern Territory Government has a focus on ensuring children successfully transition into school.<sup>(50)</sup>

School attendance in Transition, NT Government schools



Data source and year: NT: NT Department of Education website, 2018. Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Education, Enrolment and Attendance data, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.

Note: (na) not available.

In 2018, attendance in Transition class was highest in Greater Darwin, with attendance of almost 9 in 10 available days (89.3%). In some regions, average school attendance in Transition was less than 6 in 10 days.



## 4.4 School progress

Education is linked to the social and economic circumstances of populations. It is important for children to attend and engage in school learning to provide the skills to achieve their goals and take advantage of future opportunities.

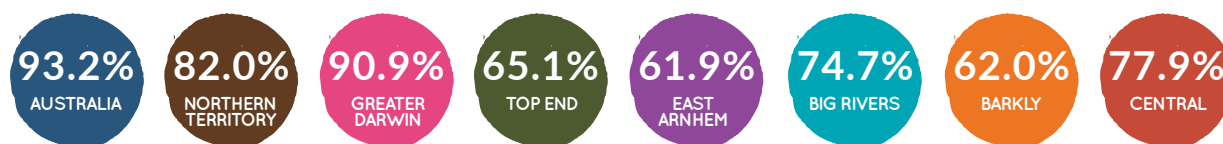
### 4.4.1 School attendance

Students who attend school regularly are most likely to achieve good educational outcomes, progress through school, and increase options for their future. While every day of attendance is important to optimise progress, a school attendance rate of 80% is regarded as a threshold below which children have difficulty with the continuity of classroom learning. In the Northern Territory, school attendance has been historically low, particularly among remote Aboriginal students.<sup>(51)</sup> Low school attendance among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children is recognised as a national concern and in 2014, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) set a target of 90% attendance to be achieved within five years.<sup>(52)</sup>

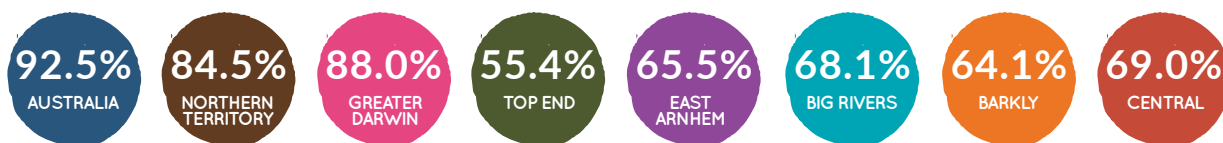
In the Northern Territory, school or an approved alternative education program, such as home schooling, is compulsory for children who turn six on or before 30 June of the school year.<sup>(53)</sup>

The rate of school attendance presented here is the proportion of time students attend school as a proportion of the time they are expected to attend school.

#### School attendance, in Year 3, NT Government schools



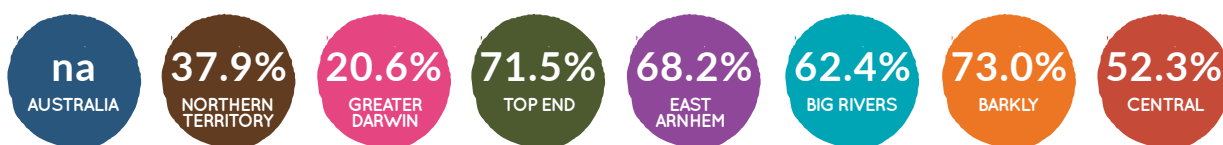
#### School attendance, in Year 7, NT Government schools



Data source and year: Australia: Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, website, 2018. NT: NT Department of Education website, Enrolment and Attendance, 2018. Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Education, Enrolment and Attendance data, prepared by the NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.

Across the NT, average school attendance varied for primary schools, presented for Year 3, and for secondary schools which is presented for Year 7. In Year 3, average school attendance varied from about 60% for several regions to 90.9% in Greater Darwin. The distribution was similar for Year 7 which ranged from 55.4% attendance for schools in the Top End to 88.0% for schools in Greater Darwin.

#### Proportion (%) of students with less than 80% school attendance, NT Government schools



Data source and year: NT Department of Education, Enrolment and Attendance data, prepared by NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.  
Note: (na) not available.

In 2018, there was a substantial proportion of children with less than 80% attendance across the NT, with a range from about 2 in 10 children (20.6%) in Greater Darwin to 7 in 10 children in Barkly (73.0%) and the Top End (71.5%).



**'Feeling safe is central to good learning'**

## TRANSFORMING LEARNING

Over the past few years, Sadadeen Primary School in Alice Springs, has focused on embedding trauma informed, child-centred practices into their everyday work. Recognising the barriers to children engaging in school were all too evident, with many students with a background of complex trauma, ongoing intergenerational trauma or precarious living situations, the school saw it needed to approach learning in a new and family centred way.

The school started by developing a strong school vision across all staff levels, to create an aware and emotionally responsive environment, ready to meet the needs of its students. In its planning, the school acknowledged the relationship between learning, belonging, safety, culture and nurturing children. Understanding support for the wellbeing and learning of a child requires positive and effective relationships across all areas of a

child's life, the school partnered with government and non-government services to deliver and embed the trauma informed, family centred practice throughout the school.

Key features of the practice include an understanding that feeling safe is central to good learning; a change in thinking about behaviour to the understanding that all behaviour communicates a need and it is about how you respond appropriately to that need; a belief that the physical environment is important, and playgrounds should be both exciting and relaxing spaces; and a strong commitment to building an inclusive and caring school environment.

After implementing the new approach, Sadadeen Primary saw a decline in behavioural incidents by almost 50 per cent between 2015 and 2017, as well as promising signs of improvement in literacy for children in the early years.

