Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory: Implementation approach for Stronger Communities for Children

The Australian Government is publishing this Implementation Plan (IP) because it is committed to working with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory, their representatives and leaders to effectively implement Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory measures.

The Stronger Communities for Children Implementation Plan contributes to the objectives and outcomes of the National Partnership Agreement for Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory. This IP sets out the strategy for how the Commonwealth will deliver projects and services for which it is responsible. It should be read in conjunction with Stronger Communities for Children Program Guidelines.

The Australian Government has made a 10 year commitment to work with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to build strong, independent lives, where communities, families and children are safe and healthy. Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory is a $3.4 billion investment and responds directly to what Aboriginal people told the Government what is important to them.

The Australian Government will work with Aboriginal people in both large and small communities to support local jobs, tackle alcohol abuse and encourage children to go to school, as well as provide important services, including health, education and police. The Australian Government will talk to Aboriginal people in each community about how best to deliver services under Stronger Futures, providing Aboriginal people with more responsibility for services within their own community.

The Australian Government will support Aboriginal organisations to deliver services under Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory and all services will be expected to employ Aboriginal people wherever possible.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory: Stronger Communities for Children

Stronger Communities for Children (SCfC) aims to give Indigenous children and young people the best possible start in life through safer families and communities, nurturing educational environments, positive participation opportunities and cultural events so that children and young people grow up strong, healthy and confident.

The target groups in scope for this Activity are:
• **Early Childhood (0-5) years** – where the aim is to improve the health and well-being of families and the health, well-being and early development of young children, from before birth to school age.

• **Children from 6 – 11 years** – where the aim is to assist parents and families build their confidence and parenting skills in meeting their children’s developmental needs, ensuring that their children are nurtured and educated so that they can grow up strong, health and confident.

• **Young People (12 and over)** – where the aim is improve life choices and outcomes for young people by facilitating the creation of child and youth-friendly communities, providing effective diversion programs for young Aboriginal people from risky behaviours, promoting pathways to better health and wellbeing, facilitating community contributions as well as participating in school, work and social networks and improving youth services infrastructure and resources.

• **Families** – where the aim is to promote safe and health social interaction of women, men and families using a strengths based approach by promoting increased parenting skills, mental health, cultural engagement, leadership development, community cohesion, conflict resolution and/or healing opportunities.

• **Men and Women’s services** – where the aim is to provide men and women with greater capacity to meet the needs of their families using culturally based family interventions and community development approaches that focus on health, positive relationships, drug and alcohol abuse, enhancing social and workforce participation, economic capacity, leadership and empowerment.

• **Community capacity building** – where the aim is strengthen the local Indigenous community services workforce plus the capabilities and cultural governance of the local community and its NGO service providers.

**Why is this element included in the SFNT package?**

Many Indigenous children experience unacceptable levels of disadvantage in Australia, compared to the non-indigenous population. Indigenous children are less likely to participate in early childhood education and less likely to meet the minimum standard of literacy and numeracy as the level of remoteness increases.

Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory have been very clear that they want strong healthy children, young people, families and communities. During consultations about development the Stronger Futures Package, it was also clear that Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory want the government to talk to them about policies and for the government to listen to what they have to say.

SCfC responds directly to these concerns. It is designed to encourage more local involvement in the delivery of services and to empower Aboriginal communities and local organisations to ensure families in remote parts of the Northern Territory are able to access important services that help make communities safer and healthier places for children to live.
What is the objective of Stronger Communities for Children?

The objectives of the Stronger Communities for Children program are to:

1. Improve the coordination of existing child and family services so that they are more coherent, collaborative, and better aligned with the needs of communities.

2. Harness leadership in communities to shape and give effect to their own vision of a healthy and safe community in which children and young people can thrive (including but not limited to supporting these leaders to be effective agents of influence in the planning and prioritisation of the children and families service system).

3. Build the capacity of Indigenous controlled organisations to be effective proponents for their community leadership and support them to provide high quality services and develop a skilled professional workforce.

What are the outcomes and outputs of Stronger Communities for Children?

Stronger Communities for Children will contribute to outcomes such as:

- Families function well in nurturing and safe environments;
- Children and families have the knowledge and skills for life and learning;
- Families, including children, especially those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged, benefit from better social inclusion and reduced disadvantage;
- Organisations provide integrated services and work in collaboration with other services and the community; and
- Services focus on vulnerable and disadvantaged families and children.

Stronger Communities for Children will commit to the following outputs:

- Early intervention support services for all community members
- Capacity development of local Aboriginal organisations
- Increased Indigenous employment and employment pathways
- Community Input into Service Delivery

Who will deliver Stronger Communities for Children Services?

