

# Northern Territory Youth Strategy

2023–2033



TERRITORY FAMILIES,  
HOUSING AND  
COMMUNITIES

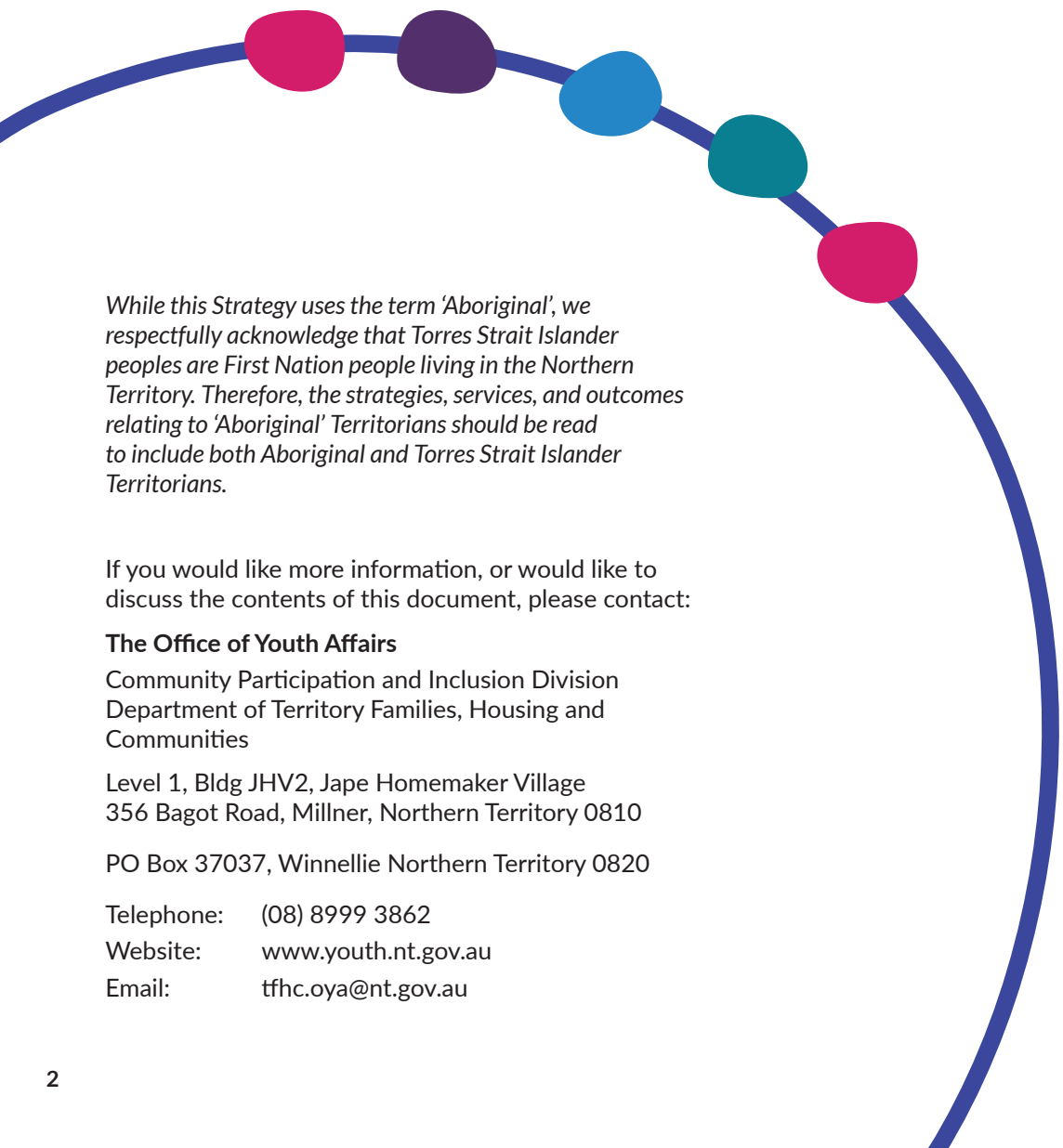


# Acknowledgement of Country

The Northern Territory (NT) Government proudly acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout the Northern Territory, and recognises their continuing connection to their lands, waters and communities. We pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people of this country and to Elders both past and present who watch over us and guide the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

We acknowledge and celebrate their wisdom, their stories, the strength of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities and the kinship, language, culture, knowledge and practices that have sustained them for generations.

We particularly acknowledge all Aboriginal young people as our emerging leaders, along with their families, and their carers.



*While this Strategy uses the term 'Aboriginal', we respectfully acknowledge that Torres Strait Islander peoples are First Nation people living in the Northern Territory. Therefore, the strategies, services, and outcomes relating to 'Aboriginal' Territorians should be read to include both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Territorians.*

If you would like more information, or would like to discuss the contents of this document, please contact:

## **The Office of Youth Affairs**

Community Participation and Inclusion Division  
Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities

Level 1, Bldg JHV2, Jape Homemaker Village  
356 Bagot Road, Millner, Northern Territory 0810

PO Box 37037, Winnellie Northern Territory 0820

Telephone: (08) 8999 3862

Website: [www.youth.nt.gov.au](http://www.youth.nt.gov.au)

Email: [tfhc.oya@nt.gov.au](mailto:tfhc.oya@nt.gov.au)

# Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	2
Minister's Foreword	4
Project Reference Group's Foreword	5
Overview	6
What we know	8
Roadmap	10
What you told us	12
Strategic alignment	14
Strategy outcomes and priorities	15
Domain 1: Connected to culture and community	16
Domain 2: Financially secure and have material basics	18
Domain 3: Able to learn, contribute and achieve	20
Domain 4: Cared for, valued and safe	22
Domain 5: Able to live a healthy life	24
Domain 6: Appropriate and secure housing	26
Domain 7: A natural and built environment that supports a high quality of life	28
Accountability	30
References and acknowledgments	31

# Minister's Foreword

It is with great pleasure, pride and optimism that I present the 10-year Northern Territory Youth Strategy 2023-2033 (the Strategy). As the Minister for Youth, I am committed to ensuring young people across the Territory have the support and resources they need to thrive. The Strategy is a reflection of that commitment, and it outlines our government's vision for young Territorians, families and communities to live in a Northern Territory where young people lead enjoyable lives, are empowered to achieve their full potential and are socially connected and positive participants in their community.