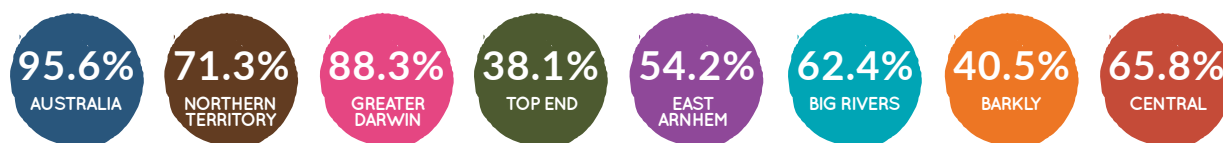
Photo: School Principal Ms Lizzy with students Lowanna, Justin, Johnic and Aaniyah in front of the school gardens

## 4.4.2 Literacy and numeracy skills

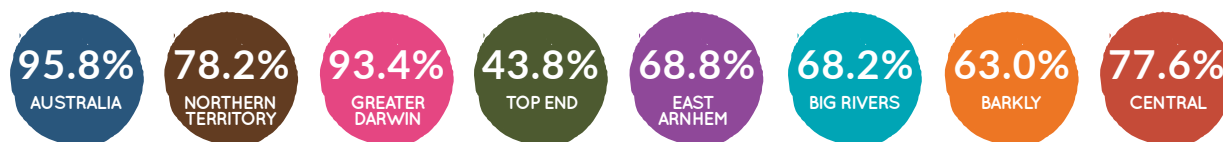
Ongoing progress through school is important to provide the necessary building blocks to have a better quality of life. Competency in reading, writing and numeracy contributes to better opportunities post school and better health, social and wellbeing outcomes. The National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is a nationwide annual assessment for students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9. The test assesses skills considered essential to progress through school in the domains of reading and writing, language conventions and numeracy.

NAPLAN provides teachers with a snapshot of which students need support in the classroom, as well as providing the Northern Territory Government with information on teaching and learning practices.<sup>(54)</sup> The national minimum standard for each domain of the NAPLAN is considered to be the minimum required knowledge for students to progress at school with little difficulty.<sup>(55)</sup>

### Proportion (%) of students in Year 3 reaching the minimum national standard in Literacy, NT Government schools



### Proportion (%) of students in Year 3 reaching the minimum national standard in Numeracy, NT Government schools



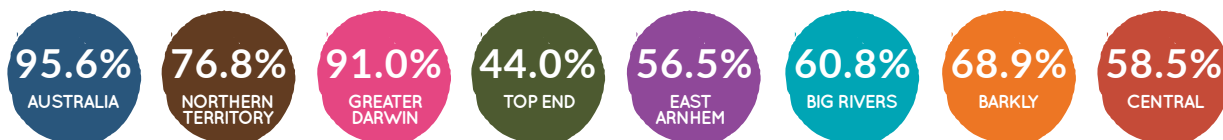
Data source and year: Australia and NT: ACARA NAPLAN – National Report for 2018, 2018. Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Education (special table), 2018

There is a substantial proportion of NT children in Year 3, aged around eight years, who would benefit from additional support with formal learning. Across Australia, about 1 in 20 children need support, while in the NT this proportion is about 3 in 10 children. There is considerable variation across the NT with about half of all children in some regions who would benefit from additional support in literacy and numeracy.

### Proportion (%) of students in Year 7 reaching the minimum national standard in Literacy, NT Government schools



### Proportion (%) of students in Year 7 reaching the minimum national standard in Numeracy, NT Government schools



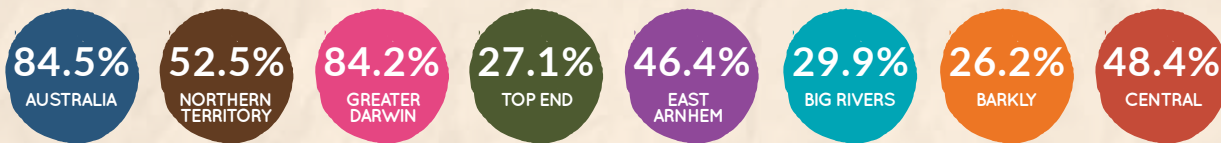
Data source and year: Australia and NT: ACARA NAPLAN – National Report for 2018, 2018. Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.

For older children in Year 7, aged around 12 years, the proportion of children who would benefit from support in literacy or numeracy (or both) is about 1 in 20 across Australia, while in the NT around 3 in 10 children. Again, there is considerable variation across the NT, with about two thirds of children in Top End and Barkly who would benefit from additional support for literacy and more than half in the Top End who would benefit from support in numeracy.

### 4.4.3 Continuation to Year 12

The apparent retention rate is a measure of the percentage of young people who were enrolled in Year 7/8 and progressed through to Year 12 in 2018. Year 7/8 is used as a marker of the start of secondary school, which varies between schools throughout Australia.

#### Apparent retention from Year 7/8 to Year 12



Data source and year: Australia and NT: ABS Schools Capped Apparent Retention Rate 2011-2018, 2018. Greater Darwin and regions: NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.

Half of the children in the NT (52.5%) who started Year 7/8 remained in school until Year 12 in 2018. This compares to Australia, where more than 4 in 5 young people (84.5%) continued to Year 12. There is great variation in retention rates across the NT, from more than 8 in 10 young people in Greater Darwin (84.2%) to about 3 in 10 young people in the Top End (27.1%), Big Rivers (29.9%) and Barkly (26.2%).



## STUDENTS IMPRESS JUDGES IN COURT IMITATION

Three Year 11 and 12 students from Darwin High School were placed third in the National High School Mooting Competition hosted by Bond University this year. Mooting is a simulated court proceeding in which student teams vie to present a superior legal argument before lawyers who act as judges.

Tricia Ulep, Harvie Stiller-Wojkowski and Samuel Roussos met at lunchtimes, after school and on weekends to dissect the mooting problem, initially unaware if they were to be the respondent or appellant. They spent a lot of time reading and mastering the relevant legislation and the supporting authorities, such as examples of precedence.

After learning the side they were required to argue, the students brainstormed strategies for weeks.

On the day of the competition, the students battled through the elimination rounds to become the only government school in Australia to win a spot in the final. Each speaker had 10 minutes to present an argument opposing that of the contesting counsel. The judges were entitled to interrupt the teams to ask questions and raise points for clarification. The mooting teams were scored on their presentations (35%) content (35%) and their proficiency in handling the judges' questions (30%). Samuel also won the Outstanding Advocate Award.

Photo: Tricia, Harvie and Samuel (from left to right) ready for action

## 4.5 School completion

The amount of education a young person receives has an impact on their future job opportunities and income. Numerous studies have found those with higher educational attainment are not only more likely to be employed full time, but also to have higher income, and have greater productivity in the workforce. In 2010, the Productivity Commission estimated the average gain in earnings for those who completed Year 12, compared to non-completers, was 13% and 10% for males and females respectively.<sup>(56)</sup>

### 4.5.1 Year 12 or equivalent completion

Year 12 or equivalent completion is considered a key measure of educational attainment by young Australians. An equivalent qualification to Year 12 is a Certificate III or higher achievement. Variations in Year 12 completion are due to factors which include rurality or remoteness, gender and language background.