To lead this program in each community, FaHCSIA will contract a non-government organisation as the Facilitating Partner who will coordinate the planning, integration and evaluation of services. Where possible, the Facilitating Partner will be an Aboriginal organisation, or in a consortia with an Aboriginal organisation.

Through the development of a local community plan, the Facilitating Partner, in partnership with local community reference groups (the Community Board), will decide which services are delivered in their community, and by which service providers. The Facilitating Partner will also consult with existing service providers and plans to ensure that any new services fill service gaps and do not duplicate services.
When will Stronger Communities for Children be implemented?

Services will be established in Ngukurr, Galiwinku, Wadeye, Ntaria and Santa Teresa from July 2013, with a further roll out in Gunbalanya, Maningrida, Utopia Homelands, Engawala and Lajamanu in 2014. Another five communities, which are yet to be selected, will benefit from July 2017, meaning that in total 15 communities will benefit from Stronger Communities for Children services under the expansion.

Stronger Futures Commitment to Aboriginal Service Providers and Aboriginal Employment

Under Stronger Futures, the Australian Government is strongly committed to developing the capacity of Indigenous service delivery organisations and increasing employment opportunities for Aboriginal people. Aboriginal employment targets are being set for all Stronger Futures measures to encourage service providers to invest in employing Aboriginal staff and developing their skills.

The Child, Youth, Family and Community Wellbeing Package, under which Stronger Communities for Children sits, is committed to the following employment targets for Indigenous Employment:

- 2013-2014: Aboriginal employment of 50% of total positions in the first tranche of five SCfC sites;
- 2014-15: Employment of 50% of total positions in the second tranche of five SCfC sites;
- 2017-18: Employment of 60% of total positions in the third tranche of five SCfC sites;
- 2020-21: Maintain SCfC sites and increase Aboriginal employment to 75% of total positions.

A key focus of the new SCfC program is to support local Aboriginal people and organisation to deliver the services funded under the program.

To meet this workforce vision Facilitating Partners in partnership with Community Boards will outline workforce plans as part of the Service Delivery Plan. Service Delivery Plans will describe what activities Facilitating Partners and subcontracted providers will deliver over the SCfC period.

The Service Delivery Plan must also explain what strategies will be used to employ local Aboriginal people in services, where possible. Facilitating Partners will use resources contained in the SCfC Workforce Development Strategy and adapt them to their communities. The Service Delivery Plan must also contain strategies for linking people from one job to another and continuing services after Stronger Futures funding ends.

Supports have also been developed by FaHCSIA to help indigenous organisations with their governance and workforce issues. These include the NGO Capacity Strengthening Unit and the Quality Service Support Panel.

The NGO Capacity Strengthening Unit’s (the Unit) key objective is to build strong local NGOs who can provide the best possible services to the community for the life
of the SCfC and beyond Stronger Futures. The Unit will sit down with organisations and build a plan in collaboration with them in many key organisation domains, to assist them into the future. These include financial management, governance, legal compliance, management systems and Human Resources.

The Quality Service Support Panel (QSSP) aims to improve the service delivery process of the Facilitating Partners and Service Providers across all of the SCfC sites. It will undertake local workforce planning and develop a community workforce plan in conjunction with Facilitating Partners, Local Community Boards and Service Providers.

**Stronger Futures Commitment to Engagement with Aboriginal people:**

The Australian Government is also strongly committed to changing the way it engages with Aboriginal people. All Stronger Futures measures are required to ensure services are responsive, effectively meet community needs and that agreed mechanisms are in place to provide for their ongoing feedback.

Stronger Communities for Children uses a Community Board in its service delivery model to ensure that community interests are represented in decision making processes and that feedback from Community Members is taken into account. The Facilitating Partner must consult with the community board in decisions about activities selection and service delivery.

**Links to other programs**

Stronger Communities for Children is one program of many under the Child, Youth, Family and Community Wellbeing Package (CYFCWP) of Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory. Under CYFCWP the Commonwealth is supporting a range of measures that complement each other in providing early intervention supports for the whole community. Stronger Communities for Children will cooperate in remote communities with programs such as:

- Intensive Family Support Service
- Youth in Communities
- Mobile Child Protection Teams
- Women’s Safe Houses
- Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers

And with other Stronger Futures Measures such as:

- Remote Jobs and Community Program
- Regional Education Skills and Jobs

**Funding and governance arrangements**

The funding available for this project is:

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**Evaluation, monitoring and review**

This Implementation Plan will be reviewed in 2016-17 and 2019-20 in line with evaluation of the NPA with regard to progress made in respect of achieving the stated objectives.

**Lead agency**

The Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs is the lead agency on the implementation of this measure.

**Contact and questions**

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