With a focus on prevention and early intervention, the Strategy offers a whole-of-government approach to acknowledge the positive contribution of young Territorians while recognising the dedicated services, investment and policies needed across government and non-government sector to enhance the lives of young people in the Territory.

The Northern Territory is a unique and diverse place, and our young people are no exception. They come from all walks of life, and they have different experiences, challenges and aspirations. The Strategy recognises this diversity and provides a framework for supporting young people in a way that is inclusive, equitable and responsive to their needs.

Unique approaches are required to positively address crucial life stages and challenges young Territorians transition through and experience. The Northern Territory (NT) Government will continue to be agile and proactive when leading the identification of programs, services, investment and infrastructure that can respond effectively to issues affecting young Territorians.

I recognise that achieving improved outcomes for young people relies on a resourced, skilled, culturally safe and equipped youth sector. We will prioritise integration and optimise coherence and coordination, be aspirational and strive for greater outcomes for young Territorians. Our policies, investment and decisions will continue to reflect that.

The Strategy has been developed in consultation with young people and the youth sector. It is a result of their input, feedback, and contributions. I would like to express my gratitude to everyone who has been involved in this process, and I am confident this strategy will make a positive difference in the lives of young people across the Territory. In particular, I thank the Project Reference Group comprised of young leaders from across the Territory who guided

the development of the Strategy, and are committed to have their say on the things that matter to them, and contribute to making their communities a better place.

I thank all the young people of the Northern Territory for their resilience, courage, and creativity. I acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of young Territorians regardless of their age, geographic location, cultural background, religion, gender and identity. You are the present and the future of our Territory, and we are committed to supporting you every step of the way.

The NT Government will continue to reflect its commitment to empower young Territorians and give them the tools and skills to be the drivers of their future. We are committed to ensuring that young people in the Northern Territory are safe, healthy and happy, and given the opportunity to thrive. We will continue to work with young people, families, and the youth sector to achieve that.

**The Hon Lauren Moss MLA**  
Minister for Youth  
Northern Territory Government



# Project Reference Group's Foreword

On behalf of the Project Reference Group (PRG), we are proud to present the Northern Territory Youth Strategy (the Strategy). Our voices and commitment to represent young Territorians will act as the foundation for the Strategy and its action plans to guide and strengthen NT Government policy involving youth affairs.

To ensure the voice of young Territorians has been heard, membership of the PRG includes young leaders, regional youth advisory group's representatives, the Youth Round Table, the NT Council of Social Service (NTCOSS) and the NT Government. We are united through a joint vision and commitment to ensuring the dignity, health and prosperity of young Territorians. We support the Strategy's vision to have a Northern Territory where young people lead enjoyable lives, are empowered to achieve their full potential, are socially connected and positive participants in their community.

The PRG is proud to have played an essential part in the development of the Strategy. We acknowledge and thank the hundreds of individuals who have dedicated themselves to ensuring the quality and depth of this document. This includes the extensive efforts of several local action groups and stakeholder networks involved in developing past Regional Youth Action Plans, consultations, and policies that guided the Strategy. These groups' stakeholder consultations and the focus of our 'Have Your Say' online survey and youth-friendly consultation tool, have allowed the Strategy to address the distinct regional concerns for young people across the Territory.

It was amazing to observe that the Strategy was discussed widely with young people ensuring that everyone had a say. Having the opportunity to guide the development of this important document shows that there is trust for better outcomes for us.

The PRG hopes the Strategy will ensure a clear direction for progress in elevating the lives of young people in the Northern Territory and commits not only the NT Government, but all Territorians to further support our community.

**Mr Alexander Storey and Mr Jordon Humphreys**  
Co-Chairs, Project Reference Group,  
NT Youth Strategy



# Overview

The NT Government is committed to ensuring young people in the Northern Territory (NT) are safe, healthy and happy, and given the opportunity to thrive. We aim to empower young Territorians and give them the tools and skills to be the driver of their future. The Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (the Department) is leading the identification of programs, services, and infrastructure that can respond effectively to issues affecting young people in the Territory.

The NT Youth Strategy 2023-2033 (the Strategy) delivers a whole of government approach to articulate both the positive contribution and recognition of young people aged 12-25 years, while also acknowledging that dedicated services and policy focus is required across Government and the non-government sector. The term “young Territorian” used throughout the Strategy includes all young people living in the NT.

The Strategy has been developed to provide an overarching framework for the design and delivery of a range of NT strategies, services and approaches for improving options and opportunities for young people. The Strategy aims to guide and strengthen NT Government investment and effort in program and service responses in the area of youth. There is extensive work being undertaken and many separate services, programs, policies and related strategies, but no overarching mechanism to strengthen governance, coordination and integration, until now.

The Strategy is not intended to provide a list of all youth issues or Government youth-related programs and services. However, it aims to articulate the NT Government’s commitment to support and develop youth policy and program development. The Strategy is also enhanced and complemented by more targeted strategies and plans developed to address a broad range of complex issues facing young Territorians, including those at risk, experiencing vulnerability or involved in the criminal justice system.

The document is strategically aligned to the Northern Territory Government’s 10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the Northern Territory 2023-2033 (the Generational Strategy), the NT Social Outcomes Framework, the Education Engagement Strategy 2022-2031 (Education Engagement Strategy), the Department’s Strategic Plan 2021-2025 and Action Plan 2022-2023 and the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth (ARACY) Nest Model.

Young Territorians, youth workers, advocates, and carers have played a key role in the development of this Strategy, sharing their ideas, issues and concerns. The views of young people and the youth sector have formed the development of the vision, domains and priorities.

## Vision

A Northern Territory where young people lead enjoyable lives, are empowered to achieve their full potential, are socially connected, and positive participants in their community.

## Principles

The Strategy is guided by the following principles, including those that align with the United Nations Youth Strategy:

- Deliver youth-led and evidence-based initiatives to strengthen safe and supportive family and community connections
- Prioritise integration and optimise coherence and coordination, be aspirational and strive for greater outcomes for young Territorians
- Recognise the unique approaches required to positively address crucial life stages and challenges that young Territorians transition through and experience
- Acknowledge and reflect the diversity of young people in the Territory including age range, geographic location, cultural background, religion, gender and identity
- Recognise that achieving improved outcomes for young people relies on a resourced, skilled, culturally safe and equipped youth sector.