Proportion (%) of all young people, aged 20-24, who have attained a Year 12 or equivalent qualification



Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016.

In 2016, across Australia about 3 in 4 young adults (74%), aged 20-24 years, had completed a Year 12 or equivalent qualification, compared with 1 in 2 NT adults (49.3%) of the same age.

### 4.5.2 NTCET completion

The Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training (NTCET) is the final school qualification for students in the Northern Territory. Achieving the NTCET indicates students have completed senior secondary school requirements. The NTCET has been running for eight years, and offers graduates the opportunity to enter a range of tertiary education streams.

Proportion (%) of enrolled students who completed NTCET



Data source and year: NT Department of Education (special table), 2018.  
Note: 1. (na) not available. 2. (nr) not reportable because of small numbers.

In 2018, a total of 1,373 students completed the NTCET, of whom 197 identified as Aboriginal students. There was a high rate of completion across all regions, with more than 9 in 10 young people completing NTCET among those who intended to complete the NTCET.





## Domain 5

# Participating

It is important for children and young people to be actively participating with their peers and within the community. Children can be involved by speaking up and sharing their views, being involved in sport or other recreational or social activities and by volunteering. Young people can participate in work, further study and can vote to have a say in our political leadership.

In this domain, two outcomes of participation in work or study and participation in the community, are explored through five indicators and three case studies:



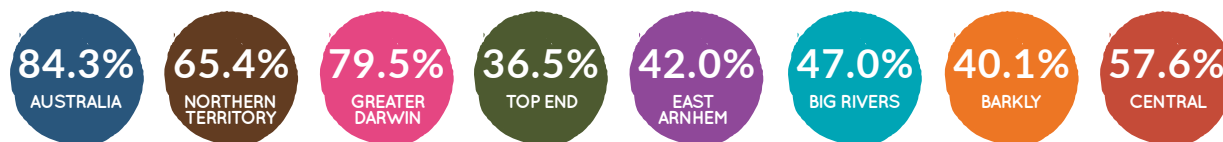


## 5.1 Participation in work or study

### 5.1.1 Young people earning or learning

Engaging in school, higher education, training or work is crucial for young people to gain employment skills and become contributing members of society. After school, young people engage in seasonal activities of work and study which are often subject to opportunity, accessibility and individual priorities.

**Proportion (%) of young people, aged 15-24, who are engaged in school, work or further education and/or training**



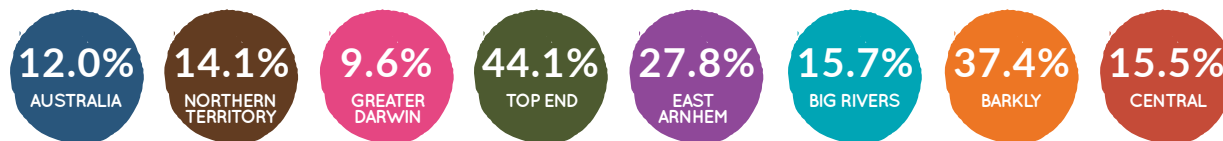
Data source and year: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

The proportion of young people in the NT engaged in 'earning or learning' in 2016 was lower than the Australian average. Across the NT, engagement varied from about 2 in 5 young people in remote regions, such as East Arnhem (42.0%), to 4 in 5 young people in Greater Darwin (79.5%).

### 5.1.2 Unemployment among young people

Unemployment is measured as the proportion of working age Australians who are not working but can work and are looking for work. Some workers, particularly young people, become discouraged, and stop actively looking for work. While these individuals may be jobless, they are not recorded as being unemployed in official unemployment statistics.

**Proportion (%) of young people, aged 15-24, who are unemployed**



Data source and year: Australia: ABS Labour Force Survey 2016. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

The labour force survey conducted by ABS in 2016, sampling approximately 50,000 people, reported that about 1 in 10 young Australians (12.0%) are unemployed. There is substantial variation in the unemployment rate for young people across the NT. For Greater Darwin the unemployment rate is lower (9.6%) than the comparable Australian figure, while in some NT regions more than 1 in 3 young people are registered as unemployed, such as Top End (44.1%) and Barkly (37.4%).

### 5.1.3 Community Development Program participation


The Community Development Program (CDP) is an employment program operated in remote areas by the Australian Government. It is aimed at improving employment opportunities through young people gaining employment experience as well as enabling young people to contribute to their communities through a range of flexible activities. Over 30,000 people in Australia are employed by CDP providers.<sup>(57)</sup>

**Proportion (%) of young people, aged 15-24, participating in the Community Development Program**



Data source and year: Australia and NT: ABS Census of Population and Housing. Greater Darwin and regions: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

The availability of CDP varies across the NT regions. At the time of the last census, in 2016, there were no CDP programs in the Greater Darwin area, while in East Arnhem 1 in 14 young people (7.6%), aged 15-24, work in a CDP activity.



**'It's changed my life. We can support our families and also we are doing something good for our community'**

## **BACK TO THE TOOLS**

**'My name is Clinton. I am a proud Arrernte man from Ltyentye Apurte and one of the founders of the Ltyentye Apurte Traditional Craft Centre. Before the Traditional Craft Centre I was working at the men's shed and Catholic Care. I didn't really know anything about doing craft and bush tools until my big brother, Dean, showed me some stuff. That's how I started and then I got the hang of it and the more I keep on doing it I get better and better.**

**We decided to make tools again, the grandsons got together and started making tools. It's pretty good I'm working for the Traditional Craft Centre otherwise I'd still be working over there (on Community Development Program). It's changed my life.**

**I think everybody looks up to us now we have jobs. We can support our families and also we are doing something good for our community.**

**They bring the school kids up to us once a week to learn from us to make woomeras and shields and boomerangs. I see the schoolkids changing because they are excited to come here and work with us. I heard my little nephew saying they 'can't wait to go up to the craft centre'.**

**Showing our work off makes me feel proud. Proud to be Aboriginal, proud to have culture, proud to have these skills, and to support this community. I'm proud of doing our traditional crafts'**

**Photo: Clinton at home in Ltyentye Apurte (Santa Teresa)**

## 5.2 Participation in the community

### 5.2.1 Young people volunteering

Volunteers make an extraordinary social and economic contribution to the Australian community, a value which has been estimated to be as much as \$290 billion a year.<sup>(58)</sup> The value is not only to the individuals and organisations that benefit directly from the service, but also the social and emotional benefit to the volunteers and to the wider community. ABS defines a volunteer as someone who performs unpaid work in the form of time, employment or skills through a group or organisation.<sup>(59)</sup>

Australian young people report they volunteer to help others, to develop social contacts, for personal satisfaction and as a form of staying active. Over half a million young Australians had engaged in volunteer work at the time of the last census.<sup>(59)</sup>

#### Proportion (%) of people, aged 15-24, who spent time doing voluntary work in the previous 12 months



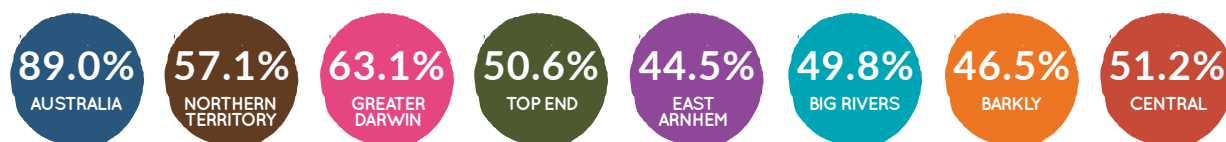
Data source and year: Australia: ABS: Census of Population and Housing, 2016. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: ABS Census of Population and Housing, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2016.

At the time of the census in 2016 about 1 in 5 young people (18.5%) aged 15-24, across Australia, reported undertaking voluntary work in the previous year. In the NT the proportion was lower with about 1 in 8 young people (12.6%) across the NT having volunteered. Across the regions there was some variation in the proportion of young people volunteering.

### 5.2.2 Young people enrolled to vote

Many young people in Australia are active and interested in social and political issues, and young voters are a powerful segment influencing Australian elections. In Australia, all citizens aged 18 years and older, are required to enrol and vote in elections, by-elections and referendums. Voting is a demonstration of active citizenship and is considered a responsibility of a citizen.

#### Proportion (%) of people, aged 18-24, enrolled to vote



Data source and year: Australia: Australian Electoral Commission, 30 June 2019. NT, Greater Darwin and regions: NT Electoral Commission, 28 June 2019; proportions calculated using ABS 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, Regions of Australia, prepared by PHIDU (special table), 2017. Note: Proportions are calculated using estimated resident populations, with no adjustment for residents not eligible to vote.

There is a substantial difference in the rates of enrolment by young adults between the NT and Australia. In the NT, about 6 in 10 young adults (57.1%) are enrolled to vote compared with 9 in 10 young adults (89.0%) across Australia. The enrolment rate varies across the NT from over 4 in 10 young adults in East Arnhem (44.5%) to almost two thirds in Greater Darwin (63.1%).

**Participation in sport and physical activities improves health and wellbeing. There is no data to adequately reflect sporting involvement in the Northern Territory and so, over the next two pages, a couple of stories are included to reflect participation in sport and physical activities, and the resulting positive outcomes for children and young people.**



'All levels of student abilities are catered for'

## BUILDING PATHWAYS FOR ATHLETIC PARTICIPATION

In the Barkly region, school students were competing in regional athletics competitions without any exposure to competitive sport outside of their school environment. A proposal was made in 2016 to develop an interschool sports program to build capacity and give students broader experience in the lead-up to regional competitions.

The interschool athletics carnival program was launched in the following year. It aimed to bring schools and their students together for athletics carnivals. The days socialised the students on a wider level, gave them greater exposure to competition and prepared them for regional events. 'The students from our school look forward to the annual Interschool Athletics Carnival. Beneficial student outcomes can be measured by student participation, physical fitness, socialisation and enjoyment', said Janet Purje from Murray Downs School.

The athletic carnivals are competitive sporting events with a strong social component. 'All levels of student abilities are catered for and when ribbons are awarded for either a place or participation, they are worn proudly and shared with parents and the community upon return home', Janet said. Community members attend and are also involved in the relays, tug of war, and egg and spoon race.

Since its inception, there has been an increase in schools and students participating, with all schools in the region apart from two participating in 2018.

Photo: A student competing at the Ampilatwatja interschool competition



**'This place is like my second home'**

## A SAFE PLACE TO GO

In Palmerston, teenagers had been asking to use the basketball courts at the Palmerston Recreation Centre after school. They wanted a place which was easy to get to, safe, and where they could be with their friends from other schools. Sport, particularly basketball, is a positive engagement tool and one that attracts a wide range of young people.

Responding to the requests from the community, in April 2017, the Youth Drop-In Sports program began. The model of delivering the program is based on the Loughborough University 10 factors of effective sport-based projects. The program runs five days a week, 50 weeks a year. It is a place-based solution to the perceived issue of youth crime and anti-social behaviour. Young people are involved in nearly all aspects of the program, from the planning to evaluation.

The program is also about building relationships between teenagers, the staff and volunteers, and sports. It engages with an average of 85 young people each night, over 100 on Friday nights and on average 70% are Aboriginal young people.

Clinton says, 'Before coming here, I really didn't have anywhere to hang out so used to just hang out at the shops. Coming here keeps me motivated and happy with something to look forward to each day. It keeps my mind positive'. And Kaylum, 'I like it here because I get to hang out with people into the same hobbies as me. I come because I had to do something positive and keep me active, so I stay away from the streets. This place is like my second home'.

Photo: Youth Drop-In Sports mentors Campbell and Mikaella at the afternoon program.



## Domain 6

# Positive sense of identity and culture

Identity and culture underpins all other outcomes for children and young people's wellbeing. ARACY's review of research found a 'positive sense of identity and culture' is fundamental to a child or young person's wellbeing.

Identity and culture are broad reaching themes and are challenging to define for any child or community, as they are very personal, are dependent on a child's awareness of their own identity, and change as a child progresses through life. Identity is influenced by family, country, language, health, feeling loved and safe, involvement in the community and having access to other external influences. Each of these factors both define and are defined by identity and culture.