## Principles from the United Nations Youth Strategy

- Uphold and respect human rights
- Engagement, Participation and Advocacy - Amplify youth voices
- Informed and healthy Foundations - Support young people’s greater access to quality education and health services
- Economic Empowerment through Decent Work - Support young people’s greater access to decent work and productive employment
- Youth and Human Rights – Protect and promote the rights of young people and support their civic and political engagement
- Peace and Resilience Building – Support young people as catalysts for Peace and Security & Humanitarian Action.

## Domains

The domain areas list all those parts of our lives that need to work to have a good life.

The seven intrinsically linked domains are based on the Social Outcomes Framework and aim for young Territorians to:

1. Be connected to culture and community
2. Be financially secure and have material basics
3. Be able to learn, contribute and achieve
4. Be cared for, valued and safe
5. Be able to live a healthy life
6. Have appropriate and secure housing
7. Have a natural and built environment that supports a high quality of life.



# What we know



In 2021, there were approximately 30,000 young people aged 15-24 in the NT which is about 13% of the NT population.<sup>1</sup>



The NT has a young population with about 1 in 3 people aged 0-24. 1 of these 3 young people are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, and more than 4 in 10, 15-24 year olds, are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.<sup>2</sup>



NT Government school student population includes 14,533 Aboriginal students, and 49% of all students have a language background other than English.<sup>3</sup>



In 2022, the school attendance rate in Term 4 across the NT was 72.7%<sup>4</sup> and 1,622 young Territorians completed their Northern Territory Certificate of Education and Training including 277 Aboriginal students.<sup>5</sup>



More than half of all the National Disability Scheme Insurance (NDIS) recipients in the NT are young people aged 24 years or younger.<sup>6</sup>



In 2021, more than 3000 young Territorians engaged in volunteering.<sup>7</sup>



In Australia more than 8 in 10 young adults (84.5%) are enrolled to vote, while in the Northern Territory the proportion is more than 5 in 10 young adults (54.4%).<sup>8</sup>



Across the Northern Territory there is a substantial proportion of both young men (46.3%) and young women (24.5%) who are current smokers.<sup>9</sup>



The proportion of children and young people aged 0-24, who are homeless in the NT is 8.2% in comparison to 0.6% across Australia.<sup>10</sup>



In 2019, almost 6 in 100 births (5.9%) in the Northern Territory were to women aged under 20. This is three times more than the proportion for Australia (2%).<sup>11</sup>



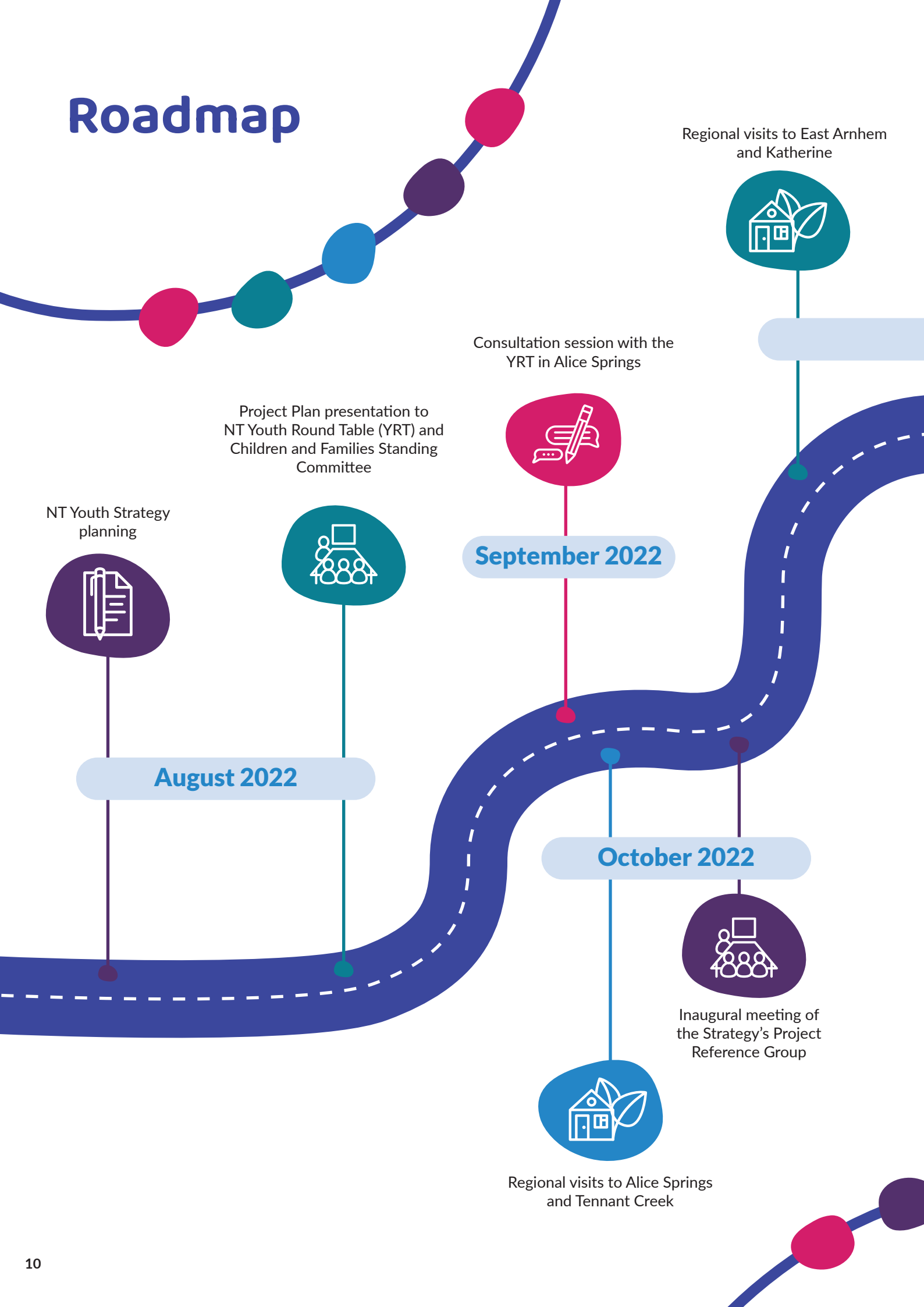
In 2021, almost 98% of children in youth detention and 90% of children in out-of-home care were Aboriginal.<sup>12</sup>





Photo supplied by Tangentyere Council

# Roadmap



Regional visits to East Arnhem and Katherine



Consultation session with the YRT in Alice Springs



September 2022

Project Plan presentation to NT Youth Round Table (YRT) and Children and Families Standing Committee



NT Youth Strategy planning



August 2022

October 2022

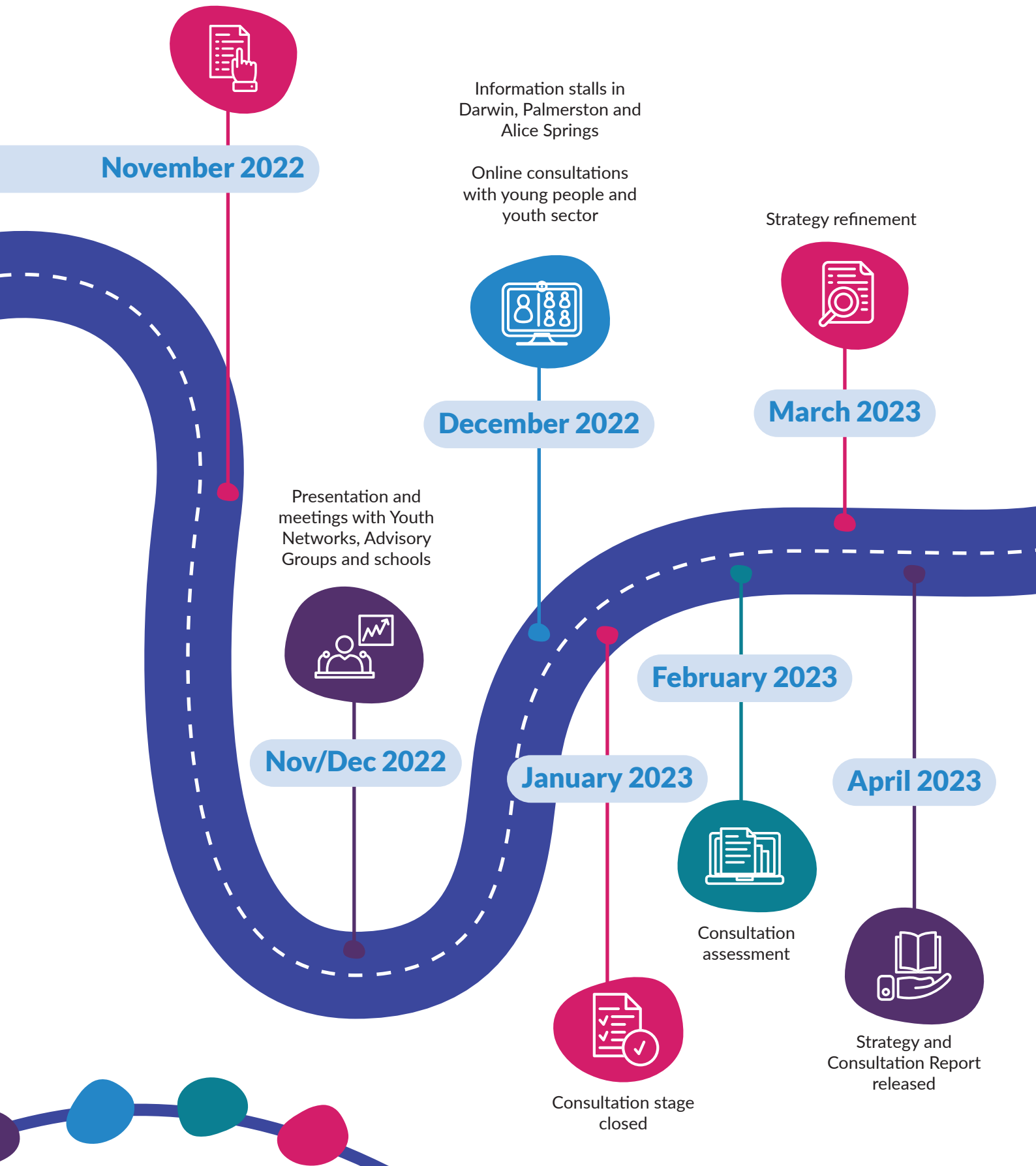


Inaugural meeting of the Strategy's Project Reference Group



Regional visits to Alice Springs and Tennant Creek

Release of the **Draft NT Youth Strategy**, Discussion Paper and youth-friendly consultation tools



# What you told us

To capture the voice of young Territorians, the community, government and non-government organisations (NGOs) and inform the Strategy, Territory-wide consultations were undertaken with young people, the community, the NT Government and sector from September 2022 to January 2023. Particular attention was given to ensure that the voices of young Territorians were captured during the consultation period, and that we drew from the extensive consultations that have recently occurred with young people, their families and the sector.

In addition to targeted consultations, the Strategy is informed by relevant NT Government strategies, frameworks and plans including the 10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the NT 2023 - 2033 (Generational Strategy), Education Engagement Strategy 2022-2031, Northern Territory Social Outcomes Framework, Regional Youth Action Plans, Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities Action Plan 2022-23 and Strategic Plan 2021-25.

## Engagement tactics



Regional visits



Face-to-face meetings



Information stalls



Presentations



Assessment of relevant strategies, plans, reports and policies



Release of a Draft Strategy and Discussion Paper



Online surveys



Written submissions



Social media engagement



Youth-friendly consultation tool

## We engaged with:



200+ young Territorians



50+ stakeholders



Project Reference Group



NT Youth Round Table



Youth Advisory Groups



Youth Local Action Groups



Government agencies

A consultation report including further details, findings and the list of stakeholders we engaged with during the consultation process has been released on the Have Your Say online platform.

## Summary of key topics and themes arising from consultations, submissions and other policy documents

### Valuing young people

Young people:

- value being included and having a voice on the decisions that affect them
- see a need to challenge negative stereotypes and promote and celebrate positive representation and leadership of young people
- want more opportunities to have a voice and this could be through the introduction of a Youth Parliament program, formalised youth advisory groups, and forums across the Territory.