In this domain, three outcomes of connection to culture, spirituality and cultural diversity, are explored through six indicators and three case studies:



Indicators Case studies

## 6.1 Connection to culture

### 6.1.1 Language spoken at home

The language a child or young person speaks has an important role in shaping their identity. The Northern Territory population is linguistically diverse. Nearly half of young people aged 15-24 (46.1%) speak a language other than English.<sup>(5)</sup>

In Aboriginal communities, language is a channel through which knowledge, heritage and belonging is passed down through generations.<sup>(60)</sup> Of the 13 most common Aboriginal languages spoken by children in Australia, five of the top six are spoken in the Northern Territory: Djambarrpuyngu (a Yolngu language from East Arnhem) with 4,264 speakers, Warlpiri (spoken in Central, Big Rivers and Barkly) with 2,276 speakers, Tiwi (spoken on the Tiwi Islands in the Top End) with 2,020 speakers, Murrinh-Patha (spoken at Wadeye in the Top End) with 1,966 speakers and Kunwinjku (spoken in west Arnhem Land in the Top End) with 1,702 speakers.<sup>(61)</sup>

The census question 'Language Spoken at Home' is designed to detect the main language, other than English, spoken at home.<sup>(62)</sup> Where English is recorded for this measure, it indicates only English is spoken at home.

**Proportion (%) of young people, aged 15-24, who speak English, Aboriginal languages and other languages at home**

	AUSTRALIA	NORTHERN TERRITORY	GREATER DARWIN	TOP END	EAST ARNHEM	BIG RIVERS	BARKLY	CENTRAL
English	72.3%	54.0%	69.6%	16.3%	12.6%	39.2%	42.3%	45.8%
Aboriginal languages	0.4%	21.7%	1.3%	75.2%	77.8%	43.1%	42.9%	27.4%
Other	Mandarin 4.3%	Filipino/ Tagalog 2.2%	Filipino/ Tagalog 3.3%			Filipino/ Tagalog 1.0%		Filipino/ Tagalog 1.8%
	Arabic 1.6%	Greek 1.2%	Greek 2.2%					
	Vietnamese 1.6%		Mandarin 1.2%					

Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016.  
Note: Languages spoken at home by less than 1% of the population are not included in this table.

There is a great variety of languages spoken at home by young people, including Filipino/Tagalog, Greek and Mandarin, however the prominent languages, second to English, are the Aboriginal languages. In the NT, over 1 in 5 young people aged 15-24 (21.7%) speak an Aboriginal language at home. In Australia, the proportion is less than 1 in 200 young people (0.4%).





**'Learning is supported through everyone connected to the child - teaching, talking testing all the time'**

## **NUTHANMARAM DJAMARRKULINY' MÄRRMA'KURR ROMGURR: GROWING UP CHILDREN IN TWO WORLDS**

**'We teach them at an early age, the connections, clans...traditions... paintings and totems'... For many Yolŋu families, developing a strong cultural identity is the highest priority in early childhood-through building children's understanding of their connections to people, place and other elements of the natural world. Learning is supported through everyone connected to the child-teaching, talking, testing all the time. While children are learning one word or concept, Yolŋu are also teaching deep, intricate connections: Our truth inside tells us that these connections are there from the beginning-children are surrounded by them and belong in them... These are the things that keep children healthy and strong. And this is our law that has always been there and all we have to do is exercise it and teach our children that deep meaning', said Associate Professor Elaine Lāwurrpa Maypilama, Project Leader.**

In response to community concerns that early childhood services need to better understand how Yolŋu grow up their children, Yolŋu and non-Aboriginal researchers worked together on a longitudinal study in Galiwin'ku. The findings illuminate a range of priorities and strengths in Yolŋu child development and parenting. In these rich and supportive learning environments, Yolŋu constantly monitor and assess their children's development, celebrate individual children's strengths and accommodate their different needs.

Photo: Mother and child, everyone will talk to the child... day and night



## 6.1.2 Aboriginal culture

Aboriginal spirituality and a connection to country help to guide a child's development, as well as teaching a child moral values of caring for others, responsibility and resilience.<sup>(63)</sup>

For a lot of Aboriginal people, culture is central to life and everything stems from it. It is inherent in everything; country, language, family, diet, custom, ceremony. It shapes ways of communicating and relating to others, connection to plants and animals, who you can marry and what you can eat, among many other things.

The National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey 2014-15 found that more than 4 in 5 Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory (81%), identify with clan, tribal or language group, which is greater than the 3 in 5 Aboriginal people across Australia (62%). The survey also found that a greater proportion of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory (83%) were involved in cultural events, ceremonies or organisations in the previous year, than all Aboriginal Australians throughout the country (62%).

Aboriginal art centres are important cultural and creative community spaces. There are approximately 28 remote art centres in the Northern Territory, spread throughout the regions.<sup>(64)</sup> An art centre offers a space for sharing of culture between members of the community and with visitors, helping to maintain traditions and knowledge.

Connection to Aboriginal culture is intricate, often stemming from practices in the family, in ceremonies and on country and as such, there is not a measure to adequately represent this connection.

## 6.1.3 Community education

Throughout the Northern Territory, a range of community initiatives provide the opportunity for children and young people to engage in activities which promote their culture and connect with the wider community. These range from large scale multicultural community events in major cities, to smaller community initiatives in rural and remote locations. In educational settings, language, culture, art, literature and sporting classes built into the curriculum also build and maintain strong links to cultural heritage and expression.

Cultural education more commonly occurs in the home and as such, it is not recorded in available datasets. The Register of Cultural Organisations does however record the number of not-for-profit organisations who support culture and the arts. Organisations are listed on the register when their purpose is to foster literature; community, visual and performing arts; music; television, video, radio and film; and arts or languages of Aboriginal people. Public art galleries, museums or libraries are not included.

### Number of organisations promoting culture and the arts



Data source and year: Register of Cultural Organisations – Australian Government, 2019.

Note: 1. Numbers reflect Registered Cultural Organisations (organisations that can receive tax deductible donations and which promote cultural arts and language diversity). 2. NT data includes one Territory wide organisation.

As at September 2019, of the 1,799 organisations promoting culture and the arts funded by the Australian Government, 42 were based in the NT. Many of these organisations, whilst based in Greater Darwin serviced the NT more broadly.