### Health, mental health and wellbeing

Young people:

- want to know more about the health, mental health and wellbeing programs and services available to them
- seek easy access to specialist services, including in schools, that support holistic needs of students' education and wellbeing
- seek acknowledgement of intergenerational impacts of trauma faced by young people and need for healing
- are concerned about the use of drugs and alcohol.

## Housing

- Availability of affordable and appropriate housing options for young people was raised in all submissions. Even though housing issues are complex, short and long term housing has been identified as critical for young people
- Improve and uplift standards of living for young people by improving service delivery in transitional periods of young people's lives.

## Youth-friendly spaces and access to services

Young people:

- need for more safe spaces for young people such as drop-in centres, improvements in safety and more fun activities
- seek improved ways to connect to information about the support, programs and services available for young people
- indicated that some of the challenging things about being a young person in the Territory are boredom and lack of activities/entertainment
- want for increased participation and opportunities in high level sports
- want for more, and access to, sporting courts such as a basketball court with covers in high public populated areas.

## Education, training and pathways after school

Young people:

- indicated that one of the challenging things about being a young person in the Territory is access to quality education
- want more opportunities for education, career and jobs could improve their lives in the Territory
- seek improved access to training, education, positive learning environments and transition pathways during and after school
- feel that partnering with parents and communities is important in children and young people's education and engagement
- see a need for post-school study and career options, especially for regional and remote young people.

## Role models and mentors

- Recognise the importance of positive role models and mentors and programs which will help young people to be role models, mentors and Elders.

## Connection to family, community and culture

Young people:

- are empowered to be engaged, connected, have positive relationships with community and culture, and support local community-led initiatives
- are given the opportunity to be heard and connected to their culture
- identified having a functional family, friends, close knit community, freedom and positive experience with school as the good things in their life
- are seeking more support for young people who come from troubled families.

## Environment and climate change

- Climate change has been recognised as an emerging issue as young people have voiced to protect the natural wilderness and minimise the impact of development in the Territory
- Young people mentioned the Territory lifestyle (such as going fishing, camping, the environment and nature), and diversity of the Territory as the best things for young people.

## Community Safety

- Safety was highlighted by young people as something that could improve their lives; suggesting crime and anti-social behaviour are some of the most challenging things about being a young person in the Territory.

## Youth Justice

- Noted that a disproportionate number of young Territorians in out of home care are in contact with police and corrections
- There is a call for better rehabilitation programs for drugs and alcohol and youth diversion.

## Coordination and integration

- Consistent comments regarding importance of collaborative partnerships, cross-agency cooperation and integrated services within and between government and non-government sectors.

## Life skills and financial security

- Seek reforms in relation to adult guardianship, social security, welfare and financials are also recognised with a need for change
- Young people need further support around navigating the legal system and private rental market in a way that is tailor made for them, their knowledge-base and the unique challenges they face.

## Disability

- Tailored help and support for young people with disability.

# Strategic alignment

The NT Youth Strategy aligns with and reinforces commitments made for young people in the Northern Territory. It focuses on the needs of young Territorians and enhances other policies, strategies and frameworks that intersect with their lives.

The Strategy principles have been guided by both the United Nations Youth Strategy (*2030 Working With and For Young People*) and the NT Social Outcomes Framework. Other national and NT reforms also interrelate with the Strategy, and so, this Strategy will be implemented in a collaborative and inclusive way by putting the needs of young Territorians at the centre.

## Northern Territory Government

- Closing the Gap – Northern Territory Implementation Plan
- NT Social Outcomes Framework
- 10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the NT (*collaboration with the Australian Government and the community sector*)
- Regional Youth Action Plans
- NT Aboriginal Justice Agreement
- Education NT Strategy 2021-2025
- Education Engagement Strategy 2022-2031
- NT Child and Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan 2018–2028
- Story of our Children and Young People
- Territory Business Innovation Strategy
- Mental Health Strategic Plan
- Suicide Prevention Strategy
- Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities Strategic Plan and Action Plans
- NT Disability Strategy
- NT Gender Equality Action Plan 2022 - 2025
- Domestic Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework
- Multicultural Policy for the Northern Territory
- NT Sport and Active Recreation Strategic Plan 2021-2025
- NT Housing Strategy 2020-2025
- NT Homelessness Strategy 2018-2023
- NT Youth Detention Centres Model of Care

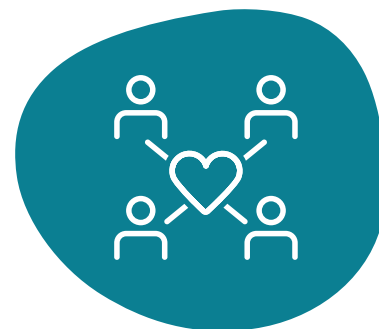
## External to Northern Territory Government

- Local Government Youth Plans
- Australia's Youth Policy Framework
- NTCOSS Young Territorians Report 2021
- UN Youth Strategy

# Strategy Outcomes and Priorities



# Domain 1: Connected to culture and community



## Young Territorians:

- A. diversity and range of needs are valued, respected and included
- B. voices are heard, help shape their community and young people are respected members of the community
- C. are engaged with and participate in community activities
- D. have pride in their identity and culture.

## Why this is important

Connection to culture and community helps young people to develop a sense of cultural identity, belonging and pride, which can enhance their self-esteem and resilience. It provides opportunities for social support and connection, including through intergenerational relationships, cultural activities, and community events.

This sense of connection can provide young people with valuable knowledge, skills, and perspectives, including traditional knowledge, language, and history. It can also foster leadership and empowerment, enabling young Territorians to take on meaningful roles and responsibilities within their community, and contribute to positive social change.

Pride in one's identity and culture helps to preserve cultural heritage and traditions, which can be important for maintaining a sense of community and shared history. Connection with identity and culture, including through language, country, and kinship, can help young people to develop a sense of self and belonging, which can enhance their self-esteem and resilience.

Truth and healing initiatives can help to address past injustices and trauma, and promote reconciliation and healing between different groups in the community.<sup>13</sup> Kinship systems and other community structures can help to build social connections and support networks, promoting community resilience and wellbeing. Connection to language, country, and culture can provide young people with valuable knowledge, skills, and perspectives, including traditional knowledge, cultural practices, and environmental stewardship.