**'When we take kids out bush they are learning as soon as we get there'**

## TIME ON COUNTRY

'Kurdu kurdu (kids) don't know about their culture anymore, we need to teach them. Nyurru wiyi (long time ago) kids used to live on the country but now days they only got country visit. That's why it's really important for them to learn on country visit from all the elders. We can teach them everything about culture, hunting, dancing, bush tucker and the old people'. (Yuendumu elder)

At Yuendumu School, a country visit program is embedded into the annual school calendar and is an essential component of the school's bilingual curriculum. It was started with support from the Warlpiri Education and Training Trust (WETT) in 2006. Since then, an annual week-long country visit has been a significant community event. The visits involve the whole school population (up to

250 students) who are joined by parents, family members and elders over two or three camps. It is a time of learning and sharing between the generations. The highlight of the camp is 'painting up' where students learn their design, songs and dances from community elders. 'We went to Jurlpungu for country visit and we went hunting for kangaroo and had big fun in the bush. We ate the kangaroo we got. It was so tasty', a child shared.

A young Warlpiri educator shared, 'When we take kids out bush they are learning as soon as we get there. They all find something and we teachers have to explain it to them: when, where, what. But we learn a lot from kids too when we are out; they teach us. We need to make sure we go with old people, learn a lot more from them, deeper'.

Photo: Some of the Yuendumu group painted up at a country visit

## 6.2 Spirituality

Having a positive sense of identity and culture includes considering an individual's spirituality. Modern spirituality has evolved from the traditional understanding of holding a religious belief. Today, it encompasses many shared and individual practises; most of which consider development of a sense of peace and purpose. Spirituality can be different for each person and may involve an appreciation for a sacred or higher being or supernatural dimension, be centred around nature and the environment, or personal and inner truth and growth. A sense of spiritual growth and understanding can play an important role in a child's social and moral wellbeing, as well as general cultural understanding and acceptance.

### 6.2.1 Aboriginal spirituality

Aboriginal spirituality is a way of life and can be part of everything. It is often imparted to Aboriginal children at a young age and helps them to identify who they are, their relationship to the land, the environment, animals and plants, spirits, their community and their family. Central to Aboriginal spirituality is the Dreaming, an abstract, holistic structure which encompasses spiritual and physical dimensions of Aboriginal culture, in the past, present and future.<sup>(65)</sup> Importantly, the Dreaming is tightly linked to country, and therefore connection to country plays a crucial role in an Aboriginal child and young person's identity and culture.

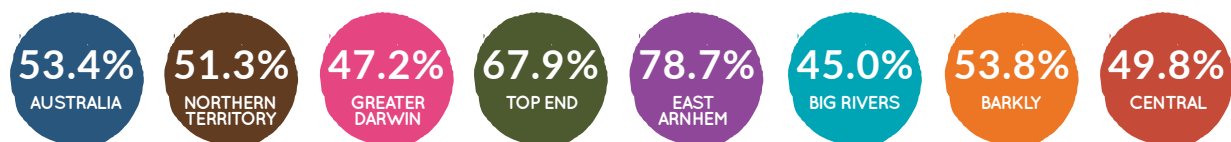
While this is an important indicator of wellbeing for Aboriginal children and young people, we do not have a quantitative measure of spirituality for young Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. The learning and development in connection with the Dreaming occurs with family, elders and community, often during times of being on country.

### 6.2.2 Religions

Throughout a child's development, formal religious or cultural settings can be places where children are taught to socialise beyond their family or formal schooling, and are places of emotional and spiritual support where children are taught different resilience practices. Family and community religion has a strong influence on young children.<sup>(66)</sup>

The most common religions with which Northern Territory residents identify are Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. Hinduism and Sikhism are the fastest growing religions in the Northern Territory<sup>(5)</sup> while traditional Christian religions are declining. Across Australia, the proportion of people who report no religion has been steadily increasing, and between 2011 and 2016 an additional 2.2 million people reported as having no religion.<sup>(67)</sup>

#### Proportion (%) of population, aged 15-24, identifying with a religion



Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016.

Note: For the purposes of this report religion does not include secular or other spiritual beliefs.

In 2016 in the NT, there were slightly fewer young people who identified with a religion (51.3%) than for Australia (53.4%). Across the NT, the proportion of young people identifying with a religion ranges from 45% in Big Rivers to 78.7% in East Arnhem.



## 6.3 Cultural diversity

Australia and the Northern Territory are made up of diverse cultural communities. The culture of a child or individual not only influences how they see the world and their identity but also through practices and celebrations impact how other children grow up understanding and accepting the world. Accepting other cultures is central to social cohesion.<sup>(68)</sup>

Multiculturalism has different definitions, but most commonly it considers the different places people are born, their ancestry, their religion and languages they speak. National research has found Australians not only support multiculturalism, but also think it is good for the country. The Scanlon Foundation has found, through ongoing surveys since 2013, that Australians are increasingly agreeing 'multiculturalism is good for Australia'.<sup>(69)</sup> From the same surveys, the Scanlon Foundation reported young people aged 18-24 have the greatest proportion of the population agreeing or strongly agreeing to the benefit of multiculturalism in Australia.<sup>(69)</sup>

Multiculturalism is supported in the Territory through the Northern Territory Multicultural Participation Framework, which encourages multicultural celebrations, support for migration and settling in, and support for multicultural community facilities.<sup>(70)</sup>

### 6.3.1 Overseas-born

Australia has a large population of individuals born overseas, with 7.3 million migrants in 2018.<sup>(71)</sup> Those aged 30-34 have the highest proportion of overseas-born, and are at an age when they may have young families. The Northern Territory has the second lowest proportion of the population born overseas (20%) among all Australian states and territories.<sup>(5)</sup>

When understanding cultural diversity, it is important to consider the country of birth of children and young people as well as the country of birth of their parents.

#### Proportion (%) of population, aged 0-24, born overseas



Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016.

In the NT about 1 in 10 children and young people were born overseas (10.1%), which is less than for Australia (13.3%). There was variation across the NT with greater proportions of young people in Greater Darwin (14.1%) and Central (9.8%) being born overseas.

#### Proportion (%) of Australian born population, aged 0-24, who have both parents born overseas



Data source and year: ABS Housing and Population Census, 2016.

About 1 in 6 NT children and young people (15.8%) had both parents born overseas. Across the NT, children and young people in Greater Darwin (22.4%) and Central (14.2%) were much more likely to have both parents born overseas.