It is important that young people's voices are heard and that they have the opportunity to help shape their communities. Young people have unique perspectives and experiences that can bring fresh ideas and insights to community planning and decision-making processes. When young people are able to participate in decision-making opportunities, they feel more empowered and invested.



## Priorities

### A. Young Territorians are valued

1. Support young people to know their rights and have the tools to exercise them
2. Create opportunities for the contributions of young people to be recognised and valued
3. Enhance opportunities for young people to engage and participate meaningfully in their community.

### B. Young Territorians are heard

1. Create mechanisms for the voice of young people to be heard in decisions that affect them
2. Proactively create opportunities for young people to embrace self-determination.

### C. Young Territorians are engaged

1. Raise awareness and support programs that encourage young people to engage in volunteering, internship and traineeship opportunities
2. Have mechanisms at local levels to include young people in community planning processes
3. Explore the challenges that are experienced in delivering activities in the community, and seek solutions to improve access.

### D. Young Territorians are proud

1. Empower young people to feel value and pride in their individual and collective identities and culture
2. Respect and identify cultural roles and responsibilities relevant to Aboriginal young people and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.



# Domain 2: Financially secure and have material basics



## Young Territorians:

- A. can participate in the economy
- B. have affordable, secure, reliable and high-quality food, water and energy
- C. are digitally connected and capable
- D. can enter the workforce and aspire to a career of their choice
- E. are valued, and respected for their time and knowledge through appropriate remuneration.

## Why this is important

Being financially secure and having material basics is crucial in everyone's lives particularly among young people. Having access to material basics such as food, water, energy, shelter, and clothing is essential for meeting basic needs and promoting health and wellbeing.<sup>14</sup>

Financial security and access to material basics can also create opportunities for future success, such as the ability to invest in education, save for a home or other long-term goals, and build financial security for themselves and their families.

Young people are important contributors to economic growth, driving innovation, entrepreneurship, and productivity. Digital connectivity and capabilities can support young people's education and learning, providing access to online resources, educational platforms, and remote learning opportunities. It can also support innovation and entrepreneurship, providing access to information, resources, and markets for young people who want to start their own businesses or pursue other ventures. Many services, such as healthcare, financial services, and government services, are now offered online, and being digitally connected can help young people to access these services easily and conveniently.

Appropriate remuneration when consulting young people can demonstrate that young people's time and knowledge are valued and respected, recognising their skills, expertise, and contributions. It can also motivate young people to perform at their best, leading to increased productivity, engagement, job satisfaction and the retention of young talent, reducing turnover and the associated costs of recruitment and training. Equity and fairness can also be promoted, ensuring that young people are compensated fairly for their time and knowledge, regardless of factors such as gender, race, or socio-economic background.

## Priorities

### A. Young Territorians can get a job

1. Provide programs and services to incentivise young Territorians to start a business
2. Raise awareness among the community about the advantages of employing young Territorians
3. Address barriers to employment, including structural barriers, unconscious bias and administrative hurdles
4. Ensure young people have access to information and programs that build their financial literacy.

### B. Young Territorians are secure

1. Strengthen and promote services and programs that provide young Territorians with material basics.

### C. Young Territorians are digitally connected

1. Support access to technology that improves young Territorians' lives
2. Address barriers that prevent young people gaining digital literacy skills.

### D. Young Territorians have job and training pathways

1. Support programs to increase employment of young Territorians, including local mentoring and work experience opportunities
2. Increase options for young Territorians to transition from school to further studies and/or an employment pathway of their interest
3. Grow employment opportunities in priority sectors and create more pathways into jobs.

### E. Young Territorians are valued workers

1. Support mechanisms to attract and retain a skilled workforce, including upskilling and developing young working people
2. Make use of evidence bases to develop place-based employment strategies.



# Domain 3: Able to learn, contribute and achieve



## Young Territorians:

- A. have access to quality and appropriate education and training
- B. see a positive future for themselves
- C. have the skills, training and resources they need for life
- D. have employment and education pathways created and supported by training and mentoring that is inclusive and relevant to culture.

## Why this is important

The ability to learn and contribute to society is essential for personal growth and development among young people.<sup>16</sup> By engaging in learning opportunities and contributing to their communities, young Territorians can develop a sense of purpose and meaning, as well as develop skills and knowledge that will help them succeed.

Learning, contributing, and achieving can also help young people achieve economic success, by developing skills and knowledge that are valued in the workforce. This can help to promote financial stability and independence, as well as provide opportunities for career advancement and success.

By learning and contributing to their communities, young people can also develop strong social connections and relationships, which are important for overall wellbeing and mental health.<sup>17</sup> Young people can also develop a sense of civic engagement and responsibility. This can promote a sense of belonging and social inclusion, which can help young people in the Territory thrive, succeed, and become active and engaged members of their communities, promoting positive social change and progress.

# Priorities

## A. Young Territorians can access learning

1. Identify and enhance pathways for young Territorians to continue on a path of learning beyond school that supports their strengths and goals
2. Increase collaboration between service providers and schools to improve school engagement and educational outcomes for young people.

## B. Young Territorians can and do achieve

1. Promote young Territorians' achievements, contributions and leadership to the community
2. Improve and elevate the diverse pathways available for young Territorians to aspire to.

## C. Young Territorians have skills for life

1. Promote activities that engage young people with the diverse range of opportunities in skills, training and learning
2. Support programs that equip young people with practical life skills and activities
3. Support initiatives that improve access to information that enhance outcomes for young people
4. Support young parents to have the skills, training and resources they need.

## D. Young Territorians are supported

1. Increase collaborations across sectors to ensure young people get access to the supports they need, at the right time throughout their education and beyond
2. Explore solutions to enable young people to access mentors and role models.



# Domain 4: Cared for, valued and safe



## Young Territorians:

- A. have safe environments and are safe in the community
- B. are safe from abuse and violence
- C. have a justice system which meets their needs.