**‘We are all interconnected – paying respect to ancestors is very important for me’**



## **PAYING RESPECT TO ANCESTORS**

**‘My name is Leila and I am a Cantonese Toi Sun woman. There are different traditions in Chinese cultures; this is the story for me and my family.**

**We believe we are part of our ancestry. We carry to the next generation. It is important to pay respect. There is an obligation in this as we are the link from the ancestors to future generations.**

**After a child is born, we have a baby blessing at home. People who believe in ancestor worshipping do this. It is done at home because we don’t want to take the baby to the temple in case of bad spirits.**

**There is a ceremony to bless the baby. We do this for two reasons. Firstly, to inform the ancestors of the birth of the child. And secondly, to ask the ancestors to bless the child with a peaceful and healthy life.**

**We are all interconnected - paying respect to ancestors is very important to me’**

**Photo: Leila with her daughter Melanie (holding Joseph, two years), granddaughters Tiffany (on the left, with Bruno, 18 months) and Jessica (on the right, with Xander, five months)**



# Where to from here

There are many stories within these pages. For many of our children and young people, their lives are flourishing, they are loved and healthy, and have opportunities to learn and participate. However, the data also highlight a distressing story, as a disproportionate number of our children and young people face significant challenges. These challenges commonly begin in their early years, and as they progress through life, they continue to fall behind.

It is critical that we address the many challenges influencing the wellbeing of our children and young people. We all have a role to play in improving the outcomes for our children and young people. It requires a collaborative effort across the whole community, not just a role for government. Working together is essential and there are positive examples of this in many communities.

This is the first in a series of publications. A commitment has been made by the Northern Territory Government, to ensure in 2021, we reflect on our journey and review our collective progress across the measures and case studies in this Story, in the spirit of continuous improvement and progress. There are some areas where the data is not available to tell the story. Gaps in data availability are examined in Appendix I.

The Northern Territory Government is in the process of establishing Regional Children and Families Committees to improve local outcomes for children and families through increased collaboration and more effective programs and services. The Story, which has been structured by region, will provide a reference point to inform and support their work across the community.



Figure 4: The process toward the next Story

This is a rich and evolving resource for our community. It is designed to be useful and to be widely used. Upon its launch in 2019, there is an anticipated time for engagement and evaluation in the lead-up to the 2021 Story. It is important we continue to seek relevant local indicators for the wellbeing of children and young people that can guide services and measure progress.



## APPENDIX I – IDENTIFIED DATA GAPS

In the development of the Story, there were a number of measures identified where no data was available. In some cases, there was data available for the Northern Territory, but not at regional level. This is a summary of the identified data gaps.

Measure	Method of data collection/report elsewhere	Territory level data available
<i>Loved and safe</i>		
School children reporting they are bullied	Student health and wellbeing survey/Victoria State of the Children Report	
Number of young people in detention	NT Government Territory Families data/ reported on NT Government Territory Families website	Yes
Children and young people reporting sexual related assault/inappropriate behaviour at place of education	Survey/not reported elsewhere currently	
Rates of offence of acts intended to cause injury for children and young people	Australian Bureau of Statistics, Recorded Crime/ ARACY Report Card 2018	
<i>Having material basics</i>		
Mobile phone use by children and young people	Survey or telecommunications provider data/ not reported elsewhere currently	
<i>Healthy</i>		
Children who do not feel positive about their future	Face-to-face interviews and surveys/ARACY Report Card 2018	
Children meeting minimum recommended consumption of fruit	Child health and wellbeing survey/ARACY, The State of Victoria's Children Report and others	*
Children meeting minimum recommended consumption of vegetables	Child health and wellbeing survey/ARACY, The State of Victoria's Children Report and others	*
Young people reporting mental illness	Hospital morbidity data collection and mental health information system/WA Atlas	
School aged children reporting having had sex	Student health and wellbeing survey/The State of Victoria's Children Report	
School aged children reporting having protected sex	Student health and wellbeing survey/The State of Victoria's Children Report	
Number of diagnosis of chronic conditions in children	Hospital morbidity data collection and state cancer registry/WA Child Development Atlas	Yes
Young people who smoke daily	National Drug Strategy Household Survey/ ARACY Report Card 2018/The State of Victoria's Children Report	*
Young people consuming alcohol at risky levels	National Drug Strategy Household Survey/ ARACY Report Card 2018/The State of Victoria's Children Report	*
Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) rate among young people aged 15-24	NT Department of Health data/not reported elsewhere currently	



Measure	Method of data collection/report elsewhere	Territory level data available
<i>Learning</i>		
Children who report feeling connected to their school	Student attitudes to school survey/The State of Murrindindi's Children 2016 and The State of Great Shepparton's Children 2014	
<i>Participating</i>		
Children and young people who have participated in sport or recreational physical activity in past year	Australian Bureau of Statistics General Social Survey/ARACY Report Card 2018	*
Young people who have participated in social groups in past year	Australian Bureau of Statistics General Social Survey/ARACY Report Card 2018	*
Children and young people who feel able to have a say within the community on important issues all or most of the time	Survey/The State of Great Shepparton's Children 2014 and ARACY Report Card 2018	
Youth underemployment	Australian Bureau of Statistics Census and Survey/not reported elsewhere currently	
<i>Positive sense of identity and culture</i>		
Children and young people who report discrimination as being a personal concern	Survey (Mission Australia's National Survey of Young Australians)/ARACY Report Card 2018	
Children and young people reporting body image is an issue of personal concern	Survey (Mission Australia's National Survey of Young Australians)/ARACY Report Card 2018	
Children and young people who identify as LGBTQI and feel good about identifying as LGBTQI	Survey and focus groups (Growing up Queer)/ARACY Report Card 2018	
Children and young people who report being tolerant of society being comprised of different cultures	Australian Bureau of Statistics General Social Survey/ARACY Report Card 2018	*
Children and young people involved in at least one organised cultural activity in past year	Australian Bureau of Statistics National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey/ARACY Report Card 2018	*
Community acceptance of diverse cultures	Australian Bureau of Statistics General Social Survey/Child Friendly Alice Community Profile 2019 and The State of Murrindindi's Children 2016	*

\* Some survey data is reported at NT level, but is not representative of all NT children.

## APPENDIX II – EDITORIAL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

### **Heather D'Antoine (Bardi woman)**

Associate Director, Aboriginal Programs;  
Division Leader, Education and Research Support,  
Menzies School of Health Research

### **Peter Pangquee (Marrathiyiel and Antakirinja Matu-Yankunytjatjara man)**

Community member

### **Mick Adams (Yadhigana/Wuthathi and Gurindji man)**

Senior Research Fellow, Australian Indigenous HealthInfoNet,  
Edith Cowan University

### **Ashlee Coleman**

Youth Worker, YMCA – Palmerston Youth Space

### **Christine Fejo-King (Larrakia and Warungu woman)**

Director Child and Family Centres, Reform Management Office

### **John Guenther**

Research Leader, Education and Training, Batchelor Institute

### **Tanja Hirvonen (Jaru and Bunuba woman)**

Adjunct Lecturer, Flinders University

### **Craig Kelly**

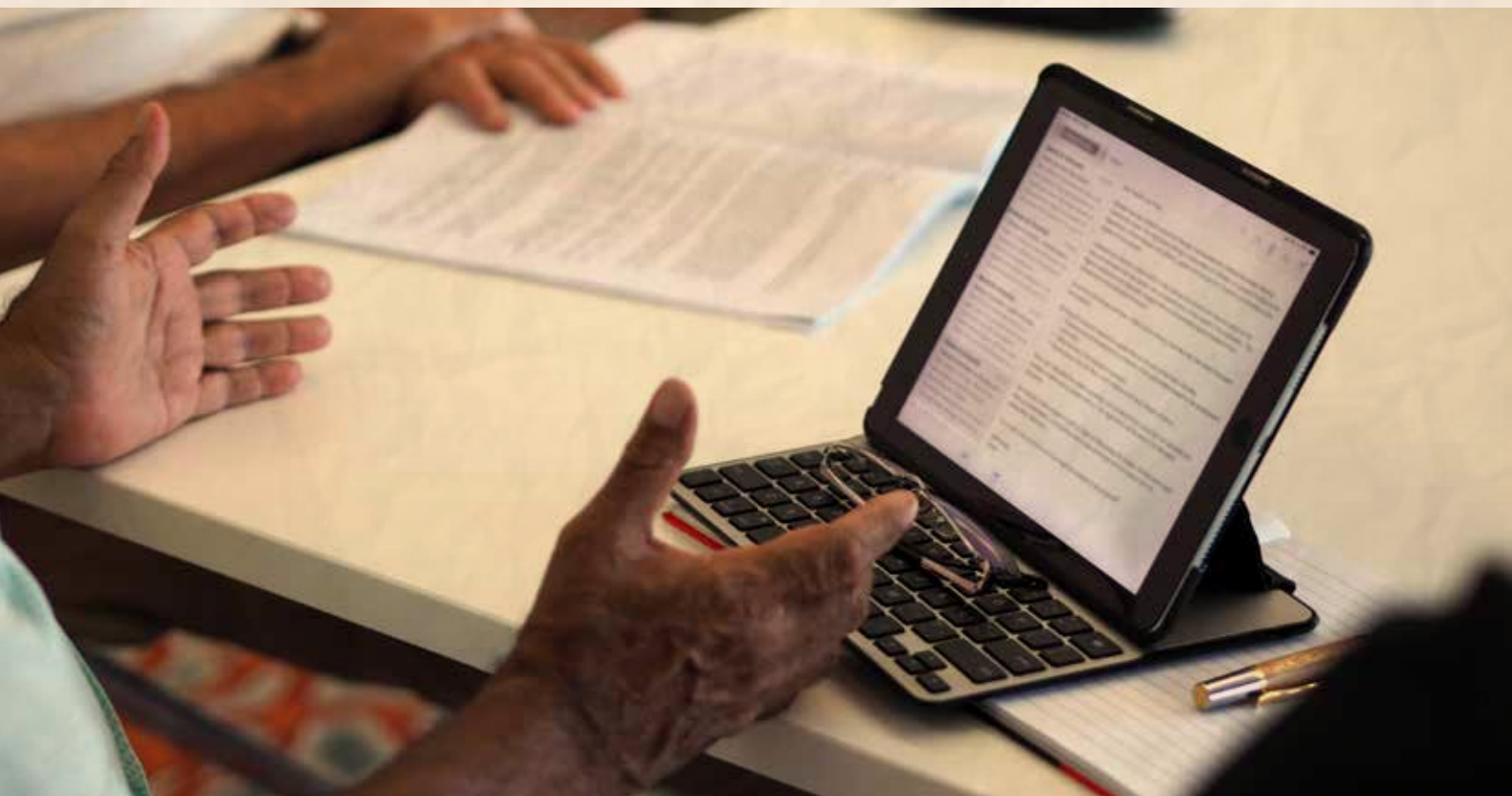
Regional Executive Director, Department of Chief Minister

### **Jen Lorains**

Director, Research and Evaluation, Children's Ground

### **Sven Silburn**

Honorary Research Associate, Centre for Child Development  
and Education, Menzies School of Health Research



## GLOSSARY

Aboriginal people	Aboriginal people, including Torres Strait Islanders and also to mean First Nations peoples of Australia
Child/children	Usually 0-9 years of age, statistically and legally aged 0-17
Children and young people	Children and young people aged 0-24
Community	Inclusive of all forms of community: local community, schools, sporting clubs, arts and music clubs, faith communities and others
Domain	An essential outcome area of wellbeing which encompasses indicators related to a central subject. Also known as a theme or outcome
Indicator	A broad and measurable concept that can indicate change
Family	Related families as well as caregivers, guardians, kinship carers, foster or adoptive families and any other arrangements where children are in the official care of adults
Measure	A specific and quantifiable variable which addresses an indicator
Outcome	A goal or aspiration for the wellbeing of children and young people
Youth/young people	Young people aged 10-17
Young adults/people	Young adults aged 18-24

### Acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
AEDC	Australian Early Development Census
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
CDP	Community Development Program
CFCA	Child Friendly Community Australia
FaFT	Families as First Teachers
FASD	Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder
LGBTQI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Intersex
MSI	Multiple Strength Indicator
NAIDOC	National Aboriginal and Islander Day of Celebration
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy
NT	Northern Territory
NTCET	Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training
PHIDU	Public Health Information Development Unit
SEIFA	Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas
WHO	World Health Organisation

### Notes on measures

na	Data not available
nr	Data not reportable (due to small numbers)

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