## Why this is important

Being and feeling safe in their community can strengthen emotional safety and reduce the risk of trauma or other emotional harm among young people.<sup>18</sup> Protection from abuse and violence can promote educational success by providing a safe and conducive environment for learning. Prioritising safety from abuse and violence can also help to prevent future harm and the impact of trauma by promoting education, awareness, and prevention strategies that address the root causes of abuse and violence. This can help young people to achieve their full potential and pursue their goals by promoting positive mental health outcomes, as well as providing a supportive environment for personal growth and development.

Empowering young people to have a voice and be active members of their community can promote civic engagement and participation. Feeling empowered and respected can promote personal growth and development, as it can provide opportunities for self-expression, skill-building and leadership. This can also help young people to contribute to their community in meaningful ways, building stronger communities and promoting social cohesion.

It is essential to have a justice system that is focused on rehabilitation which can promote the wellbeing and future success of young people who have engaged in criminal behaviour.<sup>19</sup> A justice system that is fair and equitable can help ensure that young people are not discriminated against or treated unfairly based on factors such as race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. A justice system that provides access to appropriate support, such as mental health services or substance abuse treatment, can promote the wellbeing and success of young people who have engaged in criminal behaviour. A justice system that holds young people accountable for their actions in a developmentally appropriate way can promote personal responsibility and growth. This can help them to overcome challenges, address underlying issues, make positive changes in their lives and avoid future involvement with the justice system.

## Priorities

### A. Young Territorians have safe places and services

1. Advocate for and improve access to supports and services for young people in remote communities and homelands
2. Increase the availability of a diverse range of safe, inclusive, and accessible spaces and venues available for young people
3. Ensure young people have access to transport services that are safe and affordable, and to road safety programs and education.

### B. Young Territorians are safe from violence

1. Support services that provide help to young people who are experiencing domestic family and sexual violence, and advocate for these services to have youth specific approaches
2. Empower young people as active change-agents to reduce abuse and violence in their communities
3. Advocate and support initiatives that reduce young people experiencing bullying, abuse and violence

4. Ensure that young people are provided with the necessary resources to positively and safely use technology
5. Maintain clear and accessible feedback and complaints mechanisms across services, including statutory systems, and addressing barriers to using complains mechanisms.

### C. Young Territorians are on the right path

1. Invest in services and programs that prevent young people from entering the youth justice system
2. Ensure that young people are equipped with the tools and pathways to navigate and exit the justice system.



# Domain 5: Able to live a healthy life



## Young Territorians:

- A. are healthy, active, thrive, and have developmental equality
- B. have the best physical, mental and spiritual health throughout their lives

## Why this is important

Having a healthy life is essential for young Territorians because it lays the foundation for a healthy future.

Good health is necessary for young people to grow, develop and reach their full potential.<sup>20</sup> It enables them to engage in physical activities and exercise, which is important for maintaining a healthy weight, building strong bodies, and reducing the risk of chronic diseases.

A healthy lifestyle can help improve mental health by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression. Young people who prioritise self-care and maintain healthy habits are more likely to have better mental health outcomes.

Healthy living can also improve social relationships by promoting positive behaviours and social interactions. This can help young people build stronger relationships with family and friends, which in turn can provide a support system during difficult times.

Good health can also contribute to academic success. When young people are healthy they are better able to focus, concentrate and retain information, leading to improved academic performance.

Overall, healthy living is important for young people to ensure they have a strong foundation for a healthy and fulfilling life. By prioritising good health early on, they can prevent chronic diseases and enjoy a higher quality of life as they age.



## Priorities

### A. Young Territorians are healthy and active

1. Support services to work together to improve young Territorians' health and wellbeing outcomes
2. Support health and wellbeing policies, programs and partnerships that respond to young people

### B. Young Territorians health and wellbeing is supported

1. Support and advocate for culturally appropriate health and wellbeing education to be prioritised for young people
2. Support and advocate for programs focused on mental health, sexual health and reduction of harm associated with tobacco, alcohol and other drugs consumption among young people

3. Ensure that the youth sector has adequate access to relevant information and training to respond to young people's health and wellbeing needs
4. Normalise conversations about mental health and encourage young Territorians to seek information, support and guidance
5. Support early identification of issues and referral to early intervention services
6. Raise awareness amongst young Territorians about the importance of having an active and healthy lifestyle.



# Domain 6: Appropriate and secure housing



## Young Territorians:

- A. are living in the right home, for the right time, in the right location
- B. do not experience housing financial stress
- C. can access housing which is fit-for purpose, accessible, affordable and both culturally and climate appropriate.

## Why this is important

Housing is a key determinant of health and wellbeing,<sup>21</sup> and are committed to improving access to appropriate housing and improving living conditions.

Appropriate housing provides a safe and healthy living environment, which can have a positive impact on physical and mental health. Secure housing reduces the risk of exposure to environmental hazards, such as extreme temperatures or air pollution, and can also reduce the risk of injury or illness due to unsafe or unsanitary living conditions.

Secure housing can provide a stable base for young people to pursue education and employment opportunities. Without secure housing, young people

may struggle to maintain consistent attendance at school or work, which can limit their future opportunities and potential. Housing can also provide a sense of stability and belonging, which is important for social and emotional wellbeing.<sup>22</sup> Without stable housing, young people may experience social isolation and loneliness, which can lead to mental health issues. They could also be at a higher risk of experiencing homelessness, which can have negative consequences for their physical and mental health, education, and employment opportunities.

Appropriate and secure housing can also contribute to crime prevention by providing a stable and safe environment that reduces the likelihood of young people engaging in criminal activities or becoming victims of crime.

Providing appropriate and secure housing for young people in the Northern Territory is an important investment in their physical and mental health, education and employment opportunities, social and emotional wellbeing, and the prevention of homelessness and crime.

## Priorities

### A. Young Territorians can live independently

1. Support initiatives that aim to increase the availability of affordable housing options for young people
2. Support programs and services that assist young Territorians to transition to independent living
3. Raise awareness about the rate of youth homelessness in the Territory.

### B. Young Territorians can manage housing costs

1. Support programs and services for young people that aim to avoid rental or mortgage stress

### C. Young Territorians housing needs are met

1. Explore the current options for emergency, short and medium term housing to assess how these facilities are meeting the needs of young Territorians
2. Support and advocate for initiatives that facilitate entry of young people to the property market



# Domain 7: A natural and built environment that supports a high quality of life



## Young Territorians

- A. have infrastructure in built and natural environments that support their social inclusion
- B. live in communities that are resilient to climate change

## Why this is important

Natural environments such as parks, gardens, and the bush, provide opportunities for young people to engage in physical activity and connect with nature and culture. This can improve physical and mental health, as well as provide opportunities for socialising and community building.

Built environments that prioritise safe and accessible transport options, such as bike lanes, public transit, and pedestrian-friendly streets, can make it easier for young people to access education, employment, and recreational opportunities.

Prioritising cultural and recreational opportunities, such as museums, art galleries, sports facilities<sup>23</sup>, community centres, and youth hubs, can provide young people with opportunities for personal growth and socialisation. This can contribute to a sense of belonging and community involvement, which can improve overall quality of life.

Climate change is leading to more frequent and severe weather events, such as floods, cyclones, and bushfires. Living in communities that are resilient to climate change can provide young people with protection from these events, reducing the risk of injury, death, and property damage. Resilient communities can also contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, protecting natural habitats, and promoting sustainable resource use.<sup>24</sup>

Living in resilient communities can create economic opportunities for young people, such as green jobs in renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, or climate adaptation and mitigation.

A natural and built environment that supports a high quality of life can provide young Territorians with opportunities for physical and mental health, access to basic materials and services, cultural and recreational opportunities, and community building. This can contribute to their overall wellbeing and future success of our community.

## Priorities

### A. Young Territorians have a socially inclusive environment

1. Increase the number of safe, engaging and inclusive spaces for young people
2. Ensure young people are involved in the planning and design of community infrastructure
3. Understand the places available for young people in their communities and identify areas for improvement
4. Have mechanisms at local levels to include young people in community planning processes
5. Advocate to ensure that natural environments are protected and accessible for young people.

### B. Young Territorians live in climate resilient communities

1. Support youth voice and actions that promote resilience to climate change
2. Support young people to be change agents for protecting and safeguarding a future against climate change.



# Accountability

A vital part of the Strategy and its implementation is ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure it is meeting the needs of young people and communities, and making a difference.

## Governance

Three consecutive three-year action plans will cover the life of the Strategy and progress the key priorities. The first action plan will be developed in the second half of 2023. Aiming for coordination and collaboration, the aim is that all NT Government agencies will embed their commitments under these action plans into agency and business plans.

The Northern Territory (NT) Minister for Youth will oversee the implementation of the Strategy. The Round Table and Project Reference Group will monitor progress and provide advice to the NT Minister for Youth on key issues regarding implementation. The Round Table is an advisory group to the NT Minister for Youth and represents the voice of young people in the Northern Territory.

## Monitoring and reporting

NT Government agency representatives will meet regularly to discuss, monitor and report on the progress of initiatives under the action plans. The Department will work with government agencies, young people and the youth sector (where appropriate) to provide annual progress reports to the Minister and Round Table. The annual reports will be published on the Department's website and will include updates on progress against key actions and initiatives, and reporting against the outcome measures associated with the Strategy.

## Review and evaluation

An outcomes framework and program logic will be developed for the Strategy. The first action plan will include key indicators and the data sources required to monitor progress of actions under the seven domains and associated outcomes and priorities. The process to develop the second action plan will begin in 2025 in consultation with government agencies, young people, the youth sector and other stakeholders. This second action plan will reflect progress against key actions of the first action plan and key changes in the external environment.



# References and acknowledgments

## References

- 1 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 Northern Territory, Census All persons, people and population.
- 2 Australian Bureau of Statistics. 3235.0 Population by Age and Sex, 2016 as cited in De Vincentiis B, Guthridge S, Su J-Y, Harding, Mm Williams T. Story of Our Children and Young People, NT 2021.
- 3 Department of Education, Education Engagement Strategy Discussion Paper, 2021.
- 4 NT Department of Education, Enrolment and Attendance Data for term 4 2022, [Enrolment and attendance data | Department of Education](#)
- 5 NT Department of Education; Education NT Strategy 2021-2025.
- 6 Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, Northern Territory Disability Strategy 2022-2032.
- 7 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021 census of population and housing.
- 8 Story of Our Children and Young people; Australian Electoral Commission, 30 June 2019.
- 9 Story of Our Children and Young people; 2017-18 National Health Survey and 2018-19 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Survey, ABS.
- 10 Department of Territory Families, Housing and Families, NT Homelessness Strategy 2018-23.
- 11 Story of Our Children and Young People; AIHW National Perinatal Data Collection, 2018, prepared by the NT Department of Health, 2019.
- 12,13 Kids Safe, Family Together, Community Strong: 10-Year Generational Strategy for Children and Families in the Northern Territory, Commonwealth of Australia (Department of Social Services and National Indigenous Australians Agency), Northern Territory Government (Reform Management Office and Department of Chief Minister and Cabinet), Aboriginal Peak Organisations Northern Territory, North Australian Aboriginal Justice Agency and Northern Territory Council of Social Service, 2021.
- 14 Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet; NT Social Outcomes Framework.
- 15 Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade; NT Innovation Strategy.
- 16 Department of Education, NT Education Strategy 2021-2025.
- 17 Department of Health, NT Mental Health Strategic Plan 2019-2025.
- 18 Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities; Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Reduction Framework 2018-2028.
- 19 Department of Attorney-General and Justice; Aboriginal Justice Agreement 2021-2027.
- 20, 21 Department of Health; The Best Opportunities in Life – NT Child and Adolescent Health and Wellbeing Plan 2018-2028.
- 22 Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, NT Housing Strategy 2020-2025.
- 23 Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities, NT Sport and Active Recreation Strategic Plan 2021-2025.
- 24 Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security; NT's Climate Change Response Towards 2050, annual progress report - 2022.

## Acknowledgment

With thanks to, and acknowledgment of the members of the NT Youth Strategy Project Reference Group.

- Alexander Storey, 22, and Jordy Humphreys, 17, Co-Chairs – Darwin and Alice Springs
- Shanae Kuo, 23 - Darwin
- Tayloraye Bailey, 22 – Big Rivers
- Hajrah Kamran, 19 – Darwin
- Jemima Fernandes, 20 – Darwin
- Jaiden McGregor, 24 - Darwin
- Azra Zendelji, 26 – Tennant Creek
- Sophia Rogers, 15 – East Arnhem
- Steph Burgess (NTCOSS)

